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NEW TESTAMENT TRADITIONS AND APOCRYPHAL NARRATIVES

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François Bovon

Translated by

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FOREWORD

At the beginning of this foreword, I wish to thank Ms. Jane Haapiseva-Hunter, who translated these articles with distinction, tenacity and precision. She has spared neither her time nor her energy and I assure her of my deep gratitude.

I also express my thankfulness to the Ernst and Lucie Schmidheiny Foundation of Vesenaz in Geneva, who underwrote the translation of these articles. In particular, it gave the necessary courage to undertake the task.

Professor Dikran Y. Hadidian, Director of Pickwick Publications, also deserves our warm thanks. His interest in this book, as in French language theology, goes back several years. I thank him for including this volume of articles in one of his collections.

I would like to thank three associates from Harvard University who helped me by proofreading the manuscript: Marianne Bonz, Beverly Kienzle, and David Warren. They solved some remaining translation problems and provided me with the best English phrasing for several portions which I had revised.

For this volume I have chosen a series of studies which correspond with my main fields of research, Luke-Acts and Christian apocryphal literature, though not neglecting Paul's epistles and the later works of the New Testament. Readers will not hold it against me, I hope, that I did not bring these studies up to date. As they stand, they reflect the state of my research at various times. I have attempted, nevertheless, to follow recent publications on both the work of Luke and the Christian apocryphal literature, and to appraise and in some cases interpret them.* As an author, I hope that their translation into English will generate some reaction.

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*For example, "Studies in Luke-Acts: Retrospect and Prospect," *HThR* 85 (1992) 175-196.

FIRST PUBLICATIONS

1. "Une formule prépaulinienne dans l'épître aux Galates (Gal 1,4-5)," *Paganisme, Judaïsme, Christianisme. Influence et affrontements dans le monde antique. Mélanges offerts à Marcel Simon* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1978) 97-107.

2. "L'homme nouveau et la loi chez l'apôtre Paul," *Die Mitte des Neuen Testaments. Einheit und Vielfalt neutestamentlicher Theologie. Festschrift für Eduard Schweizer* (ed. U. Luz and H. Weder; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1983) 22-33.

3. "Le Saint-Esprit, l'Eglise et les relations humaines selon Actes 20,36-21,16," *Les Actes des Apôtres. Traditions, rédaction théologie* (BEThL 48; ed. J. Kremer; Gembloux: J. Duculot and Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1979) 339-58.

4. " 'Schön hat der heilige Geist durch den Propheten Jesaja zu euren Vätern gesprochen' (Act 28,25)," *ZNW* 75 (1984) 226-32.

5. "L'importance des médiations dans le projet théologique de Luc," *NTS* 21 (1974-75) 23-39.

6. "Le Dieu de Luc," *La parole de grâce. Etudes lucaniennes à la memoire d'Augustin George* (ed. J. Delorme and J. Duplacy; Paris: Recherches de science religieuse, 1981) 279-300 (= *RSR* 69 [1981] 279-300).

7. "Israel, die Kirche und die Völker im lukanischen Doppelwerk," *ThLZ* 108 (1983) 403-14.

8. "Effet de réel et flou prophétique dans l'oeuvre de Luc," *A cause de l'Evangile. Etudes sur les Synoptiques et les Actes offertes au P. Jacques Dupont, O.S.B.* (LeDiv 123; Paris: Cerf, 1985) 349-59.

9. "Connaissance et expérience de Dieu selon le Nouveau Testament," *La mystique* (Relais-Etudes 4; ed. J.-M. van Cangh; Paris: Desclée, 1988) 57-71.

10. "Le Christ, la foi et la Sagesse dans l'épître aux Hébreux (Hébreux 11 et 1)," *RThPh*, 3rd series 18 (1968) 129-44.

11. "Possession ou enchantement. Les institutions romaines

selon l'Apocalypse de Jean," *Cristianesimo nella storia* 7 (1986) 221-38.

12. "Le privilège pascal de Marie-Madeleine," *NTS* 30 (1984) 50-62.

13 "La vie des apôtres: traditions bibliques et narrations apocryphes," *Les Actes apocryphes des apôtres. Christianisme et monde païen* (Publications de la Faculté de théologie de l'Université de Genève, 4; Genève: Labor et Fides, 1981) 141-58.

A PRE-PAULINE EXPRESSION
IN THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS
(Gal 1:4-5)*

Detecting traditional elements in the Pauline epistles demands prudence.[1] It does not seem too hazardous, however, to delineate several pre-Pauline elements in the address and the greeting of the letter to the Galatians, primarily in verses 4 and 5 of the first chapter. We will follow up this investigation with a philological and historical analysis which I hope will show the Jewish roots, decidedly apocalyptic, of the expression used by Paul; and after the diachronic survey, a synchronic presentation of Gal 1:1-5.[2]

I

Between the greeting (Gal 1:3) and a brief doxology (1:5), Paul inserts a mnemonic of the work of salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ "who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father" (1:4). Various arguments show that the vocabulary of this evocation is not typical of the Apostle's writing:[3]

τοῦ δόντος ἑαυτόν: to express the gift that Jesus makes of himself, Paul habitually uses the composite verb (for example, in Gal 2:20 and Rom 8:32).[4]

'Υπὲρ (or περὶ)[5] τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν· this expression is not Pauline either. The apostle prefers the prepositions ὑπέρ and διά followed by a personal or relative pronoun or by an adjective (cf. Gal 2:20: ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ; Rom 5:8: ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν; 1 Cor 1:13: ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν; 1 Cor 8: (6),11: δι' ὃν; 2 Cor 5:14: ὑπὲρ πάντων). The words "for our sins" are indeed found in 1 Cor 15:3, but there they have their place in a confession of faith anterior to the Pauline composition. The apostle habitually uses ἁμαρτία in the singular. This word thus designates sin as a harmful force, and not, as in this case, as various transgressions. For these, he uses παράπτωμα (Rom 5:15-20; 2 Cor 5:19; Gal 6:1) or ἁμάρτημα (1 Cor 6:18).[6]

'Εξαιρεῖσθαι: as is known, Paul prefers the vocabulary of justice to that of salvation. When he calls to mind, however, the salvific nature of Christ's intervention, he chooses σῴζειν, ἐλευθεροῦν, (ἐξ)αγοράζειν or ῥύεσθαι; nowhere else ἐξαιρεῖσθαι.

'Εκ τοῦ αἰῶνος τοῦ ἐνεστῶτος πονηροῦ: sometimes the apostle describes this world with the help of the term αἰών. But normally he chooses the expression ὁ αἰὼν οὗτος (Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 1:20; 2:6,8; 3:18; 2 Cor 4:4).[7] Even if here and there he does not disdain the adjective ἐνεστώς, in the sense of "present" (Rom 8:38; 1 Cor 3:22; 7:26, διὰ τὴν ἐνεστῶσαν ἀνάγκην, the Pauline formula most like the one we are considering), nowhere else does he couple αἰών and ἐνεστώς. Similarly for the adjective πονηρός which is rare in his writing.[8]

Κατὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ πατρὸς ἡμῶν: the authentic epistles never make the redemption of Jesus Christ depend explicitly on the will of God. In Paul, only ethical statements (for example Rom 12:2; 1 Th 4:3) or affirmations relating to apostleship (for example 1 Cor 1:1) call up the mention of τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ. Furthermore, he never says κατὰ τὸ θέλημα but ἐν τῷ θελήματι (Rom 1:10) or rather διὰ θελήματος (Rom 15:32; 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; 8:5).[9]

Since Paul likes to signal the paternity of God (for example, Rom 15:6; 2 Cor 1:3; 11:31), perhaps one should attribute to him the precision καὶ πατρὸς ἡμῶν. But it is not certain, for several uses of πατήρ qualifying God in the apostle's writing occur in liturgical phras-

es (cf. Rom 6:4; 1 Cor 8:6; Phil 4:20, not counting all the greetings, except 1 Th 1:1). Furthermore, from Second Isaiah on, Judaism made a connection between the themes of deliverance and the kindness or paternal responsibility of God: ἀλλὰ σύ, κύριε, πατὴρ ἡμῶν· ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς . . . (Is 63:16).[10]

These arguments suffice to suggest that Paul was using a traditional fragment here. The following analysis will point out the Jewish roots of most of these terms in Gal 1:4. Then a reflection concerning the composition of the text must be added to the historical argument that in the beginning of the epistle to the Romans, Paul elongates the prologue in an unusual manner and refers explicitly to the traditional faith of the Church, whence the formula of Rom 1:3-4. For a different reason, polemical and not apologetic, the apostle does the same here. With his appeal to ecclesiastical tradition, he situates himself within the truth of the Gospel he has received and disqualifies his adversaries.

Some remarks should be made concerning the literary genre of this verse. The aorist verbs confer on the phrase the quality of a narrative and historical statement. This then is not an intercession for deliverance, nor the expression of a certain hope; nor does it describe the being of Christ, as does Col 1:15-20.[11] The subject is in the third person singular and the complement in the first person plural: as an expounder, the community places itself within the framework of the text and recalls the intervention of its Savior. The use of the participle (δόντος) could belong to the hymnic tradition of Israel which frequently mentions the interventions or qualities of God in this manner. What is striking is the brevity of the text, which excludes any redundance and demonstrates great restraint.

Even though the text is direct, on several points it is distinguishable from similar phrases in the New Testament: in Gal 1:4, as in 1 Tim 2:6 and Titus 2:14, Jesus gives himself; elsewhere, it is God who delivers him up. The sequence of events corresponds then to the voluntary intervention of Jesus Christ. Since the end of the verse declares it to be the accomplishment of the will of God, it follows that the formula is the expression of a community, such as that of Matt 11:27, which has thoroughly considered the relationship between the Father and the Son. It also gives positive value to the cross, which was certainly not done in primitive statements. The expiatory significance of "for our sins" goes beyond history and belongs to meta-history. Finally, the act of redemp-

tion is given a second effect: not only does it efface sins, it also lifts
one out of the evil age. That this is indicated in second place does not
render it secondary:[12] Judaism and the New Testament often indicate
deliverance as the aim and impact of the pronouncements of salvation
in the Old Testament. This is done by the use of conjunctions (ὅπως,
ἵνα), infinitives with a meaning of finality (with or without τοῦ), or the
preposition εἰς followed by a substantive.[13] In brief, this formula is re-
servedly concise at the same time as it is complexly construed. Such a
dual character should incite us to attribute it not to the most primitive
community, but to a Christianity anterior to Paul, a community which
had already traversed an intensive phase of christological reflection.[14] It
is difficult to say if the formula was written in Hebrew, Aramaic or
Greek: the vocabulary as well as the syntax may come from a semitic
language (cf. the Qumran parallels) or from Greek (cf. the parallels in
the Septuagint and Josephus). The gift of self exists in rabbinism (E.
Lohse), but it is perhaps better explained in hellenistic Judaism (K.
Wengst).[15] The expression "who gave himself" may suggest a hellenis-
tic Jewish Christian context. Would not the semitic formulation be
"who gave his life"? But as this conception never seems to apply to the
Messiah in contemporary Judaism, it should perhaps be attributed to Je-
sus himself and to the experience that the disciples had of his death. As
for the ecclesial roots (Sitz im Leben) of the expression, we could con-
sider baptism, communion, preaching and communal prayer—it means
we ignore this original setting. The theory developed here concerning
the provenance of the doxology (verse 5) with the primitive formula
prods us to see the fragment used by a church mindful of the origin of
the forgiveness of its sins (ἡμῶν) and of its deliverance from this world
(hostile because of the people and demonic forces which inhabit the
world).

The formula of v. 4 is not the only place where these verses
borrow from a still recent primitive Christian heritage.[16] In my opinion,
three other pre-Pauline expressions reveal the apostle's effort to situate
his discourse within the traditional and ecclesial frame of doctrine. 1)
The qualifying of God as he "who raised Jesus from the dead" (Gal 1:1)
is frequent in the speeches of the Acts[17] and, in the epistles, in the pas-
sages[18] which refer to the commonly received faith.[19] 2) The greeting
itself (Gal 1:3) may have a liturgical origin. It is found in the same form
in the authentic epistles.[20] As the later letters do not use it again in this

form, some exegetes suggest, because of this lack of permanence, that the whole of the greeting should be attributed to the apostle rather than to tradition, and that an epistolary expression should be recognized here rather than a liturgical one.[21] However, everyone is agreed on keeping the words "from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" for the pre-Pauline church.[22] 3) Finally, the doxology (Gal 1:5) contains nothing particularly Christian and is found in similar form in both Jewish and Christian texts.[23] In commentators' lists of NT doxologies,[24] it is shown that in rabbinical style, Paul sometimes interrupts or concludes his reasoning with a doxological exclamation.[25] But concerning Gal 1:5, it has not been emphasized often enough that from a formal and thematic point of view, the OT willingly associates the evocation of a liberating action of God with thanksgiving or praise. We should not then be surprised if the doxology in v. 5 were already traditionally uttered after a commemoration of the deliverance accomplished by Jesus Christ (Gal 1:4).[26]

II

We begin the second phase of this investigation with an analysis of the verb, a verb which has not found favor with the editors of theological dictionaries, in spite of its doctrinal weight.[27]

In secular Greek, ἐξαιρεῖσθαι in the middle voice can signify "deliver". A person or a group benefits from this deliverance and, consequently, the action expressed by this verb conducts one from an unfavorable or harmful condition or state (danger, tribulation, siege, imprisonment, inevitability) to a better situation (liberty, happiness, etc.). The middle voice establishes a relationship between the source and the beneficiaries of deliverance. It can even mean to choose someone.[28]

Apart from some occurrences of the active voice in the sense of "tear away," the Septuagint uses the middle voice to express various kinds of deliverance, mainly those which God has offered, offers or will offer to his people. Contrary to what one might think, σώζειν does not have, in this version, uncontested precedence: for five occurrences of σώζειν, about three can be found of ῥύεσθαι and two of ἐξαιρεῖσθαι. If manuscript tradition permits such precision, the middle voice appears a hundred and thirty-seven times.[29] It translates various Hebrew verbs relating to deliverance and salvation, principally the hifil of

וְצַל (in the chapters of Daniel written in Aramaic, it normally translates the verb שֵׁיזִב).

What is striking is the rooting of this translation in the tradition of the Exodus in expressions which repeat themselves in a stereotyped and doubtlessly liturgical manner: Ex 3:8: Καὶ κατέβην ἐξελέσθαι αὐτοὺς ἐκ χειρὸς Αἰγυπτίων καὶ ἐξαγαγεῖν αὐτοὺς ἐκ τῆς γῆς ἐκείνης καὶ εἰσαγαγεῖν αὐτοὺς εἰς γῆν ἀγαθὴν καὶ πολλήν. Throughout our investigation, we will find this active and benevolent will of God (κατέβην) which intervenes (ἐξελέσθαι) in favor of his people (αὐτούς) by opposing adversaries (ἐκ χειρὸς Αἰγυπτίων) and by bringing those whom he delivers into a place of privilege (εἰς γῆν ἀγαθὴν καὶ πολλήν).[30] An indication of timing appears in the following verses: καὶ νῦν ἰδοὺ κραυγὴ τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ ἥκει πρός με (Ex 3:9) and καὶ νῦν δεῦρο ἀποστείλω σε πρὸς Φαραὼ βασιλέα Αἰγύπτου (Ex 3:10). Just like the place of servitude and liberation,[31] the time of misfortune and deliverance figure regularly alongside the verb ἐξαιρεῖσθαι. Evocations of the deliverance from Egypt using our verb are met in other texts besides the Pentateuch: Οὕτως εἶπεν κύριος ὁ θεὸς Ἰσραήλ, Ἐγὼ ἐθέμην διαθήκην πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας ὑμῶν ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ, ᾗ ἐξειλάμην αὐτοὺς ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου ἐξ οἴκου δουλείας . . . (Jer 34 [41]:13).[32]

More interesting than this quality of permanence is the capacity of the soteriological schema to adapt. We see the same elements applied to various forms of deliverance which God brings about in favor of isolated believers or of the entire people. Ἐξαιρεῖσθαι is used in connection with Jacob (Gen 32:12[11]), with Joseph (Gen 37:21-22) and especially with David, the main individual beneficiary. The Philistines and other peoples of Palestine take the place of the Egyptians, but it is always enemies and strangers who are beaten, and by the same God who saves out of a perilous situation. Self-confident before the threatening Goliath, the young shepherd says to Saul: Κύριος, ὃς ἐξείλατό με ἐκ χειρὸς τοῦ λέοντος καὶ ἐκ χειρὸς τῆς ἄρκου, αὐτὸς ἐξελεῖταί με ἐκ χειρὸς τοῦ ἀλλοφύλου τοῦ ἀπεριτμήτου τούτου (1 Sam 17:37).[33]

On the collective level, it can be Jerusalem which awaits deliverance. Thus in the prophecy of Is 31:5, ὡς ὄρνεα πετόμενα, οὕτως

ὑπερασπιεῖ κύριος ὑπὲρ Ἰερουσαλὴμ καὶ ἐξελεῖται καὶ περι-
ποιήσεται καὶ σώσει (these last three verbs belong to the vocabulary
of the Exodus). But throughout the ages it is particularly Israel which
benefits from the protection of God, who sometimes, on the grounds of
his justice, refuses to intervene (Zech 11:6). The people are liberated
from Egypt, delivered from their adversaries in Canaan[35] and brought
back out of exile.[36]

From being used to evoke the magnificent acts of God in favor
of the people, ancestors or leaders, the soteriological structure became
available for individual prayer. Out of evocation grew entreaty. From
what had been lived or known, deliverance itself became something
hoped for, awaited, sometimes also experienced. Two examples of this:
. . . πλὴν, κύριε, ἐξελοῦ ἡμᾶς ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ταύτῃ (Judg 10:15)
and Ἐξελοῦ με, κύριε, ἐξ ἀνθρώπου πονηροῦ (Ps 140 [139]:1).

The necessarily vague, conventional, even all-purpose aspect
of the individual complaint will facilitate its further usage. It will per-
mit, in particular, the symbolic development of the adversary. The
Egyptians and Pharaoh will serve as models for other enemies: the Phi-
listines, the Amalekites, the king of Babylonia (Jer 42:11), sinners (Ps
37:40), the oppressor (Sir 4:9), the evildoer (Ps 140:1), the lion (1 Sam
12:10; 17:37; Ps 91:13-16).[37] These adversaries become symbolic or
mythical entities, concrete and bewitching: death (ὅτι ἐξείλατο τὴν
ψυχήν μου ἐκ θανάτου, Ps 116 [114]:8),[38] famine and war (Job
5:19-20), tribulation (καὶ ἐπικάλεσαί με ἐν ἡμέρᾳ θλίψεως, καὶ
ἐξελοῦμαί σε, καὶ δοξάσεις με, Ps 50 [49]:15),[39] distress (idols can-
not deliver from it: ἐν ἀνάγκῃ ἄνθρωπον ὄντα οὐ μὴ ἐξέλωνται,
Epist. Jer. 36),[40] floods (ἐξαπόστειλον τὴν χεῖρά σου ἐξ ὕψους,
ἐξελοῦ με καὶ ῥῦσαί με ἐξ ὑδάτων πολλῶν, ἐκ χειρὸς υἱῶν ἀλ-
λοτρίων Ps 144 [143]:7), and blazing fire (Is 48:10, cf. supra n. 36).[41]

The furnace, rich in symbolic connotations, is found again in
the book of Daniel which uses the verb ἐξαιρεῖσθαι several times in
conventional formulae[42]: εὐλογεῖτε, Ἀνανία, Ἀζαρία, Μισάηλ,
τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας,
ὅτι ἐξείλατο ἡμᾶς ἐξ ᾅδου καὶ ἐκ χειρὸς θανάτου ἔσωσεν
ἡμᾶς καὶ ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς ἐκ μέσου καμίνου καιομένης φλογὸς
καὶ ἐκ μέσου πυρὸς ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς (Dan 3:88, translation by The-
odotion). One perceives in this prayer of thanksgiving a widened con-

text for the deliverance offered by God. The later texts in particular am-
plify the dimensions of a liberation which will turn into resurrection,
cosmic redemption and eschatological deliverance. The tendency is
confirmed in the Septuagint text of Sir 51:11, the closest parallel to Gal
1:4, which has curiously escaped the notice of critics: καὶ εἰση-
κούσθη ἡ δέησίς μου· ἔσωσας γάρ με ἐξ ἀπωλείας καὶ ἐξείλου
με ἐκ καιροῦ πονηροῦ. This expression of relief and gratitude is
found at the end of a psalm of thanksgiving which serves as an appen-
dix to the work.[43] The canticle brings to mind enemies of all sorts and
the most terrible trials. No human has been able to come to the rescue
of the psalmist. It is the Lord who, when invoked, has responded to his
prayer and delivered him from the καιρὸς πονηρός. The eschatologi-
cal importance of the word καιρός should certainly not be exaggerat-
ed. The term does express nevertheless, as in Gal 1:4, the unbearable
space-time in which the victim has been imprisoned; πονηρός is a suit-
able adjective in both texts. Only deliverance by the Lord (God in Sir-
acide, Jesus Christ in the Epistle) transforms the situation (ἐξείλου in
Siracide, ἐξέληται in Galatians).

　　　Before going further, we should confirm the Septuagint usage
in other Jewish and Christian texts contemporary to the New Testa-
ment. The most important are found in the Syriac Apocalypse of Ba-
ruch, which also seems to have escaped the notice of exegetes of the
Epistle to the Galatians. The author recalls the ineluctable character of
the last tribulations, but also emphasizes the happy fate reserved for the
just after the resurrection and the last judgement: "They have been
saved from this world of affliction and have put down the burden of an-
guishes" (51:14). A preceding paragraph unambiguously specifies that
the just owe their deliverance to their good works (51:7).[44] The ungod-
ly, on the contrary, have "denied the world that does not make those
who come to it older. And they have rejected the time which causes
glory" (51:16).

　　　The Qumran concordance[45] attests to the continually favored
use of the verb נָצַל in one branch of Judaism. The concordance of the
Tg. Onqelos and the Aramaic dictionaries confirm the usage of the verb
שֵׁיזִב.[46] Furthermore, the verb ἐξαιρεῖσθαι appears in the writing of
Josephus when he tells of Israel's past: "There was one whose name
was Othniel, the son of Kenaz, of the tribe of Judah, an active man and

of great courage. He had an admonition from God, not to overlook the Israelites in such a distress (ἀνάγκη) as they were now in, but to endeavor boldly to gain them their liberty (εἰς ἐλευθερίαν αὐτοὺς ἐξαιρεῖσθαι) . . ." *Ant. 5.3.3.*[47] To these testimonies, we add those of the New Testament. In Stephen's speech, Luke uses ἐξαιρεῖσθαι first to express the deliverance of Joseph (Acts 7:10), and then that of the Exodus (7:34). Further on, this verb describes Peter's liberation from prison (Acts 12:11). And the protection that God assures Paul after his calling (Acts 26:17: the missionary to the Gentiles is preserved, liberated not to escape from men, but to be able to go to them and convert them).[48] Philo, for his part, uses several times the expression εἰς ἐλευθερίαν ἐξαιρεῖσθαι. It permits him to describe the freeing of the mind. Thus the Jewish philosopher internalizes and extends to all humanity "the notion of a chosen people, set apart, sustained and saved."[49]

Returning to the Septuagint, we find that God and the leaders whom he has chosen are regularly the means of liberation.[50] Several later texts recall other executors of the salvific will of God. The Greek text of Nahum evokes a mysterious liberator (is it the Messiah?) ἀνέβη ἐμφυσῶν εἰς πρόσωπόν σου ἐξαιρούμενος ἐκ θλίψεως (Nah 2:2). Concerning the consequences of the fall of Adam, the Wisdom of Solomon states: Αὕτη (= ἡ σοφία) πρωτόπλαστον πατέρα κόσμου μόνον κτισθέντα διεφύλαξεν καὶ ἐξείλατο αὐτὸν ἐκ ἰδίου (Wis 10:1).[51] Other texts of ethical and wisdom content exhort believers to free victims from their oppressors (Sir 4:9).[52] It is neverthe-less God who remains the most frequent subject of the verb "deliver". Never, as far as we know, is deliverance provoked as in Galatians 1:4 by the giving of self.[53] We touch directly here upon something specifically Christian. Jewish messianic texts evoke a victory of the Messiah which is gained through strength and not through weakness.

Moreover, another observation must be made, that of the very ancient link between the evocation of liberation and the prayer of thanksgiving which normally follows. Two examples are: καὶ εἴπατε Σῶσον ἡμᾶς, ὁ θεὸς τῆς σωτηρίας ἡμῶν, καὶ ἐξελοῦ ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῶν ἐθνῶν τοῦ αἰνεῖν τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ἅγιόν σου καὶ καυχᾶσθαι ἐν ταῖς αἰνέσεσίν σου (1 Chr 16:35, a part of the psalm which David asks to sing before the Ark of the Covenant); and καὶ ἐπικάλεσαί με ἐν ἡμέρᾳ θλίψεως, καὶ ἐξελοῦμαί σε, καὶ δοξάσεις με (Ps 50:15

quoted above).[54]

In my opinion, this relationship, manifest in the traditions of Israel's worship, explains the linking of verses 4 and 5 of Galatians 1. The evocation of liberation is logically followed by the doxology. It is not enough to say, as does P. Billerbeck,[55] that Paul, as a rabbi, interrupts or finishes his reasoning with an exclamation of thanksgiving. The relationship between the two verses is both theologically closer and in literary terms, more traditional.

As early as the Sinai tradition, various texts signal another interaction which is present in our text: a connection between the fault and the liberation which can be expressed in a ritual manner: the camp of the Israelites in the desert must be pure in order that God can penetrate it to save his people (ὅτι κύριος ὁ θεός σου ἐμπεριπατεῖ ἐν τῇ παρεμβολῇ σου ἐξελέσθαι σε καὶ παραδοῦναι τὸν ἐχθρόν σου πρὸ προσώπου σου, Dt 23:15). This also appears in an ethical context: Samuel says to Israel that God will not deliver them until there is a complete conversion of hearts (1 Sam 7:3). In some later wisdom texts, the believer is saved by his good works, particularly by his charity (Sir 29:12)[56] or by his fear of God (Sir 33 (36):1). Deliverance thus implies a ritual and moral purity.[57] According to the Christian formulation, new on this point, it is the Messiah Jesus who, by his voluntary oblation, has re-established this integrity of the people of God.[58]

The texts cited thus far show that deliverance accorded by God is the decisive mark in the history of salvation. Some among the most recent envisage a last, eschatological intervention. Besides 1 Chronicles 16:35 already cited, certain general or specific passages of the Psalms,[59] Second Isaiah and Daniel should be mentioned, those which were able to be understood, if not written, in an eschatological perspective. One other passage orients the mind in this direction, while associating hope with anamnesis: ἐλπίζομεν γὰρ ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ ὅτι ταχέως ἡμᾶς ἐλεήσει καὶ ἐπισυνάξει ἐκ τῆς ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸν εἰς τὸν ἅγιον τόπον. ἐξείλετο γὰρ ἡμᾶς ἐκ μεγάλων κακῶν καὶ τὸν τόπον ἐκαθάρισεν (2 Macc 2:18). However, one should be prudent and not speak too soon of eschatological redemption.

What gives an apocalyptic tone to Gal 1:4 therefore is not the verb ἐξαιρεῖσθαι as such, but the indication of an adversary: "this present evil age."[60] Of course, the opposition of the two ages and the two worlds does not imply ipso facto an apocalyptic perspective. The

two aeons can be understood in a spatial manner or according to a chronology in which any imminence is excluded, as attested in the rabbinical texts collected by P. Billerbeck.[61] Nevertheless, the first manifestations of the words "this aeon" and of the opposition between the two aeons are rooted in apocalyptic tradition.[62] The pessimistic qualification of this aeon as being evil, as well as the association of the term aeon with the idea of liberation in Gal 1:4 confirms this apocalyptic tone. If one adds to these arguments the early Christians' impatient expectation of the end, a consequence of the preaching of Jesus, a meaning of ultimacy will be understood in the liberation proclaimed by the pre-Pauline fragment.

Finally, the Jewish apocalyptic origin of the formula permits a new interpretation of the expression "according to the will of our God and Father." These words might fit into a dualist perspective. The text supposes that the will of God is opposed to that of the demonic adversary, of the πονηρός par excellence, the prince of this aeon. The Testament of Naphtali, for example, attests this opposition between the θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ and the θέλημα τοῦ διαβόλου (Test Napht 3:1).[63]

The Christian community which composed this formula still has a Jewish vision of the world: God must deal ruthlessly with the evil which has defiled even his people and holds it imprisoned, though he wants at the same time to liberate them. Yet this same Church sounds a new message in its criticism of the ritual or ethical means of deliverance which were then in use. The pardon of sins has been obtained by the gift that Jesus, the Messiah, has made of his life according to the plan of God. This movement of two wills, that of the Father and that of Christ, depreciates the traditional observance of the Law. Paul will take up and radicalize this criticism in his conception of the justice of God and his new interpretation of the Law.

This gift of self—historic, past and unique—had a second consequence: besides purification, it was the liberation of the people of God, a victory over the adversary, a second exodus,[64] a spatial displacement, the transfer into a new age. The biblical tradition studied here suggests that liberation always implies the people of God getting back their domain. But what is it? The silence of the formula on this point gives room for thought. It would be too easy to speak of the eschaton or of heaven. It is rather the earth and the Temple to which God of the

covenant gives new access. But since these notions in the Old Testament did not point exclusively to material realities (the ways which lead to the sanctuary, according to Psalm 84:6, are "in the heart"), we can get past the opposition between the heavenly kingdom and the land of Canaan, between the spiritual temple and the Temple in Jerusalem. The place and the time are offered here and now (Christians realize that one can fall back into this evil aeon: μὴ συσχηματίζεσθε τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ, Rom 12:2). But an eschatological time and a new place are open to believers in a liturgical community. This implies faith, it transforms action, and it does not let up on hope.

III

In his polemics, Paul can pick up on this Christian text, because he himself clings to this old vision of the world, which is Jewish, and to this new affirmation, which is specifically Christian. His battle against the legalisms in Galatia pursues the polemical effort of the first Christians, which was the necessary corollary of the expression of their faith in Christ Jesus. The apostle expresses himself with all the more authority in that his personal experience corroborates that of the primitive Church. Yet, going back to his apostolic vocation, he uses the traditional pairing of God the Father and Jesus Christ in the order which corresponds to the apparition on the way to Damascus: διὰ 'Ιησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ πατρός (Gal 1:1b). He who appeared to Paul to appoint him apostle was not first the crucified, but the living Christ. Hence the reference to a traditional formula τοῦ ἐγείραντος αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν (Gal 1:1b), which establishes a link between the apostolate and the resurrection.

In yielding to Christian inheritance, Paul indicates that he is not alone. The mention of the brothers who join him in greeting the Galatians (Gal 1:2a) confirms his ecclesial concern.

Paul does not remove from the believers in Galatia the beautiful title of Church (v. 2b). Yet he holds back from conferring upon them a title of honor.[65] Possibly posing a threat or suggesting a suspicion, he does not use the habitual expression "to the church of God which is in ... ," (1 Cor 1:2) and puts the ἐκκλησία in the plural.

The greeting itself (Gal 1:3) is identical to that of the other

epistles. Whether it is the work of Paul or of the community is not important. What counts is the liturgical echo which confirms the ecclesial and ecumenical preoccupation of the apostle.

If in verse 2 the apostolate brings to mind the mention of the resurrection because of the Damascus road apparition (cf. 1 Cor 9:1 and 15:8), the mention of the community of the believers ("churches of Galatia," "you") in vs. 2 and 3 entails an indispensable allusion to redemption.[66] The traditional formula of v. 4-5, centered on the redemptive suffering of the Christ, is appropriate for this result. It combines the apostle's two concerns, similar to the heading of the epistle to the Romans: to refer to the common faith of the Church and not to leave any place for legalistic works. In Christian faith, obedience is not the condition of redemption, but its consequence. The traditional text implies this truth which will be developed in the epistle.

At the end of his letter (Gal 6:14), Paul will express the same certainty of salvation, but in a personal way. His style will change from "we" to "I," and liberation from the evil aeon will become crucifixion. Christian existence, the raison d'être of the apostle, his καυχᾶσθαι is based solely upon the cross of Jesus Christ, who has made it possible for him to die unto the κόσμος and made the κόσμος to be dead to the apostle. Circumcision and uncircumcision are then overcome by the new creation (Gal 6:15).

2

THE NEW PERSON AND THE LAW
ACCORDING TO THE APOSTLE PAUL*

In the economy of salvation, as the apostle Paul saw it, the system of the law[1] venerated by the rabbis and the Jews was replaced by the work of the Christ:[2] "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh." (Rom 8:1-3).

Of course the Mosaic law maintained an important place in Pauline thought, but for the most part it became a foil which permitted one to understand, by contrast, the new covenant.[3] In the face of the law stands the Christ; in contention with Moses, who fulfilled a ministry of condemnation and death, behold the apostle, glorious minister of justice (2 Cor 3); against the merger of the letter and the flesh, behold the πνεῦμα (Rom 8). The triad, law—sin—death had been succeeded by life, the outflow of justice, and faith. This is what we read in the verses immediately following our first citation (Rom 8:1-3): ". . . so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those

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* These pages are dedicated to Eduard Schweizer, a teacher who knows, when it is appropriate, to offer his friendship over his knowledge. Having benefited from just such a gesture, I can witness to his evangelical faith which breaks through hierarchy, respects each person and places ἀγάπη at the center of life.

who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace" (Rom 8:4-6).

Though it is not the only manner in which to speak of the law, such a presentation by antithesis suits the apostle in his definition of the saving force of God. But it also prevents the demonstration of the concrete role which is played by the law in the lives of believers.

One line of interpretation, under the influence of Luther,[4] insists upon these attacks against the law, as if they represented the last word of the apostle. For fear of undermining the exclusive prestige of the Christ, some exegetes have a tendency therefore to begrudge the law any positive value whatsoever. They maintain the most outspoken formulations of the apostle: "But the scripture has imprisoned all things under the power of sin" (Gal 3:22); "But the law came in with the result that the trespass multiplied" (Rom 5:20); "I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, 'You shall not covet.' But sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law sin lies dead" (Rom 7:7-9); "Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions . . ." (Gal 3:19).

According to this interpretation, the Christ definitively crushed the law. He is its τέλος not in the sense of accomplishment but of end.[5] "For Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (Rom 10:4); "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law . . ." (Gal 3:13); "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law in order to redeem those who were under the law" (Gal 4:4-5); "For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace" (Rom 6:14).

As we know, Paul uses the example of marriage (Rom 7:1-3): upon the death of her husband, the wife is free of her engagement. She is free from her husband and can marry another. This is an eloquent comparison, since for Christians it really is a definitive breaking away from the law; a breach so total that one can speak of it as of a death: "In the same way, my friends, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead . . . " (Rom 7:4); "For through the law I died to the law so that I might live to God" (Gal 2:19). It is the end of the belonging of

Christians to the law, to its hold and to its authority. In short, the system of justice, of faith, of the Christ and of the Spirit has now been established χωρὶς νόμου (Rom 3:21).

However, in order to set up such an indictment of the law, one is obliged at almost every citing to cut up the passage in order to avoid quoting a eulogy of the law or at least a phrase or a proposition which does not invalidate it, therefore:

1) in Galatians 4:4, Christ was able to liberate us from the law because he himself was subjected to it;

2) in Romans 7, the sentence which immediately precedes the criticism of the law which nourishes desire: "What then should we say? That the law is sin? By no means!" (Rom 7:7);

3) in saying that the Scripture has enveloped everything in sin, Paul does not wish to make us believe that the law is evil. In fact, a parallel text in Romans gives another subject for the proposition: "For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all" (Rom 11:32);

4) in the text in Galatians, parallel to Rom 7:4, Paul says that it is the law which permits one to die unto the law: "For through the law I died to the law so that I might live to God" (Gal 2:19);

5) in applying the example of mourning in the couple, Paul does not speak of the death of the law, but of that of Christians, called to be reborn to belong to another master, the risen Christ;

6) in the famous text in which appear the words χωρὶς νόμου, one finds as well these positive words concerning the law μαρτυρουμένη ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου: "But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets" (Rom 3:21);

7) finally, the faith according to Paul is so far from being simply an enthusiasm, that he often calls it an obedience, ὑπακοή, an obedience which implies the existence if not of a rigorous norm, then at least of a reference to a person.

Exegetes who insist on the cessation of the law neglect, in my opinion, the distinction between the soteriological and the ethical functions of the law. Or, to express this in the words of a British scholar, it is for lack of the word "legalism," that Paul attacks the law.[6] The law has never killed anyone, nor does it give life. It is the meeting between the law and the human which provokes unhappiness; such unhappiness,