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## ***The Problem of the Identity of Covenant Community in Paul's Epistles to the Galatians and the Romans***

### *Introduction*

Manuscripts of Christian writers and apologists from the end of the first and during the second century A.D. indicate that the Church of Christ had recognizable and affirmed identity which is seen as the patrimony and inheritance of apostolic teaching and sacrifice<sup>1</sup>. In the Epistle to Diogenetus, for example, the Church is called “the new people” — *καινὸν γένος*, a Christian is “the new man” — *καινὸς ἄνθρωπος*, his behavior or ethos is “the new behavior” — *καινὸν ἐπιτήδευμα*, and his faith, as the foundation of all these, is “the new (system of) doctrine” — *καινὸς λόγος*<sup>2</sup>. The affirmation of the “new” identity, which (identity) for the Church of 2<sup>nd</sup> century already represented her traditional and distinctive way of existence, in the former generation at the end of 1st century still was a crucial problem, a matter of major importance for the Church's survival. The Apostles, especially the Apostle Paul, are those who bore the burden of the struggle for establishing identity of God's people in Christ upon their shoulders. This applies in particular to St. Paul who has constantly found himself torn between the two worlds, two value and religious systems as well as two civilization concepts, — the Judaic and the Hellenistic ones. In Epistles to the Galatians and the Romans sublimate the author's intentions, recognizable in his other letters as well, to define and affirm the *new identity* of Israel as the people of God which now bears the identity of the crucified and resurrected man Jesus Christ, whom Paul, by the force of his own experience, declares to be the Son of God and the Savior (Messiah).

This study aims to, at least to some extent, examine what the Epistles to the Galatians and the Romans tell us about the challenges the Apostle Paul faced during his missionary work, while founding the Church among Gentiles, as well as about the methods he used in order to establish a recognizable and lasting identity of the Church, by confronting God's Revelation in the person of Jesus Christ with Judaic and Hellenistic heritage.

### *To Galatians*

Paul's Letter to Galatians, written c. 56 A.D., reveals passionate yearnings of the holy author to affirm the legitimacy and accuracy of his evangelizing ministry and mission.

<sup>1</sup> Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr, Hermas and many others, testify about the Church as a structurally and socially already defined and recognizable reality. The authors of the first post-Apostolic generation do not any more strictly deal with the problems of identity, but with other issues concerning the internal organization of the Church and the ethical testimony of her members.

<sup>2</sup> *The Epistle to Diogenetus*, chaps 1-2.

Throughout this process, passing, in a frank and self-critically intoned manner, through a freeing experience of a polemical overcoming of his own pharisaism and zealous experience,<sup>3</sup> the Apostle Paul tries to dismiss the grounds of his religious identity, which was based on the Law, and to re-establish his relation towards God, man, world and his own self on the experience of faith and grace given to him through Jesus Christ. Trying to preserve and restore the fruits of his mission and preaching among Christians in Galatia, Paul is critical of the rule-keeping principle, that is, of believing that obeying the Law is an assumption of participating in the covenant community of God and Israel. Namely, the Apostle has set his own example of being a pharisee and a zealous persecutor of the Church as an insufficient and existentially unsatisfactory way of partaking in this community. Paul's concept of justification by faith and not by the works of the Law exceeded the original purpose of the Epistle and became, in the process of ecclesial reception, a proclamation of the *new life* in Christ and of the grace of faith as an experience of justification free from any elements of the Law (Gal 2: 21). To put it simply, Paul builds a new identity of the covenant community, based on righteousness (ἡ δικαιοσύνη), as on the value criterion for those who possess the privileged identity of being God's people. Abandoning the concept of the Law, the Apostle of the Gentiles develops a specific universalistic value system<sup>4</sup>, based on the Person of Christ, his death on the cross and the Resurrection, a system rooted in the beginnings of the Old Testament history, in the conversion, faith and righteousness of Abraham (Gal 3:5-14). Paul strives to assign a new, different identity to the term justification<sup>5</sup> and to the whole community, as he wanted to separate this identity from the experience of subordination to the Law, of which (subordination) circumcision was a mere manifestation. He wanted to upgrade this term to the level of faith, for which intention he finds confirmation in the authority of the Old Testament revelation (Gal 3:11; Hab 2:4), while expecting its fulfillment in the Person of Jesus Christ and his economy of salvation. Paul is aware of the high-stakes context and understands that, if he fails to successfully connect the converted gentiles from Galatia with the abrahamic Old Testament inheritance regarding the universalistic concept of

<sup>3</sup> In Paul's self-presentation as a former Jewish zealot, Atsuhiko Asano sees an attempt of emphasizing the identity which, as something surpassed, is already far behind him, and as such dismissed. Consequently, Paul presents this to the Galatians, in the form of a value pattern, as a religious paradigm they need to dismiss, just as he dismissed it, in order to become the people of God through faith and grace. Subtly, at the very beginning of the Epistle, the Apostle Paul tries to conduct an identification of his own experience and the experience through which the Galatians must pass. See: Atsuhiko Asano, "Therefore, Paul's earlier life in Judaism and the Church are depicted as disjunctive, or rather, incompatible with each other.", *Community-Identity Construction in Galatians. Exegetical, Social-Anthropological and Socio-Historical Studies*, p. 83., T&T Clark International, A Continuum Imprint, London-New York 2005.

<sup>4</sup> J. Gager believes that Sanders contributed the most to the formation of the opinion in the context of the New Testament science, holding that the Apostle has not denied the covenant identity of Jewish people, but only extend it to Gentiles, thus abandoning the particularistic agenda of the Old Testament Judaism of Mosaic tradition and taking over the universalistic one of Abrahamic tradition, which he, admittedly, defines as also a particularistic one, just of "another kind". See John G. Gager, "Paul opposes Jewish particularism, but introduces a particularism of another kind, elsewhere it is said 'Paul makes the church in theory universal'", *Reinventing Paul*, pp. 46-48, Oxford University Press, New York 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Philip F. Esler proves in Galatians that the notion of righteousness represents an identity breaking-point and a distinguishing characteristic that devices Israel from the Gentiles. Striving for righteousness, in that sense, is an expression of the search for the legitimization of the identity of God's people, and as such is dominant in the writings of the Apostle Paul, i.e. in his preaching to the converted Gentiles. See: Philip F. Esler, *Galatians*, pp. 143-144., Routledge, London – New York 1998.

values, by affirming the justification by faith and not by the works of the Law, all his effort in proclaiming the Gospel will be in vain. Namely, if the proclamation of the new life in Christ would be entirely subordinated to the legal concept of justification, it would, for Paul, be false and inauthentic as such. Therefore Paul affirms only the pedagogical meaning of the Law, while denying its potential for righteousness (Gal. 3:21), understood as the measure of conformation to God through the One (whom Paul recognized in Christ) in whom, according to God's promise previous to the Law, all the nations will be blessed.<sup>6</sup> Christ is, for Paul, the bearer of righteousness and the justification of all people, not only the Jews, and thus provides the identity of those adopted by God in Christ to all who believe (Gal 3: 26-27). The positioning of faith as something constitutive of the identity, as Paul explains in the Letter to the Galatians, transforms all natural and social identities of those who have faith into a new identity, both of individuals as well as of the whole community, the identity lying in Christ, that is, the one identical with Him (Gal 3:28). Thus, at the end of the third chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians, Paul aims at the conforming belonging to Christ by faith and its rootedness in Abrahamic covenant tradition, as well as at the heritage in God's promise, which is how he traces an undeniable, legitimate and safe direction of the identity of his community in Galatia, defined by means of the two constitutive concepts – Abraham's conversion and Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. This place is among the crucial ones within the whole of Paul's sacred tradition, as it bears witness to the complete triumph of the concept of justification by faith, through which the converted Gentiles become legitimate heirs and possessors of God's promise in the experience of Christ's grace<sup>7</sup>, i.e., they become the people of God — Israel<sup>8</sup>. This is the moment where the sacred tradition returns from the particularistic limitations of Jewish legalistic concept of subordination to God's authority, back to the universalistic values of free communion with God within the experience of grace, given through faith in Christ's Sonship.

In chapter 5 of the Letter to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul returns to the previously formed opinion, elaborated in the Epistle to the Philippians, claiming that returning to the legal grounds of justification and ethical modeling of the community actually means turning away from Christ and the loss of grace (Gal 5:1-5). The ethos that Paul wants to affirm in the Church in Galatia is based on the identity of Other, whether the individual identity of a person or the corporate identity of a community. That is the reason for forewarning them that they are obliged to manifest their freedom as serving others out of love and not out of obedience to the Law<sup>9</sup>. The Apostle of the Gentiles indicates to the Galatians that their legitimate share in the mystery of God's promise fulfilled in Jesus

<sup>6</sup> Frank Thielman, "For Paul the law is necessary not only as a guide to Christian ethics but as a definition of Israel's (and the Gentiles') failure to keep the covenant and therefore of their need for God's eschatological, saving intervention", *From Plight to Solution – A Jewish Framework to Understanding Paul's View of the Law in Galatians and Romans*, p. 49., E.J. Brill, Leiden – New York 1989.

<sup>7</sup> Mika Hietanen, "The question of the inclusion of the Gentiles in the emerging Church was a decisive question, not only for Paul, but for the future of Christianity", *Paul's Argumentation in Galatians – A Pragmatic-Dialectical Analysis*, p. 79., T&T Clark International, A Continuum Imprint, London-New York 2007.

<sup>8</sup> P.F. Esler, *op.cit.*, "From this it is followed that a person could only be or become righteous by crossing the boundary separating Israelites from Gentiles to join the House of Israel", p. 143.

<sup>9</sup> F. Thielman, *op.cit.*, "Paul, on this view, is not suddenly saying that the law has a place in Christian ethics (he has after all just forbidden the Galatians from practicing circumcision), but that Christian ethics overwhelm and, by overwhelming, supersede the Jewish law", p. 51.

Christ, affirmatively corresponds with their responsibility which they have through their faith and freedom. Responsibility for others, based on love, represents the fulfillment of the Law (Gal 5:14)<sup>10</sup> which is how Paul legitimizes not only community but also himself as an authentic recipient of Christ's Revelation, confirming in this way his apostolic authority and the authoritativeness of his mission. Thus our Apostle completes his address to the Galatians by unifying the truth of his proclamation of Gospel, which he did not receive from man but through the straight and personal revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal 1:11-12), with the truth of the identity of the community, which he freed from the subordination to the Law, and grounded it in freedom, faith and grace. According to Paul, serving the others out of love and for their own sake is a manifestation of the *Christ's law* (Gal 6:2), which is not just any alternative to the Old Testament law but is existentially and ethically perfected. Thus, any value revision of the importance of obeying or disobeying the Law is stultified in the context of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, as a metaphor of his existential responsibility for every man and for the whole world.

### *To Romans*

After a series of letters that the Apostle Paul addressed to the Churches, which he had founded in Asia Minor and Balkans, the last authentic one was Epistle to the Romans, exposed in the form of a thorough and bold recapitulation of his theological ideas (Rom 15:15). Epistle to the Romans, was the only one sent (around 58 A.D.) with no particular corrective or pedagogical motif and it represents a comprehensive theological elaboration on the *new life* in Christ based on the faith, promoting the author's vision of the New Israel. Paul does not build on anyone else's foundation (Rom 15:20), as he himself puts it, but, by addressing the Romans, he is sending a message to the Churches throughout the Roman empire, establishing his own, as well as the heritage of the other Apostles, on the cornerstone of faith.<sup>11</sup> It seems that the Apostle wished, by means of the message addressed to the Christians in the capital city, i.e. to the Church he had not founded nor given to her the value-profile and ethical criteria, to once and for all close the topic which he so radically approached in the Epistle to the Galatians, that is, the problem of the converted gentiles and their relation towards the Jewish heritage. Furthermore, he blurs to disappearance previously known "boundaries" of God's people<sup>12</sup> and sets new extended ones that included converted Gentiles, which is a par

<sup>10</sup> F. Thielman clearly observes the ambivalence and multilayeredness of Pauline preaching to the Galatians. He explains that, despite denying the importance of the Law, as of a "path" towards justification, Paul still does not exclude it from the experience of believers, as an ethical standard they reach through practicing "love" and "walking by the Spirit". See F. Thielman, *op.cit.*, "I hope to demonstrate that although Paul says that the law cannot be kept in "the present evil age", that it "encloses" humanity under the sin, and that it pronounces a curse upon humanity for its disobedience, he affirms that in the eschatological age of deliverance from sin, believers keep the law by walking in the Spirit. Thus Paul does not argue against the law as the codified will of God, but against life "under law" – under the curse which the law pronounces on sin", p. 50.

<sup>11</sup> New Testament theologians express a well-grounded opinion that the Epistle to the Romans, apart from the capital of the empire, probably was or should have been addressed to the Christian communities in Ephesus and Corinth, as well. See P. Dragutinovich, *Uvod u Novi Zavet*, pp. 101-102., ITI – Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Belgrade, Serbia.

<sup>12</sup> Jacob Taubes, "For him (Paul) this is quite significant, because by means of the Holy Scripture he wishes to prove that the time has come for opening for the Gentiles, for the opening of Jews — the Holy people of God — for the Gentiles. Thus, the Holy people of God gets transformed, which means that the boundaries of the original people get blurred.", *Political theology of Paul*, p. 79., edition on Croatian, Ex libris, Rijeka, Croatia 2008.

excellence constituting determinant for the new identity of Israel, not anymore as the law-keeping people, which was an exclusive Jewish privilege, but as the people recognizable by the faith in Jesus Christ, accessible for those converted among Gentiles, as well. Paul points to the consequences of defining the *new* people of God, regarding the change of value and ethical criteria for identifying it, which (change) consists in the necessity of the “new Law”, given and fulfilled in Christ, as well as in the new existential objectives of communion, in faith or through faith, with God through His Son’s community, that is, through the Church. The notion of righteousness or rightness, very complex and reach in meaning, has been linked by the Apostle Paul to the Person of Jesus Christ and to his Gospel. Righteousness in the context of Christ’s economy of salvation becomes personal experience of everyone, whether Jews or Gentiles, exclusively through faith (Rom 1:16-17). In the Letter to the Romans Apostle Paul derives the full consequences of the universalistic concept of the relationship of God and man, given to the mankind within the chronology of sacred Revelation through the person and faith of righteous Abraham. The Apostle already reflected on this concept much earlier, in the Epistle to the Philippians and to the Galatians and, to a smaller extent, in the second letter to the Corinthians. In his address to the Romans he overcomes all the limiting elements imposed by the strictly determined idiom and choice of themes, caused by the peculiarity of the specific historical context in which the Churches he wrote to found themselves at the moment. In the Epistle to the Romans, unbounded with an internal issue of the community he is writing to, Paul is free to promote at large the universality of God’s revelation in Christ, which excludes all the consequences of the particularistic, law-based self-understanding of the Jews, while the Jews, as is obviously proved by Paul’s very example, are not themselves excluded, but included in the community of those who build their relationship with God on faith, a community that, beside Jews, includes the Greeks and other Gentiles “for God shows no partiality” (Rom 2:10-11). Addressing the Romans, Paul repeats the universalistic identity-pattern of belonging to God’s people by performing the “works of faith,” not “works of the Law,” introduced in the Epistle to the Galatians, which opens up a possibility of equal partaking of both the Jews and the Gentiles, in the righteousness gifted by faith in Christ (Rom 3:20-25)<sup>13</sup>. Paul emphasizes that a unity with God based on the Law would be incomplete and that the works of the Law are insufficient, as sin still remains unbeaten and the gap between us and God remains unabridged. Both Jews, the people under the Law, as well as Gentiles, without the law, display the same existential and ethical inability to justify themselves before God “they are under sin... none is righteous” (Rom 3:9-10, 12). The Apostle of the Gentiles radically, yet quite convincingly, with direct existential consequences, by preaching Christ, sets free every man, Jews and others as well, from the totalitarian and authoritarian identity of the Law, which “has stopped all mouth” and in which “all the world may become guilty before God”

<sup>13</sup> K. Barth, “But instead of that (instead to direct our attention to the Law, nota bene), ‘without the Law’ we must and may look upon the Judge and hear from his lips that those who, as a result to the Law proclaimed and applied by him, are sinners and have no glory before God (3:24), have been justified because they cleave to him, because they believe to him. That however is purely a gift. It is not their merit – where could they have earned it? – but God’s grace, the free work of divine kindness and favor which they have in no way provoked, on which they have no claim whatsoever”, *A Shorter Commentary on Romans*, p. 27., ed. Maico Michielin, Ashgate Publishing Limited, England 2007.



(Rom 3:19)<sup>14</sup>. He relays on the Abrahamic tradition, which has been smoldering in prophetic testimony throughout the centuries, despite the domination of Mosaic particularistic normative agenda simplified through the Law. By means of summing up the Revelation chronologically, Paul tries to promote the experience of justification before God through belief in the promise<sup>15</sup> that we accept through the event of Christ's crucifixion, which happened because of our sins, for our resurrection and justification (Rom 4:23-25). This, furthermore, represents the fulfillment of the Law, or, more precisely, the healing of the weakness of the Law (Rom 3:28-31). The universality of Abrahamic tradition, fulfilled by the Resurrection of Christ, as preached by the Paul, has as its consequence the overcoming of ethical consequences of keeping the Law, through emphasizing the soteriological aspect of re-placing the identity of Israel away from the legal grounds onto the experience of grace, to which we "obtained access by faith" (Rom 5:2). The Apostle Paul wishes to stress the reality and tragedy of death that frustrate every man and whole of the creation, which is, for him, the basis of the whole existential drama, which dominates over history and nature (Rom 5:12-14), which is confirmed by the imperfection of the Law. Accordingly, Paul states the examples from the Old Testament which show us that the existential problem of the presence of death through sin cannot be solved by correcting the ethos, but through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Just as Adam, as the first one, brings to the experience of death even those who have not sinned, in spite of their ethical justification (Rom 5:15-19), so does Christ, as the last one, through his death and the resurrection bring grace into Creation, which justifies all men, despite their ethical imperfection. Introducing the thesis on universalistic dimensions of the suffering documented in the Old Covenant testimony about the *primordial sin* (Gen 2:17; 3:19), the Apostle wishes to offer, as an existential antithesis, the soteriological universality of the consequences of Christ's Resurrection, which justifies the life of all men (Rom 5:18)<sup>16</sup>. Namely, according to Paul, the existence of each individual, regardless of their natural and social identities, receives its meaning beyond the framework of ethical or legal justification, in the experience of immortality, gracefully given to all in Christ. The formerly mentioned soteriological dimension of the transformation of the notion of righteousness and justification from the law-keeping experience into the experience of being graced, as it was formulated in the Epistle to the Romans, also has highly emphasized anthropological and cosmological consequences, which are of great significance for Paul, given that the soteriological aspect of the identity transformation shows itself as an ex-

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, "In his (Christ's) death God has made the necessary angry end with the sinners. And so the guilt – not his guilt, but the guilt of his people, in whose place he has sacrificed himself- has been disposed of, so that there is now not one unjust person left among his people. Those of his people – i.e. all those who believe in him – are righteous, innocent, and clean", p. 27.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, "Paul wants to make it clear that, and to what extent, the manifestation of the divine verdict as the justification of all believers is not a new revelation, but (3,21) has been witnessed 'by the Law and the prophets', i.e. by the O(ld) T(estament), and is consequently merely the confirmation of the truth of the OT.", p. 28.

<sup>16</sup> James D.G. Dunn, "We may note at once, therefore, Paul's awareness that Adam (*adam*) denotes humankind. For in these verses Paul encapsulates all human history under the two archetypal figures (note the duple "all" of 5.18) – Adam and Christ – as embodying, in effect, the only two alternatives which the Gospel opens to humankind. This, we may say, is his own version of the epochal choice between death and life laid before Israel in the climax to the Deuteronomic covenant (Deut.30:15-20)", *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, p. 94., William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA / Cambridge, U.K. 1998.

istential reality precisely in the way and the outcome of the existence of men as of a created being, as well as in the way of existence of the whole of Creation.

From the seventh chapter of the Letter to the Romans onwards, Paul approaches the question of the presence of evil in the world, through sin as the manifestation of human mortality. This identity transformation of the community takes place within man as an individual, that is, it most directly and most intimately touches upon his life and death. Correspondingly, Paul conducts certain identification of the consequences of the transformation of a community as a corporate personality, on the one hand, and the transformation of a person as a part (member) of a community, on the other hand. The Apostle paradigmatically witnesses his absolute weakness, based on his corporeality and mortality, and that is where he sees the cause of the insufficiency of the concept of justification through the Law. The Law is good, but one who obeys the law — a Jew or anyone else, i.e. every man, — is without ability (Rom 7:12-25) to, obeying the rules, contextualize legal righteousness as the eternal and durable unity with God, so in spite of the Law evil remains unbeaten, while death triumphs. Thus Paul's universal, to-everyone-belonging understanding of sin, as an anthropological phenomenon, transposes itself in the form of evil present in every aspect of social community, into the dimension of a social and legal, as well as cosmological problem, through the experience of mortality within the whole of creation<sup>17</sup>. Looking for the solution of the all-permeating problem of evil, sin and death directly, but does not find it in the Law, which is why, despite its holiness, he neglects it. (Rom 8:3). The Apostle turns to the *new Law* (Rom 7:22-25) which he receives as a graceful gift of the Spirit (Rom 8:1-3). In the Epistle to the Romans, the whole chapter 8 presents the apology of the new and eternal life in Christ, as a gift to man and the world by the Holy Spirit. Immortality as a gift of Christ's Resurrection is an assumption of fulfilling legal justice by following the transformed value-pattern, not the legal, but the spiritual one (Rom 8:4-6). The Apostle of the Gentiles triumphantly emphasizes that Christ is the achievement of goals in the Israel's centuries-long quest for righteousness, which they, as the bearer of the revealed tradition, recognized in the unity with God through obeying the Law. Paul is not disappointed because the unity with God could not be achieved through the Law, but is excited, and expects such an attitude from the Jews as well as the Gentiles, because by grace of resurrected Christ, this community, as life in righteousness (Rom 8:10), becomes unbreakable and eternal. Justification and righteousness in Christ, as manifestation of the liberation from sin and death served to Paul to establish a new, persistent foundation of God's people by pointing out the experience of *Sonship* in Christ, as a spiritual identity gift of God's love (Rom 8: 32-39). Evolving the "idea" of becoming sons of God through Jesus Christ, Paul wants to draw complete theological consequences of forming the identity on the faith in God's promise, which is something he already wrote about in the Epistle to the Galatians. Referring to the abrahamic tradition, Paul does all this in order to distance himself from the concept of justi-

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, "Death is the outcome of a (God's) breakdown with creation. There is a two-sidedness to this state of affairs, involving both sin as a given of the social fabric of society and sin as an accountable action of individual responsibility. It is precisely this merging of the one into the other which makes it so difficult to determine the precise lines of responsibility – in contemporary society as well. Overall, however, this state is the consequence of humanity's refusal to acknowledge God, of the creature's attempt to dispense with the Creator. When humankind declared its independence from God, it abandoned the only power which can overcome the sin, which uses the weakness of the flesh, the only power which can overcome the death", p. 97.

fiction within the Law. Paul's method is transforming and revolutionary, giving that the *adopted God's people as New Israel* is based on the *new Law* given by God in Christ and on the *new values* which are the fruit of faith rather than a consequence of obeying the Law (Rom 9: 32). The most important thing is that the identity basis of the New people, instead of the Law (Rom 10: 5), becomes the Son of God in which the original God's promise to Abraham is fulfilled. The cycle of God's revealing and gifting is thus closed with the affirmative existential outcome — salvation (Rom 10: 9-10), which becomes the heritage and immortal identity of every individual who believes (Rom 10: 12). This is the climax of Paul's universalistic anthropology, which, in the form of soteriologically formulated notion of the adoption, provides crucial changes concerning the organization of society and relations between people. The Apostle does not offer this as his political attitude (which, by the way, would be completely strange to him), but as a value-principle belonging to the community of the *chosen ones*, which exists as the testimony of God's philanthropy in Christ. The second soteriological consequence regarding Paul's universalistic anthropology expresses the cosmological reflections and is directly focused on the changing the way in which nature exists, as it is freed from slavery to corruption and death *through the revealing of the sons of God*. Thus our Apostle, through the experience of faith in Jesus Christ, puts in an mutually interdependent relationship the existence of man and the one of the world, which is a recognizable part of the value-agenda of contemporary ecological association and human rights organization.

Having made a clear distinction between the righteousness according to the Law and the one in faith, in the rest of the epistle Paul is focused on formulating the consequences of the identity transformation of God's people community, through the experience of the new ethos, of the new structural formation of community as a liturgical reality as well as of witnessing the love for neighbors and for enemies. The transforming pattern based on faith in the Sonship of Jesus Christ and his resurrection presupposes the identification of the faithful ones with the sacrificial self-giving to others, based on the model of Christ's self-giving to death for the sake of all men. In Paul's opinion this is, on the one hand, a constitutive characteristic for the formation of a solid ecclesial model of the community of many, endowed with different, yet compatible gifts of the Spirit (Rom 12:1-8), which (model) he explains by referring to his own experience of the Church, previously mentioned in 1 Cor 12. On the other hand, it is crucial for the testimony of love both for those within the community and for those outside. (Rom 12:9-21) The experience of love, as depicted in the Letter to the Romans, reflects its fulness in three different existential aspects: 1. The ontological one — love as the manifestation of immortality within the community with God and the near ones in the christocentric ecclesial "atmosphere" (Rom 12: 1-16), 2. The ethical one — through love toward enemies as neighbors (Rom 12:17-21) and 3. The socio-legal one — love toward the near ones as an expression of the perfection of the Law (Rom 13:8-12) and through loyalty to political community as a manifestation of trust in God's presence in the world and his care for Creation (Rom 13: 1-7)<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> Bishop David (Perovich) holds that there is no conflict between the two statements of the Apostle Paul concerning the consequences of love: 1. that love abolishes the Law, and 2. that love is the fulfillment of the Law. This opinion Bishop David grounds in Paul's complex personality (Paul's bipolarity, as the bishop puts it), which is at the same time Christ-filled and permeated with the Law, which Paul had previously zealously served. See David Perovich, „The meaning of love and its relationship with righteousness in the evangelizing ministry of St. Apostle Paul“, pp. 8-9., *Bogoslovlje* 1/2013, Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Belgrade, Serbia.



### *Conclusion*

The identity of the New Israel, most comprehensively and most consistently formulated in the Epistles to the Galatians and the Romans and expressed through the ethos, ecclesial attitude as well as social responsibility of the church members, has undergone several phases of reception in the post-pauline period during the end of 1st and the first half of the 2nd century A.D. The identity determinants found in the writings of Apostle Paul strongly influence the formation of christian ethos nowadays and, as such, essentially determine the relation of the Christians towards the society in which they live and whose values they share. Furthermore, especially in the context of the already advanced process of globalization and striving for global legal and socio-structural uniformity, the analyzed notions allow the Church to preserve its own identity and recognize its responsibility for every individual as well as for the community she establishes in the modern society.