

## Two Laws and the Gospel: Barth's *Simul* at the Heart of Romans

### Abstract:

Barth's theology takes Luther's dictum *simul (totus) iustus et (totus) peccator* and extends it to all human beings. This essay considers how Barth's *simul* derives from two underlying laws—the “law of the Spirit of life” and the “law of sin and death” (Rom 8:2)—and more deeply, from the incarnation itself. That these laws do not comprise an anthropological natural law will be clear by their Christological starting point. Drawing not from his earlier *Romans* but solely from Barth's exegesis throughout *Church Dogmatics*, I posit four aspects of the *simul* as they emerge in four chapters: the universal aspect (5); the sequential aspect (6); the existential aspect (7); and the deliverance aspect (8). The result is a cohesive portrayal of Barth's reading of Romans 5–8 which can arguably function as an interpretive key for all of his later theological anthropology.

In *Church Dogmatics* Karl Barth promotes his own version of Luther's *simul iustus et peccator* as the keynote to his entire program of sanctification and conversion.<sup>1</sup> Barth's rendering of the *simul* is more severe than Luther's in its delineation of the total and mutually exclusive nature of the two human “determinations”—*iustus* and *peccator*. These determinations are by no means static states. Exceeding all notions of imputed righteousness, the *iustus* determination is a dynamic which involves all humans in Christ and in the Spirit, and in right relationship with the Father; this *iustus* determination is constantly opposed in this life by the counter-dynamic of sin—the *peccator* determination of humanity. Barth's universal application of the *simul* is derived not only from Scripture itself but most directly from the incarnate Word who himself took on *sarx* and poured out his Spirit on all flesh. The interconnection of Christology and anthropology provides the basis for Barth's claim that the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ reveal the ultimate truth of humanity and thus, in the end, the provisional nature of the *simul*. Obviously it is impossible in this space to adequately develop these larger themes, but, my main purpose will be to sketch Barth's understanding of Romans 5–8 in its Christological

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 4 vols. in 13 parts (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 2004), Vol. IV/2, 572. *Church Dogmatics* is hereafter designated as *CD*. I am operating on the premise that Barth's thought in *CD* is consistent enough throughout his thirty years of production so as to be regarded as one work.

context by drawing out Barth's convictions concerning the *simul* infrastructure of the entire passage. As will hopefully become apparent, it is the understanding of Christ's two-way mediation which establishes for Barth the foundational meaning of covenant as the true *iustus* law of every human life and which locates creation, covenant and gospel together in unprecedented ways.

### **Entering through Romans 7**

I begin with Romans 7 because of its emphasis on simultaneity. In concurrence with Barth, my conviction is that once the sequential aspect of conversion language—e.g. “the old has gone the new has come”—is introduced and applied incorrectly, it becomes exceedingly difficult to retrieve the critical simultaneous elements in Scripture which are necessarily foundational to a most robust theology of human transformation. For Barth, Scripture attests the “old man” (*peccator* humanity) and the “new man” (*iustus* humanity) to be contemporaries in this life.<sup>2</sup>

Barth follows others (e.g. Augustine, Luther, Calvin) in the belief that Paul is writing of himself in Romans 7 and describing the experience of a mature believer.<sup>3</sup> According to Barth's exegesis of Romans 7, Paul personally testifies to being the sanctified man of the Spirit while at

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<sup>2</sup> Because of Barth's reliance on “old man” and “new man” language in articulating the *simul*, I have hesitantly maintained the use of “man” as the wisest and most faithful course. My overall commitment to inclusive language is indicated in my own prose. Additionally, I am using *iustus* and *peccator* as modifiers for humanity to make plain the connection back to the traditional dictum *simul iustus et peccator*. Because of Barth's anthropological scope and his belief that there is no difference ontologically between Christians and unbelievers, what may appear to speak to the individual person (the “new man” or the “old man”), is also true for the corporate entity (humanity) and vice versa.

<sup>3</sup> *CD IV/3.1*, 210: Barth writes, “At the very height of his apostolic career Paul can and must write in the present tense and in personal terms a passage like Ro. 7.7-25, in which the contradiction in his existence is plainly to be seen in all its menace.” Barth here urges the importance of interpreting Romans 7 within the context of Romans 5–8 as a whole, so that not only the simultaneous *totus* determinations, but also their asymmetry, can be clearly recognized.

the same time the “wretched man” of the flesh. In Barth’s view, it is the Christian who must admit with Paul: “nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh” (Rom 7:18, NRSV). In spite of the Christian’s “freedom as the new man in Jesus and in the Holy Spirit,” writes Barth, the Christian is in “bondage as the old man...in the flesh.” The two, oppositional determinations of the believer are both total. “Total freedom” and “total bondage,” Barth insists, “clash in one and the same man.”<sup>4</sup> Paul’s words reflect the human struggle between total freedom and total bondage: “So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, and in my flesh [I am] a slave to the law of sin” (7:25).<sup>5</sup> Like all human beings, and despite Jesus’ admonition in Mt 6:24, asserts Barth, Paul confesses to having two masters.<sup>6</sup> In fact, on Barth’s view, it behooves the Christian subject to consider the drastic nature of this “quarrel” as one between “two total men”—subjects “who cannot be united but are necessarily in extreme contradiction.”<sup>7</sup>

Barth’s “more severe” version of Luther’s *simul* is based largely on the Swiss Dogmatician’s more insistent, and consistent, use of *totus*, but why is *totus* such a critical aspect of Barth’s theology of sanctification? In sum, Barth is attacking a holiness model based on zero-sum fluidity, whereby one’s sanctification becomes progressively more established as the percentages of sinfulness and righteousness in a believer are determined to shift favorably towards righteousness. This kind of *partim-partim* configuration for sanctification, in contrast to Barth’s *totus-totus*, depends on unreliable self-assessment, “a psychological myth with no real

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<sup>4</sup> CD IV/2, 496-97. Between these two determinations there can be no cooperation: “For how can there be co-operation between total freedom and total bondage? How can the Spirit give assistance to the flesh, or the flesh to the Spirit?”

<sup>5</sup> Rom 7:25: The oppositional slaveries of Rom 7:25 cannot be allowed to devolve into spatial dichotomies like mind-body or inner-outer. Paul does use these images in Romans 7, but in the context of the section Barth adheres to Paul’s overall meaning of two, whole, mutually exclusive determinations, *totus iustus* and *totus peccator* (for Barth’s *simul*, *totus* should always be assumed). As we will see, “inner” retains great importance in its non-spatial meaning, being useful in conjunction with the “hidden” dimension of humanity; for Barth the inner man (7:22) is true humanity.

<sup>6</sup> CD IV/1, 589.

<sup>7</sup> CD IV/2, 570, 571.

substance.”<sup>8</sup> A sliding scale approach is ill-advised because of its reliance on emotional markers, states Barth.<sup>9</sup> Not only that, it is impossible to have assurance from such an exercise: “What we see in our own life are all kinds of attempts and fragments, all kinds of half-lights which may equally well be those of sunset or sunrise, which vouch less for our sanctification than...against the factuality of our sanctification.”<sup>10</sup>

Barth is convinced that *partim-partim* approaches to sanctification simply do not take grace *or* sin seriously enough.<sup>11</sup> Self-professions of righteousness (e.g., “I am not a racist”) ring hollow because they are hallucinatory judgments “passed by ourselves on ourselves.”<sup>12</sup> For Barth, Christians do not need to marginalize sin negatively because the death and resurrection of Christ does it positively. The lack of a *simul (totus) iustus et (totus) peccator* approach to sanctification can only produce false humility or blind pride—false humility when the persons in view judge themselves to be worse than they are (as if they have forgotten their total righteousness in Christ), or blind pride when persons judge themselves to be better than they are (as if they have forgotten that they are bankrupt sinners).<sup>13</sup> Aside from these inadequate extremes, Barth promotes what I call “*simul* sanctification” as a way to inspire at the same time proper humility and Christian confidence. Just how Barth means this inspiration to be acquired will be clear in due course.

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<sup>8</sup> CD IV/2, 572.

<sup>9</sup> CD II/2, 776. Barth is not against emotional experiences of faith, but only criticizes what he perceives as the “juggling” act of psychologism whereby Christians “may achieve a sensational but very dangerous interchange of supreme rapture and the most profound disappointment.”

<sup>10</sup> CD II/2, 572.

<sup>11</sup> CD IV/1, 594; “For if the knowledge that as man justified by God he is a sinner is serious, the knowledge that as a sinner he is justified by God is even more serious.”

<sup>12</sup> CD II/2, 776.

<sup>13</sup> The Christian recognizes that total righteousness and total sinfulness share the same space in this life and thus both appear *less than they are* when translated into our day to day existence. In sum, when it comes to our perceived human experience, we could say that these two totals equal an incomplete!

## The Scope of the *Simul*

If, as Barth opines, the person of Romans 7 is indeed *simul (totus) iustus et (totus) peccator*, the human duality of the *simul* is something Barth derives not only from Romans 7 but Romans 5–8 as a whole. Here, at the heart of this great epistle, oppositional duality runs rampant; to wit: the themes of First Adam/Second Adam, sin/righteousness, condemnation/justification, disobedience/obedience, death/life, slavery to sin/slavery to righteousness, law of sin and death (flesh)/Law of the Spirit of Life; these all fit the *simul* template. Barth considers the oppositional determinations of these couplets to be set against one another at the angle of 180.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, as counter-intuitive as it may sound, it should be reinforced that the two diametrically opposed determinations exist in the one person. But which persons again are in view?

Barth's argument that Jesus' representative humanity includes all persons is anchored squarely in Romans 5 (e.g. 5:18: "Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all").<sup>15</sup> Quoting Rom 5:8, Barth describes the love God demonstrated towards a world of sinners in the death of Jesus Christ, "It took place once for all on Golgotha," Barth asserts. "We were there, for there took place the dying of the Son of God for us."<sup>16</sup> Not only did all humans die in Christ, Barth states,

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<sup>14</sup> *CD I/2*, 305.

<sup>15</sup> Of Romans 5 Barth remarks, "In Paul, therefore, Christ is man." This is "not in contrast," Barth continues, to him being the Son of God. It is only *because* he is the Son of God that he may also be humanity (*CD III/2*, 46). Elsewhere regarding Rom 5 he will say Jesus is "the One for the many" and "the many as the One" (*CD IV/3*, 859) to describe Christ's representative effectiveness. In regards to a most straightforward statement regarding Christ as humanity, see *CD IV/2*, 519: "Thus the humanity of Jesus in the particularity in which He is this one man is, as the humanity of the Son of God, humanity as such, the humanity for which every man is ordained and in which every part already has a part in Him."

<sup>16</sup> *CD IV/1*, 295: Barth continues in this vein, "For then and there, in the person of Christ taking our place, we were present, being crucified and dying with him. We died. This has to be understood quite concretely and literally.... We died: the totality of all sinful men, those living, those long dead, and those still to be born, Christians who necessarily know and proclaim it, but also Jews and heathen, whether they hear and

but Christ's representation extends to his resurrection as well: "the raising of Jesus Christ...[is] comprehended and understood as an act of God with the same seriousness as the preceding event of the cross with its implication for us and for all men."<sup>17</sup>

Consistent with Paul's universal, de-relativizing statement a couple of chapters earlier (Rom 3:23-24),<sup>18</sup> the universal application of Adamic typology in Chapter 5 precludes any ontological distinction between believers and unbelievers and sets the tone for the "two-fold" paradigm that runs throughout the four chapters. What begins in Chapter 5 as a contrast between sinful Adam and Christ (the Second Adam) continues its course until Chapter 8, where comparable mutually exclusive elements are described as flesh and Spirit.<sup>19</sup> When it comes to his reading of Chapter 5, it is obvious that Barth understands all humans in the first Adam to be included in the Second, but what about Barth's universal application of the Holy Spirit? Is not the Spirit reserved for believers only? Barth refuses to parse the pneumatological away from the Christological.<sup>20</sup> He holds strongly to the cohesiveness of Romans 5 which signifies that everyone included in the Second Adam is also included in the gift of righteousness described in

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receive the news or whether they tried and still try to escape it. His death was the death of all: quite independently of their attitude or response to this event."

<sup>17</sup> CD IV/1, 300.

<sup>18</sup> In Rom 3:23-24 the *simul* is couched in a universal symmetry (or asymmetry) very similar to Paul's crescendo of Rom 5:18. Cf. CD II/1, 104: of Rom 3:22 f. Barth inquires rhetorically, "Is there a place between this twofold (but in the wisdom and will of God undivided) determination of man by the wrath and righteousness of God, where it is possible for man in the cosmos as such, and grounded in himself, to stand in an independent relationship to God, i.e., untouched by the wrath and righteousness of God...?"

<sup>19</sup> For Barth, true humanity is spiritual but not immaterial. A person's most fundamental identity is who he or she is in Christ and *in the Spirit* (cf. CD IV/2, 574). While distinguishing false humanity (flesh) and Spirit, Barth does not mean in any way to conflate the Spirit with true humanity, as we shall see.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. CD I/2, 205-08: as Barth perceives it, the attempt to make the subjective element of human faith in the Spirit separate from the objective truth of human faith established in Christ, as if to add to, finish, enhance or make valid the work of Christ, re-introduces an insidious possibility-to-actuality framework; in other words, it can only "indirectly call into question the *homoousia* of the Holy Spirit compared to the Father and the Son" (208).

the first verses of the chapter.<sup>21</sup> Because the Holy Spirit is often commodified as an exclusifying extra meant to indicate a dualistic separation between righteous persons and wicked persons, Barth insists that the righteous, *iustus* determination of humanity means all persons are included in the Pentecostal blessing alluded to in Rom 5:5, “God has poured his love out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who he has given us.”<sup>22</sup> Again, this view of Barth’s is grounded in the overall, Christological tenor of chapters 5–8 and what it tells the reader about who Jesus Christ is for all humanity. To take Rom 8:9 for instance—“Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Christ”—as restrictive of the presence of the Holy Spirit can only prove restrictive of the Person and Work of Christ, doing violence to the internal logic of Rom 5–8 as a whole: “Where and to the extent that He now acts in the Holy Spirit, He forms and directs the man who still exists in the flesh, who is still wandering as a sinner. Certainly this is a strictly hidden formation and direction, just as He Himself, the Master, is a hidden master.”<sup>23</sup> To the extent, then, to which humans are obeying Jesus Christ, they are freely acting in their righteous, true humanity, by the Spirit of Truth, and under the mastery of the only true Master. Barth defines Christians as those who manifest the desire to do this, even while being unavoidably entangled with the other deadly, pseudo “master.”

## Duality vs. Dualism

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. *CD* 4/2, 273; “Our existence is enclosed in His,” insists Barth, so that even before we are Christians we “are addressed and claimed as those who are already directed and obedient to God in Him, as those who are already born again and converted, as those who are already Christians. ‘We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ’ (Rom 5:1). Many serious and penetrating things result from this peace as it emerges in Rom. 5–8. But they result from the fact that we *have* this peace.” Italics original.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *CD* IV/2, 780: along with the promises of Ezekial 36 and Jeremiah 31, here Barth again recognizes Rom 5:5 as universal in scope.

<sup>23</sup> *CD* I/2, 277. If Barth does not separate the Spirit from Christ, neither does he try to control or limit the Spirit. He does not attempt to explain why we see the Spirit move in special ways in different people at different times. For Barth, pneumatic activity in this world is always as miraculous as it is mysterious.

Now, in considering a *simul* interpretation of Romans 5–8 , and having recognized Barth’s universal application from Chapter 5, what more can be said at this juncture about the twin slaveries in the one person as carried forward by Paul in chapters 6 and 7? We have established Barth’s insistence on the “two-fold determination”<sup>24</sup> of true humanity (*totus iustus*) and false humanity (*totus peccator*) in the *one person*, and his equally keen commitment to the severe delineation between the new and old, respectively. But is it really possible to maintain Barth’s severe duality without it devolving into a dualism?

In spite of the apparent dualism, it is Paul’s first person language of “I” or “me”, used to refer to both determinations, which substantiates the *simul* as a human duality (not a dualism). At the same time, the use of “I” to describe the “old man” and alternatively, also the “new man,” can be difficult to untangle. Paul recognizes the potential confusion, feeling the need to qualify his language so that one recognizes which determination he is speaking of: “I know that nothing good lives in me, *that is, in my flesh*” (7:18, emphasis added). Without Paul’s qualification, we would be left to a portrayal of either two different people or to consider such statements as referencing the same person, but at two different times (before or after conversion). However, instead of classifying statements like Rom 7:18 as those of a pre-Christian or immature Christian perspective, Barth submits that Paul’s first person language actually provides lucid textual substantiation for the *simul*.<sup>25</sup>

Barth’s *simul* then reflects what we could call Paul’s own single-subject latitude, even while holding to the presence of “two total men”—the old self and the new—in each human subject. Put differently, Barth wants us to take the *simul*’s *totus* determinations seriously, as if

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<sup>24</sup> CD IV/2, 570.

<sup>25</sup> CD IV/1, 588.



there are two subjects, but his functional dualism turns into something better grasped as a duality—one subject, two subjectivities. This allows Barth to take sin fully seriously by using the single subject (e.g. “nothing good lives in me”; “sinners, of whom I am the worst”, “I have been crucified with Christ”).<sup>26</sup> In the end, however, albeit *only* by virtue of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the *peccator* subjectivity is exposed as a parasitic counterfeit, an empty predicate without a true subject.<sup>27</sup>

“The subject Adam,” Barth states, “is eliminated.”<sup>28</sup> The “I” in the fleshly direction—the “old man” and his “bad subjectivity”<sup>29</sup>—has been dealt with. But how should we define the “I” in the Spirit direction? If, instead of the false subjecthood and subjectivity of Adam, the Second Adam emerges as the true subject, where then is my subjectivity located? Is it supplanted or annihilated? Is human agency dissolved, or at least diminished, in light of this comprehensive Subject? Quite the contrary, advances Barth. The believer discovers two things: 1) that “the only ultimate and really serious determination...is that which proceeds from Jesus Christ. Ultimately in the true sense he [the believer] is no longer the subject.” And 2) “In and with [the believer’s] subjectivity he has become a predicate to the subject Jesus Christ, by whom he is both justified

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<sup>26</sup> Rom 7:18; 1 Tim 1:15 (which Barth opines as Pauline; *CD* II/2, 430); Gal 2:20. Also, compare Gal 2:20a with Rom 6:6 to see two aspects of the one event, the former emphasizing the single subject as a whole (I have been crucified with Christ), the latter emphasizing the *peccator* determination of the counterfeit subject (for we know that our old selves have been crucified with him). Interestingly, Gal 2:20b returns with the converse to Rom 6:6, emphasizing the *iustus* determination of the new and true self in Christ (nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me)!

<sup>27</sup> It is of utmost importance that while Paul states either our “old man” was crucified with Christ (Rom 6:6; leading with the false predicate), or “I was crucified with Christ” (Gal 2:20; leading with the single subject), at no point does Paul say the “new man” was crucified with Christ. In following Paul, Barth thereby establishes two related facts: 1) that it is sin which is the problem, not human creation; 2) that sin is always embodied, and therefore it is the sinner who must die, not “sin” in some kind of extractable form. This begs the question: If there is a sense in which humanity’s good creation is not destroyed along with the “old man” at the cross, but instead renewed (revealing true, original “man” to be synonymous with the “new man”), does this logically infer that the true subject and true predicate, the one *iustus* human person in Christ, is preserved, albeit hidden, from creation straight through to redemption?

<sup>28</sup> *CD* II/2, 591.

<sup>29</sup> *CD* III/4, 389, 391.

and sanctified.”<sup>30</sup> In other words, in Christ the Creator, the human’s subjectivity, while second fiddle, is actually enhanced as it exists in fully dependent fashion on his or her true Subject-self.<sup>31</sup> This is what Barth calls the “non-autonomous life” of grace.<sup>32</sup>

## Two Slaveries

But even if the presence of these two *totus* determinations in human life is to be acknowledged, what exactly is the nature of these slaveries? What does it mean, for instance, when Paul describes Christians as “slaves to sin” or “slaves to obedience” (Rom 6:16)? Earlier we cited Barth employing the device of single subject latitude; at one point he even comments that the Christian “never chooses the right, only the wrong.”<sup>33</sup> By now I hope I have established the foundational basis for such a remark.<sup>34</sup> On Barth’s view, sin is categorically impossible, because it has no root in reality; it was not created, it will not permanently continue, but it can and does happen.<sup>35</sup> Persons sinning are acting irrationally and inherently destructively and must take responsibility for these actions. However, sin or disobedience does not occur in a vacuum; it is, consciously or unconsciously, a participation in the absurd anti-ontology of evil which is

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<sup>30</sup> *CD I/2*, 313. Notice the important phrase maintaining the integrity of the believer’s subjectivity: “In and with [the believer’s] subjectivity”

<sup>31</sup> *CD I/1*, 94: as revealed in Christ’s true humanity, notes Barth, “God is the subject from whom human action must receive its new and true name: not just a title tacked on; no, the name which belongs to it essentially and primarily as possible in the full supremacy of the will of its Creator and Lord.”

<sup>32</sup> *CD I/2*, 275.

<sup>33</sup> *CD IV/2*, 497.

<sup>34</sup> As with Barth’s apparently harsh treatment of the law (discussed in due course), it would be a mistake to take Barth’s graphic portrayal of wretched humanity—“absolutely useless, stupid, inhuman, dissipated and discontented”—as a comprehensive statement. To this he might say, “is humanity equivalent to sin? By no means!”

<sup>35</sup> Sin is painful and deadly now, even while it is ultimately and already exposed as a lie, “expiated and overcome by Jesus Christ, trodden underfoot and destroyed” (*CD II/1*, 158).

diametrically opposed to that of righteousness.<sup>36</sup> Paul is chagrined that even as a man of righteousness, he does things that he does not want to do, and does not do the things he wants. Twice in four verses Paul accredits his participation in evil to a force stronger than he: “Now if I do what I do not want to do, I prove that it is not I who do it, but sin living in me that does it” (7:20; also 7:17). Slavery is not too strong a word to describe the insidious nature of this kind of compelling.<sup>37</sup> It is a universal human bondage, a holistic wickedness which manifests glaringly in human addictions but which also lurks in the invisible air of systemic evils of which we are often unconscious participants.

But what about slavery to righteousness and obedience? To reverse Barth’s phrase above, the *iustus* self cannot sin, the “new man” always chooses the right, never the wrong. Importantly, if sinful disobedience does not occur in a vacuum, neither does righteous action. Human obedience occurs only inside of the Person—our true Subject-self—who is perfectly obedient in the will of God and who is incessantly sharing his personal obedience with us. Humans are personally responsible for their actions, but again with the caveat that they are participating in something, or more specifically in someone, beyond themselves, hence the Pauline formula, not I, but Christ (Gal 2:20).<sup>38</sup> Again, compelling is not too strong a word.<sup>39</sup>

In one’s true humanity one cannot and does not sin because he or she is by grace united to and participating in the Righteous one who is living in perfect filial obedience to the Father by

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<sup>36</sup> Barth believes that for Paul, being and act cannot be separated in the anti-ontology of “nothingness” any more than they can be separated in what I call his Christo-anthropological actualism.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *CD* IV/1, 588: The believer recognizes “I am not the master of my own house.”

<sup>38</sup> The syntax of Gal 2:20, “not I who live, but Christ who lives in me” is strikingly similar to Paul’s antithetical description in Rom 7:17 above, “not I who sin, but sin living in me.” Without being erased, both subjects are operating within the determinations in which they participate.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. 2 Cor 5:14: “for Christ’s love compels us....” Compelling is expressly *not* coercing.

the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>40</sup> Incessantly and unconsciously carried along in the High Priestly ministry of our human Brother, the Christian may consciously break forth into a life of worshipful gratitude, giving credit where credit is due. Human beings cannot escape the authority of their Lord, notes Barth, but in this unique authority—slavery to righteousness—they find the fullest freedom, personhood and authenticity.<sup>41</sup> Again Barth returns us to who is Jesus Christ and who he is for all individual people: “If He is for us, this means—and in the last resort this alone means—that with the eternal certainty proper to the Son of God *we too are present, genuinely participating in what He is and has done.*”<sup>42</sup>

### **The Interpretive Key: Christological Sequence**

But can true hope really exist within such an oppositional dynamic where the one person’s two determinations—the *peccator* self, which cannot obey, and the *iustus* self, which cannot *not* obey—exist in such radical contradiction? Even with the proposed *iustus* freedom the Christian claims as a bond servant of Christ, the acknowledgement of such a formidable nemesis might be

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<sup>40</sup> CD IV/2, 368: “the Holy Spirit affirms the one man and negates the other....He champions freedom against unfreedom, obedience against disobedience, our life against our death, the one possible thing against the many impossible.” For Barth, the “indication” of the Holy Spirit is in dynamic onto-unison with the “direction” of the Son (367).

<sup>41</sup> CD I/2, 273. As slaves to righteousness, our will is one with Christ’s. Barth defies the typical theological construct pitting God’s sovereign will against human self-determination: “we are bound. We cannot alter it. Our self-determination is still active, but it is imposed upon us. And in this fact we are free for God.” Cf. CD IV/2, 370; along with 1 John, Galatians 5 is another Barth favorite from whence to highlight the *simul*. If, in Barth’s words, “I am my true self only in the reality of my own free will,” then with Galatians Barth can say the opposite, “if he who is called to freedom...follows the lust of the flesh he necessarily does that which he does not will.”

<sup>42</sup> CD II/1, 156; emphasis added. Ironically for Barth, the most incorrect idea we can have concerning participation in Christ is to think we are not currently and actually participating! That is why instead of constantly urging Christians to participate, Barth often asks us to lay aside all concepts of “non-participation,” i.e., acting “as if He did not do it for us, for me, as if we, I, were not affected and determined by what He does” (CD II/2, 579-80).

enough to spiral us into the depths of discouragement, as if caught in the middle of a Manichean tug of war.

For Barth, hope's anchor is found in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus it is Christ's death-to-life *sequence* which functions as the critical element of interpretation in the simultaneous and apparently endless struggle. Mired in contradiction, Christians in the midst of the *simul* may, with eyes to see how the sequence of Jesus Christ's passion applies to them, live as those who have already died and face death as those who are already alive. The sequential informs the *simul* by continually bringing to bear the all important sequence of Jesus Christ's person and work, revealing the asymmetry of the two determinations and generating transformation under the sound of the gospel. Hopefully it is obvious that without the universal application of Christ's humanity as rooted in Romans 5, i.e., without the involuntary implication of every human in the soteriological sequence of Christ's person and work, all talk of sequence will invariably fall back on some form of existential and relatively arbitrary marker of "sequence." Christians are not justified by their faith any more than they are regenerated by their baptism, although human moments of faith and baptism are certainly witnesses derived from the sequence which contextualizes them.<sup>43</sup> For Barth, it is always the sequence of Christ which is in primarily in view, i.e., Christ's sanctification and conversion on humanity's behalf, not the believer's own.<sup>44</sup> In fact, the believer's own sequence—witnessed to in faith and sacrament—is transformative precisely because it is secondary. But can we say more about how sequence functions in the midst of the simultaneous?

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. I/2, 206; "We can end with baptism only if we have begun with baptism."

<sup>44</sup> CD IV/2, 514.

I have argued that Barth's Christological understanding equips him for affirming Paul's statements regarding simultaneity and sequence without marginalizing either. Nowhere is this more evident than in his reading of Romans 6. This chapter Barth names the "the *locus classicus* for this differentiation, demarcation, and separation of that which is radically impossible for the Christian (in view of his Lord) from the one thing which is alone possible."<sup>45</sup> To grasp the sequential clarity of Romans 6, Barth first returns us to the notions of impossibility and possibility. Those who regard themselves as "dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Rom 6:11) recognize sin and death to be categorically impossible in light of the real and indicative dynamics of human righteousness, freedom and obedience in Christ. Barth picks up on the places where Paul draws the demarcation line as thickly as possible: "When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness" (6:20). Here is no zero-sum fluidity involved between sin and righteousness, just the stark, mutually exclusive facts. The same is true in the other direction in regards to freedom and slavery: "You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God" (6:18). Together these statements appear at first glance to describe individuals in a simple before-and-after sequence; in other words, "you were a slave to sin, now you are slave to God."

As alluded to above, Romans 6: 1–10 reflects pure sequence, centered as it is around baptism and new life. We died with Christ, Paul exhorts, adding that "anyone who has died has been freed from sin" (6:6-7). Romans 6:17-22 is also heavily sequence oriented. However, just as apparent to any astute reader is the mid-section of the chapter, 6:11-16, where Paul seems to ignore his clear-cut demarcation of the before-after sequence. These verses portray the Christian

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<sup>45</sup> *CD IV/2*, 370-71 (italics original): Barth calls 1 John the premier Johannine expression of this duality, "like a very short and concise summary" of Romans 6 (371).

in the balance, conflicted between the two slaveries of sin and righteousness. Exegetically, how do we explain the fact that the past tense indicatives do not match up with the present tense imperatives? For instance, if we definitively died with Christ and died to sin, as the indicatives of Romans 6: 5, 6, 7, 8 explain, then why the present imperatives of 6:11,12 and 13 cited below?

So you also must count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, since you are not under law, but under grace (Rom 6:11-14).

The imperative that implores Christians to live *as those who have been brought from death to life* would be absolutely senseless if Paul's hearers were acting, or could act, solely in correspondence to the righteous truth of their lives and not in the vein of falsehood. Why would Paul urge Christians to count themselves dead to sin if there was not a temptation and even a likelihood for Christians to "count" themselves differently? According to Paul's words above, Christians are not merely bothered by sin as if it is an antiquated nuisance; on the contrary, Christians may in fact find themselves enslaved to sin and mastered by evil. "Do not let sin reign" must be taken deadly seriously. Surely Paul's warning against the *present* slavery of sin is too strong to neglect, no matter how much attention is given to the before-after sequence.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Words and phrases such as "flesh patterns," "residue," and "remnant" are often used to explain the remaining presence of sin which is supposed to be continually diminishing in believers. For Barth these descriptions (*contra totus peccator*) are not strong enough to describe the encounters and experiences believers face in present struggles with sin. These anemic descriptions are arguably less biblically sound than the *simul* because they both ignore the *totus iustus* and *totus peccator* simultaneity of Romans 7; in addition, they employ a zero-sum game which compromises the force of sequence-driven passages in Romans 6 and elsewhere (cf. 2 Cor 5:17, "the old has gone, the new has come," which, without denying simultaneity, Barth instead views as indicating the asymmetry—the "old" has no future; *CD III/1*, 108). Barth does speak of sin as an anachronism in light of the unadulterated truth of the fully accomplished redemption of humanity in Jesus Christ, and he will even speak of the "old man" as the "ghost of subjective individualism" in ultimate comparison to the "new man" (*CD III/4*, 201; cf. *CD IV/1*, 568). However, because humans exist in the overlap of the ages, sin and its myriad manifestations, instead of

With all the emphasis in 6: 11-16 on the simultaneous struggle, Paul appears quick in subsequent verses (17-18)<sup>47</sup> to guard against a pendulum swing threatening to downplay the definitive Christological sequence he has established. Such a result could only revert to an emphasis on arbitrary existential elements/qualifiers which backtrack from the finished work of Christ, translating the robust ontology of our life and death in Christ into hypothetical or metaphorical terms. Note above that Paul does not urge his hearers to live *as if* they have been brought from death to life, but to live “*as those who have* been brought from death to life” (6:13, emphasis added). We have already noted the ramifications for sanctification when, devoid of actualist ontology, existential<sup>48</sup> experience or even the sacrament of baptism is allowed to carry the freight.<sup>48</sup>

### Coherent Coinherence

It is obvious that Paul’s readers in Chapter 6 have had a *metanoia* event, involving life-changing epistemic awareness of their implication in the Christ event: “But *now* that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life”

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purely past, can only be described as past/present (overlapped with present/future). Rooted thusly in the heart of Romans, Barth’s *simul* provides an inherent guarantee against Gnostic spirituality and an over-realized eschatology.

<sup>47</sup> “But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.”

<sup>48</sup> Again, once a metaphorical or hypothetical element is introduced, anxious Christians can hardly avoid attempting to prop up their assurance through means of performance and self-assessment, or perhaps through a marker such as baptism. Because humans all are actually and ontologically included in Jesus’ baptism (particularly his death and resurrection), the sacrament of baptism has realistic and transformative content. Unfortunately, because the sacrament of baptism appears to be in view in the first part of Rom 6, (3-4), it can be misapprehended that what follows (i.e. Rom 6:5ff) is related first and foremost to the sacrament and those who have received it, and not to the actual Christological-anthropological event from which it derives. The ontological baptism of humanity in Christ is logically prior to the sacramental (e.g., note 43). Of course, for those who have received the sacrament, “We died to sin” (v.2) has double meaning.



(v22, emphasis added). What is Paul’s “now” referring to? Is he referring to the Christological sequence or to the human believer’s sequence? On Barth’s reading, there is no need to separate the two to artificially ensure a distinction. Barth does not want to denigrate the spiritual experience of the believer; at the same time he refuses to reduce what we might call a “born anew” episode to an isolated sequence, as perhaps something similar to, or parallel, to Christ’s. Instead, Paul’s “now” likely means from the new point when his hearers recognized and experienced the reality of Christ in profound fashion, awakening to a relationship which had always been theirs.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, Barth’s theological realism—the fact that one’s personal relationship with Christ always precedes one’s experience of it—is what gives the relationship its “concrete” stability.<sup>50</sup>

The phenomenal event of faith, then, is not new in one sense, but its revealed transformative power is incontestable. For Barth, to “walk in newness of life” (6:4) corresponds to humanity’s rebirth in the resurrection of Christ.<sup>51</sup> In 6:17-22 Paul is therefore emphasizing a Holy Spirit awakening *to* the Sequence, from *within* the Sequence, and even while the believer remains in *simul* contradiction. In other words, Paul is upbraiding his people to live in correspondence to what Christ has proven to be the deepest present-and-future reality of their lives, without at all dismissing the idea that these Christians will inevitably still flounder in the other determination—what Christ has made ultimately impossible. All the while Paul constantly calls his hearers to the truest aspect of their lives as caught up in the sequence of Jesus Christ, the

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. CD I/1, 409: Barth says as much related to the “now” of Rom 5:11, “through whom we have now received this reconciliation.” He remarks, “to the extent that in the fact of revelation God’s enemies already are actually His friends, revelation is itself reconciliation. Conversely reconciliation...can only have the form of the mystery which we describe as revelation.”

<sup>50</sup> CD IV/3.1, 381: “God’s Yes to this man, like this man’s Yes to Him, is not abstract but concrete.”

<sup>51</sup> CD IV/2, 563.

sequence Barth calls the “movement of conversion.”<sup>52</sup> “But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient *from the heart* (v17).<sup>53</sup> To know Jesus Christ is to discover one’s inner *anthropos*, or inclusively translated, “inmost self” (7:22) which delights in obedience.<sup>54</sup>

In Barth’s view from Romans 6, then, the Christian is urged to take one’s death with Christ “literally,”<sup>55</sup> but not sequentially *only*. “I was and still am the old man,” states Barth, “I am and will be the new man.”<sup>56</sup> *Simul* sanctification involves understanding “the already but not yet” as going in both directions: I am already free from sin, but not yet; I am already dead to sin, but not yet. Along with recognizing “the already but not yet” as a bilateral movement, proper interpretation also demands that the “already” aspect of both directions cannot in any way be compromised. The “already” is the note of force in the equation which derives from the sequence of Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection. Knowing the sin and righteousness in their one person, Paul and our Swiss Dogmatician are both keen to insist that their hearers maintain the interpretive key of Christological sequence in the midst of the simultaneous. Existing within the overlap of old and new, recognizing “old” as “false” and “new” as “true” will help believers to live in the “already-truth” of their overlapped lives. Christians may be as likely to live in the past of their present (Barth’s “was and still am”) as in the future of their present (Barth’s “am and will be”) but they keenly desire to avoid wrong-headed notions and to live by the Spirit in their right

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<sup>52</sup> CD IV/2, 560.

<sup>53</sup> Emphasis added. It could be argued that this is another allusion to the *iustus* dimension, the true and new humanity which already and actually loves God whole-heartedly. Importantly, the true self cannot be discovered by looking directly for it, but only in Christ can one find one’s true identity. Along with the possible reference to the “*iustus* heart” in 6:17, see also 5:5, 8:27 (and also 2:15, 2:29, 10:8).

<sup>54</sup> Again, “the inmost self” is the inner *man* (*anthropos*, cf. 2 Cor 4:16; Eph 3:16; 1 Pet 3:4), the “new man,” the true self, the *iustus* self, the created and redeemed self always in contradistinction to the “old man,” the false self, the *peccator* and fallen *anthropon* (Col 3:9)

<sup>55</sup> CD IV/1, 295, cited earlier.

<sup>56</sup> CD IV/1, 544. The “saying” in quotes is my succinct paraphrase of Barth. Barth’s actual quote in CD: “I was and still am the former man....I am already and will be the latter man.”

minds. In the midst of the simultaneous, the sequence of Jesus Christ, in which all are implicated, visits us with power by the Holy Spirit.

## Two Laws?

For Barth, victorious living in the sanctified life is meant to be embodied from within the *simul*, not in a non-conflicted idealistic “beyond.” To wit, Barth’s adamant remark: “Rom. 8 is unthinkable ...without Rom. 7 understood, not as a glance back at the past, but as an assertion about the present and about the whole temporal future even and especially of the Christian.”<sup>57</sup> Keeping with Barth’s insistence, to what degree can we recognize the beginning of Chapter 8 as congruent with the *simul* theme as it has been thus far elucidated? We are familiar with the two slaveries, but beginning in 7:21 we recognize that Paul is speaking of two “laws.” Up to this point, Paul has spoken of the one Mosaic law<sup>58</sup> with its two aspects: the law is holy (7:12); it also arouses one’s sinful passions (7:5). But in view of the one law, what do we make of Paul’s introduction of “another law” warring against his “inner man” and the good law in which he delights (7:22-23)? It should not surprise us that Barth views these two laws of Romans 7 as reflective of the two determinations of the *simul*, elaborated upon in the first verses of Chapter 8 (v.2): “the law of the Spirit of life” and its parasitic rival, “the law of sin and death.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> *CD I/1*, 466: Barth is continually adamant about recognizing the carry-over of the *simul* from Chapter 7 to 8. Cf. *CD II/1*, 120, 627; also *CD IV/1*, 591: even in Rom 8 “the ‘both together’ has not completely disappeared, nor has the ‘wretched man’ of Rom 7.”

<sup>58</sup> To avoid confusion between “law” and “law,” I use law in its general sense as the Mosaic “law and the prophets.” In keeping with Barth’s tendency, I have chosen to capitalize Law only when it refers to its purest form (as in Word of God incarnate), i.e., where torah is truly Torah.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. *CD II/2*, 604, for Barth’s direct linkage between 7:14 and 8:2.

Instead of one law with two nuances, Paul here has inverted the equation, presenting two underlying laws—or principles—upon which the one law is in torque. In Barth’s view, the “law of the Spirit of life” and the “law of sin and death” are not referring to the Mosaic law directly, but neither are they unassociated. They point to the two determinations of humanity’s *simul*, but even more deeply they reflect what Barth calls “the original antithesis between God and nothingness.”<sup>60</sup> By loosening his hearers from their default tendency to start with Mosaic law, Paul’s flipped derivative questions the degree to which the law is congruent with the most vital law, the Law of the Spirit of Life. This explains Paul’s conflicted relationship with the law, for he disavows it to the extent in which it is co-opted by the *peccator* determination. In other words, being given perfectly by God as purely good and holy, the Law is inevitably received by, and implemented by, sinful people in twisted ways;<sup>61</sup> at this point, before one can ever grasp it in its pure form, the Law devolves into the “law, weakened by the flesh” (8:3). “The Law of the Spirit of life,” Barth surmises, is “the Law of God...in its inmost concealed substance.” It is also “the law of sin and death (Rom 8:2) in its form and effect.”<sup>62</sup>

In *simul* terms, then, the two laws of Romans 8:2—the law of the Spirit of Life (A), and the law of sin and death (B)—reach back to correspond neatly with the two Christian testimonies at the end of chapter 7 (v. 26): (a) I am a slave to God’s law and (a) in my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin. The subsequent statements about the “law” in 8:3 and 8:4, then, are further

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<sup>60</sup> CD III/1, 120, 123. While beyond the purview of this study, it is the “unreality” of evil, what Barth calls “nothingness” or “chaos,” which poses an even greater threat than human sin to God’s good creation. On Barth’s view, even before creation God enters into the original antithesis from below, putting himself under the derivative contradictions light and darkness, righteousness and sin.”

<sup>61</sup> Barth takes the same tack in debunking all versions of natural revelation.

<sup>62</sup> CD II/2, 589.

correlates to these underlying oppositional movements (A)-(a)-(aa) the just requirement of the law (8:4), and (B)-(b)-(bb) the law, weakened by the flesh (8:3).<sup>63</sup>

But what about verses which seem to ignore the law all together? Most apparent in this connection are Rom 6:14, “you are not under law but under grace,” and 7:6, “now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive.” Barth notes that together these texts seem to make a strong “statement” against the law. However, Barth retorts, “The Law of God is not affected by this statement. On the contrary, this statement is the most positive indication of the fulfillment of the Law.”<sup>64</sup> In other words, Paul is not chipping away from the integrity of the Law, only chiseling away all that is un-Law. “There is for Paul a Law,” Barth asserts, “the continuance and validity of which he never thought to question.” Thus, suggests Barth, to say one “died to the law” (Rom 7:4) is Paul’s way of saying we died to the flesh in Christ and *therefore* to the law as it finds its negative expression.<sup>65</sup> Would Barth give us permission to say the same thing about humanity that he says about the Law?—i.e., could we say ‘there is for Paul a true, *iustus* humanity, the continuance and validity of which he never thought to question?’ Indeed it should be clear that what Barth is doing with the law is comparable to Barth’s theological treatment of humanity; both are characterized in *simul* fashion.<sup>66</sup> In their Christ-centeredness, both the law in its inmost substance and humanity in its inmost being are good and holy. At the same time, both in their anti-Christ dimensions are lethal. As with temporal humanity, what is said about *either* dimension—the law’s good dimension or the law’s lethal dimension—can be said about the one law.

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<sup>63</sup> CD I/2, 396.

<sup>64</sup> CD IV/1, 583.

<sup>65</sup> CD IV/1, 582.

<sup>66</sup> CD II/2, 591.

It is this familiar single subject duality, a duality which like dualism gives the pseudo-law a life of its own, which makes interpretation concerning Paul's "law" tricky at best.<sup>67</sup> The challenge of interpretation is heightened further when Barth presents Paul as combining multiple single subject dualities into the singular metaphor of Rom 7:1-6—that of the Person of Christ (hidden), the person (represented by the wife) and the law (represented by the two husbands). The two husbands of Paul's metaphor represent for Barth the two dimensions not only of humanity—they are the "old man" and the "new man"—but also of the law. In the death of the old self, "the law of this man...has lost its validity," while in "this Other, their Liberator, Jesus Christ risen from the dead...they are free for life under this law...the Law of the Spirit of life."<sup>68</sup> The second husband, then, represents Christ, the "new man," and the Law, properly understood. To these the single subject truly belongs (7:4).

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<sup>67</sup> Paul's illustration is distilled as a wife with two husbands or as the two husbands of one wife, or, the two laws of the one person and the one person of the two laws (an implicit chiasmic structure). When the attention is on the one person (wife) with the two husbands (laws), Barth sees the one person (wife) with two sequential husbands, the "old man" and the "new man" of the wife; when the attention is on the two husbands (laws), Barth sees the unspiritual law and the spiritual law as the two simultaneous aspects of the one law. What is hidden throughout is that Jesus Christ defines the righteous aspect of all of the positive layers—the Law of the Spirit of Life, the "new man," and the spiritual/divine law (in that order), and he also defines all of the negative layers—the law of sin and death, the "old man," and the unspiritual/abstract law (in that order). Cf. *CD IV/1*, 583 where Barth's interpretation of the second husband puts the Law of the Spirit of life, Jesus Christ himself, and true humanity in as close of relationship as possible: "This law is itself the *other man* for whom according to Rom. 7:3, man has become free with the death of the first man. It has nothing to do with sin (v.7) and with death (v. 13)"; italics represent Barth's original Greek. Seen in this fashion with Barth, the overt emphasis of 7:1-6 is the sequence of moving from the wife's one husband to the other as couched in the death and resurrection of Christ. "Her husband, or rather ours, has been put to death. That is to say, we ourselves in the lusts of our sins, our being in the flesh, the end of which can only be death (v. 5). It is all up with him." Paul's emphasis on sequence here in 7:1-6 provides the critical interpretive undercurrent for the subsequent emphasis on simultaneity. On Barth's view, 7:1-6 is therefore the "controlling statement" of Romans 7 and should not be isolated (*CD IV/3*, 210).

<sup>68</sup> *CD III/2*, 304-5.

The death of the “old man” is not the death of humanity any more than one’s death to the law (7:4, 6) extinguishes the law.<sup>69</sup> For Barth, then, Christ being the “end of the law” (Rom 10:4) can never be thought of as meaning the termination of the true Law, but through a deeper, proper understanding of the Law, founded on and fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the “ignorant adoption and application of the Law” is exposed.<sup>70</sup> That is why Paul’s language regarding the impotence of the law refers to the commandment as it is “heard unspiritually and without Christ”—this in contradistinction to one hearing “the commandment in the commandment.”<sup>71</sup> This “divine Law”<sup>72</sup> for Barth is perfect, and it is spiritual (Rom 7:14),<sup>73</sup> but it is opposed by the “abstract law”<sup>74</sup> which could only ignore the Law’s relation to Jesus Christ. The divine Law, the commandment within the commandment, is simply Jesus Christ’s life for humans whose location is in Him. The “law of liberty” (James 2:12), notes Barth, describes the “original and ultimate unity” of law and gospel that Luther largely failed to apprehend.<sup>75</sup>

But if it is true that I cannot discern the heart of the law from the outside any more than I can pull and apart and assess the *iustus* and *peccator* determinations of my humanity,<sup>76</sup> how do I

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<sup>69</sup> Even though the death of the first husband could lead in that direction, Paul never says the law died, only that the single subject died to the law (cf. Gal 2:19).

<sup>70</sup> *CD* II/2, 244. With his deeper understanding of the Law, founded and fulfilled in Jesus Christ, Barth resists a view of a law which has served its purpose and can be readily disposed of once Christ is introduced. Cf. *CD* IV/1, 583: Barth cites 1 Cor 9:21 in this vein, “rejecting the claim that he was *lawless*, Paul calls himself *under the law of Christ*.” Italics represent Barth’s original Greek.

<sup>71</sup> *CD* I/2, 274.

<sup>72</sup> *CD* I/2, 274.

<sup>73</sup> Barth does not tire of making the interconnection between the “spiritual” law of Rom 7:14 and the Law of the Spirit of life (Rom 8:2). Cf. *CD* I/2, 311; II/2, 579; IV/1, 587.

<sup>74</sup> *CD* III/3, 307. Continuing his discussion of the conflicted law in a parallel vein with conflicted humanity, Barth calls the “old man” the “abstract I” (*CD* III/4, 388).

<sup>75</sup> *CD* I/2, 311. For further reference to Barth’s criticism of Luther on this score, cf. *CD* II/2, 589, 592. In the epistle of James, Barth sees the “real Law” where Luther sees only the law seized by the flesh unto disobedience. It precisely for this reason that Barth cannot agree with Luther that the book of James should be jettisoned from the canon (*CD* I/1, 457).

<sup>76</sup> *CD* III/4, 236: “How could man himself make this distinction? He is both the one and the other of these two creatures, and therefore he cannot separate himself from himself, freeing his real self from his false

know if I am hearing the commandment spiritually or unspiritually? Again we are back to the “subject” of the law. Hearing the commandment rightly is to know the commander.<sup>77</sup> In Barth’s view, both true humanity and true law have this in common: they begin with Jesus Christ and are meant to be grasped, by faith, from the inside out.

### **Jesus Christ Clothed in the Law**

But again, when Jesus meets the just requirements of the law for us, to what extent are we involved? In Barth’s view, the fact that the real human, Jesus Christ, *did* and *does* fulfill the law for us means not only that we may fulfill it, but that as Christ does it for us, we in our true humanity, by the Holy Spirit, are doing it with him.<sup>78</sup> It is clear that for Barth the “Law of the Spirit of Life” is the perfectly faithful and obedient humanity of Jesus Christ; in other words, to be *in Christ* and *in the Spirit* is not two separate things.<sup>79</sup> Because the true humanity of Christ is the humanity in which all persons are fundamentally located,<sup>80</sup> and because the Holy Spirit guarantees that this is a dynamic movement of all humans participating in Christ, this law is as involuntary as it is irresistible.<sup>81</sup> It includes all subjective, agential aspects of created human life in right relationship with God. In Barth’s view, what Paul terms slavery to righteousness is simply “man in his natural relationship with God.”<sup>82</sup>

Our Cartesian sensibilities resist Barth’s redefinition of freedom. However, his vision of all persons irresistibly caught up as participants in Christ and the Spirit arguably provides the

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self, pulling himself out of the quagmire by his own forelock. But God can make this distinction and achieve this rescue, and He does so. Intervening, God sides with the former against the latter...summoning his good creature against the transgressor.”

<sup>77</sup> CD I/2, 274.

<sup>78</sup> CD II/1, 156; cited earlier.

<sup>79</sup> CD I/1, 453.

<sup>80</sup> CD IV/2, 519.

<sup>81</sup> CD III/3, 118.

<sup>82</sup> CD III/2, 365.



highest view of creation imaginable. Barth is emphatic that the gospel is only good news, it is only liberating, *because* of its authority as the law of our humanity, where the imperatives and indicatives perfectly merge in Christ.<sup>83</sup> In the law of the Spirit of Life, the Christian in her *iustus* determination is living in this world with God's prerogative to define for her the concepts of human love, freedom and obedience. Invisibly before visibly,<sup>84</sup> subconsciously before consciously, she is actually loving the Lord with all of her heart, soul, mind and strength;<sup>85</sup> she is a freely obedient hearer and doer of God's will.<sup>86</sup> This is the law of humanity for Barth, the "norm" of human "orientation." One can receive this authority of grace with contempt (in the flesh) or with contentment. The latter "accept God's action as right, and...live and act as those who have done and do and will do this in and above everything." Ideally this contentment ushers forth into "joyful participation, or better, with the burning and exclusive desire to be obedient." The implications of Barth's claim are staggering: the imperative to love God with all one's heart,

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<sup>83</sup> CD IV/3.1, 12: "The Yes of Jesus demands recognition and consent on the part of those who hear it, but it does not need recognition and consent on the part of those who hear it to be true and valid and thus to claim recognition and agreement with absolutely compelling force. The Yes of Jesus triumphantly bears in itself the positive acceptance proper to it. It triumphantly bears in itself its own Amen. It is for this reason that it is a mighty promise awakening faith and a mighty claim demanding obedience."

<sup>84</sup> CD I/2, 394-396. Here Barth is careful not to confuse the visible and invisible with metaphysical dualism.

<sup>85</sup> CD I/2, 395-96. In virtue of God's covenant of extravagant grace with all humanity, Barth can speak of loving God as a "compulsory" commandment—"the law of love imposed upon us." Cf. also CD II/2, 580.

<sup>86</sup> CD I/2, 240; quoting Barth at length: "In Christ" means that in Him we are reconciled to God, in Him we are elect from eternity, in Him we are called, in Him we are justified and sanctified, in Him our sin is carried to the grave, in His resurrection our death is overcome, with Him our life is hid in God, in Him everything that has to be done for us, to us, *and by us*, has already been done....That is why the subjective reality of revelation as such can never be made an independent theme. It is enclosed in its objective reality....Therefore we have to say, and in principle it is all that we can say, that *we are brethren of the Son of God, hearers and doers* of the Word of God." Emphasis added. "Hearers and doers" is obviously an allusion to Rom 2:13, "For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God's sight, but the doers of the law."

soul, mind and strength is a light command for every person, simply because it is already actual for every person.<sup>87</sup>

Barth's actualism, which on his view is inherent in the Law of the Spirit of life, connects back to the sixth chapter and Paul's exhortation to live in correlation to the Christological reality (especially when noticing the exact Greek phrasing, in italics): "The death he died, he died to sins once for all, the life he lives, he *lives to God*. In the same way count yourselves dead to sin and *living to God* in Christ Jesus" (6:10-11). It follows that all for whom Christ died are *living to God*. Christians are those who count themselves as such. They thereby seek sacramental and ecclesial expression of their participation in this dynamic Christological claim, one to which all human beings are accountable.

Barth's understanding of the Law of the Spirit of life not only allows him to maintain the heart of the law as he sees in Paul, it also gives him an enhanced, albeit nuanced appreciation for a law in the Old Testament which is not in any way "against the promises." The Law of the Spirit of life is not only the "law of the Gospel,"<sup>88</sup> it is also the law of Jeremiah 31:33, the covenantal law of which Jesus Christ is the inherent meaning.<sup>89</sup> For humanity, the law's freedom is found in its binding power; the Law of the Spirit of life, asserts Barth, "is the law of [man's] own free act

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<sup>87</sup> CD II/2, 579-80.

<sup>88</sup> CD IV/1, 651.

<sup>89</sup> CD I/2, 311; cf. CD IV/2, 580: Barth describes God's covenant with his creatures, "it is He first who is for man, and then and for that reason man is for Him." In the reconciling act of Jesus Christ, God "silences the No of man and lays a Yes in his heart and on his lips." Because the covenant is prior to the fall, the quickening Spirit reveals that this dimension of human reciprocation to God is built into creation and never recedes, even if it is obscured. That is why Barth calls this moment of existential conversion a "radical recommencement," i.e., humanity's covenant faithfulness, as hidden in Christ's human faithfulness, emerges or breaks forth in human experience in spite of darkest obfuscation. Cf. also CD I/1, 453; "The act of the Holy Ghost in revelation is the Yes to God's Word which is spoken by God Himself for us, yet not just to us, but also in us....All these things, faith, knowledge and obedience, exist for man 'in the Holy Spirit.'"

apart from which he has no freedom to choose any other.”<sup>90</sup> Humanity under the law of Christ’s life in us and for us—the Law of the Spirit of life—is irresistibly free and irresistibly obedient; the fact that humanity does indeed resist can only demonstrate the lethal destructiveness of the law of sin and death. This “law of anomaly,” notes Barth, is an evil authority, “we might almost say a demonic right of wrong.”<sup>91</sup> It is an aberration, but one to which we are “irresistibly subject.”<sup>92</sup> In the “grossest act of treachery,”<sup>93</sup> sin pirates the law, “misinterpreting and misapplying the divine command.”<sup>94</sup>

Under the influence of the two irresistible underlying laws, the one Mosaic law “can only tear us in two,”<sup>95</sup> asserts Barth, yet in Jesus Christ “both the negative and the positive have already taken place.” By virtue of “the Law of the Spirit of life” this assures freedom *from* the law which kills (7:10,11), and freedom *for* the law of living unto God (Rom 6:10, 11).<sup>96</sup> In the death of Christ, “the true Law of God, revealed again in its proper substance as the Law of grace,” validates itself “in spite of its perversion by sin.” In this event human being is liberated “from the pernicious form of the Law of sin and death...cut loose from the distress which this Law necessarily causes him.”<sup>97</sup>

It follows, then, that to the extent that Paul or the Christian is living in this world in correlation to his *iustus* self—in the law of the Spirit of Life—he is obeying the torah, but the

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<sup>90</sup> *CD* IV/2, 580.

<sup>91</sup> *CD* IV/1, 584.

<sup>92</sup> *CD* IV/1, 585.

<sup>93</sup> *CD* I/2, 310.

<sup>94</sup> *CD* II/2, 727.

<sup>95</sup> *CD* II/2, 590.

<sup>96</sup> *CD* II/2, 591. Barth describes the “misused Law” as “fatally effective” (590).

<sup>97</sup> *CD* II/2, 592. Note that the unusual capital letter for Law in *CD* here reminds the reader of the uncanny aping of good by evil—a perceived symmetry exploded only by the power of the resurrection.

same cannot and should not be said in reverse.<sup>98</sup> Conveniently, when Paul says that “in my inner being I delight in God’s law,” whether “law” means the underlying Law of humanity in Christ, the law, or both, is not important, as long as the derivative is properly construed. From Barth’s viewpoint, it is only crucial that we grasp the “Law of the Gospel”<sup>99</sup> before we can discern the “Gospel in the Law.”<sup>100</sup> The only way to understand the apparent contradiction of Rom 7:10 (the commandment as death) and 7:12 (the commandment as holy, just and good), Barth notes, is to recognize “Jesus Christ Himself as the Gospel, revealed, proclaimed, offered to man and affecting him, is always clothed in the Law.”<sup>101</sup>

Without understanding the Law of the Spirit of Life as fundamental to the Adamic covenant, and logically primary to the Mosaic law, the reader of Romans may perhaps make the ill-fated attempt to fit Jesus into Israel’s covenantal torah instead of the other way around. As Barth concludes, “The law which does not have its basis and meaning in the Gospel, in the declaration of a revelation, benefit and election which are made already, of the grace of God as it is operative in Jesus Christ—that law is no real Law.”<sup>102</sup>

## Two Minds

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<sup>98</sup> To start with the torah is to become ensnarled in two competing predicates (aa) and (bb). But to the extent we participate in Jesus Christ, the proper human Subject, content, and fulfillment of the Law (A), we live in alignment with (a) and (aa), “the just requirement of the law” which is “fulfilled in us” (8:4). In sum, Torah is torah, but torah is not necessarily Torah. This is consistent with Barth’s treatment of Scripture as the Word of God.

<sup>99</sup> *CD IV/2*, 782-83.

<sup>100</sup> *CD I/2*, 396.

<sup>101</sup> *CD II/2*, 563: Barth adds, “That is why [Paul] can say in plain words and not in any sense hypothetically that only the doers of the Law shall be justified (Rom 2:13).” Barth perhaps is playing off of Calvin’s famous statement of Jesus Christ clothed in his gospel as a way of showing the unity of gospel and Law.

<sup>102</sup> *CD I/2*, 384.

If we reject the idea that Paul’s oppositional statements about the two laws and the two slaveries are meant for two different people (Christian—non-Christian), an idea that we have argued does not comport in Barth’s view to the overall fabric of Romans 5–8, then the *simul* as it continues to emerge in the text proves a faithful guide through the next section of the chapter. In view here especially is Romans 8:5-8:

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those 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. For this reason the mind set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law—indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Again two subjectivities are expressed, this time expressed as “two minds”—literally the mind of the flesh and the mind of the Spirit—controlled by opposite forces, two *totus* human psycho-determinations driven by flesh and Spirit, respectively.<sup>103</sup> If “the mind of the Spirit” here in Rom 8:5-6 (NASB) pertains to the human mind in the Spirit, this should not be confused with the mind of the Spirit in Rom 8:27, which pertains to the Spirit himself. While the mind of the Spirit is universally given to humans by grace alone, in Barth’s view of Romans chapter 8 it would be foolish to assert that this mind is unopposed: “there is still present, and obviously known at first

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<sup>103</sup> The NRSV obviously slants this passage (8:6-7) to a focus on the one subject, the one who “sets” his or her mind on either the Spirit or the flesh. This obscures the severe delineation of the two totally separate minds (subjectivities) in 8:6, the mind of the flesh and the mind of the Spirit (or at least the mind set on the flesh/Spirit). It follows that in 8:7 the NRSV loses the more literal “the mind of the flesh is hostile to God.” A further note: in some translations the flesh has been mistakenly represented as “the sinful nature” (NIV 1986). The flesh is essentially everything anti-human in nature, sinful through and through; it is comprehensively opposed to true human being in the Spirit. There is only one human nature, that created and redeemed in Jesus Christ, and filled with the Spirit. However, because the flesh (*sarx*) is comprehensively anti-human and because it transcends physical corruption and foists a mirrored corruption on every level, “sinful nature” can communicate the seriousness of its effects and is not an un-useful equivalent for the “old man.” Cf. *CD* IV/1, 165: “‘Flesh’ is the concrete form of human nature and the being of man in his world under the sign of the fall of Adam—the being of man as corrupted and therefore destroyed, as unreconciled with God and therefore lost.” The holistic term “sinful nature” is especially apt if the flesh is mistakenly relegated to spatial parameters, as in “outer” or “body” (versus “inner” and “mind,” respectively). For more on the parasitic “mirroring” attempted by the flesh, even at the pneumatological level, see Barth’s equation of the “spirit of bondage” (Rom 8:15) to Job 20:3, Is 29:24, Zech 13:2, and 2 Cor 11:4 (*CD* III/2, 358).

hand, an ungodly *mind of the flesh*, a possibility of being or walking *in the flesh* which is continually to be assigned to nothingness but which continually returns and threatens (Rom 8:4f).” This “*desire of the flesh*” is one “which resists the Spirit and which the Spirit for His part must also resist (Gal 5:16).”<sup>104</sup> In their *peccator* minds, humans sow to the flesh and reap destruction; in their *iustus* minds, humans sow to the Spirit and reap everlasting life. Because Barth believes eternal life is a dimension of this life, his comment here is not to be taken simply as futuristic or eschatological talk. The important point is that these opposite mindsets and their mutually exclusive “sowings” exist in every person. Even for the Christian, notes Barth, “it cannot be taken as a matter of course that man will sow to the Spirit.”<sup>105</sup> In fact, for Christians experiencing the freedom of Christ, the fact that they are still prone to wander egregiously “can only mean (8:5f) that they are still confronted in the flesh and therefore with that old sinful man.”<sup>106</sup>

It cannot be emphasized enough that for Barth the two dimensions of flesh and Spirit co-exist in temporal human beings without division, separation, mixture or confusion, just as they did in the original incarnate human being who was both true and false humanity in himself<sup>107</sup> — he who was Resurrection and Life, even in his death.<sup>108</sup> Barth would therefore have us let the person of Christ, the one who said flesh gives birth only to flesh and Spirit gives birth only to

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<sup>104</sup> CD IV/3, 210. Italics represent Barth’s original Greek.

<sup>105</sup> CD IV/3, 210.

<sup>106</sup> CD II/2, 592. Interestingly, in this passage Barth uses quotation marks to communicate the accidental, relativized nature of Christians being in the flesh: they are “in the flesh” but they are not truly, fundamentally, in the flesh (they are in Christ).

<sup>107</sup> CD IV/1, 573, CD II/2, 350; other Chalcedonian allusions related anthropologically to the “old and new man,” and therefore to the *simul*, can be found in CD IV/1, 407, 494, 544; CD IV/2, 399-400; IV/3.1, 379-80, 396. What we could call a “Chalcedonian anthropology” is purely provisional and not ultimately tenable.

<sup>108</sup> CD IV/1, 516-17.

Spirit,<sup>109</sup> interpret Romans 8 for us; in this we are given to see that the two determinations of the *simul* are not only evident, but assumed. The presence of the Holy Spirit (“the Spirit of Christ”, 8:9) works within Christ’s *simul* sanctification, and therefore within the universal human predicament. In effect, Paul is telling his hearers, ‘I would not even be writing you if the Spirit did not live in you’ (8:9).<sup>110</sup>

Importantly, if the *iustus* determination of humanity is inseparable from the law of the Spirit of life, proper theological boundaries must be maintained. Just as Jesus Christ is not conflated with *iustus* humanity, neither is the Spirit.<sup>111</sup> Yet for Barth, as he reads Paul, the Holy Spirit is the pneumatological equivalent to the mediation of Christ and the basis for Paul’s post-ascension understanding of the gospel. While Christ sits at the right hand of the Father interceding for humanity (8:34), the Spirit intercedes for us in accordance with God’s will (8:27), i.e., in accordance with the *iustus* determination of humanity, to which we are obligated (8:12). Those who keep in step with the Spirit show themselves to be God’s children (8:14).<sup>112</sup> Again with Barth we recognize that these manifestations may not be consistent; we may betray our

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<sup>109</sup> Jn 3:6.

<sup>110</sup> Rom 8:9: “But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.” For Barth, this verse describes “man in his natural relationship and orientation to God” (CD III/2, 366).

<sup>111</sup> This is why flesh and Spirit, while fitting into the *simul* template, are not perfectly equivalent to the old self–new self couplet as are the other oppositional relationships describing *peccator* and *iustus* humanity in Romans 5–8. Cf. CD III/2, 366: there can be “no thought of an equation between Spirit and man.” Here Barth does cite passages of the Spirit dwelling in humans (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19) as carrying not only a reference to Christians in the body of Christ but as also having “a more extensive anthropological truth and significance.” Cf. CD IV/2, 620: The Body of Christ is defined by Barth as “a provisional representation of the sanctification of all humanity and human life as it has taken place in Him.”

<sup>112</sup> Rom 8:14: “Those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.” It is important to note what Paul does and does not say. He does not say some persons are led by the Spirit and some are not. Neither does he state that people apparently resisting the Spirit are not children of God. Being led is not something humans decide; we *are* led! Some visibly follow better than others, demonstrating on occasion that they are being led by the Spirit in the only way the Spirit of Christ can go, in the living direction to God (Rom 6:10; CD IV/1, 503). Cf. CD I/1, 457, where Barth elaborates on the inseparability of the Spirit and children of God.

newness of life, even after our baptism in the Spirit, choosing instead the way of the perishing. Participation from within the overlap of one's false and true self will always be mixed, therefore we can only say that we participate in the *iustus* dimension of our life *to the extent* that we do, but to that extent, we really do!

### **The Primal Cry**

The Spirit of Truth is the one who continually provides life to the *iustus* dimension of human beings, but how does the Spirit of Truth related to the *peccator* dimension? The Spirit has nothing to do with the flesh, but because in this multi-dimensional, transpositional existence it is impossible to know precisely where one's body of death (Rom 7:24) ends and one's spiritual body begins, Paul also testifies that the Spirit carries the load providing life for the overall singular person. Barth is sure that Paul's hearers are meant to understand themselves in the flesh as well as in the Spirit (Rom 8:10), both as defined by Christ.<sup>113</sup> It follows that in Rom 8:11 ("Now if he who raised Christ from the dead lives in you, he will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who lives in you") the life given to our "mortal bodies" should not be understood as merely future, post-mortem life but as signifying the struggle of *this* life, where the Spirit provides the only hope against the gravity of the flesh. Christians have not moved past "the inner conflict," says Barth, "they are wholly mortal"; yet, "if in spite of everything, they are living and holy, well pleasing to God, it can only be because the Holy Spirit dwells in them, because He is the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead."<sup>114</sup> That the Spirit is present to animate even the worst of sinners is intrinsic evidence of the Spirit's hidden ascendancy.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> CD IV/1, 311: Barth argues here that 2 Cor 5:17 should be understood in similar terms to Rom 8:10—in other words, in *simul* terms and not purely sequentially.

<sup>114</sup> CD II/2, 728-29. Barth again makes a direct connection of Rom 7:24 to Rom 8:11, i.e., the "wretched man" is not without the resurrection Spirit. Interestingly, elsewhere (CD IV/1, 590), Barth describes the



Could there be a better word than “groan” or “sigh” (8:22, 23, 26) to describe the conflicted nature of fallen creation and the person in *simul* contradiction, both in the midst of acute earthly distress? These are sufferings no one understands better than humanity’s truest intercessors, the Savior in solidarity with fallen humanity, and his Spirit. Barth highlights not only the Son’s and Spirit’s solidarity with humanity, but also their intimate relationship with one another. If it is the Spirit in human hearts who calls out “Abba, Father” (Gal 4:6), it is also humans in Christ, in the Spirit of Sonship, who cry the same (Rom 8:15). Barth states regarding the cry of Sonship that it is “the most basic and primal form of the command of God. This is what God’s command wants of us—the crying of the child, of the children who have at last found their father again, have at last been found by him...at last been freed from the nerve or lever of sin.”<sup>116</sup> That “Abba, Father” is not merely humanity’s cry of deliverance but also its primal cry signifies that it is the original cry of creatures in the Spirit of adoption—humans adopted *into* ongoing participation as part of the fabric of their created personhood in the

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“body of death” in corporate terms, a parasitic mirroring of the body of Christ. Paul is speaking of “the nexus or fellowship of all men under the law of sin. It is the body of the death which is absolutely without a future, hopeless and non-redemptive. It is the body from whose context and association man must be torn and delivered if he is able to live.”

<sup>115</sup> Cf. *CD II/2*, 728-29: Barth remarks that in Romans 8 but also throughout the remainder of Romans, it should not surprise us that Paul is speaking to those whose struggle with the flesh is “the most characteristic thing proper to these Christians,” noting the admonitions Paul gives in Rom 12:2, 13:12 and 13:14. He continues, “The fact that we are still dealing with the man described in Romans 7—in his weakness as in his strength—ought to be plain from the sentence (13:3) which was once so important to St. Augustine, for according to this verse it was apparently not self-evident that ‘reveling and drunkenness...’ are not compatible with a walking *properly, as in the day*.” Italics signify Barth’s original Greek. While too long to quote here, there is a beautiful description of the Christian living in *simul* contradiction at the end of this section (732).

<sup>116</sup> *CD II/2*, 592.

Trinitarian Persons.<sup>117</sup> It follows that the conversion experience of believers born from above is a recommencement, “a beginning newly posited by God.”<sup>118</sup>

The second half of Romans 8 looks forward to the time when all will see creation restored and humanity redeemed. For Barth, Christians know they are saved, but only in hope (8:24). In other words, they manifest supernatural confidence, even if not free and clear of the painful reminders of the fall. Entangled in the throes of the *simul*, believers credit God for the first fruits of this heavenly Holy Spirit vision (8:23).<sup>119</sup> Empowered by the Easter message, they live on earth with active and anticipatory purpose. In hope, the Christian community eagerly awaits redemption’s final “manifestation”<sup>120</sup> (8:19) where creation, “set free from its bondage to decay,” celebrates the full revelation of the “freedom of the glory of the children of God” (8:21); these children are definitively separated forever, not from their true Father, but from the *peccator* self which has plagued them.

## **Conclusion: The Romans Road**

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<sup>117</sup> CD I/2, 275: “As those who cannot do it of ourselves, and never could, we have to participate when the Word does it.” This connects with Barth’s proposition that “Abba, Father” is the primal command of God for humans.

<sup>118</sup> CD IV/2, 563. On conversion as a new, or re-newed, beginning, Barth continues, “The walking *in newness of life* (Rom 6:4) which corresponds to the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a transformation (“metamorphosis,” Rom 12:2) which comes over man in the form of a *renewing of the mind*” (italicized phrases are Greek in Barth’s original).

<sup>119</sup> CD III/2, 494.

<sup>120</sup> CD IV/3, 210. “Manifestation” and “consummation” for Barth should not be confused with completion, as if Christ’s work will not been fully finished until later, i.e., until the *eschaton*. Therefore for Barth, not yet consummated simply means outside of “our circle of vision” (CD IV/3, 262). Cf. also CD III/3, 363; CD II/1, 630-31; CD III/2, 494; CD IV/3, 210.

We have seen how, for Barth, Romans 7 and 8 “form a unity which is not to be severed either biographically or factually.”<sup>121</sup> The narrative of two simultaneous “laws” which are “continually opposed”—the past/present law of sin and death, and the present/future law of the Spirit of life—should be recognized as running through both chapters (7 and 8).<sup>122</sup> Barth elaborates:

As plainly revealed in the life of Peter and the teaching of Paul, e.g., in Rom. 7 and 8, the new creation of man by the call of Jesus Christ does not exclude the fact that, although his sin and guilt are indeed behind him, they are behind him in such a way that they are still a potent factor in the present, so that he must continually receive afresh his freedom from them and allow himself to be set forward on the road ahead.<sup>123</sup>

In the midst of the simultaneous, Christians know the asymmetrical, Christological, context. They walk this Romans road by looking “back to the crucified and forward to the risen.”<sup>124</sup> Instead of simply being ignorant sinners, Christians are “disturbed sinners” with a testimony like Paul’s in Romans 7,<sup>125</sup> equipped with the over-riding confidence to know that their inner struggle is not reflective of an ultimate “equilibrium or see-saw.” In Barth’s view, the “inter-related” Romans 7 and 8 provide witness to not only the depth of the opposing, counterfeit “reality” of *peccator* humanity; they also point to the fact that the evil that enshrouds humanity is inferior—“infinitely less and fleeting and passing”—in relation to the *iustitia* of Christ and true, new and original humanity in him.<sup>126</sup> It is only fitting that connecting these two chapters is something of a two verse catechesis (7:24-25) reflecting the entire heart of Romans: “Wretched man that I am,

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<sup>121</sup> CD II/1, 120.

<sup>122</sup> CD II/1, 627.

<sup>123</sup> CD IV/3, 531.

<sup>124</sup> CD IV/1, 311.

<sup>125</sup> CD IV/2, 524.

<sup>126</sup> CD II/1, 627.

who shall deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” The Christian is one who knows not only this question, comments Barth, but also the answer.<sup>127</sup>

The Law of Christ—what we have alternatively called the Law of the Spirit of life, the divine Law, the command within the commandment, i.e., Christ’s life for us and in us (and we in him)—makes plain for Barth two important facts: 1) it exposes sin to be really bad; “Sin emerges from its anonymous existence when man encounters the self-revealing God and therefore his Law,”<sup>128</sup> and 2) it is a Law which provides for inherent ethical accountability: persons are “placed under discipline. They are put under the order of revelation. They are no longer free in all their sinfulness.”<sup>129</sup>

As we have sought to establish some of Barth’s biblical factors dictating his theology of the *simul* in the heart of his beloved Romans, it could generally be observed that the universal aspect of the *simul* is most notable in Romans 5, the severely sequential and starkly differentiated aspects of the *simul* in Romans 6, the simultaneous nature of the *simul* in Romans 7, and the overall victory and accompanying hope of our rescue from the *simul* in Romans 8. All of these strands together comprise the fabric of Barth’s understanding of Romans 5–8 and the emerging concept of humanity *simul iustus et peccator*. The last line of the first three chapters (5-7) reflect the *simul in nuce*<sup>130</sup> and form a sort of internally cohesive framework upon which hangs the culmination of the section. Indeed, Romans 8 is where we most poignantly peer into the

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<sup>127</sup> CD IV/1, 591.

<sup>128</sup> CD IV/1, 586.

<sup>129</sup> CD I/2, 361. Because of the built-in accountability in Barth’s actualism, moral license is not the problem it is under a static *simul* (Luther). In dynamic terms, Barth describes Jesus Christ as our most personal sanctification: “the being of man in Christ...is a strict and bold and stimulating matter. We shall learn to know its incisive consequences, and we shall then be amazed that anyone could be afraid of a false assurance” (CD IV/2, 272).

<sup>130</sup> Romans 5:21; Rom 6:23; Rom 7:25b.

mysteries of a Holy God who confronted the *simul* in solidarity with us.<sup>131</sup> It is here where believers may be emboldened in the Law of the Spirit of Life against all threat of the law of sin and death, and hence discover the Law as the Gospel.

It is the contention of this paper that the only way to keep together the sequential and the simultaneous aspects of Rom 5–8 is, with Barth, to make Jesus Christ the reference point to the historical *sequence* of every person’s salvation, establishing a real, unmitigated ontology for humans to participate in, and even while caught in the *simultaneous* contradiction of life and death in this present age. I have proposed that Barth’s reading of Romans is founded on a true Christological anthropology in deepest conflict with the pseudo-anthropology of the flesh. Such an assessment daringly points to the *simul iustus et peccator* existence of the incarnate Jesus Christ. In Barth’s own words, “God Himself, becomes one of His creatures...thus making His own its two-fold determination, its greatness and wretchedness, its infinite dignity and infinite frailty, its hope and its despair, its rejoicing and its sorrow. This is what has taken place in Jesus Christ.”<sup>132</sup> In his true, *iustus* humanity, and his simultaneous (albeit provisional) assumption of the false, *peccator* humanity, the Son of God is also the sanctified human who establishes the overall death-to-life sequence by which Christians interpret a contemporaneous life-and-death matrix.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Cf. Rom 8:3: “God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh....”

<sup>132</sup> CD III/1, 377. Barth never specifically uses the phrase *simul iustus et peccator* for the incarnate Christ, but on my view the association here, especially with the use of his familiar *simul* descriptor—“two-fold determination”—is unmistakable.

<sup>133</sup> Rom 8:17b is one of Paul’s many encapsulated short-hand statements reflecting the *simul*. The suffering and glory of humanity are both included in Christ (Rom 8:17). Human glorification is contemporaneous to human suffering, albeit hidden, i.e., humanity “glorified” (Rom 8: 30) is not simply future (CD IV/2, 278). Again it is the Christian who knows the clarifying gospel sequence in the midst of a confusing simultaneity; in Barth’s words “the contemporaneity of our being in both spheres is always to be understood as non-contemporaneity” (CD II/1, 627).

Caught within this matrix, Barth submits that one's personal sin, or even one's perception of the world's brokenness, is immeasurably deep and cannot be relativized by one's own self-analysis. There is always a quotient of self-deception in self-assessment. Instead of self-justifying attempts to lighten one's complicity in sin, Barth asks us to rely on the weight of Christ's person and work. In other words, in place of the arduous and dubious task of measuring Christian progress, for Barth the joyful assurance which leads to obedience flows from knowing the person Jesus Christ as one's "righteousness, sanctification and redemption."<sup>134</sup> To know Jesus Christ is to know with Holy Spirit certainty that both Christ's death and ongoing resurrection life, each of which already implicates all persons, provides *more* than a counter-measure to the immeasurable depths of human depravity.<sup>135</sup> "Convinced" of this, we therefore may live as "more than conquerors through him who loved us."<sup>136</sup>

Therefore life in the Holy Spirit means "already," even in the midst of the "not yet," to stand in the full truth of what, considered from our "not yet," is pure future, but on the strength of this "already," pure present, in which we can already live here and now, expecting the annulment of the duality.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> 1 Cor 1:30.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. *CD IV/2, 577*: in Barth's words, in the recurring miracle of the Spirit, "the teleology of the dispute" will validate itself in our experience. This happens acutely under the proclamation of Jesus Christ" (life) "and him crucified" (death) and in communities who intentionally "remember" in word and deed the simultaneous wholeness and brokenness of humanity derived from the witness of the humanity of God.

<sup>136</sup> Rom 8: 37-38.

<sup>137</sup> *CD II/1, 158*.

