Liberated by the Spirit from the Law of Sin and Death: Pre-Nicene Christian Writers on *νόμος* 'Law' in Romans 7:21–8:2

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Short Abstract

This dissertation is a study of the reception history of selected verses from Romans 7:21–8:2 in the first three centuries of the Common Era, up to and including Origen. The large range of interpretations of Romans 7:21–8:2 and its *νόμος* 'law' phrases in today's scholarship has led to division among Pauline scholars. As yet, no comprehensive study on the interpretation of Rom. 7:21–8:2 by the early church has been undertaken and deployed in the study of this passage. This dissertation fills this lacuna by investigating four of the most pressing questions that continue to divide today's Pauline scholars through the lens of the early writers: (1) whether the text should be understood as autobiographical (who is the 'I' of Rom. 7:21–8:2, and more broadly, 7:14–8:2?), (2) the meaning of *νόμος* in the *νόμος* phrases in Rom. 7:21–8:2, (3) the manner in which the *νόμος* phrases work on human beings, whether they are internal or external to the human being, and (4) to what extent did Greco-Roman thought impacted the early Christian understanding of this passage.

The authors studied in this dissertation are Tertullian, Theodotus the Valentinian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen. There are three primary reasons that Origen was chosen as the end terminus. Firstly, the proximity of Origen and those who wrote before him to the language and culture of Paul would have given them a privileged access to Paul's world. Secondly, Origen, the latest of these authors, was the first extant Christian author to write biblical commentaries, and especially a commentary on Romans. Therefore, the dissertation examines the earliest readings of these verses before the authors' interpretations were coloured by myriads of biblical commentaries. And thirdly, these authors wrote before the Roman Empire officially embraced Christianity (325 CE), and thus before there was a stricter oversight of theological works; these authors would have been less constrained by authority when they wrote. These criteria helpfully limit the number of authors studied because the extant references to and comments on Rom. 7:21–8:2 significantly increases from the fourth century onwards, which would have made it unmanageable for a dissertation.

This dissertation argues that the early writers were primarily preoccupied with promoting self-mastery (a virtuous life) and keeping the vices at bay when they made use of Rom. 7:21–8:2. It further argues that the authors were primarily interested in the struggle or combat between that which is worldly and that which is otherworldly as depicted in Rom. 7:23, the verse that was by far the most popular and most referred to by the four authors. Furthermore, although the four authors interpreted the *νόμος* phrases in similar ways, not one author understood every *νόμος* phrase in the same way as another author. In stark contrast to contemporary scholarship of Rom. 7:21–8:2, the dissertation demonstrates that not a single early author understood any of the occurrences of *νόμος* to refer to 'the Law of Moses' (the Torah). Still further, the earliest readers of Rom. 7:21–8:2 approached the text with predominantly Greek philosophical categories and these early authors—apart from Origen, who addressed nearly all of the questions that contemporary scholars raise—had no problems with this passage (none but Origen raised any concerns about any of the verses in their extant writings), including the identity of the 'I'. Moreover, only Tertullian and Origen explicitly mentioned external forces as connected to 'the law of sin', whereas Theodotus and Clement do so too, although not when they addressed Rom. 7:21–8:2. Finally, all authors understood the 'I' to be applicable to Paul and to the audience of the writers, who were presumably fellow Christians, but possibly all people.

The dissertation contributes to today's scholarship by presenting for the first time a comprehensive study of the earliest extant readers of Rom. 7:21–8:2. The findings will enrich contemporary scholars' readings of Rom. 7:23–8:2 and will shift the concerns and focus that scholars have concerning this passage, such as putting too much emphasis on the identity of the 'I' or reading all or most occurrences of *νόμος* 'law' as referring to the Law of Moses. The dissertation further contributes to scholarship by demonstrating that the primary use this passage had for the early authors was as a proof text for arguments concerning the interior struggle that every human feels when faces with the choice to embrace either worldly things or heavenly things, or in arguments to show the struggle between that which is good in the person (the body, created good by God) and that which is evil in the person (sin, or sinful and disordered thoughts, created by the freedom of the will to choose evil). As such, these findings lend further support to certain ways of reading Romans 7–8 in contemporary scholarship.

The methodology used in this dissertation closely follows that of Jennifer Strawbridge: for each early Christian author who made use of the passage, I present a thorough analysis of the

context in which it occurs, the manner in which it is used, and the distribution of its use throughout different genres. Finally, the dissertation is structured around the four early Christian authors, with emphasis on their interpretations in the light of the four significant dividing questions mentioned above.

Long Abstract

Many New Testament scholars consider Romans 7:14–8:2 to be one of the most simultaneously enthralling and troubling passages in the whole of the Pauline corpus. In no other Pauline passage does the audience read of the *ἀκρασία* 'akrasia'—the weakness of will or the lack of self-control––of the Apostle of Christ. In this short passage, Paul admits that, not only does he not know what he is doing, he does not do what he wants to do (Rom. 7:15-16). The good that he wants to do, he does not, while the evil that he abhors, he does (Rom. 7:19, 21). He credits these failings to the presence of *ἁμαρτία* 'sin', which he sees dwelling in him (Rom. 7:18, 20). Romans 7:14–8:2, then, is first and foremost about human agency, the inability to act according to one's will (Rom. 7:15-20) because there is some element that is preventing one from behaving as one intends (Rom. 7:17, 20-23). Due to the existential nature of Rom. 7:14–8:2, the passage lends itself to investigations spanning very diverse fields of study, such as anthropology, philosophy, Patristics, and biblical studies.

This dissertation is a study of the reception history of selected verses from Romans 7:21–8:2 in the first three centuries of the Common Era, up to and including Origen. Romans 7:21–8:2 is arguably both the climax and the resolution of Rom. 7:14–8:2, and so a more precise understanding of Rom. 7:21–8:2 may aid in the exegesis of the larger text in which it is found. The large range of interpretations of Rom. 7:21–8:2 in today's scholarship has created certain divisions among Pauline scholars. Four main issues have been and continue to be debated surrounding this text. Firstly, who is the 'I' in Romans 7–8? Is it autobiographical or paradigmatic, or both? Secondly, what do the mysterious *νόμος* phrases (which only occur in

Rom. 7:21–8:2 in the whole Pauline corpus) *ἕτερον νόμον ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου* ‘another law in my members’ (7:23), *τῷ νόμῳ τῆς ἁμαρτίας* ‘the law of sin’ (7:23, 25), *τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοός μου* ‘the law of my mind’ (7:23), *τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ θεοῦ* ‘the law of God’ (7:22, 25), *ὁ γὰρ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ* ‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ’ (8:2), and *τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου* ‘the law of sin and death’ (8:2) mean and how do these elements influence the human’s will and ability to execute it? Thirdly, to what extent do these—internal or external—laws influence the freedom to choose and to act according to that choice? And finally, in answering these questions, did early authors use other Scripture passages to address these verses (as proof texts, for example) or did they take recourse to Greco-Roman traditions? Or both? Despite disagreements on these topics, no comprehensive study on the interpretation of these verses by early writers has been undertaken and deployed to help address these difficulties.

I have limited myself to early Christian authors up to and including Origen of Alexandria (c. 185 – c. 253 CE). I offer three reasons for choosing this period. Firstly, these authors were well acquainted with Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures of Paul’s time due to their proximity—both temporal and geographical—to the composition of the Epistle to the Romans and therefore they had access to the cultural and linguistic background behind Paul’s text. Secondly, pre-Nicene authors wrote before Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, an event that impacted many aspects of the church, including biblical exegesis and theology. Oversight and censorship by Emperor, Patriarch, or Pope, was not as strong as it would be later. And finally, Origen initiated the tradition in Christianity of line-by-line biblical commentary. His commentaries made their way into the Latin world very quickly thanks to the labours of Rufinus, consequently influencing Christian writers in both Latin and Greek worlds. It is therefore very exciting to examine works on Rom. 7:21–8:2 before and up to Origen in order to see their

different approaches to the text before Origen dominated the biblical field. Four early authors who have engaged with Rom. 7:21–8:2 meet these criteria: Tertullian, Theodotus the Valentinian (from Clement's *Excerpts from Theodotus*), Clement of Alexandria, and Origen.

The unique contribution of this dissertation lies in a comprehensive engagement with early authors who lived within two centuries of Paul's life. For the fields of reception history and Pauline studies, the dissertation offers a thorough treatment of early Christian hermeneutics of Rom. 7:21–8:2. Addressing this lacuna in biblical and reception history studies is important because the dissertation offers early Christian solutions to arguably the most important section of Romans 7–8, as it is in Rom. 7:21–8:2 that the audience hears about both the reason for Paul's *ἀκρασία* and how it is resolved. The findings of this dissertation will give more weight to some contemporary scholars in the ongoing debates mentioned above, as they will find support for their interpretations in the writings of the early authors. As such, a major contribution is that these findings will serve as an arbiter in the debates. Another important contribution is that the findings will significantly shift the focus of contemporary scholarship when studying the Pauline text. The Torah, the Law of Moses, for example, was not at all on the minds of any of the authors when they interpreted or made use of the *νόμος* phrases in Rom. 7:21–8:2. Rather, it was the interior struggle as highlighted by the Pauline text with war-like imagery (Rom. 7:23) that was the primary concern of the authors when they turned to Rom. 7:21–8:2, and especially 7:23, the verse referred to by far more than any other verse in this section of Romans. The identity of the 'I' was not problematic for them either. The early authors were above all concerned with the human being's progress in the moral life, and this progress was always understood as a communal endeavour, where the 'I' is never alone before God, but rather together with other members of the Christian community.

Finally, the study also offers further insights into early Christian approaches to Christian ethics, specifically through the use of Rom. 7:21–8:2 in combination with Greco-Roman philosophy. Nowhere else does Paul or any other biblical author use the *νόμος* phrases, thereby making their interpretation in Romans especially difficult. This examination offers very helpful insights into how *νόμος* might be interpreted in Rom. 7:21–8:2 by early Christian writers who used Paul's language and conversed with intellectuals of a similar intellectual background to those with whom Paul would have conversed.

The project is structured around the four early authors, while engaging with the four aforementioned major issues in Rom. 7:21–8:2. In the Introduction, I raise the main issues in Rom. 7:21–8:2 and I present the different opinions of contemporary scholars who have endeavoured to address them. I then present the main arguments of this dissertation, followed by a brief note of introduction to the four early Christian authors that will be studied. Following this, I offer an explanation of some of the most important Greek terms from Rom. 7:21–8:2 that will be analysed in the dissertation. Next, I introduce the study of the reception history of biblical texts, its aims, benefits, and methodologies. Here, a number of recent studies have served as a methodological guide, but most importantly, I follow the methodology presented by Jennifer Strawbridge: a great emphasis on the context in which the quotation appears, how it is used, and its distribution across the different kinds of works of the early Christian author.[1] In addition to the elements presented by Strawbridge, the methodology employed in this dissertation also places significant weight on the interpretation of the early extant writers of Rom. 7:21–8:2. As such, I analyse (a) the context of the passage containing the reference(s) to Rom. 7:21–8:2, (b)

[1] See especially Chapter One of Jennifer R. Strawbridge, *The Pauline Effect: The Use of the Pauline Epistles by Early Christian Writers*, SBR 5 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015).

textual-critical issues concerning each author's use of the Pauline text and what variants may say about the author's understanding of the passage, (c) how and to what end each author employed the verse(s) or individual law phrases, especially paying attention to how they addressed the four issues raised above, and (d) in which genre of writing the reference occurs and how this impacts its interpretation. Finally, I present the contributions of the dissertation to scholarship.

Chapter One focuses on the works of the Latin writer Tertullian which engage with a selection of the *νόμος* phrases in Rom. 7:21–8:2. I examine three of his works, as Tertullian only makes use of excerpts from Rom. 7:21–8:2 in *Adversus Marcionem* V.14 (Rom 7:23), *De resurrectione mortuorum* 46 (Rom. 8:2) and 51 (Rom. 7:23), and *De puditicia* 17 (Rom. 8:2). I frequently take recourse to other works by Tertullian (e.g. *De Anima*) in order to help understand some of his brief comments on Rom. 7:23 and 8:2.

Chapter Two focuses on the works of the Greek writers Clement of Alexandria and Theodotus the Valentinian which engage with some of the *νόμος* phrases in Rom. 7:21–8:2. First, I analyse the four allusions to Rom. 7:23 and 8:2 in Clement's work *Stromateis* (*Strom.* 3.77.1, 4.40.2, and 7.44.7), taking regular recourse to other texts from the *Stromateis* and other works (e.g. *Paedagogus*) in order to shed further light on some of Clement's brief comments on selected verses from Rom. 7:21–8:2. I then analyse one allusion in Clement's work *Excerpts from Theodotus* 52.1 (henceforth referred to as *Excerpts*). The *Excerpts* have been recognised as not Clementine, and most probably belonging to a certain Theodotus, who may have even been a direct disciple of Valentinus.

Chapter Three focuses on the works of Origen of Alexandria which engage with all the *νόμος* phrases in Rom. 7:21–8:2. Origen employs the verses in their entirety or one or more of the *νόμος* phrases no less than 67 times. It will be impossible to cover all occurrences in this

dissertation. As such, Origen's *Commentary on Romans* will serve as the primary text under investigation in Chapter Three because Origen's thoughts on these phrases are most fully articulated therein (especially 6.9-11, where Origen comments on Rom. 7:14-25). Analysis of the other occurrences will also be incorporated should they offer anything new to his interpretation in the *Commentary on Romans*.

The concluding chapter will bring everything together, both the principal findings and a more elaborate presentation of the contribution to contemporary scholarship of these findings. Firstly, early Christian authors did not find any problems with Paul's 'I' in Rom. 7:21–8:2 (and more broadly, in Rom 7:14–8:2) and regularly saw themselves and their audience in Paul's 'I'. Origen was the only one who explicitly questioned the 'I' in Romans 7–8, but this is because he questioned nearly every aspect of the Epistle in his commentary. Secondly, all authors differed on their interpretation of the meaning of the *νόμος* phrases, although they all had one thing in common in their interpretations: none understood *νόμος* to refer to the Law of Moses, the Torah. There are some shared interpretations of some laws, but not a shared vision of all occurrences of *νόμος* in Rom. 7:21–8:2. Thirdly, all of the early authors employed Greek philosophical concepts—such as virtues/vices, passions, the natural law, and more—to interpret or employ the *νόμος* phrases. This hints at the fact that this is how the text was generally read in the first two centuries following the composition of the Epistle. Finally, only two authors (Tertullian and Origen) explicitly commented on the external nature of the *νόμος* phrases as also being some force or the Devil. Clement had a similar view, although he did not mention this when he commented on Rom. 7:21–8:2; other writings were explored to demonstrate this. As such, all four authors held that both internal and external influences were responsible for identity

formation and decision-making; the ‘I’ was understood to belong firmly to a living community that could help or hinder it.

Abbreviations

1. Works of ancient authors

Ad mart.	Tertullian's *Ad martyras*
Ad uxor.	Tertullian's *Ad uxorem*
Adv. haer.	Irenaeus' *Adversus haereses*
Adv. Herm.	Tertullian's *Adversus Hermogenem*
Adv. Iud.	Tertullian's *Adversus Iudaeos*
Adv. Marc.	Tertullian's *Adversus Marcionem*
Adv. Val.	Tertullian's *Adversus Valentinianus*
Apol.	Tertullian's *Apologeticus pro Christianis*
Carn. Chr.	Tertullian's *De carne Christi*
Cels.	Origen's *Contra Celsum*
ComMat.	Origen's *Commentary on Matthew*
ComRom.	Origen's *Commentary on Romans*
Cult. fem.	Tertullian's *De cultu feminarum*
De an.	Tertullian's *De anima*
De bapt.	Tertullian's *De baptismo*
Cor. mil.	Tertullian's *De corona militis*
De ieiun.	Tertullian's *De ieiunio: adversus psychicos*
De mon.	Tertullian's *De monogamia*
De or.	Origen's *De oratione*
De orat.	Tertullian's *De oratione*

De paenit.	Tertullian's *De paenitentia*
De pall.	Tertullian's *De pallio*
De pat.	Tertullian's *De patientia*
De praes.	Tertullian's *De praescriptione haereticorum*
De pud.	Tertullian's *De pudicitia*
De spect.	Tertullian's *De spectaculis*
Div.	Clement of Alexandria's *Quis dives salvetur?*
Ex. cast.	Tertullian's *De exhortatione castitatis*
Exc.	Clement of Alexandria's *Excerpta ex Theodoto*
H.E.	Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*
HomGen.	Origen's *Homiliae in Genesim*
HomJos.	Origen's *Homiliae in Josue*
HomJud.	Origen's *Homiliae in Judicum*
Ios.	Philo of Alexandria's *De Iosepho*
Leg.	Philo of Alexandria's *Legum allegoriae*
Migr.	Philo of Alexandria's *De migratione Abrahami*
Mos.	Philo of Alexandria's *De vita Mosis*
Paed.	Clement of Alexandria's *Paedagogus*
Praem.	Philo of Alexandria's *De praemiis et poenis*
Princ.	Origen's *De principiis*
Prot.	Clement of Alexandria's *Protrepticus*
Rep.	Plato's *Republic*
Res. carn.	Tertullian's *De resurrectione carnis*
Scorp.	Tertullian's *Scorpiace*
Test. anim.	Tertullian's *De testimonio animae*

2. Publications

AA	Antichità Altoadriatiche
AB	Anchor Bible
ABR	*Australian Biblical Review*
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
AGLB	*Aus der Geschichte der lateinischen Bibel*
AK	Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte
AMD	Ancient Magic and Divination
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
ASPTLA	Ashgate Studies in Philosophy & Theology in Late Antiquity
AugStud.	*Augustinian Studies*
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BBK	Bonner Beiträge zur Kirchengeschichte
BN	*Biblische Notizen*
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*
BP	*Biblia Patristica*
BTS	Biblisch-theologische Studien
CLL	Classical Life and Letters
CNT	Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
CSCP	Cornell Studies in Classical Philology
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
CTNT	Commentario teologico del Nuovo Testamento
DRLAR	Dr. Richard L. Armstrong Series on Biblical Studies

ExAud.	*Ex Auditu*
ECF	Early Church Fathers
Enc.	*Encounter*
FC	Fathers of the Church
FHSNSL	Fort Hays Studies New Series: Literature
FLTP	The Fontana Library: Theology and Philosophy
ICC	International Critical Commentaries
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JGRChJ	*Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
HAPG	Heidelberger Abhandlungen zur Philosophie und ihrer Geschichte
HThKNT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
LCP	Latinitas Christianorum primæva
LSLD	*Lewis and Short's Latin Dictionary*
LTPM	Louvain Theological & Pastoral Monographs
MNTC	Moffatt New Testament Commentary
MS	Millennium-Studien
NCCS	New Covenant Commentary Series
NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NS	Nuovi saggi
NTSS	Nuovo Testamento Seconda Serie
OECS	Oxford Early Christian Studies

OECT	Oxford Early Christian Texts
OH	Oxford Handbooks
OTM	Oxford Theological Monographs
PIBA	Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association
PPSD	Pauline and Patristic Scholars in Debate
SBR	Studies of the Bible and Its Reception
SC	Sources Chrétiennes
SCL	Sather Classical Lectures
SD	Studies and Documents
SEA	Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum
SHBC	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
SOC	Scritti delle origini Cristiane
SPCK	Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge
SS	Symposium Series
STRev	*Sewanee Theological Review*
TB	Theologische Bücherei
ThH	Théologie historique
ThZ	*Theologische Zeitschrift*
TUGAL	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
VC	*Vigiliae Christianae*
VR	*Vox Reformata*
VS	Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmäler der (Königlichen) Museen zu Berlin
WHCT	Westminster Handbooks to Christian Theology
WKB	Works of Karl Barth

WTS	Wijsgerige Teksten En Studies
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAC	*Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum*
ZNT	*Zeitschrift für Neues Testament*
ZNW	Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche
ZTK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

Introduction

1. The dissertation, the problem, and the argument

The dissertation

This dissertation is in the fields of early Christian reception history of biblical texts and Pauline studies. In what follows, I will investigate early Christian interpretations of the enigmatic so-called *νόμος* 'law' phrases that occur in Romans 7:21–8:2, arguably both the climax and the resolution of Rom. 7:14–8:2.[1] These verses and their *νόμος* phrases have provoked much speculation throughout the history of New Testament exegesis and are at the heart of the problem that plagues Paul, which is his inability to be perfectly obedient to God's Law. The notion of freedom in Paul's extant writings has initially attracted me to this section of the Epistle, while further investigation into Paul's lack of freedom as expressed in Rom. 7–8 led me to both the culprit of this imprisonment of the will and to its liberator, namely, the *νόμος* phrases. Still further, I discovered that there is no consensus in biblical scholarship about the meaning and function of these important phrases.

This discovery was both intriguing and impelling, as I realised that this important section of Romans has no 'common' reading and the various interpretations seem to be locked in a stalemate. This led me to search out early Christian interpretations of the *νόμος* phrases, as I

[1] Douglas Moo believes that 'the personal plea' in these verses 'brings to a climax the narrative of vv. 7-23' (Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 466).

have grown to value the insights and methodologies of the early Christian writers throughout my studies. There I found a substantial lacuna: no comprehensive study has been carried out on these *νόμος* phrases in the early Christian writings so as to use them to shed any further light on the exegesis of this biblical text today. Studies in reception history of biblical texts have become very popular in the last two decades, with a significant number of new and exciting publications on early Christian interpretations of Scripture coming out every year.[2] Work into reception history has been very fruitful, as contemporary authors try to present (sometimes for the first time) early Church methodologies and exegeses of complicated biblical texts for the contemporary reader. Although few would claim that reception history definitively recreates a biblical author's thoughts and intentions, reception history sheds light on how these ancient texts were read by the first few generations of Christians. This nascent period of interpretation would then set the stage for new traditions of interpretation and is thus very important for the development of Christian thought throughout the centuries. Because Paul's writings are often at the centre of debates between the different Christian Churches, many scholars of reception history have tried to insert ancient voices into modern debates as possible arbitrators, especially if a debate has found itself in a stalemate. Following in the noble tradition of scholars of reception history of biblical texts, this dissertation is thus one of early reception history of the latter section of Romans 7 and the first two verses of Romans 8.

The *νόμος* phrases that will be studied in this dissertation are *ἕτερον νόμον ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου* 'another law in my members' (7:23), *τῷ νόμῳ τῆς ἁμαρτίας* 'the law of sin' (7:23, 25), *τῷ*

[2] See, for example, these recent publications in reception history: Jeremiah Coogan, *Eusebius the Evangelist: Rewriting the Fourfold Gospel in Late Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022); a collection of essays in reception history edited by Todd D. Still and David E Wilhite, *The Apologists and Paul* (London: T&T Clark, 2024); Chris Len de Wet, 'John Chrysostom's Interpretation of the Book of Ruth in His Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew,' *Journal of Early Christian History* (2025): 1–17.

νόμῳ τοῦ νοός μου 'the law of my mind' (7:23), *τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ θεοῦ* 'the Law of God' (7:22, 25), *ὁ γὰρ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ* 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ' (8:2), and *τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου* 'the law of sin and death' (8:2). Four early Christian authors writing before the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325 CE)[3] have engaged with the *νόμος* phrases in Rom. 7:21–8:2: Tertullian, Theodotus the Valentinian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen. I will be engaging with the works of these authors in this dissertation. Before I present the argument of the dissertation, I will first outline the problem that the text from Romans presents to contemporary biblical scholarship.

The problem

Many New Testament scholars consider Paul's seemingly autobiographical section in Romans 7:14–8:2 to be one of the most simultaneously enthralling and troubling passages in the whole of the Pauline corpus. John Ashton, for instance, claims that 'this passage is unquestionably one of the most puzzling and, for that reason, most fiercely debated paragraphs that Paul ever wrote',[4] whereas Douglas Moo boldly states that 'Romans 7 is one of the most famous chapters in the Bible.'[5] In no other Pauline passage does the audience read of the *ἀκρασία*—the weakness of will or the lack of self-control—of the Apostle of Christ. In this short passage, Paul admits that, not only does he not know what he is doing, he does not do what he wants to do (7:15-16).[6] The good

[3] Please see Section 2 'Methodology' below for my rationale for selecting these four early Christian authors.

[4] John Ashton, *The Religion of Paul the Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 217.

[5] Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2nd ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 409.

[6] The identity of the 'I' in Rom. 7:14–8:2 will be thoroughly explored in each chapter of this dissertation. See below in this Introduction on p. 9 for a brief introduction to the main exegetical approaches to this text by contemporary scholarship.

that he wants to do, he does not, while the evil that he abhors, he does (7:19, 21). He credits these failings to the presence of *ἁμαρτία* 'sin', which he sees dwelling in him (7:18, 20). Romans 7:14–8:2, then, is first and foremost about human agency: it is about Paul's inability to act according to his will (7:15-20) because there is some element that is preventing him from behaving as he intends (7:17, 20-23). Due to the existential nature of 7:14–8:2, the passage lends itself to investigations

spanning the diverse fields of anthropology,[7] biblical studies,[8] Jewish studies,[9] law,[10] Patristics,[11] philosophy,[12] psychology,[13] sociology,[14] religious studies,[15] and theology.[16]

[7] For an anthropological reading of Romans 7, see: Rudolf Bultmann, 'Romans 7 and the Anthropology of Paul,' in *Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann*, tr. Schubert M. Ogden, FLTP (London: Collins, 1964), 173–85; Susan Grove Eastman, *Paul and the Person: Reframing Paul's Anthropology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2017); Beverly Roberts Gaventa, ed., *Apocalyptic Paul: Cosmos and Anthropos in Romans 5–8* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2013); Samuel D. Ferguson, *The Spirit and Relational Anthropology in Paul*, WUNT 2.520 (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2020); Karl Kertelge, 'Exegetische Überlegungen zum Verständnis der paulinischen Anthropologie nach Römer 7,' *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 62 (1971): 105–14; Hermann Lichtenberger, *Das Ich Adams und das Ich der Menschheit: Studien zum Menschenbild in Römer 7*, WUNT 164 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

[8] All commentaries on *Romans* address the difficulties surrounding Rom. 7:21–8:2. In addition to these commentaries, which are often overviews of the current status of scholarship on the matter, a number of monographs and articles also address Romans 7, and more specifically, 7:14-25. See especially: David R. Catchpole, 'Who and Where Is the "Wretched Man" of Romans 7, and Why Is "She" Wretched?,' in *The Holy Spirit and Christian Origins: Essays in Honor of James D.G. Dunn*, ed. Graham Stanton and et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 168–80; Stephen J. Chester, Grant R. Osborne, and Mark A. Seifrid, *Perspectives on Our Struggle with Sin: Three Views of Romans 7* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011); Simon Chow, 'Who Is the "I" in Romans 7:7-25?,' *Theology & Life* 30 (2007): 19–30; J. de Waal Dryden, 'Revisiting Romans 7: Law, Self, and Spirit,' *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters* 5 (2015): 129–51; Nicholas Elder, '"Wretch I Am!" Eve's Tragic Speech-in-Character in Romans 7:7-25,' *JBL* 137.3 (2018): 743–63; Donald V. Engebretson, 'Romans 7: Personal Struggle, Defence of the Law, or Israel's Struggle?,' *Logia* 20 (2011): 25–30; Beverly Roberts Gaventa, 'The Shape of the "I": The Psalter, the Gospel, and the Speaker in Romans 7,' in *Apocalyptic Paul: Cosmos and Anthropos in Romans 5-8*, ed. John M. G. Barclay and Simon J Gathercole (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2006), 158–72; Teresa J. Hornsby, 'Paul and the Remedies of Idolatry: Reading Romans 1:18-24 with Romans 7,' in *Postmodern Interpretations of the Bible: A Reader*, ed. Andrew Keith Malcolm Adam (St. Louis: Chalice, 2001), 219–32; J. Gerald Janzen, 'Sin and the Deception of Devout Desire: Paul and the Commandment in Romans 7,' *Enc.* 70 (2009): 29–61; Bjørn Øivind Johansen, 'The "I" of Romans 7 and Confessions in the Dead Sea Scrolls,' *BN* 170 (2016): 101–18; Werner G. Kümmel, *Römer 7 und das Bild des Menschen im Neuen Testament*, TB 53 (Munich: Kaiser, 1974); Ulrich Luck, 'Das Gute und das Böse in Römer 7,' in *Neues Testament und Ethik: Für Rudolf Schnackenburg*, ed. Helmut Merklein (Freiburg: Herder, 1989); Paul W. Meyer, 'The Worm at the Core of the Apple: Exegetical Reflections on Romans 7,' in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, ed. Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Robert T Fortna (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 62–84; Michael Paul Middendorf, *The 'I' in the Storm: A Study of Romans 7* (St. Louis: Concordia Academic, 1997); Rudolf Schnackenburg, 'Römer 7 im Zusammenhang des Römerbriefes,' in *Jesus und Paulus: Festschrift für Werner Georg Kümmel zum 70sten Geburtstag*, ed. Werner G. Kümmel and et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 283–300; Stefan Schreiber, 'Wer bin "ich"?: Die Rolle Adams und die neue Tora-Hermeneutik in Römer 7,' *ZNT* 16 (2013): 49–54; Robert Carl Schwarz, 'Not Complaining of Obscurity: Romans 7 and the Identity of "I,"' *STRev* 36 (1992): 123–35; Elo Süld, 'Adam bei Paulus in Römer 7: Bemerkungen zur paulinischen Paradiesgeschichte,' in *The Letter to the Romans*, ed. Udo Schnelle, BETL 226 (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 771–77; Lauri Thurén, 'Romans 7 Derhetorized,' in *Rhetorical Criticism and the Bible*, ed. Dennis L. Stamps and Stanley E. Porter (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 420–40; Will Timmins, *Romans 7 and Christian Identity: A Study of the 'I' in Its Literary Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Manuel Vogel, 'Einleitung

zur Kontroverse: Das "ich" in Römer 7: Vorchristlich oder Christlich?,' *ZNT* 16 (2013): 48; Nigel M. Watson, 'The Interpretation of Romans 7,' *ABR* 21 (1973): 27–39.

[9] For Romans 7 in the context of Jewish studies, see: H Braun, 'Römer 7, 7-25 und das Selbstverständnis des Qumran-Frommen,' *ZTK* 56 (1959): 1–18; Barry F. Parker, 'Romans 7 and the Split between Judaism and Christianity,' *JGRChJ* 3 (2006): 110–33; E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); Alan F Segal, 'Romans 7 and Jewish Dietary Law,' *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 13.1 (1984): 19–27.

[10] For a reading of Romans 7 through the lens of law, see: Gerald L. Bray, 'Sin and the Law (Romans 7:1-25),' *Evangel* 19.2 (2001): 33–37; James K. Bruckner, 'The Creational Context of Law Before Sinai: Law and Liberty in Pre-Sinai Narratives and Romans 7,' *ExAud* 11 (1995): 91–110; Charles E.B. Cranfield, 'The Works of the Law in the Epistle to the Romans,' *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 43 (1991): 89–101; Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 2nd ed., WUNT 29 (Tübingen: Mohr, 2010).

[11] For studies on early Church authors and Romans 7, see: Caroline P. Bammel, 'Philokalia IX, Jerome, Epistle 121, and Origen's Exposition of Romans VII,' *JTS* 32 (1981): 50–81; Bennett Byard, 'The Person Speaking: Prosopopoeia as an Exegetical Device in Didymus the Blind's Interpretation of Romans 7,' in *Studia Patristica* (Louvain: Peeters, 2010), 173–77; Stephen M Hildebrand, 'The Letter Kills but the Spirit Gives Life: Romans 7 in the Early Works of Augustine and in Rufinus's Translation of Origen's Commentary,' *AugStud* 31 (2000): 19–39; Anne Gordon Keidel, 'Basil of Caesarea's Use of Romans 7 as a Reflection of Inner Struggle,' in *Studia Patristica* (Louvain: Peeters, 1997), 136–40; Eugene TeSelle, 'Exploring the Inner Conflict: Augustine's Sermons on Romans 7 and 8,' in *Augustine: Biblical Exegete*, ed. Frederick van Fleteren and Joseph C. Schnaubelt (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 313–45.

[12] For a philosophical reading of Romans 7, see: Reinhard von Bendemann, 'Die kritische Diastase von Wissen, Wollen und Handeln: Traditionsgeschichtliche Spurensuche eines hellenistischen Topos in Römer 7,' *ZNW* 95 (2004): 35–63; Troels Engberg-Pedersen, 'A Stoic Concept of the Person in Paul? From Galatians 5:17 to Romans 7:14-25,' in *Christian Body, Christian Self: Concepts of Early Christian Personhood*, ed. Clare K Rothschild and Trevor W Thompson (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 85–112; Niko Huttunen, 'The Human Contradiction: Epictetus and Romans 7,' in *Lux Humana, Lux Aeterna: Essays on Biblical and Related Themes in Honour of Lars Aejmelaeus*, ed. Antti Mustakallio and et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005); Hans Jonas, 'Philosophical Meditation on the Seventh Chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans,' in *The Future of Our Religious Past: Essays in Honour of Rudolf Bultmann*, ed. James M Robinson (London: SCM, 1964), 333–50.

[13] For Romans 7 and psychology, see: Simon J Gathercole, 'Sin in God's Economy: Agencies in Romans 1 and 7,' in *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment*, ed. John M. G. Barclay and Simon J Gathercole (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2006), 158–72; Stephen Voorwinde, 'Paul's Emotions in Romans 7: A Key to Understanding?,' *VR* 83 (2018): 95–122; Emma Wasserman, *The Death of the Soul in Romans 7: Sin, Death, and the Law in Light of Hellenistic Moral Psychology*, WUNT 2.256 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

[14] For Romans 7 and sociology, see: Matthew Croasmun, *The Emergence of Sin: The Cosmic Tyrant in Romans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Philip Francis Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003).

[15] For Romans 7 through the lens of religious studies, see: Ashton, *The Religion of Paul the Apostle*.

[16] For a theological reading of Romans 7, see: Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, tr. Patricia Dailey, Meridian (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005); Karl Barth, *Der Römerbrief*, 2nd ed., WKB 47 (Zürich: Theologischer, 1922); James D.G. Dunn, 'Rom. 7, 14-25 in the Theology of Paul,' *ThZ* 31 (1975): 257–73; Bader Günter, 'Römer 7 als Skopus einer theologischen Handlungstheorie,' *ZTK* 78

Paul's existential angst crescendos until Rom. 7:21–8:2. In Rom. 7:21–8:2, Paul attempts to put into words an experience of interior movements that he has had or continues to have. Some of these movements are hostile, waging war against his mind (Rom. 7:23) and against God (Rom. 8:7), while others are benevolent, freeing him from those that are hostile (Rom. 8:2). He refers to these hostile movements in Rom. 7:23 as 'another law' and 'the law of sin'. This hostility is often associated with the flesh and its members (Rom. 7:23), which occupies an important place in this section of Romans as can be seen by the fact that the Greek word for flesh, *σάρξ*, appears 12 times in Rom. 7:14–8:8 (of 28 times; 43 % of all occurrences in Romans). Because nothing good dwells in his flesh, Paul cannot exercise his will properly (Rom. 7:18, 25). He cannot please God by fulfilling the law because his flesh is weakened by sin, which he cannot remove himself (Rom. 7:25, 8:3 and following). He would have been stuck in this vicious cycle if it had not been for God's intervention through Christ, who took the same weakened flesh upon himself in order to fulfil the Law for him and make him once again pleasing to God (8:3 and following).

Paul's main argument in this section of Romans is that the Spirit of Christ has enabled him to fulfil God's will, which he was unable to fulfil until he received the Spirit. Sinful flesh accounts for his failure to exercise his will properly by embracing and following God's will. He sees a blockage, a sort of stumbling block and break in communication between the will of his mind and the obedience of the flesh to his will. The *νόμος* phrases 'another law' and 'the law of sin' are his attempts to articulate this 'psychosarcic' blockage, whose importance has not eluded the keen eyes of biblical scholars throughout the centuries, and thus remain hotly debated in contemporary

(1981): 31–56; Jan Lambrecht, *The Wretched 'I' and Its Liberation: Paul in Romans 7 and 8*, LTPM 14 (Louvain: Peeters, 1992).

biblical scholarship. Most notably, the *νόμος* phrases feature prominently in three issues. Firstly, what could Paul have meant by the mysterious *νόμος* phrases in Rom. 7:21–8:2, phrases that he did not use anywhere else in his extant writings? Regarding the hostile *νόμος* phrases in Rom. 7:21–8:2, for example, Biblical scholars do not agree on their interpretation and they may be divided into the following camps:

(1) a kind of self-imposed human principle, norm, rule, or system, that has its origin in a wrong approach to the Torah;[17]

(2) a power, dynamic, or authority that acts in a constraining fashion on the human being;[18]

(3) the Torah, but described in metaphorical language;[19]

(4) disordered appetites, desires, inclinations (including the Jewish *yetzer*), motivations, or passions, caused by being in a sinful state;[20]

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[17] E.g. Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *Romans: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2024), 215–16; C.H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, MNTC (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1960), 114; Heinrich Schlier, *La lettera ai Romani: Testo greco, traduzione, e commento*, tr. R. Favero and G. Torti (Brescia: Paideia, 1982), 388–89; Udo Schnelle, *The Human Condition: Anthropology in the Teachings of Jesus, Paul, and John*, tr. O.C. Dean Jr. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 72; Süld, 'Adam bei Paulus in Römer 7: Bemerkungen zur paulinischen Paradiesgeschichte', 771–77.

[18] E.g. Bultmann, 'Romans 7', 260; C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1 of ICC 32 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), 376–78; Joseph Huby, *Saint Paul, Épître aux Romains: traduction et commentaire par Joseph Huby*, ed. Stanislas Lyonnet, New ed., VS 10 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1957), 277; Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, tr. Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 292–98.

[19] E.g. C.K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, rev. ed., BNTC 6 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 153–55; Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans, tr. Edwin C. Hoskyns*, Oxford Paperbacks 160 (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 231–42; F.F. Bruce, 'Paul and the Law of Moses,' *BJRL* (1975): 259–79; Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, tr. G.W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 186–89, 215–16; Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 16, 52–53, 110, 150.

[20] E.g. William D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology*, 3rd ed., SPCK 5 (London: SPCK, 1970), 20–22; Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 481; Craig S. Keener, *Romans: A New Covenant Commentary*, NCCS (Cambridge: Lutterworth, 2009), 94–95; Hans-Joachim Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History*, tr. Harold Knight (London: Lutterworth Press, 1961), 185; Peter Stuhlmacher, *La lettera ai Romani*, tr. Paolo Florioli, Nuovo Testamento Seconda Serie (Brescia: Paideia, 2002), 138–41.

(5) the reign of (indwelling, persistent) sin;[21] and

(6) knowledge of one's sins.[22]

In addition to these interpretations of the phrases, there is also disagreement as to whether 'another law in my members' is the same as 'the law of sin' in Rom. 7:23. A small group of scholars discern two distinct hostile laws at work in the Pauline text,[23] whereas most scholars see only one hostile law at work and therefore equate these two laws.

Secondly, there is much debate about the identity of the 'I' in Rom. 7:14–8:2. It is not entirely clear whether this is an autobiographical section (readers of Paul's letters will notice that Paul often talks about his personal life, e.g. Gal. 1:11-24, 2 Cor. 11:16-33) or whether Paul meant to put on a persona in order to teach the Roman community about the newness of Christ and the Spirit in their efforts to stay faithful to God's will for their lives. If autobiographical, is Paul writing about himself before his conversion-baptism or whilst already a Christ-follower? [24] If not autobiographical, is it rather paradigmatic of every person's inner struggle to live obediently according to God's laws?[25] Is it, in turn, a biblical persona, Eve's tragic speech-in-character?[26]

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[21] E.g. Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, ed. Eldon Jay Epp, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 470–71; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 482–83; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 464; Romano Penna, *Lettera Ai Romani. II. Rm 6-11. Versione e Commento*, vol. 2 of *Scritti Delle Origini Cristiane* (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane Bologna, 2007), 116–20; Charles H. Talbert, *Romans*, SHBC (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 193–94.

[22] E.g. Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 108; J.C. O'Neill, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), 131, 137.

[23] See Croasmun, *The Emergence of Sin*, 140–49; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 476, 482–83; Schlier, *Romani*, 388–89; Stuhlmacher, *Romani*, 138–41.

[24] E.g. Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 107–08 (a Jew trying to be faithful to the Torah but knows that she or he cannot); Jewett, *Romans*, 456 (pre-conversion zealots); Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 205 (the unredeemed human); Keener, *Romans*, 85–97 (a non-Christian); Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 447–51 (the unregenerate person, anyone living before he or she embraced Christianity).

[25] E.g. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 150; Cranfield, 'The Works of the Law', 341; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 476 and following; Huby, *Saint Paul, Épître aux Romains*, 255–56; Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 5th ed., KEK 4.14 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 224–25; Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, 292.

[26] Elder, ''Wretch I Am!' Eve's Tragic Speech-in-Character in Romans 7.'

Today, most would argue that the 'I' of Rom. 7:14–8:2 was paradigmatic of those who have struggled to live faithfully to God *before* encountering Christ and receiving the Spirit and *after* baptism, and so Paul intended that both Jews and pagans in the Roman Christian community could see themselves in this text before and after their own conversion.[27] Paul's reason for doing so would be to emphasise that their salvation was dependent on the Spirit rather than their own efforts. Perhaps making use of the 'I' instead of 'you' might have served to make his experience more relatable to theirs, possibly as a way to encourage them that he too experienced similar hardships.

Thirdly, the role that communal influence plays on the ability to fulfil God's will is another pressing issue in contemporary Pauline scholarship, especially that of Romans and the *νόμος* phrases in 7:21–8:2. In the Pauline epistles, baptism has a decisive role in the freedom of human agency and in fulfilling God's commandments, as the person goes from being a 'natural human' ('in the flesh') to being a 'spiritual human' ('in the Spirit').[28] Whether Rom. 7:21–8:2 is about Paul or about the experience of anyone, some scholars see that the definitive embrace of the Christian way of life—the forgiveness of sins, the reception of the Holy Spirit, and inclusion in a new community—can definitively and permanently free Paul and any Christian from these hostile

[27] Croasmun insightfully adds that 'Paul's language in Romans shows that he considered the Romans to constitute a local social body, both before and after baptism (6:23).' (Croasmun, *The Emergence of Sin*, 177).

[28] Paul has a number of dualisms in his letters. For example, he writes about the 'old man' and the 'new man' (cf. Rom. 6:6; Col. 3:9-11; Eph. 2:15, 4:22-24), the 'natural man' and the 'spiritual man' (cf. 1 Cor. 2:6-16), and the 'old Law' and the 'spiritual law' (cf. Rom. 7:14). Udo Schnelle, for example, commenting on Rom. 8:9-13, picks up on the dualism between flesh and spirit. He writes: 'In Rom. 8:9 the apostle explicitly emphasizes the *change of existence* that transpires in baptism from the realm of *σάρξ* to the realm of the *πνεῦμα* (Spirit). Thus Rom. 8:10-11, 13 can no longer speak of *being determined* by *σάρξ* but only of *being confronted* by *σάρξ*. *Σώμα* as such has not become a slave to the alien powers of flesh and sin and thus deprived of its own will, yet it finds itself in the constant danger of being taken over by them again.' See Udo Schnelle, *Apostle Paul: His Life and Theology*, tr. M. Eugene Boring (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 496. Dunn describes this change in Rom. 8 as rather setting a 'new orientation' towards a new Lord, Christ (James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, WBC 38A (Dallas: Word, 1988), 425, 428).

laws and therefore influence their ability to choose the good freely in their new life in Christ.[29] This issue is a natural consequence of the first two: to what extent do the *νόμος* laws—whether they be internal or external—influence the freedom to choose and to act according to that choice? Are they powers that influence human beings from without (that is, from our surroundings) or are they internal modes of reasoning that have their origin in human beings' own psychological processes? In other words, are human beings in complete control of their choices and the formation of their identity[30] or are their ability to choose and their identity formation also dependent on their relationship to others?[31]

The importance of this climactic passage lies in its depiction of the struggle to preserve human freedom, which is probably why it has been argued over for so long and by an astonishing number of scholars. Human freedom—its nature, but especially what takes it away and what restores it—has been a key Christian doctrine since the very beginning of Christianity.[32] The three issues mentioned above are at the heart of the Christian doctrine of human freedom: something

[29] For example, Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 443–48, writes of the 'unregenerate' versus 'regenerate person'. Those who have not committed themselves to the Christian way of life, and so have not received the Holy Spirit to be 'regenerated' to become new human beings, are susceptible to the weakness of the will as described in Rom. 7:21–8:2. Moo writes: 'Paul makes it clear that "being free from under sin" and "being free from the law of sin and death" are conditions that are true for every Christian. If one is a Christian, then these things are true; if one is not, then they are not true. This means that the situation depicted in *vv*. 14-25 cannot be that of the "normal" Christian, nor of an immature Christian.' (p. 448) Talbert and Keener too emphasise that the Spirit has set Christians free from the reign and power of sin and therefore Rom. 7:21–8:2 would no longer be applicable to them. Therefore, the text refers to Jews and Gentiles (Talbert, *Romans*, 191–92, 203–04; Keener, *Romans*, 85–97, and see especially his 'Excursus: The "flesh" (sarx) in Romans' at the end of the chapter).

[30] Bultmann and his followers; notably Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul*; Engberg-Pedersen, 'A Stoic Concept of the Person in Paul?'.

[31] Käsemann and his followers; most recently Wasserman, *The Death of the Soul in Romans 7*; Eastman, *Paul and the Person*; Croasmun, *The Emergence of Sin*; Ferguson, *The Spirit and Relational Anthropology in Paul*.

[32] Ferguson pointedly notes that 'freedom for the believer…does not mean autonomy but being ruled by the right Lord.' (Ferguson, *The Spirit and Relational Anthropology in Paul*, 133). To achieve human freedom is to be liberated from the hostile forces that plague both the non-Christian and Christian alike. Freedom in human agency, Ferguson explains, is always in relation to another (here, to either Christ or to evil forces).

prohibits the 'I' from exercising its freedom (the hostile laws in Rom. 7:21, 23, 25), something enables the 'I' to live freely (the 'law of the spirit' in 8:2), and something might need to happen to the 'I' in order that it might have access to this 'law of the spirit' as presented in 8:2 and following.

The large range of interpretations of 7:21–8:2 and its *νόμος* phrases in contemporary biblical scholarship is indeed astonishing. Still further, as I have noted above, it is surprising that no comprehensive study on the interpretation of these verses by early church writers has been undertaken and deployed to help address these difficulties, given the importance of the passage. The early authors' proximity to Paul's historical context would have given them privileged access to the cultural baggage behind this text and thus offer contemporary biblical scholarship precious insights into this enigmatic text, especially into the three important issues raised above. I will now present the dissertation's arguments.

The argument

I will demonstrate in this dissertation that the pressing matters that continue to pose problems for contemporary biblical scholars were not in the forefront of the minds of the ancient authors when approaching these verses. Rather, I will show that the ancient authors had the ethical life first and foremost in mind when they made recourse to these phrases from Rom. 7:21–8:2. This primary discovery will be helpfully divided into four sub-arguments.

Firstly, I will show that the early Christian authors up to and including Origen had no established tradition of interpreting the *νόμος* phrases in Rom. 7:21–8:2. Due to this freedom of interpretation, all four authors differed in their employment and understanding of these phrases in

their works. There are some common themes shared amongst them, but not one interpreted them in the same way as another.

Secondly, I will argue that all four made use of the phrases and certain verses from Rom. 7:21–8:2 as proof texts in larger arguments that had little or no relationship with the subject matter of Rom. 7:21–8:2 (or the larger text of Rom. 7–8, for that matter).

Thirdly, I will show that all four authors employed the *νόμος* phrases alongside Greco-Roman philosophical concepts that would have been widely shared by many philosophical and Gnostic traditions of each author's time.

Finally, I will demonstrate that the early authors had very different views on what is important in these verses in comparison to contemporary biblical scholars. For example, the reader will see that there is no mention of the weakness of the Apostle's will, there is no uncertainty about who the 'I' is in this section of Romans, there is no discussion of baptism and how the Apostle's *ἀκρασία* defies baptism's power, and there is no discussion as to whether *νόμος* in these phrases refers to the Law of Moses or to some other law, except for Origen's Commentary on Romans, which sees Origen ask nearly every possible question. The ancient authors, when thinking of these phrases and section of Romans, seemed to be primarily interested in the ethical life and its impact on salvation. The ethical life for them was primarily living a virtuous life and imitating the charity of Christ, while avoiding the vices through self-discipline.

2. Methodology

The methodology of this dissertation primarily follows that of Jennifer Strawbridge (see especially Chapter One of her 2015 monograph[33]): criteria for discerning a biblical quotation, a great emphasis on the context in which the quotation appears, how it is used, and its distribution across the different kinds of works of the early Christian author. I have also found inspiration in the recent works of Thomas McGlothlin and Matthew Thomas.[34] From their works, I have taken the approach of structuring each chapter around one ancient author and one theme, and with Thomas more specifically, around one Pauline passage (i.e. Rom. 7:21–8:2).[35]

I have limited myself to early Christian authors up to and including Origen of Alexandria (c. 185 – c. 253 CE). I offer three reasons for choosing this period. Firstly, these authors were well acquainted with Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures of Paul's time due to their proximity—both temporal and geographical—to the composition of the Epistle to the Romans and therefore had access to the cultural and linguistic background behind Paul's text. Secondly, I have chosen pre-Nicene authors because they wrote before Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, an event that impacted many aspects of the church, including biblical exegesis and theology.[36] And finally, Origen initiated the tradition in Christianity of line-by-line biblical

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[33] Jennifer R. Strawbridge, *The Pauline Effect: The Use of the Pauline Epistles by Early Christian Writers*, SBR 5 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015).

[34] Thomas D. McGlothlin, *Resurrection as Salvation: Development and Conflict in Pre-Nicene Paulinism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Matthew J. Thomas, *Paul's 'Works of the Law' in the Perspective of Second Century Reception*, WUNT 2.468 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018).

[35] It must be noted that both McGlothlin and Thomas use very similar approaches to Strawbridge in their analyses.

[36] Due to the various anathemas against the works of Origen, many authorities in the Church became suspicious of biblical and theological treatises, which would have resulted in a more tame approach to biblical exegesis and theology. For the influence of the Christian Byzantine emperors and the Ecumenical Councils on the development of Christian doctrines, see Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development*

commentary.[37] His commentaries made their way into the Latin world very quickly thanks to the labours of Rufinus. Origen's commentaries have therefore influenced Christian writers in both Latin and Greek worlds. It is therefore very exciting to examine works on Rom. 7:21–8:2 before and up to Origen in order to see their different approaches to the text before the erudite Origen dominated the Christian biblical field.[38] Only four early Christian authors who have engaged with Rom. 7:21–8:2 meet this last criterion: Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Theodotus the Valentinian (from Clement's *Excerpts from Theodotus*), and Origen.

While Strawbridge structured her monograph around four different Pauline passages, the methodology employed in this dissertation places significant weight on the interpretation of the early Christian writers of only one Pauline passage, Rom. 7:21–8:2. As such, I analyse (a) the context of the passage containing the reference(s) to 7:21–8:2, (b) textual-critical issues concerning each author's use of the Pauline text and what variants may say about the author's understanding of the passage, (c) how and to what end each author employed the verse(s) or individual law phrases, especially paying attention to how they addressed the three issues raised above, and (d) in which genre of writing the reference occurs and how this impacts its

of Christian Discourse, SCL 55 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), Peter Sarris, *Justinian: Emperor, Soldier, Saint* (London: Basic Books, 2023), and Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020).

[37] There is already a rich line-by-line biblical commentary (called the *pesharim*, or 'interpretations') tradition in Jewish circles in the Qumran community and a rather long tradition in the various Greek schools of antiquity, where ancient scholars composed commentaries on works of the great philosophers and playwrights for their own pupils or benefactors. For example, six commentaries on Isaiah have been found in the Dead Sea Scrolls (e.g. 4QpIsa^{a}), as also a commentary on Habakkuk (1QpHab), Nahum (4QpNah), Micah (1Q14), and a number on certain Psalms (e.g. 4QpPs^{a-b}). For an excellent introduction to the *pesharim* from Qumran, see James H. Charlesworth, *The Pesharim and Qumran History: Chaos or Consensus?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002). For more on Greek commentaries on the Greek philosophers, especially commentaries on Plato, see the excellent introduction and translation of two ancient commentaries in L.G. Westerink, *The Greek Commentaries on Plato's Phaedo*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1976).

[38] A study of authors following Origen would be most valuable but unfortunately too large for this dissertation.

interpretation. Finally, I place the early Church authors' interpretations in dialogue with contemporary scholarship as far as this is possible, given the very large chasm between the ancients and contemporaries in methodology.

3. Explanation of key terms

This dissertation is in the field of reception history of biblical texts. As such, there is much in it from the fields of biblical studies, Patristics, and history. Most terms and their meanings are well known to the reader. Nevertheless, the following Greek words need some explaining because they feature prominently in the verses that will be analysed in this dissertation: *ἁμαρτία* 'sin', *μέλος* 'member', *νόμος* 'law', and *νόος* or *νοῦς* 'mind'.[39]

The word *ἁμαρτία* has a surprisingly large semantic range, principally around the notion of fault, failure, or error, in common parlance, or guilt or sin in religious and philosophical discourse.[40] It is derived from the verb *ἁμαρτάνω*, which means 'to miss the mark', that is, to fail at reaching a set goal or target, such as, for example, missing the target with a spear.[41] In Hellenistic times, the term was used to denote a deviation, either involuntary or voluntary, from human or divine standards of uprightness or righteousness.[42] In addition to these common

[39] Corresponding Latin terms will be thoroughly discussed as they appear in the writings of the Latin author Tertullian in Chapter One and in the works of Origen that have been preserved in Latin in Chapter Three. In addition to these key terms, if there should be any other unusual use of an ancient word by the early Christian authors, this will be clarified where it occurs in the dissertation. For example, there is some debate over the way in which Tertullian understood and employed the related terms *animus, anima,* and *spiritus* (see fn. 6 in Chapter One).

[40] See the entry for *ἁμαρτία* in Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996).

[41] See the entry for *ἁμαρτάνω* in Liddell, Scott, and Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*.

[42] See the entry for *ἁμαρτία* in Walter Bauer and Frederick William Danker, *Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

meanings, more specifically to Paul and his early Christian context, it could also take the meaning 'a destructive evil power, sin', which was sometimes personified.[43] In the context of Romans 7, *ἁμαρτία* may be interpreted as some failure in attaining the goal, which, in Romans 7, may be described as perfectly following the Law of God. It is falling short in living up to God's commandments in one's life. In a religious context, this may be called 'sin', something that needs to be forgiven, repented of, and rectified so that it does not happen again. Conversely, some interpret it as a being with its own separate entity with its own agency.[44] This latter interpretation certainly makes the reading of the phrase 'the law of sin' and 'the law of sin and death' (Rom. 7:21, 25; 8:2) all the more fascinating as perhaps 'the reign of Sin' or something similar could be a valid translation.

In Classical and Hellenistic Greek, the word *μέλος* generally means limb or member, either of the human body (*σῶμα*) or of some organisation or community, and it is generally used in the plural form (as is the case in Rom. 7:21).[45] It is also used in music, as a tune, song, or strain of music. The latter definition does not come in play in Romans, as there is no mention of music in this section of the letter. The former definition is more likely, either referring to bodily limbs, or, if Paul is writing metaphorically about the new community of Christ-followers or of his Jewish community, then it may perhaps refer to members of one of these communities.[46]

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[43] Bauer and Danker, *Lexicon of the New Testament*, *ἁμαρτία.*

[44] E.g. Croasmun argues that sin is personified and that Paul is referring to one of the female Roman deities (see Croasmun, *The Emergence of Sin*).

[45] See the entry for *μέλος* in Liddell, Scott, and Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon,* and Bauer and Danker, *Lexicon of the New Testament*.

[46] I am aware that the question of Paul within or outside of Judaism is a hotly debated topic. Still further, the question whether the Christian community was a distinct entity outside of Judaism during Paul's writing of Romans is altogether another debate. A few strong proponents of Paul within Judaism today (the 'New Perspective' on Paul, following the groundbreaking work of E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977)) would be New Testament scholars Mark D. Nanos, a Jewish believer himself, who has published, along with Magnus Zetterholm, a persuasive collection of studies in defence of Paul's firm adherence to Judaism: Mark D.

The word *νόμος* is at the centre of this project, with the *νόμος* phrases being the primary focus of the dissertation. As has already been pointed out above in subsection 1, there is no consensus regarding the meaning of the genitive constructions with *νόμος* in Rom. 7:21–8:2, whereas the meaning of *νόμος* in Classical and Hellenistic Greek is well known and uncontested. The word may mean 'that which is in habitual practice, use or possession', [47] or 'that which is conceived as standard or generally recognized rules of civilized conduct, especially as sanctioned by tradition'.[48] It may be commonly translated as custom, norm, principle, or usage, while in more formal settings, it may mean law, statute, or an ordinance promulgated by an authority. With a genitive construction, it may mean 'the practice of', and so the phrase *ὁ νόμος τῆς ἁμαρτίας*, for example, could be translated as 'the practice of sin', or simply 'sinful practice(s)'.[49] In some cases in the New Testament, its usage may be interpreted as something like a system or code of conduct, especially when used with the genitive construction (e.g. *ὁ νόμος τοῦ Χριστοῦ* 'the law of Christ' in Gal. 6:2).[50]

The word *νοῦς* has a very long and rich semantic history. The Classical understanding of *νοῦς* as mind, reason, or intellect, that faculty in the human which thinks, reasons, perceives, or senses, carries on through the Hellenistic period.[51] Another important meaning for *νοῦς* is that

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Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm, eds., *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle* (Philadelphia: Fortress: 2015), Matthew V. Novenson, *Paul and Judaism at the End of History* (Cambridge University Press, 2024), and Matthew Thiessen, *A Jewish Paul: The Messiah's Herald to the Gentiles* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023), who also argue along similar lines for Paul firmly within Judaism. The New Perspective seems to be the new consensus amongst Pauline scholars today, though each scholar naturally presents his or her own qualification of this perspective.

[47] See the entry for *νόμος* in Liddell, Scott, and Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*.

[48] Bauer and Danker, *Lexicon of the New Testament*, *νόμος*.

[49] Liddell, Scott, and Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, *νόμος*.

[50] Bauer and Danker, *Lexicon of the New Testament*, *νόμος*.

[51] See the entry *νόος* in Liddell, Scott, and Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*.

faculty which feels or decides, and may be translated as 'heart'.[52] Finally, the word may mean resolve, purpose, design, or intention, that action which the mind has set itself on.[53] Hellenistic authors seem to have also used the term to denote one's attitudes or ways of thinking, and thus the term may mean *πνεῦμα* 'Spirit' in some instances in Paul's writings when it refers to someone who is *πνευματικός* 'spiritual' rather than *ψυχικός* 'natural' or 'worldly' (=unspiritual, one who has not yet received the Holy Spirit; see 1 Cor. 2:14-16, where *νοῦς* in v. 16b may easily be replaced with *πνεῦμα*).[54]

Finally, the way in which I will employ the terms 'reference' or 'allusion' regarding early Christian authors' use of a biblical passage must be explained, as there exist a number of ways to refer to a sacred text. There may be a *verbatim reference*, which may contain a phrase, a full sentence, or more, from an extant manuscript. This is often introduced by the ancient authors with some phrase, as Paul often introduces his biblical quotes with 'as it is written…' (for example, see Paul's use of Isa. 29:10 in Rom. 11:8). There may be a *paraphrase reference* of the original biblical text, and hence a significant deviation from the text (for example, Paul paraphrases Gen. 17:10 about Abraham and circumcision in Rom. 4:11). Finally, there may be an *allusion* to a biblical text without providing any of the text, or very little of it (for example, Paul alludes to Lev. 18:5 or Ezek. 20:11 in Rom. 10:5 or to Exod. 17:6 and Num. 20:11 in 1 Cor. 10:4 when he refers to the story of Moses and the rock at Horeb in those passages but does not reference the book).

It is sometimes difficult to ascertain whether an early Christian author is intentionally referring to a biblical passage or simply using similar vocabulary in his work. The difficulty

[52] Liddell, Scott, and Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, *νόος*.

[53] Liddell, Scott, and Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, *νόος*.

[54] Bauer and Danker, *Lexicon of the New Testament*, *νοῦς*.

arises from the fact that much of the biblical language made its way into everyday language and thus it is sometimes difficult to separate references to biblical texts from writings that are simply borrowing the vocabulary from the biblical texts without meaning to refer to them. Because this dissertation is studying early Christian interpretations of the *νόμος* phrases in Rom. 7:21–8:2, there is no danger of confusing the references to other parts of the Bible because the *νόμος* phrases are only attested in this small section of the Bible, thus easily ruling out anything else. Finally, to ensure that the ancient author is not simply using Paul's terminology without the intention of referring to the biblical text, I chose passages in which Paul is explicitly referred to along with the *νόμος* phrases or entire verses from Rom. 7:21–8:2. To summarise, two criteria must be met for a reference to be accepted: (1) the presence of one or more *νόμος* phrases, and (2) a direct reference to Paul in the vicinity of the reference. Following this, each reference to a biblical text will be classified as *verbatim*, *paraphrased*, or *allusion*.

I have gathered the biblical references to Rom. 7:21–8:2 from volumes 1 and 3 of *Biblia Patristica*.[55] These references have been vetted by Strawbridge in her Pauline database, where all references in the *Biblia Patristica* were found to be either a 'reference', a 'possible reference', or 'reference not found'.[56] The 'reference' category in Strawbridge's work refers to the three categories that I have drawn up, that is, verbatim, paraphrased, or allusion to a biblical text; there is a 'high degree of literality' and the reference is undeniable. Following this category is the 'possible reference', where much vocabulary and content is shared between the Pauline text and the early Christian author, while only the context will determine whether the author is indeed

[55] J. Allenbach et al., *Des origines à Clément d'Alexandrie et Tertullien*, vol. 1 of *Biblia Patristica : Index des citations et allusions bibliques dans la littérature patristique*, 7 vols. (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1975); J. Allenbach et al., *Origène*, vol. 3 of *Biblia Patristica : Index des citations et allusions bibliques dans la littérature patristique*, 7 vols. (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1991).

[56] Strawbridge, *The Pauline Effect*, 21.

referring to Paul's writings or not. Finally, there is 'reference not found', where not enough evidence supports the claim that the early Christian author is referring to a Pauline text instead of simply making use of similar vocabulary and/or concepts.[57]

4. Introducing the early Christian writers and their context

The extant writings of the early Christians from the first to third centuries give us the impression that Rom. 7:14–8:2 may have been a source of discomfort—or perhaps even embarrassment—for the nascent Christian community. In no other Pauline passage does the audience hear of the *akrasia*—the powerlessness of the will—of Paul, an Apostle of Christ. Even though authors as early as the late first or early second century had access to Romans (e.g. Clement of Rome),[58] it was only in the beginning of the third century that writers began to engage selected verses from 7:14–8:2, and even then it was a somewhat hesitant engagement. Tertullian, for example, one of the first extant writers to refer to 7:14–8:2, did not touch upon any of the verses that address the Apostle's *akrasia* but rather only those verses that display sin dwelling in the flesh (e.g. 7:18). The first to do so was Clement of Alexandria, although, as we shall see, he did not at all comment on 7:20 ('if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me'). Clement's successor, Origen, would be the first to comment in great detail on these verses in his *Commentary*.

[57] See Strawbridge, *The Pauline Effect*, 18–22. Strawbridge is building on the work of Annewies van den Hoek, 'Techniques of Quotation in Clement of Alexandria: A View of Ancient Literary Working Methods,' *VC* 50.3 (1996): 223–43.

[58] For example, Clement of Rome (d. ca. 99-102 CE) quotes Rom. 4:3 in the *First Epistle to the Corinthians* 10 (and *passim*).

In this section, I will introduce the four early Christian authors whom I will study in this dissertation. I will briefly outline the main events in their lives, their historical contexts, and the works in which references to Rom. 7:21–8:2 are found. I will then briefly present the leading philosophical schools of their times, since our authors were in dialogue with thinkers from these schools, while also employing their philosophical ideas, whether consciously or not.

Tertullian

The past seventy-five years have seen a surge in the study of the life and works of Tertullian (c. 155/160 – c. 220/240 CE).[59] Tertullian is one of the most prolific ante-Nicene writers, with thirty one extant works and another fifteen lost works.[60] However, as with most early Christian authors, very little can be said about Tertullian with certainty. Although we have thirty one works attributed to him, he wrote very little about himself in them. Nonetheless, all scholars can agree that he was a well-educated Roman citizen from the city of Carthage in North Africa. During Tertullian's life, Carthage was the second largest city in the Roman Empire and was a very hostile city to Christianity, and thus the persecutions against Christians there gave rise to a Christianity that was hardened, austere, and sombre.[61] Early Christian claims that he was a

[59] Some recent influential monographs on Tertullian's life and works include: Timothy David Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985); Geoffrey D. Dunn, *Tertullian*, ECF (London: Routledge, 2004); Jerónimo Leal, *La antropología de Tertuliano: Estudio de los tratados polémicos de los años 207-212 d.C*, SEA 76 (Roma: Institutum patristicum Augustinianum, 2001); David Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); David E. Wilhite, *Tertullian the African: An Anthropological Reading of Tertullian's Context and Identities*, MS 14 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007).

[60] Dunn, *Tertullian*, 5. Cf. fn. 5.

[61] Everett Ferguson, 'Tertullian, Scripture, Rule of Faith, and Paul,' in *Paul and Tertullian*, ed. Todd D. Still and David E. Wilhite, PPSD (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 23.

presbyter have recently been challenged and generally not accepted.[62] Since the publication of the in-depth study of the life and works of Tertullian by Timothy Barnes, most have now come to see Tertullian as a professional rhetorician/orator rather than a lawyer.[63]

History has also associated him with the Montanist movement, which was driven by its members' prophetic visions. The Montanists appeared to be doctrinally orthodox and did not claim to add anything new to the revelation conveyed in Scripture;[64] rather, in addition to their emphasis on stricter discipline, their novelty was in offering new insights into 'the nature of prophecy, the exercise of authority, the interpretation of Christian writings and the significance of the phenomenon for salvation-history.'[65] Barnes places Tertullian's espousal of Montanism in 208 CE.[66] Studies in Tertullian's pre-Montanist and Montanist works have shown that he did not change his doctrines after he joined the movement.[67]

He was extremely erudite. 'He knew the repertoire of classical literature perhaps better than most of his generation,' states Dunn.[68] Scholars have remarked on his linguistic gifts.

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[62] Cf. For Tertullian as a jurist trained in Rome, see Eusebius' H.E. II.ii.4; for Tertullian as a priest, see Jerome's *De viris illustribus,* 53.

[63] Barnes, *Tertullian,* 57–59. Wilhite suspects that he was a respected elder of the Carthaginian Christian community (known as the *seniores laici*, cf. *De mon.* 12 and *Ex. cast.* 7) (Wilhite, 'Introduction,' xix).

[64] David Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), xiv. Rankin states: 'It is generally accepted that, whatever the attitude towards it in the fourth and later centuries, the New Prophecy of the late second and early third centuries was doctrinally orthodox.'

[65] Christine Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority and the New Prophecy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 3. Cf. also: Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church*, 48.

[66] Barnes, *Tertullian*, 328. Barnes' dating of Tertullian's works is grounded on this date and has generally received wide approval.

[67] Cf. Dunn, *Tertullian*, 2.; Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church*; Trevett, *Montanism*, 70.; Wilhite, *Tertullian the African*, 17. Osborn, however, prefers to follow the chronology proposed by Réné Braun, *Deus Christianorum : recherches sur le vocabulaire doctrinaire de Tertullien,* 2nd ed. (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1977), 563–77. Braun bases his chronology on Tertullian's doctrinal vocabulary, and is therefore able to construct his chronology around Tertullian's theological development over time.

[68] Dunn, *Tertullian*, 4. He was well informed on and influenced by early Christian orthodox and heterodox writers across the empire, explicitly mentioning 'Barnabas, a man sufficiently accredited by God' (*De pud.* 20), 'Justin, philosopher and martyr' (*Adv. Val.* 5), 'Irenaeus, that very exact inquirer into all doctrines' (*Adv. Val.* 5),

Osborn notes that, 'strikingly, he wrote his own kind of Latin…To this strength he added the rarer gifts of paradox, metaphor and wit, all necessary for a thinker who fashions a language.'[69] Tertullian's knowledge of Greek must have also been exceptional. He himself mentioned writing a number of works in Greek, although none of these has been preserved (cf. *De bapt.* 15). Leal and Dunn postulate that the Latin quotations from Scripture were his own translations of the Greek Septuagint and New Testament.[70]

Finally, Tertullian had an impressive knowledge of Scripture. He quoted nearly every book of the Bible and he frequently offered extensive comments on selected verses.[71] A number of overarching principles may have guided Tertullian's use of Scripture. Firstly, in *most* cases, Tertullian used Scripture for polemical purposes, often against unorthodox groups, such as the Marcionites (*Adversus Marcionem*), the Gnostic Valentinians (*De Prescriptionibus*), and the

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Marcion, Valentinus, and many others. Christopher Bounds writes that Tertullian, 'as the first major Latin theologian, [was] conversant with and dependent upon the work of Irenaeus, the Greek apologists, and the Apostolic Fathers.' (Christopher Bounds, 'Tertullian's Doctrine of Christian Perfection and Its Theological Context,' *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 51.2 (2016): 126)

[69] Eric Francis Osborn, *Tertullian: First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), xiii-xiv.

[70] Jerónimo Leal, *La antropología de Tertuliano: Estudio de los tratados polémicos de los años 207-212 d.C*, Studia ephemeridis 'Augustinianum' 76 (Roma: Institutum patristicum Augustinianum, 2001), 28f. Leal studies Tertullian's Latin translation of 1 Cor. 15:39 alongside *twenty* Latin translations of this verse in early Latin authors as a test case and concludes that 'la traducción de Tertuliano tiene un aire original, de personalidad propia. Mientras los demás sólo hacen una traducción, Tertuliano respeta la fuerza del texto original imprimiéndole estilo propio. Nos parece que de la comparación de las distintas traducciones se podría muy bien desprender que Tertuliano ha traducido directamente del original griego, al menos en este caso [1 Cor. 15:39], pero como idea que debemos tener presente para el análisis sucesivo. Es posible que Tertuliano haya conocido otras traducciones, pero de la comparación de los textos que hay a nuestra disposición - no nos cabe la menor duda - la conclusión es que ha tenido siempre delante el texto griego' (Leal, *La antropología de Tertuliano,* 32; my underlining). Similarly, Dunn writes that 'Tertullian generally made his own translation from the Greek but, where a Latin translation existed (not all the scriptural books having been translated into Latin at the same time), he made some use of it. The debate is about the degree of that "some use"' (Dunn, *Tertullian,* 14).

[71] 'The exceptions are Ruth, Obadiah (only Melito of Sardis among first- and second-century Christian writers made use of these two), 1 Chronicles, Esther, 2 Maccabees, 2 John and 3 John,' writes Dunn (Dunn, *Tertullian,* 13). Interestingly, Tertullian ascribes *Hebrews* to Barnabas (Id.).

Monarchianists (*Adversus Praxean*).[72] His polemical use of Scripture resulted in a sort of selectivity of *what* to use and *how* to use it. Secondly, Tertullian's exegesis is often characterised by *certitude, simplicity*, and *brevity.*[73] His was a 'continuous endeavour to exclude by all means arbitrariness from interpretation.'[74] He strove not to write more than necessary because the heretics fell into the trap of writing *too* much due to an unhealthy *curiositas* that was all too often linked with the pursuit of personal glory (cf. *Praes. haer.* 14).[75] Thirdly, Tertullian selectively used *un*ambiguous passages in order to clarify the ambiguous ones that the heretics used to construct their doctrines.[76] And fourthly, his use of Scripture was intimately connected with the *regula fidei* – the Rule of Faith as preserved in the tradition of the church – and with sound philosophical principles derived from the predominant philosophy of the day.[77]

It is evident from Tertullian's writings that he had a predilection for the writings of Paul, whom he called 'my apostle' (*tam meum apostolum quam et Christum, Adv. Marc*. V.1). He was indebted to the Pauline corpus for the development of his theology more than to any other New Testament author. He quoted all thirteen letters of Paul. Everett Ferguson remarks that 'even

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[72] William Tabbernee, 'The World to Come: Tertullian's Christian Eschatology,' in *Tertullian and Paul*, ed. Todd D. Still and David E. Wilhite, PPSD (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 271. Tabbernee writes: 'Tertullian was a rhetorician rather than an exegete or a systematic theologian. Although normally referred to as such, his extant works are not so much 'treatises' but 'polemics.' In arguing his case against various 'heretics' or for topics such as the resurrection of the dead, Tertullian utilized whatever sources he deemed most advantageous for winning the argument' (Id.).

[73] Waszink, 'Tertullian's Principles and Methods of Exegesis,' 18–20. On simplicity as Tertullian's 'guiding principle', see: Thomas P. O'Malley, *Tertullian and the Bible. Language, Imagery, Exegesis*, LCP 21 (Nijmegen: Dekker & Van der Vegt, 1967), 132.

[74] Waszink, 'Tertullian's Principles and Methods of Exegesis,' 18.

[75] Waszink, 'Tertullian's Principles and Methods of Exegesis,' 20–23.

[76] Waszink, 'Tertullian's Principles and Methods of Exegesis,' 27. Waszink writes that, for Tertullian, 'the starting-point should always be taken from clear and unambiguous passages, and these should always have precedence over *figurae* and *aenigmata*' (Id.).

[77] Claudio Moreschini, 'Tertulliano tra stoicismo e platonismo,' in *Kerygma und Logos: Beiträge zu den geistesgeschichtlichen Beziehungen zwischen Antike und Christentum; Festschrift für Carl Andresen zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Adolf Martin Ritter and Carl Andersen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 367–79.

apart from *Against Marcion*, quotations from Paul's letters constitute nearly half of Tertullian's quotations from the New Testament.'[78]

Clement of Alexandria

Clement of Alexandria (c. 140/150-211/216 CE) was a contemporary of Tertullian of Carthage (c. 155/160-220/240 CE). Although only 2,500 km separated these two distinguished North African authors, the cultural and political contexts in which they lived were remarkably different. Carthage was predominantly Latin and was the second largest city of the Roman Empire, while Alexandria was Greek and significantly smaller. Alexandria was known for its academic excellence, hosting great minds such as Ammonius Saccas, Celsus, and Philo, and arguably possessing the largest collection of literary works in its day. The Christian communities were also different. The Carthaginian community of Tertullian's time was marked by persecution, resulting in a rather conservative and austere Christian community. The Alexandrian Christians, on the other hand, found themselves in a relatively liberal atmosphere in which many religions and philosophical schools coexisted in peace.[79] The Christian community was heavily influenced by the stimulating intellectual life of Greek and Jewish writers. Clement was particularly influenced by the Greek philosophical schools and by the Jewish Philo, who himself was heavily influenced by Greek thought.[80]

[78] Ferguson, 'Tertullian,' 23.

[79] Although more tolerant than Carthage, persecution of Christians nonetheless persuaded Clement to depart from Alexandria around 202-203 CE for Palestine, where he died around 215-216 CE, as proposes Eric Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1.

[80] Osborn notes that Clement cites 348 different classical authors, with Plato being cited most frequently with 600 citations and Philo coming second, with 300 citations. Homer comes in third with 240 citations. See Osborn, *Clement*, 4.

Clement's life is shrouded in mystery. The year of his birth, 150 CE, is an estimation, as is the place of his birth, which some locate in Athens.[81] He himself admits being a convert to Christianity in his work titled *Paedagogus.* It would seem, then, that he was raised in a pagan Greek family and exposed to an excellent Greco-Roman education. He was initially instructed in the faith by a certain Athenagoras of Athens (133-190 CE), after which he then travelled throughout the empire, seeking wise teachers and learning about Christianity.[82] This quest eventually led him to Alexandria, where he studied at the catechetical school under Pantaenus. It was in Alexandria that ancient traditions had it that he was also ordained to the priesthood by Pope Julian before 189 CE, although Eric Osborn and others now consider this a pious tradition and that he was never ordained a presbyter.[83] We do not know whether he was married or not, and whether he had any children; his positive views on marriage may be indicative of this, although this is an argument from silence. The church historian Eusebius (see H.E. 5.10.4) notes that he became the head of the catechetical school at one point and then had to depart the city around 202-203 CE possibly due to increased persecutions instigated by the emperor Lucius Septimius Severus (reigned 193-211 CE) across the empire. Eusebius' tradition is not generally accepted amongst Clement scholars today, however. Benjamin A. Edsall, for instance, proposes that it is unlikely that there was *one* formalized catechetical school in Alexandria and that Clement was its head, though he affirms that it is clear that Clement 'inherited catechetical

[81] It is unclear whether Clement was born in Athens or Alexandria, as notes John Ferguson, *Stromateis, Books 1–3*, FC 85(Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 3. However, André Méhat, *Étude sur les 'Stromates' de Clément d'Alexandrie*, PS 7 (Paris : Seuil, 1966), 54, proposes Athens as his place of birth and around the year 140 CE.

[82] Méhat, *Clément*, 43. Osborn, *Clement*, 1.

[83] Osborn, *Clement*, 14. The ancient tradition was from a surviving letter by Bishop Alexander (see Eusebius' H.E. 6.11.6), while some passages from Clement's own writings might hint at this (see *Strom*. 6.4.37.3, 6.13.106; *Paed*. 3.12.101.3).

practices', as his work 'betrays a thorough knowledge of and concern for contemporary catechetical practices'. His writings therefore witness to the fact that the catechumenate had already developed into an 'institutional fact' during Clement's time.[84] Some maintain that he fled to Palestine while others that he fled to Cappadocia. The year of his death is also uncertain, but it is estimated to be between 211 and 216 CE, with further disagreement from scholarship.[85]

Clement's writings reveal his love of philosophy and Scripture. Unlike Tertullian's predominantly polemical style, Clement's writings are marked by speculation and pastoral concern for a relatively young but academically-minded Christian community. He too had unorthodox Gnostic writers in mind, although his works were not primarily written to counter their doctrines even though this too is found in them. The pedagogue in Clement is felt in each of his works; he is a teacher who has his students in mind when he is writing. Because he is writing for a Christian audience, he masterfully intertwines Greco-Roman works with the Old and New Testaments.

Clement often uses Scripture either to begin a new topic or as a proof text rather than as a substantial part of the argument. A pattern may be discerned in many of Clement's arguments: (a) present an issue (Scripture may or may not be used to stimulate a new discussion), (b) work through it with sound logic, and then (c) find suitable passages in Scripture (often a collection of passages from a variety of biblical books) that support the conclusions reached in step (b). This

[84] It is more likely that there were many catechumens in Alexandria, each with his or her own teacher, who may or may not have known each other, rather than one centralised institution for all of them. See Benjamin A. Edsall, 'Clement and the Catechumenate in the Late Second Century,' in *The Rise of the Early Christian Intellectual*, ed. Lewis Ayres and H. Clifton Ward, AK 139 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 101–27 (quotations found on pp. 101–02).

[85] Ferguson, *Stromateis 1–3*, 3, proposes that Clement settled in Cappadocia and died there around 216 CE, whereas Osborn, *Clement*, 1, proposes Palestine, following Eusebius' dating, thus with his death somewhere between 211 and 215 CE (see Eusebius' H.E. 6.11.6 and 6.14.9).

approach allowed Clement to fuse in a creative manner his use of philosophical tools and the authority that came from Scripture.

Annewies van den Hoek's study of Clement's writings has demonstrated that Clement was one of the most educated Christian writers in the early Church, if not *the* most educated. This is shown in the extent to which he referred to pagan, early Christian, and biblical sources, citing or referring to some 348 pagan authors, 32 early Christian authors, 42 Old Testament books, and 25 New Testament books.[86] When it comes to Paul, Clement is very much like his contemporary Tertullian: of the 5,000+ New Testament citations in Clement's works, van den Hoek observes that 'Paul is the most cited by a large margin', amounting to approximately 26 per cent of New Testament quotations.[87]

Theodotus the Valentinian

Theodotus is mentioned in Clement's work *Excerpts from Theodotus* (henceforth referred to as *Excerpts*), an 'annotated' collection of various passages giving rise to an 'epitome'.[88] No one knows for sure who Theodotus was, although it is fairly certain, given the content of the excerpts, that he was firmly in the Valentinian tradition. F. Sagnard surmises that Theodotus may have even been Valentinus' disciple from around 140-160 CE, a contemporary of Ptolemy, and

[86] Annewies van den Hoek, 'Techniques of Quotation in Clement of Alexandria: A View of Ancient Literary Working Methods,' *VC* 50.3 (1996): 223–43.

[87] van den Hoek, 'Techniques of Quotation in Clement of Alexandria: A View of Ancient Literary Working Methods,' 240. Citations of Paul (1273 citations in total) take up 27 columns-worth of text while those of the second highest cited New Testament author, Matthew, amount to only 11 columns. Plato takes second place, after Paul, with 618 citations (15.5 columns).

[88] Judith L. Kovacs, 'Reading the 'Divinely Inspired' Paul: Clement of Alexandria in Conversation with 'Heterodox' Christians, Simple Believers, and Greek Philosophers,' *VC* 139 (2017): 330.

active as a teacher between 160-170 CE possibly in Asia Minor.[89] If this is indeed the case, then Theodotus' reference to Rom. 7:23 may predate all of the other authors studied in this dissertation. Sagnard estimates that approximately seventy-five per cent of the *Excerpts* are Theodotus' writings, leaving the rest to Clement's annotations.[90]

A recent publication by Giuliano Chiapparini challenges the long-established tradition that Theodotus was a Valentinian and proposes that, based on the first three *Excerpts*, Clement's *Excerpts* are from works by a certain Theodotus of Byzantium (also known as Theodotus the Tanner or the Cobbler), who was also active around this time (mid-late 2nd c. CE) and who was associated with the 'adoptionist' heresy.[91] This Theodotus was a wealthy leather tanner who went to Rome in c. 189 CE and presented his adoptionist theology to Pope Victor I, who condemned him of heresy. He developed a strong following, which eventually died out in the 3rd century. However, the recent publications by Peter-Ben Smit and Jeremiah Coogan challenge Chiapparini's theory. Smit argues that later theological debates gave rise to the concept of adoptionism rather than it being a well-established and coherent early Christian theology.[92] Similarly, Jeremiah Coogan argues that the diverse theological views found in the first three centuries do not easily map onto the later theological controversies and therefore the term 'adoptionism' is anachronistic with no unquestionable instantiation so early on.[93]

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[89] F. Sagnard, *Clément d'Alexandrie : Extraits de Théodote*, SC 23 (Paris: Cerf, 1948), 6–7. Sagnard notes that blocks 43–65 strongly parallel Ptolemy's doctrines (p. 28).

[90] Sagnard, *Extraits de Théodote*, 8.

[91] See Giuliano Chiapparini, 'The Theodotus of Clement of Alexandria Was Not a Valentinian? Analysis of Excerpts from Theodotus 1–3,' *Studia Patristica* 126 (2021): 55–68.

[92] see Peter-Ben Smit, 'The End of Early Christian Adoptionism? A Note on the Invention of Adoptionism, Its Sources, and Its Current Demise,' *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 76 (2015): 177–99.

[93] Jeremiah Coogan, 'Rethinking Adoptionism: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category,' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 76 (2023): 31–43.

Although it is now more likely that Theodotus was a Valentinian Gnostic, as Sagnard, Smit, and Coogan propose, his exact identity is not crucial for the analysis of his excerpts in Chapter Two of this dissertation, and thus I follow the established tradition that Theodotus was a Valentinian Gnostic. The Gnostic ideas agree much more with Valentinianism than adoptionism, as will become evident in the analysis in Chapter Two.

Origen

Origen (c. 185-253 CE), the purported successor of Clement as head the catechetical school in Alexandria, was arguably the greatest mind of the early Church.[94] As in the case of the previous authors in this study, very little is known with certainty about his early life. Much that we do know comes from early Church historians, who are not the most reliable of sources, especially in the case of Origen, whose name has been associated with heresies and movements that came after him.

Tradition has it that Origen was born in Alexandria to Christian parents. His father was martyred when he was a teenager and he desired to follow in his footsteps, only to be stopped by

[94] See fn. 82 above. It is uncertain whether there actually was an established catechetical school during Clement's time, let alone whether Clement and Origen were its leaders. Peter W. Martens, studying the writings of Eusebius, comes to the conclusion that there is no firm testimony to Origen being the success or Clement as the head of a 'catechetical school' in Alexandria. Martens is clear that Origen did offer 'catechetical instruction in Alexandria' and that he devoted much of his income to purchase relevant material for this task. See Peter W. Martens, *Origen and Scripture: The Contours of the Exegetical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2012), 17 and following. However, Mark Edwards points out that our concept of an 'Institution' is very different from that in the ancient world. If we are expecting large buildings belonging to one campus of some 'Catechetical school', then we will be disappointed when we learn that such an institution likely did not exist. Rather, there would have been 'a self-appointed pedagogue, a group of regular listeners, and a larger audience at occasional lectures. If the teacher had a successor, he gained that post informally, perhaps having been regarded as a colleague of his predecessor during the latter's lifetime…' (Mark Julian Edwards, *Origen against Plato*, Routledge Revivals (London: Routledge, 2018), 18)

his mother. Origen was involved in the infamous 'Catechetical School' in Alexandria. Early traditions record that he used his erudition to teach at the school and support his family after his father had been martyred. He was supposedly a student of Clement, although he never explicitly mentions Clement, nor is he mentioned by Clement. He was 'illicitly' ordained a deacon and a presbyter by a rival bishop, bishop Theoctistus of Caesarea, whilst travelling in Palestine, which enraged the bishop of Alexandria, Demetrius, with whom he had an on-going conflict. This led to his priesthood being stripped and him departing Alexandria for Caesarea in Palestine in 231, where he continued to teach and write until his death.[95]

Although we do not know for certain under whom he studied as he grew up, his writings nevertheless betray a very thorough Greco-Roman education and a love of Scripture. He is known for his exceptional knowledge of Scripture, as can be seen in his work with the Hexapla (sadly only the Septuagint column from the Hexapla survives, albeit only in a Syriac translation) and in his countless biblical commentaries, which were the first of their kind in Christianity. This marked a new era in Christian writings, with his writings leaving an indelible mark on all Christian biblical commentaries that came after him, both in the East and in the West. His *Commentary on Romans* (henceforth *Commentary*) —Origen's massive fifteen-volume Greek original is now sadly lost, but we do have the 'reduced' ten-volume Latin version translated by Rufinus—will serve as the primary source of his exegesis of Rom. 7:21–8:2 in this dissertation.

Apart from his meticulous linguistic analysis of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words, grammar, and syntax, Origen also introduced the three layers of interpretation of biblical passages, the literal, moral, and spiritual, or allegorical, layers, which immediately opened up the

[95] He died in Caesarea in 254 CE.

biblical text to new and creative ways of interpretation.[96] Although these layers are often attested in pagan and Jewish exegesis in the Alexandria of his day, Origen was the first to introduce them in a systematic way to Christian biblical exegesis, especially to the exegesis of difficult passages which only made sense to him in either the moral or allegorical layer. Unable to reconcile his understanding of the God of love, as taught in the New Testament by Jesus, with a very severe and often blood-thirsty God of the Old Testament, he encouraged his audience to go beyond the literal text when faced with especially jarring passages in the Old Testament in order to seek out the deeper moral or spiritual meaning.[97] This allowed Origen and his audience to maintain one and the same God of the Old and New Testaments, unlike Marcion and other early authors, who posited two distinct gods active in the universe.

Similar to the other Christian authors mentioned above, Origen too used seemingly straightforward passages as proof texts to help him explicate more difficult passages. Like Clement, Origen also used Greco-Roman writings in his works, as can be seen in his apologetic work *Contra Celsum.* His adoption of Greco-Roman philosophical concepts is also discerned in his biblical commentaries, as being thoroughly educated in Alexandria would have exposed him to a rich array of philosophical traditions, from which he drew to help him understand some of the difficulties of the Greek Scriptures.

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[96] See especially Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, Chapter 9: Message: Saving Knowledge, for an excellent presentation of Origen's three layers of interpretation. Martens offers many examples from Origen's works. Origen compares the three layers to an almond: 'a bitter shell which yields to a second layer that, in turn, protects its nutritious center, the third layer: "with its third layer it feeds and nourishes the one who eats it" (p. 199).' For one of Origen's expositions of the three layers of Scripture, see *Princ.* 4.6.4.

[97] See, for example, Origen's exegesis of the Israelite war campaigns against the Canaanites in Joshua 6–12, where the whole sequence of battles is an allegory of the ongoing battle between every human being's soul (the Israelites) and flesh (the Canaanites). See the analysis of Homily 22 on Joshua below in Chapter Three (p. 191).

Finally, Origen was greatly indebted to the writings of Paul in his works. Richard Layton notes that 'Origen was the first exegete to comment systematically on the Pauline corpus, expounding on all but two of the documents accepted by early Christians as letters of Paul.'[98] Whether he was writing commentaries on Paul's epistles, commenting on Old Testament texts, or writing homilies on Gospel texts, Paul features prominently in all his writings. Origen would have understood Paul as the commentator on Scripture par excellence, and thus he freely drew from Paul's insights in his own exegesis of non-Pauline passages, and it made no difference whether they were Old or New Testament. Origen particularly enjoyed some of the dualisms found in Paul's writings, between the 'old man' and the 'new man' (cf. Rom. 6:6; Col. 3:9-11; Eph. 2:15, 4:22-24), between the 'natural man' and the 'spiritual man' (cf. 1 Cor. 2:6-16), and between the 'old Law' and the 'spiritual law' (cf. Rom. 7:14),[99] using them regularly to support his spiritual/allegorical reading of Scripture. Origen's methodology will be seen in this dissertation in Chapter Four, where he uses various phrases from Rom. 7:21–8:2 to explicate difficult Old Testament texts.

[98] Richard Layton, 'Recovering Origen's Pauline Exegesis: Exegesis and Eschatology in the "Commentary on Ephesians",' *JECS* 8 (2000): 373–410 (citation from p. 373). Origen does not engage with 1 Timothy or Titus in his extant writings.

[99] Origen uses Paul's phrase 'the law is spiritual' (Rom. 7:14) over 77 times in his writings. It served him perfectly for his allegorical/spiritual readings of many verses found in the Torah and beyond (e.g. his use of Rom. 7:14 in his interpretation of the binding of Isaac (the *Akedah*) in Genesis to mean the soul's perfect surrender to the will of God; see Origen's *Homily 8 on Genesis*).

Middle Platonism and other philosophical schools of the first three centuries CE

The philosophical movement commonly known as 'Middle Platonism' flourished between the years of approximately 80 BCE and 220 CE.[100] It is characterised by the somewhat eclectic tendency of synthesising various key doctrines held by the individual philosophical schools into a unified vision of reality, thereby resulting in a mirage of attempts to create the 'perfect' philosophy. This is, of course, a simplified understanding of a very complicated development of the exchange of ideas and the reworking of these ideas by great minds, who very deliberately chose certain doctrines that they believed to be the best of each school. Great thinkers, such as Plutarch or Numenius, created new ways of bringing ancient ideas together. Plutarch, for example, brought together Platonic and Stoic ideas with a particular focus on ethics,[101] whereas Numenius brought together Platonic and Neopythagorean ideas with a particular focus on metaphysics.[102] The exchange of ideas was not limited to the ancient philosophical schools, such as the Lyceum, the Academy, or the Stoa. Jewish and Christian theology also began to enter slowly into the mix, especially in the intellectual capitals of the empire, such as Alexandria, where Jewish, Christian, and Pagan philosophers were known to engage one another.[103]

There are some overarching themes that are shared by many of the Middle Platonists. Perhaps the most important of these is the integration of Platonic metaphysics with Aristotle's ethics and logic, where Plato's Forms and Aristotle's Prime Mover and divine mind have come

[100] One of the greatest authoritative writings on the Middle Platonists remains that of John Dillon. My brief outline of Middle Platonist teachings is drawn from his magnum opus: John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220*, revised ed. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996).

[101] On Plutarch and his Middle Platonic ethical system, see Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, 192–98.

[102] On Numenius and his Middle Platonic metaphysics and cosmology, see Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, 366–78.

[103] Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, 139–44, 396.

together, with the Forms being understood as God's thought or reason.[104] The dualism of Plato was adopted, emphasising the distinction between the active principle (metaphysical realm of the divine) and the material principle. Plutarch posited an evil world soul (the Indefinite Dyad) to account for the presence of evil in the world, whereas daemons as spirit guides gained more popularity as intermediaries between the two realms and as beings who could influence humans.[105] Plato's emphasis on the virtues and Aristotle's notion of virtue as a golden mean in behaviour helped to achieve the goal of becoming like God, a *telos* that was very much adopted from Plato's writings (a profoundly Platonic notion originating from a number of his dialogues[106]). Finally, Aristotle's physics was often integrated with that of the Stoics and other specialised natural philosophers who have written extensively on the physical world.[107]

These Middle Platonic ideas were not widely available to the public, as very few would have had sufficient education to read their works and to comprehend them. Rather, these doctrines were exchanged amongst intellectuals of the day, along with their schools, because a greater degree of exchange was made possible due to the easier flow of Greek and Latin thought through the Roman empire. Within philosophical circles, then, the various strands of Middle Platonism were known and had some influence, although many of these Middle Platonic

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[104] Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, 45–49.

[105] Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, 202–08. In Plutarch, there is the 'maleficent world soul', which is a 'disorderly element of the universe' which nevertheless desires order. There is also the 'positively evil element' in the universe, which Plutarch calls the Indefinite Dyad. This latter element is evil itself and actively introduces evil in the cosmos. See Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, 208, for a good summary of Plutarch's doctrines.

[106] See, for example, *Theaetetus* 176a5-b2: 'But bad things cannot be destroyed, Theodorus, for there must always be something opposed to the good. Nor can they gain a place among gods. Rather, by necessity they haunt mortal nature and this place here. That's why one must try to flee from here to there as quickly as possible. Fleeing is *becoming like god* so far as one can, and *to become like god* is to become just and pious with wisdom.'

[107] Natural philosophers, such as Galen, Celsus, and Pliny the Elder in the Latin tradition and Empedocles of Akragas, Hippocrates of Kos, Hipparchus, and Theophrastus in the Greek tradition, contributed to Middle Platonic appreciation and development of natural philosophy.

doctrines would become more significant only later in Christianity and Neoplatonism.[108] Many of the above-noted syntheses will be discerned in both Latin and Greek authors studied in this dissertation. Being great intellectuals of their day would have given them access to these doctrines, and especially the methodology of taking what is best from one school of thought and adopting it for one's own approach to theology and biblical exegesis.

5. Synopsis

In terms of what follows in this dissertation, I will present my analysis of the early Christian writers who commented on the *νόμος* phrases in three chapters so that each early Christian author may have his own chapter, with the exception of Theodotus, who will appear in Clement's chapter. Chapter One will focus on the works of the Latin writer Tertullian which engage with the *νόμος* phrases in Rom. 7:21–8:2. I will examine three of his works, as Tertullian only makes use of excerpts from Rom. 7:21–8:2 in *Adversus Marcionem* V.14 (Rom 7:23), *De resurrectione mortuorum*[109] 46 (Rom. 8:2) and 51 (Rom. 7:23), and *De puditicia* 17 (Rom. 8:2). I will show that Tertullian uses select phrases from Rom. 7:21–8:2 as proof texts in larger arguments to do with ethics whilst also engaging with soteriology and eschatology. I will also demonstrate that he puts the Pauline text at the service of arguments based on Greco-Roman philosophical categories so as to give these philosophical arguments scriptural backing. Still further, I maintain that Tertullian does not use these verses for any kind of argument to do with law—be it the Law of Moses or the Law of God—as one may perhaps expect, given

[108] Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, 396.

[109] The work is also referred to as *De resurrectione carnis*. The title *De resurrectione mortuorum* has been favoured in recent scholarship since the discovery of *Codex Trecensis* (12th c. CE), where this title is used.

contemporary scholarship's focus on 'law' in this part of Romans 7. Rather, I will show that Tertullian's arguments revolve around the presence or absence of sin, which is for him the greatest hurdle to living well, and hence, to salvation. I will also demonstrate that Tertullian equates 'sin' with 'the law of sin' and 'another law in my members' of Rom. 7:23 and is concerned above all with good or bad behaviour, and what causes it. Because every human has this presence of sin in him or her to some extent, Tertullian identifies Paul with the 'I' in Rom 7:21–8:2 and has no qualms with this identification. Finally, I will argue that when we read Tertullian's use of Rom 7:23 and 8:2 in the light of his other writings, there is no doubt that, for Tertullian, external forces, whether good or evil, human or spiritual, have a tremendous influence on the presence or absence of sin in the human.

Chapter Two will focus on the works of the Greek writers Clement of Alexandria and Theodotus the Valentinian which engage with selections of the *νόμος* phrases in Rom. 7:21–8:2. I will analyse the four allusions to Rom 7:23 and 8:2 in Clement's work *Stromateis* (*Strom.* 3.77.1, 4.40.2, and 7.44.7), and one allusion in Clement's work *Excerpts of Theodotus* 52.1, which has been recognised as not Clementine, and most probably belonging to a certain Theodotus the Valentinian, as noted above on pp. 29–30.[110] I will show that Clement and Theodotus also employ selected phrases from Rom 7:21–8:2 as proof texts in larger arguments with the help of Greek philosophy. I will demonstrate that these arguments are preoccupied with the interior struggle between the mind and the passions, or desires. I also maintain that, like in Tertullian's case, Clement does not pay any attention to 'law' in the legal sense of the word in his uses of these Pauline texts; rather, I will argue that Clement finds the language of struggle of 7:23 useful in discussions surrounding psychology and anthropology. Regarding the text by

[110] F. Sagnard, *Clément d'Alexandrie : Extraits de Théodote*, SC 23 (Paris: Cerf, 1948), 6 and following.

Theodotus in Clement's *Excerpts*, I will demonstrate that Theodotus also employs Rom. 7:23 as a proof text, while for Theodotus it is useful in a reflection on Gnostic anthropology.

Finally, Chapter Three will focus on the works of Origen of Alexandria which engage with the *νόμος* phrases in Rom. 7:21–8:2. Origen employs the verses in their entirety or one or more of the *νόμος* phrases no less than 67 times. It will be impossible to cover all occurrences in this dissertation. As such, Origen's *Commentary on Romans* will serve as the primary text under investigation in Chapter Three because Origen's thoughts on these phrases are most fully articulated therein (especially *Commentary* 6.9-11). Analysis of the other texts will also be incorporated should they offer anything new to his interpretation in the *Commentary*. I will show that Origen employs commonly shared elements from the Greek philosophical traditions of his day when he interprets the *νόμος* phrases in his *Commentary* and in his other writings. I will substantiate this by demonstrating how Origen in his exegesis of the *νόμος* phrases uses Greek doctrines of the natural law, the passions (and impulses, desires, and lusts), the influence of daemons (the Greek concept of *δαίμων*), the vices, and of the virtues.[111] In addition to this, I will also argue that Origen is the most creative and nuanced early Christian exegete of Rom 7:21–8:2, clearly distinguishing between 'another law in my members' and 'the law of sin', and thereby presenting a reading that is at the same time faithful to the rest of Paul's Epistle to the Romans

[111] These elements of Greek thought cannot be claimed by any one philosophical tradition. Rather, they seem to have been the common patrimony of Greek culture and academic discourse. Edwards insightfully notes that 'In every age intelligent thinkers have worked their way to the same conclusions, not because they have 'stolen', 'borrowed' or 'succumbed to influence', but because as human creatures they enjoyed the same climate and used the same resources, as citizens they lived under common ordinances and aspired to common goods, and as philosophers they reasoned on the same principles, and were vexed by the same shortcomings in the patrimony of knowledge' (Edwards 2002, 5) and 'too many have forgotten that the use of a common language is as much the precondition of controversy as of intellectual friendship' (Id. 9). Thus, Edwards warns that we ought not to apply 'the term 'Platonic' to elements of Origen's thought that he and his contemporaries would have considered part of the Christian heritage' (Id. 11).

and creative in solving its enigmatic character. Finally, I maintain that Origen too does not interpret *νόμος* in the *νόμος* phrases in the legal sense of the word.

6. Contribution to scholarship

The dissertation offers contributions to the study of the reception history of biblical texts, the Pauline Epistles, and Patristics by presenting for the first time a comprehensive study of the earliest extant readers of Rom. 7:21–8:2. For the field of reception history and Pauline studies, the dissertation offers a thorough treatment of early Christian hermeneutics of Rom. 7:21–8:2. As has been mentioned in Section 1 above, addressing this lacuna in biblical studies and reception history studies is important because the dissertation offers early Christian solutions to arguably the most important section of Romans 7–8, as it is in Rom. 7:21–8:2 that the audience hears about both the reason for Paul's *ἀκρασία* and how it is resolved.

Furthermore, the division in scholarly interpretations of these verses as well as some of the confusion surrounding Paul's *νόμος* language will benefit greatly from the adjudication of the early Christian writers. Regarding the meaning of the enigmatic *νόμος* phrases, for example, Clement of Alexandria's and Origen's readings of 'another law in my members' (Rom. 7:23) as inordinate passions and desires would support the readings of scholars, such as James Dunn, Craig Keener, and Peter Stuhlmacher. On the other hand, Tertullian's reading of 'the law of sin' as some force that is able to turn the human will away from God and towards sin is akin to the interpretations of the evil *yetzer* by William Davies and Hans-Joachim Schoeps. As such, these ancient interpretations will give more weight to certain contemporary readings, thereby showing that the contemporary biblical scholars are continuing in ancient footsteps.

Still further, the dissertation highlights the significant difference in concerns and emphases between the early Christian authors and contemporary biblical scholars when approaching this text. The ancient authors were not overly concerned with the identity of the 'I', nor with the way in which Paul used *νόμος*. Rather, they were above all concerned with the human being's progress in the moral life, and this progress was always understood as a communal endeavour, where the 'I' is never alone before God, but rather together with other members of the Christian community, who are ready to instruct, discipline, and lead. Perhaps these ancient approaches and emphases may guide contemporary readings of Romans 7 and 8, and especially the *νόμος* phrases found in 7:21–8:2.

Finally, the study also offers further insights into early Christian approaches to Christian ethics, specifically through the use of Rom. 7:21–8:2 in combination with Greco-Roman philosophy. Nowhere else does Paul or any other biblical author use the *νόμος* phrases, thereby making their interpretation in Romans especially difficult, as biblical scholars have no other recourse outside this particular text to aid them. An examination of early Christian writers who used Paul's language and conversed with intellectuals of a similar intellectual background to those with whom Paul would have conversed, offers here very helpful insights into how *νόμος* might be interpreted in Rom. 7:21–8:2. Difficult topics—as can be seen in the interpretation of the *νόμος* phrases by our four authors—were approached with the help of both divinely inspired biblical texts and secular philosophy. In these passages, early authors would often put biblical texts at the service of the philosophical arguments as proof texts in order to give them greater

authority, while the dialectical method inspired by Plato's style of writing was put at the service of biblical exegesis and theology.[112]

Now that the project has been sufficiently introduced, let us now turn to the writings of Tertullian, one of the earliest extant Christian authors who has engaged with Rom. 7:21–8:2.

[112] See Isidoros C. Katsos, *The Metaphysics of Light in the Hexaemeral Literature: From Philo of Alexandria to Gregory of Nyssa*, OECS (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023). Katsos offers insights into the early Church Fathers' exegetical methods when approaching the topic of the seven days of creation in Genesis 1 and ancient philosophical discussions about the nature of light and transcendence. Katsos concludes that the early Christian writers were deeply immersed in 'dialectical hermeneutics', where the discursive nature of philosophical writings, especially those of Plato, inspired exegesis. Meaning and therefore truth was not so much found *in* the text but rather in the discourse that is found *in between* the text, that is, in the debates, textual variants, oral reading, and 'vocality' surrounding the study of a text.

Chapter One: Tertullian on Romans 7:21–8:2

While Irenaeus has the honour of being 'the first Christian author whose extant writings engage extensively with Paul',[1] Tertullian was the first extant Ante-Nicene writer to engage Romans 7:21–8:2 in a significant manner. To be sure, his use of the Pauline text is coloured by polemics, as all of his partial quotations are found in heated debates against heretics or in exhortations to lax Christians. The focus of this chapter, then, is the study of Tertullian's deployment of selected verses from Rom. 7:21–8:2. Tertullian makes use of parts of only two verses in Rom. 7:21–8:2 in three works: *Adversus Marcionem* V.14 (Rom. 7:23), *De resurrectione mortuorum*[2] 46 (Rom. 8:2) and 51 (Rom. 7:23), and *De pudicitia* 17 (Rom. 8:2). These texts offer precious insights into an early Christian intellectual's understanding of Christology, soteriology, eschatology, ethics, and anthropology. When these insights are read alongside some of Tertullian's other writings on similar topics, they bring clarity to the way Tertullian may have understood the enigmatic text of Rom. 7:21–8:2 and they offer the contemporary reader a glimpse into early Christian approaches to what are for today's reader troublesome texts.

This chapter furthers the main thesis of this dissertation by two arguments. Firstly, I argue that Tertullian uses Rom. 7:23 and 8:2 as proof texts in larger arguments to do with ethics whilst also engaging with soteriology and eschatology. Secondly, with his use of Rom. 7:23, Tertullian puts the Pauline text at the service of arguments based on Greco-Roman philosophical categories

[1] Thomas D. McGlothlin, *Resurrection as Salvation: Development and Conflict in Pre-Nicene Paulinism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 13, 96.

[2] The work is also referred to as *De resurrectione carnis*. The title *De resurrectione mortuorum* has been favoured in recent scholarship since the discovery of *Codex Trecensis* (12th c. CE), where this title is used.

so as to give them scriptural backing. The four key debates discussed in Chapter One—that is, the meaning of the *νόμος* phrases, the identity of the 'I', and the internal or external forces that inhibit or enable the human agency of the 'I'—will frequently resurface throughout the chapter. In Section 1, I analyse the two polemical works in which Tertullian engages verses Rom. 7:23 and 8:2 as he defends the resurrection of the body. These works are *De resurrectione mortuorum* 46 and 51 (dated to 206/7 CE) and *Adversus Marcionem* V.14 (dated to 207/8 CE).[3] Following this, I analyse in Section 2 another occurrence of Rom. 8:2, but this time in Tertullian's exhortative work *De pudicitia* 17 (dated to 210/11 CE). Finally, I conclude the chapter with a discussion (Section 3).

I frequently rely on other works of Tertullian in order to explicate certain concepts because it is often the case that he develops these concepts elsewhere (e.g. *De anima* contains much helpful information regarding what Tertullian thinks about the nature of the soul, sin, and other important anthropological and metaphysical elements). Finally, although most of Tertullian's works were written in a polemical context and he underwent a kind of Montanist 'conversion' at one point in his life (around 208 CE, according to Timothy Barnes),[4] I work on the assumption that, following the opinions of Geoffrey Dunn and David Wilhite,[5] he is remarkably consistent across his extant works in regard to the important doctrines of the Christian faith. His thought slowly crystallises over time and he changes his focus from one work to another according to the opponent at hand, but his theology largely remains unchanged. In Section 1, then, I turn to

[3] Timothy David Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 53–55.

[4] Barnes, *Tertullian*, 328.

[5] See especially the two works by Geoffrey D. Dunn, 'Mary's Virginity *in Partu* and Tertullian's Anti-Docetism in *De Carne Christi Reconsidered*,' *JTS* 58.2 (2007): 467–84, and David E. Wilhite, 'The Spirit of Prophecy: Tertullian's Pauline Pneumatology,' in *Tertullian and Paul*, ed. Todd D. Still and David E. Wilhite, PPSD (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 45–71.

Tertullian's various defences of the resurrection of the flesh in his polemical works *De resurrectione mortuorum* and *Adversus Marcionem*.

1. Romans 7:23 and 8:2 and the defence of the resurrection of the flesh

Three quarters of Tertullian's references to Rom. 7:21–8:2 are found in polemical arguments in which Tertullian defends Christ's true flesh in order to support the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh—of Christ's and that of the rest of humanity.[6] It is imperative for Tertullian to defend the resurrection of the flesh because, in his mind, the final judgment can only be possible if both the flesh and the soul—together as the body—appear before God. This, in turn, impacts salvation, for there can be no bodily entrance into heaven without the judgment of the body. God will otherwise not be truly just if he will not judge both substances, both of which are implicated in good and evil works. The works which feature references to Rom. 7:23 and 8:2 are *De resurrectione mortuorum* and *Adversus Marcionem*, although it will be helpful to investigate these works alongside the other work that also argues extensively for the resurrection of the flesh. As such, in this section, I analyse three works from Tertullian's 'Montanist' period (206-

[6] A word is in order about Tertullian's terms. Tertullian is not entirely consistent in the way he uses words pertaining to the whole person (i.e. all that comprises the 'body'). For Tertullian, the body, *corpus*, is the soul, *anima*, the flesh, *carnis,* and sometimes the spirit, *animus* and *spiritus*, together as one entity. The mind is also sometimes referred to as the *animus* and it has its seat in the *anima*. This neat classification is muddled by the fact that *carnis* also seems to refer to the actual matter/flesh/meat of the body while *corpus* also refers to anything that has existence according to Stoic teaching, which Tertullian espouses. And so, in theory, because the human *carnis* exists, it is also by Stoic definition a *corpus*, some *thing* that occupies space and is made of something. Still further, *spiritus* is the Spirit of God, but it can also be the spirit that is bestowed, or breathed upon, the human. It may be likened to the later, more theologically developed concept of grace, *gratia*, that is, a divine element active in the human being, giving him or her comfort, strength, etc. It is from this flexible and free use of terms whence the confusion of terms often comes. For more on Tertullian's use of these terms, see Eliezer Gonzalez, 'Anthropologies of Continuity: The Body and Soul in Tertullian, Perpetua, and Early Christianity,' *JECS* 21.4 (2013): 479–502.

211 CE)[7] that offer arguments for the resurrection of the flesh with the help of Rom. 7:23 and 8:2 or neighbouring verses: *Adversus Marcionem*,[8] *De carne Christi*,[9] and *De resurrectione mortuorum*.[10]

Tertullian's opponents: Marcion, Valentinus, and Apelles, the 'modern Sadducees' (Carn. Chr. 1; Res. mort. 2)

Marcion (active c. 140-155 CE)[11] believed that the god of Jesus Christ was different from the evil creator god whom the Old Testament and some of the more Semitic sections of the New Testament revealed. One may call Marcion the first 'innovator' of the biblical field, as he was the first known writer (perhaps only rivalled by Tatian's project to harmonise the Gospels, c. 120-180 CE) who developed his own biblical canon. He did this in order to suppress any mention of the Old Testament and its evil god, who created the corrupted matter of the universe. His

[7] Barnes, *Tertullian*, 55.

[8] Unless otherwise noted, all Latin and English quotations from Tertullian's *Adversus Marcionem* are from *Adversus Marcionem: Latin Edition and Translation*, tr. and ed. with an introduction and notes by Ernest Evans (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972).

[9] Unless otherwise noted, all Latin and English quotations from Tertullian's *De carne Christi* are from: Tertullian, *Treatise on the Incarnation: De Carne Christi*, tr. and ed. with an introduction, commentary, and notes by Ernest Evans (SPCK. London: SPCK, 1956).

[10] Unless otherwise noted, all Latin and English quotations from Tertullian's *De resurrectione mortuorum* are from: Tertullian, *Treatise on the Resurrection: Q. Septimii Florentis Tertulliani De Resurrectione Carnis Liber*, tr. and ed. with an introduction, commentary, and notes by Ernest Evans (London: SPCK, 1960).

[11] The dating of his activity is from William Tabbernee, 'The World to Come: Tertullian's Christian Eschatology,' in *Tertullian and Paul*, ed. Todd D. Still and David E. Wilhite, PPSD (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 260. The earliest mention of Marcion is in Justin Martyr's *Apology* I.26. He states that Marcion is still alive, that he is from Pontus, and that he is preaching a different and 'greater' god than the Creator. Irenaeus is the next significant author to mention Marcion (mentioned for the first time in *Adv. haer.* I.25.1). Tertullian is very much indebted to Irenaeus' work. For more on Tertullian using Irenaeus' *Adversus haereses*, see McGlothlin, *Resurrection as Salvation*, 96f, and Evans' Introduction in Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*.

canon therefore did not include the Old Testament and a large part of the New Testament that had strong Semitic themes (e.g. the Gospel of Matthew or the Letter to the Hebrews).

It is difficult to make any firm conclusions about Marcion's writings because none of his works survives until today. All we have are fragments preserved in what are now recognised as orthodox writers, and they must be approached with caution because these authors are generally unsympathetic to his writings.[12] The whole of *Against Marcion* is devoted to dismantling the theology of Marcion, and Tertullian addresses Marcion's docetic doctrines in various sections throughout the whole work. Tertullian approaches the Marcionites' docetic doctrines and the problem these pose for salvation by defending the *goodness* and the *resurrection* of the flesh. The Marcionites believed that the flesh was evil by nature and therefore would not be saved. Hence, the theological controversy was about theodicy: could God be responsible for creating evil?[13] The Marcionites saw fleshly existence with all its evils and imperfections and concluded that the supremely good god of Jesus Christ could not have created such an evil substance. Indeed, Tertullian has Marcion's god exclaiming 'I am he that created evil' (*Adv. Marc.* I.2.2; Marcion's god evidently adopts Isaiah 45:7, 'I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace,

[12] Our knowledge of Marcion's docetic doctrines comes from the writings of Irenaeus (*Against Heresies*, especially books I, III, IV, and V, with Irenaeus' most forceful arguments against Docetism in V.1 and V.21), Tertullian (*Against Marcion*, spread throughout the whole work, but more concentrated in IV.7 and V, with book V being entirely devoted to disproving Marcion's docetic doctrines through Scripture, especially those which Marcion recognised), Epiphanius of Salamis (*Panarion* I.42), and Hippolytus of Rome (*Refutation of All Heresies* X.15). A comprehensive monograph that presents Marcion's life and doctrine still remains that of Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion: The Gospel of the Alien God*, tr. John E. Steely and Lyle D. Bierma, 2nd ed. (Durham: Labyrinth, 1990), although a recent publication by Sebastian Moll offers an updated vision of Marcion with the research that has been done since Harnack's first work. See Sebastian Moll, *The Arch-Heretic Marcion* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010). See also the edited collection: Petri Luomanen and Antti Marjanen, eds., *A Companion to Second-Century Christian 'Heretics'* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), in which there are excellent chapters on Marcion (Chapter 4) by Heikki Räisänen and on the school of Valentinus (Chapter 3; this is relevant for the following paragraph on Valentinus) by Ismo Dunderberg. Space does not permit a more thorough treatment of Marcion's doctrines and works here.

[13] Tertullian shows a Marcion who is 'morbidly brooding over the question of the origin of evil' (*Adv. Marc.* I.2.2).

and create evil.'). The group held that the soul came directly from the true and good god and was therefore also divine but the flesh came from the evil creator god and was sinful, and therefore evil. They readily agreed that humans are comprised of flesh and soul, although it is the soul that is really important—the divine part of the human—while the flesh is good for nothing because it is evil. This led them to deny the resurrection of the flesh.[14] Still further, they held docetic views about Christ, namely that Christ could not have had human flesh and therefore did not come to save the whole person, who was both flesh and soul, but rather only the soul. Christ merely 'appeared' to be human, although in reality he was not, since 'Christ…only pretended the assumption of a bodily substance' (*Adv. Marc.* I.11.8).[15] There was no incarnation of the Word and therefore no human nativity of Christ (*Adv. Marc.* III.11).[16] Lastly, the Marcionites believed that Christ died, a doctrine in their belief system that Tertullian saw as a glaring inconsistency (if Christ had no mortal body, how could he have died? See *Carn. Chr.* 5).[17]

Sources for Valentinus' own writings are more accessible than those for Marcion or Apelles, as many of his doctrines survive in the writings of Theodotus, one of his disciples,

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[14] Of Marcion's doctrine of the resurrection, Tertullian writes: 'even those whom he [Marcion's god] saves are found to possess but an imperfect salvation—that is, they are saved only so far as the soul is concerned, but lost in their body, which, according to him, does not rise again' (*Adv. Marc*. I.24.3).

[15] 'Docetism', or 'docetic', comes from the Classical Greek word *δοκεῖν*, 'to appear' or 'to seem', hence the belief that Christ only 'seemed' human, but he only really had a spiritual existence. In *Adv. Marc.* II.28.2, Tertullian uses very strong words to describe Marcion's views, directly addressing Marcion: 'If you allege that the Creator practised deception in any instance, there was a far greater mendacity in your Christ, whose very body was unreal.'

[16] According to Tertullian, Marcion believed that Christ's body was like that of the angels when they would appear to humans: unborn, and its substance 'borrowed from the elements' (*Adv. Marc.* III.11.1-2).

[17] Tertullian himself shows confusion at their doctrine that Christ was crucified: 'God was found little, that man might become very great. You who disdain such a God, I hardly know whether you *ex fide* believe that God was crucified. How great, then, is your perversity in respect of the two characters of the Creator!' (*Adv. Marc.* II.27.7) A bit further, Tertullian exposes the inconsistency: 'If His flesh is denied, how is His death to be asserted; for death is the proper suffering of the flesh, which returns through death back to the earth out of which it was taken, according to the law of its Maker? Now, if His death be denied, because of the denial of His flesh, there will be no certainty of His resurrection. For He rose not, for the very same reason that He died not, even because He possessed not the reality of the flesh, to which as death accrues, so does resurrection likewise' (*Adv. Marc.* III.8.6).

which are preserved in Clement of Alexandria's work *Excerpts from Theodotus*.[18] F. Sagnard estimates that approximately seventy-five percent of these excerpts are by Theodotus, and the remaining twenty-five are interpolated comments by Clement.[19] Against Valentinus (active c. 160-170 CE),[20] Tertullian had to defend the true earthly flesh of Christ, for Valentinus believed that Christ's soul underwent a transformation into a kind of heavenly flesh when Christ came to earth.[21] The Valentinians believed in the nativity of Christ although they qualified the kind of flesh that he had: it was *not* the same as human flesh because he did not receive it from his

[18] Ismo Dunderberg has done much work on Valentinus and his strand of Gnosticism in recent years (see Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008)). He has convincingly shown that Valentinus' teachings should not be grouped together with the other schools of Gnosticism for a number of important reasons. He points out that, according to the Valentinian tradition, the Demiurge was ignorant but benevolent (rather than malevolent), and thus creation was *not* created inherently evil. Dunderberg, referring to the doctrines in the Valentinian *Gospel of Truth*, notes that 'the emergence of the material world is explained as being due to ignorance and confusion that took place in the divine realm' (60). Secondly, the Valentinians put a strong emphasis on ethical and moral formation, which was to be carried out in and by the community (see Chapter 2 in Dunderberg's monograph on how the ethical life is indispensable in the Valentinian system for reaching immortality). Thirdly, historical sources are not so clear on whether the Valentinian community was so evidently separated from the mainstream Christian community, both in terms of the use of the Scriptures and in the participation in Christian rituals. It seems that there might have been a fair bit of overlap (p. 3 and following). Fourthly, and importantly for this discussion, the Valentinians believed in a tripartite Christology, following the pattern of the traditional Pauline tripartite anthropology found in 1 Thess. 5:23 (spirit, soul, and body). According to the Valentinians, Christ too had a spiritual, psychical, and material nature (see the section on Heracleon the Valentinian, p. 141 and following). To safeguard the impassability of Christ's divine nature, Valentinus proposed that it was only the psychical and material natures that suffered during Christ's earthly ministry, and especially during the Crucifixion. The spiritual nature of Christ remained untouched by suffering, or any emotion, for that matter.

[19] This is according to F. Sagnard. See Clement of Alexandria, *Extraits de Théodote*, tr. and ed. with an introduction and notes by F. Sagnard, SC 23 (Paris: Cerf, 1948), 8. Valentinus—through the writings of Theodotus––will be much more thoroughly studied in the following chapter. See Section 3 in Chapter Two.

[20] See Sagnard's Introduction in Clement, *Extraits de Théodote*, 6–7. Also Tabbernee, 'The World to Come,' 260.

[21] In *Exc*. 18, Theodotus writes that 'the Saviour descended' and this was his 'advent in the flesh'. Unless otherwise noted, all English quotations from Clement's *Excerpts from Theodotus* are taken from: Clement of Alexandria, *The* Excerpta ex Theodoto *of Clement of Alexandria*, tr. with an introduction by Robert Pierce Casey, SD 1 (London: Christophers, 1934).

mother Mary[22] because human flesh was sinful and corruptible (*Carn. Chr.* 15).[23] Could the Son of God have taken upon himself something that was corruptible and therefore perishable? Their solution was to adopt angelic fleshly nature as attested in Old Testament apparitions of angels (*Carn. Chr.* 10–14): God made Christ's flesh materialise out of the substance of his immortal and incorruptible soul in the same way that God made the flesh of angels materialise in many Old Testament passages (*Carn. Chr.* 14). Like the Marcionites, the Valentinians also believed that Christ died and was raised from the dead (*Carn. Chr.* 15).[24]

Apelles (active c. 145-160 CE)[25] is another early writer against whom Tertullian argues in these works (esp. in *Carn. Chr.* 6–9).[26] As in the case of Marcion, none of Apelles' own works

[22] Theodotus writes that 'The visible part of Jesus was Wisdom and the Church of the superior seeds and he put it on through the flesh' (*Exc.* 26). Still further, in *Exc.* 59–60, he writes that Jesus put on the psychic Christ, 'but even this psychic Christ whom he put on, was invisible, and it was necessary for him when he came into the world to be seen here, to be held, to be a citizen, and to hold on to a sensible body. A body, therefore, was spun for him out of invisible psychic substance, and arrived in the world of sense with power from a divine preparation. Therefore "the Holy Spirit shall come upon thee" (Luke 1:35) refers to the formation of the Lord's body, "and a power of the Most High shall overshadow thee" (Luke 1:35) indicates the formation of God with which he imprinted the body in the Virgin.'

[23] Theodotus elaborates that 'the Creator divided the fine elements from the course. …And of the material elements, he made one out of grief, which gives substance to the "spiritual things of evil with whom is our contest" (Eph. 6:12)' (*Exc.* 48). Still further, the flesh is 'that weakness which was an offshoot of the Woman on high…whose passions became creation' (*Exc.* 67).

[24] Theodotus elaborates on what happened during Christ's death. He writes: 'And he died at the departure of the Spirit, which had descended upon him in the Jordan, not that it became separate but was withdrawn in order that death might also operate on him, since how did the body die when life was present in him? For in that way death would have prevailed over the Saviour himself, which is absurd. But death was out-generalled by guile. For when the body died and death seized it, the Saviour sent forth the ray of power which had come upon him and destroyed death and raised up the mortal body which had put off passion. In this way, therefore, the psychic elements are raised and are saved, but the spiritual natures which believe receive a salvation superior to theirs, having received their souls as "wedding garments"' (*Exc.* 61). He later mentions in *Exc.* 7 that the resurrection will be a 'spiritual resurrection' so that the flesh is not subject to corruption again, 'equal to angels' (*Exc.* 22). Finally, in *Exc.* 61, Theodotus notes that the Saviour was resurrected by 'the ray of power which had come upon him and destroyed death and raised up the mortal body which has put off passion…'

[25] Tabbernee, 'The World to Come,' 260.

[26] He was a disciple of Marcion, but later either left the group or was expelled by the group. He moved to Alexandria, where he wrote *Revelations*, a work based on the revelations given to his partner Philumena in her

survive and thus his thought must be reconstructed based on the works of his opponents. Like his teacher Marcion, Apelles did not grant Christ a true human nativity.[27] Rather, Christ simply appeared on earth, very much like the angels mentioned in *Carn. Chr.* 14. He did have flesh, but it was 'cosmic flesh' instead of earthly flesh (*Carn. Chr.* 6 and 8).[28] Pseudo-Tertullian, another source for Apelles' doctrines, notes that Apelles did not believe in the bodily resurrection from the dead; rather, it was only the soul that is saved and enters heaven (*Against All Heresies* 6). Tertullian agrees that one of Christ's natures was cosmic; this was his divinity. However, he could not have come as the angels did in the Old Testament because he had a radically different mission than theirs (*Carn. Chr.* 6). He had to die for sinful humanity and only that which is born can undergo death. Therefore, Christ must have been born and must have received a kind of flesh—human flesh—that was capable of suffering death. Having introduced Tertullian's opponents, I now turn to Tertullian's response to their docetic doctrines.

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visions (see Tertullian's *De praes*. 30 and *Adv. Marc.* III.1.1). He also wrote *Syllogisms*, which were meant to disprove various passages in the Pentateuch about the nature of God (see Pseudo-Tertullian, *Against All Heresies* 6). Finally, according to Jerome (*Comm. in Mt*., prol., PL XXVI 17A), he may have written a Gospel called *The Gospel of Apelles*. All of these works have been lost. See Wilhelm Schneemelcher and R. McL. Wilson, eds., *Gospels and Related Writings*, vol. 1 of *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2 vols., rev. ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), especially pp. 399–400.

[27] Tertullian writes: 'He borrowed, they say, His flesh from the stars, and from the substances of the higher world. And they assert it for a certain principle, that a body without nativity is nothing to be astonished at, because it has been submitted to angels to appear even among ourselves in the flesh without the intervention of the womb' (*Carn. Chr.* 6).

[28] Pseudo-Tertullian notes that even this cosmic flesh was left behind when Christ ascended into heaven: '[He] restored, in the course of His ascent, to the several individual elements whatever had been borrowed in His descent: and thus—the several parts of His body dispersed—He reinstated in heaven His spirit only' (*Against All Heresies* 6, quotation from ANF 3).

Distinguishing between the substance of the flesh and its accidents

Tertullian spills much ink on attacking various forms of docetic Christologies so as to prove the salvation of the whole human body, the flesh and the soul. He has to 'redeem' the honour of the flesh, for the greatest stumbling block for the heretics to accept an orthodox Christology, and hence, an orthodox anthropology, is sinful flesh. Tertullian securely anchors his anthropology in his Christology and therefore a discussion of the former must be within a discussion of the latter.[29] Still further, Tertullian's Christology is soteriological insofar as his ultimate goal is to demonstrate that the whole person—flesh and soul—is saved.[30]

Tertullian demonstrates the salvation of the whole person, both flesh and soul, with the help of Greek philosophical concepts. He has to separate the substance (*substantia*) of the flesh from its accidents (*qualitas, accidens,* or *adscribere*)[31] in order to show that the flesh is naturally good and therefore worthy of salvation just as much as the soul. He must demonstrate that Christ shared the same substance of the flesh with human beings, while differing from them regarding its accidents, especially sin. Christ's sinless flesh was the same as prelapsarian Adam and Eve's flesh. When Tertullian removes sin from the substance of the flesh, he takes away his opponents' main argument against Christ's incarnation and resurrection, and hence, the stumbling block that prevents them from believing in the resurrection and salvation of the flesh. If Christ's flesh was sinless and good, then there is nothing to prevent Christians from believing in Christ's

[29] McGlothlin, *Resurrection as Salvation*, 119.

[30] Dunn, 'Tertullian's Anti-Docetism,' 468.

[31] Tertullian picks up the helpful Aristotelian distinction between substance and accident, although he does not appear to settle on *one* Latin term to employ it. He uses *qualitas* (*Adv. Marc.* V.10)*, accidens* (*Adv. Marc.* V.11)*,* and the verb *adscribere* (*Adv. Marc.* V.14) largely synonymously when employing the Aristotelian concept of accident.

incarnation. If Christ's flesh was of the same substance as that of prelapsarian Adam and Eve, then it is of the same substance as postlapsarian flesh, which is no different than that of Adam and Eve.

Christ and the prelapsarian humans differ from postlapsarian humans only with respect to sin, and not with respect to the nature of their fleshly substance. It is precisely the sin, which dwells in the flesh, that Christ came to abolish in order to save humanity because humans could not remove it by themselves. He willingly took upon himself the human's fleshy substance in order to destroy sin on the human's behalf. Christ assumed that which needed redeeming, the flesh and soul of the human (*Adv. Marc.* IV.37).[32] Furthermore, Christ's resurrection proved that every person's flesh would be raised. This is of utter importance for Tertullian because it is only when the flesh and soul are together again that humans can be judged by God and receive an eternal sentence. The salvation of the whole human person is therefore at stake. To put it succinctly: no resurrection of the flesh means no judgment; no judgment, no divine justice; no divine justice, no sentence; no sentence, no entry into heaven or hell; no entry into heaven, no eternal salvation.[33]

Tertullian makes use of this argument—distinguishing between the substance and accident of the flesh—with the help of selected verses from Rom. 7:21–8:2 and from the broader text of Rom. 7:14–8:8 in *all* seven passages in which verses from Rom. 7:21–8:2 appear (*Adv. Marc.*

[32] Tertullian puts it rather elegantly in *Adv. Marc.* IV.37: 'Since a man consists of two substances, body and soul, the question we must consider is, in respect of which kind of substance he may be supposed to have become lost. If of the body, then his body was lost, his soul was not. That which was lost, is what the Son of man saves: and so the flesh obtains salvation. If he was lost in respect of his soul, then it is the loss of the soul which is intended for salvation: the flesh, which has not got lost, is safe already. If the whole man was lost, in respect of both substances, then the whole man must of necessity be brought to salvation, and there is an end of that opinion of the heretics who say the flesh finds no salvation.'

[33] McGlothlin brings together Tertullian's Christology, soteriology, and anthropology masterfully in chapter 3 of his published dissertation (*Resurrection as Salvation,* 96–134).

V.10 and V.14; *Carn. Chr.* 16; *Res. mort.* 10, 16, 46, and 51). The core argument is the same, although the way in which he presents it differs slightly in each case. In order to avoid unnecessary repetition, I present this argument in its full form as it appears in *Adversus Marcionem* V.10 and V.14. I supplement this analysis of *Adversus Marcionem* with some of Tertullian's other insights on Rom. 7:21–8:2 from the other five texts without repeating the substance/accident argument, which is present in all of the texts. I have chosen *Adversus Marcionem* because the two chapters therein exemplify the two ways in which Tertullian approached this argument: ch. 10 contains an anthropological argument based on the postlapsarian human's flesh and its works and ch. 14 contains a Christological argument based on Christ's flesh being equal to sinful flesh in substance but not in accident.

Tertullian's most sustained attack against Marcion's docetic Christology is in *Adversus Marcionem,* which he published in two editions. William Tabbernee surmises that the final edition was completed between 208-211 CE.[34] Book I of the work is devoted to the examination and refutation of the theology of Marcion's two gods with sound logic and selected passages from both Testaments. Book II focuses on demonstrating that Marcion's god of the Old Testament is indeed the God of Jesus Christ and the Creator God, the one and only God. Book III is devoted to Christology. Tertullian demonstrates that Old Testament writings already point towards Christ and that Christ is the Son of this one and only God. Furthermore, Christ was truly human; he had real flesh; he died and rose from the dead; he must have had a real body because

[34] William Tabbernee, 'The World to Come: Tertullian's Christian Eschatology,' in *Tertullian and Paul*, ed. Todd D. Still and David E. Wilhite, PPSD (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 265 and following. Tabbernee notes that Tertullian published the first edition of *Adversus Marcionem* during his pre-Montanist period (before 206 CE). The first edition comprised of books one to three. According to Tabbernee, this edition 'had been pilfered' by one of Tertullian's opponents in Carthage. The second edition was begun in 208 CE and saw the addition of books four and five. One may see the influence of Tertullian's Montanism in these latter books (e.g. Paraclete language for the Holy Spirit).

only something mortal dies and can be raised from the dead. Book IV sees the refutation of Marcionite doctrines with Marcion's version of the Gospel of Luke.[35] Finally, Book V follows the pattern of Book IV, albeit with the Pauline corpus *à la* Marcion instead of the Lukan Gospel. Marcion only recognised ten Pauline epistles (he omitted the Pastoral Epistles: 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus) and even these were 'lightly edited'.[36] It is in Book V that the substance-accident arguments with references to Rom. 7:21–8:2 (and the larger text 7:14–8:8) are found.[37]

In Book V, Tertullian progresses through the ten Pauline letters that Marcion acknowledged by commenting on the verses that he believes were misinterpreted by Marcion. After a few words of introduction (ch. 1), he devotes chs. 2–4 to Galatians, where he examines the place that the Law has in the Christian faith. Chapters 5–10 treat 1 Corinthians. He defends the true flesh of Christ (ch. 5), which then sets up his defence of the one and true God's creation of human flesh, in which God desired to dwell (chs. 6–8). Consequently, this flesh, which God found acceptable to indwell, must also participate in the resurrection (chs. 9–10).

Tertullian devotes most of ch. 10 to the interpretation of 1 Cor. 15:50 ('For this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot obtain possession of the kingdom of God'[38]). Tertullian

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[35] Stephen Cooper, '*Communis Magister Paulus*: Altercation Over the Gospel in Tertullian's *Against Marcion*,' in *Tertullian and Paul*, ed. Todd D. Still and David E. Wilhite, PPSD (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 226 and following. Cooper notes the difficulty in pinning down the version of Luke that Tertullian made use of in his arguments in Book IV. Cooper suggests that Tertullian had access to a Marcionite Lukan Gospel and he used this version to attack Marcion so as to level the field and argue from Marcion's own Scriptures.

[36] Cooper, 'Communis Magister Paulus,' 226 and following. Tertullian comments on the nature of Marcion's version of Romans thus: 'But how many ditches Marcion has dug, especially in this epistle, by removing all that he would, will become evident from the complete text of my copy' (*Adv. Marc.* V.13).

[37] Tertullian offers another argument with the use of Aristotle's substance-accident metaphysical categories in *Adv. Marc.* V.12, though without a reference to Rom. 7:21–8:2. The context is a discussion about the resurrection of the flesh. Tertullian alludes to 1 Cor. 15:50, 2 Cor. 5:17, and Gal. 5:19-21 and writes: 'If he also bids us cleanse ourselves from the defilement of flesh and blood, it is not the substance but the works of that substance he says are not capable of the kingdom of God.'

[38] Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*, 575. Evans' translation of the Latin text in *Adv. Marc.* V.10.

criticises Marcion because 'he makes this a question not of quality but of substance (*non qualitatis sed substantiae*)' (*Adv. Marc.* V.10).[39] Both substances would inherit the kingdom of God, while certain accidents (namely, sin) would not. He illustrates the distinction between the morally neutral substance of the flesh from the evil done by it with an analogy: 'To administer poison is a felony, yet the cup in which it is administered is not brought under accusation. So also the body is the receptacle of carnal acts, but it is the soul which in the body mixes the poison of this or that evil deed' (*Adv. Marc.* V.10). Tertullian understands the Apostle's phrase 'flesh and blood' from 1 Cor. 15:50 as a figure of speech for those who live carnally,[40] 'meaning those works of flesh and blood which when writing to the Galatians (5:19-21) he (Paul) said could not inherit the kingdom of God' (*Adv. Marc.* V.10). Thus, those people '*who are in the flesh cannot please God* (Rom. 8:8)' (*Adv. Marc.* V.10). It is obvious for Tertullian that Paul was speaking in figurative language, 'for when shall we be able to please God if not while we are in this flesh? There is, I suppose, no other time for us to work in' (*Adv. Marc.* V.10). Living human beings are *always* in the flesh. The issue at hand is the works of the flesh, whether they are good or evil, for 'condemnation is passed not on that in which evil is done, but on the evil that is done' (*Adv. Marc.* V.10).

The distinction that Tertullian makes in ch. 10 between the innocent substance of the flesh and the sin that corrupts it is helpful for him in order to explicate the ambivalent passages of 1 Cor. 15:50 and Gal. 5:19-21 as they relate to the human condition at the threshold of heaven. Tertullian changes his focus to Christ's flesh in *Adv. Marc.* V.14. In a similar fashion to ch. 10,

[39] My translation. Evans translates the singular *qualitas* (gen. *qualitatis*) as 'attributes'. This may not be the best choice because an attribute in philosophical discourse generally describes something that is intrinsically part of the nature of the substance, rather than a quality or accident, which can be changeable.

[40] Tertullian explains this by stating that 'his [Paul's] custom in other places besides is to let a substance stand for the works of that substance' (*Adv. Marc.* V.10).

Tertullian also makes use of 1 Cor. 15:50 in his argument to affirm that that which does not inherit the Kingdom of God is 'the works of the flesh', and not 'flesh'.

Tertullian begins ch. 14 by affirming that Christ's flesh was real: 'That the Father sent Christ *in the likeness of flesh of sin* (Rom. 8:3) is no reason for saying that the flesh which was visible in him was a phantasm' (*Adv. Marc.* V.14). He begins his argument by providing the controversial verse (Rom. 8:3) that the Docetists would have used to support their arguments. Tertullian argues that Christ could not only have been a spirit while appearing as flesh because 'among opposites there is no similitude. Spirit could not be described as *likeness of flesh* because neither could flesh take upon it the likeness of spirit: if it was visible as that which it was not, it would be described as "phantasm". But it is called "likeness" when it is what it is seen to be.' He is arguing from his Stoic metaphysics, which hold that everything that exists has substance.[41] Substances of different kinds have different properties and therefore cannot be equated. A spirit too has its distinct substance, which is much finer than the flesh, finer even than the soul.[42] It is 'invisible and intangible' and therefore cannot ever be confused with flesh (*Apol.* 22).[43] Because

[41] Eliezar Gonzalez writes: 'Stoicism, which was highly influential during the emergence of Christianity, taught that "everything that 'exists' is corporeal" and only things that were imagined could be said to be incorporeal. Even Plato dealt with "something more like a spectrum of essences," rather than the radical ontological Cartesian dichotomies. In the thought of Antiochus of Ascalon, who promoted a form of Platonism that was adjusted to fit in with Stoic doctrines, there was no distinction between the corporeal and incorporeal' (Eliezer Gonzalez, 'Anthropologies of Continuity: The Body and Soul in Tertullian, Perpetua, and Early Christianity,' *JECS* 21.4 (2013): 482.

[42] Joseph Moingt notes that 'the graduation between spirit, soul, and flesh, is that of density and its energetic mass' (Joseph Moingt, *Substantialité et individualité*, vol. 2 of *Théologie trinitaire de Tertullien*, 4 vols., Théologie 38 (Paris: Aubier, 1966), 327). See also footnote 58 below.

[43] The Bible has many stories of angels appearing to humans, and God does not deceive the senses of the humans by making the bodies of angels seem to be something that they are not. Tertullian argues that when angels appear in the Bible, they too have real human bodies—they do not merely appear to have real bodies but in fact have real bodies—but this is only because God makes these bodies for them for their appearance on earth. Although they are believed to be spirits when they dwell in the spiritual-heavenly realm, they are given real human bodies when they encounter humans (cf. *Carn. Chr.* 3).

God is supremely good and true, he does not play the illusionist by deceiving peoples' senses by appearing as one thing but being altogether something else.[44] Would this be an honest God?

Having made his point that that which people saw in Christ was real flesh, Tertullian turns to Rom. 7:23 and 8:3 in order to equate the substance of Christ's flesh with that of humans:

> That the Father sent Christ *in the likeness of flesh of sin* (Rom. 8:3) is no reason for saying that the flesh which was visible in him was a phantasm. The Apostle has just recently attributed (*adscripsit*) sin to the flesh, and has called it *the law of sin dwelling in his members and warring against the law of the mind* (Rom. 7:23). For this purpose, then, he says the Son was sent *in the likeness of flesh of sin*, that he might redeem the flesh of sin by a similar substance, a fleshly substance, such as should be similar to sinful flesh, while not itself sinful. For in this will consist the power of God, in using a similar substance to accomplish salvation. (*Adv. Marc.* V.14)

If Christ had come to redeem human beings, then he must have had the same substance, for how else would he have redeemed real flesh? The use of Rom. 7:23 in *Adv. Marc.* V.14 supports his view that sin is really present in the flesh. This needs to be affirmed in order to state next that Christ had to assume human flesh if the flesh was in need of salvation. Finally, Tertullian surmises that Paul used the word 'likeness' in order to distinguish between substance and accident. The flesh of Christ was of the same substance as that of the human, although it was not the same with regard to its accidents, especially sin.

[44] Thus, 'God is not a liar' in *Adv. Marc.* I.11 and II.28, and 'God is not an illusionist' in V.20.

The above quote from *Adv. Marc.* V.14 also sheds some light on how Tertullian understands 'another law' and 'the law of sin' in Rom. 7:23. Tertullian perceives the sin that is ascribed to the flesh to be 'the law of sin dwelling in his [Paul's] members.' Secondly, he equates 'the law of sin' with 'another law' as he replaces the latter with the former in his allusion to Rom. 7:23a, for the Greek text reads: *ἕτερον νόμον ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου ἀντιστρατευόμενον τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοός μου* ('*another law* [not *the law of sin,* which appears in 7:23b] in my members warring against the law of my mind'). For Tertullian, then, the sin that dwells in the flesh is synonymous with 'the law of sin' and 'another law' that dwells in one's members.

In summary, Chapters 10 and 14 of *Adversus Marcionem* V have illustrated Tertullian's argument in support of the resurrection of the flesh by distinguishing substance from accident. The philosophical arguments that make up Tertullian's defence are securely situated in the Greek philosophical tradition, most notably that of Aristotle and his metaphysics.[45] The substance of the flesh is distinct from the accidents of the flesh, which are changeable. The former's nature was created good and was only reversibly corrupted by sin, an example of the latter.

Tertullian's use of Rom. 7:23 also sheds some light on how he understands the verse, even though he is only using it as a proof text. The 'I' for Tertullian is Paul, 'the Apostle', who is securely the author of the text and to whom Tertullian returns when quoting Romans with the use of third person masculine pronouns (see the analysis above for *Adv. Marc.* V.14). Although Paul is the 'I' of Rom. 7:23 here, the argument is applicable to every postlapsarian person who has corrupted the good substance of the flesh with sin, for Christ came to redeem *all* of sinful humanity, and not just Paul.

[45] See especially Aristotle's *Categories*, where things 'said-of' something describe a substance's attributes (1a20-23) while things 'present-in' something describe a substance's accidents (1a24 and following; in 1a25, he gives 'grammatical knowledge' as an example of an accident/something 'present-in').

Finally, through his use of the verse, Tertullian reveals to the reader what the meaning of 'another law' and 'the law of sin' is for him. As he is using the substance of the flesh and the accident of sin in this argument, he needs to find a Pauline text in which there are two clearly distinguishable entities. As such, he sees 'another law in my members' and 'the law of sin' as simply meaning 'sin', which then allows him to use the verse as a proof text in his argument in order to show that Paul, the great authority on the matter, sees some element in the flesh that is not supposed to be there.

Who or what is responsible for sin in the flesh?

Once Tertullian has made a distinction between the flesh's substance and its accidents in his argument, he often continues with an examination of *who* or *what* is responsible for introducing sin into the flesh. Is it the flesh's fault or is it the soul's fault? Or still some other external agent? Which one will be punished at the last judgment? Tertullian elaborates on the soul's culpability in the guilt that the flesh bears in *De resurrectione mortuorum* (written c. 210 CE), which builds on its predecessor *De carne Christi* in defending the dignity of human flesh and its ultimate resurrection.[46] Yes, it is true that the Apostle

> frequently stigmatises the flesh. For though he says that *in his flesh dwelleth no good thing* (Rom. 7:18), though he affirms that *those who are in the flesh cannot please God* (Rom. 8:8), because *the flesh lusteth against the spirit* (Gal. 5:17)…I shall reply later on that no

[46] '…for this reason I also have issued a preparatory volume *On the Flesh of Christ*…' (*Res. carn.* 2)

reproach ought in a particular sense to be brought against the flesh, but only for a reproof to the soul which subdues the flesh to menial service to itself. (*Res. mort.* 10)

According to *Res. mort.* 10, the soul is responsible for sin, for the soul directs the actions of the flesh. The flesh only does what it is bid, for it is the soul's instrument. Similar conclusions are found in Tertullian's earlier work *De anima*[47] (written c. 206/7 CE).[48] Because the soul's survival depends on the survival of the flesh, the soul must concern itself with the workings of the flesh (*De an.* 38). The soul is the flesh's master: the soul is the charioteer or rider, while the flesh is the horse and chariot (*De an.* 53; similarly in *Res. mort.* 7).

This overemphasis on the innocence of the flesh is short-lived in *Res. mort.* 10, however. Tertullian has his Gnostic opponents in mind when he is writing these works, for he has to defend the goodness of the flesh at all costs. The waters become a bit muddied when he approaches the topic of the resurrection of the body. Tertullian provides the reason for the resurrection of the flesh a few chapters later: judgment and salvation (*Res. mort.* 14). Judgment and salvation prove that God is at the same time righteous Judge, Lord, Maker, and God (*Res. mort.* 14). In order for God to be truly a righteous judge, his judgment must be 'plenary and complete', that is, 'the divine censureship presides over the judgement of both the human substances, the flesh no less than the soul…he (each human being) must be made present in both, seeing he needs to be judged as a whole, as assuredly he has not lived except as a whole' (*Res. mort.* 14).

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[47] All Latin and English quotations from Tertullian's *De anima* are from: Tertullian and J.H. Waszink, *De Anima. Latin Edition with a Commentary* (Amsterdam: J.M. Meulenhoff, 1947); Tertullian, Rudolph Arbesmann, Emily Joseph Daly, and Edwin A. Quain, *Tertullian: Apologetical Works and Minucius Felix Octavius. A New Translation*, FC 10 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1950).

[48] Barnes, *Tertullian*, 55.

If the flesh remains completely innocent (as implied above in *Res. mort.* 10), then it will not need to appear before God at the last judgment, nor will it need a saviour made of flesh to save it. But Christ came to save flesh and soul. The flesh, then, must also be guilty for the sinful actions that were committed by it, even though the soul directed it. In fact, Tertullian affirms that no sin of the soul can be committed without the flesh, for even thoughts implicate the flesh (*Res. mort.* 15). Tertullian asks: 'Is it possible therefore to attach sentence even to receptacles and tools, that they too may share in the merits of their owners and principals?' (*Res. mort.* 16) The analogy can only go so far, he notes, for a tool, such as a cup, which he employs to illustrate his point as we have seen above in *Adv. Marc.* V.10, is materially external to the human being, 'whereas the flesh, being since its origin in the womb, conceived and formed and brought to birth in company with the soul, is also in every operation commingled with it.' It is a vessel that contains the soul (2 Cor. 4:7), true, but it is also called 'outer man' (2 Cor. 4:16) and therefore still nevertheless '"man" because of the community of nature which makes it in operations not a tool but a servant. So also, as a servant, it will be held to judgement, even though of itself it does no thinking, because it is the portion of that which thinks, not its chattel' (*Res. mort.* 16). Tertullian then makes use of Rom. 8:3 in order to support this claim. He writes: 'The Apostle, with this in mind, that the flesh does nothing of itself that is not imputed to the soul, none the less judges the flesh sinful (Rom. 8:3), lest because it seems to be set in motion by the soul it should be thought to have been set free of judgement.'

The allusion to Rom. 8:3 provides Tertullian with a scriptural basis for supporting his view that the flesh was also sinful. 'It must be true because the Apostle said so.' The doctrine is essential in order to be able to argue for the necessity of a flesh-and-soul saviour, who would have come to save *both* substances. If the flesh had not been sinful, then there would have been

no need for a saviour to take on human flesh in order to redeem it along with the soul, and the heretics would have been right![49] This way of thinking about the flesh—that it is guilty of sin despite not having a will of its own—would have been inseparable from his view that the flesh and soul really must be so intimately commingled and practically indistinguishable[50] that they really do act as one in everything, even in thought, an action that was purely an intellectual activity for most Greeks (cf. *Res. mort.* 15).

His less polemical works offer additional insights into his views on the flesh and soul's shared responsibility for sin. In the earlier work *De paenitentia*[51] (written 198/203 CE),[52] Tertullian states:

> Some [sins] are carnal and others spiritual, since man is composed of this two-fold substance, but the sins are equal because the two, body and spirit, are one. Both are creatures of God, one wrought by his hands and the other consummated by his *afflatus.* Both equally live, die, and are raised in the resurrection. Both sin, and so repentance is

[49] The heretics would have been right indeed from the opposite side of the argument, meaning, that the flesh for them is the source of sin and thus by nature sinful and irredeemable. Therefore, the saviour would definitely not have come in the flesh to save something that should not and *could not* be saved.

[50] Osborn writes: 'The insistence on unity ("twofold quality … conjoined in one person … flesh and spirit can be in one" [*Adv. Prax.* 27]) is sustained through a Stoic concept of interpenetration of physical bodies, by which each retains its specific qualities and is not replaced by a third thing. For Tertullian, as for all Stoics, the phrase "two in one" means the interpenetration of two bodies, their physical union in "total blending". He takes his version of two natures from scripture (in particular Rom. 1.3 and following and John. 1.14) and rejects both Gnostic dualism and Marcion's docetism' (Eric Francis Osborn, *Tertullian: First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 141).

[51] All Latin and English quotations from Tertullian's *De paenitentia* are from: Tertullian, *La pénitence*, tr. and ed. with an introduction and notes by Charles Munier, SC 316 (Paris: Cerf, 1984). Tertullian, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Cox, rev. Am. ed., ANF 3, ed. Philip Schaff (Edinburgh; Grand Rapids: T&T Clark; Eerdmans, 1993).

[52] Barnes, *Tertullian*, 55.

necessary for both. …Sins in deed are corporeal, sins of the mind are spiritual; but sins are not of deed only, but also of will. (*De paen.* 3)

His views on the connection of the two substances matured between the writing of *De paenitentia* and *De anima* (c. 206/8 CE).[53] In this work, it appears that the senses bridge the substantial gap between flesh and soul (*De an.* 6 and 17). He writes: 'incorporeal objects can be perceived by the bodily senses: thus, sound by the hearing, color by the sight, odors by the sense of smell, in all of which cases the soul has contact with the body' (*De an.* 6). A few chapters further, he continues: 'But, what is the basis of thought, if not the senses? Whence does the mind get the idea the tower is really round, unless from the senses? Whence comes the act of sensation, if not from the soul? On the other hand, a soul without a body would experience no sensation' (*De an.* 17). Tertullian maintains that all life is dependent on the senses and the senses are a second source of knowledge, giving rise to the arts, politics, etc. 'Without the senses', concludes Tertullian, 'the only rational being in creation would thus be incapable of intelligence or learning, or even of founding an Academy!' (*De an.* 17)

Another important passage that addresses the flesh-soul connection is found in *Res. mort.* 46 because Tertullian brings Rom. 8:6-7 ('the mind of the flesh') into the argument. Tertullian devotes *Res. mort.* 46 to demonstrating that Paul never condemned the flesh *per se,* but rather the works of the flesh, an argument not dissimilar to that already seen above in *Adv. Marc*. His next task is to analyse 'the mind of the flesh' (*sensus carnis*, Rom. 8:6-7) and how it fits into the argument. He sees that the soul, 'the mind of the flesh', and 'sin dwelling in the flesh', are intimately connected. Firstly, he reasons that 'the mind of the flesh' cannot be ascribed to the

[53] Barnes, *Tertullian*, 55.

substance of the flesh 'unless you prove that the flesh has any consciousness of its own (*si probaveris aliquid carnem de suo sapere*)' (*Res. mort.* 46). If the flesh has no consciousness, then the consciousness must belong to the soul because 'apart from the soul it has no mind (*sine anima nullius est sensus*)' (*Res. mort.* 46).

Tertullian surmises that Paul must have used 'the mind of the flesh' to refer to the soul, which is given over to the works of the flesh as 'it [the soul] is for a time accounted to the flesh because it is for the sake of the flesh and by means of the flesh that it is administered (*carni interdum deputatum quia propter carnem et per carnem administratur*)' (*Res. mort.* 46). Tertullian then reminds the reader that 'transgression dwells in the flesh (Rom. 7:17), because the soul also, by which transgression is introduced, is an inmate of the flesh.' The implication is that the substance of the flesh becomes sinful when a sinful soul dwells in it and this results in the flesh dominating (administering) the soul so that what is done by the person is for the sake of the flesh. This is an important passage because Tertullian comes close to exhibiting the flesh's dominance over the soul in Paul's struggles in Rom. 7:14-23.[54] This is supported by Osborn's observation that 'in metaphysics, Tertullian's Stoic materialism excludes the plea that spirit is willing and flesh weak. His concluding words are that there is nothing stronger than the flesh which crushes out the spirit *(pud.* 22).'[55] Tertullian's work *De ieiunio: adversus psychicos* is largely devoted to those whose souls are ruled by the desires of the flesh.

The substance-accident argument is approached in a different manner in *Res. mort.* 51, wherein he specifies what is the corruptor of the flesh and what is the corrupted. He alludes to

[54] It may seem that Tertullian is contradicting himself here, since we have seen above (p. 55), especially in the cup analogy, that it is the soul that is responsible for the sins committed by the flesh, whereas here it seems the other way around. However, it is the soul that *first* introduces the flesh to sin, thereby introducing the flesh to a vicious cycle, but the first movement towards sin is still committed by the soul, and not by the flesh.

[55] Osborn, *Tertullian*, 173.

Gal. 5:19-21 in order to explicate his argument. Paul listed a number of sinful behaviours and named these 'the works of the flesh' (Gal. 5:19-21a), while in v. 21b he wrote that 'those who do such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God.' This allows Tertullian to conclude that it is not the flesh that is the corruptor, but rather it is the flesh that is corrupted. In a somewhat complicated passage, he writes:

> *Now, the sting of death is transgression*, and this is what corruption must mean. *And the strength of transgression (virtus autem delinquentiae) is the law* (1 Cor. 15:56), doubtless that *other law which he locates in his members, fighting against the law of his mind* (Rom. 7:23), indeed that very faculty of transgressing in spite of the will (*ipsam scilicet vim delinquendi contra voluntatem*). (*Res. mort.* 51)

'That other law' functions as that which corrupts and he describes it as *vis delinquendi*. Although Evans translates *vim* (accusative of *vis*) as 'faculty', this lexical meaning is not found in *LSLD* under the entry 'vis'. It may be best translated as 'energy', 'potency', 'strength', 'force', or 'power' (*LSLD*, '*vis*'). Philip Schaff, for example, translates the phrase as 'the actual power of sinning against the will'.[56] The corruptor of the flesh, then, is *vis,* a power that opposes the will and therefore influences the human soul to sin.

Tertullian does not elaborate further what *vis delinquendi* might mean for him, and yet other sections of his work are replete with insights on these very topics. It is nonetheless a solution to the original problem of corruption: the substances that make up the body, the flesh and the soul, if they are to inherit the Kingdom of God, must be free from that which corrupts

[56] Tertullian, ANF 3:584.

them. This corruptor is named *vis,* a power capable of opposing the will. It may be helpful to turn to Tertullian's other writings for greater clarity concerning the will and those things that may influence it.

God creates the soul at the moment in which it is joined with the flesh. It has its origin in the fiery *adflatus,* or breath, of God, which Tertullian keenly distinguishes from the Spirit (*spiritus*) of God (*Res. mort.* 7). Commenting on the moment of the creation of Adam's soul, Tertullian surmises that the soul was a 'rarefied substance' (*Adv. Marc.* II.9; see also *Adv. Marc.* V.10; *De an.* 5) that 'diffused itself through all the spaces of the body…it was condensed, taking on the lineaments that it filled and, as it were, it was frozen into the exact shape of the body' (*De an.* 9). This 'ethereally bright' substance was immortal, although not eternal, for only God is eternal (*De an.* 9). This archetypical soul, with its own eyes and ears with which it could see and hear the Lord in Paradise, which 'in the beginning took the form of the body of Adam, became the germ not only of the substance of every human soul but also of the shape that each one was to bear' (*De an.* 9).

The function of leadership that the soul has received from God is largely due to the mind, the faculty (most frequently *principale*; sometimes *suggestum* and *vis*) of the soul that can think and direct the flesh (*Ad mart.* 4; *De an.* 12–13). He refers to this faculty as the *animus*, which he equates with the Greek *voῦς* (*De an.* 12). This faculty Tertullian understands as being 'inherent and implanted in the soul and proper to it by birth and by which the soul acts and gains knowledge' (*De an.* 12). Tertullian states that

> the possession of this faculty [the mind] makes it possible for the soul to act upon itself, the soul being moved by the mind as if they were distinct substances. … to know is to feel, and

> to be moved is to feel, and the whole is a process of being acted upon. But, we see that the soul experiences none of these things unless the mind is also affected, for it is the mind which really effects all these things. (*De an.* 12)

There arise certain impulses (*pulsus* or *impulsus*) in the mind, 'emotions, passions, functions, desires' (*Adv. Herm.* 36), or concupiscence (*Res. mort.* 34), which have different sources:

> many extrinsic conditions … have a way of developing the mind … to all of which may be added the influence of higher powers (*praesunt potestates*). For, according to our teaching, such higher powers are: the Lord God and His enemy, the Devil. …They [the impulses of the mind] are conditioned by circumstances of place, education, bodily health, the influence of higher powers, and by man's own free will. (*De an.* 20; 24)

Once an impulse has arisen in the mind from one of these sources and the will has consented to it, the mind then moves the flesh by means of the soul (*Adv. Herm.* 36; *De an.* 6 and following).

Thus far the discussion has resolved around two substances, the flesh and the soul. There is yet a third substance that has influence over the human being: the spirit (*spiritus*). Tertullian makes a distinction between spirit and soul although on rare occasions he uses the terms synonymously. While soul belongs exclusively to the body of the human being, spirit is an *extrinsic* agent. This clear-cut distinction breaks down at times because spirit has two meanings

for Tertullian. Wilhite calls these two 'the personal and the impersonal.'[57] The 'impersonal' may be equated with the soul *if* the term refers to the soul's involvement in respiration (*spirare*). This function makes the soul also a 'spirit' (*spiritus*) (*De an.* 5; 11).[58]

Spiritus may also be a personal agent, and therefore an *extrinsic* spirit. Tertullian explains that 'first God gives the soul (*anima*), that is, breath (*flatus*), to the people upon the earth; that is, those living live in the body according to the flesh. After that, He gives the Spirit (*spiritus*) to those who tread upon the earth; that is, those who control the tendencies of the flesh' (*De an.* 11). 'These substances [flesh and soul]', Tertullian continues later, 'are the specific property of each man, while "Spirit and power" (*spiritus vero et virtus*) are extrinsic gifts conferred by the grace of God' (*De an.* 35). 'Spirit' may therefore be considered that which *spiritually* (i.e. the spiritual life) animates the human (*De an.* 53), for it is the Holy Spirit, "the holy minister of prayer itself [who] conducts prayer to the altar" (*Ex. cast.* 10).[59] Prelapsarian Adam was therefore first *animated* by the soul (*animale corpus*) when his flesh received the soul, which gave him the capacity to be 'afterwards a spirit-informed body (*corpus spiritale*), when it clothes itself with Spirit' (*Res. mort.* 53).

Because Adam and Eve's souls were capable of welcoming spiritual entities, they were susceptible to the action of two opposing spirits, that of the Spirit of God and that of the Devil,

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[57] Wilhite, 'The Spirit of Prophecy,' 50 and following.

[58] Sometimes Tertullian uses *anima* and *spiritus* interchangeably to refer to the soul. See fn. 6 above for a note on Tertullian's use of anthropological terms. For example, in *De bapt.* 4, Tertullian notes that the flesh and spirit both share the guilt of sin (and not the flesh and soul, as one might expect from his other writings, as analysed above): 'Sins do not show themselves in our flesh, so persons are therefore foul in the spirit, which is the author of the sin; the spirit is lord, and the flesh servant, although they mutually share the guilt: the spirit on account of the command and the flesh on account of subservience' (*De Bapt.* 4).

[59] All Latin and English quotations from Tertullian's *De exhortatione castitatis* are from: Tertullian, *Treatises on Marriage and Remarriage: To His Wife; An Exhortation to Chastity; Monogamy*, tr. with an introduction by William P. Le Saint, ACW 13 (Westminster: Newman, 1951); Tertullian, *Exhortation à la chasteté*, translated and ed. with an introduction and notes by Jean-Claude Fredouille and Claudio Moreschini, SC 319 (Paris: Cerf, 1985).

who is also a spirit (*Adv. Marc.* II.10; *De an.* 11; 14). The Spirit of God was already present in Adam and Eve to a certain extent from God's *adflatus*. Tertullian hypothesises that the breath of God gave the prelapsarian human the gift of divine reason (*De an.* 16). Reason, in turn, gave the human the ability to recognise God and to steer the flesh in an ordered manner (*De an.* 16; *Adv. Marc.* II.6). Tertullian therefore maintains that Adam was already spiritual, but then 'reverted back to the condition of a psychic (*psychicum*) after the spiritual ecstasy (*post ecstasin spiritalem*)…[for] he yielded more readily to his belly than to God' (*De ie.* 3).[60] This view is also supported in *De bapt.* 5: 'in days bygone [the human] had been conformed to the image of God (image in his form, and likeness in his eternity), for he receives again [in baptism] that Spirit of God which he had then first received from His *afflatus* (*adflatu*), but had afterwards lost through sin.'

An *irrational* element (*inrationale*) would come into the postlapsarian human's soul. This foreign element, inserted into the soul by the Devil through Adam and Eve's disobedience, Tertullian calls the 'secondary element, the later and depraved part' (*De an.* 16). Tertullian makes explicit reference to Plato's theory of the two elements (*rationale* and *inrationale*) of the soul in *De an.* 16. Tertullian here proposes that Plato was not entirely accurate, however, for 'it is impossible that that be irrational which came from the will of God; in fact, resulted from His very breath' (*De an.* 16). If the soul came directly from God, who is purely rational and has nothing irrational in him, then it would be impossible for the irrational part of the soul to have its

[60] All Latin and English quotations from Tertullian's *De ieiunio: adversus psychicos* are from: A. Cleveland Coxe, ed., *Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second*, tr. Sydney Thelwall, Robert Ernest Wallis, and Frederick Crombie, rev. Am. ed., ANF 4 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); Tertullian, *De ieiuno, adversus psychicos*, ed. with an introduction and notes by A. Reifferscheid and G. Wissowa, CSEL 20 (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1890).

origin in God. This brought Tertullian to the conclusion that the irrational element of the soul must have come from the Devil:

> the irrational element must be thought to have come later, resulting from the suggestion of the serpent and producing the very act of the first transgression. From then on, this irrational element became imbedded in the soul, developed with the soul, and, as it happened at the very beginning of the soul's existence, gave every appearance of being an essential element of the soul. (*De an.* 16)

Thus, 'the impulse to sin proceeds from the Devil and, since all sin is irrational (*inrationale*), the irrational therefore proceeds from the Devil whence comes sin. Sin is alien to the nature of God, as is also anything irrational. The distinction, then, between these two elements of the soul arises from the difference of their authors' (*De an.* 16).[61] It is important to note that Tertullian does not believe that the addition of the irrational element ontologically changed the substance of the flesh (as has been seen above). There was no 'new human nature' or 'second nature' that resulted from the Fall. The irrational is an 'add-on' and best understood through the lens of the above discussion on Tertullian's distinction between substance and accident, how sin is not connatural with the substances of the body and soul but rather an accident that can just as easily be removed as it has been added (*De an.* 41; 52).[62] M.C.

[61] Similarly, in *De spect.* 2, Tertullian affirms this change rather strongly: 'his [the Lord's] foe, the great corrupter, the corrupting and God-opposing angel overthrew in the beginning the virtue of man so as to entirely change his nature—created, like His own, for perfect sinlessness—into his own state of wicked enmity against his Maker.'

[62] M.C Steenberg, 'Impatience and Humanity's Sinful State in Tertullian of Carthage,' *VC* 62.2 (2008): 107–32, here especially pp. 116 and following.

Steenberg argues convincingly that Tertullian, when writing about the human's fallen nature, does not mean a *new* nature, but rather a new and perverted way of acting ('not as a perversion of nature, but a perversion of act').[63] It is a question of the postlapsarian human's 'economic, rather than ontological, nature'.[64]

The insertion of the irrational into the human soul was not an unwanted intrusion. Tertullian affirms the God-given free will: 'Man was created by God as a free man, with the power to choose, to act, for himself. Man corresponds to the form of God through the nature of his soul, and here to freely choose and act is the supreme characteristic of God' (*Adv. Marc.* II.5). Tertullian understands this gift of freedom to be for the sake of freely imitating God in doing the good while freely rejecting the temptations of the Devil: 'there was granted to him complete freedom of choice in either direction, that as his own master he might boldly confront goodness by choosing to maintain it, and evil by choosing to avoid it' (*Adv. Marc.* II.6). Humans have to choose to whom to give access to their souls, however: 'the Devil did not impose upon him [Adam] the volition to sin, but subministered material to the volition. …when you have willed, it follows that he subjects you to himself, not by having wrought volition in you, but by having found a favourable opportunity in your volition' (*Ex. cast.* 2). The influence of the Devil on the human mind is therefore due to an initial *yes* of the will to the Devil's suggestions, the result of which was that the Holy Spirit departed from Adam and Eve, for 'what is unclean has no party with the holy, unless to defile and slay it by its own (nature). …Where He is, there the evil one is not' (*Ad ux.* II.2, 8; similarly in *De or.* 12).[65] This 'primordial sin' (*primordiale*

[63] Steenberg, 'Impatience and Humanity's Sinful State,' 109.

[64] Steenberg, 'Impatience and Humanity's Sinful State,' 110.

[65] All Latin and English quotations from Tertullian's *Ad uxorem* are from: Tertullian *À son épouse*, tr. and ed. with an introduction and notes by Charles Munier, SC 273 (Paris: Cerf, 1980); ANF 4.

delictum; *De iu.* 3) greatly affected Adam's soul because 'the Devil corrupted [it] by injecting the seed of sin' (*Adv. Marc.* V.17).

The human being's task of returning to God is made difficult not only because human nature has been weakened, but also because the evil spirit continues to plague the human both from within and from without. 'Satan and his angels have filled the whole world'[66] (*De spect.* 8) and 'this vicious power (*vis*) [the Devil] … roams all over with complete freedom' (*De an.* 46) to the extent that he uses everything good in the world to direct humans by means of 'promiscuous employment' towards himself (*Cor. mil.* 6; 8). The worldly pollutions devised by the Devil (especially the games, idolatrous ceremonies, etc.) are 'digested in the very spirit and soul' (*De spect.* 13), which, in turn 'disturb the mind, producing movements in the inner man' (*De spect.* 15). Evil spirits violently assault the body and 'their marvellous subtleness and tenuity give them access to both parts of our nature' (*Apol*. 22) and 'by an influence equally obscure, demons and angels breathe (*adspiratio*) into the soul, and rouse up its corruptions with furious passions and vile excesses' (*Apol*. 22; similarly in *Apol.* 27).[67] Evil communal practices mould human beings even from their birth (and sometimes even before birth!) and thus human beings are plunged into a world of sin—what we would call today 'social sin'—from the very beginning of their lives.[68]

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[66] All Latin and English quotations from Tertullian's *De spectaculis* are from: Tertullian, *Les spectacles*, tr. and ed. with an introduction and notes by Marie Turcan, SC 332 (Paris: Cerf, 1986); Tertullian, *Christian and Pagan in the Roman Empire: The Witness of Tertullian*, tr. with an introduction and notes by Robert D. Sider, Selections from FC 2 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2001).

[67] All Latin and English quotations from Tertullian's *Apologeticum* are from: Tertullian, *Apologeticum. Verteidigung des Christentums. Lateinisch und Deutsch*, tr. Carl Becker (München: Kösel, 1961); Tertullian and Minucius Felix Octavius, *Tertullian: Apologetical Works and Minucius Felix Octavius. A New Translation*, tr. with an introduction by Rudolph Arbesmann, Emily Joseph Daly, and Edwin A. Quain, FC 10 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1950).

[68] Tertullian sees the influence of the environment on the human being as even starting from the crib. In *De an.* 39.1-2, Tertullian writes that 'the Devil lies in wait to trap every human soul from the moment of its birth, to which he is invited to assist by all the superstitious practices which surround child-birth. All men are born

As children and later, adults, naturally pick up good or evil habits from their communities, the communal pressures on individual decisions are tremendously strong and happen naturally. Humans are caught up in their regular communal cycles, imitating what they see done around them. According to Tertullian, then, the Devil is indeed very active from without by way of every possible means.

The exploration of these passages can now allow us to make sense of Tertullian's concise statement in *Res. mort.* 51: 'indeed that very faculty of transgressing in spite of the will (*ipsam scilicet vim delinquendi contra voluntatem*)'. We have seen that sin has its origins in the irrational element of the soul (*De an.* 16 and following). This irrational element, the product of the evil spirit's activity in the soul and frequently from without by means of evil communal practices, may therefore be understood to have a certain power to sway the human's will away from choosing to do good and towards choosing to do evil.

A force capable of bending the human will towards a conscious decision to do evil can only be a conscious force, the evil spirit. However, it is not necessarily a matter of demonic possession for Tertullian. Although the evil spirit is at work *in* and *on* the person, it has been given access through the human's assent to its alluring suggestions over the course of many years of sinful living and constantly being exposed to sinful practices. It is the mind that is ultimately the culprit because it allows evil to enter and to direct the flesh and soul to sin. Adam and Eve's deliberate choice to disobey God resulted in human beings' weakened resolve and will because they are no longer Spirit-filled as was originally intended by God. Because of this, the *vis* is therefore able to take hold of a person and will increase in strength unless the person

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surrounded by the idolatry of the midwife; the wombs from which they are born are still wrapped in the ribbons which were hung on the idols, and thus the child is consecrated to the demons.'

consciously responds to it by opposing it with discipline, which can only be realised successfully if the person is Spirit-filled.[69]

Conclusion

In the first section of this chapter, I have analysed Tertullian's use of selected passages from Rom. 7:21–8:2 in his polemical works against various unorthodox writers. As the verses are used in a polemical context, it is understandable that Tertullian does not comment on them for their own sake but rather he makes use of them in two larger arguments. These arguments pertain to discussions about the flesh and the resurrection of Christ and of the human. In the first argument, he distinguishes the substance of the flesh from its accidents, especially sin, and in the second, he blames the soul for the flesh's guilt. Tertullian shows that the substances of the flesh and soul are good because God created them. That which corrupts these great works of God is sin, and it is sin that will prevent the body from entering into the Kingdom of God rather than the substances of the body.

The exposition of Tertullian's writings support the argument of this thesis, namely, that Tertullian uses Aristotelian philosophical concepts to argue in support of the goodness of both the flesh and the soul. He does not merely hint at Greek philosophy but rather explicitly uses philosophical terms that have their origin in Aristotle's writings on metaphysics. It is primarily

[69] Tertullian may be accused of showing early signs of Pelagianism. This is not a fair assessment of his doctrine, however. Fighting off the irrational element is only possible through self-discipline, but self-discipline can only be truly effective if the human being is filled with the Spirit of God and has the gifts of the Spirit to be disciplined. Christ serves as the ultimate model and teacher in how to live a disciplined life, although Tertullian is nonetheless realistic and realises that only Christ is without sin, while everyone else is still susceptible to sin (see *De an.* 41, wherein Tertullian clarifies that the only human being without sin in all of history has been Christ).

on these philosophical concepts that he bases his arguments, thereby putting Scripture at the service of philosophical arguments as proof texts. Furthermore, in addition to Aristotle, Tertullian relies on Stoic metaphysics to develop his arguments on how the different substances relate to each other, especially those of the flesh, soul, and spirit. For the Stoics, everything has some kind of corporality. The more spiritual something is, the finer its body. This helped Tertullian understand how the soul permeates through the body and how sin and 'the law of sin' might also permeate the body. This also helped him formulate his distinctive view of the irrational and how it contaminates human nature, just as the rational Logos in the Stoic system permeates all things, though in the case of the irrational, it is not of the Logos but of the Devil, which he hypothesises is behind the mysterious *vis* that bends the will towards sin and away from God.

Romans 7:23, 8:3, and 8:8 appear a number of times in arguments concerning the resurrection of the flesh in 1 Cor. 15:50 and Gal. 5:19-21. Because the central argument revolves around the 1 Corinthian and Galatian passages, it would appear that these passages trigger the use of the Roman passages rather than the other way around. The issue in *Adv. Marc*. V.10 is the human's resurrection of the flesh and inheritance of the kingdom of God, while that in *Adv. Marc*. V.14 is Christ's real fleshly incarnation for the purpose of saving the whole human, including the flesh. The limiting factor is sin. Sin prevents the flesh from entering into the Kingdom of God (*Adv. Marc*. V.10) and sin distinguishes our flesh from that of Christ (*Adv. Marc*. V.14). Lastly, according to *Adv. Marc*. V.14, 'the law of sin' and 'another law' are equated with 'sin'.

I now turn to two treatises that are *generally* less polemical than the three works discussed above. They are nonetheless strong exhortations, as Tertullian is fighting what he believes to be the laxity that was slowly creeping into the church.

2. Romans 8:2 in a treatise on Christian ethics and discipline

Tertullian makes reference to Rom. 8:2 in *De pudicitia*[70] (written c. 210/11 CE), one of his treatises on Christian ethics and discipline.[71] The treatise *De ieiunio: adversus psychicos* (also written c. 210/11 CE), although it does not refer to 7:21–8:2, will also be included in this section because Tertullian makes use of Rom. 8:8 in an argument that is very similar to those found in Section 1 and sheds more light on the impact of the presence and absence of the Spirit in the human's life. Although he is engaging a different kind of interlocutor in these works (no longer unorthodox writers), caution must still be maintained when reading them, as it is evident that Tertullian focuses more on certain things that he himself holds dear; for example, the reader will quickly notice that there is a great deal of emphasis on asceticism while there is little to nothing on divine mercy or love. The historical circumstances of the late second and early third century Carthaginian church may partly account for this.

David Rankin remarks that 'the history of the North African church during its first 500 years is, in great part, a history of martyrdom.'[72] Carthage, 'the second city of the Empire', saw more persecutions of Christians than any other city in the Empire during this time. From the

[70] All Latin and English quotations from Tertullian's *De pudicitia* are from: Tertullian, *La pudicité*, tr. and ed. with an introduction and notes by Charles Munier and Claudio Micaelli, SC 394–95 (Paris: Cerf, 1993); ANF 4.

[71] Barnes, *Tertullian*, 55.

[72] David Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 10.

beginning of the reign of Commodus to the end of that of Caracalla (c. 180-217 CE), North African Christians experienced three or perhaps four significant persecutions.[73] The difficult conditions in which the church found itself contributed to the 'traditional rigorism and conservatism' of the Carthaginian church of Tertullian's time. It is thus understandable how 'the natural rigour and fervour of African religious expression was a natural seed-bed for a severe, extreme form of Christianity and church life.'[74] The North Africans had to fight for what they believed with their very lives. This was the air in which Tertullian lived and worked. One of Tertullian's most famous phrases, 'the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church' (*Apol.* 50), was undoubtedly the fruit of this arduous context.

De ieiunio is directed against Christians in the mainstream church ('these will be warnings both to people and bishops, even spiritual ones', see *De ie.* 16) who probably attacked the Montanists for their extra fasts. The treatise is a rigorous defence of fasting and *extra* days of fasting with the help of a plethora of scriptural passages. Tertullian notes that even the pagans have extra fasts in extraordinary cases (*De ie.* 16). *Psychicos* is the term Tertullian gives to someone who is only flesh and soul (*ψυχή*is the Greek word for 'soul', hence the name), without Spirit. The *psychicoi* (the plural form of *psychicos*) inordinately enjoy the pleasures of the world. They overeat and overdrink, which leads them to overindulge in sexual activities (*De ie.* 1). Addressing these *psychicoi* in an ironic tone, Tertullian writes: 'Men of soul and flesh alone as you are, justly do you reject things spiritual' (*De ie.* 17). Still further, he notes: 'Sure we are that *they who are in the flesh cannot please God* (Rom. 8:8), not, of course, those who are in the substance of the flesh, but in the care, the affection, the work, the will, of it' (*De ie.* 17).

[73] Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church*, 14 and following.

[74] Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church*, 16.

The 'care, affection, work, and will' of the flesh are painstakingly exemplified throughout the work. Any form of gratification of the body for pleasure's sake—the overindulgence of food, drink, or sensuality—is strictly forbidden, for it turns the person away from spiritual things. The use of Rom. 8:8 echoes previous uses of the same verse. In order to avoid any confusion with Gnostics, who despise the flesh, Tertullian is quick to specify that it is not the flesh *per se* that is at fault, but its sinful works.

The last work to be examined is *De pudicitia.* As in *De ieiunio*, Tertullian treats 'the works of the flesh' in great detail in *De pudicitia*. Having heard about a local bishop's edict (Agrippinus of Carthage?) and one from the bishop of Rome (pope Callistus) that adulterers and fornicators might be forgiven and readmitted into the church, Tertullian launches a full assault against church leaders and the grave mistake of forgiving previously unforgivable sins.[75] He severely criticises the scriptural exegesis that these leaders use to back up their edicts as 'curious niceties' that would eventually lead people away from the truth (*De pud.* 9). Modesty is Tertullian's answer to sexual indulgence, for modesty is 'the flower of manners, the honour of our bodies, the grace of the sexes, the integrity of the blood, the guarantee of our race, the basis of sanctity, the pre-indication of every good disposition' (*De pud.* 1).

De pudicitia 16 is devoted to defending the consistency of Paul's ethical teachings across his whole corpus. Tertullian quotes several passages from Paul's letters to show that Paul was teaching the same ethic in all of his works. He argues that Paul appeared not to pardon any sexual offenders (incest, adultery, and fornication) because this would have introduced laxity into the Christian community. He surmises that the prohibition of sexual intercourse outside of

[75] In *De pud.* 19, Tertullian presents two categories of sins, those that could be forgiven, and those that could not.

marriage would no longer be feared. Chapter 17 begins in a similar vein. Tertullian quotes passages from 1 Thess. 2:3, 1 Thess. 4:3-5, Gal. 5:19-21, and Gal. 9:21, to demonstrate that the works of the flesh, especially fornication and lust, are forbidden, and those who commit them will not enter the Kingdom of God. He then quotes the whole of Rom. 6:1-11 to demonstrate that Christ died once for all, and since we have also died in him once for all, then we cannot live again for 'such heinous sins' as fornication and adultery (*De pud.* 17). He concludes this train of thought with Rom. 6:13 ('if you live according to the flesh, then you will die, but if you put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit, then you will live') to exhort the readers no longer to give their members over to the works of the flesh as they did before, but rather to works of righteousness.

Tertullian desires to exemplify this before-after dynamic of baptism with Paul's *before* and *after* experience. It does not seem to be a fitting example because there is nothing in Paul's known biography that made him sexually immoral and sexual immorality is the main 'work of the flesh' that is under discussion. Nonetheless, the following argument shifts to a contrast between life according to the Law (presumably the Mosaic Law, and so Saul before baptism) and life according to the Spirit. Tertullian reminds the audience that the Apostle wrote that 'nothing good dwells in my flesh'[76] (Rom. 7:18) in order to display that, before he received 'the law of the Spirit', he was living 'according to the law of the letter' (*secundum legem litterae*) (*De pud.* 17). 'The law of the letter', however, only makes us aware of sin but does not give us the power to overcome it. God gave 'the law of the Spirit' (Rom. 8:2) in order to give us the power to overcome sin. This law 'frees us from the infirmity of the flesh' (*De pud.* 17).

[76] The Greek reads 'in me'. Tertullian here is emphasising the flesh, which is under discussion.

Tertullian seems to be implying that Jews (esp. Saul of Tarsus) were overwhelmed by the demands of the Mosaic Law without any help to fulfil it before the Spirit was given. Tertullian supports the argument by quoting Rom. 8:3-5 to show that God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh in order to overcome the burden of the Law by fulfilling it for us. He concludes the argument with an *inclusio* by returning to the previous theme of life *before* and *after* baptism: he turns to Rom. 8:6-8 to reaffirm that sinful behaviours belong to the *past* (*De pud.* 17).

Tertullian quotes Rom. 8:2 in the context of discussing the inadequacy of the Law as an aid to fulfil the Law. Saul the Jewish Pharisee was a servant of iniquity all the while the Law was making him aware of that iniquity but the Law did not give him the power to overcome it. Sin continued to dwell in his flesh because the Law did not provide a healing remedy. This seems to be the meaning of the phrase 'no good dwelled in my flesh' for Tertullian. 'The law of the Spirit', however, can remedy the situation, which, given the immediate context, appears to mean 'the integrity and plenitude of the rules of discipline' (*integritatem et plenitudinem disciplinarum*, *De pud.* 17). Christ came to realise this 'integrity and plenitude of the rules of discipline' for our sake 'in order that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit' (*De pud.* 17; cf. Rom. 8:3-4).

Tertullian is here proposing an ethical reading of 'the law of the Spirit' in Rom. 8:2. As Christ came to be a role model for human beings and to show them how to live according to the Spirit rather than according to the flesh (Rom. 8:3 and following), so also the 'law of the Spirit' is meant to be a sure way to assist the Christian in resisting to live according to the flesh, while living according to the Spirit. For Tertullian, 'the law of the Spirit' is that which sets out for a Christian upright ethical behaviour in order to imitate Christ's upright ethical behaviour, which Christ modelled. The Spirit sets the discipline, thereby establishing (*instaurat*) the Christian

'remedies (*remedia*) to prevent the commission anew (*denuo*)' of sins against God (*De Pud.* 16). The Spirit is given to each Christian at baptism thanks to the saving work of Christ, and this Spirit strengthens the human's resolve and ability to live a good and disciplined life and to persevere in it.[77] Tertullian understands the Apostle's *σε* 'you' in Rom. 8:2 to be directed towards 'us' (*in nos dirigit integritatem et plenitudinem disciplinarum*, *De pud.* 17), that is, towards all who have been saved by Christ and given the Spirit now to live sinless lives, not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:3 and following).

Conclusion

Tertullian makes use of passages referring to the flesh in Rom. 7:21–8:2 (and 8:8) to argue for the condemnation of gratifying one's flesh (*De ie.* 17; Rom. 8:8) and for not falling back into sinful behaviours from one's life before baptism (*De pud.* 17; Rom. 7:18, 8:2-6). The argument in *De ie.* 17 follows a similar line of thought as that found in Section 1 of this chapter: those who are in the flesh cannot please God, although it is not their fleshly substance that is at fault, but its accidents, their carnally minded lives. Human beings are good by nature, but Tertullian shows that they are plunged into evil practices through the evil company they hold. The accident of sin intensifies in the substances of the flesh and soul the more sins are committed. It is a vicious cycle fuelled by peoples' surroundings and by their desire to continue to be ruled by 'the mind of the flesh' (Rom. 8:6). This kind of life—the Christian's former life before baptism—was

[77] In *De pud.* 9, Tertullian writes: 'the whole system of salvation, comprised in the maintenance of discipline, we see subverted by their interpretation' (*totum autem statum salutis in tenore disciplinae constitutum subuerti uidemus ea interpretatione*). As can be seen from this passage (and others similar to it), discipline has a central role in salvation for Tertullian.

characterised by sinful 'works of the flesh' because the human did not yet have access to the Spirit, who helps the Christian live a disciplined life (*De pud.* 17). The human had laws, even a divine Law in the case of the Jews, although law on its own was not capable of reforming the human's sinful life and giving him or her the strength to sustain a life of discipline.

Finally, Tertullian profits from the dualism found in Rom. 7:21–8:8 to emphasise the goodness of the flesh and to call the flesh to cast away its sinful works. That being said, reality shows that human beings often commit sinful acts. The situation is not hopeless because the two substances do not lose their original integrity; rather, it is a question of banishing sin from them through continual conversion and discipline.[78] God gave humans the Spirit in baptism in order to cleanse them from sin and to strengthen them in their exercise of discipline, thereby making a life of holiness possible again.

3. Conclusion

The study of selected texts by Tertullian in this chapter has borne much fruit and allows us to offer a number of conclusions about his reading of Rom. 7:21–8:2. The analysis has shed light on why Tertullian turns to selected verses from Rom. 7:21–8:2, how he employs these verses, and what the enigmatic *νόμος* phrases may have meant to him. In support of the argument of this dissertation, the chapter has demonstrated that Tertullian, the first extant author who has made

[78] Tertullian does allow for, or rather, laments at regression, that is, another 'falling away of a Christian from God and the Holy Spirit' (*De pud.* 9). In this case, this is due to 'dissolute living…amid the errors and allurements and appetites of the world' (*De pud.* 9). Tertullian laments that in this case 'the substance of the sacrament is most truly wasted away' (*De pud.* 9). In *De paenit.* 6, Tertullian distinguishes between the 'mature' Christians, who 'permanently retain fruits of repentance' and new Christians, who are not yet strong and mature enough and fall back to previous ways. Novice Christians make slow and steady progress through constant repentance, as 'repentance is the price at which the Lord has determined to pardon sins' (*De paenit.* 6).

use of Rom. 7:21–8:2, deploys selected verses from 7:21–8:2 as proof texts in larger arguments that are principally concerned with a good ethical life that leads to salvation. In these arguments, Tertullian employs Greek philosophical categories, especially the concepts of substance and accident found in Aristotle's metaphysics, to defend the goodness of the flesh in order then to defend the salvation of the whole person, both flesh and soul. His quoting from Rom. 7:21–8:2 allows him to support these philosophical arguments with the use of Scripture, thereby giving his arguments the backing of scriptural authority. These proof texts seemed to have come to mind when Tertullian was commenting on other biblical texts to do with resurrection and salvation, namely 1 Cor. 15:50 and Gal. 5:19-21 (the passages in 1 Corinthians and Galatians trigger the use of the passages in Romans for Tertullian), and are often used alongside other proof texts from Romans, such as Rom. 6:1-11, 13, 8:3, and 8:8.

The above-studied texts where Tertullian employs 7:23 and 8:2 show that Tertullian makes use of these verses in polemical and exhortative contexts, and always favours brevity when quoting the texts. Tertullian is above all concerned with defending what would become the mainstream (i.e. orthodox) belief about the resurrection and salvation of the whole human body, both flesh and soul. This defence needs to be argued through the development and articulation of a robust Christology, which, in turn, lays the groundwork for a proper Christian anthropology and ethical system. Because Tertullian is answering critics whose stumbling block, among other things, is the presence of sin in the material part of creation, and especially in the human flesh, Tertullian therefore must structure his arguments around the presence or absence of sin in the human. With the help of Aristotelian metaphysics, Tertullian clarifies that sin is an accident in relation to the flesh and soul. This accident is meticulously distinguished from the substances of the flesh and soul.

According to the Aristotelian metaphysics that Tertullian adopts, various substances—flesh, soul, and spirit, for example—have particular qualities that cannot change (a substance may be hard, soft, permeable to something else, rational, etc.). Substances amass accidents—either good, neutral, or evil—as a result of their operations. We have seen that both the flesh and the soul have unique operations according to the nature of their substances. Therefore, each substance has unique ways to do good or evil. Sin is an action (described by a verb) with its own consequences, and the origin of sinful actions is the mind, a faculty of the soul and its primary mover, which, in turn, moves the flesh (*De an.* 12).

The substance-accident argument is supported in part by Rom. 7:23, for Tertullian sees in this verse a very convenient distinction between a substance (the flesh and its members) and an accident ('sin' in the form of 'another law' and 'the law of sin'). Delving into previous and later verses in Romans 7 and 8 allows him to equate these laws with 'sin' (in *Adv. Marc.* V.14 and *Res. mort.* 46; Rom. 7:17-18a; 8:3-8), which he understands to be the Pauline 'works of the flesh' (*Adv. Marc.* V.10 and *Res. mort.* 46; see Gal 5:19-21), sinful behaviour contrary to God's Law. The ethical life, then, is founded on the exercise of self-control so that good actions replace evil actions, thereby reducing the presence of sin in the human. Because God created both flesh and soul as good, both substances must be disciplined and both must be cleansed from the accident of sin. The heretics fail to understand that the good substance is corrupted by an evil accident, which can indeed be removed through God's intervention. God's solution to the presence of the accident of sin is not to destroy all flesh but rather to remove that accident through the saving work of his Son.

While Tertullian uses Aristotelian metaphysics to describe the presence or absence of sin in the substances of the flesh and soul, he employs Stoic metaphysics to describe the

interpenetration of these substances. Because the soul is finer than the flesh, it is able to disperse itself through it, giving it life and movement, and the spirit, whether good or evil, is still finer than the soul, and is therefore able to penetrate the substance of the soul, for good or ill. Tertullian thus develops a complex theory of the presence and activity of spirits in the human, where good or evil external spiritual forces are able to penetrate the human soul and inspire it to good or evil thoughts and actions. In this vein, 'sin' is the diabolically produced irrational element in the soul that is actively working against the God-given, rational element of the soul wherein the mind and will reside, which is why Tertullian interprets 'another law' and 'the law of sin' in *Res. mort.* 51 to mean *vis,* a power, which, given its context, is an extrinsic hostile power. The human is still responsible for his or her actions; the blame for sin cannot be put on the temptations of the evil spirits for it is undeniably still the human who willingly invites the evil spirits.

The human mind, especially one that is undisciplined, is extremely swayable. We have seen that the Devil is a spirit (*Apol* 22; 27). He has imitated God's breathing into Adam by breathing his will into the human's soul with the human's consent (*Apol.* 22; *De pat.* 5). This demonic breath is nothing other than the Devil's wicked will for the human. In *Apol.* 22, the breath is capable of swaying the human towards 'furious passions and vile excesses, cruel lusts, various errors, idolatry, the turning of human minds from God toward false divination', while in *De pat.* 5, it moves the human to impatience. Once the human consents to the Devil's will, the Devil enters into the human's soul and breathes its irrational element into the soul (*De an.* 16 and following), thereby directing the person to perform the 'the works of the flesh'.

The irrational element in the soul must have, ironically, its own mind, for it has the power of 'turning of human minds from God' (*Apol.* 22). This element must be understood as being

nearly *on par* with the human mind, for otherwise it would not be capable of challenging and duping it.[79] Therefore, there must be *two* minds present in the individual: the individual's own mind and the mind of the evil spirit. When the human's mind assents to the suggestions of the Devil, then the compromised mind becomes 'the mind of the flesh' and hostile to the things of God (Rom. 8:6-7; *Res. mort.* 46). Therefore, if 'the impulse to sin proceeds from the Devil' (*De an.* 16), and this impulse is ascribed to the irrational element (*De an.* 16), then we may conclude that Tertullian believes that the Devil works in the human directly through the irrational element of the soul and consequently has direct access to the soul and, by extension, to the members of the flesh. The irrational element is therefore the mind of the evil spirit present in the human being.

This foreign entity can therefore be fittingly called *vis,* for it is a real power with its own agency, capable of opposing and manipulating the human will and mind. Taking Socrates as an example, Tertullian invites the reader to 'see Socrates and the evil spirit that attached itself to him from his childhood, turning his mind from what was good' (*Apol.* 22). As the soul with all its elements is understood as dwelling in the flesh, being diffused throughout, so the irrational element also dwells somewhere in the flesh, for 'their [the evil spirits'] marvellous subtleness and tenuity gives them access to both parts of our nature' (*Apol.* 22). Indeed, Tertullian refers to evil spirits working in the human with the Latin terms *potestas* and *vis*: 'ruling powers' (*praesunt potestates; De an.* 20) and 'power' (*vis; De an.* 46).

On first sight, there seems to be a contradiction in Tertullian's understanding of 'sin' to mean 'another law' and 'the law of sin' and *vis*. Can these hostile laws be at the same time

[79] I write *nearly* because Tertullian writes: 'For even though it was an angel that beguiled him, yet he who was beguiled was a free man, not under constraint, and the image and likeness of God is stronger than an angel, even as God's breathing is of nobler quality than that material spirit of which the angels are composed' (*Adv. Marc.* II.8).

concrete sinful actions (=sins) and the impulses of the evil spirit? The texts that have been studied in this chapter demonstrate that the impulses of the evil spirits lead to sinful behaviour, if assented to. In this way, 'sin'—or 'the works of the flesh'—is an evil action that has the giving in to evil impulses at its root. Where sinful behaviours are present, so is the whispering of the evil spirit. While *vis* more explicitly brings the reader's attention to the active agency of the evil spirit, 'sin' encapsulates both the human's weakness in the face of the evil impulses and the actions that result from this weakness. In both terms, then, there is the presence of the will of the evil spirit for the human, namely, to do evil in the sight of God.

We have also seen that this external and foreign will is active in the human within the person's soul through the presence of the irrational and evil element. This external will imprints itself on the human's mind through communal living, and especially through evil practices, such as the games, idol worship, superstitious practices, and excessive eating and drinking.[80] This gives support to one of the sub-arguments of this dissertation, namely, that the earliest extant Christian commentators on Rom. 7:21–8:2 understood the hostile laws as working on the human from without and that the influence of the environment on human development and agency was taken as a given.[81] To be sure, humans have their own reason and grow in wisdom and knowledge, which should allow them to accept what is good and reject what is evil, and this is done in the sphere of the mind, which belongs to the self. However, this private and personal sphere still needs formation at the hands of wise and knowledgeable teachers, and their work is far more fruitful if their pupils are immersed in good communities. Tertullian's writings make it

[80] Although this notion is present to a certain extent in all of Tertullian's works, it is most forcefully stated in *De spectaculis*.

[81] In *De an.* 24.4, Tertullian writes: '…our ideas and emotions…are conditioned by circumstances of place, education, bodily health, the influence of higher powers, and by man's own free will.'

clear that a human being grows and matures in a community, whether good or evil. The 'I' is therefore not alone; it is formed by its surroundings. In order to break out of an evil community and to become good also requires a good agent who enters into the evil environment of the 'I' in order to liberate it.[82]

This external benevolent agent who enters the human from without is the Spirit, who is the God-given divine element in the human and who is meant to aid the human in living a holy life. Being God's gift, the Spirit strengthens the human in his or her resolve and actions in order that the human may fulfil God's will. For Tertullian, then, 'the law of the Spirit' of Rom. 8:2 frees the Christian from the hostile laws although this is a *pledge* for what is to be realised fully only in the next life, when corruption will put on incorruption (*Res. Carn.* 57; here Tertullian picks up the Pauline concept from 1 Cor. 15:42-49). The Spirit brings with him a myriad of gifts; he instructs the human in the ways and will of God; he strengthens the human's resolve in the fight against evil; he forgives sins; he helps the human with the disciplined and virtuous life. The Christian therefore lives in an 'already but not yet' moment in history, where the Spirit promises *today* that freedom which will come fully *tomorrow*, so long as faith and discipline are maintained.

Tertullian states that there are external pressures—both spiritual and societal—on human agency. His interpretation of 'the law of sin' as an external force gives solid backing to today's scholars who also see external forces at work in Romans 7. We have seen in the Introduction (see p. 8, fn. 18) that a number of scholars understand the hostile laws as powers or other external forces active against the individual. This dynamic in Romans has been articulated by the works

[82] See, for example, *Adv. Marc.* II.19. God sends holy people in order to teach others 'godly conduct – to remove wickedness from the soul, to learn to do well…'

of Matthew Croasmun, Samuel Ferguson, and Susan Eastman, and others from the school of interpretation of Paul within the context of Jewish apocalypticism.[83] These Pauline scholars appreciate that the early Christian audience of the Epistle was heavily influenced and pressured by their surrounding pagan Roman citizens, whose lifestyles were in stark opposition to that taught by Christianity. This was a contest of Lords, especially under which Lord's influence one would fall. There was the Lord Jesus Christ on the one hand, and the Roman emperor who ruled the present evil age with its sinful practices, on the other hand. It was indeed a cosmic struggle of good versus evil. To whom will the Christian give allegiance? Tertullian paints a very similar picture of the Christian situation in his time and does not hesitate to turn to Rom. 7:21–8:2 to find some support for his own writings. These external pressures are so strong that one wonders whether a person is truly free in such a web of influences. He or she is left weak or powerless in the face of these forces if left alone without the help from one who is more powerful than them.

[83] Some leading scholars who have pioneered this field in Pauline studies are Krister Stendahl (one of the forerunners of interpreting Paul through the lens of apocalypticism, see his groundbreaking essay Krister Stendahl, 'The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West,' *HTR* 56.3 (1963): 199–215), J. Louis Martyn (see especially his landmark work on Galatians and apocalypticism, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1997), Beverly Roberts Gaventa (especially her work on Romans; see her excellent collection of essays in *Apocalyptic Paul: Cosmos and Anthropos in Romans 5–8* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2013)), Douglas A. Campbell (with a special focus on Romans, Galatians, and Philippians; for Campbell's analysis of Rom. 5–8 and apocalypticism, see especially Chapter 3: Systematic Difficulties, in *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), and Martinus C. de Boer (see his work on Romans, Galatians, and apocalypticism in his recently published collection of essays, *Paul, Theologian of God's Apocalypse: Essays on Paul and Apocalyptic* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2020)). These scholars see Paul presenting a dramatic cosmic struggle between the newly inaugurated Kingdom of God, led by Christ the true Lord, and the present sinful and evil age (which some scholars understand to be ruled by the Devil, but the scholars mentioned above, such as Gaventa, de Boer, and Martyn, for example, do not interpret Paul as believing that the Devil is the ruler of the present evil age). This battle is on cosmic proportions, but is also very much here in our midst too. Human beings must decide *now* to which Lord they belong and amend their lives accordingly, since the end times (the Apocalypse) and God's final victory are approaching. Tertullian is very much caught up in this cosmic struggle too, especially felt in how the Christian community was being treated in Carthage during his lifetime. Their persecutions and martyrdoms gave the Christian community a sense of urgency. This is keenly felt throughout Tertullian's works.

This brings us to the identity of the 'I' in Rom. 7:14-25. Who is the weak person who cannot resist the societal pressures to sin and follow the evil spirit's will? In the texts that we have studied, it is evident that Tertullian is not at all troubled by Paul's weakness, as his concerns lie elsewhere.[84] Although Tertullian understands the 'I' to be Paul the Apostle (see Section 1 above and the analysis of Rom. 7:23 in *Adv. Marc.* V.14), the context of the passages discussed is applicable to every human being because it addresses the question of salvation for everyone: Christ came to save every sinner, and Paul is included just as much as everyone else. This is because, for Tertullian, no human being is without sin except for Jesus Christ, as he affirms in *De an*. 41: 'God alone is without sin, and the only sinless man is Christ, since He is God. … So, just as no soul is wholly without sin, so no soul is entirely bereft of some seeds of good.' The sinful element is passed on from generation to generation through the soul of fathers (*De an.* 5, 27, 36; *Test. an.* 3). It is put to death in those who are baptised, but it only takes another disobedient act to allow the Devil to return to his former abode. As such, Tertullian states that all good people have some evil in them, while all evil people have some good in them (*De Anim.* 41). It will not be until the resurrection of the dead and the last judgment that every body that will inherit the Kingdom of God will be without sin (*De an.* 58). Every baptised Christian has the irrational element in the soul. It is therefore not a problem that even an Apostle speaks of the presence of sin; it is simply Paul being humble and brutally honest with his own condition.

Finally, Tertullian shows a lack of engagement with the word *lex* 'law' in Rom. 7:21–8:2. The above analysis shows that he is not at all concerned with legal matters, even though the word

[84] Tertullian does not shy away from presenting Paul in the various stages of his struggle, whether it be under 'the law of sin' (Rom. 7:23) or under 'the law of the Spirit' (Rom. 8:2).

'law' appears in these passages. Tertullian does not use these verses for any kind of argument to do with law—be it the Law of Moses or the Law of God—as one might have perhaps expected, given contemporary scholarship's focus on 'law' in this part of Romans 7.[85] Rather, Tertullian's arguments revolve around the presence or absence of sin, the greatest hurdle to living well, and hence, to salvation. Tertullian interprets 'the law of sin' to mean 'sin', which once again shows his lack of interest in the legal meaning of *lex* in this particular context.

This chapter has focused on Tertullian, the first extant Christian writer who has engaged the complicated text of Rom. 7:21–8:2. The following chapter will investigate Clement of Alexandria's reading of selected verses from Rom. 7:21–8:2. Clement, a neighbouring North African theologian who was Tertullian's contemporary, lived in a Greek-speaking part of the Roman Empire and wrote in Greek, unlike Tertullian, who wrote in Latin. We now turn to the Alexandrian's writings.

[85] For a note on contemporary scholarship on Law and Rom. 7:14-8:2, see fn. 10 in the Introduction.

Chapter Two: Clement of Alexandria and Theodotus the Valentinian on Romans 7:21–8:2

This chapter advances the thesis of this dissertation through its engagement with the writings of Clement of Alexandria and Theodotus the Valentinian on Rom. 7:21–8:2. I demonstrate that Clement and Theodotus, as their contemporary Tertullian, employ selected phrases from Rom. 7:21–8:2 as proof texts in larger arguments with the help of Greek philosophy. For Clement, all of the arguments in which Rom. 7:23 and 8:2 occur are preoccupied with the interior struggle between the mind and the passions, or desires. Like Tertullian, Clement does not pay any attention to 'law' in the legal sense of the word (i.e. Torah) in his uses of these Pauline texts; rather, Clement finds the struggle language of 7:23 useful in discussions surrounding psychology and anthropology in *Strom.* 3.77.1, 4.40.2, and 7.44.7, whereas 8:2 is merely quoted along with the rest of 8:3-15 without any comments or modifications in *Strom.* 3.77.1.[1] Theodotus also uses Rom. 7:23 in a context of struggle.

[1] Unless otherwise noted, English quotations from *Prot., Paed.,* and books 4-8 of the *Stromateis* are taken from Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria, *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria*, tr. F. Crombie et al., ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, rev. Am. ed., ANF 2, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe (Edinburgh: T&T Clark; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993). English quotations from Books One to Three of the *Stromateis* are taken from Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis Books One to Three*, tr. with an introduction and notes by John Ferguson, FC 85 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1991). All Greek quotations are taken from Clement of Alexandria, *Les Stromates*, tr. and ed. with an introduction and notes by C. Mondésert, M. Caster, P.-T. Camelot, A. Le Boulluec, P. Voulet, P. Descourtieux, and A. Van Den Hoeck, SC 30, 38, 278, 428, 446, 463, 608 (Paris: Cerf, 1951). The format of the references to Clement's works will follow the divisions as found in the *Sources Chrétiennes*. For the *Stromateis* and *Paedagogus*, it is: work, book, paragraph, and sentence (e.g. *Strom.* 3.71.1, *Paed.* 2.60.1). For *Protrepticus*, it is: work, chapter, paragraph, and sentence (e.g. *Prot.* 4.46.4). Finally, for *Div.*, it is: work, paragraph, and sentence (e.g. *Div.* 10.1).

The four allusions to Rom. 7:23 and 8:2 in the *Stromateis* are Clement's, whereas the fifth, found in the *Excerpts from Theodotus* 52.1 (henceforth referred to as *Excerpts*), has been recognised as not Clementine, and most probably belongs to a certain Theodotus, who may have even been a direct disciple of Valentinus the Gnostic.[2] The Gnostic text is noteworthy for its early date of composition (it probably predates both Tertullian and Clement's uses of Rom. 7:21–8:2), the context in which Rom. 8:23 is used, and for the comments that accompany it.[3] I demonstrate that Theodotus employs Rom. 7:23 as a proof text in a reflection on Gnostic anthropology to demonstrate the struggle between what he calls the hylic soul and the heavenly soul. Theodotus also deploys Greek philosophy in his writing.

In Section 1, I analyse Clement's employment of Rom. 7:23-24 and Rom. 8:2 in a series of arguments against certain Gnostic groups to do with theodicy in *Strom.* 3.71-78. I will then present two occurrences of Rom. 7:23 in *Strom.* 4.40 and 7.44 in Section 2, as the two passages both treat the need to preserve a contemplative state in prayer and the reference to Rom. 7:23 in *Strom.* 7.44 is rather brief. Finally, I present an analysis of *Exc.* 52.1, an early reading of Rom. 7:23 by a Valentinian Gnostic named Theodotus, in Section 3.

[2] See F. Sagnard's Introduction in *Extraits de Théodote*, tr. and ed. with an introduction and notes by F. Sagnard, SC 23 (Paris: Cerf, 1948), 6 and following. See Section 4 in the Introduction for more on Theodotus.

[3] According to the *Biblia Patristica,* a reference to Rom. 7:25b is found in *Paed.* 3.2.2, although I shall classify it merely on the level of 'possible reference' and I will therefore not address it here: 'Since the flesh is a slave, as Paul witnesses…' This seems to be rather far from '…I am a slave…with my flesh to the law of sin'. See J. Allenbach et al., *Des origines à Clément d'Alexandrie et Tertullien*, vol. 1 of *Biblia Patristica : Index des citations et allusions bibliques dans la littérature patristique*, 7 vols. (Paris: Centre National de la Recherce Scientifique, 1975), 1:435. The reference to Paul is most likely due to the quotation from and exploration of Phil. 2:7, which immediately follows the phrase. In the immediate context, Clement explores the beauty of the flesh that Christ took upon himself. There is no engagement with Romans 7, nor with the theme of interior struggle.

1. Romans 7:23-24, 8:2 and *Stromateis* 3.77.1

Clement's longest extant work, the *Stromateis* 'the Miscellanies'[4], is generally accepted to be a collection of personal notes that possibly served as lecture notes.[5] Clement himself offers a number of reasons for composing the work: 'This work is not a writing rhetorically shaped for exhibition. It is a collection of memoranda, a treasure for my old age, a remedy against forgetfulness, a mere reflection, a sketch of vividly alive originals, words I was thought worthy to hear, and blessed and genuinely memorable men from whom I heard them' (*Strom.* 1.11.1). Elsewhere he notes that he wrote the work for 'the preservation of the tradition' and that 'I am quite sure that they [his students] will be delighted…with this exposition of mine' (*Strom.* 1.12.1). Although scholars note that there is not one central theme in the whole work, each book appears to be devoted to a different topic.[6]

The quotations from Rom. 7:21–8:2 are found in Book Three of the *Stromateis*, which is a discussion of the negative views on marriage held by various Greek philosophical schools and Gnostic groups, yet it is also a presentation of an authentic vision of Christian marriage (e.g. *Strom.* 3.57 and following). *Stromateis* 3.76-77, our passage of concern, is found in a section

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[4] *Stromateis* is the plural form of *Strometeus*, which, in the singular, may mean 'coverlet' or 'bedspread' (*LSJ* = Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones, *A Greek-English lexicon*, 9th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), '*στρωματεύς*' entry). The plural form means 'patchwork' and was occasionally used to designate 'miscellaneous writings', such as those of Clement and also those of Plutarch of the same title, as noted by Eusebius of Caesarea in *Praeparatio Evangelica* 1.7 (Id.). Clement's work is also known as the *Stromata*, the plural form of *στρῶμα*, which means 'anything spread or laid out for lying or sitting upon, mattress, bed' (Id., '*στρῶμα*' entry). The variant *Stromata* comes from the Latin title of the Greek work rather than from the plural form of the Greek word *στρῶμα*. *Stromateis* will be used in this dissertation.

[5] Mondésert et al., *Les Stromates*, 1:17.

[6] So claim Mondésert et al., *Les Stromates*, 1:23, although Mondésert notes that, if one were pressed to find some common thread, it would be the use of Scripture throughout the whole work. See also Id. for a good outline of the eight *Stromateis.*

comprising paragraphs 71 to 78—marked as Chapter XI in most editions. The section addresses self-discipline as pertaining to the control of lustful thoughts in married life, the restriction (but not abolition) of sexual intercourse, and the struggle to live according to the Spirit instead of the flesh, all of which are discussed in a polemical context.

Although the *Stromateis* as a whole was not meant to be published as a polemical document against heretical groups (*v.s*. 'This work is not a writing rhetorically shaped for exhibition', *Strom.* 1.11.1), much of Book Three is polemical in nature, and *Strom.* 3.71-78 follows this pattern. Clement's greatest concern in *Strom.* 3.71-78 is to defend the Christian doctrine of the self-discipline of both the married Christian's body and soul in order that he or she may receive the Spirit and therefore know God. Alain le Boulluec and Patrick Descourtieux surmise that Clement may be responding to three Gnostic groups in this short section: the hedonistic Gnostics called the Antitactes ('the Opponents', Clement's own designation; cf. *Strom.* 3.34.3-4), the hedonistic Gnostic disciples of Prodicus (cf. *Strom.* 3.30.1, 4), and the excessively ascetical Gnostics called the Encratites (cf. *Strom.* 1.15, 7.17; 3.82.2, especially Tatian as an Encratite).[7] In *Strom.* 3.71-78, Clement refers to these groups with a variety of names: 'the heretical sophists' (3.71.1), 'the heretics' (3.71.2), 'against similar ones [as the heretics mentioned above]' (3.74.1), 'the heterodox who assail...the Creator' (3.76.3)[8], and 'the hedonists' (3.78.1).

[7] Mondésert et al., *Les Stromates*, 3:230 (n. 3), 3:239 (n. 6), 3:241 (n. 2). The Encratites were a second century CE excessively ascetical Christian group that opposed any form of marriage and lawful sexual intercourse, and the hedonistic Gnostics from the school of Prodicus seemed to disregard moral laws and lived as they wished. Similar to Prodicus' followers, the Antitactes were also Gnostics who believed that the Law was given by a second evil Demiurge, creator, and was therefore not obligatory; they showed their contempt for it by purposely violating the commandments of the Old Testament.

[8] Le Boulluec and Descourtieux posit that 'Les adversaires, cependant, pourraient être plutôt les encratites, plus précisément Tatien qui, selon Clément, "détruit la Loi comme si elle venait d'un autre Dieu" (*infra* 82,2), qui serait "le Créateur" de "la chair" mauvaise' (Mondésert et al., *Les Stromates*, 3:241 (n. 2)).

The two hedonistic groups were seemingly against self-discipline and therefore did what they wanted, while the Encratites were against any form of pleasure.[9] To the hedonists, he must show that Scripture—the Old and New Testaments alike—mandates self-discipline in both body and soul. To the ascetics, however, he must show that Scripture permits marriage and that it is not an evil. Clement spends much more time on the former defence in this section of the *Stromateis*.

Four subsections may be detected according to certain doctrines that Clement feels he must defend and the beginning of each subsection aligns very neatly with a reference to these hedonistic and ascetic groups: (a) the need for self-control in sexual intercourse for married couples (*Strom.* 3.71-73); (b) the call to maintain purity of heart and soul (*Strom.* 3.74-76.2); (c) the innocence of the Creator against the charge that he created the flesh evil, while accusing the human's choice to sin (*Strom.* 3.76.3-77.1, 78.1); and (d) the call to choose the life of the Spirit over the life of the flesh (*Strom.* 3.77.2-3, 78.1-5). I begin with the first two subsections by examining Clement's defence of Christian self-control and the biblical notion of a pure heart.

*Self-control and the purity of heart (*Strom. 3.71-73, 74-76.2)

Clement begins the section by offering two biblical laws to defend the Christian notion that a Christian must control his or her lustful thoughts[10] and this is followed by several stories from

[9] Naomi Koltun-Fromm, 'Encratism/Encratites,' in *Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity Online*, ed. David G. Hunter, Paul J.J. van Geest, and Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte (Leiden: Brill, 2024), accessed on 26 May 2023, https://referenceworks.brill.com/ display/db/eeco?contents=mrw-title-toc.

[10] 'You shall not desire your neighbour's wife' of Exod. 20:17, and 'You shall not lust' of Matt. 5:27-8 and Rom. 7:7; *Strom.* 3.71.3.

the Old Testament that show biblical figures exercising self-discipline in sexual intercourse.[11] The aim of the former is to demonstrate to the hedonists that both the Old and New Testaments have laws against lustful thoughts, while the aim of the latter is to demonstrate to the ultra-ascetics by way of example that the Old Testament Law allows for marriage and sexual intercourse. Sexual relations should nevertheless be regulated through self-discipline, and so desire (*ἐπιθυμία*) and the ruling impulse (*τῆς ὁρμῆς τῆς κυριευούσης*) must be transformed into 'a rational appetency' (*εἰς ὄρεξιν εὔλογον*) (3.71.4).

Clement next demonstrates that the married Christian must be self-disciplined in order to maintain a pure heart and soul.[12] In *Strom.* 3.74, he begins with a series of quotations from 2 Corinthians in which Paul exhorts his readers to 'purify their hearts from every stain of flesh or spirit' (2 Cor. 7:1). The members of the Church are therefore to be like 'chaste virgins' who have been presented to 'her one and only husband' (2 Cor. 11:2). The great threat to the chaste disposition of a Christian, Clement maintains, is the corruption of his or her thoughts (*φθαρῇ τὰ νοήματα ὑμῶν*), just 'as the serpent in his wicked cunning deceived Eve' (2 Cor. 11:3; *Strom.* 3.74.3). In *Strom.* 3.75, Clement warns the reader to 'abstain from fleshly desires (*τῶν σαρκικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν*)', which 'wage war (*στρατεύονται*) against our soul' (1 Pt. 2:11), because we have already died to sin (Rom. 6:2), and thus 'our bodies should no longer be instruments of wickedness to sin' (Rom. 6:13).

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[11] E.g. Moses's father refraining from sexual intercourse for three years between Aaron's and Moses's births, Exod. 7:7; *Strom.* 3.71.4–73.4.

[12] The Sixth Beatitude on the purity of the heart (Matt. 5:8) is by far the most quoted Beatitude by Clement because, as Henny Fiskå Hägg states, 'it is the heart, the instrument for the contemplation and knowledge of God, that must be purified' ('Purity of Heart and the Vision of God in Clement of Alexandria,' *Symbolae Osloenses* 9.1 (2020): 148–56 (here p. 149)). Veronika Černušková proposes that the biblical term for 'heart' stands for the human will for Clement (see 'Four Desires: Clement of Alexandria and the Sermon on the Mount,' in *Clement's Biblical Exegesis. Proceedings of the Second Colloquium on Clement of Alexandria (Olomouc, May 29-31, 2014)*, ed. Veronika Černušková, Judith L. Kovacs, and Jana Plátová (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 217–58, esp. p. 229).

He begins the next paragraph with the affirmation that 'the Apostle [Paul] preaches the same God whether through the Law, the prophets, or the gospel' (*Strom.* 3.76.1). The Old Testament Law given by God is still in effect, as can be seen by the fact that Paul also reaffirms it (quoting Rom. 7:7). Because Clement is addressing the Encratites and the Antitactes, both of whom seemed to have rejected the Old Testament Law in one form or another, he affirms that the self-discipline preached in the Old and New Testaments is one and the same and has its inspiration from the same God. Having defended the Christian practice of self-discipline and the fact that it is derived from both the Old and New Testaments, Clement then moves onto defending the Creator's innocence against the charge that the Creator is the author of evil and sin.

The Creator is defended against the charge of creating evil and sin

Clement references Rom. 7:23-24 in the third polemic, his defence of the Creator against the accusation that he created the flesh sinful (*Strom.* 3.76.3-77.3). He launches a counter-attack against the Antitactes and/or the Encratites, who seemed to have held that the flesh is evil because the Creator made the flesh evil (*Strom.* 3.76.3).[13] Because they appeared to have used Rom. 7:18a ('I know that good does not dwell in me, that is, in my flesh') to construct their doctrines, he also feels obliged to defend the Creator by using this passage. He faults them for reading it out of its proper context, for 'they had better read the words which precede and come after these' (*Strom.* 3.76.3). He continues in *Strom*. 3.76.4-77.1:

[13] Le Boulluec and Descourtieux are uncertain as to which group Clement is referring in this passage. They write: 'Il est difficile d'établir l'identité exacte des "hétérodoxes" opposés au Créateur' (Mondésert et al., *Les Stromates*, 3:241 (n. 2)).

> For he [Paul] has said earlier, 'But sin dwells in me' (Rom. 7:17b), which makes it fitting to continue to, 'good does not dwell in my flesh' (Rom. 7:18a). Still further he continues, 'If I do what I do not will, it is no longer I that do it but the sin that dwells in me' (Rom. 7:20), which 'is at war with the law of' God and of 'my mind', he says, 'and makes me captive by the law of sin that is in my members. I am (such) a wretched man! Who will rescue me from this body of death?' (Rom. 7:23-24)[14]

Following this, Clement ends the section by defending the call to live according to the Spirit rather than according to the flesh by extensively quoting from Rom. 8:2-4, 1 Cor. 3:16, and Rom. 8:5-15 (*Strom.* 3.78). He has the 'hedonists' (*τοῖς φιληδόνοις*) in mind here, most probably the Antitactes and the disciples of Prodicus. He concludes with a statement that provides somewhat of a *telos* for the whole section: 'we have received the Spirit to enable us to know the one to whom we pray (*ἵνα γινώσκωμεν τοῦτον ᾧ̓ προσευχόμεθα*), our real Father, the one and only Father of all that is, the one who like a Father educates us for salvation and does away with fear' (*Strom*. 3.78.5).

Clement's main concern in the third polemic (*Strom.* 3.76.3–77.1) appears to be similar to that of Tertullian (cf. Section 1 of Chapter One): he is concerned with defending the doctrine that God created innocent flesh against false charges that God created the flesh sinful. Clement must therefore demonstrate that the Creator is innocent of the charge of creating evil flesh because it is

[14] My translation, with the addition to Rom. 7:23 by Clement underlined for emphasis. The Greek of 3.77.1 reads: *ἑπομένως <δ'> ἐπήγαγεν · 'Εἰ δὲ ὃ οὐ θέλω, τοῦτο ἐγὼ ποιῶ, οὐκέτι ἐγὼ κατεργάζομαι αὐτό, ἀλλ' ἡ οἰκοῦσα ἐν ἐμοὶ ἁμαρτία,' ἥτις 'ἀντιστρατευομένη τῷ νόμῳ' τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ 'τοῦ νοός μου,' φησίν, 'αἰχμαλωτίζει με ἐν τῷ νόμῳ τῆς ἁμαρτίας τῷ ὄντι εν τοῖς μέλεσί μου. Ταλαίπωρος ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος. Τίς με ῥύσεται ἐκ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ θανάτου τούτου;* (Mondésert et al., *Les Stromates*, 3:240–42)

the human who has chosen to contaminate him- or herself with sin.[15] He is very explicit about God's innocence in a number of other places in the *Stromateis*. In *Strom.* 4.93.3, for example, we read that 'assuredly sin is an activity, not an existence: and therefore it is not a work of God', while in *Strom.* 5.136.4, quoting Plato's *Republic*, Clement notes that 'Plato in what follows gives an exhibition of free-will: "Virtue owns not a master; and in proportion as each one honours or dishonours it, in that proportion he will be a partaker of it. The blame lies in the exercise of free choice. But God is blameless" (*Rep.* 617e), for "He is never the author of evil" (*Rep.* 379b-c).'

He begins his defence by quoting Rom. 7:18a—'I know that good does not dwell in me, that is, in my flesh'—in *Strom.* 3.76.3, the verse that apparently the heretics used to show that the Creator created the flesh evil. If good does not dwell in the human, then the opposite must be true: evil dwells in the human. Clement wholeheartedly agrees and goes back to Rom. 7:17b in order to support this: 'For he (Paul) said earlier, "But sin dwells in me", because of which (*δι'ἥν*), he continued saying, "good does not dwell in my flesh"' (*Strom.* 3.76.4). The logic is obvious: good does not dwell in the flesh because sin dwells therein. Put differently, where sin

[15] The concern to affirm that the flesh and body are neutral substances is attested in a number of places in his corpus. Clement is consistent in his doctrine that the flesh and body are neutral in themselves, for they may be used to do good or to do evil (e.g. *Strom.* 4.95.2). For the true Gnostic, the flesh may even be beautiful. In *Strom.* 7.76.7, he writes: 'In the act of contemplating the souls of the brethren, he beholds the beauty of the flesh also, with the soul itself, which has become habituated to look solely upon that which is good, without carnal pleasure.' Commenting on the body, he states in *Strom.* 4.168.1-2, 4.169.2-3: 'Those, then, who run down created existence and vilify the body are wrong; not considering that the frame of man was formed erect for the contemplation of heaven, and that the organization of the senses tends to knowledge; and that the members and parts are arranged for good, not for pleasure. Whence this abode becomes receptive of the soul which is most precious to God; and is dignified with the Holy Spirit through the sanctification of soul and body, perfected with the perfection of the Saviour. … The soul of man is confessedly the better part of man, and the body the inferior. But neither is the soul good by nature, nor, on the other hand, is the body bad by nature. Nor is that which is not good straightway bad. For there are things which occupy a middle place, and among them are things to be preferred, and things to be rejected.'

dwells, there good cannot dwell.[16] Along similar lines, Clement quotes Epicharmus in *Strom.* 7.27.5 when discussing the purity of heart and the absence of sin: 'If you have a pure mind, then you are pure in your whole body.' Having made this clear, he must address the most pressing issue, which is how sin came to dwell in the flesh, whether it was God's doing or the human's doing.

Clement affirms God's innocence in three ways with the help of passages from Romans. Immediately before our passage of interest, we have already seen above that Clement reaffirms that God gave commandments against lust, both in the Old and New Testaments (Exod. 20:17, Matt. 5:28, Rom. 7:7; *Strom.* 3.76.1-3). Furthermore, by quoting the entirety of Rom. 7:7, Clement affirms that the Law is not sin because the Law orders us not to sin, as the command 'do not lust' affirms (*Strom.* 3.76.2). If God commands us not to sin, then surely God and God's Law do not want us to sin; God is thus innocent of the sin that is in us.

Clement writes that sin disrupts the human's ability to act according to his or her will (Rom. 7:20) and therefore fights against 'God's Law' and 'the mind's law' (Rom. 7:23). He is attempting to demonstrate that sin is foreign to God's plan for human nature, and he may very well be responding to the Valentinian text of Theodotus that he collected in *Exc.* 52.1 (see Section 3 below). The presence of sin deeply disturbs the human psyche, a phenomenon that surely should not occur if sin were truly at home in human nature. Sin is alien to human nature, rather than originally placed there by God as part of God's original plan. The effects of

[16] To what extent is Clement associating *ἀγαθόν* from Rom. 7:18 with Plato's form of the good? The connection would have been obvious to him as an admirer of Plato. Nevertheless, the form of the good takes a radically different 'form' for the Christian philosopher from Alexandria. In *Div.* 7.1,3, Clement writes: 'Wherefore the greatest and chiefest point of the instructions which relate to life must be implanted in the soul from the beginning—to know the eternal God, the giver of what is eternal, and by knowledge and comprehension to possess God, who is first, and highest, and one, and good. …For ignorance of Him is death; but the knowledge and appropriation of Him, and love and likeness to Him, are the only life.'

indwelling sin speak for themselves: humans are not able to do what they will (Rom. 7:20; *Strom.* 3.76.4). Still further, the effects of indwelling sin are felt at a deeper level: indwelling sin assaults God's Law and the mind's law so as to make the person 'captive to the law of sin' (Rom. 7:23, with Clement's insertion of 'God's law'; *Strom.* 3.77.1). Therefore, if God had created the flesh sinful, this would have presumably been according to God's plan and God's sinful Law, and one would therefore have expected this 'sinful flesh' to be in harmony with God's sinful Law rather than in conflict with it. Clement notes, however, that indwelling sin fights against God's Law and the mind's law, thus showing that there is a disagreement between 'sinful flesh' and God's Law. The implication is that the presence of sin in the person is in fact foreign to God's Law and to the mind's law, hence to God's creation of the human and to his plan for the human. Along similar lines, it follows that one's own will (Rom. 7:20) would not be inhibited either if evil were proper to human nature, and yet the Apostle clearly points out that the will is in a state of struggle. The inconsistency of the heretics is thus unmasked.

Following this, Clement's fourth defence (*Strom.* 3.77.2-3, 78.1-5) builds on the previous one to continue to unmask the heretics' logical inconsistencies. In the fourth defence, Clement is accentuating the conflict between God and sin by quoting from Rom. 8:2-4, 5-15 and 1 Cor. 3:16. Again, the implication, given the context and the polemic at hand, appears to be that there should be no interior conflict between sin and the Spirit if sin were part of human nature and if God were promoting sin. This is not the case, however. Clement sets up some strong dualisms to emphasise that God is particularly interested in removing the sin that is present in the human rather than promoting its presence there. Clement offers a number of premises before he presents his conclusion. Firstly, the Apostle affirmed that 'the Law of the Spirit has freed [us] from the law of sin and death' (Rom. 8:2; *Strom.* 3.77.2). Secondly, the one who lives according to sin is

like one whose body has become a tomb for the soul rather than a temple for God's Spirit to indwell (Rom. 8:10; 1 Cor. 3:16; *Strom.* 3.77.3).[17] Thirdly, the mind-sets (*φρόνημα*) of the flesh and of the Spirit are diametrically opposed to each other (Rom. 8:5-15; *Strom.* 3.78). Finally, the spirit of slavery (likely here understood as the enslavement to sin, as per Rom. 7:23 and *Strom.* 3.77.1) produces fear, whereas the Spirit of God disperses fear and establishes us as sons and daughters of God (Rom. 8:15; *Strom.* 3.78.5), the goal of which is to know God (*Strom.* 3.78.5).[18] Therefore, because there is only conflict between God and the things made by God and evil, then evil cannot have its origin in God.

To summarise Clement's use of Rom. 7: 23-24 and 8:2 in *Strom.* 3.77–78, he is arguing against Gnostics who have also used some verses from this section of Romans. He is therefore provoked to engage the larger text of Rom. 7:17b–8:15 in order to acquit the Creator of the false charge that God created the flesh sinful.

The identity of the 'I' in Rom. 7:21–8:2

Beyond the *why* of Clement's use of the text, this short passage in the *Stromateis* also sheds some light on two contemporary lingering issues in the Pauline text: the identity of the subject and the meaning of the *νόμος* phrases. Regarding the identity of the speaker, Clement does not shy away from explicitly naming Paul as the main actor in these verses of Romans from the

[17] A similar image is also found in Plato's *Cratylus* 400b-c.

[18] In *Div.* 42.18-19, Clement is very explicit about God's innocence and the human soul's culpability. He writes: 'But if one chooses to continue and to sin perpetually in pleasures, and values indulgence here above eternal life, and turns away from the Saviour, who gives forgiveness; let him no more blame either God, or riches, or his having fallen, but his own soul, which voluntarily perishes. But to him who directs his eye to salvation and desires it, and asks with boldness and vehemence for its bestowal, the good Father who is in heaven will give the true purification and the changeless life.'

moment he begins to quote from the letter (*Strom.* 3.75.3 and following). For Clement, Paul is clearly the subject of the verbs in Rom. 7:14-25. A further support of this view is the fact that Clement uses the third person singular to refer to Paul in his interpolated comments.

The νόμος *phrases and 'indwelling sin' in Rom. 7:7-25*

Concerning the *νόμος* phrases, according to the above analysis of *Strom.* 3.71–78, Clement understands the hostile laws of Rom. 7:23 to be 'indwelling sin', which, in turn, he interprets to be the ruling impulse (*τῆς ὁρμῆς τῆς κυριευούσης*, *Strom.* 3.71.4), lustful desires (variants of the root *ἐπιθυμ-*, *Strom.* 3.71.4, 75.1, 76.2), and corrupted thoughts (*φθαρῇ τα νοήματα*, *Strom*. 3.74.3).[19] The connection between lustful thoughts and sin is made explicit in his quoting Rom. 7:7—'You shall not lust'—immediately before discussing indwelling sin in Rom. 7:17b and following (*Strom.* 3.76.2 and following). In fact, Paul uses similar language in Rom. 7:5, 7-8, wherein he reminisces about our former life 'in the flesh' (*ὅτε γὰρ ἦμεν ἐν τῇ σαρκί*), when 'the sinful passions (*τὰ παθήματα τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν*), aroused by the law, worked in our members (*ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ἡμῶν*)' (Rom. 7:5), and when 'sin seized an opportunity in the commandment, produced in me every sort of desire (*πᾶσαν ἐπιθυμίαν*)' (Rom. 7:8). Paul's striking use of a synonymous parallelism in Rom. 7:7 strongly suggests that he himself may have equated inordinate desires with sin[20]:

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[19] Clement holds this doctrine quite consistently across his work. See, for example, *Strom.* 4.40, in which Rom. 7:23 is quoted. Here, 'another law' and 'the law of sin' are equated with *τὰ πάθη* 'the passions' (see p. 124 and following).

[20] Paul Biays brought this to light in his 1967 work. Cf. Paul Biays, *Parallelism in Romans*, FHSNSL 5 (Kansas: Fort Hays State University, 1967). Curiously, despite the presence of many parallelisms in Romans 7, he does not touch on Romans 7 at all. Robert Jewett is a recent Pauline scholar who has pointed out the parallelisms found in Romans 7 (cf. Robert Jewett, Romans*: A Commentary*, ed. Eldon Jay Epp, Hermeneia (Minneapolis:

ἀλλὰ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἔγνων	But I would not have known sin
εἰ μὴ διὰ νόμου·	if it had not been for law;
τήν τε γὰρ ἐπιθυμίαν οὐκ ᾔδειν	I would not have known what it is to lust
εἰ μὴ ὁ νόμος ἔλεγεν· οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις	if the law had not said, 'You shall not lust'

Clement is a keen observer of the context, as he himself points out in *Strom.* 3.76.3 with his criticism of the heretics, who evidently did not pay close attention to the context. This allows him to interpret 'indwelling sin' with that which precedes it. In a similar fashion, Clement works backwards to equate 'another law' of Rom. 7:23 with 'indwelling sin' of Rom. 7:17b/20. In this section of the *Stromateis,* his engagement with Rom. 7:23 is limited to quoting the text, although the way in which he quotes Rom. 7:23—the modification of Paul's text by removing 'another law in my members' and inserting 'God's Law'—is significant.[21] Now, 'indwelling sin' takes the place of and functions like Paul's 'another law in my members', as it functions as the subject of the participle *ἀντιστρατευόμενον* in its place, although Clement takes Paul's thought further. This indwelling sin not only makes war against the law of the mind, but also against the Law of God, a concept that is not found in Rom. 7:23. He seems to place these two laws on a par, as sin makes war on both laws indiscriminately.

Nothing can be said about Clement's understanding of the identity of 'the law of sin' in Rom. 7:23 because Clement simply quotes the remainder of the verse along with Rom. 7:24-25

Fortress, 2007), 456). However, Jewett limits himself to pointing them out rather than engaging them as a way to aid the interpretation of certain ambiguous elements found in the synonymous, antithetical, or synthetical cola.

[21] Clement seems to be drawing from the immediate context for his insertion, wherein 'the law of God', 'mind', and 'the law of sin' appear. In Rom. 7:25b, Paul writes: 'So then, I serve the law of God with my mind (*τῷ μὲν νοῖ δουλεύω νόμῳ θεοῦ*), but the law of sin with my flesh (*τῇ δὲ σαρκὶ νόμῳ ἁμαρτίας*).'

without any modifications or comments. As such, no firm conclusions can be drawn from *Strom.* 3.71-78 about the second hostile law, 'the law of sin', whether Clement understands it to be the same as the first, and so, mean 'indwelling sin', or whether it should be best understood as yet another hostile law at work in the person. Clement's use of Rom. 7:23 in another section of the *Stromateis*, as explored in Section 2 below, will support the understanding that the two laws are really one law. Having analysed Clement's understanding of the hostile laws, it is now opportune to assess Clement's interpretation of the good, beneficial laws, and especially examine why he modifies the Pauline text with the insertion of 'the Law of God', where Rom. 7:23 does not have it (it is in Rom. 7:22, however).

Φρόνησις, *'the law of my mind', and 'the law of God' in Philo and Clement*

Clement has a rich understanding of divine and human laws, which must be taken into account in order to comprehend fully his reworking of Rom. 7:23, and especially to understand why he inserts 'the Law of God' in his modified quotation. Salvatore Lilla asserts that Philo's reading of Divine Law (=God's Law, the Mosaic Law, the Torah; *ὁ νόμος*), natural law (*λόγος φύσεως*), and the Stoic concept of divine reason (*λόγος θεῖος*) has heavily influenced Clement.[22] Lilla writes: 'we must not forget that his concept of the Jewish *νόμος* is identical with that of Philo. Clement, when defining *νόμος* in Stoic terms, has the definition of *νόμος* given by Philo still floating in his mind.'[23] For both, the Mosaic Law is the most perfect expression of divine reason that is

[22] Salvatore Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism*, OTM (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 74–76.

[23] Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria*, 75.

accessible and comprehensible to human beings.[24] It is, nonetheless, only an image of divine reason, not quite its fullness. As Clement describes it in *Strom.* 6.58.3: *ὁ νόμος εἰκὼν καὶ σκιὰ τῆς ἀληθείας* ('the Law [is] the image and shadow of the truth', my translation). Lilla further observes that both Philo and Clement maintain that 'a spark of this universal Logos was present in the human mind'.[25]

For both authors, discerning and applying God's Law is accomplished through the exercise of *φρόνησις*, the virtue of prudence, or practical wisdom. Both authors see a great deal of overlap between the Mosaic Law and *φρόνησις*, as they define the two terms in nearly identical ways: the Torah and the virtue of practical wisdom furnish the mind with the knowledge of what one ought and ought not to do. We will encounter this later in *Strom.* 4.40 (Section 2 below), wherein Clement modifies Rom. 7:23's 'law of the mind' and deploys *φρόνημα*, a cognate of *φρόνησις*, in place of *νόμος*.

In *Migr.* 130 (ii. 68. 14-15), Philo defines the Torah as: *νόμος δὲ οὐδὲν ἄρα ἤ λόγος θεῖος, προστάττων ἃ δεῖ καὶ ἀπαγορεύων ἃ μὴ χρή* ('But indeed, the law is nothing other than divine reason, which prescribes those things which ought to be done and prohibits those which ought not to be done', my translation).[26] He defines *φρόνησις* in a strikingly similar manner: *λογισμοῦ γάρ ἐστιν ἐπιστήμη ὧν τε δεῖ ποιεῖν ὧν τε μή* ('[Practical wisdom] is the reasoning knowledge

[24] Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria*, 76.

[25] Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria*, 76. Clement writes: 'For "the Sun of Righteousness," who drives His chariot over all, pervades equally all humanity, like "His Father, who makes His sun to rise on all men," and distils on them the dew of the truth. … having bestowed on us the truly great, divine, and inalienable inheritance of the Father, deifying man by heavenly teaching, putting His laws into our minds, and writing them on our hearts. What laws does He inscribe? "That all shall know God, from small to great;" and, "I will be merciful to them," says God, "and will not remember their sins." Let us receive the laws of life, let us comply with God's expostulations; let us become acquainted with Him, that He may be gracious' (*Prot.* 11.114.3-115.1).

[26] Similarly defined and formulated in *Ios.* 29 (iv. 67. 17-18), *Mos.* ii. 4 (iv. 201. 4-5), and *Praem.* 55 (v. 248. 11-12).

[practical knowledge] of those things which one ought and ought not to do', my translation; *Leg*. i.70, vol. i.79. 18-19).

Clement defines *φρόνησις* in a similar manner in *Strom.* 6.154.4: *φρόνησίς εστιν, δύναμις ψυχῆς θεωρητικὴ τῶν ὄντων καὶ τοῦ ἀκολούθου ὁμοίου τε καὶ ἀνομοίου διακριτική τε αὖ καὶ συνθετικὴ καὶ προστακτικὴ καὶ ἀπαγορευτικὴ τῶν τε μελλόντων καταστοχαστική* ('prudence, a faculty/power of the soul; [it is] the study of existences, distinguishing and comparing what succeeds as like and unlike, prescribing and forbidding, and conjecturing the future', my translation). Similarly, Clement writes the following concerning *νόμος* in *Strom.* 1.166.4-5: *...ἀλλὰ νόμος ἐστὶ χρηστὴ δόξα, χρηστὴ δὲ ἡ ἀληθής, ἀληθὴς δὲ ἡ τὸ ὂν εὑρίσκουσα καὶ τούτου τυγχάνουσα· 'ὁ ὤν δὲ ἐξαπέσταλκέν με' φησὶν ὁ Μωυσῆς. ᾗ τινες ἀκολούθως δηλονότι τῇ χρηστῇ δόξῃ λόγον ὀρθὸν τὸν νόμον ἔφασαν, προστακτικὸν μὲν ὧν ποιητέον, ἀπαγορευτικὸν δὲ ὧν οὐ ποιητέον.* ('But law is good opinion, and the truth is good, and the truth is that which finds that which is and attains to it. "He who is," says Moses, "sent me." In accordance with which, namely, good opinion, some have called law, right reason, which prescribes what is to be done and prohibits what is not to be done.' My translation.)

Evil, irrational human laws and 'indwelling sin'

The way in which Clement rearranges Rom. 7:17b-18a, 20, and 23 reveals that indwelling sin is an affront not only on the human mind but also on divine reason's expression in human language, God's Law. Clement's reasoning seems to lead to the conclusion that the God who created the world and its underlying *logos* could not have created a creature with innate sin, something irrational, for this would go against the reason that was operative in creating the

creature. Instead of harmony, one would find disharmony. This is precisely why Clement demonstrates the disharmony between indwelling sin, the human will, God's Law, and the mind's law. Had creation been imbued with sin from the moment of creation, sin would be a harmonious element in creation rather than one that disrupts it.

While there is a Divine Law whose ultimate source is divine reason, there are also human-made laws and customs that are irrational and therefore opposed to the Divine Law and to divine reason. Although Clement refers to these as laws but a few times (and sarcastically, at that; see *Paed.* 3.22.1), his favourite term is by far 'customs' (*τὰ ἔθη*). Evil laws and customs move people towards ignorance and chaos rather than towards knowledge and harmony, 'the result [of these 'wise laws'] being notorious: the whole earth has now become full of fornication and wickedness' (*Paed.* 3.22.1). While wicked human laws legally permit people to sin and indulge in pleasure (Clement points out adultery and fornication, *Paed.* 3.22.1-2), 'evil' and 'unlawful' customs in which one is raised introduce the maturing person to idolatry and to practises that lead to an overly sexualised culture (e.g. attending the games, overly erotic dress, immoderate drink), which inevitably leads to sexual licentiousness (see esp. *Prot.* 10, but also most of Book 2 of *Paed.*).

These irrational laws and customs therefore surround humans with sinful behaviours from the moment of their birth (*Prot.* 1.7.5). Their sinful surroundings not only introduce them to sin, but they also keep them in sin as a sort of vicious circle: they are enslaved to their customs through their upbringing. As illustrated below with the example of the Apostle John and his disciple (*Div.* 42), Clement maintains that humans cannot break out of this vicious circle on their own. They need divine assistance and good teachers to be able to instruct them in true knowledge and true praxis and guide them out of ignorance and bad habits. Clement's teaching

on the influence of the environment—whether for good or for ill—on human agency begins with sense perception and must be explored in order to appreciate fully his understanding of 'indwelling sin'.[27]

Environmental influences understood through Clement's epistemology

Clement's clearest treatment of epistemology and sense perception and their relationship with anthropology is in *Strom.* 6.68.3–69.2. The experience of 'existing objects'/'certain things' (*τὰ ὄντα*) produces knowledge in the mind of the rational soul (*Strom.* 6.69.2). This experience is the first stage, that which Clement calls 'learning' (*Strom.* 6.69.1).[28] Learning, whether good or bad, stimulates the heart to an 'assent', a choice, which then produces an 'impulse' (*αἱ ὁρμαί*; *Strom.* 6.69.1).[29] The impulse subsequently moves the person towards an action (*Strom.* 6.69.1).

[27] Similarly, Hamilton Baird Timothy observes that, for Clement, truth has four pillars: *αἴσθησις* (sensation), *νοῦς* (understanding), *ἐπιστήμη* (knowledge/real science), and *κατάληψις* (sure comprehension, as opposed to *ὑπόληψις,* opinion). Sensations and understanding have equal access to *τὸ ἐνεργές* (evidence), which may lead to *γνῶσις* (apprehension/knowledge). Cf. Hamilton Baird Timothy, *The Early Christian Apologists and Greek Philosophy: Exemplified by Irenaeus, Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria*, WTS 21 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1973), 65–74. In like manner, Joachim Meifort draws our attention to the Platonic dualism between *κόσμος νοητός* and *κόσμος αἰσθητός* that Clement readily picks up. The experience of the sensible world—*κόσμος αἰσθητός*—is indeed important for gaining access to that which lies beneath or beyond, *κόσμος νοητός*. The former is an 'image' (*εἰκῶν*) of the latter, which serves as the archetype (*ἀρχετύπος*). The former, nonetheless, elicits φυσικὴ θεωρία, which then moves the contemplative deeper to *ἐπιστήμη τἀγαθοῦ καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας* ('knowledge of the good and of the true'', or true and good knowledge'). Or, as Meifort puts it: 'Die ganze *ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία* mag wohl eine Vorübung sein insofern, als durch sie die Seele geweckt wird für die Beschäftigung mit den νοητά' (p. 12). Cf. Joachim Meifort, *Der Platonismus bei Clemens Alexandrinus*, Heidelberger Abhandlungen zur Philosophie und ihrer Geschichte 17 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1928), 12–13.

[28] Meifort notes that 'Es ist nur eine scheinbare Unterbrechung dieses Begriffsschemas, wenn Str. VII, 2 zwischen die Sphäre der *αἰσθητά*, die dem bürgerlichen Leben entspricht, und die Sphäre der *νοητά* eine Zwischenstufe eingefügt ist, die *διδακτά*: alte Philosophie und die frühere Prophetie. Denn das „Lehrbare" ist für Clemens eben nichts weiter als Vorbereitung für die vollkommene noëtische Stufe, die durch die christliche Gnosis jetzt verwirklicht ist' (Meifort, *Der Platonismus bei Clemens Alexandrinus*, 13).

[29] An impulse is good if it leads to 'rational action' (*Strom.* 6.69), or, if it leads to an irrational, bad action, it may be 'an impulse of ignorance' (*Strom.* 7.16.2) or 'an irrational impulse' (*Paed.* 3.53.1).

Clement summarises his view rather concisely: 'for naturally, he who does what he wishes to do learns it first; and knowledge comes from learning, and impulse follows knowledge; after which comes action' (*Strom*. 6.69.1).

The passions (*τὰ πάθη*) and desires (*αἱ ἐπιθυμίαι*) are capable of accessing and influencing the mind.[30] While the passions always seem to have a negative connotation, desires may be good or bad. All of these are stimulated by the knowledge gained from one's surroundings and these influence the will, which, unlike knowledge, is found in the heart (*Strom.* 6.135.4). The passions always seem to be associated with desiring various forms of pleasures or exhibiting inordinate emotions, such as excessive rage or fear (e.g. *Strom.* 6.71). Desires are often used synonymously with passions, and so, negatively, although they may be good if the object of desire is good, such as the pursuit of God, study, knowledge, and the like.[31]

Clement appears to follow the Middle Platonists in his understanding of the soul and how the above-mentioned elements interact therein.[32] For Clement, the soul is tripartite. In *Paed.*

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[30] The notion of passions and desires influencing the mind is ubiquitous in Clement's writings. See *Paed.* 2.48.3, 2.81.1-2; *Div*. 12.1-2; *Strom.* 4.83.4-6, 5.57.4, 7.44.6-7, 7.101.6-7. The Stoics believed the passions to be in the upper part of the soul, while Clement, the Middle Platonists, and the Neoplatonists believed the passions to be in the lower part of the soul. For a thorough treatment of the matter, cf. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria*, 85–96.

[31] E.g., in *Strom.* 5.86.3, Clement writes: 'But the good differ especially from the bad in inclinations and good desires. For all depravity of soul is accompanied with want of restraint; and he who acts from passion, acts from want of restraint and from depravity.' See also *Strom.* 6.54.3, 6.71, 6.136.1, and *passim*. The negative use of 'desire' is attested in *Strom.* 6.98.1-2.

[32] In his monumental study of Clement's thought, Lilla shows convincingly that Clement cannot be so easily categorised. Clement takes elements from many systems and adds a uniquely Christian spin (he was deeply inspired by Justin Martyr). Lilla sees elements from Aristotle, the Stoics, the Middle Platonists, Jewish-Alexandrine philosophy, and early forms of Neoplatonism (Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria*). Juan José Sanguineti keenly observes that 'Es ist auch kein Zufall, dass er alle oder fast alle klassischen Autoren heranzieht, ohne sich übermäßig auf einen Einzigen zu konzentrieren, wenn er auch seine Vorliebe für Platon hat. Die Wechselbeziehung der christlichen Wahrheit mit einem einzigen Autor zu suchen, birgt die Gefahr in sich, ihn fast mit der Offenbarung gleich zu stellen. Clemens denkt im Gegensatz dazu, wie wir sahen, dass die weltliche Wahrheit unter viele zerstreut ist, und sucht sie deswegen bei allen gleichzeitig' ('Christliche Inkulturation in die griechische Philosophie bei Clemens von Alexandrien,' in *Die Weite des Mysteriums: Christliche identität im dialog. Für Horst Bürkle*, ed. Klaus Krämer (Freiburg: Herder, 2000), 345). For more on Clement's philosophical leanings, see: Robert Pierce Casey, 'Clement

3.1.2, Clement names these 'three parts of the soul' (*τριγενοῦς οὖν ὑπαρχούσης τῆς ψυχῆς*): (a) 'the intellectual, which is also called the rational' (*τὸ νοερόν ὅ δὴ λογιστικόν καλεῖτει*), (b) the irascible or spirited (*τὸ θυμικόν*; located in the heart), and (c) the appetitive (*τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν*).[33] The upper part of the soul, which Clement names 'the ruling faculty' (*τὸ ἡγεμονικόν*, *Strom.* 6.135–36), is the rational part, while the lower part, named 'the carnal spirit' (*τὸ σαρκικόν πνεύμα*, *Strom.* 6.135.3), 'the corporeal spirit' (*τὸ σωματικόν πνεύμα, Strom.* 6.136.1), or 'the corporeal soul' (*ἡ σωματικὴ ψυχή*, *Strom.* 7.79.6) comprises the spirited and appetitive parts.

The mind (*νοῦς*) resides in the upper part (*Strom.* 6.135.4), the part that is engaged in the intellectual life, which involves understanding and contemplating eternal truths, and, most perfectly, God and God's will for the world.[34] The spirited part, intimately connected with the organ of the heart (*καρδία*), contains the will (i.e. the power of choice, *ἡ προαιρετική*),[35] and it is fed with knowledge from the mind. The spirited part, in turn, is closely connected with the appetitive part of the soul, which is in close proximity to the flesh. Thus, these two parts of the

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of Alexandria and the Beginnings of Christian Platonism,' *HTR* 18 (1925): 39–101; Henry Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition: Studies in Justin, Clement, and Origen* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966); Meifort, *Der Platonismus bei Clemens Alexandrinus*; Timothy, *The Early Christian Apologists and Greek Philosophy*; Dietmar Wyrwa, *Die christliche Platonaneignung in den Stromateis des Clemens von Alexandrien*, AK 53 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1983). For some excellent resources on the doctrines of the Middle Platonists, see: Julia Annas, *Platonic Ethics, Old and New*, CSCP 57 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 117–36; John M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: A Study of Platonism, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220*, rev. ed., CLL (London: Duckworth, 1996); Jan Opsomer, *In Search of the Truth: Academic Tendencies in Middle Platonism* (Brussel: Paleis der Academiën, 1998); Marco Zambon, 'Middle Platonism,' in *A Companion to Ancient Philosophy,* ed. by Mary Louise Gill and Pierre Pellegrin (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 561–576.

[33] Clement largely follows Plato's terms—the rational (*τὸ λογιστικόν*), a variant of the spirited (*τὸ θυμοειδές*), and the appetitive (*τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν*) (*Republic* 434d–441c; *Phaedrus* 246a-254e; *Timaeus* 69d-71d, 90a-d). All of the Middle and Neoplatonists, including Clement, adopted Plato's later views of the tripartition of the soul (Annas, *Platonic Ethics*, 121).

[34] The form of the good is now understood as intimate knowledge of God and his will for creation (cf. *Strom.* 7.44.5, 7.60, 7.78.3-4).

[35] Timothy notes that Clement's understanding of the will is thoroughly Aristotelian (*The Early Christian Apologists and Greek Philosophy*, 79).

soul, if not mastered by the mind through the virtues, are prone to be led by fleshly pleasures and pains (*Strom.* 6.71.1; *Paed.* 2.102.2-3).

Our environment as experienced in the body (knowledge gained from learning, customs, bodily pleasures and pains, and so forth) stimulates the production of passions and desires in the lower part of the soul, which then influence the will by virtue of the will also being in the lower part of the soul. If the will is not informed and disciplined by a *νοῦς* steeped in true knowledge and disciplined by virtue, then it acts upon the animal-like desires and passions that arise from the body, producing impulses, which move the body to bad action.[36]

The will seems to be an extremely sensitive element of the soul and therefore rather unstable if not under the control of reason, while at the same time very important due to its role in moving the body towards or away from an object of desire.[37] Being closely connected to the body through the appetitive part of the soul, it is affected by the sensations that the body experiences. Being in close proximity to the reasoning part of the soul, however, it is also

[36] Plato's renowned image of the charioteer (the rational part of the soul) and his two winged horses (the white horse, symbolising the spirited part of the soul and black horse, symbolising the appetitive part) in the *Phaedrus* illustrates this ruling function of reason well (*Phaedrus* 246b, but see also the larger section 246a-54e). Reason must master the two winged horses in order to attain a ruly ascent to the heavens (i.e. the Forms). Clement employs very similar imagery of horse and rider—reason and reason assaulted by sin—in *Paed.* 1.101.1,3–102.1. He writes: 'Everything that is contrary to right reason is sin. Accordingly, therefore, the philosophers think fit to define the most generic passions thus: lust, as desire disobedient to reason; fear, as weakness disobedient to reason; pleasure, as an elation of the spirit disobedient to reason. If, then, disobedience in reference to reason is the generating cause of sin… whatever is done through error of reason is transgression, and is rightly called, sin. … being rightly regarded as irrational, he is likened to the beasts. Whence Wisdom says: "The horse for covering; the libidinous and the adulterer is become like to an irrational beast." Wherefore also it is added: "He neighs, whoever may be sitting on him." The man, it is meant, no longer speaks; for he who transgresses against reason is no longer rational, but an irrational animal, given up to lusts by which he is ridden (as a horse by his rider).' A similar image is also found in *Paed.* 3.53.1-2.

[37] In *Prot.* 11.117.2, Clement comments on the fire of mystical, divine love, which 'comes to men thus, when in the soul itself the spark of true goodness, kindled in the soul by the Divine Word, is able to burst forth into flame; and, what is of the highest importance, salvation runs parallel with sincere willingness—choice and life being, so to speak, yoked together.'

influenced by the mind, although the mind may be well or badly shaped, depending on the education and training the person has received. The content of the knowledge from the intellect largely determines the will's decision, since the rational part is nevertheless the superior part (*Strom.* 6.135-136).

It follows from this that the human can only exercise the will freely[38]—and thus follow good desires and reject evil ones—if he or she knows what the good is, which includes theoretical and practical knowledge of the virtues.[39] In *Paed.* 1.29.4–30.1, Clement cannot be clearer concerning the effects of ignorance and knowledge on the person:

> The darkness is ignorance, through which we fall into sins, purblind us to the truth. Knowledge, then, is the illumination we receive, which makes ignorance disappear, and endows us with clear vision. Further, the abandonment of what is bad is the adopting of what is better. For what ignorance has bound ill, is by knowledge loosed well; those bonds are with all speed slackened by human faith and divine grace, our transgressions being taken away by one *Pœonian* medicine, the baptism of the Word. We are washed from all our sins, and are no longer entangled in evil. This is the one grace of illumination, that our characters are not the same as before our washing.

[38] 'Emancipating the free-will', *Paed.* 3.87.1; also, when a person has 'clear vision', *Paed.* 1.29.4.

[39] To 'act rightly' and 'to judge well' are intimately connected with the free exercise of the will. In *Strom.* 7.101.6-7, Clement writes: 'Though men's actions are ten thousand in number, the sources of all sin are but two, ignorance and inability. And both depend on ourselves; inasmuch as we will not learn, nor, on the other hand, restrain lust. And of these, the one is that, in consequence of which people do not judge well, and the other that, in consequence of which they cannot comply with right judgments. For neither will one who is deluded in his mind be able to act rightly, though perfectly able to do what he knows; nor, though capable of judging what is requisite, will he keep himself free of blame, if destitute of power in action.'

Clement here explicitly connects the falling into sin with being ignorant of the truth. It is impossible to be a good person if the human being is steeped in ignorance and unaware of the good. This results in a sort of bondage to and entanglement in sin. Although it is ultimately up to the individual to decide for him- or herself which knowledge to accept and live according to, external circumstances greatly influence the knowledge that reason has access to. If the human is educated well and therefore nurtured with true knowledge and disciplined in the virtues, then his or her rational part will be formed properly. It will function according to reason and inform the will accordingly so that it may develop good impulses and therefore act well. Good instructors of knowledge and truth are therefore needed in order to bring the human out of the state of ignorance and into the state of true knowledge. Contemporary Pauline scholars in the tradition of reading identity formation as Ernst Käsemann did (such as aforementioned in the Introduction and Chapter One: Michael Croasmun, Susan Eastman, and Samuel Ferguson), certainly see this dynamic in Paul's works. It would seem that the notion was well established in the Ancient Near East in general. Such doctrines are already present in the writings of various Greek philosophers. Plato, for example, would have the sophists, the poets, and the vicious citizens banned from a city because of their negative influence on the other citizens.[40] Plato's sentiments concerning the power of poetry is certainly alive and well today, as per Dylan Thomas's comment: 'A good poem helps to change the shape and significance of the universe, helps to extend everyone's

[40] Much of Books II, III, and X of the *Republic* are strong critiques of the place of poetry and rhetoric in education and society. Likewise, Plato criticises the self-proclaimed interpreter and exegete of Homer's poetry, Ion, in the dialogue of the same name, for pretending to have true knowledge but, in effect, he uses rhetoric to dupe his audience into thinking that he actually possesses true knowledge (which he doesn't). The *Gorgias* and *Protagoras* are strong critiques of sophistry. Finally, the *Phaedrus* evaluates poetry and rhetoric and shows the dangers of using them wrongly, that is, Plato shows how much power the poet and rhetorician have and what harm may be done with it. For an excellent presentation of Plato's views on the dangers of poetry and rhetoric, see Elizabeth Belfiore, 'Plato's Greatest Accusation against Poetry,' *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 9 (1983): 39–62.

knowledge of himself and the world around him.'[41] Clement is very aware of this dynamic in his writings, as he frequently refers to the importance of the role of one's formators and surroundings on character development. For example, Clement quotes Plato's *Letter VII* (326bc) in *Paed.* 2.18 in connection with a discussion on taking pleasure in overeating and how custom promotes sluggishness of mind through this vice.[42] The idea is not new; what is new in Clement's writings is the pedagogical role of Christ, the Logos.

Writing of Christ, the true Pedagogue, Clement notes that 'He prescribes the cure with all speed, advising the head to be instantly shaven; that is, counselling the locks of ignorance which shade the reason to be shorn clean off, that reason (whose seat is in the brain), being left bare of the dense stuff of vice, may speed its way to repentance' (*Paed.* 1.5.1). Instruction in knowledge, which includes knowledge of and training in the virtues, is the great disciplinarian that displaces bad habits, which have been learned from the people and customs that surround us.[43] In *Paed.* 1.2.1-2, Clement is adamant that instruction and exhortation 'to the attainment of right dispositions and character' come first, and these are followed by the 'energetic practice of our duties', the appropriation of 'pure commandments', and the instruction in the lives of exemplary people, that is, 'representations of those who formerly wandered in error'. The twofold aim of this training is 'the one having for its purpose that we should choose and imitate the good, and

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[41] Dylan Thomas, *Quite Early One Morning* (New York: New Directions, 1954), 192–93.

[42] Another pertinent example is found in *Strom.* 4.149.4-5, where Clement writes approvingly of Democritus' views on 'nature and upbringing'. He writes: 'Wherefore Democritus well says, that "nature and instruction" are like each other. And we have briefly assigned the cause. For instruction harmonizes man, and by harmonizing makes him natural; and it is no matter whether one was made such as he is by nature, or transformed by time and education. The Lord has furnished both; that which is by creation, and that which is by creating again and renewal through the covenant.'

[43] Customs are a frequent topic in Clement's work *Protrepticus* and *Paedagogus*. In *Prot.* 12.118.1, he writes: 'Let us then avoid custom as we would a dangerous headland, or the threatening Charybdis, or the mythic sirens. It chokes man, turns him away from truth, leads him away from life: custom is a snare, a gulf, a pit, a mischievous winnowing fan.'

the other that we should reject and turn away from the opposite' (Id.). Put another way, the instruction in God's Law, the dispersion of ignorance, and the cultivation of the virtues are all means of 'emancipating the free-will' for the sake of faith and salvation (*Paed.* 3.87.1).

The virtuous life as the fruit of knowledge

The more virtuous we become, the more control we have over the upper and lower parts of our soul so that desires and passions have less of a hold on us.[44] This is the vision of a virtuous and good human, one whose body and soul are in harmony because they are ruled by reason, which, through intense training, has been put in line with God's will for creation. It is important to note that this is not an 'all or nothing' scenario. Humans are somewhere on a spectrum, making their way either towards knowledge or towards ignorance.[45] The simultaneous existence of both in the human is therefore the source of continuing inner conflict, which is often explained with contentious imagery very much like that found in Rom. 7:14-25 or 1 Pt. 2:11.[46]

It is therefore no surprise that, in *Strom.* 3.76.2-77.1, Clement neatly weaves together the sin of lust (Rom. 7:7), 'indwelling sin' (Rom. 7:17, 20), no indwelling goodness (Rom. 7:18), the *ἀκρασία* of the will (Rom. 7:20), and the war against God's Law and the human mind's law

[44] Like the Middle and Neoplatonists, Clement also believes that there is a particular virtue for each part of the soul. In *Strom.* 4.163.3-4, he states that the different parts of the soul ought to be ruled by *σοφία* (wisdom), *δικαιοσύνη* (justice), and *ὁσιότης* (piety), while in *Div.* 15.5, speaking of the human in more general terms, Clement notes that the human should be ruled by *φρόνησις* (wisdom or prudence), *σωφροσύνη* (prudence or temperance), and *εὐσέβεια* (piety). Annas notes that, for the Middle and Neoplatonists (giving as an example Alcinous), all four virtues need to be working together in orchestration for a person to be considered 'virtuous' (Annas, *Platonic Ethics*, 123–25).

[45] In *Strom.* 6.96.3, Clement writes: 'Wherefore also some have been competent to attain to perfect virtue, and others have attained to a kind of it. And some, on the other hand, through negligence, although in other respects of good dispositions, have turned to the opposite.'

[46] E.g. *Div.* 25.4; *Strom.* 7.20.3-8, 7.44.7, 7.66.1-2, 7.67.4.

(Rom. 7:23). To a Middle or Neoplatonist's ears, this would have sounded like an account of a person who possesses a fair bit of knowledge but is still far from possessing the virtues so as to implement into his or her life that which he or she has learned. Because the will is still not completely ruled by the mind's reason through the virtues, it is still unable to resist certain desires and passions generated by the body, and hence it lives less according to reason and more according to brutish desires.[47]

The principal issue with Rom. 7:14-25 for admirers of Plato like Clement would have been that Paul had not yet graduated to the next step of his formation. As has been mentioned above in reference to *Paed.* 1.2.1-2, 1.29.4–30.1, and 3.87.1, education in the knowledge of the good is but the first stage. Following this comes the putting into action of God's commands in conjunction with the imitation of the lives of holy people; the virtuous life (doing the good) follows instruction in true knowledge.[48] Possibly out of respect for Paul, an Apostle of Christ, Clement does not elaborate on the Apostle's *ἀκρασία* in Rom. 7:20 in *Strom.* 3.77.1.

The return to sinful practices by baptised Christians

The topic of Paul's *ἀκρασία* could not be ignored altogether, however, because Clement had to address the tangentially related issue of lapsed Christians. What of those who have been illumined by the truth, baptised, and incorporated into the community, but subsequently returned to their former sinful lives? We may discern three reasons why this relapse may happen across

[47] In *Prot.* 10.95.1, Clement laments this dynamic: 'Why, in fine, do we not choose the better part, God instead of the evil one, and prefer wisdom to idolatry, and take life in exchange for death?'

[48] The virtues must be learned. Knowledge of them is indispensable for their acquisition, as Annas writes: 'Perfect virtues are the product of education, and the growth of an understanding of what the virtue in question is, and why one should, on each occasion, act in accordance with it' (Annas, *Platonic Ethics*, 122).

Clement's writings. Firstly, in *Strom.* 7.94-108, he surmises that there must have been something faulty with their education: the knowledge they learned was false and/or incomplete, as is clearly seen in the case of heretical groups. They reverted to their sinful ways because they did not really learn the way of Christ, often through no fault of their own.

Secondly, it may have been the case that their Christian formation in virtue was incomplete. In *Strom.* 7.46.8–47.1, Clement addresses 'those in whom there is still a heavy corner, leaning downwards, even that part which has been elevated by faith is dragged down'. Virtue and knowledge can indeed be lost, although Clement admits that this is impossible for the one who, through 'Gnostic training', has acquired virtue to such an extent that this 'habit becomes nature' (*Strom.* 7.46.8–47.1).[49] Lack of care, consideration, and caution in avoiding sinning disrupts the pursuit of virtue, while the lack of exercise of one's will and lack of resort to the power of reason, knowledge, and Divine Providence, disrupts the pursuit of knowledge (*Strom.* 7.46.8–47.1).

Clement illustrates this reality in *Div.* 42 with a lengthy apocryphal story about the Apostle John and one of his youthful disciples, who fell from grace but was again reinstated. This young

[49] Clement holds that when one truly achieves this state, it is impossible to lapse from it. In *Strom.* 7.70.4-6, he writes: 'it is not he who merely controls his passions that is called a continent man, but he who has also achieved the mastery over good things, and has acquired surely the great accomplishments of science, from which he produces as fruits the activities of virtue. Thus, the Gnostic is never, on the occurrence of an emergency, dislodged from the habit peculiar to him. For the scientific possession of what is good is firm and unchangeable, being the knowledge of things divine and human. Knowledge, then, never becomes ignorance nor does good change into evil.' Similarly, the one who possesses 'divine wisdom' is on his way towards salvation and 'from this…can be dragged by no demon' (*Prot.* 4.63.5). On the surface, this may seem like a very Gnostic (and later Pelagian) doctrine, where our own efforts are enough to bring us to salvation, either through the acquisition of knowledge or through self-discipline. Clement does emphasise the need for grace and forgiveness from God to begin and guide the process (see, for example, the quote from *Paed.* 1.29.4–30.1 above on p. 114), and thus it is not entirely up to the human being to make his or her way into heaven on his or her own efforts. Ultimately, salvation from Clement comes from *theosis*, being like God, which comes from the contemplation of God and being in constant, uninterrupted contact with God, i.e. an intimate relationship with God, in today's religious parlance.

man was educated in the knowledge of the Gospel, baptised, and received into the Christian community. Shortly after this, he began to re-associate with his former companions, who were highway robbers. One thing led to another, and slowly he abandoned his Christian faith and re-embraced his former life of thievery. It took the intervention of the Apostle John to win him back. The young man was 'baptised a second time with tears', that is, he was readmitted into the Christian community through many acts of penance (notably with prayers, fasts, and oral confession).

The third reason why some fall away from grace is because of the activity of external spiritual entities. Clement is aware that there is a spiritual deceiver, the Devil, who incessantly tries to trick Christians into accepting falsehoods and thus make them sin: 'that deceitful serpent, devouring the understanding part of man through vanity, has the soul as its hole, filling all with deadly poisons; and injecting his own venom of deception'.[50] In this scenario, the Christian did learn true Christian knowledge, but the Devil confused it with his lies, resulting in a lapse into former ways.

The passage from Rom. 7:14-25 depicts a person who seems to know and want to do the good (the precepts of the Law) but is prevented from doing it. This situation is best explained by the afore-outlined second option. Sin and ignorance are still dwelling in the human and they prevent the human from doing the good that he or she wants to do. These persons still lack the virtue to master their bodies and souls and, therefore, to rid themselves of the obstacle that is inhibiting them. This cannot be done on its own. This is done through experienced teachers and with the help of God's grace.[51] Emma Wasserman comes to a similar conclusion in her book on

[50] *Paed.* 3.5.4; cf. also *Strom.* 3.74.3, 4.118.1-2, *Prot.* 1.7.4-5, 3.43.1-2, and *passim*.

[51] Rom. 7:25a, 8:2 and following; e.g. *Strom.* 5.83.1, 6.113.2-3, and *passim*.

the death of the soul in Romans 7.[52] The dominion of vice is exemplified by the two parts of the soul being in dire conflict with each other. She believes that the 'I' in Rom. 7:14-25 suffers from 'extreme immorality', wherein the battle between reason and the passions is won by the passions due to a lack of virtue, thereby resulting in the metaphorical 'death of the soul' (Philo's language of *Leg.* 1.105-106). For Clement, as for Paul, this situation is reversible, as has been seen in the story of John the Apostle and his disciple. There is yet hope for the sinner who desires to do God's will.

Conclusion

This exploration of Clement's *Strom.* 3.71-78 and some of his other writings on similar topics has given us a better understanding of the way in which a Christian intellectual living less than two hundred years after Paul approached some difficult verses in Rom. 7:14–8:15. The analysis has shown that Clement did not engage this section of Romans for its own sake, but rather due to a polemic against heretical groups who seemed to have built some of their doctrines on Rom. 7:18a. He does not comment on Rom. 7:23, as one would expect from a commentary on Romans; rather, he uses a modified version of the verse largely as a proof text to support an argument, since he is determined to show them that their exegesis was false because they read Paul out of context. As such, he engages with much of Rom. 7:7, 17–8:15 in order to defend the orthodox Christian doctrine of a good Creator who created the flesh good; the evil therein is a result of human choice and not of a faulty creation.

[52] Emma Wasserman, *The Death of the Soul in Romans 7: Sin, Death, and the Law in Light of Hellenistic Moral Psychology*, WUNT 2.256 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008). She believes that Paul is working from a Middle Platonist system in his understanding of the self (pp. 115 and following).

Beyond the *why* of Clement's deployment of selected verses from Rom. 7:14–8:15, the *how* is revealing in the light of Clement's other writings. Unlike his opponents who did not seem to take the context of a biblical text seriously, Clement makes good use of the context of the verses that he addresses. In order to interpret 'indwelling sin', not only does Clement take recourse to his training in Platonic ethics, but also to the immediate context, finding similar ideas and terms in Rom. 7:5, 7-8. We may discern a similar approach in his interpolation of 'God's Law' in his quoting Rom. 7:23. He is likely drawing from the proximate Rom. 7:25b, where the phrase 'I serve the law of God with my mind' appears. Clement therefore shows himself to be a 'responsible' exegete, for he manipulates certain verses with the guidance of neighbouring verses.

As Clement uses neighbouring verses to make sense of 'indwelling sin', he uses 'indwelling sin' to understand 'another law in my members' of Rom. 7:23. The ambiguity about 'another law' is resolved by substituting it with a known element that has been taken from the immediate context. While the text is clear about Clement's understanding of 'another law in my members', nothing can be induced from *Strom.* 3.77 concerning his understanding of 'the law of sin', the second hostile law mentioned in Rom. 7:23b, because he does not modify it or comment on it. He simply cites the whole Rom. 7:23b, along with the following verses, verbatim. If this had been the only use of Rom. 7:23 in Clement's writings, the question whether the two laws were separate or identical would have been inconclusive. However, with the help of the analysis of another important passage, Section 2 below will strongly favour equating the two laws.

If Clement equates 'another law' of Rom. 7:23 with 'indwelling sin' of Rom. 7:17b, 20a, he then equates 'indwelling sin' with 'desires' of Rom. 7:5, 7-8, which, in turn, he interprets to mean certain desires, thoughts, or impulses that inhibit the proper functioning of the will. His

broader works filled in some much-needed information about his anthropology and epistemology: these sinful movements are stimulated through the body's experiences and are proper to the lower part of the soul. It is this lower part, when unrestrained, that makes war against the mind, which is in the upper part. The first element, 'indwelling sin', makes war on God's Law and the mind's law while 'the law of sin' is involved in enslaving the human although unfortunately this 'enslaving' does not receive any further comments or modifications from Clement in *Strom.* 3.77–78.

Clement's insertion of 'God's Law' into Rom. 7:23 has allowed us to see the strong connection between 'the law of my mind' and 'God's Law', a profoundly Philonian term imbued with the Stoic concept of the pervasive and all-penetrating divine mind and reason. A similar connection between *νόμος* and *φρόνησις/φρον-* will be explored in the following section, along with a creative use of a parallelism in imitation of Paul's parallelism in Rom. 7:23.

The way in which Clement uses this section of Romans reveals that he understands the subject to be Paul. At times, he names the Apostle explicitly; at other times, when commenting sporadically on some of the verses, he uses the third person singular, thus most probably referring to Paul. In short, Clement has no issues with Paul being the subject of these challenging verses.

Finally, the engagement with Clement's other works has also shown us that character formation, whether in virtue or vice, is always achieved in relation to another. Wise, virtuous, and knowledgeable teachers influence a person in one way, while foolish, vicious, and ignorant individuals influence a person another way, as exemplified by the Apostle John's disciple in Clement's *Div.* 42.

Having explored Clement's use of selected verses from Rom. 7:14–8:15 in *Strom.* 3.76–78, we now move on to *Strom*. 4.40 and 7.44, texts in which he deploys 7:23 in a more elaborate manner.

2. Romans 7:23 and *Stromateis* 4.40.2 and 7.44.7

Stromateis 4.40.2 and 7.44.7 both pertain to the preservation of a contemplative state, be it in prayer or in daily life. Clement devotes the fourth *Stromateis* to the exploration of martyrdom and perfect Christian Gnosticism and the seventh *Stromateis* to the description of a true Christian Gnostic. Among the topics discussed in the fourth *Stromateis*, a substantial section is dedicated to the Beatitudes. *Stromateis* 4.40.2-4 is found in the 'Blessed are the peacemakers' (Matt. 5:9) section of this reflection (*Strom.* 4.39–40). *Stromateis* 7.44.7, on the other hand, finds itself in a reflection on the attainment of a Gnostic state through prayer and how to remain in that state (*Strom.* 7.43–46).

Stromateis *4.40 and Romans 7:23*

In *Strom.* 4.40, Clement offers a spiritual interpretation of 'Blessed are the peacemakers' (Matt. 5:9). His reflection on this beatitude follows the previous reflection on 'Blessed are the pure in heart'. As mentioned in Section 1, the heart, for Clement, is 'the leading faculty of the soul' and is purified by knowledge (*Strom*. 4.39.1-2). The 'intermediate things', which he calls the 'necessary things' or 'circumstantials', are the material realities of our existence. These are neutral in themselves, although they may lead to 'good or bad actions'. Furthermore, they may

also give rise to 'corporeal lusts', that is, desires for 'spurious [things] that stand in the way of its [the leading faculty of the soul's] power' (*Strom.* 4.39.2). Those who are pure in heart have mastered the corporeal lusts and the desire for spurious things in order to have 'holy thoughts' and so 'to attain to the knowledge of God' (*Strom.* 4.39.2). True Gnostics, therefore, distinguish between the necessary and unnecessary things in life and only opt for the necessary, for they see how the unnecessary may rob the heart of its purity through inordinate desires and passions.

Clement is addressing the obstacles that stand in the way of remaining in a contemplative state. In *Strom.* 4.40, Clement explores the 'corporeal lusts' and 'spurious' things mentioned in *Strom.* 4.39. The one with a pure heart

> devotes himself to contemplation; communing in purity with the divine, he enters more nearly into the state of impassible identity, so as no longer to have science and possess knowledge, but to be science and knowledge. 'Blessed, then, are the peacemakers' (Matt. 5:9), who have subdued and tamed 'the law which wars against the inclination of our mind' (Rom. 7:23), the menaces of anger, the baits of lust, and the other passions which war against reason (cf. Rom. 7:23);[53] who, having lived in the knowledge both of good works and true reason, shall be reinstated in adoption, which is dearer. (*Strom.* 4.40.1-2)

Clement uses Rom. 7:23 to describe the interior struggle that the Christian needs to overcome in order to attain inner peace for the sake of contemplation. The passions need to be mastered; otherwise, there will be no inner peace and, hence, no contemplation. Clement does

[53] 4.40.2 '"*Μακάριοι τοίνυν οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί." Τὸν ἀντιστρατηγοῦντα νόμον τῷ φρονήματι τοῦ νοῦ ἡμῶν, τοῦ θυμοῦ τὰς ἀπειλὰς καὶ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας τὰ δελέατα τά τε ἄλλα πάθη, ὅσα πολεμεῖ τὸν λογισμόν, τιθασεύσαντες καὶ ἐξημερώσαντες*…'

not show any interest in a legal interpretation of *νόμος* in *Strom.* 4.40.2. Rather, this law, which is not here stated to be in his members (cf. Rom. 7:23) but securely in his mind, is shown to be a metaphor for 'corporeal lusts' and the desire for 'spurious things' when read alongside the immediate reflection on the purity of the heart. The mind is inclined towards 'holy thoughts' but these thoughts knock it off balance, and so the peacemaker is the one who masters them in order to regain interior peace.

It is noteworthy that Clement seems to detect Paul's use of a parallelism in Rom. 7:23—a literary technique used very frequently in Hebrew poetry—and produces his own modified and expanded version of it. In both the Pauline and Clementine texts, we may discern two cola that are set in parallelism to each other very much in the style of Old Testament poetry. Robert Lowth, an Old Testament scholar of the eighteenth century, who pioneered the study of parallelisms in Hebrew Poetry, proposed that there are three major kinds of parallelisms: (i) synonymous, in which the same notion is repeated in different but equivalent words; (ii) antithetical, in which the opposite cola express the opposite sides of the same thought; and (iii) synthetical, in which the two cola contain two dissimilar ideas, which, however, are connected by a certain affinity between them (the second often extends the thought of the first).[54]

Parallelisms, however, are not found solely within Hebrew Poetry. In fact, due to the profoundly Jewish character of the New Testament, scholars have also discerned parallelisms in the New Testament, including Romans. More importantly for this study, Rom. 7:7-25 is replete with parallelisms. Although a few Pauline scholars make note of this in their studies of Rom.

[54] See especially Robert Lowth, 'De Sacra Poesi Hebræorum Prælectiones,' 1753, Lecture xix.

7:14-25, they curiously do not engage the actual parallelisms to help explicate the text at hand, as Old Testament scholars frequently do with Hebrew poetry.[55] Here is Rom. 7:22-23:

v. 22	*συνήδομαι γὰρ*		(the main verb)
	τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ θεοῦ	*κατὰ τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον*,	(a b)
v. 23	*βλέπω δὲ*		(the main verb)
	ἕτερον νόμον	*ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου*	(a' b')
	ἀντιστρατευόμενον	*τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοός μου*	(c b'')
	καὶ		
	αἰχμαλωτίζοντά	*με*	(c' b''')
	ἐν τῷ νόμῳ τῆς ἁμαρτίας τῷ ὄντι	*ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου.*	(a'' b')

Robert Jewett notes 'the well-developed antithetical parallelism' in Rom. 7:22 and 23a (where 'inner self' is contrasted with 'members') and in Rom. 7:23a and b (where 'mind' is contrasted with 'members').[56] To these, we may also add four further parallelisms: (1) the antithetical parallelism between 'God's law' (Rom. 7:22) and 'another law' (Rom. 7:23a); (2) the synonymous or synthetical parallelism between 'another law' (Rom. 7:23a) and 'the law of sin' (Rom. 7:23b); (3) the alternating antithetical and synonymous parallelisms of the b elements

[55] Robert Jewett is among the few who comment on the many parallelisms in Rom. 7:7-25 and, notably, the antithetical parallelisms of Rom. 7:22 and 23a and Rom. 7:23b and 23c. See Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, ed. Eldon Jay Epp, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 456 and following Douglas Moo also points out that Rom. 7:22-23 'belong together antithetically' (Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 460).

[56] Jewett, *Romans*, 456.

(Rom. 7:22-23); and (4) the synonymous or synthetical parallelism between 'to make war' (Rom. 7:23a) and 'to take captive' (Rom. 7:23b). Finally, we may also discern a concentric structure in the parallelism of Rom. 7:23.

Knowing the nature of the parallelism in Rom. 7:23 is important for the interpretation of the verse. If the parallelism is synonymous, then the function of Rom. 7:23b is to articulate in similar terms that which is said in Rom. 7:23a. We would expect to have the same number of elements in both cola. This would mean that 'the law of sin' is functioning as a synonym of 'another law'. If this is the case, then there is one law in question in Rom. 7:23 rather than two different laws, which would be a different interpretation to Clement's as found above in Section 1, where Clement might have understood two different laws at work. Similarly, 'to take captive' becomes a synonymous expression for 'to make war'. The antithetical parallelism remains, however, between 'my members' and 'the law of my mind', while 'me' becomes a synonym of 'the law of my mind'. The middle *καί* functions epexegetically, clarifying that which precedes with that which follows.[57] If this is the case, and 'the law of sin' is in a synonymous parallelism with 'another law', then this would require the active participle *αἰχμαλωτίζοντά* to have a passive sense while maintaining its active form, as *LSJ* allows for this verb.[58]

This interpretation of the participle results in there only being one law operative (elements a' and a''); otherwise, if 'another law' is the subject of *αἰχμαλωτίζοντά*, then 'the law of sin', a different law, and no longer simply a synonym for 'another law', serves as the instrument of the verb's action. This would introduce an extra element into the parallelism (making 'another law' element d, for example), for a' ('another law') would be there implicitly as the unexpressed

[57] Traditionally referred to as the *waw explicativum* in Biblical Hebrew or the *kai explicativum* in Greek.
[58] *LSJ*, '*αἰχμαλωτίζω*' entry.

subject of *αἰχμαλωτίζοντά* from the previous clause. The passive sense of the participle allows only one law operative in Rom. 7:23b, which would thus maintain the same number of elements in each colon of the parallelism. The fact that both 'another law' and 'the law of sin' are said to be 'in my members' further supports the equating of the two laws. When the participle is read as having a passive sense, Rom. 7:23b may be read as an accusative direct object clause of 'to see', expressing indirect discourse with a supplementary participle. Because it is an accusative direct object of the main verb *βλέπω*, the subject is in the accusative case with the accompanying supplementary participle also in the accusative case, thereby giving '…that is, [I see] that I am taken captive by the law of sin, which dwells in my members' (Rom. 7:23b).[59] This interpretation of the two hostile laws as one is much clearer and explicit than Clement's comments in *Strom.* 3.76-77 (Section 1 above), where Clement understands 'another law' to be the desires of the heart that pull the human away from God, while 'the law of sin' is simply quoted from Rom. 7:23b without any further elaboration.

If Rom. 7:23 is interpreted as a synthetical parallelism, then the participle is best understood as having an active sense. 'Another law' becomes the subject of both supplementary participles, thereby making 'the law of sin' a distinct reality from 'another law', hence an extra element in the second colon of the parallelism (element d). In this case, Rom. 7:23b is meant to add something more to the concept found in Rom. 7:23a and the middle *καί* has a consecutive meaning ('and so' or 'and therefore'), serving to introduce a clause that furthers the meaning of the previous one. If it is interpreted in this way, the second verb, 'to take captive', sheds further light on 'to make war': this 'another law' enslaves the person by means of 'the law of sin'.

[59] Huby and Lyonnet offer a somewhat similar rendition in their commentary on Romans: 'Mais j'aperçois dans mes membres une autre loi, en guerre avec la loi de ma raison, cette loi du péché qui est dans mes membres, me réduit en servitude' (Huby, *Saint Paul, Épître aux Romains*, 254.).

Clement's reworking of Paul's parallelism (Rom. 7:23) in Stromateis *4.40.2*

Although both options ultimately point towards the same reality (enslavement of the self to a hostile law), each option adds a different nuance. In the first scenario, there appears to be one law that both makes war against the person's mind and takes the person captive. The second scenario sees two laws: 'another law' makes use of 'the law of sin' to enslave the person to itself. There still remain questions regarding the identities of 'another law' and 'the law of sin', and whether they are indeed separate realities. In *Strom.* 4.40.2, Clement appears to pick up on the parallelism in Paul's text and transforms Rom. 7:23 into his own parallelism, thereby clarifying a number of ambiguities that have been pointed out thus far. Clement's parallelism may be structured thus:

'μακάριοι' τοίνυν 'οἱ εἰρηνοποιοὶ'.

Τὸν ἀντιστρατηγοῦντα νόμον τῷ φρονήματι τοῦ νοῦ ἡμῶν, (a b c)

τοῦ θυμοῦ τὰς ἀπειλὰς καὶ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας τὰ δελέατα τά τε ἄλλα πάθη,

ὅσα πολεμεῖ τὸν λογισμόν, (a' b' c')

τιθασεύσαντες καὶ ἐξημερώσαντες (the main verbs)

Each bicolon in *Strom.* 4.40.2 comprises three elements: subject (a and a'), verb (b and b'), and object (c and c'). Clement leaves out the Pauline 'another' and simply has 'the law' (element a), and this is quickly explained to mean 'the menaces of anger, the baits of lust, and all the other passions' (a'). These elements are in the accusative case, either because they are the direct objects of the verbs *τιθασεύω* and *ἐξημερόω* or because they are in apposition to *τὸν*

ἀντιστρατηγοῦντα νόμον, also in the accusative case, as it is the direct object of the verbs *τιθασεύω* and *ἐξημερόω*. The lack of conjunction supports the appositional interpretation, although both options would amount to the same thing. If the former, then Clement equates the two terms and turns the second direct object into a kind of parenthetical comment. If the latter, as is typical of an appositional construction, then it serves an epexegetical purpose, clarifying what precedes it; the accusative case links that which is in apposition to the previous element in the accusative case ('the law...*that is*, the passions…').

As in his other texts where Clement connects the notions of corrupted laws and customs with the passions (e.g. *Paed. 2,* 3.22.1-2, *Prot.* 10), Clement also sees here a strong connection between the law that wars against the *φρόνημα* of the mind and the passions, *τὰ πάθη*. He understands the passions to be proper to the lower part of the soul, which makes war on the ruling faculty of the soul, the *ἡγεμονικόν*, if it is not mastered by the virtues.[60] It is significant that Clement does not include Paul's element b' ('in my members'). If 'another law' and 'the law of sin' are proper to the lower part of the soul rather than to the body, why should they be found in one's bodily members? The passions assault that which is not the flesh, but rather the mind, which, as a faculty of the soul, is immaterial for Clement. Paul's phrase 'in my members' is not in line with Clement's anthropology and he therefore resolves the conflict by removing it altogether. He also does so in *Strom.* 7.44.7, in which he loosely quotes Rom. 7:23.

[60] As already mentioned in fn. 36, the image of the warring lower part of the soul against the upper part goes back to Plato's image of the charioteer and the two horses (*Phaedrus* 246b). The notion has been taken up by Middle and Neoplatonists, including Philo and Clement (e.g., *Div.* 25.6; *Paed.* 1.101.1,3-102, 3.53.1-2; *Strom.* 7.20.3-6, 7.44.6-8, 7.66.1-2). In *Div.* 25.6, for example, Clement writes: 'More grievous and painful is this persecution, which arises from within, which is ever with a man, and which the persecuted cannot escape; for he carries the enemy about everywhere in himself. Thus also burning which attacks from without works trial, but that from within produces death. War also made on one is easily put an end to, but that which is in the soul continues till death.'

As earlier in *Strom.* 3.77 where Clement drops 'law' from his use of Rom. 7:23, here he drops 'another' and opts for simply *νόμος*. Next, he replaces Paul's *τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοός μου* with *τῷ φρονήματι τοῦ νοῦ ἡμῶν*. Despite the possible uncertainty that may arise from the modification of the Pauline text, Clement quickly deals with this ambiguity with the use of a parallelism. Clement's meddling with Rom. 7:23 in *Strom.* 4.40.2 is closely connected with its context. Clement's use of *πάθη* is not only because it fits his ethical system. The interpretation of 'another law' and 'the law of sin' as 'passions' is in keeping with the context of Rom. 7:23, for the words 'law', 'passions' (*τὰ παθήματα*), 'desire' (*ἐπιθυμία*), 'members' (*μέλη*), and 'to hold captive' (*κατέχω*) occur in close proximity in Rom. 7:5-6, 8a.[61]

As already noted in Section 1, Clement seems to be aware of the 'passions' and 'desires' in Rom. 7:5 and 7:8 and how they function remarkably like 'another law' and 'the law of sin' in Rom. 7:23 (they take us captive, they make us slaves, and they are in our members). The phrase in Rom. 7:5 is the same genitive construction consisting of 'sin' as Rom. 7:23 (*τὰ παθήματα τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν* of Rom. 7:5 and ὁ *νόμος τῆς ἁμαρτίας* of Rom. 7:23), which creates a further link between these two verses, while in Rom. 7:8, we hear that 'sin…produced in me every kind of desire', therefore also linking 'sin' with 'desire'. Furthermore, the passions 'were at work in our members' (Rom. 7:5), just as 'another law' and 'the law of sin' are 'in my members' (Rom. 7:23).

Next, let us turn to his comments on the *τὸ φρόνημα τοῦ νοῦ*. While the passions seem to come to Clement's mind when he reads 'another law' and 'the law of sin', he appears to

[61] Paul writes: 'While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions (*τὰ παθήματα τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν*), aroused by the law, were at work in our members (*ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ἡμῶν*) to bear fruit for death. But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive (*ἐν ᾧ κατειχόμεθα*), so that we are slaves not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit… But sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment, produced in me every kind of desire (*πᾶσαν ἐπιθυμίαν*).'

understand 'the law of my mind' to mean 'the *φρόνημα* of the mind' in *Strom.* 4.40.2. As with 'another law' and 'the law of sin' where Clement takes recourse to the immediate context, so it appears that he does the same here. The word *φρόνημα* is only used by Paul four times and these occurrences are in Rom. 8:6, 7, and 27. The noun features prominently in the discussion concerning 'the *φρόνημα* of the flesh/spirit' in 8:6-7. Is Clement connecting 8:6-7 with 7:23 by means of the genitive construction involving *φρόνημα* and *νοῦς*? Is he equating the meaning of *φρόνημα* with *νόμος* in this particular case? Alternatively, is he using *φρόνημα* because it is an important term for him in his own anthropological system?

We have seen above that both Philo and Clement see a very close connection between 'the law of God' and *φρόνησις*, the virtue that is meant to order one's life according to the Divine Law. The term *φρόνημα* is from the same semantic family as *φρόνησις*, both having the common root *φρον-*. For *φρόνημα*, the *LSJ* proposes (i) 'mind, spirit' and (ii) 'thought, purpose, will'.[62] Walter Bauer and Frederick Danker propose 'way of thinking' and 'mind-set', as in 'the faculty of fixing one's mind on something'.[63] In a similar fashion, Franco Montanari offers (i) 'mind, spirit', (ii) 'thought, aim, intention', and (iii) 'elevated or noble mind, nobility of intentions'.[64] Because Clement uses *φρόνημα* alongside *νοῦς* (which consistently means 'mind' for Clement), 'mind' is an unlikely candidate for *φρόνημα*. 'Spirit' is also an unlikely candidate here because 'spirit' is associated with the heart and not the mind for Clement, as seen above (p. 112), and *πνεῦμα* is used for Spirit in the immediate context and refers to the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:2f.). For 'will', Clement prefers to use *προαιρετική* (e.g. *Strom.* 6.135.4). The context—a discussion of the

[62] *LSJ*, '*φρόνημα*' entry.

[63] Walter Bauer and Frederick William Danker, *Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), '*φρόνημα*' entry.

[64] Franco Montanari, *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*, ed. Madeleine Goh and Chad Matthew Schroeder, English ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2015), '*φρόνημα*' entry.

objects of thoughts in prayer—supports thoughts/aims/purposes/intentions of the mind, and so 'the faculty of fixing one's mind on something' appears to be the best option. It especially fits well with the fact that *νοῦς* appears with *φρόνημα* in a genitive construction. This is the preferred option, for it appears to be in synonymous parallelism with *λογισμός*, which, given the context, may mean 'reasoning, thought, argument' (Montanari)[65] or 'reason', 'reasoning' or 'reasoning power' (*LSJ*).[66] Clement is therefore highlighting the preoccupation or attention of the thoughts of the upper part of the soul (where the mind resides) and how it is precisely this function that is under attack by the passions (*Strom.* 4.40.2).

If *φρόνημα* is substituting *νόμος* with 'the faculty of fixing one's mind on something', then we may understand Clement to interpret *ὁ νόμος τοῦ νοῦ* of Rom. 7:23 to mean the thoughts that are fixated upon some object (whereas the control/direction of the orientation/inclination/fixation of the mind's thoughts would be proper to the virtue of prudence, *φρόνησις*). This interpretation should not be surprising by now, given the fact that *νόμος* and the *φρον-* semantic family are closely related in Clement's writings. If the goal is to direct one's thoughts towards God so as 'to be science and knowledge' and to contemplate and commune with God, then it is the passions that pull the mind's thought processes away from these goals. Clement's greatest concern, then, seems to be the identity of the object(s) towards which the mind is directed, to encourage those that bring us closer to God and to discourage those that pull us away from God. Therefore, Clement uses Rom. 7:23 to describe the obstacles that must be surmounted in order to achieve the desired purity of heart, the 'impassible identity', true gnosis, and contemplation; in short, clarity of thought. The true peacemakers, then, are the ones whose minds are undisturbed by the

[65] Montanari, *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*, '*λογισμός*' entry.

[66] *LSJ*, '*λογισμός*' entry.

passions and can turn their whole attention to the contemplation of God without any constraints.[67]

*Clement's parallelism (*Strom*. 4.40.2) as aid for understanding Paul's parallelism (Rom. 7:23)*

We may now return to the nature of Paul's parallelism and how Clement's reading of it may be helpful in its interpretation. Clement's parallelism seems to be a hybrid between a synonymous and a synthetical parallelism. His explication of 'law' by means of 'the passions' is more synthetic than synonymous, for he attempts to clarify the first element. The other two elements, however, are clearly paralleled synonymously: 'to make war' is expressed twice by means of two different but synonymous verbs and 'the thought process of the mind' is repeated with 'reasoning'.

Clement's insertion of the passions in apposition to 'law' and his leaving out 'the law of sin' also resolves the problem of two distinct laws and resolves the uncertainty addressed above in Section 1: Clement only has one and it is the subject of both verbs. This removes the ambiguity of the existence of two separate laws and the ambiguity of the interpretation of the verb *αἰχμαλωτίζοντά* as either active or passive in sense. His choice of the second 'war' verb as something much closer to the first in meaning rather than what Paul utilises ('to take captive')

[67] This can only be attained if the human is in control of her passions, or, in the more advanced ethical stage, if the passions are eradicated altogether. Clement has a two-tier ethical system: the first is where the passions are 'moderated' and are therefore under control; they are not completely eradicated but rather kept within certain healthy limits, set by nature. This is what Plato (cf. *Rep.* 423e, 431c, 603d-e, 619a), Aristotle, the Middle Platonists, Philo (*Leg. Alleg.* 3.126, 132), and Clement call *μετριοπάθεια*. The higher ethical standard, however, is characterised by the complete eradication of the passions (cf. *Strom.* 6.74.1, 6.105.1, 6.109.3, 6.111.3). Philo (*Leg. Alleg.* 3.129, 3.132), Plotinus (*Enn.* 1.2.3, 1.2.6, 1.2.7) and the other Neoplatonists (Porphyry *Sent.* 22.3; Apuleius, *De Platone* 2.248-50, 252-53), and Clement call this *ἀπάθεια*.

also strengthens the case that Clement reads Paul's parallelism as largely synonymous, even though he seems to think it necessary to clarify the meaning of 'law'.

Applying this to Paul's parallelism, we then see that 'another law' and 'the law of sin' are one and the same thing, as C.K. Barrett and others have proposed (cf. fn. 25 in the Introduction). In light of Clement's reading, it would be best to interpret Paul's parallelism between the first elements as synthetic: 'the law of sin' clarifies the mysterious identity of 'another law', just as Clement clarifies 'law' with a string of qualifiers. Still further, Clement's reading of the immediate context reveals his interpretation of this 'other', 'sinful' law: the passions. This reading will then favour interpreting the second participle as having a passive sense, because there is now only one law that both makes war and takes captive.

Before we leave *Strom.* 4.40 and conclude with *Strom.* 7.44, a word needs to be said about the change of pronoun from 'my' in Rom. 7:23 (*τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοός μου*) to 'our' in *Strom.* 4.40 (*τῷ φρονήματι τοῦ νοῦ ἡμῶν*). Clement seems to understand Paul as writing about himself as a Christian, for he has no issues with appropriating the phrase for *us*. It fits well with his ethics: all Christians, in order to attain that peace of mind, must overcome the interior struggle against the passions that disturb their mind when contemplating God. This interpretation is further supported by the change of tense of the verbs. While Clement maintains a present sense of the main verbless clause, he adds two attributive aorist participles that provide the reason for the beatitude: the peacemakers are *now* blessed because they *have already* mastered the unruly law that previously made war on them. There is the dynamic of moving from a past to a present reality. This may be indicative of the movement witnessed in baptism.

Romans 7:23 in Stromateis *7.44.7*

Finally, a few brief remarks must be offered regarding the reference to Rom. 7:23 in *Strom.* 7.44.7. Clement only uses two words from this verse: *ἀντιστρατεύω* 'to make war' and *νοῦς* 'mind'. Clement's use of Rom. 7:23 in *Strom.* 7.43–46 is along similar lines to that found in *Strom.* 4.40. He is, once again, addressing the challenges to maintaining an interior state that is undisturbed by external realities. In *Strom.* 7.44.7, however, he explores the petitions made in prayer and the things which people often desire. Those who live well ('the one who chooses what is right') and who 'have a thankful heart' will obtain what they desire from God (*Strom.* 7.43.1). Wicked people ask for 'what they have not' ('external', 'unnecessary', and 'fleeting realities'), while true Christian Gnostics pray for the 'permanence of the things they possess', that is, 'the things which concern the soul' (*Strom.* 7.44.1-2). The Gnostic, then, strives to know God's will, to be brought into close contact with God, to be spiritual by being united to the Spirit, and to have 'the permanent energy of …the perspicacious keenness of knowledge' (*Strom.* 7.44.3-6). Clement calls this 'permanent energy' a *δύναμις*, a power. The Christian Gnostic strives for it 'by obtaining command of all the influences which war against the mind' (*Strom.* 7.44.7; cf. Rom. 7:23). Clement writes:

> Thus he, being magnanimous, possessing, through knowledge, what is the most precious of all, the best of all, being quick in applying himself to contemplation, retains in his soul the permanent energy of the objects of his contemplation, that is the perspicacious keenness of knowledge. And this power he strives to his utmost to acquire, by obtaining command of 'those things which war against the mind' (Rom. 7:23; *Ταύτην δὲ ὡς ἔνι μάλιστα βιάζεται*

> *κτήσασθαι τὴν δύναμιν, ἐγκρατὴς γενόμενος τῶν ἀντιστρατευομένων τῷ νῷ*); and by applying himself without intermission to speculation, by exercising himself in the training of abstinence from pleasures, and of right conduct in what he does… (*Strom.* 7.44.6-7)

As in the other two instances of referring to Rom. 7:23, Clement leaves out 'another law' and replaces it with a plural attributive participle without a subject, which is generally translated as a neuter, hence 'things'. The context—a discussion on the object of prayer—lends itself to interpreting the neuter plural subject as those things that are capable of disturbing the mind: sinful thoughts. Earlier in the section, Clement notes that 'wicked people' turn their minds in prayer to those things that they do not have and, therefore, do not attain true contemplation because their minds are fixed on unnecessary and external realities (*Strom.* 7.44.1). The elements that make war against the mind, then, are thoughts that are fixed on fleeting things.

Clement leaves out 'law' from the phrase 'the law of my mind' because he seems to understand the phrase to be synonymous with 'mind'. This is, in fact, what concerns him in this section. His omission of 'law' strongly suggests that he finds 'law' to be unnecessary and possibly confusing in the given context.

Clement's modification of Rom. 7:23 in *Strom.* 7.44 is remarkably consistent with the previous two. Thoughts, especially towards sinful or fleeting objects, are what disturb the mind and, therefore, pull it away from contemplation. These must be overcome if the Christian wants to maintain a contemplative state. We now turn to the last text from Clement's works, *Excerpts from Theodotus*, a collection of passages by a certain Theodotus, collected by Clement for his own purposes.

3. Romans 7:23 and *Excerpts from Theodotus* 52.1

Modern scholarship is in agreement that the *Excerpts from Theodotus* are Clement's 'annotated'[68] collection of Valentinian writings. Its genre may be classified as 'epitome', which Judith Kovacs defines as 'a collection of excerpted texts from other works', a well-attested practice amongst both pagans and Christians at this time.[69] The epitome may have served as an author's notebook, for Kovacs suggests that Clement may have used *Excerpts* in preparation for the composition of the *Stromateis*, which allude to 'several ideas and terms found in the *Excerpts*'.[70] Robert Edwards, largely in agreement with Kovacs, states that 'it is unlikely that the text was ever intended for publication, but rather for Clement's (or whomever's) own reference'.[71] He proposes that they were excerpts of exegetical writings from the eastern Valentinian tradition.[72] The Valentinians' exegesis was deemed 'deterministic' by Clement, and this seemed to be the biggest issue that he had with their exegesis, Clement being a great defender of the free will.[73] It is therefore no surprise that Kovacs proposes that the most important doctrine in which Clement was interested, was that of salvation and its influence on anthropology.[74] That being said, Clement learns much from the Valentinian way of appropriating

[68] Judith L. Kovacs, 'Reading the "Divinely Inspired" Paul: Clement of Alexandria in Conversation with "Heterodox Christians," Simple Believers, and Greek Philosophers,' *VC* 139 (2017): 330.

[69] Judith L Kovacs, 'Clement of Alexandria and Valentinian Exegesis in the Excerpts from Theodotus,' *Studia Patristica* 41 (2006): 187−200, here esp. p. 188.

[70] Kovacs, 'Valentinian Exegesis,' 188.

[71] Robert G.T. Edwards, 'Clement of Alexandria's Anti-Valentinian Interpretation of Gen 1:26-27,' *ZAC* 18.3 (2014): 368.

[72] Edwards, 'Anti-Valentinian Interpretation,' 369.

[73] Edwards, 'Anti-Valentinian Interpretation,' 371.

[74] Kovacs, 'Valentinian Exegesis,' 189–90.

Greek philosophy into exegesis, while fine-tuning it to fit better into his vision of exegesis.[75] Valentinian exegesis therefore becomes a sort of 'spring-board for Clement's own interpretation of Pauline texts'.[76]

No one knows for sure who Theodotus was, although it is fairly certain that he was firmly in the Valentinian tradition.[77] F. Sagnard surmises that Theodotus may have even been Valentinus' disciple from around 140 – 160 CE, a contemporary of Ptolemy, and active as a teacher between 160 – 170 CE.[78] If this is the case, then we may have a reference to Rom. 7:23 that predates all of the other authors in this dissertation. However, the work does not come down to us in its purest form, as Clement has added his own observations on occasion. Sagnard estimates that approximately twenty-five per cent of the *Excerpts* are Clement's own writing.[79] Before I present an analysis of *Exc.* 52, the chapter in which the reference to Rom. 7:23 is found, I will give a brief overview of the work's structure and main themes in order to give some helpful background information for the passage of interest.

The structure of Clement's Excerpts from Theodotus

Sagnard detects four discernible sections in the *Excerpts*. Section A (nos. 1–28) is about Jesus the Saviour, the seeds, relationship between Valentinian seeds and the angels, and a brief

[75] Edwards, 'Anti-Valentinian Interpretation,' 374–77. While the Valentinians saw some predestined for damnation and salvation according to their nature, Clement saw everyone with the same nature but at different stages in their spiritual progress. More specifically, there are two stages in the Christian's progress: 'faith' (*πίστις*) and 'knowledge' (*γνῶσις*).

[76] Kovacs, 'Reading the "Divinely Inspired" Paul,' 330.

[77] See Section 4 in the Introduction for additional historical notes about Theodotus and his possible identity.

[78] Sagnard, *Extraits de Théodote*, 6–7. Sagnard notes that blocks 43–65 strongly parallel Ptolemy's doctrines (p. 28).

[79] Sagnard, *Extraits de Théodote*, 8.

treatment of the Eons of the Pleroma. Section B (nos. 29–42) addresses the first Couple, explores Wisdom, the Christ, the Demiurge, the Angels, and the rising of the seeds with Jesus. Section C (nos. 43–65) parallels Irenaeus of Lyon's *Against Heresies* I.5, treating the formation of Wisdom by Jesus and his angels, the transformation of his passions into substances (psychic and hylic), the cosmogonic action of the ignorant Demiurge, the creation of the human, the three natures, the psychic Christ, and the wedding of the Valentinians with their angels. Finally, Section D (nos. 66–86) addresses the transformation of the female seed, Destiny, the battle of the good and evil angels, the birth under the stars and regeneration by the Saviour, baptism, Gnosis, the sanctification of the elements (bread, oil, water), various rites, and victory over the Powers.[80]

Section C is of interest for this dissertation because it contains excerpt 52.1, wherein Theodotus makes use of a part of Rom. 7:23. Sagnard breaks Section C down thus[81]:

43–45.1 The sending of the Saviour Jesus; the formation of Wisdom

45.2–49 Cosmogony

50–53.1 Anthropology; the formation of the psychic human in the hylic human

53.2–57 The pneumatic human

58–62 Christology

63–65 Eschatology

[80] Sagnard, *Extraits de Théodote*, 28–34.

[81] Sagnard, *Extraits de Théodote*, 35. There is very little connection between Section C and the other Sections; there is some contact with Section D: the 'nuptial chamber' between nos. 64 and 65 in C and 68 and 79 in D; 'the one who was above' in no. 45.2 versus 'the Woman from above' in nos. 67.1, 4, and 68. See Sagnard, *Extraits de Théodote*, 39.

Excerpts from Theodotus *52.1 and Romans 7:23*

Theodotus' reference to Rom. 7:23 falls securely in the presentation of his Valentinian doctrines on anthropology. Valentinian Gnosticism proposed a tripartite vision of humanity, which they developed through a creative exegesis of 1 Thess. 5:23 and with Greek philosophical principles (Paul states that each human being has a *πνεῦμα*, *ψυχή*, and *σῶμα*).[82] They saw the Pauline tripartite human as the highest level of humanity, or the ideal human being, which not every human was.

According to this view, only some human beings possess all three parts.[83] In addition to *ψυχή* and *ὕλη*, this rarified group also possesses *πνεῦμα*, spirit, which is the divine spark present in the human. The humans who have a spirit are naturally inclined towards knowledge and therefore will be saved, since salvation is only achieved through true gnosis. The second category of humans possesses *ψυχή*, soul, and *ὕλη*, matter, and these do not have *πνεῦμα*, the divine spark. The 'soulish' humans are governed by their soul and their emotions and they are under the power of the Demiurge, who is the creator of their souls, rather than under the power of Wisdom, who is the creator of the divine spark, *πνεῦμα*, in some humans. Some of these soulish humans may attain a partial salvation, depending on their appropriation of knowledge. It is in the discussion of the relationship between the physical body and the soul that we shall

[82] Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008). Even in the vicinity of our text, we see how Theodotus uses different terms to describe these three parts. He refers to the soul *ψυχή* sometimes as *ψυχὴ ζῶσα* 'living soul' (e.g. *Exc.* 50.3), or as *ψυχὴ θεία* 'divine soul' (e.g. *Exc.* 51.2), or even as *ψυχὴ οὐράνιος* 'heavenly soul' (e.g. *Exc.* 52.1). To describe the material body, Theodotus uses *ὕλη* (e.g. *Exc.* 50.1), or *ψυχὴ γεώδη καὶ ὑλική* (e.g. *Exc.* 50.1), or *σάρξ* (e.g. 51.2-3), or *τὸ σαρκίον* (e.g. *Exc.* 52.1), or even the Pauline *σῶμα* (e.g. 51.3, where the hylic soul is understood to be the 'body' of the divine soul).

[83] See Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, Chapter 8, especially the section on Heracleon the Valentinian, for a thorough presentation of this tripartite human in Valentinian Gnosticism.

encounter Theodotus' use of Rom. 7:23, as he tries to show how these two are in opposition. If there should be any chance of the soulish human reaching salvation, it is when the mind overcomes the physical body, which tries to make war on it (cf. Rom. 7:23). Finally, the third category of humans possesses only *ὕλη*. These humans have an entirely materialistic view of the world and lead their lives ruled by their desires for material things. There is no salvation for them, as there is no immaterial reality in them that will persevere after their material bodies die. The Valentinians believed that each human being was created to belong to one of these three categories. As such, each was predestined to be saved or to perish. However, some Valentinian sources permit growth and migration from one category of human to another.[84] With this overview of Valentinian anthropology in mind, let us now turn to Theodotus' use of Rom. 7:23 in this anthropology.

Theodotus begins the section on anthropology with a brief outline of the doctrine of the formation of the psychic human in the hylic human. Firstly, the Demiurge forms a hylic soul from the earth (*...ψυχὴν γεώδη καὶ ὑλικὴν ἐτεκτήνατο*, *Exc.* 50.1). This first hylic soul is consubstantial (*ὁμοούσιον*) with the beasts and is called 'according to the image'. Next is the creation 'according to the likeness'. Here, the Demiurge breathes (*ἐνεφύσησέν*) and sows his very own substance into the newly formed hylic souled human (*Exc.* 50.2). By doing so, the Demiurge has left something of himself in this being, and this is done by means of angels (*ὁμοούσιόν τι αὐτῷ δι' Ἀγγέλων ἐνθείς*). This latter creation is named *ψυχὴ ζῶσα* 'living soul' insofar as it is in the created world and *πνοὴν ζωῆς* 'breath of life' insofar as it is in the

[84] Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 141 and following. According to Dunderberg, it seems that Heracleon leaned towards this interpretation. Those who have received the soul may be able to put on that which is imperishable and still be saved, but otherwise, having the psyche is still not enough. Heracleon's exegesis seems to hint at the possibility for the non-spirituals also to put on a spiritual nature.

immaterial world (*Exc.* 50.3). This 'living soul' has the potential for eternal life, while the hylic soul, without the breath and seed of the Demiurge, is destined for natural death. The hylic soul becomes a sort of body for the reception of the living soul (*τὴν ὑλικὴν ψυκὴν σῶμα οὖσαν τῆς θείας ψυχῆς*, *Exc.* 51.2), which was given to the human in Paradise in the fourth heaven by the Demiurge (*Exc.* 51.1-2). This 'divine soul' (*ἡ ψυχὴ θεία*), then, is hidden inside the hylic soul, which Theodotus understands to be solid and heavy (*Exc.* 51.2). He ends this section by bringing in Matt. 10:28: 'it is concerning these two souls that the Saviour said, "one must fear the one who has the power to destroy in Gehenna both our soul and our body", that is, the soulish body (*τὸ ψυχικόν*)' (*Exc.* 51.3).

The next section examines more closely the relationship between the soulish body (*τὸ σῶμα τὸ ψυχικόν*), which is another way of describing the hylic soul, and the living, heavenly soul. Theodotus states that

> it is this carnal element (*τὸ σαρκίον*) which the Saviour called 'the adversary' (*ἀντίδικον*, Matt. 5:25), and Paul 'the law which fights against the law of my mind' *(νόμος ἀντιστρατευόμενον τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοός μου*, Rom. 7:23). It is this one, which the Saviour advises 'to bind' and 'to rob of its goods' like those of the 'strong man' (Matt. 12:29), who makes war against the heavenly soul (*τοῦ ἀντιπολεμοῦντος τῇ οὐρανίῳ ψυχῇ*) … It is this one which is called 'the weeds', which grows with the soul along with 'the good wheat' (Matt. 13:25). It is this one which is 'the seed of the Devil' (cf. Jn 8:44) insofar as it is consubstantial with him (*ὡς ὁμοούσιον ἐκείνῳ*), and also 'the serpent' (Gen. 3:15), 'the one who goes after the heel' (Gen. 49:17), and 'the bandit' who attacks the king's head. (*Exc.* 52.1; my translation)

This anthropological exploration by Theodotus reveals to us something of his understanding of the first hostile law in Rom. 7:23. As in Clement, Theodotus also removes 'another', although he keeps the rest of Rom. 7:23a as he presumably received it. Because the reflection is on the relationship between the hylic soul and the heavenly soul, between which Theodotus sees conflict, he turns to a variety of New Testament texts to interpret this conflict. His hermeneutic may be divided into three movements: the hylic soul's position vis-à-vis the heavenly soul, the hylic soul's activity, and the hylic soul's origin. Firstly, Matt. 5:25 allows him to see the hylic soul as an adversary of the heavenly soul; it is therefore no surprise that the two souls are hostile to one another. Secondly, Paul's warring terminology of Rom. 7:23a helps him to articulate what this adversary is doing: the hylic soul makes war on the mind, which would have been understood as the reasoning part of the heavenly soul (*Exc*. 52.2-5). It is the mind that seeks knowledge, which is the means for salvation for Theodotus/Valentinus. This is a life and death situation for the heavenly soul. Unlike the spiritual/pneumatic part of the human (discussed in the next section, *Exc.* 52.2 and following), the heavenly soul is not guaranteed salvation and therefore must fight for it against any temptation that may pull it away from it. As such, the coexistence of the hylic and soulish natures do not allow for a tranquil coexistence. Finally, this conflict exists because the hylic soul has a different source, which is described in *Exc*. 52.1: the Devil. Because the hylic soul shares the same substance as the Devil, it cannot coexist in harmony with the heavenly soul, which is of the same substance as the Demiurge (*Exc.*50.2), which, in Valentinian thought is not evil, but rather ignorant.[85]

It is noteworthy that Theodotus does not delve into the significance of Paul's use of *νόμος* in Rom. 7:23. For Theodotus, the law is not important; what is important is the use of Rom. 7:23

[85] See fn. 18 in Chapter One on this point.

as a proof text to demonstrate the struggle of one element against another, in this case, the hylic soul against the heavenly soul. The struggle can be overcome by asceticism in which the person resists evildoing (*Exc.* 52.2-3), and therefore he or she no longer nourishes and strengthens the hylic soul (*μὴ τρέφοντας καὶ ῥωννύντας τῇ τῶν ἁμαρτημάτων ἐξουσίᾳ*, *Exc.*52.2). If it is no longer nourished, it will be dispersed and it will therefore evaporate and disappear (*Exc.* 52.3).

Finally, the 'I' of Rom. 7:23 is Paul for Theodotus, as he mentions him explicitly along with the first person possessive pronoun. However, it is clear, given the context, that Theodotus' reference to Rom. 7:23 is meant to use Paul as paradigmatic of the experience of every human who has received the heavenly soul. Paul's struggle is the struggle of all of those who have been inbreathed with the heavenly breath of life by the Demiurge.

Conclusion

Theodotus' use of Rom. 7:23 appears in *Excerpts* 52.1, an excerpt dedicated to the exploration of Valentinian anthropology, especially the relationship between the physical body and the soul. The text shows that Theodotus made use of the verse as a proof text in a larger argument, and again in this case, in an argument in which the nature and behaviour of substances was at issue.

Firstly, the 'I' of this section of Romans is understood as Paul, but also as paradigmatic Paul, applicable to others. Many human beings have both the hylic and the heavenly souls, and so it is fitting to apply Paul's statements to a larger group of people, beyond the Apostle himself.

Secondly, Theodotus reaches for Rom. 7:23 as a proof text, which serves to lend authority to the doctrine of the conflict of the different souls, the hylic against the heavenly. Theodotus sees the conflict as a result of the inevitable clash of different and incompatible natures. The way

to resolve the conflict is to remove the threat of the hostile hylic soul through ascetic practices, which effectively silence the hylic soul's attacks.

Thirdly, the influence of the evil spirit is explicitly mentioned in Theodotus' use of Rom. 7:23. Theodotus sees the Devil as the author of the hylic soul, which, in Theodotus' mind makes the Devil consubstantial with the hylic soul. The hylic soul, or the physical body, in other words, is therefore inherently evil for Theodotus.

Fourthly, Theodotus interprets 'another law in my members' of Rom 7:23 as the carnal element (*τὸ σαρκίον*) of the human being. He replaces 'another law in my members' by the word 'law' and explicitly equates it with this hylic soul, the carnal element that is created by the Devil.

Finally, Theodotus shows a complete disregard for the legal meaning of the word *νόμος* in Rom. 7:23. He does not use the verse in such a way as to draw any legal conclusions or inspirations from the passage. Rather, his use of the verse along with the accompanying reflection are on human behaviour, especially behaviour that will lead the human to salvation, and the parts of the human being which are involved in this behaviour.

4. Conclusion

The analysis of Clement and Theodotus's engagements with the *νόμος* phrases in Rom. 7:21–8:2 has brought to light a number of helpful insights into the Pauline text. These insights have further strengthened the thesis of this dissertation in a number of ways. Firstly, their engagement with the *νόμος* phrases shows that the legal dimensions of *νόμος* (i.e. the Torah) do not at all come to

Clement and Theodotus' minds when they turn to this section of Romans 7.[86] Rather, the mind and its thought processes are Clement and Theodotus' principal preoccupations when employing verses or phrases from this section of Romans, although in slightly different ways for each. As his contemporary Tertullian, Clement relies heavily on Greek philosophy for his exegesis and deployment of the law phrases, most notably Platonic psychology, as he explores the soul and that which is conducive or detrimental to its flourishing. He is most frequently drawn to the language of struggle in Rom. 7:23, presumably because the verse is one of its kind in Scripture. The verse depicts the conflict dynamic between the immaterial mind and the material body, which is shown to be a hostile and sinful element. All three Clementine texts that make use of Rom. 7:23 address this interior struggle, although in different arguments. Theodotus also highlights the hostility between the physical body and the soul, showing that one makes war on the other because they have two different origins and natures. He too seems to find Rom. 7:23 helpful because it depicts an interior struggle between two distinct realities.

Secondly, the two authors have shed further light on the possible identity of the *νόμος* phrases in Rom. 7:23–8:2. In Section 1, we have seen that, for Clement, Rom. 7:23 is helpful for giving scriptural support for the Platonic war of the lower soul against the upper soul.[87] In *Strom*. 3.77, Clement desires to demonstrate to his Gnostic opponents that the interior conflict between 'indwelling sin', which he earlier equates with inordinate thoughts (=desires and passions), and the law of God and of the mind proves that there is a profound disharmony in the person when sin is present. This would not be so if God created the human sinful, as some of his Gnostic opponents held. Because the presence of sin causes a disruption in God's plan for creation,

[86] Clement does refer to the Law of Moses when he addresses some earlier verses in Romans 7 (esp. Rom. 7:7), as has been explored in p. 101 above.

[87] See especially Plato's allegory of the chariot and horses in *Phaedrus* 246a-254e.

God's law just as much as the human mind's law are affronted because sin is not natural to creation. Therefore, in *Strom.* 3.77, Clement understands 'another law in my members' to be inordinate thoughts, or rather, desires and passions for things that are fleeting and unnecessary and that pull the human's mind away from contemplating God. The section did not permit any further extrapolations regarding 'the law of sin' of Rom. 7:23b or about 'the law of the Spirit' of Rom. 8:2, both of which were used verbatim without any modifications or comments. As such, it was not possible to induce whether the two hostile laws were distinct or the same law.

The analysis in Section 2 has shown that Clement's use of Rom. 7:23 in *Strom.* 4.40 and 7.44 reveals yet another aspect of his understanding of this verse. The way in which Clement employs a parallelism in *Strom.* 4.40 when he uses Rom. 7:23 has shed some light on how he may understand Paul's parallelism. Firstly, he understands 'the law of sin' and 'another law in my members' to be one element, the passions, while, secondly, he understands 'the law of the mind' to mean the inclinations of the mind's thoughts. Thirdly, by removing 'in my members' in *Strom.* 4.40 and 7.44, Clement reveals his Platonic psychology wherein thoughts—good or bad—are in the immaterial soul rather than in the material flesh. The ambiguity of the distinctive or equivalent nature of the two laws in Section 1 has been clarified in *Strom.* 4.40, thereby giving support to contemporary scholars who also see one hostile law at work. Had there been a second hostile law at work, it would have been mentioned as some other distinct force in addition to these passions, whereas no such other force is mentioned in these texts. To be sure, Clement mentions the Devil and communal influences, but all of these are understood to influence the human mind by influencing the knowledge and thoughts that the mind entertains.

Still further, it is fascinating to see that Rom. 7:23 comes to Clement's mind when he is discussing the sixth and seventh beatitudes (Matt. 5:8-9). When he offers an exegesis of 'Blessed

are the pure in heart', he reaches for Rom. 7:23 when he is engaging the theme of a pure heart and what pollutes it (see *Strom.* 3.77 and 4.40). Similarly, when he explains 'Blessed are the peacemakers' (see *Strom.* 4.39–40), he turns to Rom. 7:23 when he is engaging with the theme of a Christian Gnostic's aim to reach inner peace during contemplation of divine truths and those things which seem to disrupt a peaceful mind. The sight of God, which, for Clement, is the contemplation of divine truths, especially during prayer, is made possible when the passions and desires are subdued and no longer disturb the mind with cravings for unnecessary things.

The analysis of Theodotus' text has shown that the identity of 'another law in my members' is the hylic soul, that is, the physical part of the human being that produces desires in the human and makes war against the human's mind so that he or she live a purely physical life instead of a spiritual life, which is that of pursuit of knowledge. This hylic soul has the Devil as its origin and is therefore evil by nature, being consubstantial with the Devil. The heavenly soul, being created by the Demiurge, is ignorant but not evil. It strives to free itself from the hylic soul's bad influence and thereby attain knowledge and, ultimately, salvation. It is very likely that Clement is responding to this text when defending God's innocence in *Strom.* 3.71-78 against Gnostic charges that God created evil. Unlike Clement, Theodotus depicts the presence of this conflict as a given and as a natural beginning to the existence of those who have been given both a hylic and a heavenly soul. Finally, Theodotus teaches that this hylic soul must be fully mastered for the heavenly soul to be free. Clement too exhorts his followers to self-mastery as a way to control one's thoughts in order to reach inner peace for contemplation. The two thinkers are therefore thinking along similar lines, namely, that that which makes war on the mind is related to one's thoughts and desires, especially concerning worldly things.

Furthermore, Theodotus' *Exc.* 52.1 and the three Clementine texts, along with some of Clement's other writings explored in this chapter, bear witness to their interpreting Rom. 7:23 as a paradigmatic text. For Theodotus, the Pauline passage is about Paul because he uses his name explicitly, but it is also paradigmatic of all those who have the hylic *and* soulish bodies. For Clement, every Christian needs to overcome this interior conflict in order to attain interior peace and, therefore, to know and contemplate God. He undoubtedly includes the Christian Paul in this *us* (*Strom.* 4.40). Clement's is a profoundly communal endeavour. Sin and holiness are *learned* from one's surroundings, as are ignorance and knowledge, which, for Clement, are intimately linked to sin and holiness, respectively. These, in turn, mould the human's thoughts, which then either coexist in harmony with the mind or make war with it. Clement's understanding of Christian formation or pagan deformation in a particular community is therefore remarkably similar to that of Tertullian, which was explored in Chapter One.

Finally, neither author studied in this chapter comments on 'the law of the Spirit' of Rom. 8:2. In the Pauline text, it is the 'law of the Spirit in Christ Jesus' which frees the human being from 'the law of sin and death'. In our two authors, it is discipline and self-mastery that free the human being from the hostile law. For Clement, this discipline is taught by the 'law of God' and 'of the mind' (*Strom.* 3.77), 'the law of my mind' meaning the human's *φρόνησις* which attempts to align itself with God's will for creation. This includes self-discipline in order for the human to have a quiet mind for the sake of contemplation. Self-discipline, in turn, comes from true knowledge gained from one's good teachers (Jesus being the best of these teachers, and his teachings are found in the Gospels) and from the help of God's grace. For Theodotus, in turn, true knowledge is essential for salvation and it is this that instructs in self-discipline in order to

master and tame the hylic soul. Freedom from this war comes through ascetic practices, which, in turn, come from knowing the truth.

Having now explored the writings of Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Theodotus the Valentinian, I now turn to Origen of Alexandria's writings in order to further this dissertation's arguments. I will explore how Origen approaches the *νόμος* phrases both in a first ever (extant) Christian commentary—*Commentary on Romans*—and in other writings, such as his *Homilies* or *De principiis*.

Chapter Three: Origen on Romans 7:21–8:2

In Chapters One and Two, we have seen how early Christian writers, apart from Origen, read and made use of the *νόμος* phrases in Romans 7:21–8:2. It was shown that all of these authors delved into Greco-Roman philosophical tradition in order to assist them in interpreting or employing this difficult passage. It is now opportune to turn to Origen's reading of these *νόμος* phrases, for, of the early writers studied in this dissertation, Origen is by far the writer who makes use of and comments on them the most times: he employs the verses in their entirety or one or more of the *νόμος* phrases no less than 67 times.[1]

Our understanding of Origen's engagement with the verses and their *νόμος* phrases is enriched by the fact that he makes use of them in a variety of literary genres, for—as Benjamin Blosser observes in his study of Origen's complex doctrine of the soul—'an abundance of passages in a variety of genres' is crucial for the understanding of difficult doctrines in an author's work to whose original text (in its original language and form) we do not always have access.[2] Origen uses the verses or individual *νόμος* phrases in his apologetic work (*Contra Celsum*), biblical commentaries (on Matthew and on Romans), philosophico-theological treatise

[1] See J. Allenbach et al., *Origène*, vol. 3 of *Biblia Patristica : Index des citations et allusions bibliques dans la littérature patristique*, 7 vols. (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1991), 367. It must be noted that not all of the entries in *BP* 3:367 are true references. For example, there appears to be no reference to Rom. 7:23 in *HomGen.* 13.5, the relevant fragment of which reads: 'Goats' hair is also offered. This kind of animal is ordered in the Law to be offered for sin. Hair is a dead, bloodless, soulless form. He who offers this animal shows that the disposition to sin is already dead in himself, nor does sin further live or rule in his members' (Origen, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, tr. with an introduction and notes by Ronald E. Heine, FC 71 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1981), 383).

[2] Benjamin P. Blosser, *Become Like the Angels: Origen's Doctrine of the Soul* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 33.

(*De principiis*), and in his homilies (on Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Joshua, and on Judges). Even though he makes frequent use of entire verses or some of their phrases in a variety of genres and over a number of years, he is very consistent in the way he uses and interprets them, as shall be seen in this chapter.[3]

In this chapter, I present my analysis of Origen's reading of the *νόμος* phrases in Rom. 7:21–8:2. Having evaluated the meaning that these phrases have for Origen and how he uses them, I argue that Origen also relies heavily on commonly shared elements from the Greek philosophical traditions of his day when he interprets the *νόμος* phrases in his *Commentary on Romans* (henceforth *Commentary*) and in his other writings.[4] This argument will be

[3] He wrote *De principiis* in Alexandria around 229/230 CE, whereas he wrote most of his biblical commentaries (except for the first five books of his commentary on John) and all of his homilies in Caesarea. See John Behr's Introduction in Origen, *On First Principles*, tr. and ed. with an introduction and notes by John Behr, 2 vols., OECT (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 1:xvii, and Origen, *The Commentary of Origen on the Gospel of St Matthew*, tr. with an introduction and notes by Ronald E. Heine, 2 vols., OECT (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1:5–7. For further information on the dating of Origen's works, see the excellent introductions in each volume of Origen's works in the *Sources Chrétiennes* series and in the introductions in modern language translations. Entries in Francesca Cocchini, *Origene. Dizionario: la cultura, il pensiero, le opere*, ed. Adele Monaci Castagno (Rome: Città Nuova, 2000), Ronald E. Heine and Karen Jo Torjesen, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Origen*, OH (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), and John Anthony McGuckin, ed., *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, WHCT (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), are also excellent sources for the dates of Origen's compositions.

[4] Origen would have been thoroughly educated in the principal doctrines of the main philosophical schools of his time, although he would have been most immersed in Middle Platonism, as Edwards notes: 'Alexandria stands for Platonism, as London stands for smog' (Mark Edwards, *Origen against Plato*, ASPTLA (Burlington: Ashgate, 2002), 1). For Origen's possible educational background, see the introductory chapters or parts of: Giulia Sfameni Gasparro, 'Doppia creazione e peccato di Adamo nel "Peri Archon": fondamenti biblici e presupposti platonici dell'esegesi origeniana,' in *Origeniana Secunda : Second colloque international des études origèniennes (Bari 20-23 Septembre 1979)*, ed. Henri Crouzel and Antonio Quacquarelli (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1980), 57–67; Giulia Sfameni Gasparro, *Origene: studi di antropologia e di storia della tradizione*, NS 90 (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1984). It is expedient to keep Edwards' words in mind when we attempt to piece together Origen's education: 'That Origen was born in Alexandria, the principal city of Egypt, and that most of his education was received there, may be all that is incontestably known about his infancy' (Edwards, *Origen against Plato*, 11). Blosser thus summarises Origen's relationship to the philosophy that he would have encountered in Alexandria: 'Origen wrote within the broad philosophical tradition known today as Middle Platonism, and it cannot be denied that he frequently made use of vocabulary, concepts, and even arguments from that tradition. Yet the perspective

substantiated by showing how Origen in his exegesis of the *νόμος* phrases uses Greek doctrines of the natural law, the passions (and impulses, desires, and lusts), the influence of daemons (the Greek concept of *δαίμων*), the vices, and of the virtues.[5] In addition to this argument, I maintain that Origen is the most creative and nuanced early Christian exegete of Rom. 7:21–8:2, imaginatively interpreting the hostile *νόμος* phrases as two separate laws with very particular functions: 'another law in my members' is understood to mean the thoughts, desires, and passions of the mind, very much like Clement of Alexandria and Theodotus the Valentinian, whereas 'the law of sin' is understood to mean the vices, or bad habits (i.e. sinful behaviour). The two divine laws—'the law of God' (Rom. 7:22, 25) and 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ' (Rom. 8:2)—are the natural law, that is, God's reason (Logos) active in Creation, while 'the law of my mind' (Rom. 7:23) is understood as the human's mind insofar as it is aligned with 'the law of God'. I also argue that Origen unambiguously interprets the 'I' of this section of Romans as being paradigmatic of every human being. Finally, I demonstrate that Origen's

and framework within which Origen wrote was fundamentally that of a "man of the church," informed primarily by Christian revelation, as found in Scripture and the Christian tradition' (Blosser, *Become Like the Angels*, 12). This seems to be the consensus amongst Origen scholars. For a thorough introduction to the dominant doctrines of Origen's time, see John M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: A Study of Platonism, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220*, rev. ed., CLL (London: Duckworth, 1996) and Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *From Stoicism to Platonism: The Development of Philosophy, 100 BCE-100 CE* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[5] These elements of Greek thought cannot be claimed by any one philosophical tradition. Rather, they seem to have been the common patrimony of Greek culture and academic discourse. Edwards insightfully notes that 'In every age intelligent thinkers have worked their way to the same conclusions, not because they have "stolen", "borrowed" or "succumbed to influence", but because as human creatures they enjoyed the same climate and used the same resources, as citizens they lived under common ordinances and aspired to common goods, and as philosophers they reasoned on the same principles, and were vexed by the same shortcomings in the patrimony of knowledge' (Edwards, *Origen against Plato*, 5) and 'too many have forgotten that the use of a common language is as much the precondition of controversy as of intellectual friendship' (Edwards, *Origen against Plato*, 9). Thus, Edwards warns that we ought not to apply 'the term "Platonic" to elements of Origen's thought that he and his contemporaries would have considered part of the Christian heritage' (Edwards, *Origen against Plato*, 11).

reading lends further support—along with the findings of the previous chapters—to the thesis that there was no unanimous interpretation of all the *νόμος* phrases in the pre-Nicene Church.

Due to the constraint of space, it is impossible to address here all 67 occurrences of the *νόμος* phrases in Origen's writings. Consequently, the *Commentary* will be the primary text under investigation because Origen's thoughts on these phrases are most fully articulated therein, while the analysis of the other texts will be woven into this study should they offer anything new to his interpretation in the *Commentary*.

The same methodology will be applied to Origen's texts as has already been seen in the analysis of the other ancient authors. In order to discern Origen's approach to the *νόμος* phrases, the context in which he uses the phrases and the manner in which he uses them will be presented. I first offer some introductory remarks about Origen's *Commentary.* I then analyse the texts of Origen's *Commentary* wherein he comments on the *νόμος* phrases. The beneficial laws, namely, 'the law of God', 'the law of my mind', and 'the law of the Spirit of life' will be analysed first, followed by the hostile laws, namely, 'an other law in my members', 'the law of sin', and 'the law of sin and death'. Finally, the connection between the hostile laws and evil spiritual entities in a number of Origen's other writings will be analysed.

1. Origen's *Commentary on Romans*

Origen was deeply immersed in the Pauline corpus. As Richard Layton affirms, 'Origen was the first exegete to comment systematically on the Pauline corpus, expounding on all but two of the

documents accepted by early Christians as letters of Paul.'[6] Unlike Origen's other biblical commentaries, the *Commentary* is the only commentary that has survived until today in a somewhat complete version, albeit abridged and in Latin instead of in the original Greek.[7] It is generally held by scholars to be one of his later works, composed between 243 and 246 CE in Caesarea.[8] Originally written in Greek and comprising fifteen books,[9] although preserved in a ten-book Latin translation done by Rufinus of Aquileia (340-410 CE),[10] the *Commentary* is the first extant commentary on Romans in the church's history and, as Caroline Bammel, the leading scholar on the manuscript tradition of the *Commentary*, states, it is 'a work of Pauline exegesis greatly superior to anything [before] Augustine'.[11]

The principal source for the study of Origen's reading of Rom. 7:21–8:2 remains his *Commentary*. Even though scholars generally agree that Rufinus was *largely* faithful to Origen's Greek text,[12] Bammel cautions that 'the extant manuscripts of the translation of Origen on

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[6] Richard A. Layton, 'Recovering Origen's Pauline Exegesis: Exegesis and Eschatology in the Commentary on Ephesians,' *JECS* 8 (2000): 373.

[7] See Thomas P. Scheck's Introduction in Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Books 1-5*, tr. with an introduction and notes by Thomas P. Scheck, FC 103, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 1.

[8] While Francesca Cocchini, Heine, and Scheck prefer a later date (around 246 CE; see Francesca Cocchini, 'Origen's Pauline Commentaries: To Maria Grazia Mara, in Grateful Memory,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Origen*, ed. Ronald E. Heine and Karen Jo Torjesen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 230–31; Heine, *The Commentary of Origen on Matthew*, 5–7; Scheck, *Origen: Romans, Books 1-5*, 1,), Luc Brésard, Michel Fédou, and Roukema prefer an earlier one (around 243 CE; see Riemer Roukema, *The Diversity of Laws in Origen's Commentary on Romans* (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1988), 15; Origen, *Commentaire sur l'Épître aux Romains, Livres I-II*, tr. and ed. with an introduction and notes by Luc Brésard and Michel Fédou, SC 532 (Paris: Cerf, 2009), 15–16).

[9] Christoph Markschies, *Origenes und sein Erbe: Gesammelte Studien*, TUGAL 160 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 7.

[10] Scheck, *Origen: Romans, Books 1-5*, 1.

[11] Caroline P. Bammel, 'Augustine, Origen and the Exegesis of St. Paul,' *Augustinianum* 32 (1992): 363.

[12] Behr, *On First Principles*, Henry Chadwick, 'Rufinus and the Tura Papyrus of Origen's Commentary on Romans,' *JTS* 10.1 (1959): 10–42, and Roukema, *The Diversity of Laws*, have come to a similar conclusion regarding the *Commentary*. Behr, for example, after evaluating parallel Greek and Latin texts of *De principiis*, holds that 'it is important to note Rufinus' precision: it is only with regard to matters pertaining to the Trinity that, if he

Romans derive from a copy found by Rufinus' friends after his death which they describe as not yet published or revised.'[13] Nevertheless, in a dissertation that focuses on the different meanings of *νόμος/lex* in Origen's *Commentary*, Riemer Roukema concludes that the texts pertaining to legal matters should generally be seen as reliable because 'there is no evidence that this was a controversial theme in the beginning of the fifth century' when Rufinus translated the text.[14]

A further challenge to the study of the *νόμος* phrases is the way in which Origen makes use of Rom. 7:21-8:2 in the *Commentary* and in his other works: he is similar to the other ancient authors studied in Chapter Two in that he has greater use for the verses in a fragmented way than in their entirety, which he only provides a handful of times.[15] He has a certain

found anything in the work that seemed to him contrary to what Origen says elsewhere, he omitted it as either corrupt or an interpolation; whereas if it is something unusual relating to rational beings, he has no problem in retaining the passages, apart from removing repetitions' (Behr, *Origen: On First Principles*, 1). Jean Scherer and Maṯḥaf al-Miṣrī in Origen, *Le commentaire d'Origène sur Rom. III. 5 - V. 7 d'après les extraits du Papyrus no. 88748 du Musée du Caire et les fragments de la Philocalie et du Vaticanus Gr. 762: essai de reconstitution du texte et de la pensée des tomes V et VI du 'Commentaire sur l'Épître aux Romains,'* tr. with an introduction and notes by Jean Scherer and Maṯḥaf al-Miṣrī, Bibliothèque d'étude 27 (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1957), take a different stance, as they believe that the work is rather confused due to the fact that Rufinus did not have access to the whole *Commentary* and therefore had to interpolate large sections from some of Origen's other works in order to make up for the lost material. By doing so, in their view, the work lacks consistency and therefore should be approached with great caution.

[13] Caroline P. Bammel, 'Rufinus' Translation of Origen's Commentary on Romans and the Pelagian Controversy,' in *Storia ed esegesi in Rufino di Concordia*, ed. A Scottà, AA 39 (Udine: Arti Grafiche Friulane, 1992), 131. Bammel affirms that 'at the time when he translated the *Commentary*, Rufinus was well acquainted with Origen's thought and was able with some competence to produce what is, on the whole, a self-consistent and coherent version suited to the intellectual level of his Latin readers' (Caroline P. Bammel, 'Philokalia IX, Jerome, Epistle 121, and Origen's Exposition of Romans VII,' *JTS* 32 (1981): 78). Bammel alerts the reader to the fact that 'what results, has been reprocessed through Rufinus' own mind and considerably flattened, but it remains our best source for Origen's exposition of Romans. It is better suited for illustrating the range of Origen's ideas than for answering questions about what his view was on particular disputed topics' (Bammel, 'Philokalia IX, Jerome, Epistle 121, and Origen's Exposition of Romans VII,' 78).

[14] Roukema, *The Diversity of Laws*, 13.

[15] Of the 67 references to Rom. 7:21-8:2, full verses are provided only six times: Rom. 7:23 is provided four times in *ComRom.* 6.9.10, *Princ* 3.4.2, *HomGen.* 7.2, and 9.3; Rom. 7:25b is provided once in *ComRom.* 6.10.2; and Rom. 8:2 is provided once in *ComRom.* 6.11.2.

predilection for the *νόμος* phrases rather than for the entire verses in which they are found, and he often refers to more than one phrase at a time. Furthermore, he frequently mixes the *νόμος* phrases in combinations that are not found in the biblical texts and he often inserts his own words. For example, in *ComRom.* 6.9.6, Origen writes: 'if we give our assent to the law of God according to the will, then it is no longer we who do the evil that we do but the sin that is in us, that is, "the law and will of the flesh, which leads us as captives in the law of sin"' (*lex et uoluntas carnis quae captiuos nos ducit in legem peccati*, cf. Rom. 7:23).[16] Still further, in 6.9.12, Origen writes: 'and just as "the law of the mind", which agrees with "the law of God" (*lex mentis quae consentit cum lege Dei*), if it is able to obtain possession of the soul, leads it to "the law of God", so also "the law that is in the members" (*lex quae in membris*) and the lust of the flesh, if it seduces the soul, would "subject it to the laws of sin" (*et concupiscentia carnis si seduxerit animam peccati eam legibus subdet*; cf. Rom. 7:23).' Although this latter practice may offend the sensibilities of modern textual critics, it nonetheless reveals much to the reader about how Origen understands the phrases.

Origen is the first extant writer who explicitly shows confusion and uncertainty regarding Paul's use of the term *νόμος* in Romans, and more specifically, in Romans 7 and 8.[17] Many of

[16] All translations of the *Commentary* offered in this chapter are my own and are based on the critical edition published in the *Sources Chrétiennes* (Cerf, Paris) series. See Brésard and Fédou, *Commentaire sur l'Épître aux Romains, Livres I-II*; Origen, *Commentaire sur l'Épître aux Romains, Livres III-V*, tr. and ed. with an introduction and notes by Luc Brésard and Michel Fédou, SC 539 (Paris: Cerf, 2010); Origen, *Commentaire sur l'Épître aux Romains, Livres VI-VIII*, tr. and ed. with an introduction and notes by Luc Brésard and Michel Fédou, SC 543 (Paris: Cerf, 2011); Origen, *Commentaire sur l'Épître aux Romains, Livres IX-X*, tr. and ed. with an introduction and notes by Luc Brésard and Michel Fédou, SC 555 (Paris: Cerf, 2012).

[17] Bammel highlights this challenging aspect of Romans too. She writes: 'One of the problems in expounding the epistle to the Romans concerns the interpretation of Paul's references to the law. What exactly does he mean by the word *law,* and does he mean the same each time he uses it? When is he speaking solely of the law of Moses applicable only to Jews*,* and when of law in general, applicable to all men, and what is meant by the latter?' (Bammel, 'Augustine, Origen and the Exegesis of St. Paul,' 353).

the references to the *νόμος* phrases therefore appear in passages in which Origen shows some uncertainty concerning what Paul may have meant by *νόμος*.[18] Already in his preface, Origen notes that

> indeed it [the Epistle to the Romans] yields no little difficulty to the mind (*illud sane non parum cedit ad intellegentiae difficultatem*) because many things are woven (*contexuntur*) into this letter about the law of Moses (*de lege Mosi*), the vocation of the Gentiles, Israel according to the flesh and Israel not according to the flesh, the circumcision of the flesh and of the heart, the spiritual law and the law of the letter, the law of the flesh and the law of the members, the law of the mind and the law of sin, and about the inner and the outer man (*de lege carnis et lege membrorum de lege mentis et lege peccati de interiore et exteriore homine*). These aforementioned individual themes ought to be sufficient, since in these it seems the contents of the letter are contained (*quae singula praedixisse sufficiat; in his enim continentia haberi uidetur epistula*). (*ComRom.* 1.1.6)

The excerpts from *ComRom.* 1.1.6 and other similar passages highlight the fact that the *νόμος* phrases were already causing exegetical problems in Origen's time; they demonstrate that, for Origen, Paul may have had many meanings in mind for the word *νόμος*.[19]

[18] As Bammel notes, Origen 'provides detailed and frequent discussions, together with suggested alternative explanations according to the different meanings of the word law…. Origen, being much closer in date to Paul [than Augustine], has an unusually clear grasp of the problems Paul faced' (Bammel, 'Augustine, Origen and the Exegesis of St. Paul,' 353).

[19] More comments along these lines are also found in *ComRom.* 4.4.5, 6.8.2, and 6.12.2.

In order to understand Origen's analysis of Paul's text, then, it is important to keep in mind that *νόμος* also has different meanings for Origen.[20] It may have a legal connotation and therefore mean 'law', 'statute', or 'ordinance', as found in 'the law of Moses', but it may also have something to do with a pattern of action and therefore mean 'usage', 'custom', 'habit', 'principle', or 'practice'.[21] Roukema makes note of these different meanings of *νόμος*/*lex* in Origen's *Commentary.* On the whole, Roukema sees that Origen often follows the Greek usage of the word when he is interpreting Paul's use of *νόμος* in instances that are unambiguously not 'the law of Moses'. In these instances, Origen's meaning is closer to 'custom', 'an immanent principle of life and action', or simply 'principle'.[22] Of these meanings, Roukema notes that, for Origen, 'the natural law is the most frequent of all the different laws dealt with in this epistle.'[23] The context of the given text and Origen's accompanying comments are both indispensable for discerning which meaning he employs.

[20] Apart from the passages provided in this section, there is also substantial discussion of the different meanings of *νόμος* for Rom. 2:21-25, which is available in the Greek version in the *Philokalia* 9. There is no reference to any of the *νόμος* phrases of Rom. 7:21-8:2 in this text, however. There, he offers *six* different meanings: *νόμος ὁ κατὰ τὸ γράμμα ... Μωσέως* (the literal law of Moses); *ἡ παρὰ Μωσεῖ ἀναγεγραμμένη ἱστορία* (the historical writings of Moses); *τοὺς ψαλμοὺς ὀνομαζομένους νόμον* (the Psalms are called 'law'); *ἡ τοῦ Ἡσαΐου προφητεία νόμος* (the prophecy of Isaiah is law); *ὁ νόμος πνευματικός* (the spiritual law); *ὁ κατὰ τὰς κοινὰς ἐννοίας ἐνεσπαρμένος τῇ ψυχῇ καὶ, ὡς ὀνομάζει ἡ γραφὴ, ἐγγεγραμμένος τῇ καρδίᾳ λόγος* (the reason sown in the soul, evidenced by the moral notions common to mankind, and in Scripture language 'written in the heart') (*Philokalia* 9.1–2). For a good analysis of these and other meanings of 'law' in Origen's writings, see especially Anne Achternkamp, 'Natural Law in Origen's Anthropology,' *ZAC* 23 (2019): 138–48; Bammel, 'Philokalia IX, Jerome, Epistle 121, and Origen's Exposition of Romans VII'; Stephen M Hildebrand, 'The Letter Kills but the Spirit Gives Life: Romans 7 in the Early Works of Augustine and in Rufinus's Translation of Origen's Commentary,' *AugStud* 31 (2000): 31; Roukema, *The Diversity of Laws*.

[21] See Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), entry for *νόμος*: 'that which is in habitual practice, use, or possession... I. *usage, custom...law, ordinance...statute...*'

[22] Roukema, *The Diversity of Laws*, 9–10.

[23] Roukema, *The Diversity of Laws*, 80.

Origen's commentary on Rom. 7:21–8:2 is found in *ComRom.* 6.9 (on Rom. 7:14-25a), *ComRom.* 6.10 (on Rom. 7:25b), and in *ComRom.* 6.11 (on Rom. 8:1-2). Origen writes a great deal on the identity of the 'I', the 'persona', in Rom. 7:14-25 (*ComRom.* 6.9.1-3, 11-12; 6.10.2). After exploring 'a diversity of personae' (*personarum diuersitas*, *ComRom.* 6.9.1) as possible options for the 'I' of Rom. 7:14-25, Origen eventually settles on Paul's choice of 'the persona of the weak' (*personam infirmorum*, *ComRom.* 6.9.3) for this section of Romans in order to teach (*tamquam doctor ecclesiae*) and encourage his audience (*ComRom.* 6.9.3). This is an understandable choice, as Origen reminds the reader that Paul himself wrote, 'I became weak to the weak to win the weak' (*ComRom.* 6.9.3; 1 Cor. 9:22). What follows the discussion about the *persona*, then, may be interpreted as Origen's attempt to decipher how best to interpret Paul's *persona infirmorum*.

According to Origen, Paul's persona of the weak is the newly converted mind and soul that gradually exercise more and more control over the flesh; this is the overarching theme that periodically resurfaces and holds *ComRom.* 6.9-11 together and it would appear that Origen understands this to be the central theme of Rom. 7:14-25.[24] The depicted weak person desires the good with his or her will but, because his or her will is still fleshly and not yet spiritual, it is not yet able to resist the desires of the flesh.[25] Origen writes: 'nevertheless, the person put forward

[24] Stephen Hildebrand offers a slightly different interpretation. He writes: 'Origen's explanation of Romans 7 may be characterized by two interpretive moves. First, the incarnate Word causes the death of the law according to the letter. Secondly, Origen makes several distinctions in the meaning of "law" in order to explain the existential condition of the soul' (Stephen Hildebrand, 'The Letter Kills but the Spirit Gives Life: Romans 7 in the Early Works of Augustine and in Rufinus's Translation of Origen's Commentary,' *AugStud* 31 (2000): 19–39, here p. 20). This observation is certainly true; Origen accomplishes these 'two interpretive moves', although they are at the service of the larger dynamic, which is the 'existential condition of the [weak person's] soul'.

[25] Origen also makes a distinction between the 'body' and the 'flesh'. Paul generally uses 'flesh' in a negative sense, as that which is involved in sinful behaviour, whereas 'body' is either neutral or converted/sanctified, and no longer associated with sinful behaviour. Bagby and Blosser believe that Origen seems to follow Paul's use. See Blosser, *Become Like the Angels*, 49–50, 55–56. And so: 'he seems to be saying that the

here is not always estranged (*alienus est*) from good things but, with purpose and will (*proposito et uoluntate*), he has indeed begun to seek (*requirere*) the good, although has not yet been able to persist (*obtinere*) in it in reality and in deeds (*rebus et operibus*)' (*ComRom.* 6.9.8).[26] Because this person has had a conversion, he is already attempting to make progress and become spiritual, which, Origen claims, is instinctual (*legis scilicet naturalis instinctu*) because of the natural law that is accessible to human beings through their rational nature (*ComRom.* 6.9.4).[27]

The resolution (*propositum*) to conquer evil habits is made at the moment of conversion, although vices continue to oppose the will and this new resolution because vices have dominated the person for a lifetime of evil practices and habits (*sed quoniam longo usu et consuetudine diutina vitium in eo*; *ComRom.* 6.9.8). Origen notes: 'And there is a weakness of such a kind in those who undertake to begin their conversion, that, when anyone immediately wants to do everything that is good, the execution of this does not immediately follow the will' (*ComRom.* 6.9.8).[28] Thus, the weak person in Rom. 7:14-25 is already a slave to the law of God with the

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body's influence goes beyond the mere spontaneous generation of desires, but actually extends to the corruption of the soul itself, extinguishing all its spiritual feelings and changing its nature to the point that it merits a new name ("flesh")' (Blosser, *Become Like the Angels*, 55). Similarly, Bagby understands Origen's use of the term 'flesh' in this manner: 'Persistent acquiescence to these suggestions (impulses) is to be under the dominion of sin. This failure to properly control nature's inducement is characteristic of the body becoming flesh' (Stephen Bagby, "Volitional Sin in Origen's Commentary on Romans," *HTR* 107 (2014): 354).

[26] The new convert is not alone on this journey. Origen frequently emphasises the importance of the role of good teachers. In *ComRom.* 6.9.10, for example, Origen states that 'teaching', 'instruction', 'much practice and continuous teaching' are necessary once the will has been converted to the good. The role of the community and its connection to the *νόμος* phrases and to identity formation will be examined more closely in Chapter Five.

[27] Another important passage in the *Commentary* on this topic is 5.1.29: 'From all of which it is more definitely established that the Apostle is saying these things about the law which every being, both men and also angels, bears naturally within itself by a certain divine dispensation and gift. The strength and power of this law is so great that it convicts even angels. It excludes no one, no matter what their dignity.'

[28] And still further on, Origen notes that Paul's weak person depicts 'someone who has already been converted to the Lord and has already experienced a change in his will' (*ComRom.* 6.9.12). In order that their actions match the will's desires and resolutions, they must therefore grow in the practice and training in the virtues, and this is gradual: 'But, as we said above, this does not happen all at once that someone, though they have the will to be converted to the good, should as well attain the habits of doing the good. The will is a fast-working thing and

mind and soul (cf. Rom. 7:22, 25; *mente atque animo legi Dei seruientis*, *ComRom.* 6.10.2) but has not yet succeeded in bringing the flesh in agreement with and under obedience to the mind and soul (*nondum tamen ita obtinuisse ut etiam carnis oboedientiam in consensum mentis adduceret*, *ComRom.* 6.10.2) because the weak person's will is not yet strong enough to resist the desires of the flesh (*quia uoluntas ista nondum ita fortis et ita robusta est ut definiat apud se usque ad mortem pro ueritate certandum*, *ComRom.* 6.9.5). The weak person is therefore caught in a web of laws, which have power to a greater or lesser extent over him or her as he or she strives to progress from being fleshly to spiritual. Origen sees the laws in Rom. 7:21–8:2 as playing a large part in this progress or lack thereof. These will now be explored.

2. 'The law of God', 'the law of my mind', and 'the law of the Spirit of life'

The *νόμος* phrase that appears first in this section of Romans is 'the law of God' (Rom. 7:22). Because it is intimately connected to 'the law of my mind' (Rom. 7:23) and 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ' (Rom. 8:2) in Origen's mind, these latter two laws will be evaluated with it. Origen follows in the footsteps of Clement of Alexandria, Philo, and the Middle Platonist philosophers, and maintains that every human being has access to the natural law (*ComRom.* 5.6.3; 6.9.5).[29] Because human beings are rational, they have the ability to discern reason operative in nature. The natural law is an expression of the law of God in creation, or, it is God's

is converted without hindrance but the work is slow because it requires practice and skill and effort for working' (*ComRom.* 6.9.9).

[29] For an understanding of 'the natural law' in Origen's writings, I am drawing on the studies of Achternkamp, 'Natural Law in Origen's Anthropology'; Bagby, 'Volitional Sin in Origen's Commentary on Romans'; William A Banner, 'Origen and the Tradition of Natural Law Concepts,' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 8 (1954): 51–82; Roukema, *The Diversity of Laws*.

will operative in a performative way in creation (*ComRom.* 5.6.3; *Cels.* 5.37, 7.69). Origen elaborates on this law in many places in the *Commentary*. Roukema notes that, of all the uses of *νόμος* in Romans, Origen sees the natural law behind the Pauline use of the word much more than any other kind of law.[30] For Origen, there is a strong connection between the law of God and the law of the mind. Origen writes:

> For all of them [the virtues], then, it is fitting to say, 'I delight in the law of God,' that is, in the virtues (*hoc est uirtutibus*), 'according to the inner man. But I see in my members another law fighting against the law of my mind, leading me away as a captive to the law of sin, which is in my members' (Rom. 7:22-23). He said above, 'For to will the good is present in me' (cf. Rom. 7:18). This will for the good (*hic uoluntatem boni*) he called (*nominauit*) 'the law of the mind' (cf. Rom. 7:23); the law of the mind is that which (*quae lex mentis*) agrees (*conuenit*) with the law of God and consents (*consentit*) to it. (*ComRom.* 6.9.11-12)

Origen's comments offer a number of insights, although these must be read in the light of some of his other writings. Firstly, he explains in this passage that 'the law of God' is 'the virtues'. What he likely means is that the law of God prescribes the life of the virtues to human beings.[31] Like many of the Greek philosophies of his day, Origen believes that every human

[30] Roukema, *The Diversity of Laws*, 10.

[31] See, for example, *ComRom.* 6.11.2: to serve the law of God is to serve Christ, which is also to serve the virtues. Similarly in *ComRom.* 1.2.3: 'Indeed, what does it mean to be a slave of Christ? It means that one is a slave of the Word of God, of wisdom, righteousness, truth, and of absolutely all the virtues which are identical with Christ himself.' Theresia Heither therefore holds that Origen's understanding of 'virtue' is not that of the Greek philosophers. Rather, 'virtue' for Origen is the good, Christ-like, behaviour in a person's life, which emanates from

being has the ability to perceive the natural law's prescription for the virtuous life and every human being has the capacity to live virtuously.[32] As was noted above, the natural law is that part of the 'the law of God' that pertains to and permeates all of creation, thus being discernible by rational beings (Origen calls this 'an instinct', see *ComRom.* 6.9.4; see also 5.1.29). Secondly, we see that, for Origen, 'this will for the good' (*ComRom.* 6.9.12) is the mind that agrees with and consents to the law of God; this is what Paul calls 'the law of my mind' in Rom. 7:23. Elsewhere, Origen regularly brings these laws together. For example, in *ComRom.* 5.6.4, he summarises these connections: '…the natural law, which the Apostle named the law of the mind which consents to the law of God' (…*legis naturalis quam legem mentis nominauit apostolus quae legi Dei consentit*…). Similarly, in *ComRom.* 6.12.14, he states: '…the law of the mind, which is God's law…'

The virtues are also prescribed for the human being in 'the law of Moses', which God also gave to human beings. This revealed law captures something of the natural law that is explicitly meant to introduce humans to a high standard of moral behaviour and thus to help them to reach God.[33] According to Roukema, 'the law of Moses' has four important functions for Origen: (a) it is supposed to liberate human beings from idolatry, (b) the sacrifices prescribed therein are meant to offer forgiveness of sins and therefore make peace between humans and God, (c) it teaches one what one should do and prohibits evil, and thus it promotes a virtuous life, and (d) it

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the living Christ, who dwells in the person (see Theresia Heither, *Translatio religionis: die Paulusdeutung des Origines in seinem Kommentar zum Römerbrief*, BBK 16 (Köln: Böhlau, 1990), 31).

[32] See, for example, *ComRom.* 3.6.2: 'One finds that God has in fact given to the human being every disposition and every drive by which he can go forward and advance toward virtue. Beyond the power of reason, God has ensured that the human being should know what he should do and what he should avoid. One finds then that God has supplied these things universally to all human beings.'

[33] See, for example, *ComRom.* 5.1.31. The law of Moses is meant to call human beings back to God in a more explicit manner. It also offers them something that the natural law does not offer: the forgiveness of sins through various rites prescribed by the law of Moses.

serves as an apologetic document for the Gentiles in order to bring them to God.[34] Still further, William Banner notes that, for Origen, '*ὁ τῆς φύσεως τουτέστι τοῦ θεοῦ* is the same for revelation as for reason. This is the law which was made manifest to Moses. The law of Moses is the natural law, insofar as Moses prescribed only those things which were beneficial to mankind.'[35] Thus, Banner writes the following about Origen's understanding of the natural law:

> while this revelation ['the law of Moses'] itself is received without benefit of reason, its content is not beyond reason. The divine law is a rational law; it is in the true sense a natural law, being established by God who is the creator of nature itself. This law is, therefore, universal, eternal and unchanging. … The law of nature for Origen is not merely universalized convention; this law is rooted in the nature of things and of God.[36]

The beginners on the journey from the fleshly to the spiritual first need to learn the fleshly interpretation of the law of Moses.[37] This introduces them in an explicit manner to discipline and the virtues. Following this, those who have progressed in the moral life move to the spiritual interpretation of 'the law of Moses'. This, in turn, introduces them to a deeper knowledge of God and his plan for salvation, which Christoph Markschies sees as Origen's idea of redemption. Markschies writes: 'Redemption [for Origen] is first and foremost enlightenment and knowledge, but then also redemption is an education towards a special form of experiential and yet primarily intellectual fellowship with God.'[38] The way is long and arduous that leads to this

[34] Roukema, *The Diversity of Laws*, 78–79.

[35] Banner, 'Origen and the Tradition of Natural Law Concepts,' 77.

[36] Banner, 'Origen and the Tradition of Natural Law Concepts,' 63, 72.

[37] For Origen's most complete exposition of his three ways of reading Scripture, see *Princ.* 4.2.4.

[38] Markschies, *Origenes und sein Erbe*, 11. My translation.

advanced stage. Those who have progressed to this level imitate Christ and even go beyond the 'law' and simply share in the heavenly beatitude.[39] Origen seems to think that this level is indeed attainable in this life; whereas Jesus was the only being who achieved perfection from eternity (see *Princ.* 2.6.3), it is possible for everyone else to regain his or her formerly lost perfection even in this life.[40]

There remains one other divine law that ought to be addressed at this point: 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ' (Rom. 8:2). Origen unambiguously explicates this law in chapter 11 of *ComRom.* 6. Commenting on the phrase in Rom. 8:2, he writes:

> But the law of the Spirit of life is one and the same as the law of God (*lex autem spiritus uitae una eademque est quae et lex Dei*), just as, on the other hand, the law of sin and the law of death are one and the same (*sicut rursum una atque eadem est lex peccati et lex mortis*). There will therefore be no condemnation for those who are completely liberated

[39] See, for example, *ComMat.* 12.4: 'The person who is without sin, therefore, and no longer in need of the legal sacrifices and who has been perfected has passed beyond, perhaps, even the spiritual law, and has come to exist in the Logos which is beyond it, who became 'flesh' for those living in the flesh, but those no longer still waging war 'in flesh' see him as he was 'in the beginning with God', when he is God the Logos, and reveals the Father' (Heine, *The Commentary of Origen on Matthew*, 93).

[40] See, for example, *ComRom.* 1.10.3 (the perfection of the patriarchs and the prophets), *ComMat.* 12.4 (n. 37 above), *HomJos.* 22.1-2 (everyone can attain perfection), and *passim*. Origen seems to hold that one can in fact attain perfection in this life. The opposite is also true: in *Princ* 3.4.5*,* Origen presents someone who is completely 'of the flesh'. At the same time, *ComRom.* 5.3.7 may be understood as offering the contrary opinion, that the attainment of a perfect state of the soul during one's lifetime is *not* possible. Origen writes: 'It is clear that death exercises its dominion through sin. But if we should say that Christ, i.e., life, reigns in certain souls, and death in certain others, what persons shall we find in whom the dominion of life exists in such a way that the dominion of death has no authority in them? In other words, who is entirely free from sin? These matters seem to me to pertain instead to the future kingdom, and there those things are to be fulfilled where it is said, "That God may be all in all." … The present time, however, I would say seems not so much a time of reigning as of war. Through this war the future kingdom is being striven for. Yet Christ can be said to reign even in this time of war, since the dominion of death is now broken in part and being gradually destroyed, a dominion which had previously spread itself out to all men.'

> from the law of sin, which is the law of death, and who serve the law of God, which is the law of the Spirit. (*ComRom.* 6.11.1)

Origen is explicitly equating 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ' of Rom. 8:2 with 'the law of God' in this passage. The law that frees the human being from 'the law of sin and death' (Rom. 8:2) is indeed 'the law of God', which, as we have seen above in the *Commentary* (see pp. 164–65), is the natural law's prescription for the virtuous life, and this virtuous life pattern, or plan for every human, can be understood and grasped by everyone. Therefore, that which sets the human free from the bondage of sin and death is a life according to the natural law.

Conclusion

We have thus far seen the divine laws at work in the human and how Origen discerns their presence in Rom. 7:21–8:2. In summary, for Origen there is but one divine law, the Law of God, which may also be understood as the will, reason (the Logos), or thought of God. This divine thinking gives rise to a Creation that is permeated by divine reason. The divine reason that gives order to the Creation and teaches the human how to live reasonably is known to the human as the natural law. This is a profoundly Stoic understanding of the cosmos, one that was adopted by both Philo and Clement, as we have already seen in Chapter Two (see pp. 106–08). Origen has taken up this vision of the cosmos and has made good use of it in his writings. Alongside this natural law, which is operative in Creation, there is also 'the Law of Moses', the part of 'the Law of God' that is explicitly designated by God for humans in revelation in order that they may

flourish and ultimately regain their former state of contemplation.[41] The natural law and 'the Law of Moses' are therefore spawns of 'the Law of God' in forms that are graspable by human beings by what Paul calls, according to Origen, 'the law of the mind', which understands and agrees with it. Whereas the natural law prepares the human for the reception of 'the Law of Moses', 'the Law of Moses', through its spiritual understanding, introduces the human to a progressively more spiritual existence. The one who is spiritual and whose mind has grasped God's reason for creation also lives in a certain way. This person lives according to the virtues and therefore in line with the natural law, that is, God's Law, and by doing so, is liberated from 'the law of sin and death' (Rom. 8:2). A self-disciplined, virtuous life is conducive to the contemplation of God's truths, and therefore releases the human from the bonds that tie him or her to earthly cares and concerns. Now that the divine laws have been examined, there still remain the hostile-to-God laws to be investigated in Rom. 7:21–8:2.

[41] For Origen's most extensive speculation about the 'fall of the mind' (the 'first Fall') from the constant contemplation of God, see *Princ* 2.8.3. For a good introduction to Origen's speculations about the *two Falls*, see Chapter 1 of Christopher A. Beeley, *The Unity of Christ: Continuity and Conflict in Patristic Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), Chapter 5 of Blosser, *Become Like the Angels*, Chapter 3 of Edwards, *Origen against Plato*, Anders Lund Jacobsen, 'Genesis 1–3 as Source for the Anthropology of Origen," *VC* 62 (2008): 213–32, Rebecca Lyman, 'Origen' in *Early Christian Thinkers: The Lives and Legacies of Twelve Key Figures*, ed. Paul Foster (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2010), 111–26, Chapters 5 and 10 of Peter Martens, *Origen and Scripture: The Contours of the Exegetical Life*, OECS (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), and Riemer Roukema, 'Origen on the Origin of Sin,' in *The Evil Inclination in Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. James K. Aitken, Hector M. Patmore, and Ishay Rosen-Zvi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 201–11. Human beings were created as pure minds in pure spiritual bodies, which had the contemplation of God as their sole purpose. The falling away from this contemplative experience in the 'mind' state is the first fall for Origen. Human beings are attempting to return to this former state of continuous contemplation of God. Christ has come to show them how to do this again.

3. 'Another law in my members', 'the law of sin', and 'the law of sin and death'

The hostile laws first come on the stage in Rom. 7:23, where we read that 'I see another law in my members, which is at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members' (Rufinus' Latin translation: *video autem aliam legem in membris meis repugnantem legi mentis meae et captiuum me ducentem legi peccati quod est in membris meis*, *ComRom.* 6.9.12).[42] Origen's comments on Rom. 7:23 are found in a number of places in 6.9, appearing first in *ComRom.* 6.9.6 in a reflection on Rom. 7:15, 18, 20. The main topic of reflection here is the conundrum of the human will that agrees with the law of God whilst still not in control of the body, which continues to engage in sinful behaviour.

Origen sees 'the law and will of the flesh' (*lex et uoluntas carnis*, *ComRom.* 6.9.6) as the cause of the lag in the body's agreement with the soul. Origen states: 'if we consent to the law of God according to the will, then the evil that we do, it is no longer we who do it, but the sin that is operative (*est operatur*) in us [does it], that is, the law and will of the flesh, which leads us as captives to the law of sin' (*ComRom.* 6.9.6; cf. Rom. 7:23). A few paragraphs further, Origen observes that the person continues to do evil unwillingly because the person's will 'has been overcome by the habit of the vices and by the practice of sinning' (*contra uoluntatem mala ago uictus consuetudine uitiorum usuque peccandi*, *ComRom.* 6.9.8), which he understands Paul to

[42] Bammel notes that there are two different textual traditions in Rufinus' Latin translation. There is the first textual tradition that is offered at the beginning of each chapter and there are the verses that appear in the body of the text. Rufinus does not translate the Greek Scriptures at the beginning of each chapter, but rather reproduces there what is now known as the Old Latin version. The biblical quotations within the commentary appear to be his translations, and he does not modify them to fit the Old Latin. See Caroline P. Bammel, *Der Römerbrieftext des Rufin und seine Origenes-Übersetzung*, AGLB 10 (Freiburg: Herder, 1985), 57–58, 204–30.

mean simply ‘sin’ (*consuetudinem namque peccandi peccatum nominauit [Paulus]*, *ComRom.* 6.9.8).

The passage in *ComRom.* 6.9.6 sheds some light on Origen’s interpretation of the other law that is found in the members (cf. Rom. 7:23), which he replaces here with ‘the law and will of the flesh’. This replacement is supported by the fact that both elements (another law in my members and the law and will of the flesh) function in the same way, that is, they ‘lead us as captives to the law of sin’. This law of the members is now specified as ‘the law and will of the flesh’, a term that is not further elaborated upon here, but is in other places, as shall soon be seen.

The next main section that treats the two hostile laws is found in *ComRom.* 6.9.9-12, wherein he explicitly addresses Rom. 7:22-25. The key passage is as follows:

> ‘But I see in my members another law fighting against the law of my mind, leading me away as a captive to the law of sin, which is in my members’ (Rom. 7:22-23). He said above, ‘For to will the good is present in me’ (cf. Rom. 7:18). This will for the good (*hic uoluntatem boni*) he called (*nominauit*) ‘the law of the mind’ (cf. Rom. 7:23); the law of the mind is that which (*quae lex mentis*) agrees (*conuenit*) with the law of God and consents (*consentit*) to it. However, the impulses of the body and the desires of the flesh (*motus corporis et desideria carnis*), on the other hand, he called the law of the members, which leads the soul away captive and subjects it to the laws of sin (*peccati legibus*). Indeed, it is certain that the desires of the flesh (*desideria carnis*) draw (*trahant*) the soul toward sin and put (*subdant*) it under its laws (*legibus*) and just as the law of the mind, which consents (*consentit*) to the law of God, if it can take possession (*potuerit obtinere*)

> of the soul, leads it to the law of God, so also the law that is in the members and the lust of the flesh (*concupiscentia carnis*), if it seduces (*seduxerit*) the soul, would put (*subdet*) it under the laws of sin (*peccati legibus*). (*ComRom.* 6.9.11-12).

Earlier in *ComRom.* 6.9.6, Origen notes that it is 'the law and will of the flesh' that hinders the soul's dominion over the body. Here, he specifies what this 'law and will of the flesh' is. It is the 'impulses of the body and the desires of the flesh' and 'the lust of the flesh' (*motus corporis et desideria carnis… concupiscentia carnis*, *ComRom.* 6.9.12) and Origen sees these to be Paul's 'another law in my members'.[43] Origen does not write more about the nature of these impulses, desires, or lusts, although he does offer some insights on the way in which they operate: they seduce (*seducere*) the soul and drag or draw (*trahere*) it away (presumably away from the law of God, or, more generally, away from spiritual things, as shall be seen below) towards sin and they subject (*subdere*) it to the laws of sin (*peccatum legibus*). We must turn to *Princ.* 3.4.4 in order to learn more about the nature of these movements and their connection with 'another law in my members'.

Origen's comments on 'bodily needs and functions that are like a sort of law' (*necessitatibus et usibus corporalibus, quae uelut lex quaedam corpori inest*) in *Princ.* 3.4.4 (a section which examines 'another law in my members' of Rom. 7:23) may shed some much-needed light on the nature of this law.[44] The passage is found in a larger section that explores the

[43] The use of 'body' (*corpus*/*σῶμα*) and 'flesh' (*caro*/*σάρξ*) in Origen's writings is largely consistent in that the body is seen as something morally neutral while the flesh is the body that commits sins. We see here both the body and the flesh. Based on the below analysis of 'the law of the body', it would appear that 'the impulses of the body are not sinful in themselves while 'the desires' and 'lusts of the flesh' are sinful. See the following paragraphs in *Princ.* 3.4.4.

[44] All English and Latin texts from *De principiis* are from the critical edition prepared by Behr, *Origen: On First Principles*, unless otherwise noted.

nature of temptation and sin (*Princ.* 3.4). He presents three views, and this one is the second.[45] In this view, the soul is initially in intermediate space between the body and the spirit (*Princ.* 3.4.2-3). The soul must either associate with the body or with the spirit, otherwise it remains in the middle and is 'like an animal' and 'lukewarm' (*Princ.* 3.4.3). It must make a choice: 'when it yields itself to the pleasures of the flesh (*delectationibus carnis subdiderit*), it makes human beings fleshly (*carnales homines facit*), but when it joins itself to the spirit (*spiritui iunxerit*) it makes the human being to be in the spirit (*in spiritu esse huminem facit*) and to be called, on this account, spiritual (*spiritalem nominari*)' (*Princ.* 3.4.2).

Romans 7:23 appears in the discussion of what brings the soul down to the level of the flesh. Origen first lays down the groundwork and notes that there arise 'passions of the mind' (*passiones animi*) and

> we feel within ourselves as if we are being dragged in different directions, when there arises a certain conflict of thoughts in our hearts (*cum pugna quaedam fit cogitationumin cordibus nostris*) and certain images are suggested to us (*nobis uerisimilitudines suggeruntur*), by which we are inclined now this way and now that, and by which we are at one time reproved and another time we are ourselves approved. (*Princ.* 3.4.4)

The 'passions of the mind', then, have as their origin thoughts and images that are themselves due to 'the nature of the body' (*natura corporis*) or 'the natural movements of the body'

[45] The first is the 'two souls' theory (*Princ.* 3.4.1-2), the second is the 'bodily needs' theory discussed here (*Princ.* 3.4.1,4), and third is the 'tripartite soul' theory derived from Plato's writings (*Princ* 3.4.1). The first two theories are given extensive analysis (*Princ.* 3.4.2-4) whereas the third theory is dismissed outright because Origen 'do[es] not see [this view] to be strongly confirmed by the authority of the divine Scriptures' (*Princ.* 3.4.1).

(*naturalibus motibus corporis*), which, on occasion, are stimulated by 'the impulse of some external excitement' (*impulsu alterius cuiusquam prouocationis*, *Princ.* 3.4.4). According to those who hold this view, it is this that Paul describes as 'the flesh wars against the spirit' (cf. Gal. 5:17), for it is 'the use or the needs or the delights of the flesh (*usus uel necessitas uel delectamentum carnis*), inciting (*prouocans*) a human being, [that] draw (*abstrahit*) and lead (*abducit*) him away from divine and spiritual things' (*Princ.* 3.4.4).[46] After offering a number of examples of what these desires are (sex, hunger, thirst, *Princ.* 3.4.4), he turns to Rom. 7:23 and states:

> That also which the Apostle said, 'I see another law in my members' (Rom. 7:23a), they understand in this way, as if he had said that the one who wishes to devote himself to the Word of God is, because of the bodily needs and functions that are like a sort of law in the body (*necessitatibus et usibus corporalibus, quae uelut lex quaedam corpori inest*), distracted and divided and impeded (*distrahitur atque diuellitur et inpeditur*), lest by devoting himself more attentively to the Wisdom of God he should be able to behold the divine mysteries. (*Princ.* 3.4.4)

According to this view, then, 'another law in my members' in Rom. 7:23 is the pull of the bodily needs and functions towards their gratification. These are the temptations that cause the human to sin, and thus, 'being drawn away because of the needs of the body (*pro necessitate etenim corporis abstracti*), we are not allowed to be at leisure for things divine and profitable for

[46] Origen does not specify the identity of the 'some' who hold this view, although he is not dismissive of the view as he is with the third view 'entertained by certain Greek philosophers' (see *Princ.* 3.4.1).

eternity' (*Princ.* 3.4.4). These bodily temptations, or needs, assault the mind as passions and arise from thoughts and images.[47] The result of such a life is obvious to Origen:

> the soul—when rendered grosser in feeling from yielding itself to the passions of the body, being weighed down by the mass of its vices, and being sensitive to nothing refined or spiritual (*cum crassioris sensus fuerit effecta, ex eo quod corporis sese passionibus subdit, oppressa uitiorum molibus et nihil subtile uel spiritale sentiens*)—is said to be made flesh (*caro dicitur effecta*) and takes its name from that in which it exercises the greater part of its endeavour and purpose (*in quo plus studii uel propositi gerit*). (*Princ.* 3.4.5)

Although Origen does not explicitly accept or reject this 'second view', it fits well with his anthropological system, wherein the soul fluctuates between associating more with the body or with the spirit.[48] It is clear that Origen cannot accept this view completely because, being the great defender of free will and the power of reason, he is not entirely satisfied with a purely materialistic answer to the problem of temptation and sin.[49] Physical needs most definitely play a role in this, although there is more to be said regarding ignorance and knowledge and the influence of evil spiritual entities.

The passages from *De principiis* have provided more information on Origen's concise statements about 'the impulses of the body and the desires of the flesh' and their relationship

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[47] Bagby offers a good analysis of the place of Aristotle's 'golden mean' in Origen's ethical living. He believes that this is the key to understanding Origen's comments on the human's relationship with biological needs found in the above analysed *Princ.* 3.4.4. According to Bagby, a wilful, conscious rejection of the golden mean is sin for Origen. Bagby, 'Volitional Sin in Origen's Commentary on Romans,' 358.

[48] Blosser, *Become Like the Angels*, proposes that Origen takes elements from *all three* views presented in *Princ.* 3.4. This is largely Blosser's argument in Parts 1 and 2 of his monograph.

[49] See especially Chapters 3–5 in Blosser, *Become Like the Angels*.

with ‘another law in my members’ of Rom. 7:23a. There still remain ‘the law of sin’ (Rom. 7:23b) and ‘the law of sin and death’ (Rom. 8:2). We have seen above that ‘another law in my members’ makes the soul captive to another entity, namely, to ‘the law of sin’. Origen elaborates on this captivity in the above-quoted text in *ComRom.* 6.9.11-12 (see pp. 172–73). Origen’s text is much more explicit than that of Paul. Origen seems to read the two laws as distinct. The one law, ‘another law in my members’, takes hold of the soul by means of ‘the impulses of the body and the desires of the flesh’ and thus puts it under the control of ‘the laws of sin’. Origen modifies the Pauline text by changing the singular ‘the law of sin’ to a plural form, and he does so three times in the above-quoted text (see *ComRom*. 6.9.11-12). This is an important change because it allows him to elaborate on a possible meaning of this hostile law.

Origen employs the plural form again in *ComRom.* 6.10.2, when he comments on Rom. 7:25. He begins by noting that ‘to sin in the flesh…means to serve the law of sin in the flesh’ (*...peccet in carne…enim carne seruire legi peccati*). The converted will desires to fulfil the law of God but the flesh is not yet obedient to the will and therefore continues to sin. A few lines later, he writes:

> but there is either such a great force of habit (*uel consuetudinis tanta uis*) or the sweetness of the vices is so strong (*uel uitiorum tanta dulcedo*) that when the mind (*animus*) is already tending towards (*tendat*) virtue and has determined to serve (*seruire decreuerit*) the law of God, nevertheless the desires of the flesh (*carnis tamen desideria*) may persuade it <u>to serve sin and submit to its laws</u> (*seruire peccato et legibus eius parere persuadeant*). (*ComRom*. 6.10.2)

Interior movements (*desideria carnis*) lead to sins, which are carried out in the flesh and which further subject the flesh to sin and its laws. Origen does not elaborate further on the nature of 'sin and its laws', although looking backwards a few paragraphs at *ComRom.* 6.7.16-17, a commentary on Rom. 7:5, may help us understand his use of the plural 'laws' in 'sin and its laws' (*ComRom*. 6.10.2) or 'the laws of sin' (*ComRom*. 6.9.12). The section in the *Commentary* begins thus: 'While we were in the flesh, the vices of sins, which were through the law, were at work in our members' (*cum autem essemus in carne uitia peccatorum quae per legem erant operabantur in membris nostris*, *ComRom.* 6.7.15-16).[50] Origin continues that

> it is clear (*in aperto est*) that he [Paul] is speaking of that law of the members, which resists (*resistit*) the law of the mind (cf. Rom. 7:23), about which we have also previously discussed how 'the law entered with the result that sin was abounding.' Therefore, this is the very law (*ipsa ergo lex est*) that makes (*facit*) the vices of sins abound (*uitia peccatorum abundare*) in those who live according to the flesh, with the result that they bear fruit for death (*ut fructificent morti*). In fact, it is for this reason (*ad hoc namque*) that

[50] The original Greek text reads thus: *ὅτε γὰρ ἦμεν ἐν τῇ σαρκί, τὰ παθήματα τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν τὰ διὰ τοῦ νόμου ἐνηργεῖτο ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ἡμῶν εἰς τὸ καρποφορῆσαι τῷ θανάτῳ·* ('For when we were in the flesh, the passions of sins aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death'). Although one ought to be cautious to claim with certainty that Origen himself modified the biblical text, replacing 'the passions of sins' with 'the vices of sins' (rather than the modification being the result of a word choice of his Latin translator, Rufinus), the same word selection (*uitia* instead of *passiones*) is also seen in *ComRom.* 6.7.1, where Origen provides the text of Romans before he comments on it. Furthermore, the commonly used Greek term for 'vice' would have been *κακία* (often used in opposition to 'virtue', *ἀρετή*) and not *πάθημα*, so Origen and Rufinus would have known the difference between the two terms and would not have confused them, especially that Origen uses both terms extensively in the *Commentary* and they are not used interchangeably. For example, *passiones peccati* 'the passions of sin' does appear in 6.7.4 when Origen is explaining that the one who is in the flesh is 'impelled by the passions of sin and of the flesh'. Here, *passiones* has a different function than *uitia*, as shown in this chapter, for the passions are those things which move the person interiorly to commit sinful actions, and so enabling the person to remain in the flesh.

that law is in our members: that by striving against the law of the mind, it might lead us as captives to sin and offer these fruits to death. (*ComRom.* 6.7.16)[51]

The excerpt demonstrates that Origen seems to perceive two hostile entities at work in Rom. 7:23, and the work of the two entities in unison results in the person living according to the flesh, thereby resulting in death. The first entity, the law that is in the members 'makes the vices of sins abound'. These vices, in turn, make the human live a 'fleshy' existence, which then results in death. It may be assumed with some certainty that 'that law of the members' is 'another law in my members' of Rom. 7:23a, as it is shown to 'resist the law of the mind', just as Paul has it 'making war on the law of my mind' in Rom. 7:23. This is the passions and desires of the flesh (and 'the will of the flesh', *ComRom.* 6.9.6) that we have already seen above (see p. 171), for it is these that are able to move the mind to make the body commit sin. In the Pauline text, it is the law in the members (Rom. 7:23a) which wars on the mind and ultimately makes the human captive to 'the law of sin' (Rom. 7:23b). Origen here uses 'captives to sin' instead of the Pauline 'captive to the law of sin', although the function of both elements ('sin' in *ComRom*. 6.7.16 and 'law of sin' in Rom. 7:23b) is the same: the captivity of the human to some form of sin. As such, the first law makes the vices abound, while the vices ensure that the human maintains a purely fleshly existence, and the result of this fleshly existence is death. It is the same for the sin that makes the human captive, it results in death. Therefore, it would appear that Origen understands 'the vices of sins', 'sins', and 'the law of sin' to be synonymous, as seen by

[51] A similar formulation is found shortly thereafter in *ComRom.* 6.7.18: 'Indeed, while we were located (*positi*) in the flesh and were living according to the flesh on account of the vices of sins (*propter peccatorum uitia*), which that law that was in our members (cf. Rom. 7:23) was nourishing (*alebat*) so that they might bear fruit for death, we were unable to serve in the newness of the Spirit while that law of the members was living (*uiuebat*) in us, or rather, while we were living according to that law.'

the fact that they all have the same function and outcome (i.e. captivity to sin, a life ruled by fleshly existence, with the ultimate result of such a fleshly life being death). One law leads into the other; one law is on the level of the mind (thoughts, passions, desires) while the other is on the level of deeds (vices, sins). For Origen, then, 'the law of sin' seems to be interchangeable with 'the vices of sins', and it is for this reason that he modifies the singular form for a plural form a number of times. This change to the plural is understandable because there are many vices, each with its own pattern of behaviour (or, with its own 'law', in the Greek sense of the word).

Finally, we have already seen how Origen equates 'the law of God' with 'the law of the Spirit' in *ComRom*. 6.11.1 (see pp. 168–69 above). In that same text, Origen also equates 'the law of sin' with 'the law of sin and death' ('…the law of sin and the law of death are one and the same', *una atque eadem est lex peccati et lex mortis*). A bit further on in the same paragraph, Origen notes that 'Just as he who is set free by the law of the Spirit of life remains (*permanet*) in Christ, who is life, so likewise, he who serves the law of sin remains in death (*ita qui seruit legi peccati permanet in morte*), which comes from the condemnation of sin' (*ComRom.* 6.11.5). These passages demonstrate that 'the law of sin' in *ComRom.* 6.11.1, 5 functions in the same manner as 'the vices of sin' and 'sin' in *ComRom.* 6.7.16. All three lead to death, or to 'the law of death' (Rom. 8:2). If this reading is correct, then 'the law of sin' refers to vices, which are well-established habitual sinful actions, and hence, sins. This reading is supported by the fact that Origen regularly inserts examples of specific virtues and vices that are strengthened

(virtues) or overcome (vices) when he discusses the persona of the weak and the hostile laws.[52] An excerpt from 6.11.2 may serve as a representative passage:

> … it must not be supposed (*unde non est putandum*) that when a person wills [it] to be done (*efficiatur*), he is immediately transferred (*translatus*) into Christ Jesus from the slavery of the law of sin, so that he would possess nothing in him any longer that could merit sin's condemnation. In fact, in each person righteousness searches for its own portions (*partes suas*) and it tests (*probat*) to see if one has been emended and corrected (*emendatus est et correctus*) so that it can find no unjust work in the person, on the basis of which condemnation would follow. Similarly, truth also searches for its own portions in the person to see whether the person who has been transferred from the law of sin is still found to be defiling his obedience to the truth, in part, with lying. Likewise, chastity too searches for its own portions to see whether the person is being tarnished by any unchaste desires. So do piety and wisdom examine their portions in the person. (*ComRom.* 6.11.2)

The passage illustrates Origen's interpretation that those who are under 'the law of sin' perform sinful/vicious deeds, whereas those who are no longer under this law (those who have been transferred into Christ) have reformed their behaviour and no longer commit these actions. Thus, the passage demonstrates that 'the law of sin' refers to one's actions, and not to the interior movements that may precede actions. It may be for this reason that Origen refers a number of times to the singular 'the law of sin' of Rom. 7:23 in the plural, for he sees each

[52] These include wisdom, chastity, gentleness, patience, 'and each of the virtues' (*ComRom.* 6.9.9-10) and serving righteousness, speaking the truth, chastity, and piety (*ComRom.* 6.11.2).

particular sin as a law—or practice—of its own. The captivity to these 'laws of sin' may be likened to what Origen describes as 'being weighed down by the mass of its [the soul's] vices' (*oppressa uitiorum molibus*) in *Princ*. 3.4.5.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Origen perceives two hostile laws at work in the weak person. Origen interprets 'another law in my members' as impulses and desires of the body (*ComRom.* 6.9.10), passions (*ComRom.* 6.9.12), and the will of the flesh (*ComRom.* 5.6.3, 6.9.6). These forces attack the mind and drag it and the soul, in which it is found, to the level of the flesh. Whereas 'another law in my members' seems to be related more to the struggle of the mind and its will with the tugging of the body, 'the law of sin', which Origen also equates with 'the law of sin and death' (Rom. 8:2), describes the actions and regular behaviours that result from it. We may see in Origen's analysis a sort of progression from inordinate thoughts, which remain on the level of the immaterial soul and mind, to evil actions, which manifest in the physical world what is initially on the immaterial level. The two laws certainly have some overlap, as the more one sins, the more the passions are stirred. The habit of sinning (i.e. the vices), then, becomes a kind of force or tyrant (*ComRom.* 6.10.2) that keeps the soul captive to the flesh. Thus, the 'the law of sin' outlines sinful behaviours and is therefore nothing other than sin for Origen, and more precisely, particular sins. The first law leads to the second, while the second law fuels the first, thereby creating a kind of vicious cycle, ultimately resulting in death, which is the consequence of such a life (e.g. see *ComRom.* 6.7.16 above).

Origen's reading of the hostile laws is striking because it shows that, at least in Origen's eyes, Paul is working with a Greek anthropological system wherein interior freedom is paramount. Humans are not truly free to do the good (that is, God's will) if they continue in their vices. The more people are immersed in sinful practices, the harder it is for the will to exercise dominion over the body, or even discern what the good is. As Paula Fredriksen writes:

> For Origen as for the tradition of philosophy that he drew upon, however, 'free will' was not a neutral capacity to choose between good and evil. … *Hamartia*, 'sin'—a turning from God—accordingly implies *error*, since no one would ever knowingly turn from truth or willingly make a mistake. Ignorance impedes right choices; knowledge occasions and sustains them. In brief, 'sin' as moral error has an inescapably intellectual dimension: one chooses according to what one knows.[53]

This understanding of sin is at the centre of Origen's anthropology and cosmology.[54] However, although this is understood and operative in the background, it is not the centre of attention in this section of his commentary. In fact, this ignorance is being progressively overcome by the 'persona of the weak', whom Paul is depicting. What is at stake here is that the mind, even though it may already know what the good is and desires to do it, is still incapable of mastering the body because years of sinful behaviour have trained it to do the opposite of the good. This morally bad training must now be countered and undone. Thus, Origen's reading of Paul shows

[53] Paula Fredriksen, 'Chapter 3: A Rivalry of Genius: Sin and Its Consequences in Origen and Augustine,' in *Sin: The Early History of an Idea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 103–04. Author's emphasis.

[54] Blosser notes that, for Origen, 'the essence of sin is for the perceptible to be taken for an end rather than as a means to a divine end' (Blosser, *Become Like the Angels*, 50.).

that he understands Paul to be heavily influenced by Greek philosophy, which prized the freedom of the will and which saw correct education and training in the virtues as the means to attain this freedom.

Origen's interpretation of the two hostile laws is fascinating for its nuance. Where his predecessors, Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria, understand 'another law in my members' and 'the law of sin' to be one entity, Origen perceives two. This distinction gives him the opportunity to portray the larger dynamics at play behind sin: the impulses that move the person to act and the actions that result from them. One further nuance ought to be added to the equation, however: we must account for Origen's portrayal of 'another law in my members' as acting as a personal agent, with active verbs, such as 'to lead the soul away captive', 'to subject the soul', 'to drag the soul away', and 'to seduce the soul' (*ComRom.* 6.9.10). Origen does not explicitly name these forces as external evil entities in connection to this law phrase in *ComRom.* 6.9-11, and so we must leave this section of the *Commentary* for a moment to explore a number of other places where he explicitly identifies one or more of the hostile laws with external spiritual beings.

4. The hostile *νόμος* phrases and the Devil

The doctrine that external spiritual entities are involved in the human being's moral decision-making is well attested in the Greek (the *daemon*), Persian (the *jinn*), and rabbinic (the evil *yetzer*) traditions and is already present in the Christian tradition by the time Origen is writing.[55]

[55] For a thorough analysis of this doctrine in Late Antiquity, see Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires: 'Yetzer Hara' and the Problem of Evil in Late Antiquity*, DRLAR (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). Ruth Padel, *In and Out of the Mind: Greek Images of the Tragic Self* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992)

The doctrine is in its infancy stage in the New Testament: we encounter demonic activity in the Gospels (see, for example, Mk 1:32 and Matt. 15:22 and following) and in the Pauline corpus (see, for example, 2 Cor. 12:7; Eph. 6:10 and following).[56] The Gospels attest to the evil spirit working inside a person to influence his or her actions, such as in the case of an evil spirit that would make a boy mute and make him throw himself to the ground (Mk 9:14-29) or Judas in the Gospels.[57] Satan is shown to influence Judas by entering him in order to betray Jesus (Lk. 22:3-4; Jn 13:27) and the Devil is shown to have put it into Judas' heart to betray Jesus (Jn 13:2)[58]. We also find an inkling of this in the Pauline epistles (in 1 Cor. 7:5, Satan may tempt, *πειράζῃ*, the Corinthians because of their lack of self control, *διὰ τὴν ἀκρασίαν ὑμῶν*). It is only in the Pseudo-Clementine homilies that we encounter a more elaborate and developed Christian writing on evil spirits and their involvement in decision-making for the first time.[59] The concept

explores good and evil spiritual forces in Greek thought in 'pre-enlightenment Greece' (i.e. pre-Platonic) and she claims that these beliefs continued alongside the dominant philosophical schools, especially among the common folk. She writes, for example: 'Emotion's daemonic relation to innards carries out the overall pattern expressed in physiological imagery of innards: something "comes in" from outside' (p. 134).

[56] Although today may distinguish between demonic possession, obsession, or even oppression, these contemporary distinctions are not easily discerned in the Gospels. The Greek verb *δαιμονίζομαι* may generally be rendered as 'to be demonised'. See *LSJ*, '*δαιμονίζομαι*' entry.

[57] Mark 5:1-13 would be another example, where the evil spirit would make the 'demonised' man violent towards the passers-by.

[58] Jesus is tempted in the wilderness by Satan, but Satan is never described as working internally on Jesus (Matt. 4:1 and following; Mk 1:13 and following; Lk. 4:1 and following). Rather, all three Gospels depict this meeting as a real encounter between two persons. For a recent study on the unique contribution of New Testament writings to the development of demonology, see Archie T. Wright, 'Demons in the New Testament', in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Monsters*, ed. Brandon R. Grafius and John W. Morehead (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2025), 306–22. Wright proposes that there is a continuation in the New Testament with Jewish and Greek traditions in a number of ways, but there are also two important innovative contributions that are noteworthy: firstly, evil spirits are seen as autonomous and acting of their own accord (not under God's control, as seen in the Jewish tradition) and secondly, Jesus regularly shows his dominion over them by exorcising them.

[59] See especially the ninth homily. For this second century author, demons are spirits (*πνεύματα*) that are made of fire and that try to take control of human souls by means of thoughts, especially bodily desires (9.11). See the first section of Chapter 2 in Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires*.

is also attested in rabbinic texts, wherein the evil *yetzer* is a sort of external evil entity, who is able to introduce evil thoughts or impulses into the human's mind.[60]

The Greek tradition saw virtues and vices and the pull to them as having a life of their own to such an extent that they associated divinities with each virtue and vice.[61] Popular pagan (in the original sense of the word, rural) religion had a strong influence on this aspect; the gods were very much involved in the human's life and often guided or frustrated their lives. The Greek philosophers attempted to keep this aspect of Greek culture and religion out of their philosophies, although this was not entirely possible. One only needs to recall the 'signs' that Socrates' receives, which keep him from making mistakes (see Plato's *Apology* 40a). When Christianity emerges and becomes enmeshed in the Greek world, it would have been exposed to these doctrines and would have incorporated them through the lens of its beliefs in angels and evil spirits.[62] An inkling of this is already seen in the New Testament, although it flourishes a few generations after Paul in the writings of the early Church authors, such as the aforementioned Pseudo-Clement and subsequent authors, such as Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria.

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[60] See Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires*, especially Chapters 1 and 3.

[61] I am drawing from Chapters 6 and 7 of Padel, *In and Out of the Mind*, for this section.

[62] The history of the development of the doctrine of angels and demons is rich and at the same time complicated. Alongside Greek influence, there was the heavy influence of Second-Temple extra biblical Jewish writings, especially the strong influence that the *Book of the Watchers* has had. Much has been written on this history. For a good introduction to the matter, see James K. Aitken, Hector M. Patmore, and Ishay Rosen-Zvi, eds., *The Evil Inclination in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021); Everett Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World*, SS 12 (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1984); Valerie Flint, 'The Demonisation of Magic and Sorcery in Late Antiquity: Christian Redefinitions of Pagan Religions,' in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 277–348; Dorian Gieseler Greenbaum, *The Daimon in Hellenistic Astrology: Origins and Influence*, AMD 11 (Leiden: Brill, 2016); Dale B. Martin, 'When Did Angels Become Demons?,' *JBL* 129 (2010): 657–77; Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires*; Annette Yoshiko Reed, 'The Trickery of the Fallen Angels and the Demonic Mimesis of the Divine,' *JECS* 12 (2004): 141–71; Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity: The Reception of Enochic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Origen finds himself in the line of this relatively young tradition, which he also employs relatively frequently. Having grown up in Alexandria, he was exposed to the Greek traditions that would have taught these doctrines. However, along with many a Greek philosopher, he is quick to note that the human being is ultimately responsible for his or her decisions; external entities may feed the human with various suggestions, although he or she alone must make that final decision.[63] Scheck thus comments on Origen's view on the matter in the *Commentary*: 'Obedience rests with us; we present ourselves freely, with no one forcing us; therefore we must cease blaming the Devil, our enslaved natures, or the course of the stars for our sins.'[64] Nevertheless, for Origen, the Devil is indeed very much active in the human's life and he may be best understood as a means to an end, the end being purification and growth in the spiritual life.[65] Thus, temptations—and the human decision and ability to resist them—may contribute to the strengthening of the human's will and therefore may help him or her be more virtuous. There is much on the Devil and evil spirits throughout Origen's writings and there is some overlap between these texts and Origen's reading of the *νόμος* phrases in Rom. 7:21–8:2.[66]

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[63] In the *Commentary,* see, for example, *ComRom.* 1.3.1-4; 2.4.7; 2.10.2; 6.1.4; 8.11.3, and *passim*. The matter of the free will is of utmost importance for Origen. Tertullian is the first Christian writer to use the term 'free will' (*liberum arbitrium*; *De an.* 21), although Origen is most probably its strongest defender and proponent in the pre-Nicene church. See Charles Bigg, *The Christian Platonists of Alexandria*, 2nd ed., Bampton Lectures 1886 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 79.

[64] Scheck, *Origen: Romans, Books 1–5*, 29, commenting on *ComRom.* 6.3.5.

[65] In *ComRom.* 4.8.4, Origen writes: 'How can a righteous man have peace when he is being attacked by the Devil and is enduring wars of temptations? I would say that this man has peace more than everyone else. See how carefully the Apostle writes, for he did not say, "Therefore, because we have been justified by faith, let us have peace" and then silence. Rather he continues, "let us have peace with God," because he knows that war against the Devil brings peace with God. We enter more into peace with God at that time when we are persevering in warlike hostility against the Devil and when we struggle vehemently against vices of the flesh… Thus you can see that he [James; Jas 4:7-8] thought that one will be near to God at that very moment when he is resisting the Devil.'

[66] In the *Commentary,* the overlap is in bondage (*ComRom.* 2.6.6), enslavement/dominion (*ComRom.* 5.3.7; 5.9.9), and war (e.g. *ComRom.* 1.18.6; 4.8.4; 5.3.7; 10.15.4) imagery.

In our reading of *ComRom.* 6.10.2 above (see pp. 177–78), we have seen that Origen keenly observes with rather strong language that, when the person wills to do the good and to move away from practices that arise from giving in to inordinate desires,

> there is either such a great force of habit (*uel consuetudinis tanta uis*) or the sweetness of the vices is so strong (*uel uitiorum tanta dulcedo*) that when the mind (*animus*) is already tending towards (*tendat*) virtue and has determined to serve (*seruire decreuerit*) the law of God, nevertheless the desires of the flesh (*carnis tamen desideria*) may persuade it to serve sin and submit to its laws (*seruire peccato et legibus eius parere persuadeant*). (*ComRom.* 6.10.2)

Such a statement may give the reader the impression that there is more going on than what meets the eye. This is in fact what we encounter in other passages where he describes the operations of the hostile *νόμος* phrases in Rom. 7:21–8:2.

The person's progression from a fleshly existence to a spiritual one is frequently disturbed by the activity of evil spirits.[67] Although Origen does not explicitly address evil spirits/demonic activity in the section of the *Commentary* on Rom. 7:21–8:2*,* he explicitly names the Devil as the

[67] Generally speaking, 'spirit' in Origen's writings has a divine origin (see *Princ.* 1.4-8; 2.8-9). As human beings did not lose their 'spiritual' element after the first Fall, so also the Devil and evil 'spirits' did not lose their God-given spiritual element. Origen refers to evil spirits invading the soul in *HomJud.* 2.5 ('it [the soul] is said to be handed over [to Satan] in that it is found [to be] devoid of God and invaded by a wicked spirit, *tradita dicitur ex eo quod Deo vacua invenitur et invaditur ab spiritu nequam*; lines 54-55). We also encounter evil 'spirits' in the *Commentary* with some frequency: 'all human beings are led by some spirit' (*ComRom.* 7.1.1), and these are 'rational spirits' (*ComRom.* 7.1.2), and the bad 'spirits are labelled "evil" and angels' (*ComRom.* 7.1.2-3), 'violent spirits' (*ComRom.* 7.1.4), 'unclean spirits' (*ComRom.* 7.5.2), 'spiritual forces of wickedness' (*ComRom.* 7.12.9), 'seducing spirits' (*ComRom.* 9.2.9), 'bad and apostate spirits' (*ComRom.* 9.39.3), and 'evil spirits' (*ComRom.* 9.42.3). For a clear and concise overview of this Origenian doctrine, see Roukema, 'Origen on the Origin of Sin.'

sin that exercises dominion (cf. Rom. 5:21) in his comments on Rom. 5:20-21 in *ComRom.* 5.6.7 (following a complicated discussion about the natural law, the law of God, the law of the mind, the desires of the flesh, and the law of the members in *ComRom.* 5.6.3-4). In addition to this passage, he names the Devil as the one behind evil desires and temptations of the flesh in three of his homilies in relation to the hostile laws of Rom. 7:23.

Let us first examine the excerpt that is implicitly connected to the law phrases in the *Commentary*. The comments on the Devil and Rom. 5:21 arise from his reflection on whence good and evil things come. It is clear for Origen that

> all these good things exist through our Lord Jesus Christ, so also he [Paul] wanted it to be understood that those evil things may have come to exist through the Devil although he was silent about the name of the originator of those things in order that he might attribute the superabundance in all things to grace. Indeed, just as Christ is one in essence but may be designated in many ways according to his virtues and operations—for example he is understood to be grace itself, as well as righteousness, peace, life, truth, the Word—so maybe also the Devil can himself be signified in various ways. For it is thought that he himself is the sin that is said to reign (*nam et peccatum quod regnare dicitur ipse putandus est*). Also, it is believed that he himself is that death of which it is said, 'For the last enemy, death, will be destroyed' (1 Cor. 15:26). Still further, he is understood to be a desolation (*perditio*) according to what has been spoken by the prophet, 'You have become a desolation and you will not exist in eternal time' (Ezek. 28:19). And more, that which the Apostle says, 'therefore, may sin not reign in your mortal body' (Rom. 6:12), I think that it

> is all the more said of him, since he himself is the author (*auctor*) of sin and of death and of perdition. (*ComRom.* 5.6.6)

The relevant passage is where Origen states that the Devil 'is the sin which is said to reign (*nam et peccatum quod regnare dicitur ipse putandus est*). Also, it is believed that he himself is that death of which it is said, "For the last enemy, death, will be destroyed" (1 Cor. 15:26).' In Rom. 7:21-25, Paul states that 'evil lies close at hand' (Rom. 7:21) and the 'other law' is said to make Paul 'captive to the law of sin' (Rom. 7:23), which produces 'this body of death' (Rom. 7:25). In *ComRom.* 5.6.7, the Devil is the sin that has dominion over the human, which leads the human to death, both activities that are also outlined by Paul in Rom. 7:21, 23, and 25. It thus stands to reason that the Devil is behind the human being's captivity to 'the law of sin' of Rom. 7:23, thus making the Devil somehow connected to 'another law in my members' of Rom. 7:23. The connection is not explicit in *ComRom.* 5.6.7, of course, and so it remains a proposed analysis of the Origenian text. There are nonetheless more explicit references to the hostile laws of Rom. 7:23 and the operations of the Devil.

In Homily 13 on Joshua, Origen proposes that the cities, 'which the sons of Israel seized' (*HomJos.* 13.1), should be interpreted allegorically. Near the beginning of his homily, he explains that the one who is able to read these things in a spiritual manner and who follows Jesus, the Son of God, and not the son of Nun, 'understands that all these things are mysteries of the kingdom of heaven and even now he says that my Lord Jesus Christ wars (*bellatur*) against opposing powers (*adversum virtutes contrarias*) and casts them out of the cities that they possessed (*possidebant*), that is, out of our souls' (*HomJos.* 13.1). These cities are allegorically understood as our souls and they must be cleansed and 'become the city of God and God may

reign in it' (*HomJos.* 13.1). The 'kings who were ruling in our souls' (*HomJos.* 13.1) must be destroyed 'so that sin may no longer reign in you' (*HomJos.* 13.1; cf. Rom. 6:12).

The language that Origen uses here is remarkably close to that seen above in *ComRom.* 5.6.7, where we see the Devil as sin, exercising 'reign'/'dominion' over the person. In a similar fashion, Origen interprets the kings in this homily to be 'the prince of the air of this world, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience' (*HomJos.* 13.1; cf. Eph. 2:2). Those who were under his power, 'used to honour the law of sin' (*HomJos.* 13.1; cf. Rom. 7:23b, 25b, 8:2). He does not explicitly mention the law of the members in this passage, although these kings seem to be functioning like the law of the members: they contribute to the enslavement of the soul to sin. If the law of the members of Rom. 7:23 is indeed the same as the kings of the cities, which Origen names as the evil spirit of Eph. 2:2, then the evil spirit is indeed involved in enslaving the soul to sin.

Similar sentiments are expressed in Homily 22 on Joshua, wherein Origen realises that, in addition to the desires that arise from the flesh (which he equates here with 'another law in my members' of Rom. 7:23), there is also Pharaoh, whom Origen labels as 'the author and king of sin' (*auctor et rex peccati*; the Devil is also named the author of sin and of death in *ComRom.* 5.6.6, as seen above on pp. 188–89). Pharaoh comes and tempts the human so that the Canaanite (that is, the flesh) is again let loose and no longer subject to the Israelite, the soul (*HomJos.* 22.3-6). He writes:

> it is to be feared (*verendum est*) that Pharaoh may come out of Egypt and lead (*ducat*) the unhappy soul captive so that he hands it over (*tradat*) to his daughter in a dowry (*in dote*). If indeed you consider that which the Apostle said, 'Another law rises up in our members

(*in membris nostris*) and leads us captives (*captivos nos ducere*) in the law of sin' (Rom. 7:23), you will then discover how that Pharaoh, who is the author and king of sin (*qui est auctor et rex peccati*), enlists (*conscribit*) the soul that has lived carnally (*carnaliter*) in a dowry to his daughter, who is 'the law of sin' (cf. Rom. 7:23b). (*HomJos.* 22.3)

In this text, Origen has Pharaoh, who is presumably the Devil, since he is named 'the author and king of sin' (as he is in *ComRom.* 5.6.6), assuming the role of the Pauline 'law in the members'. His activity brings the soul down to the level of the flesh and once again subjects it to 'the law of sin'. The Devil subjects the soul to 'the law of the flesh' through 'the allurements of the flesh' and through the 'seduction of beauty' (*HomJos.* 22.6).[68]

Conclusion

In summary, there is no question that Origen believes that the Devil is active and tempts the human, for he often makes note of this across his other writings. The analysis in this section has shown that there are forces from within and from without that influence the human's ability to execute the will's decisions. What is at stake in these passages is whether Origen also sees the Devil behind the passions, desires, impulses, or will of the flesh, which he only associates with the law of the members of Rom. 7:23 in his homilies. For the one who is already converted to the good, it is not the will's weakness that is at stake, but the body's obedience to the will's

[68] Likewise, in Homily 2 on Judges, Origen outlines how the weakness of sin emerges in the person: 'by me and in my heart [Christ] is in a certain way suffocated and killed because of evil thoughts and impious desires and harmful studies' (*apud me autem et in corde meo per malas cogitationes et desideria nefanda, per studia pessima succocatur quodammodo et necatur*, *HomJud.* 2.2). Such people, Origen continues, as often as they sin, 'are taken captive under the law of sin and thus "bend the knee to the Baals"…before the Devil' (*HomJud.* 2.3).

directives. It is at this level of communication and enforcement that fleshly desires and the Devil work in order to maintain the person in sinful behaviour.

Indeed, this seems to be the case for Origen in the homilies; the Devil is behind these interior movements. These passages therefore demonstrate that there is a close connection for Origen's Paul between 'another law in my members' and 'the law of sin' and the activity of the Devil, for the passages demonstrate that the Devil puts the soul under the power of 'the law of sin', a function that 'another law in my members' of Rom. 7:23 was shown to fulfil.

By holding that evil spiritual entities can provoke evil thoughts, desires, passions, or impulses, Origen follows a young Christian tradition of demonology, which, as has been noted above, seems to have emerged from the Christian encounter with Jewish and Greek culture. The control of one's passions and desires and the virtuous life are a cornerstone of these Greek traditions; the greater emphasis on the involvement of external spiritual influences in one's pursuit of the virtuous life has also been discerned in the Greek traditions of Origen's time. Origen therefore seems to be drawing on these traditions, which have already been incorporated into the Christianity of his time.

The difference in the interpretation of the law of the members of Rom. 7:23 in his homilies and that in the *Commentary* or *De principiis* is significant. Whereas in the *Commentary* and in *De principiis* the law of the members is shown to be certain thoughts, passions, or desires that arise from the flesh that, in turn, bring the soul down to the level of the flesh, in the homilies, it is the Devil who brings forward these interior movements. Finally, it is also important to note that the active verbs ascribed to these thoughts, passions, and desires in the *Commentary* (e.g. see p. 184 above regarding *ComRom.* 6.9.10) mirror those found in the *Homilies* where the Devil is clearly on Origen's mind.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of Origen's readings of the *νόμος* phrases presented in this chapter is significant for the argument of this dissertation for four reasons. Firstly, the analysis demonstrates that Origen is taking recourse to Greek philosophical concepts common to many traditions when he is interpreting difficult passages in Scripture. This observation is not new, for many scholars have noted Origen's use of Greek philosophy in his exegesis, although this is a new insight in the context of the Rom. 7:21–8:2 debate over the proper interpretation of the *νόμος* phrases: Origen makes use of Greek thought when he needs to explicate these difficult phrases. Such a reading strongly suggests that Origen himself understands Paul as employing Greek concepts in his writings; according to Origen, a Greek philosophical toolkit therefore ought to be used to make sense of the Greek-inspired writing that is the Pauline corpus. An example of this is when we examined how 'the law of my mind' of Rom. 7:23 may be understood as the human mind's alignment with and assent to the natural law that permeates Creation (see *ComRom.* 5.6.4 above).

Secondly, the chapter, when read alongside the conclusions of the previous chapters, has added to the available extant data on Rom. 7:21–8:2 that there was no unanimous reading of the *νόμος* phrases in the pre-Nicene Church. Although there are similarities in some authors, not one author has the same reading as another for all of the *νόμος* phrases in Rom. 7:21–8:2. There are similarities between all of them for a few of the laws, such as understanding the Devil as being somehow involved in 'another law in my members' for Tertullian and Origen, or 'the law of my mind' being somehow connected to the natural law, but not one author reads *all* laws in the same manner as another.

Thirdly, Origen has shown more nuance and freedom in his interpretation. We have seen that he approaches the hostile phrases from various angles, and this has allowed him to stipulate that there might be two different hostile laws at work and a variety of factors are involved with them, such as bodily needs, passions and desires, the Devil, and bad habits. For Origen, there are *three* different laws at work in this section. The first is 'another law in my members' of Rom. 7:23a. This law is the desires and passions that a human being experiences for worldly things, but it can also be the Devil's temptations for these same things. The second law is 'the law of sin' and 'the law of sin and death', both being one law for Origen. This law is the bad habits, vices, and sins of a human being. These actions make the human being captive to fleshly existence and therefore hinder the human's progress towards God. The third law is 'the law of God' and 'the law of the Spirit', both also being one law for Origen. This is the divine reason, or Logos, which permeates all of Creation and is available to the human being through the natural law and revealed law. The human mind has access to it, and when it accepts it, it becomes 'the law of the mind' (Rom. 7:23a).

Finally, Origen's explicit naming of the Pauline 'I' as the persona of the weak and as paradigmatic of everyone who attempts to align his or her actions with the firm resolve of the will to do good is a developed way of looking at the 'I' in comparison to Tertullian, Clement, and Theodotus. Origen differs from the others because he explicitly approaches the issue and attempts to reconcile Paul's use of a 'weak' persona (stage character) with the fact that Paul was a holy and saintly 'Apostle of Christ'. Origen comes to the conclusion that Paul wanted to exemplify every human's experience of striving to be faithful to God's will. As for the other authors, although they do not engage with the question explicitly, the 'I' does not seem to pose a problem; the interpretation of these authors and their use of these verses demonstrate that they

see every Christian in Paul's 'I'. In this interpretation, there is unanimity amongst the pre-Nicene authors, perhaps the only firm unanimity across all of the authors studied in this dissertation. Having presented the four major findings in relation to Origen, it is now important to see how all of them fit together with one another.

Origen's reading through a Greek lens of the interplay of the laws in Rom. 7:21–8:2 and of the progressive growth in becoming spiritual offers the contemporary reader new insights into the Pauline text. Origen provides a profoundly ethical reading of this section of Romans. The weak persons described in this section of Romans, in Origen's mind, are those whose souls are still susceptible to the tugging of the body, and particularly the flesh, which is materially focused, while they have already committed themselves to lean towards the spirit and to live a virtuous life. The virtuous life was a staple in nearly every Greek philosophical school; Origen readily ascribes to it too. However, along with his fellow Greek philosophers, Origen is also keenly aware that conversion to the good is not the same as immediately doing the good from the moment of conversion. There is a gradual progression in becoming spiritual; the conversion of the will comes first and the subjection of the body to the converted will follows. The hostile laws that are still at work in the human at the moment of conversion are progressively addressed until they no longer exercise power over the human; for Origen, this perfectly spiritual state of the soul may perhaps only be reached after death.[69] The balance must be shifted from the body to the spirit, and this can only be done when the body is under the complete dominion of the soul and intense training in the virtues is needed in order for this to be accomplished. Romans 7:21–8:2—and arguably the larger section of Rom. 7:14–8:2—can therefore be understood as a

[69] As noted above on p. 167 (esp. fn. 39 and 40), Origen is not consistent on this view in his writings. However, he is consistent on the point that Jesus has always been in this state, hence his complete association with the Logos of God.

snapshot of the moment in a person's life in which the person has undergone a conversion towards the good and thus is in transit from a vicious life to a virtuous life. The situation is therefore one of hope; growth and progress in things spiritual is desired, although not yet fully attained. At the heart of Origen's discussions, then, is the mastery of the body through the virtues so that the body may be obedient to the soul and thus do the good that it desires.

This approach to conversion of both will and actions shows much creativity and originality in Origen's approach. We have seen that Origen's reading does not agree completely with any of the other ancient authors on the interpretation of all of the *νόμος* phrases, only partially. The first significant difference is in the number of laws that are active in this section of Romans for Origen. Whereas both Tertullian and Clement see two laws operative in Rom. 7:21–8:2,[70] Origen interprets three. As Roukema notes, and as has been seen in the nature of these laws for Origen, it is best to interpret these laws as principles (I would also here include internal/external forces or powers) rather than laws in the legal sense (such as the Law of Moses), for Origen is clearly not reading them as commandments, statutes, or ordinances from a law code.

There is nonetheless some overlap with the other authors regarding the meaning of these laws. On the one hand, Origen's reading of 'another law in my members' is very similar to that of Clement, who understands it to mean the passions, although he does not equate this law with 'the law of sin', as does Clement. On the other hand, Origen's reading is also similar to Tertullian's *vis* in the way he sees the activity of the Devil behind 'another law in my members'. Origen therefore offers a more nuanced reading, allowing for more than one principle to be

[70] Tertullian reads 'other law in my members', 'the law of sin', and 'the law of sin and death' as one law and 'the law of God', 'the law of my mind', and 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ' as one law. Clement has a similar reading of the hostile laws, whereas his reading of 'the law of God', 'the law of my mind', and 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ' is like that of Origen. For Tertullian and Clement on the *νόμος* phrases, see Chapter Two and Chapter Three.

behind the law of the members (he also speculates about the tugging of the bodily needs on the soul, a speculation also found in Clement's writings). This nuanced reading leads him to see two distinct hostile laws at work in Rom. 7:21–8:2. He reads 'another law in my members' of Rom. 7:23a as distinct from 'the law of sin' / 'the law of sin and death' (Rom. 7:23b, 25b; 8:2), the latter two which he understands to be the same law. Whereas Origen interprets 'another law in my members' to mean the inordinate desires and passions of the flesh and the tempting activity of the Devil, he interprets 'the law of sin' / 'the law of sin and death' to mean the practice or habit of committing particular sins, hence why he often modifies 'the law of sin' to 'the laws of sin' in this section (cf. *ComRom.* 6.9.12).

This two-law interpretation is significant because it allows him to paint a relatively complete picture of the dynamics of vice and sin. The hostile laws at work in the human, for Origen, are involved in both the interior (the influence of desires and passions and the Devil on the soul) and exterior (the sinful acts committed as a result of the interior movements) realities of sin. One reality feeds the other, and vice versa: the human being is caught in a vicious cycle of interior movements fuelling exterior actions and exterior actions fuelling interior movements until 'the law of the Spirit' frees it through progressive behavioural reform. Therefore, one of Origen's greatest contributions to the Rom. 7:21–8:2 debate is his investigation of a variety of factors involved in this vicious cycle.

There are many similarities between Origen's reading of the good laws and those of Clement and Tertullian. Although he is the only one who explicitly comments on 'the law of my mind' in his *Commentary*, his interpretation is remarkably similar to Clement's, as we have seen after analysing Clement's other writings (see pp. 106–08 in Chapter Two). As does Clement, Origen stipulates that 'the law of my mind' is the mind in its assent to 'the law of the Spirit of

life', which he also understands to be 'the law of God', that is, 'the natural law' that is accessible through the use of reason and through a spiritual interpretation of the Law of Moses. Origen is very close to Clement's interpretation of 'the law of the mind' and 'the law of God' as the prudent living out of the natural law in the human's life, as has been seen in *Strom.* 3.77.1 (see p. 99 in Chapter Two). The complete liberation from 'the law of sin and death' happens when the human being fully aligns his or her mind with 'the law of God'. This will result in a completely virtuous life, one that sets the soul free to contemplate God and thereby become spiritual. In this regard, Origen is also similar to Tertullian, who understands 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ' to be 'the integrity and plenitude of the rules of discipline' (*De pud.* 17, see p. 80). As such, the notion of self-discipline and a good life according to God's will is discerned across all three authors in relation to Rom. 8:2; Origen therefore continues this early Christian tradition.

These factors, the influence of the passions, the tugging of the bodily needs, the importance of the virtues, the influence of external spiritual entities (the Greek *daemon*), the natural law, and the mind's assent to the law of God find close parallels in many Greek philosophical schools of his day. The view that the passions and vices influence moral decision-making is found across all of the main Greek philosophical traditions of Origen's time, and he follows in the footsteps of his Alexandrian predecessors Philo and Clement in his employment of philosophical concepts to interpret difficult biblical texts, especially the Stoic-inspired concept of the divine Logos/mind permeating Creation and accessible to human beings in the form of the natural law.

The use of a Greek philosophical toolkit does not necessarily mean that Origen was following a particular Greek philosophical tradition, as Edwards argues convincingly.[71] In

[71] Edwards, *Origen against Plato*.

addition to these philosophical insights, Origen adds uniquely Christian concepts, such as personal conversion, the imitation of Christ as exemplifying a perfectly virtuous life, the authority of Scripture and revelation, and the activity of God's grace. In extra-biblical texts, the synthesis of Greek philosophy and revelation is already found in Philo and Justin Martyr, and in our authors Tertullian and Clement. Origen too joins this illustrious group by offering a unique approach to difficult biblical problems; he takes from Greek philosophy that which is useful and not contradictory to Scripture (for example, as seen above in *Princ.* 3.4.1) and combines it with revealed truth about God's activity in the world to produce something unique. Origen turns to the *νόμος* phrases in discussions on the struggle between the flesh and the spirit (*ComRom.* 4.8.3; 6.7.4; 6.12.10), the dominion or reign of sin over the flesh or body (included here is the language of 'captivity'; *ComRom.* 6.1.3-4, 9; 6.7.16), and the weakness of the flesh and its desires and passions (*ComRom.* 5.6.3-4; 6.1.3-4, 9; 6.7.4, 16, 18).

In conclusion, a number of these interpretations of the law phrases echo in different ways through the works of some contemporary Pauline scholars (see the Introduction). Origen's reading of the hostile phrases as two distinct laws gives support to the work of contemporary scholars, such as Matthew Croasmun, Joseph Fitzmyer, Heinrich Schlier, and Peter Stuhlmacher, who also discern two hostile laws at work in the Pauline text.[72] Still further, William Davies, James Dunn, Craig Keener, Heinrich Schlier, Hans-Joachim Schoeps, and Peter Stuhlmacher follow Origen's reading of 'another law in my members' as impulses, desires, or passions,

[72] See Croasmun, *The Emergence of Sin*, 140–49; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 476; Schlier, *Romani*, 388–89; Stuhlmacher, *Romani*, 138–41. Stuhlmacher, for example, proposes that 'another law in my members' is evil impulses whereas 'the law of sin' is the law given by sin, that is, everything that is opposite to God's Law (p. 141).

although they all use slightly different terminology.[73] Such a reading of Paul is not new in contemporary biblical studies, as a number of Pauline scholars see Paul making use of Greek philosophical concepts, such as important ethical terms (e.g. emotions, thoughts, passions, virtues, vices) in his writings.[74] Finally, it is surprising that no contemporary scholar reads 'the law of sin' with Origen as particular sins or vices or 'the law of God' and 'the law of my mind' as being connected to the natural law.[75] Now that we have analysed all four early Christian authors' writings on Rom. 7:21–8:2, it is opportune to offer some final conclusions and future directions to bring this work forward.

[73] Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 20–22; Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 481; Keener, *Romans*, 94–95, Schlier, *Romani*, 388–89; Schoeps, *The Theology of the Apostle*, 185; and Stuhlmacher, *Romani*, 138–41.

[74] Much ink has been spilled on the Greek philosophical influences behind Paul's writings. For strong Stoic threads in Paul's works, see Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000); Troels Engberg-Pedersen, 'Stoicism in the Apostle Paul: A Philosophical Reading,' in *Stoicism: Traditions and Transformations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Troels Engberg-Pedersen, 'A Stoic Concept of the Person in Paul? From Galatians 5:17 to Romans 7:14-25,' in *Christian Body, Christian Self: Concepts of Early Christian Personhood*, ed. Clare K Rothschild and Trevor W Thompson (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 85–112. For some Cynic threads in Paul's works, see Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989). For Middle Platonic threads in Paul's works, see Theo K. Heckel, *Der innere Mensch: die paulinische Verarbeitung eines platonischen Motivs*, WUNT 2.53 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993); Emma Wasserman, *The Death of the Soul in Romans 7: Sin, Death, and the Law in Light of Hellenistic Moral Psychology*, WUNT 2.256 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

[75] Some scholars interpret 'the law of sin' as simply 'sin' or 'indwelling sin', which is not necessarily the same thing. See p. 8 (fn. 21) in the Introduction.

Conclusion

This dissertation has explored the earliest uses and interpretations of selected verses or clauses from Romans 7:21–8:2. This passage, along with the broader text of Rom. 7:14–8:2, depicts the interior struggle of Paul, an Apostle of Christ, to live out God's will faithfully in his life. It is the struggle of one who has already committed his life to God and his Law *in intellectu* but has not yet fully put this commitment into practice *in re*. We have seen that only four early writers in our designated timeframe—within the first two centuries of the composition of the Epistle to the Romans—have referred to and commented on selected verses from this Pauline text. These were Tertullian, Theodotus the Valentinian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen. We have found that each one presented a slightly different understanding of the text; not one author interpreted the selected verses in the same way as any other author in the extant texts available to us. That being said, we have seen that there were also significant commonalities between them. I conclude the dissertation by first bringing together my arguments and contributions about these authors' uses and interpretations of selected verses from Rom. 7:21–8:2 in the light of the four driving issues presented in the Introduction: a) who did the early authors understand the 'I' to be? b) what meaning did the *νόμος* phrases have for them? c) to what extent did they use Greco-Roman thought when they approached this text? and finally, d) did they understand the influence of these hostile and beneficial laws to be internal or external? This will be followed by other insights gained from this research and a few comments on the direction of future research possibilities. I will conclude the dissertation with some final remarks about the project.

1. Who is the 'I' in the storm?[1]

Much emphasis has been placed on the identity of the 'I' in Rom. 7:14–8:2 in contemporary scholarship. This has highlighted the fact that finding out the identity of the 'I' has been a very pressing matter in Pauline studies. For example, in his commentary on Romans, Douglas Moo devotes no fewer than nine pages to a discussion on the identity of the 'I', by far the most pages on any topic in this section of Romans.[2] Others, such as Michael Middledorf, have written monographs on just this topic (see his monograph *The 'I' in the Storm: A Study of Romans 7* (St. Louis: Concordia Academic, 1997)). The analysis of the earliest authors who have engaged with this text has shown that the identity of the 'I' was not an issue at all for them, apart from Origen's comments in his commentary, but there he made it a point to comment on nearly every aspect of the Epistle. I have shown in this dissertation that Tertullian, Theodotus, Clement, and Origen all had a *both … and* approach to the 'I'. For them, the 'I' was *both* Paul *and* everyone else who has made a commitment to follow God's Law. We have seen that Tertullian, Clement, and Origen used 'the Apostle' to speak of the one whose 'I' it is in the text, while also using third person singular pronouns to refer back to the subject, which, again, was 'the Apostle' Paul (always found in the vicinity of their use of and comments on selected verses from Rom. 7:21–8:2). Furthermore, I have demonstrated that their use of these verses clearly showed that their comments referred to everyone, and not just Paul. Similarly, Theodotus explicitly named Paul in the short paragraph studied by him, and the analysis he provided of Rom. 7:23a showed that the Pauline text was applicable to all those who have bodies and souls, and who were struggling to put their hylic bodies under the

[1] This section's title is inspired by the clever title of Michael Paul Middendorf's monograph *The 'I' in the Storm: A Study of Romans 7* (St. Louis: Concordia Academic, 1997).

[2] Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 424–27 and then again in 443–51.

control of their soulish bodies. Finally, Origen, the only author who explicitly commented on the identity of the 'I', came to the conclusion that Paul was putting on 'the persona of the weak' (*ComRom.* 6.9.1) in these verses in order to instruct and encourage his audience. It was a pedagogical tool—in which he included himself—that was meant to persuade everyone to practice self-discipline.[3] Where Origen used Rom. 7:21–8:2 outside of his *Commentary*, he did not make any explicit comments about the identity of the 'I'. As the other three authors, Origen simply understood Paul to be writing about himself and everyone else, and this was evident from the context and from how he used the verses or clauses.

In addition to the 'I' being paradigmatic for all four authors, I have also shown that there was no concern shown by the authors about the baptised or non-baptised status of the 'I' and whether baptism somehow impacted on the ability of the 'I' to fulfil God's Law. The way in which they used the verses showed that the interior struggle that Paul and others underwent was constant and always applied to everyone, whether they were baptised or not. Some contemporary scholars hold that the 'I' refers to either Jews or pagans (or both) before they believed in Christ.[4] This is because, as the logic goes, that had they been baptised, they would have been able to fulfil God's Law as a result of receiving the Holy Spirit, who would have helped them. As such, the *ἀκρασία* that Paul displays would have been a pre-baptism

[3] For Origen, no one was without sin except Christ, so Paul would have shared the same struggles as others, not being exempt from them simply because he was an Apostle. See pp. 167–68 in Chapter Three (esp. fn. 39 and 40).

[4] See, for example, Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 443–48, wherein he proposes that the 'I' is 'the unregenerate person' (p. 447), especially Paul and other Jews still living under the Law and before embracing Christianity. Similar opinions are held by Charles H. Talbert, *Romans*, SHBC (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 191–92, 204-04, and Craig S. Keener, *Romans: A New Covenant Commentary*, NCCS (Cambridge: Lutterworth, 2009), 85–97, both of whom note that those who have not been baptised and received the Holy Spirit are still living according to the flesh and have not received the power of the Holy Spirit to be free from the 'law of sin and death'. They see both Jew and Gentile in this 'I'. Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, tr. Patricia Dailey, Meridian (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 107–08, Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, ed. Eldon Jay Epp, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 456, and Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, tr. G.W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 205, however, emphasise the Jewish identity of the 'I'.

phenomenon. This has not been the case in our four authors. There, baptism did not come up and all are still susceptible to *ἀκρασία* and to the possibility of sinning. Otto Michel beautifully captures this dynamic in his commentary on Romans: 'the Christian becomes threatened and shaken again and again by this human need in his fleshly existence and in his struggle with the enduring demand of God. Since the Christian existence does not consist in the abolition of the situation of Romans 7:7-25, but in its knowledge and in overcoming it, our section has to direct its service to the baptised person as well.'[5] Like Michel many years later, the authors simply did not take any issue with the baptised/non-baptised status of the 'I' in any way. The fact that this is consistent across all authors may support the argument that this is how this part of Romans was interpreted in both the Greek- and Latin-speaking communities in the first two centuries after the Epistle was written.

A significant contribution of these findings to scholarship today is that these findings give greater weight to contemporary authors, such as Michel, who extend the 'I' to be applicable to everyone, whether baptised or not, rather than to certain groups, such as Jews under the Law before believing in Christ, as proposed by Moo, for example.[6] This is important because reading the text in this way—that the 'I' is applicable to everyone—makes the text applicable to Christians and non-Christians alike. The four early authors maintained that Christians cannot deny the fact that they too are still struggling to remain faithful to the Law of God every day. Baptism was not a ritual that made them immune to temptation and weakness once and for all. Furthermore, the findings contribute to scholarship by reminding contemporary readers not to focus excessively on the identity of the 'I' because this was not the most urgent issue that Paul was trying to convey in this section of Romans.

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[5] My translation. Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 5th ed., KEK 4.14 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 239.

[6] Moo, *Epistle to the Romans,* 425–27 and 447–48. Moo proposes that the 'I' is autobiographical and includes Jews living under the Law before they embrace Christianity.

2. Early interpretations of the *νόμος* phrases in Romans 7:21–8:2

Unlike the unanimity in the understanding of the 'I' as paradigmatic, the interpretation of the *νόμος* phrases was shown not to be unanimous across the four authors, although some agreement was seen. That being said, all authors did have *one* thing in common: not one of them interpreted *νόμος* in the *νόμος* phrases of Rom. 7:21–8:2 to refer to the Law of Moses, the Torah. This is in stark contrast to the interpretations of most contemporary scholars, such as Beverly Gaventa, who interpret the beneficial *νόμος* phrases as the Law of Moses and the hostile *νόμος* phrases as a twisted and corrupted version of the Law of Moses due to the indwelling of sin in the individual.[7] The four authors studied here had very different understandings of the *νόμος* phrases. The Torah was not on our four authors' minds when they turned to these passages. Rather, they understood these phrases to be related to right or wrong action—ethics—and therefore to behaviour that leads to salvation. The following are the findings of the dissertation regarding the early authors' interpretations of the meaning of the beneficial *νόμος* phrases and the hostile *νόμος* phrases.

The beneficial νόμος *phrases: 'the Law of God', 'the law of my mind', and 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ'*

The four authors studied in this dissertation did not all refer to or comment on all the beneficial laws found in Rom. 7:21–8:2. Tertullian referred to 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ' (Rom. 8:2) once and interpreted it to mean 'the integrity and plenitude of the rules of discipline' (*De pud.* 17). Theodotus did not refer to any of the beneficial phrases in his extant

[7] Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *Romans: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2024), 215–16.

writings as found in the *Excerpts from Theodotus*. Regarding 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ' of Rom. 8:2, Clement simply quoted the Pauline text without offering any commentary. Regarding 'the Law of God' and 'the law of my mind', however, we found a fascinating interpretation offered by both Clement and Origen, especially when we read their comments in the light of their other writings. The Alexandrians both read the phrases in a very similar way, and this has been shown to be largely inspired by Philo. Both authors understood 'the Law of God' to mean the natural law, that is, God's reason-Logos and will for Creation, as active in and sustaining all things. Origen also equated 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ' with 'the Law of God'. Finally, 'the law of my mind' was interpreted in the same way by the two Alexandrians. They understood it to be the mind insofar as it agreed with 'the Law of God', and this is where we found an indirect and loose connection between the Law of Moses and the Law of God. The Law of Moses was understood as that part of the natural law that applied to humans. These teachings about the natural law and the Law of Moses were not found in the vicinity of their comments on Rom. 7:21–8:2 for Clement but rather in other writings not related to this section of Romans 7–8.

These findings are also very different from the interpretations of the beneficial *νόμος* phrases of contemporary scholars. Most today would understand 'the Law of God' to refer to the Law of Moses (such as, for example, the aforementioned Gaventa), whereas 'the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ' would be understood as a way to live the Christian life inspired and impelled by the Spirit, flowing from the teachings and example of Jesus.[8] The natural law does not come into today's scholarly discussions in the context of Rom. 7:21–8:2, apart from a brief comment (with no further elaboration) by Michel,[9] whereas it is fascinating to see that

[8] See, for example, Talbert, *Romans*, 203–08, who explains that living according to the Spirit is allowing the power of the Spirit, who dwells in the person, to orient the person towards God, who is the person's ultimate concern.

[9] Michel, *Römer*, 245, maintains that *νόμος* in this section refers to the Law of Moses, although, 'if applied to all people, the Law would also encompass natural law' (my translation).

two of our authors had this in mind, while the third, Tertullian, had a life of self-discipline in mind, which may be argued is very much a part of living properly according to the natural law (given Tertullian's leanings towards the Stoics, this would have been a safe assumption).[10] According to these authors, then, that which frees the human from the bonds of the hostile *νόμος* phrases is an ordered and disciplined life according to God's reason or will for Creation.[11] Christ was the ultimate liberator because he taught his followers how to fight temptation and live a sinless life. This was the example to follow, and by doing so, one was able to reach some form of liberation, which every author realised was not fully possible in this life.

The hostile νόμος *phrases: 'another law in my members', 'the law of sin', and 'the law of sin and death'*

We have seen that there was some agreement amongst our authors as to the meaning of these hostile *νόμος* phrases. Not one author agreed wholly with another, but there was nonetheless some overlap. Tertullian, Clement, and Origen all saw the Devil to a certain extent behind the temptations of the mind, which pulled the human away from the Law of God. Tertullian referred to 'another law in my members' of Rom. 7:23a as a sort of *vis* 'power' which could convince the human to sin against God (*Res. mort.* 51). Through the analysis of other

[10] See John M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: A Study of Platonism, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220*, rev. ed., CLL (London: Duckworth, 1996), 80–81, where he outlines the doctrine of the natural law in Middle Platonists, such as Antiochus of Ascalon, and the inseparable connection between the natural law and upright moral living (see esp. p. 81: the natural law 'as a pricking of the consciences of the best members of the human race, which tells them what they and all others must do').

[11] On the natural law and Divine Reason in Creation, Dillon writes: 'The Natural Law, then, not only binds man to man, but man to God. … This 'highest reason' is simply the Logos working in nature; but there is the necessary implication that the Logos is a moral force, at least in its subjective aspect, in the minds of men. It commands patriotism, for instance, and forbids rape (Antiochus, *Leg.* 11.10)' (Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 80–81).

passages by Tertullian, we saw that we were able to equate this *vis* with the irrational element present in the soul, placed there by the Devil (esp. *De an.* 16). Clement referred to this first law in Rom. 7:23a as the inordinate thoughts, desires, and passions that pull the human away from the contemplation of God (*Strom.* 3.77.1, 4.40.2, and 7.44.7). These too, Clement reasoned, could be influenced by the Devil, but not always (*Paed.* 3.5.4 and *passim*). Origen too understood 'another law in my members' to be the thoughts and desires of the mind, which pull the body to 'the works of the flesh' and keep the body at the fleshly level rather than help it rise to the spiritual level (*ComRom.* 6.9.11-12 and *Princ.* 3.4.4-5). As with Tertullian and Clement, the Devil was also sometimes behind these movements for Origen (*HomJos.* 22.2-3).

We saw that the interpretations diverged when we came to 'the law of sin'. For Tertullian, it simply meant 'sin', the evil irrational element in the soul. For Clement, it was the same as 'another law in my members'. For Origen, however, it was sinful behaviours, or vices, which maintained the human being in sin (*ComRom*. 6.7.16, 6.10.2, and *Princ.* 3.4.5). This was also how Origen understood 'the law of sin and death' (Rom. 8:2), as a sinful life inevitably resulted in death. Unfortunately, the other three authors did not comment on this *νόμος* phrase.

The major contribution of this dissertation regarding the ongoing debate about the meaning of the *νόμος* phrases is that it shows that the four authors did not consider the legal meaning of *νόμος* when they used or commented on the hostile *νόμος* phrases. In fact, in some cases, the word *νόμος* was altogether removed and replaced with something else (e.g. Clement's replacement of 'another law in my members' with 'indwelling sin' in *Strom.* 3.76.4-77.1). This reading of the phrases is different from authors, such as Barrett and

Gaventa,[12] for example, who understand the phrases to refer to a warped or corrupted understanding of the Law of Moses, or still, Anders Nygren, who understands the hostile laws to be the Torah which points out sin and exposes our guiltiness before God.[13] Their readings were closer to those of scholars, such as Michel, who interpret it at as 'some foreign power that is quite felt, tangible',[14] Joseph Fitzmyer and Moo, who see it as indwelling sin or concupiscence, the inner pull towards sin,[15] or Matthew Croasmun, who interprets Paul as referring to a societal external reality (i.e. the social dynamics of sin, in other words), pressing down on him to force him to commit sin.[16] Due to these early authors' focus on non-legal matters, but rather on external evil forces and internal tendencies towards worldly realities, these findings will encourage scholars to shift their investigations towards similar writings. Focusing on spiritual and mental struggles in other Pauline texts as well as other early Christian texts will open up Rom. 7:21–8:2 to further studies in spirituality (spiritual combat) or psychology (the mental processes that hold the person captive or that free the person).

3. Greco-Roman thought and Romans 7:21–8:2

The four authors studied in this dissertation were all shown to employ Greco-Roman philosophical concepts either when they used selected verses from Rom. 7:21–8:2 as proof

[12] See C.K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, rev. ed., BNTC 6 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 149–50, and Gaventa, *Romans*, 215.

[13] Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, tr. Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 293–303.

[14] Michel, *Römer*, 238.

[15] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 476; Moo, *Epistle to the Romans,* 463–64.

[16] Regarding the hostile phrases in Rom. 7:21-23, Croasmun writes: 'there is an experience of conflict between the true self—the "innermost self"—and this foreign presence that invades through the members, through the flesh, the material interface with the larger Body of Sin.' See Matthew Croasmun, *The Emergence of Sin: The Cosmic Tyrant in Romans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 131–32 (quote from p. 132).

texts or when they commented on them. Tertullian made use of a selection of verses from Rom. 7:21–8:2 seven times when he was arguing for the goodness of the human body. In these arguments (e.g. *Adv. Marc.* V.14, as analysed in Chapter One), he employed the metaphysical categories of Aristotle when he demonstrated that substances and accidents are not the same, and that sin was an accident rather than an innate part of the substance of the body. He used Rom. 7:23a in order to show that there was a foreign entity in the substance of the flesh, namely, sin, and that this entity was not supposed to be there. He found it helpful to emphasise that 'sin' was accidental and could be removed, thereby demonstrating that God created the flesh innocent, without sin. In another reference to Rom. 7:23a (*Res. mort*. 51), Tertullian mentioned a power, a *vis*, which was able to bend the human will to its sinful will. We examined other writings of Tertullian (esp. *De an*. 16), which showed how he used Stoic concepts of interpenetration of substances to describe how the finer spiritual bodies of good or evil spirits penetrated the heavier body of the human soul and thus influenced them.

We also saw Greco-Roman thought in one excerpt from the writings of the Gnostic Theodotus (*Exc.* 52.1). He too was freely using Greek metaphysical language when he described the natures of the different parts of the human, as well as how each part interacted with the other. The interpenetration of different bodies, or substances, in Theodotus' writings was very similar to that of Tertullian and exhibited Stoic ideas of different gradients of bodily density. In the context of describing how the hylic body received the soul, he used Rom. 7:23a to show how the hylic body fought against the soul, tempting it to become fleshly/hylic, and it was up to the soul to master it through self-discipline.

Clement too heavily employed Greco-Roman concepts in his use of Rom. 7:22-23. He interpreted 'another law in my members' and 'the law of sin' to be the passions and desires of the human, which pull him or her away from the contemplation of God (esp. in *Strom.* 4.40.2). These need to be mastered in order for the human to reach and remain in a

contemplative state. Still further, Clement was inspired by the Stoic concepts of the natural law (via the writings of Philo) when he used 'the Law of God' and 'the law of my mind' (*Strom*. 3.77.1). We were able to delve deeper into the significance of his modification of Rom. 7:23a when we analysed other texts by Clement, which gave us a fuller understanding of his thoughts on the natural law and *φρόνησις*, a word that he inserted into Rom. 7:23a. Clement held that *φρόνησις* is the faculty of the soul which enables right living according to the natural law (e.g. *Strom.* 6.154.4).

Finally, we also saw that Origen took recourse to Greek thought when he interpreted the *νόμος* phrases. His readings were very close to Clement's, that is, he understood 'another law in my members' to be inordinate thoughts, passions, and desires, especially for material things which pull the human away from heavenly things. He differed from the other three authors in his interpretation of 'the law of sin', which he understood as vices and bad habits, that is, the natural result of the human giving into the first hostile law ('another law in my members), his or her inordinate thoughts. This is a profoundly Greek understanding of anthropology and ethics, and Origen thought it best to use such concepts when analysing the Pauline text. His approach to 'the Law of God' and to 'the law of my mind' was in the tradition of Philo and Clement, where the natural law was God's Law and it was up to the human mind to grasp it and live according to it.

In summary, I have contributed to scholarship by demonstrating that all early authors took recourse to Greco-Roman thought in various arguments in which selected verses or clauses from Rom. 7:21–8:2 appeared. A significant number of scholars in contemporary scholarship discern Greco-Roman thought behind the Pauline text, and thus the findings of

this dissertation will encourage scholars to read the text in the light of Middle Platonism, as, for example Emma Wasserman has done in her monograph.[17]

The early authors addressed pressing issues in the Christian community or regarding core Christian beliefs with the help of Greco-Roman thought, which ranged from metaphysics, to cosmology, to ethics. They would often bring in Scripture which largely served as a proof text for their principal arguments in order to give these philosophical arguments more authority. This contribution emphasises the fact that all early extant writers who wrote on this part of Romans 7 were taking recourse to commonly-used Middle Platonist notions as aids to interpret or use the Pauline text. Reading Paul without philosophy, that is, by only looking at his writings through the lens of other biblical texts (whether Jewish or Christian), was not the practice of the earliest extant readers.

These findings support the work of contemporary scholars, such as Emma Wasserman and Troels Engberg-Pedersen, who also did not shy away from delving into Middle Platonism when interpreting Romans 7–8.[18] As such, it highlights the fact that it is impossible to read Paul, and Romans in this case, without taking the intellectual milieu of his time seriously. The fact that all took recourse to Greco-Roman concepts strongly suggests that this was the accepted, or normal, way of reading Paul during this time, possibly going back to a tradition begun by the first audience of the Epistle.

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[17] Emma Wasserman, *The Death of the Soul in Romans 7: Sin, Death, and the Law in Light of Hellenistic Moral Psychology*, WUNT 2.256 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

[18] Troels Engberg-Pedersen has written much on the philosophical traditions present in the writings on Paul. His most relevant work for this dissertation's focus on Romans 7–8 would be: 'A Stoic Concept of the Person in Paul? From Galatians 5:17 to Romans 7:14-25,' in *Christian Body, Christian Self: Concepts of Early Christian Personhood*, ed. Clare K Rothschild and Trevor W Thompson (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 85–112. Emma Wasserman's masterful study also highlights the strong Middle Platonic threads in Romans 7–8: *The Death of the Soul in Romans 7*. Reading Paul without the recourse to philosophical traditions of his day is simply not an option for these authors. This seems to have been the case for our four early authors too.

4. Internal or external influences on human agency and Romans 7:21–8:2

The last issue that was raised in the Introduction regarding Romans 7:21c8:2 was whether the early authors understood these beneficial and hostile laws to be internal or external realities, or both. Only two authors—Tertullian and Origen—explicitly commented on whether these are internal or external realities when using selected verses from Rom. 7:21–8:2 or when commenting on them, although an exploration of other writings by these authors related to the different elements found in Rom. 7:21–8:2, such as free will, human agency, sin, and freedom, showed that all authors understood that there were both internal and external forces at work on the individual. Tertullian wrote extensively about the bad influences of bad communities on the upbringing and moral formation of the human being (see, for example, his work *De spectaculis*), while also putting great emphasis on the ultimate responsibility and accountability of the individual when he or she stands judged before God (e.g. *Res. mort.* 14).

Clement (e.g. *Paed.* 3.22) and Origen (e.g. *De or.* 15) also wrote about how bad communal customs influence the knowledge one has access to, and this influences one's moral decisions. Ignorance of the truth results in bad behaviour, whereas knowledge of the truth opens up the possibility for the human being to reform his or her life (e.g. Clement's *Paed.* 1.29.4–30.1). The Alexandrians emphasised the need for good teachers who would be able to guide the novice Christ-follower through the different stages of formation, from ignorance to knowledge, and from vice to virtue (e.g. Clement's *Strom.* 5.83.1 and Origen's *ComRom.* 6.9.10). They all recognised that in the end, it is the individual who had to make the decision and follow through with it, and this took much self-discipline. For them, the will could easily commit to God, but it was the practice that needed continual work and self-mastery. A good and healthy community would greatly help in this matter, while an evil

community would further maintain the individual in ignorance of the truth and in sinful behaviours.

All four authors held that external spiritual forces were also partly responsible for moving the individual to evil actions, through the influence of thoughts, desires, and passions for worldly things. Tertullian (*Res. mort.* 51), Theodotus (*Exc.* 52.1) and Origen (*HomJos.* 22.3-6) explicitly mentioned these realities when they commented on Rom. 7:23 whereas Clement mentioned them elsewhere (e.g. *Paed.* 3.5.4), not in connection to any verses from Rom. 7:21–8:2. Although evil spirits were partly responsible for these temptations, the authors were very clear in their writings that they were not solely responsible for sin in the individual because each individual has free will and ultimately decides his or her fate.

These findings led to the conclusion that both internal and external realities were responsible for inhibiting free human agency, especially when seeking to live according to God's will. This understanding of the influence of external realities bodes well with apocalyptic Paul scholarship, where the individual is in the midst of a cosmic struggle between this evil age (whether ruled by the Devil or by evil people) and the individual, who is part of the emerging Kingdom of God. Given what has been studied in this dissertation, it can be said that the early authors would have been very much at home with today's apocalyptic Paul scholarship. Like Paul, they were living in a time of Roman rule, and this was very often characterised by anti-Gospel and values that needed to be resisted, which would have given rise to anti-Empire sentiments.[19]

This dissertation contributes to contemporary scholarship's discussion by demonstrating that the earliest readers of Romans 7–8 also saw the individual in constant

[19] Susan Grove Eastman's essay highlights this element well in Romans and in the Christian community in the first century CE very well. See 'The "Empire of Illusion": Sin, Evil, and Good News in Romans,' in *Comfortable Words: Essays in Honor of Paul F.M. Zahl*, ed. John D. Koch and Todd H.W. Brewer (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 3–21.

struggle against external forces, especially anti-Gospel values promoted by society. Works by authors, such as Douglas Campbell, Croasmun, and Gaventa find support in these early authors' interpretations of Paul, especially selected verses from Rom. 7:21–8:2. The research highlights the fact that the Pauline Epistle must be read in the context of the community's struggles against the larger Roman society and against other cosmic spiritual forces and that the individual is always enmeshed in this struggle. This will encourage scholars to pursue future research on Romans, especially chapters 7–8, in the light of these external forces, and not solely focus on the individual's own power and resolve to embrace the faith and follow Christ alone, as if he or she were not affected by anything or anyone around him or her. External forces were always at play, as the early authors have demonstrated very frequently throughout their writings. The poet John Donne captured this dynamic beautifully in his work *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*: 'No man is an *Iland*, intire of it selfe; every man is a peece of the *Continent*, a part of the *maine*' (Meditation 17).[20]

5. We all have favourites: Romans 7:23a and 8:2 as go-to passages

A significant contribution to Pauline scholarship of Rom. 7:21–8:2 was the realisation that some verses stood out much more than others for the early authors. This matters for contemporary scholarship because it highlights what the earliest readers were struck by in the Pauline text. The most frequently referred to verses by far were Rom. 7:23 and 8:2, and often simply the clauses containing the *νόμος* phrases in Rom. 7:23 and 8:2. As has already been noted, their importance was not for their legal aspects or for pondering the identity of the 'I', as some contemporary scholars maintain, but for the depiction of the struggle between that

[20] John Donne, *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, ed. John Sparrow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923), 98.

which was worldly and that which was spiritual. The hostile *νόμος* phrases represented everything that brought the individual down to the level of the flesh, his or her thoughts, desires, passions, cravings, and so on, whereas the mind represented that part of the human which desired to be pure and to seek God.

For the field of early Christian hermeneutics and reception history, this contributes by shedding light on the most pressing concerns that early authors faced and how this affected their exegesis. All four authors lived and wrote in times of trouble for Christians and Gnostics. In the brief notes of introduction to each author (See the Introduction, Section 4), we have seen that their communities were persecuted, which would have resulted in a much sterner approaches to their faith. Still further, the polemical nature of their writings also displayed struggles with other religious groups. As such, it is no surprise that the favourite verses from this passage was related to struggle (Rom. 7:23) and liberation (Rom. 8:2). This emphasis on struggle was found to be different from what the emphasis is in today's scholarship.

Another important observation was that the authors tended to use these clauses as a response to other biblical texts or philosophical issues, as proof texts, rather than comment on them for their own sake (apart from Origen in his *Commentary*, of course). These verses (Rom. 7:23 and 8:2) or clauses containing the *νόμος* phrases were go-to texts for bigger conversations about sin, the nature of the human being (anthropology: the body, soul, and spirit), and ethics, rather than being the focus or the driving text for such discussions.

We have also seen how certain other biblical passages provoked the use of especially Rom. 7:23. In Tertullian, Paul's 'works of the flesh' from Gal. 5:19-21 and 'flesh and blood will not inherit the Kingdom of God' (1 Cor. 15:50) prompted Tertullian to turn to Rom. 7:23 (*Adv. Marc.* V.10 and V.14). Other passages from Romans also triggered the use of Rom. 7:23, especially Rom. 8:3 and the discussion on accident and substance (*Adv. Marc*. V.14,

Res. mort. 16). There were some similarities and differences between Tertullian and Clement in this matter. Clement thought of Rom. 7:23 when he was considering the interior struggle to fight off inordinate thoughts and passions (*Strom.* 4.40.2 and 7.44.7), whereas Clement also turned to Rom. 7:23 when he had to demonstrate that sin was an unnatural part of God's Creation (*Strom.* 3.77.1, prompted by Rom. 7:17-18; a similar argument to Tertullian's substance/accident argument, albeit without the use of these Aristotelian terms). In these texts from the *Stromateis*, Clement turned to Rom. 7:23 when he reflected on two Beatitudes that he was using to illustrate a calm and peaceful mind ('Blessed are the pure in heart' and 'Blessed are the peacemakers', Matt. 5:8-9).

Theodotus was concerned with using biblical texts that depicted the Devil, or any imagery that displayed active resistance and opposition to God and that which is spiritual. As such, in the short text of *Exc*. 52.1, Theodotus referred to the 'adversary' in Matt. 5:25, the 'strong man' in Matt. 12:29, the 'weeds' in Matt. 13:25 and more explicit language related to the Devil (the 'Serpent' of Gen. 3:15 and 49:17, the 'seed of the Devil of Jn 8:44). All of these were meant to represent the carnal element which ceaselessly assaults the soul in order to keep it at the physical level. His reference to Rom. 7:23, then, was helpful to illustrate this very dynamic in the most clear and evident manner: a physical reality assaults a non-physical reality. The verse would have crystallised this dynamic perfectly due to the convenient presence of both elements in one verse.

Finally, Origen also referred to Rom. 7:23 when he discussed interior struggles against temptation. This was stimulated by a variety of other biblical passages, each depicting some struggle which Origen then also saw allegorically depicted in Rom. 7:23. For example, we have analysed *HomJos.* 22 in Chapter Three, wherein warring elements, such as the Israelites against the Canaanites or against the Egyptians, were seen as 'another law in my members' making war against the mind (Rom. 7:23).

In short, the dissertation has demonstrated that the most important aspect of Rom. 7:21–8:2 for the earliest readers of this text was that of struggle between good and evil (whether the goodness of the flesh struggling with the accident of sin or the mind struggling with temptations). The struggle between good and evil in each person is a profoundly ethical and soteriological concept because its outcome influences a person's behaviour, which, in turn, impacts on a person's salvation because human beings will be accountable before God for their actions. Thus, the four authors studied here made use of the struggle depicted in Rom. 7:23 to emphasise this on-going battle that needs to be fought, for salvation is at stake.

These findings would contribute to a shift in emphasis in today's scholarship of Romans 7:21–8:2 in a similar way that we have already seen above, that is, to place greater emphasis on the struggle dynamic of the text as being most relevant for the reader, as it is this aspect that is relevant to the reader's own life, which is also no doubt *not* struggle-free. It also lends more weight to other passages of struggle in the Pauline corpus, where similar passages may shed light on each other. For example, reading Rom. 7:21–8:2 in the light of Eph. 6:10 and vice versa may be tremendously beneficial.

6. Future directions of the study of Romans 7:21–8:2

The study of these four early authors has been a first big step in the study of the reception history of Rom. 7:21–8:2, although there is more to be done, especially with the writings of Origen. The first major project to follow this should be a study on Origen's 67 references to selected verses from Rom. 7:21–8:2, a task that was too great for this dissertation. Although Origen was very consistent in his interpretation and use of these verses, a more thorough study of the other references not mentioned in this dissertation would nonetheless be beneficial to bring out further nuance in his other writings.

Another worthy follow-up project would be to trace the development of hermeneutical traditions of Rom. 7:21–8:2, especially of the *νόμος* phrases, in the Greek, Latin, and Syriac traditions following the boom in biblical commentaries across the early Christian world. Great biblical commentators, such as Jerome and Augustine, left a lasting mark on the Latin Church's reading of Romans 7–8, whereas the Cappadocian Fathers did likewise in the Greek Church. Ephrem and his commentaries and homilies on Scripture had a similar impact on the Syriac-speaking communities. What was their reading of these verses like? How did it influence subsequent commentaries and doctrines that emerged? Therefore, this dissertation has opened the doors for further research in the reception history of Romans, especially chapters 7 and 8, so that subsequent projects may continue to build on this research to continue to enrich our understanding of one of Paul's most important epistles.

7. Liberated by the Spirit: Concluding remarks

Whilst the title of this dissertation has been 'Liberated by the Spirit from the Law of Sin and Death: Pre-Nicene Christian Writers on *νόμος* "Law" in Romans 7:21–8:2', the reader will have noticed that there was surprisingly very little in the early authors concerning Rom. 8:2 and the liberating power of the 'law of the Spirit of life in Jesus Christ'. Instead, the focus of our early writers was predominantly on the current struggle in which each person finds him- or herself. Even the liberating work of 'the law of the Spirit' is full of struggle, as for those authors who commented on it, 'the law of the Spirit' meant *more* self-discipline and self-mastery, albeit now firmly rooted in imitating the perfect example of self-discipline, Jesus Christ. This liberation cannot fully be reached in this life, as our authors readily admitted; indeed, complete freedom from sin and death was only possible for Jesus Christ in this world. Everyone else follows behind and always falls short, whether by much or by little. The path

of liberation is nonetheless worthwhile, as it aligns the life of a Christian with God's will, which, in itself is beneficial because it enables the human being to be truly free of any constraints on the free exercise of the will caused by sin and the bondage that comes with it. In this regard, I leave Origen with the final word:

> I will say a little in order to make it clear that his (Celsus') remark about uniting every rational being under one law is not only possible but even true … at some time the Logos will have overcome the entire rational nature, and will have remodelled every soul to his own perfection, when each individual simply by the exercise of his freedom will choose what the Logos wills and will be in that state which he has chosen. (*Cels.* 8.72)[21]

[21] Origen and Henry Chadwick, *Origen:* Contra Celsum*. Translated with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Chadwick*, reprinted with corrections (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965).

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