

## **CORRUPTIBLE, INCORRUPTIBLE AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD. SEMANTIC BACKGROUND OF THE IDEA OF TRANSFORMATION IN 1 COR 15:50-53**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

In the present article, we turn to a closer examination of vocabulary concerning the transformation described in 1 Cor 15:50-53. Some authors have already pointed out the double cultural background of the passage in question, accentuating either its Greco-Roman or Jewish character<sup>1</sup>. Is Paul introducing his notion of transformation following the popular philosophical schools of his time, or is he drawing on the Jewish apocalyptic tradition? What is the meaning and use of a simple and at the same time ambiguous verb ἀλλάσσω which Paul chooses as a key expression denoting the process of being transformed? And finally, does the central notion of the transformation describe only the action of God or does it leave any room for human activity?

These and many other questions will be answered by means of semantic analyses, aimed to explain the meaning and possible provenience of the concepts used by the Apostle in 1 Cor 15:50-53. The object of our interest will lie not only in the detailed examination of separate terms but also in the disposition of the vocabulary, in which the oppositions, parallelisms and various interrelations are at work. Also the question about the possible sources on which the Pauline rationale draws will be of great interest to us.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Greek philosophical background of the Pauline argumentation in 1 Cor 15:50-57 was underscored by J.R. ASHER, *Polarity and Change in 1 Corinthians 15: A Study of Metaphysics, Rhetoric, and Resurrection*, [HUT 42], Tübingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000; H.W. HOLLANDER, J. HOLLEMAN, «The Relationship of Death, Sin and Law in 1 Cor 15:56», *NovT* 35:1993, p. 279-291. The Jewish parallels in the passage in question were demonstrated by R. MORISETTE, «Un midrash sur la mort (1 Cor., XV, 54c à 57)», *RB* 79:1972, p. 161-188; W. HARRELSON, «Death and Victory In 1 Corinthians 15:51-57: The Transformation of a Prophetic Theme», in: *Faith and History: Essays in Honor of Paul W. Meyer*, eds. J. T. Carroll et al., Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990, p. 149-159; H.C.C. CAVALLIN, *Life after Death: Paul's Argument for the Resurrection of the Dead in 1 Cor 15: Part I: An Enquiry into the Jewish Background* [ConBNT 7/1] Lund: Gleerup, 1974, p. 89-91.93.188.210-215; J. HOLLEMAN, *Resurrection and Parousia: A Traditio-Historical Study of Paul's Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15* [NovTSup 84], Leiden: Brill, 1996, p. 85-87.125-130; J. PLEVNIK, *Paul and the Parousia: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation*, Peabody: MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997, p. 149.155.167.244-259; M.C. DE BOER, *The Defeat of Death: Apocalyptic Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5* [JSNTSup 22], Sheffield: Academic Press, 1988, p. 132-38. Besides see J.-B. MATAND BULEMBAT, *Noyau et enjeux de l'eschatologie paulinienne: De l'apocalyptique juive et de l'eschatologie hellénistique dans quelques argumentations de l'apôtre Paul: Etudes rhétorico-exégétique de 1 Co 15,35-58; 2 Co 5,1-10 et Rm 8,18-30* [BZNW 84], Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1997, p. 253-300.

Our semantic inquires will be carried out following the two-partite structure of the text emerging from the compositional analyses<sup>2</sup>.

## 2. THE SEMANTIC STRUCTURE

Before examining in detail the vocabulary of 1 Cor 15:50-53, let us try to depict generally the semantic structure of the entire section in question. In the vv.50-53, the vocabulary describing present condition of all human beings is opposed to the status of their future life. The “present” is illustrated by means of substantives and substantivized adjectives, stressing an ingrained fragility and corruptibility of humans called *σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα* (v.50b), *φθορά* (v.50c), *φθαρτόν* (v.53a), *νεκροί* (v.52b) and *θνητόν* (v.53b). On the other hand, the future and its character is depicted by means of the terms *βασιλεία θεοῦ* (v.50b), *ἀφθαρσία* (v.50c.53a), *ἄφθαρτοι* (v.52c) and *ἀθανασία* (v.53b). It is clear, that we are dealing here with a noticeable qualitative difference between the human “now” and the divine-human “then”.

Going beyond the envisaged oppositions, additionally two strong modal verbs create the situation of dramatic suspense. The expressions *οὐ δύναται* (v.50) and *δεῖ* (v.53) describe the passage from the “present” to the “future” life as “impossible” to be achieved by the human nature itself and at the same time as “necessary” to be accomplished. The transition is possible only through the “transformation”, which in turn is described with the verbs *κληρονομέω* (v.50), *ἀλλάσσω* (vv.51c.52d), and *ἐνδύω* (v.53). In the very heart of the semantic field of the transformation one finds the verb *ἀλλάσσω*, which both from the semantic and the rhetorical point of view forms the center of the Pauline rationale. It is further specified by the substantive *μυστήριον* (v.51a) and by the circumstantial complements in v.52a and it serves as a conceptual bridge which allows the passage from the corruptible to the immortal and incorruptible.

The second part, 1 Cor 15:54-57, picks up the oppositions of the first one (v.54a-c) and builds the image of the final victory over death on them. Although there is a logical opposition between the victorious God and the defeated death, the contrast does not emerge with such force as before, neither on the semantic nor on the conceptual level. The result of the eschatological battle seems to be regarded from the divine prospective: the verb-less clauses do not create any tension nor describe any real battle, because God cannot find any real adversary in death. The section of vv. 54-57 develops the image of transformation, using the metaphor of the battlefield and presenting the personified figure of death with her particular arsenal – “law” and “sin”. The final accord of the change, taking place at the end of time, will be the defeat of death. Thus, the semantic fields of the two sections, vv.50-53 and vv.54-57, can be presented in a following way:

---

<sup>2</sup> See the previous article in this volume: «Transformation Necessary to Inherit the Kingdom of God. Rhetorical Analysis of 1 Cor 15:50-57», p. 114-126.

<i>Transformation</i>		<i>Victory over death</i>	
ἀλλάσσω		νίκος	
<i>The present life</i>	<i>The future life</i>	<i>The metaphor of divine victory</i>	<i>The personification of death</i>
σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα	βασιλεία θεοῦ	καταπίνω	θάνατος
φθορά	ἄφθαρσία	νίκος	νίκος
φθαρτόν		χάρις ὁ θεός ὁ διδόντος διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ	κέντρον ἁμαρτία δύναμις νόμος
νεκροὶ	ἄφθαρτοι		
θνητόν	ἀθανασία		
<i>Bridging expressions</i>			
κληρονομέω (οὐ δύναται), ἀλλάσσω, ἐνδύω (δεῖ)			
<i>Accompanying circumstances vocabulary</i>			
μυστήριον, κοιμάομαι, ἐγείρω, σαλπίζω ἐν ἀτόμῳ, ἐν ῥιπῇ ὀφθαλμοῦ, ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ σάλπιγγι			

At this point, let us stress once again two different points of view underlying vv.50-53 and vv.54-57. There is a noticeable shift in perspective between the two respective parts of the Pauline argumentation. In the first part, a grammatical subject is always a man described as “flesh and blood”, “corruptible”, “dead”, “mortal”, who anyway aspires to the incorruptible future life and thus must undergo the process of transformation. It is true that the strongly modal expressions as “cannot” (οὐ δύναται, v.50) or “must” (δεῖ, v.53) together with the passive forms “will be raised” (ἐγερθήσονται, v.52), “we will be changed” (ἀλλαγησόμεθα, v.52) point to the logical subject – God, but the perspective remains strongly anthropological and thus also highly dramatized.

On the other hand, the second part (vv.54-57) stresses clearly the divine subject hidden in the “written word” (v.54c), logically present in the passive form “will be swallowed” (v.54d) and emerging without any doubt as a receiver of the thanksgiving in v.57. His adversary and at the same time the second subject of the section is death herself, presented as a personified force. Her unavoidable defeat makes her no enemy in the eyes of God and encourages Paul to declaim his derisory questions (v.55). However, from a human perspective, which comes back at the end of the passage, death armed with sin still remains a real danger. The two perspectives, human and divine, cannot be separated and ultimately both resound strongly in the final v.57. After these preliminary assertions, let us now have a closer look at the vocabulary used by Paul to describe first of the two scenes of the eschatological drama.

### 3. THE LINE OF TRANSFORMATION

The notion of transformation emerges from a strong clash between the condition of the present life and the state demanded by the future existence. In conformity with the rules of semantic analysis, our analyses in this part will touch upon three categories: 1) the description of the corruptible state of the present, 2) the image of the incorruptible condition of life to come, 3) the bridging expressions depicting a passage from one state to another.

#### 3.1 THE CORRUPTIBILITY OF THE PRESENT

The terminology applied by Paul to describe the corruptibility of the present does not belong to the terms commonly used in the NT and presents the combination of ideas coming from the Greek and Jewish-Hellenistic environment. The very first expression, with which the Apostle envisages the qualitative abyss between the present and future world, is of Semitic provenience. The term σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα is first attested in Ecclesiasticus (14:18; 17:31) and occurs in rabbinic parallels as בָּשָׂר וְדָם<sup>3</sup>. The word pair appears also in LXX Lev 17:11.14 where it refers to the principle of life of all flesh, situated in blood.

The Semitism concerning the living carries not only the idea of physical frailty and mortality of the present human body, but also defines a human nature as burdened with sin. In this aspect, it varies from the meaning of חַטָּאת in the OT, which, although described as transitory and mortal, does not carry in itself the principle of sin<sup>4</sup>. This last idea emerges clearly in Sir 17:31, which, according to Schweizer<sup>5</sup>, may be due to the Hellenistic influence equating σὰρξ with a sinful sexuality or passion. The popular philosophy of Epicure, which was supposed to advocate the enthronement of bodily desires, may be responsible for the influence<sup>6</sup>. This Hellenistic notion of body generally remains in agreement with the Pauline concept of σὰρξ, appearing often in the constellation with ἁμαρτία, νόμος, and θάνατος, and depicting human beings as subject to the power of sin<sup>7</sup>. A similar meaning of σὰρξ is also found in Qumran, which closely relates the flesh to sin and pride, evaluating it negatively<sup>8</sup>.

The second element of the expression, the blood, is commonly found in the OT and in the Jewish intertestamentary writings as the carrier of life and the dwelling of the soul<sup>9</sup>. This idea dominates in the use of σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα by Philo who, advocating the blood as essence of life, refers to the Mosaic Law from Lev 17:11<sup>10</sup>. His work *Questiones in Genesim* demonstrates also how much the idea is common to the Hellenistic

<sup>3</sup> Cf. J. JEREMIAS, «'Flesh and Blood Cannot Inherit the Kingdom of God' (I Cor. XV.50)», *NTS* 2:1955/56, p. 152.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. N.P. BRATSIONIS, «חַטָּאת», *TDOT* II, p. 317-332. However, see also the examples where the body appears in connection with the human transgressions, corruption and consequently with the divine judgment: Gen 6:3.12; Isa 66:24; Jer 25:31. Cf. BDB, p. 142.

<sup>5</sup> See A. SCHWEIZER, «σὰρξ» *TDNT* VII, p. 98-105.

<sup>6</sup> See the Epicurean sentence ἐν τῇ σ. ἡ ἥδονή. Cf. LSJM, p. 1585.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Rom 7:5.14.18.25; 8:5ff. See also A. SAND, «σὰρξ», *EDNT* III, p. 229.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. A. SCHWEIZER, «σὰρξ», p. 119-151.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Gen 9:4; Lev 17:11.14; Deut 12:23; JOSEPHUS, *A.J.* 1:102. See also O. BÖCHER, «αἷμα», *EDNT* I, p. 37.

<sup>10</sup> See PHILO, *Det.* 1:80.84; *Leg.* 4:122. Cf. also the reference to Gen 9:4 in Philo's *Q.G.* (fragmenta) 2:59, and to Gen 2:7 in his *Her.* 1:56.

ambience. Philo in his use of σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα mingles Jewish tradition with the Hellenistic philosophy, calling blood the substance of the soul<sup>11</sup> and at the same time dividing humans into two categories: those who live by the divine Spirit and reason and those who live according to blood and pleasure of the flesh<sup>12</sup>. The presented examples demonstrate that the Jewish-sounding expression σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα in Paul is heavily influenced by the Hellenistic popular philosophy certainly familiar to the Corinthians. In 1 Cor 15:50-53 it refers, first of all, to the living, and depicts the image of the transitory human nature burdened with sin.

In v.50b Paul builds up a synthetic parallelism in which σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα finds its counterpart in φθορά. The abstract noun φθορά comes from the verb φθείρω which means to *destroy* (person or things), to *waste*, *corrupt*, *bribe*, *ruin*, and in passive also to *be morally corrupted*<sup>13</sup>. Consequently, the stem φθορ-, denotes *destruction*, *passing out of existence*, *loss by deterioration*, even *seduction* or *abortion*<sup>14</sup>. Its most basic sense emerges in the papyri where it serves to describe the material damage or destruction, referred mainly to the property<sup>15</sup>. In the older Greek philosophy, as well as in works by Plato and Aristotle, the perishing is opposed to becoming and makes a part of reflection on the permanent elements of nature and of the structure of being<sup>16</sup>. Finally, in later Hellenistic period, the concept increasingly acquires a religious sense contrasting the divine and the earthly world<sup>17</sup>.

Passing to the Jewish-Hellenistic literature, in the LXX φθορά signifies *complete destruction*<sup>18</sup>, *moral corruption*<sup>19</sup>, *dissolution* of body and *fading* of strength<sup>20</sup> or *pit*, the synonym for Hades<sup>21</sup>. In the last case, it appears as a translation of the Hebrew תַּבַּיִת, the place of the dead<sup>22</sup>. Josephus uses φθορά in the basic sense of crushing *defeat*,

<sup>11</sup> According to Martin, Paul is drawing on Plato. The author mentions also Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* (5:33; 2:17; 6:15) where the soul is called "exhalation of blood", and Galen asserting that the soul is nourished by vapors from the blood. See D.B. MARTIN, *The Corinthian Body*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995, p. 116.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. PHILO, *Her.* 1:57.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. LSJM, p. 1928.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 1930.

<sup>15</sup> The examples come from petitions and law suits: B.G.U. VIII.1824.25-30. Cf. P. ARZT-GRABNER, *I. Korinther* [PKNT 2], Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006, p. 498.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. G.D. FEE, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [NICNT], Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987, p. 798. In the ancient literature, especially in philosophy, φθορά denotes the idea of passing out of existence, ceasing to be, and thus it is often found in opposition to generation. See PLATO, *Phil.* 55a: οὐκοῦν τῷ γίνεσθαι γε τοῦναντίον ἅπαντες τὸ φθείρεσθαι φαίμεν ἄν. "We should all agree that the opposite of generation is destruction, should we not?". See also *ibid.*, *Phaed.* 95a; ARISTOTLE, *Metaph.* 6.1026b; 7.1039b; 8.2042a; 8.1044b; 11.1068b; 14.1088a.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. G. HARDER, «φθορα», *TDNT* IX, p. 93-106.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Exod 18:18; Isa 24:3; Mic 2:10.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Wis 14:12.25.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Dan 3:92; 10:8.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Ps 102:4; Jonah 2:7.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. BDB, 1001. The noun תַּבַּיִת in the LXX is translated with various expressions: except for φθορα (Ps 102:4; Jonah 2:7) also φθάρμα, (corrupted thing Lev 22:5); ῥύπος (filth, dirt Job 9:31); βόθρος (pit, cistern Ps 7:16; 93:13; Prov 26:27); θάνατος, (Job 17:15; 33:10.18.22.24); διαφθορά (destruction, corruption Job 33:28; Ps 9:16; 15:10; 29:10; 34:7; 54:24; Ezek 19:4.8).

*massacre*<sup>23</sup>, physical *degradation* through sickness<sup>24</sup>, *death, plague*<sup>25</sup> or moral *corruption*<sup>26</sup>. On the other hand, Philo picks it up in the context of the popular philosophic topic of generation and destruction<sup>27</sup> and in his *De Aeternitate Mundi* reflects for long on the *perishability* of the world, victim to *corruption*. The preeminent topic of his writings is, however, the *destruction* caused by the lack of virtues, passions and ignorance enrooted in the soul attached to vice<sup>28</sup>.

As we may notice, the Pauline concept of φθορά is close to Philo and to the Greek-Hellenistic thought pondering on the difference between the human and divine world and moral corruption present in the former. There is one significant difference, however, speaking for the Pauline originality. Paul does not refer φθορά to the mere lack of virtue but rather to sin as a destructive power, responsible for the decay of the whole creation<sup>29</sup>. In this sense φθορά strengthens the meaning of the parallel expression σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα presenting a man not only as burdened with sin but already subject to decay and death resulting from it.

With a next expression, νεκρός, Paul enters the question of the resurrection of the dead, providing a time frame for a primary argument on the transformation of the living. The profuse literary material confirms that the basic meaning of this substantivized adjective in the classical Greek is a *corpse* of mankind, *cadaver*, frequently of those killed in battle<sup>30</sup>. Later, it can also denote a dying person, metaphorically dead<sup>31</sup>, or, in plural, the dwellers of the nether world<sup>32</sup>. The Stoics, for example, characterize people and their life condition as *dead* when their orientation was not to the world of philosophy. The adjective

<sup>23</sup> Cf. JOSEPHUS, *A.J.* 1:96; 2:313; 9:100; *B.J.* 2:559; 3:528; 5:345.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, *A.J.* 9:101; *B.J.* 4:489.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, *A.J.* 4:216. 251; 7:324; 8:115; 10:116.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 1:339; 5:339; 17:309.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. PHILO, *Opif.* 1:58; *Leg.* 1:7; *Cher.* 1:51; *Her.* 1:209.247; *Somn.* 2:53; *Abr.* 1:1; *Spec.* 1:27.112

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, *Leg.* 1:105; 2:77.102; 3:52; *Cher.* 1:92; 1:46; *Det.* 1:68; *Deus* 1:16.83; *Agr.* 1:108. 109; *Plant.* 1:114.157; *Ebr.* 1:12.23.29; 141; *Conf.* 1:36.117.167; *Somn.* 1:151; *Abr.* 1:24; *Spec.* 2:13; 3:72; 4:84.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Rom 8:21; 1 Cor 15:42.50; Gal 6:8. See also Col 2:22; 2 Pet 1:4; 2:12.19.

<sup>30</sup> See κείται ν. περὶ νεκρῶ SOPHOCLES, *Ant.* 1240; AESCHYLUS, *Ag.* 659; *ibid.*, *Th.* 1018; *P. Fay.* 103.1: λ[όγος] ἀναλώματος τοῦ νεκροῦ, “account of expenses for the corpse”; *P. Grenf.* 2.77.13: καὶ ἐκ τούτου ἔμαθον ὅτι οὐ χάριν τοῦ νεκροῦ ἀνήλθατε ἀλλὰ χάριν τῶν σκευῶν αὐτοῦ, “and from this I learned that it was not on account of the dead man you came here, but on account of his goods”. Cf. LSJM, p. 1165; J. H. MOULTON, G. MILLIGAN, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament. Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1929, p. 423.

<sup>31</sup> A certain Menogenes Eustathes expresses his views on life in the spirit of Epicurean philosophy: τὸ ζῆν ὁ ζήσας καὶ θανὼν ζῆ τοῖς φίλοις ὁ κτώμενος δὲ πολλὰ μὴ τρυφῶν σὺν τοῖς φίλοις, οὗτος τέθνηκε περὶ πατρῶν καὶ ζῆ νεκροῦ βίον? “The Christian spirit which objected to free enjoyment of life for self and friends is stigmatized as ‘death in life’”. See MOULTON–MILLIGAN, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. 423.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. κλυτὰ ἔθνεα νεκρῶν by HOMER, *Od.* 10.526. See also a sepulchral inscription from II A.D: χαῖρέ μοι μητὲρ γλυκυτάτη καὶ φροντίζετε ἡμῶν ὅσα ἐν νεκροῖς. Cf. MOULTON–MILLIGAN, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. 423.

νεκρός can also denote *inorganic, inanimate* substances like stone or wood but most frequently it is applied to a dead body, considered also unclean and abhorrent<sup>33</sup>.

The term νεκρός appears in the NT, in conformity with the classic forms, as adjective denoting *no longer living* in both literal and figurative senses<sup>34</sup>, while as substantive it designates a *dead person* or *the dead* in contrast to the living as no longer alive<sup>35</sup>. The plural substantive is primarily used in the statements related to the resurrection (about 86 times) and refers to those abiding the underworld or designates the realm of the dead in general<sup>36</sup>.

In difference to the typically Greek meaning, νεκρός, both in the NT and in the OT, is applied rather to the *person* than to the *cadaver*. The sphere of death in the OT permeates the world of the living, and manifests its presence in illness or ungodly conduct, while the righteous even in death can be called living<sup>37</sup>. Thus, Jesus speaks of God as the God of the living with reference to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and about the judgment which awaits the living and the dead (cf. Matt 22:32). Since Christ is called not only the “first fruits of those who sleep” but also the “first to rise from the *dead*”, his resurrection is the beginning and the cause of all other resurrections, including the resurrection of the *dead* on the last day<sup>38</sup>. The word νεκρός bound to Christ and his resurrection belongs to the conceptual language in which the NT speaks of the sort of the dead. That obviously shows a difference between Paul and the OT and marks an abyss between him and the Greek thought for which the idea of the resurrection of the dead was at most ridicule and to be rejected by the educated<sup>39</sup>. In 15:50-53, the resurrection of the dead marks a moment when an instantaneous change of the living will also take place.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *P. Tor.* 1.1.2.22 where it is said of Hera and Demeter – αἷς ἀθέμιτά ἐστιν νεκρὰ σώματα. See MOULTON–MILLIGAN, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. 423.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Luke 15:24.32; Rom 6:11.13; Eph 2:1.5; Col 2:13; Heb 6:1; 9:14; Jas 2:26; Rev 3:1.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. R. DABELSTEIN, „νεκρός“, *EDNT* II, p. 459.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *Ibid.* See also Matt 17:9; Mark 6:14; Luke 9:7; 24:46; John 2:22; 12:1.9.17; 21:14; Acts 3:15; 4:10; 13:30; Rom 4:24; 6:4.9; 7:4; 8:11.34; 10:9; 1 Cor 15:12.20; Gal 1:1; Eph 1:20; Col 2:12; 2 Tim 2:8; Heb 11:19; 1 Pet 1:21.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Ps 30:2-4; 86:13. Thus, the rabbis also call the godless “dead” because they have no part in the benefits of salvation and no relation to God. Cf. H.L. STRACK, P. BILLERBECK, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash* I-V, München: Beck, 1922-1928, vol. I, p. 489; *ibid.*, vol. III, p. 652.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 15:20; Acts 26:23. See also DABELSTEIN, «νεκρός», p. 459.

<sup>39</sup> The disparate Greek idea of νεκρός as a cadaver obviously finds further resonance in the concept of life after death. Even if the Greek-Roman religions were not interested in the speculations or reassurances concerning the sort of life after death, Martin claims much popularity and credibility for the myths which spoke of an underground region, in which the dead lived in a shadowy existence. He quotes Lucian, the second century satirist, who in his dialogue *The Lover of Lies* ridicules the traditional views describing the dead in Hades as lying upon the asphodel along with their friends and kins. *On Funerals* presents them in the form of shadows vanishing like smoke in fingers, who receive their nourishment from the libations on the tomb. Further, in *Menippus* or *The Descent into Hades* Lucian describes the popular image of the dead as shadows, decomposing bodies and skeletons. It is hard to believe that such a cadaver could have been revived or risen. Consequently, the idea of resurrection was presented as ridiculous from the philosophical point of view and the *sophos* was supposed to reject it. Cf. MARTIN, *The Corinthian Body*, p. 108-110.

Coming back to the sort of the living, in v.53 Paul applies to them the expression φθαρτός, cognate to φθορά found in v.50. The stem φθαρ- meaning *corruption*, in Greek denotes what is *destructible, perishable* and appears often with its counterpart ἀίδιος denoting what is *everlasting, eternal*<sup>40</sup>. For the Greeks, *perishable* is a synonym of *born* (γεννητός) while *imperishability* belongs to what is *not born* or *not created* (ἀγέννητος)<sup>41</sup>.

That idea is also present in the LXX which uses φθαρτός to translate the Hebrew מָוֶת in Isa 54:17. Besides, the word appears in 2 Macc 7:16 as a proper name for humans (“mortal”), in Wis 9:15, with reference to the mortal body which weighs the soul down, and in Wis 14:8 to describe the idols made of perishable material. Reference to the human body and to the idols recurs also by Josephus who uses φθαρτός along with the noun ὕλη<sup>42</sup>. Finally, the expression is used quite frequently by Philo, who thus stresses the contrast between imperishable God or heaven and mortal, created man<sup>43</sup>, as well as a typically Hellenistic opposition between the soul or the intellect, and the material body influenced by passions<sup>44</sup>. Consequently, the one who follows the wisdom or the divine Law, by itself imperishable, passes from the corruptible and mortal into the incorruptible life<sup>45</sup>.

In the few instances in which φθαρτός appears in the NT, it carries the idea of the opposition between immortal God and mortal humans with their perishable, worthless prizes and riches<sup>46</sup>. It seems that Pauline use of this word in 1 Cor 15:53.54 draws on the popular Greek concept of the contrast between the heavenly and the mere terrestrial existence and fragility of the human body. Although the baggage of the sinful nature is not explicitly mentioned here, it remains bound to this image by means of a strict relation with φθορά in v.50.

Finally, the last of the adjectives describing the perishable human present is θνητός derived from θνήσκω (to die). It defines what is *liable to death, mortal* and refers primarily to the living persons or to all the creatures<sup>47</sup>. Thus, θνητός becomes a synonym of man as the *mortal*, and describes things befitting him: his *mortal* deeds and works. Being subject to death constitutes in the Graeco-Roman world the basic difference between humans and deities immortal (ἀθάνατος) by nature<sup>48</sup>.

The same notion of a fundamental difference between God and man described with θνητός is also found in the LXX and in the Jewish-Hellenistic literature. A man is liable to death, because he is “a descendant of the first-formed child of earth” and, as such, he lacks the knowledge and understanding of life<sup>49</sup>. Josephus, according to the classical and biblical canons, uses the adjective to describe the difference between man and God, but

<sup>40</sup> Cf. LSJM, p. 1927.

<sup>41</sup> See the word pair γεννητός καὶ φθαρτός in contrast to ἀγέννητος and ἀφθαρτος in BDAG, p. 857.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. JOSEPHUS, *A.J.* 8:280; *B.J.* 2:154; 3:372;

<sup>43</sup> Cf. PHILO, *Leg.* 2:3.99; 3:36; *Gig.* 1:45; *Opif.* 1:82; *Cher.* 1:5; *Plant.* 1:53; *Ebr.* 1:73.208; *Praem.* 1:28; *Legat.* 1:118; *Somn.* 1:172; *Abr.* 1:55; *Spec.* 2:198; *Aet.* 1:44.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, *Opif.* 1:119; *Leg.* 1:32.88; 2:89; *Conf.* 1:176; *Abr.* 1:244.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, *Cher.* 1:7; *Ebr.* 1:142; *Abr.* 1:243; *Det.* 1:49; *Post.* 1:43; *Virt.* 1:67. See also the term applied with reference to perishable materials, gold, idols: *Cher.* 1:48; *Post.* 1:165; *Ebr.* 1:132; *Congr.* 1:112; *Mos.* 2:171 and a discussion on the perishability of the cosmos in *Aet.* 1:7.9.78.124.131.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Rom 1:23; 1 Cor 9:25; 1 Pet 1:18.23.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. HOMER, *Od.* 5.213; 19.593; PLATO, *Sph.* 265c.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. PLUTARCH, *Mor.* 960b.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Wis 7:1; Job 30:23; Isa 51:12; Prov 3:13; 20:24; 9:14.



also as a definition for the body and generally for the human nature<sup>50</sup>. If Josephus as a historian does not have many occasions to employ the religiously and philosophically tinted expression *θηητός*, it occurs with an astonishing abundance in Philo. Drawing both on the OT and on the Greek philosophers, Philo presents mortality as the equivalent of being created which results in the lack of knowledge and truth<sup>51</sup>. The creaturish-ness deeply rooted in every earthly being makes a fundamental difference between the world of man and that of God<sup>52</sup>. In a way typical for him, Philo introduces the ethical topic of virtue and pleasure calling them respectively an immortal and mortal life<sup>53</sup>. Ultimately, his philosophical dependences emerge clearly when he calls a man mortal as to his body and immortal as to his intellect<sup>54</sup>.

In the NT, *θηητός* is closely related to the human body or flesh that remains under the influence of sin and passions and thus is susceptible to pain and death<sup>55</sup>. Paul, using this term, does not concentrate on the difference between God and humans but rather stresses the power and commitment of God who gives life to the mortal bodies, makes the life of Jesus shine in them, and endows them with a new clothing of resurrection<sup>56</sup>. That is also the notion that resounds powerfully in 1 Cor 15:53.

Having analyzed the last expression *θηητός*, we receive the complete image of the human corruptible existence as depicted by Paul. One can notice a meaningful rhetorical and semantic crescendo in which the Apostle begins with the accent on human frailty and finishes with the inescapable subjection to death. The Semitic concept *σάρξ και αἷμα* depicts men as transitory and susceptible to sin, while the next *φθορά* describes them as already suffering the state of spiritual and physical decay. The presence of the adjective *νεκρός* marks a comparison of the living with the world of the dead and stresses the same existential situation of both groups remaining under the domain of death. Finally, the last word pair *φθαρτός* and *θηητός* without losing from sight their moral dimension, presents the human existence in its fleeting, creational, and thus mortal character and turns significantly toward God as the One that can assure its continuation. Thus, the divine figure opens also the passage to the incorruptible future, the image of which we will examine now.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. JOSEPHUS, *A.J.* 9:222; 11:56; 12:282; 15:372; 19:345; *B.J.* 2:118; 3:372; 6:84; 7:344.5; *Apn.* 2:167.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. PHILO, *Opif.* 1:4.61.77.117.134.135.149; *Leg.* 1:20; 1:45; 2:17; *Cher.* 1:31.47.82; *Det.* 1:139; *Post.* 1:134.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, *Opif.* 1:62.84.142.151; *Leg.* 1:5.9.16; *Sacr.* 1:40.64.70.101.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, *Det.* 1:95.114; *Post.* 1:135.

<sup>54</sup> See *Ibid.*, *Opif.* 1:135: 'ὅν εἰ καὶ θνητόν ἐστι κατὰ τὴν ὄρατὴν μερίδα, κατὰ γούν τὴν ἀόρατον ἀθανατίζηται. διὸ καὶ κυρίως ἂν τις εἴποι τὸν ἄνθρωπον θνητὴς καὶ ἀθανάτου φύσεως εἶναι μεθόριον ἑκατέρας ὅσον ἀναγκαῖόν ἐστι μετέχοντα καὶ γεγενησθαι θνητὸν ὁμοῦ καὶ ἀθάνατον, θνητὸν μὲν κατὰ τὸ σῶμα, κατὰ δὲ τὴν διάνοιαν ἀθάνατον. "Even if man is mortal according to that portion of him which is visible, he may at all events be immortal according to that portion which is invisible; and for this reason, one may properly say that man is on the boundaries of a better and an immortal nature, partaking of each as far as it is necessary for him; and that he was born at the same time, both mortal and the immortal. Mortal as to his body, but immortal as to his intellect".

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Rom 6:12; 8:11; 2 Cor 4:11; 5:4.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. W. BIEDER, «*θηητός*», *EDNT* II, p. 153.

### 3.2 THE INCORRUPTIBILITY OF THE FUTURE

The above-analyzed vocabulary, with the use of which Paul describes the present, corruptible life, stands in clear opposition to the one with which the eschatological hope is depicted. The first concept that which the expression σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα is balanced which, is βασιλεία θεοῦ, the kingdom of God. It stems from the OT vision of JHWH as king over Israel<sup>57</sup>. The Hebrew expressions מְלִכּוּת, מְלִכּוּת, מְלִכּוּת, מְלִכּוּת all used for the kingdom of God, stress his royal power, dominion and sovereignty rather than the spatial aspect of his reign<sup>58</sup>. God's ruling is eternal, invisible and consequently assumes the eschatological dimension<sup>59</sup>. In the period after the Exile, the kingship of JHWH was universalized and extended over all creatures and nations, while apocalyptic literature added to it the characteristic of the realm of the saints<sup>60</sup>.

The same sense of βασιλεία prevails in the LXX and in the secular Greek, where the noun demonstrates the primary abstract meaning *kingship* or *sovereignty* with only secondary passage to the actual *dominion* or *sign of royalty*<sup>61</sup>. In the NT, βασιλεία θεοῦ is found predominantly in the Synoptics along with its synonym βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν. On the one hand, it presupposes an active role of God who opens and prepares his kingdom for the believers<sup>62</sup>. On the other hand, it also puts forward the prerequisites that must be met to enter it<sup>63</sup>. Likewise, Paul thinks of it as something that effects changes in a person and manifests itself in deeds, not in words<sup>64</sup>. All in all, the access to the kingdom is far from the Greek idea of spiritual training, ecstasy, or asceticism, since it sets men before the rule of God, which concerns the future, but at the same time determines the present<sup>65</sup>. This way a similar concept may be found in the rabbinic literature which speaks of “accepting the yoke of the kingdom,” and of the “manifestation of the kingdom”, thus accentuating its dual, present-future nature<sup>66</sup>. Therefore, binding together the terms σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα and βασιλεία θεοῦ, a man described as subject to corruption, “blood and flesh”, is not able to meet by its own force the moral conditions of the future life with God.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Deut 33:5; 1 Kgs 22:19.

<sup>58</sup> The kingdom in the sense of spatial or geographical realm is never applied to God and refers to the kingdom of David. Cf. BDB, p. 574-575.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Exod 15:18; 1 Sam 12:12; Ps 145:11ff; Isa 24:23; Zeph 3:15; Zech 14:16-17.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Isa 43:14-15; Dan 7:16ff. See G. VON RAD, «βασιλεία», *TDNT* I, p. 565-571.

<sup>61</sup> For βασιλεία in its original sense we may cite from the papyri *P. Paris* 61.6: πάντας τοὺς ὑπὸ τὴν βασιλείαν δικαιοδοτεῖσθαι, *P. Tor.* 1.1.7.14: τῶν μεγίστων βασιλέων ἀπολελυκότων τοὺς ὑπὸ τὴν βασιλείαν πάντας αἰτιῶν πασῶν. For the sense “reign” see *P. Oxy.* 10.1257.7: ἐπὶ τοῦ (ἔτους) ἃ ἔτους τῆς εὐτυχιστάτης ταύτης βασιλείας. Cf. MOULTON–MILLIGAN, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. 104. See also LSJM, p. 309.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Luke 12:32; Matt 16:19; 21:43; 25:34.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Matt 4:17; 5:20; 13:24ff; 18:3f; Mark 1:15; 10:14f; 19:14; Luke 18:16f. See also BDAG, p. 134-135.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 4:20; 6:9f; Gal 5:21; Eph 5:5.

<sup>65</sup> In Philo, in vogue with the sapiential and Hellenistic meaning, βασιλεία constitutes a chapter of his moral teaching (the image of king as a wise person) and it is not presented as an eschatological entity. Cf. K.L. SCHMIDT, «βασιλεία», *TDNT* I, p. 574-593.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. K.G. KUHN, «βασιλεία», *TDNT* I, p. 571-574.

The next antithetical concept which Paul opposes both to φθορά and to φθαρτός is ἀφθαρσία, the counterpart of φθαρσία (*destruction*) accompanied by the privative alpha<sup>67</sup>. In Greek ἀφθαρσία signifies the state of *incorruption* and consequently *immortality* as well as moral *integrity, sincerity*<sup>68</sup>. Philodemus affirms against the Stoics that ἀφθαρσία is a positive power pertaining to gods, which is able to hold the atoms together and thus preserves them from corruption<sup>69</sup>. In the same vein, Plutarch, using this term, gives a definition of god as happy and incorruptible nature<sup>70</sup>.

A similar concept of ἀφθαρσία as the original state of *incorruptibility* and the intent of God's creation may be found in LXX Book of Wisdom. What is interesting, this state is achievable for a man who lives according to God's Law<sup>71</sup>. Thus, in the LXX ἀφθαρσία can be translated as *immortality*, the quality of the future life which comes from outside men<sup>72</sup>. Philo in his usual way combines the Jewish and Hellenistic ideas applying ἀφθαρσία to the soul<sup>73</sup> or to the world<sup>74</sup>, defining it as the quality of earthly life according to wisdom<sup>75</sup>, or *immortality* gained by knowledge and by virtuous life<sup>76</sup>. For Paul, who uses ἀφθαρσία only five times, three of which we find in 1 Cor 15:42-54, the term denotes both the goal of the moral life of men and the divine gift bestowed at the time of resurrection<sup>77</sup>. Referred to the two antithetical terms φθορά and φθαρτός, it stresses a new status of life in which not only the physical and spiritual decay will be abolished, but also the distance between the creature and God will be surpassed, giving this first a share in the divine existence.

The next expression used by the Apostle to describe the future incorruptibility is ἄφθαρτος. In 1 Cor 15:52, it is placed in antithesis with νεκρός and envisages the condition in which the dead will be found after their resurrection. The adjective derives from the already known stem φθαρ- (*destruction*) and indicates the state in which something is *uncorrupted, undecaying*, or shows insusceptibility to corruption<sup>78</sup>. Consequently, the

---

<sup>67</sup> One may wonder why Paul does not use the exactly corresponding terms φθαρτός – ἀφθαρσία. However, the Pauline word pair is also found in PHILO, *Mos.* 2:194: “ἐν γὰρ κόσμῳ βασιλείον μὲν ἱερώατον οὐρανός, ἐσχάτη δὲ γῆ, καθ’ ἑαυτὴν μὲν ἀξιοσπουδάστος, εἰς δὲ σύγκρισιν ἰούσα αἰθέρος ἀπολειπομένη τοσοῦτον ὅσον σκότος μὲν φωτός, νύξ δὲ ἡμέρας, φθορὰ δ’ ἀφθαρσίας καὶ θνητός θεοῦ”. “For in the world the heaven is the most holy temple, and the further extremity is the earth; though this too is in itself worthy of being regarded with honor; but if it is brought into comparison with the air, is as far inferior to it as light is to darkness, or night to day, or *corruption to immortality*, or a mortal to God”.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. LSJM, p. 289.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. J.M. REESE, *Hellenistic influence on the book of Wisdom and its consequences* [AnBib 41], Roma: PIB, 1970, p. 64-69, n.156.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. PLUTARCH, *Mor.* 358e.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Wis 2:23; 6:18-19; 18:4.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. L. MAZZINGHI, *Notte di paura e di luce: Esegese di Sap 17,1-18,4*, [AnBib 134], Roma: PIB, 1995, p. 223-224.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. PHILO, *Somn.* 1:181; *Q.G.* 3:11.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, *Aet.* 1:1.27. 150. It is hard to say, whether Philo really believes in the immortality of the cosmos, since his work finishes at the point when he wants to present the theories that oppose it.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. PHILO, *Opif.* 1:153.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, *Agr.* 1:100; *Ebr.* 1:140; *Somn.* 2:258; *Sacr.* 1:5; *Fug.* 1:56.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Rom 2:7; 1 Cor 15:42.50.53.54. See also 2 Tim 1:10.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. LSJM, p. 289.

expression also denotes something that is *eternal* or *immortal* and it is often applied in Greek to heaven, soul, the abstract category of genre or to poems. Aristotle stresses a strong opposition between the characteristics of perishable and imperishable, which, constituting the substance or the essential part of a being, cannot be found together<sup>79</sup>. In the papyri material, the adjective occurs as an antithesis to mortal and it is referred to gods, or to the imperial rule<sup>80</sup>.

The LXX picks up the classic reference to the deities and applies ἄφθαρτος to God's spirit and Law<sup>81</sup>. Similarly in the NT, the adjective constitutes the characteristic of God himself and describes his word or life to come<sup>82</sup>. Ultimately, ἄφθαρτος confronted with νεκρός in 1 Cor 15:52 stresses the gift of the generous participation in God's life for those who already experienced the state of decay. This act of divine mercy, which will take place at the end of time, consists in the reversal of the mortal processes and restoring the dead to the original glory of God's creation.

The last term with which Paul describes the incorruptible future is ἀθανασία. It stands in opposition to θνητός (1 Cor 15:53) and denotes *immortality*, the state in which death does not affect a being. In such sense it appears in the sepulchral epitaphs in the formula οὐδεὶς ἀθάνατος ("nobody is free from death")<sup>83</sup>. In the papyri material illustrating the vernacular usage, the word occurs with the connotation of *constancy* or *inalterability*, as it is in the epithet referred to Caligula<sup>84</sup>. Although immortality belongs primarily to gods, a mere man can also attain it. The school of Plato applies it to the human soul<sup>85</sup>, pantheistic Stoicism finds impersonal immortality in the cosmos, while individual immortality is sought in the mysteries, magic, and mysticism. According to Bultmann this

---

<sup>79</sup> Similarly to Paul, the "imperishable" appears in Aristotle almost always in pair with the "perishable". The stark opposition between the two categories is demonstrated in the passage of *Metaph.* 10.1059a.1-10: οὐδὲν γὰρ ἔστι φθαρτὸν κατὰ συμβεβηκός· τὸ μὲν γὰρ συμβεβηκός ἐνδέχεται μὴ ὑπάρχειν τὸ δὲ φθαρτὸν τῶν ἐξ ἀνάγκης ὑπαρχόντων ἔστιν οἷς ὑπάρχει· ἢ ἔσται τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ ἐν φθαρτὸν καὶ ἀφθαρτὸν εἰ ἐνδέχεται μὴ ὑπάρχειν αὐτῷ τὸ φθαρτὸν ἢ τὴν οὐσίαν ἄρα ἢ ἐν τῇ οὐσίᾳ ἀνάγκη ὑπάρχειν τὸ φθαρτὸν ἐκάστῳ τῶν φθαρτῶν ὃ δ' αὐτὸς λόγος καὶ περὶ τοῦ ἀφθάρτου· τῶν γὰρ ἐξ ἀνάγκης ὑπαρχόντων ἄμφω ἢ ἄρα καὶ καθ' ὃ πρῶτον τὸ μὲν φθαρτὸν τὸ δ' ἀφθαρτὸν ἔχει ἀντίθεσιν ὥστε ἀνάγκη γένοι ἕτερα εἶναι "Nothing is accidentally perishable; for that which is accidental may not be applicable; but perishability is an attribute which applies necessarily when it is applicable at all. Otherwise one and the same thing will be imperishable as well as perishable, if it is possible for perishability not to apply to it. Thus perishability must be either the substance or in the substance of every perishable thing. The same argument also applies to the imperishable; for both perishability and imperishability are attributes which are necessarily applicable. Hence the characteristics in respect of which and in direct consequence of which one thing is perishable and another imperishable are opposed; and therefore they must be other in kind." See also *ibid.*, 11.1060a; 9.1050b; 3.996a; 12.1071b; 10.1058b; 10.1059a; 3.1000b.

<sup>80</sup> The term appears in antithesis to the "mortal" in *Syll* 365.10: θεῶν δὲ χάριτες τούτῳ διαφέρουσιν ἀθροπίνων διαδοχῶν, ᾧ ἢ νικτὸς ἥλιος καὶ τὸ ἀφθαρτον θνητῆς φύσεως; *OGIS* 569.24 ὑπὲρ] τῆς αἰωνίου καὶ ἀφθάρτου βασιλείας ὑμῶν, with reference to the Imperial rule. Cf. MOULTON–MILLIGAN, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. 96.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Wis 12:1; 18:4.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Rom 1:23; 1 Cor 9:25; 15:52; 1 Tim 1:17; 1 Pe 1:4.23.

<sup>83</sup> See MOULTON–MILLIGAN, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, 11.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. *Syll* 365.7. The Persian Guard is called the "Immortals," because their numbers were kept up to the same figure. Cf. MOULTON–MILLIGAN, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, 11.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. PLATO, *Phdr.* 246a.

immortality means something more than duration. It is a promise of participation in the blissful divine nature<sup>86</sup>.

Passing to Josephus, the term ἀθανασία serves him to express the eternal reward awaited by the Maccabees but also a long earthly life, which the martyrs and the Eseeens are fleeing, preferring death<sup>87</sup>. Philo, whereas he speaks about the practicing of virtues, affirms that it gives life and immortality in the sense of never-ending future awaiting the just after death<sup>88</sup>. In other places, immortality seems to be simply an eternal beauty and youth, the terrestrial life which does not know the pain of death<sup>89</sup>. The human soul longs for eternity but the only one who gives it is God<sup>90</sup>. Finally, the medley of Greek and Jewish-Hellenistic concepts is found in the LXX where immortality is presented as a goal for those who suffer and die as martyrs<sup>91</sup>, but also, in accordance with the Greek traditions, as a reward of wisdom which perpetuates human memory on the earth<sup>92</sup>. In the NT, the term appears only three times, two of which are found in 1 Cor 15:53.54. Paul understands ἀθανασία as a clothing of the mortal human body that enables it to enter into the realm of God's kingdom. In 1 Tim 6:16 it is described as an exclusive attribute of God. With reference to its antithetic counterpart θνητός it describes something absolutely contrary to the human nature, a freedom from death, which also must be understood as a pure gift from God.

With the notion of immortality we have got a full Pauline image describing the future life. It opens with the expression βασιλεία θεοῦ that implies the existence in God's nearness. Consequently the set of expressions with the initial privative alpha: ἀφθαρσία, ἄφθαρτος, and ἀθανασία qualifies the world to come as a reality where corruption does not exist and where death is abolished. The semantic crescendo leading from "incorruptibility" to "immortality" presents the generosity of the divine gifts and death as wiped away by the abundance of the future life granted by God. It clearly prepares Pauline argument in 1 Cor 15:54-57. What should be stressed is also an active, participative character of the future life. Both the "kingdom of God", "incorruptibility" and "immortality" present a perspective that can be achieved only by the submission to the reign and to the law of God. Another words, the incorruptibility of the future demands shunning sin and necessary commitment to the moral life already in the present. With this important conclusion we are ready to pass to the next part describing the vocabulary of transformation.

<sup>86</sup> See R. BULTMANN, «ἀθανασία», *TDNT* III, p. 7-25.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. JOSEPHUS, *A.J.* 12:282; *B.J.* 1:58; 2:151. Interestingly Josephus depicts the Jewish national heroes as rigorously following the commandments of God but at the same time speaking with the Greek philosophical concepts. Those who are dying on the battlefield receive immortality imagined as being placed among the stars, becoming good genies and propitious heroes (*B.J.* 6:46-47). Eleazar, trying to encourage the Jews to choose death (for the sake of immortality of the soul) rather than life under the Romans, claims that "life is calamity for a man not death (...) for, while souls are tied down to a mortal body, they are partakers of its miseries" (*B.J.* 7:343-344).

<sup>88</sup> Cf. PHILO, *Plant.* 1:37; *Migr.* 1:37.189; *Fug.* 1:199; *Prob.* 1:117; *Aet.* 1:112.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, *Spec.* 2:262; *Conf.* 1:7; *Mut.* 1:210.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, *Virt.* 1:9; *Aet.* 1:46. Thus also in his *Legatio ad Gaium* (1:117.369) Philo affirms that the Israel embracing voluntarily death in defense of its own tradition finds the entrance to immortality.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. 4 Macc 14:5; 16:13; Wis 3:4; 4:1.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Wis 8:13; 8:17; 15:3.

### 3.3 BRIDGING EXPRESSIONS

The bridging expressions are the terms by means of which Paul creates a link between the corruptible present life and the freedom from corruption in the future. In this group we have got three verbs: κληρονομέω (v.50bc), ἀλλάσσω (v.51c.52d) and ἐνδύω (v.53) out of which ἀλλάσσω, standing in the heart of Pauline argumentation, is the most important one. It provides an answer to the dramatic situation of the living, ill-suited for the heavenly reality.

The first verb κληρονομέω comes from the stem κληρονομ- which is a composite of the noun κληρος (*lot, casting of lots or what is assigned by lot, thus legacy*)<sup>93</sup>, and the verb νέμω (*distribute, allot, hold, possess, have legal possession of*)<sup>94</sup>. It means to *inherit, obtain, acquire*, as well as to *be inheritor or heir or to leave an heir behind one*<sup>95</sup>. In the LXX, the verb translates two important words: לְהַנִּיחַ (20) and much more often שָׂרַח (115), which refer primarily to the possession of Canaan promised to the Patriarchs and their descendents.

The first verb, לְהַנִּיחַ, together with the derived noun הַנְּחִילָה signifies the property which is a part of permanent possession and a result of succession<sup>96</sup>, while its close synonym, שָׂרַח, connotes the idea of possession (apart from succession), taking of possession *in place of others, inheriting* with the enduring result of dwelling<sup>97</sup>. What is important to us, both verbs appear in the program of conquest with a stark emphasis on the Israel's obedience to the Law, which guarantees the perpetual inheritance<sup>98</sup>. We are dealing here with the idea that is found later in the Pauline use of κληρονομέω, namely, a crucial balance between the act of God and the responsive participation of the people. It is God who gives the land and the victory to possess it, yet it is conditioned by the life of people based on the obedience to the divine commandments<sup>99</sup>. The idea expanded further by the prophets in an eschatological direction promises a new, permanent possession of land, preceded also by the transformation of the heart of the people<sup>100</sup>.

The active-moral, enduring and eschatological dimension comprised in the LXX's κληρονομέω / κληρονομία emerges further in its use in the Jewish apocalyptic<sup>101</sup>, the NT<sup>102</sup> and in the rabbinic writings<sup>103</sup>. There, the land is replaced by the eternal life,

<sup>93</sup> Cf. LSJM, p. 959.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 1176.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 959.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Exod 34:9; Prov 14:18. See E. LIPÍŃSKI, «לְהַנִּיחַ», *TDOT IX*, p. 319-335.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. BDB, p. 439.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Deut 6:17ff; 16:20; Num 33:50-54.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Deut 11:31; 1 Chron 28:8. See N. LOHFINK, «יָרַשׁ», *TDNT VI*, p. 368-396.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Jer 30:3; Isa 60:21.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. 1 Enoch 40:9; 4 Ezra 7:9.17.96; 2 Apoc. Bar. 44:13.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Matt 19:29; 25:34; Mark 10:17; Luke 10:25; 18:18; 1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:21; Col 3:24; Eph 5:5; Jas 2:5; Rev 21:7.

<sup>103</sup> The rabbinic use of the formula "to inherit" is well illustrated by Strack – Billerbeck who list the expressions: יָרַשׁ הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא "to inherit the world to come" *Qid.* 40b; יָרַשׁ הַיְיָ הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא "to inherit the life of the world to come" *y. Pes.* 6:33a.50; יָרַשׁ עֵדֶן נָן "to inherit the Eden garden" *y. Ber.* 4:7a. 28. 34; נָחַל הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא נָחַל "to achieve or to take in possession the world to come" *Abot* 5:19; נָחַל הַיְיָ הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא "to take in possession the life of the world to come" *Sot.* 7b; הִסֵּךְ עַל־מֵאָה דַּאֲתִי "to take in possession the world to come" *Targ. Ruth* 2:13; קָנָה הַיְיָ הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא "to acquire the life of the world to come" *Abot* 2:7. See STRACK–BILLERBECK, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, I, p. 829.

Garden of Eden, the world to come or the kingdom of God. The context of judgment, righteousness and human responsibility in which the word appears suggests once again that it is on the moral level where the full meaning of κληρονομέω resounds. Combined with the ethical aspect of βασιλεία θεοῦ, the verb stresses the human responsibility for passing from corruptibility to the new quality of life in obedience to God. On the other hand, it is also here where the real existential drama of man appears, since with his own force he is not able to accomplish such a passage.

Thus, κληρονομέω prepares the way for a crucial verb with which Paul describes the passage from the present state to the realm of the incorruptible and enduring life, namely the Greek verb ἀλλάσσω. In the ancient papyri material the word is used predominantly in the economical sense: *give in exchange, barter one thing for another*<sup>104</sup>. In the Greek prose and poetry, it can also denote the change of time or place, but in every instance the reference to people is relatively rare<sup>105</sup>.

Passing to the LXX, the expression in the passive voice is found only in six passages: with reference to God's authority to change the earth; describing the changes of time; and once with reference to the transformation of the human heart<sup>106</sup>. Besides, the verb in the active voice recurs often as a simple expression describing the change of clothes<sup>107</sup>, and the exchange of one thing for another<sup>108</sup>. Among the six occurrences in the NT, one passive form in Heb 1:12 is a quotation from Ps 101:27 (the change of the heaven and earth compared to clothing) and two others are found in 1 Cor 15:51-52. The rest appears in the active voice and refers to the changes operated by humans, like the change of customs, the exchange of the glory of the real God for idols, the change of the tone of voice or garment<sup>109</sup>.

Let us ask once again a question from the introductory part: why is Paul using such a weak and ambiguous verb like ἀλλάσσω to express the crucial idea of transformation? At the beginning one may point to a conceptual relation between ἀλλάσσω and ἄλλος in 1 Cor 15:39-41, as well as between ἀλλάσσω and ἐνδύω, both belonging to the vocabulary connected with garment. To these, however, we may add more interesting semantic data. Asher<sup>110</sup>, claiming that the Greek philosophy is the only source that corresponds to Paul's argument in 1 Cor 15, points to the relation of verb ἀλλάσσω with the philosophical ambience. The author stressed that the Pauline understanding of change as a transformation involving opposites, remains in agreement with the philosophers down to Plato, who also accentuated the relationship between polarity and change. Most of the correspondences may be found between Paul and Aristotle who also stressed the instantaneous

<sup>104</sup> Cf. MOULTON–MILLIGAN, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. 22.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. LSJM, p. 68. The rare instances in papyri where the verb is found with reference to the change of human person are: *P. RyI. 7.230.9-11: ὀρόβ[ο]υ, μὴ [ο]ῦν ἄλλως ποιή[ε]της ἵνα μὴ δόξω- μέν σε εὐθέως ἠλλάσθαι τὰ πρὸς ἡμᾶς; B.G.U. VII.1675.3-4: ἐγὼ γὰρ ἐμαυτὴν οὐκ ἠλλαχα; S.B. VI. 9017 (18) 5-6: τάχα οὖν οὐ ἀλλασσόμεθα; P. Giss. Univ. 3.31.17-19: οἰδ[α]ς δὲ ὅτι οὐκ ἀλλάσσω ἐμαυτὸν πάποτε οὐδὲ δ[ύ]ο ψυχὰς ἔχω εἰς σέ; P. Bad. 2.35.6-7: θαυμάζω πῶς τὴν πίστιν σου ἠλλαξαι. See ARZT–GRABNER, *I. Korinther*, p. 501.*

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Ps 101:27; Dan 4:16. 25. 32; Wis 12:10.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Gen 35:32; 41:14; 2 Kgs 5:5. 22. 23; Ps 101:26; Jer 52:33.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Exod 13:13; Lev 27:10. 27. 33; Jdg 14:13; 2 Sm 12:20; 2 Kgs 5:28; Sir 7:18; Jer 2:11.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Acts 6:14; Rom 1:23; Gal 4:20; Heb 1:12.

<sup>110</sup> See ASHER, *Polarity and Change*, p. 176-177.

character of change taking place between two members of the same *genus*. According to the great Athenian philosopher, the result of transformation should also be observable for man<sup>111</sup>.

Is Paul alluding to the popular philosophical notion of transformation, certainly familiar to the Corinthians? The hypothesis of Asher does not find any semantic support in the ancient literature, where, as we managed to show above, ἀλλάσσω belongs to the common vocabulary connected with trade, traveling and everyday life. Instead, the ancient authors like Euripides, Apollodorus and Pausanias, give us an interesting hint on the use of the verb outside the philosophical ambience, in the Greek poetry and prose. They frequently apply it to describe the changes of form operated in gods and humans by Zeus and Dionysius. Thus, Apollodorus narrates the story of the Triops, who, being the descendants of gods, waged war against them. They threatened to ascend up to heaven and wooed Hera and Artemis. However, Artemis killed them by a ruse, since she changed herself into a deer and leaped between them, while they threw their darts at each other<sup>112</sup>. Both Apollodorus and Pausanias also tell the stories on Zeus changing Dionysius into a kid or transforming himself into a bird<sup>113</sup>. Finally, Euripides in *Bacchae* reports the speech of Dionysius to the Thebans in which the god admits changing his form to a mortal one to defend the Bacchae. In the same drama, Kadmos, the founder of Thebes, becomes a dragon while his wife Harmonia is turned into a serpent<sup>114</sup>.

While it is difficult to see any affinity between Zeus, who changes man into some other creatures for punishing him, and God who transforms man into glory, these texts prove that the verb ἀλλάσσω belongs to a wider cultural, rather non-philosophical, range.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> See APOLLODORUS, *The Library*, 1.7.4: ἀλλάξασα γὰρ τὴν ἰδέαν εἰς ἔλαφον διὰ μέσων αὐτῶν ἐπήδησεν, οἱ δὲ βουλόμενοι εὐστοχῆσαι τοῦ θηρίου ἐφ' ἑαυτοὺς ἠκόμισαν. "For she changed herself into a deer and leaped between them, and in their eagerness to hit the quarry they threw their darts at each other".

<sup>113</sup> See APOLLODORUS, *The Library*, 3.4.3: Διόνυσον δὲ Ζεὺς εἰς ἔριφον ἀλλάξας τὸν Ἡρας θυμὸν ἔκλειψε, καὶ λαβὼν αὐτὸν Ἑρμῆς πρὸς νύμφας ἐκόμισεν ἐν Νύσῃ κατοικοῦσας τῆς Ἀσίας, ἃς ὕστερον Ζεὺς καταστερίσας ὠνόμασεν Ἰάδας. "But Zeus eluded the wrath of Hera by turning Dionysus into a kid, and Hermes took him and brought him to the nymphs who dwelt at Nysa in Asia, whom Zeus afterwards changed into stars and named them the Hyades"; PAUSANIAS, *Description of Greece*, 2.17.4: κόκκυγα δὲ ἐπὶ τῷ σκήπτρῳ καθῆσθαι φασὶ λέγοντες τὸν Δία, ὅτε ἦρα παρθένου τῆς Ἡρας, ἐς τοῦτου τὸν ὄρνιθα ἀλλαγῆναι, τὴν δὲ ἄτε παίγνιον θηρᾶσαι. "The presence of a cuckoo seated on the scepter they explain by the story that when Zeus was in love with Hera in her maidenhood he changed himself into this bird, and she caught it to be her pet." See also PAUSANIAS, *Description of Greece*, 10.4.8: ὁ δὲ ἔποψ ἐς ὃν ἔχει λόγος τὸν Τηρέα ἀλλαγῆναι, οὗτος ὁ ὄρνις μέγεθος μὲν ὀλίγον ἐστὶν ὑπὲρ ὄρνυγα, ἐπὶ τῇ κεφαλῇ δὲ οἱ τὰ πτερὰ ἐς λόφου σχῆμα ἐξήρται. "The hoopoe, into which the legend says Tereus was changed, is a bird a little larger than the quail, while the feathers on its head rise into the shape of a crest"; APOLLODORUS, *The Library*, 3.12.6: μίγνυται δὲ αὐθις Αἰακὸς Ψαμάθῃ τῇ Νηρέως εἰς φώκην ἠλλαγμένη διὰ τὸ μὴ βούλεσθαι συνελθεῖν, καὶ τεκνοῖ παῖδα Φώκον. "Afterwards Aeacus cohabited with Psamathe, daughter of Nereus, who turned herself into a seal to avoid his embraces, and he begot a son Phocus".

<sup>114</sup> See EURIPIDES, *Bacch.* 53-54: Διόνυσος ὦν οὐνεκ' εἶδος θηρῶν ἀλλάξας ἔχω μορφήν τ' ἐμὴν μετέβαλον εἰς ἀνδρὸς φύσιν. "On which account I have changed my form to a mortal one and altered my shape into the nature of a man"; *ibid.*, 1330: Διόνυσος: δράκων γεινήση μεταβαλῶν, δάμαρ τε σὴ ἐκθηρωθεὶς ὄφεος ἀλλάξει τύπον, ἦν Ἄρεος ἔσχες Ἀρμονίαν θιγητὸς γηγῶς. "changing your form, you will become a dragon, and your wife, Harmonia, Ares' daughter, whom you though mortal held in marriage, will be turned into a beast and will receive in exchange the form of a serpent".



It could naturally arouse associations with the divine agent, stressed additionally by the passive voice in which it appears in Paul. The vague and ambiguous verb ἀλλάσσω obviously needs a clarification and that is indeed what Paul is doing, introducing the term ἐνδύω, which belongs to the semantic field of garment and new clothing. The verb is a construct from δύνω which may mean *sink, get, go into, enter*<sup>115</sup> and the preposition ἐν implying both motion *to* and subsequent position *in* some place<sup>116</sup>. The verb ἐνδύω is used in Greek to describe *putting on, wearing* clothes, *entering* something, for instance a contest or *undertaking* something<sup>117</sup>. In the papyri literature, the verb appears with the basic meaning to *put on* and is referred to garment<sup>118</sup>. An interesting passage may be found in the magic papyri where a goddess is transformed into an old woman, and then, when her service is accomplished, “the god will again clothe her with her own beauty, which she has doffed”<sup>119</sup>. Ultimately, we should not overlook the connection of the word with the various forms of mysteries, in which it symbolizes the newness of life or the semblance to gods put on by the adepts<sup>120</sup>.

Apart the connection with the mysteries, Philo draws aptly on the metaphorical sense of the term ἐνδύω, describing those who put on the “profession of a rigid life” or “simple unvaried robe of truth which no mortal thing can ever touch”<sup>121</sup>. The same metaphorical clothing appears in the LXX which depicts God girded with strength, or Zion in a beautiful garment, a symbol of salvation bestowed by the Lord<sup>122</sup>. Just like shame and dishonor can be a garment of the unjust, in the same way righteousness, justice and salvation are the robe of those who follow the paths of God<sup>123</sup>.

Finally, in the Pauline and deuterio-Pauline literature ἐνδύω appears in the theologically significant passages in three major figurative senses associated with: a) baptism and Christology, b) paraenesis, and c) eschatology. They emphasize the newness of the reality mediated by Christ<sup>124</sup>. To be baptized in Christ means that the Christians should be clothed with him, as well as with a new self, created according to the likeness of God<sup>125</sup>. The metaphor also finds its use in the specific paraenetic statements, exhorting to put on spiritual weapons, armor of light, righteousness, faith and love against the wiles of the devil<sup>126</sup>. To conclude, the distinctive paraenetic context in which the verb recurs provides us also with an important tool for interpreting the meaning of ἀλλάσσω and the whole Pauline notion of transformation. It is truly and above all a gift of God. This gift, however, demands the active participation of man, his commitment to fight the reality causing corruption.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. LSJM, p. 463.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 551.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 562.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. *P. Oxy.* 2.258.11; 51.3616.3; *P. Giss.* 1.77.8. See ARZT-GRABNER, *I Korinther*, p. 502.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. *P. Lond.* 125 verso<sup>19</sup> πάλιν θεός ἐνδεδύ[σεται]ε (ἐνδύσεται) τὸ ἑαυτῆς κάλλος ὄ[περ] ἐξεδύσατο. See MOULTON–MILLIGAN, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. 212.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. H. PAULSEN, «ἐνδύω», *EDNT* I, p. 451.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. PHILO, *Deus* 1:102; *Ebr.* 1:86 *Conf.* 1:131.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Ps 92:1; 103:1; Isa 22:21; 51:9; 52:1; 61:10.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Ps 34:26; 108:18. 29; 131:9.16; Job 8:22; 29:14; Sir 27:8.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. PAULSEN, «ἐνδύω», p. 451.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10. 12.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. Rom 13:12; Eph 6:11.14; 1 Thess 5:8.

In consequence, it is hard to find some compelling links between the Pauline and the philosophical idea of transformation, which the Greeks discussed on a purely natural level, and often referred to the abstracts or to the four main elements of the universe. The second vast field where Paul could have found his inspirations is in fact the Jewish apocalyptic literature. *1 Enoch* describes the transformation of the house of Jerusalem and the generations of pagans depicted as “white bulls” with the Messiah resembling the Lamb and the Lord as the Shepherd over them (90:28-42)<sup>127</sup>. Their life is apparently unending, and there is a return to a primitive righteousness of Eden<sup>128</sup>. In the same work, we also find the motive of the garment of glory which, given to the righteous upon the resurrection, does not grow old nor does it pass away (1 Enoch 62:15ff)<sup>129</sup>.

Even closer parallel to the Pauline text may be found in 2 Apoc. Bar. 49 – 51, which also speaks of the nature of the resurrection body. The question we find there is strikingly similar to the question reported by Paul in 1 Cor 15:35: “In what shape will those live who live in Thy day?”<sup>130</sup>. The Book describes the final judgment, during which the condition of the wicked will change for the worst, while the just will be glorified and their “face shall be turned into the light of their beauty, that they may be able to acquire and receive the world which does not die, which is then promised to them”<sup>131</sup>. *2 Apocalypse Baruch Syriac* stresses also, similarly to 1 Cor 15, an incompatibility between the present and the future eon, pointing out that whatever is corruptible and defiled with evil

---

<sup>127</sup> See also 1 Enoch 108:11ff describing transformation of those, “who were born in darkness, who in the flesh were not recompensed with such honor as their faithfulness deserved”. See *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English: With Introductions and Critical and Explanatory Notes to the Several Books. Volume II: Pseudepigrapha*, ed. R.H. CHARLES et al., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913, p. 281.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. CHARLES, *The Apocrypha*, 260, n.38. There is also the transformation of the heaven and earth that become an eternal blessing and abode of the elect one (1 Enoch 45:4-5).

<sup>129</sup> See also 1 Enoch 108:12. The same motive referred to the living can be found in the *2 Enoch* where the main protagonist is to put a new garment of glory instead of the earthly one (22:8.10). According to Cavallin, the motive of the glorious garment stems out of the Deuteronomistic description of the miracles of forty years in the desert (Deut 8:4; 29:5) transposed to the eschatological level – now those garments, incapable of being worn out, symbolize the eternal life of glory. Cf. CAVALLIN, *Life after Death*, p. 46.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. 2 Apoc. Bar. 49:2.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. 2 Apoc. Bar. 51:2-3. See also 51:5-12: “When therefore they see those, over whom they are now exalted, (but) who shall then be exalted and glorified more than they, they shall respectively be transformed, the latter into the splendor of angels, and the former shall yet more waste away in wonder at the visions and in the beholding of the forms. For they shall first behold and afterwards depart to be tormented. But those who have been saved by their works, And to whom the law has been now a hope, And understanding an expectation, And wisdom a confidence, Shall wonders appear in their time. For they shall behold the world which is now invisible to them, And they shall behold the time which is now hidden from them: And time shall no longer age them. For in the heights of that world shall they dwell, And they shall be made like unto the angels, And be made equal to the stars, And they shall be changed into every form they desire, From beauty into loveliness, And from light into the splendor of glory. For there shall be spread before them the extents of Paradise, and there shall be shown to them the beauty of the majesty of the living creatures which are beneath the throne, and all the armies of the angels, who [are now held fast by My word, lest they should appear, and] are held fast by a command, that they may stand in their places till their advent comes. Moreover, there shall then be excellence in the righteous surpassing that in the angels”. See CHARLES, *The Apocrypha*, p. 508-509.

will pass away while “the new world (comes) which does not turn to corruption those who depart to its blessedness”<sup>132</sup>. Let us mention at last the rabbinic literature that combines the transformation and immortality saying that in the times of the Messiah, men will regain the splendor of their appearance and immortal body and the righteous will not return to dust but they will live forever<sup>133</sup>.

Summing up, there is much in common between the apocalyptic literature and the Pauline program for the future. Both contain the vision of transformation placed in the scenario of the end of time, they describe it with the image of new garment, stress the primary role of God along with the value of good deeds. However, it is hard to agree with Becker<sup>134</sup> claiming that the latter is basically the current Jewish apocalyptic eschatology in its Christian form. As it was pointed by Cavallin, the text of *2 Apocalypse Baruch Syriac*, which provides the closest parallel to the Pauline notion of transformation, deals primarily with the resurrection of the dead and binds the change to the event of judgment<sup>135</sup>. Thus, the transformation becomes a mean of retribution for the righteous and a punishment for the wicked, while for Paul it is an event that helps the dead and the living surpass their finite nature, and be similar to Christ<sup>136</sup>. Paul begins his vision of transformation with the verb κληρονομέω that stresses the moral exigency of the kingdom of God, impossible to be met for man, and gradually introduces the idea of the change operated by God. The verb ἀλλάσσω points to the preeminent divine role in the process, while ἐνδύω declares the necessity of putting on and imitating the life of Christ. In the end, the unique relation to Christ constitutes the fundament and decides the originality of the Pauline vision of transformation<sup>137</sup>. It demands from man an active response to the gifts of God, subjecting his life to the divine rule and putting on the image of his Son.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Summing up the Pauline description of the clash between the present corruptible existence and the human aspiration to incorruptible life, the semantic survey leads us to four general conclusions:

1) The corruptibility of the present life drawing both on the Greek and on the Jewish-Hellenistic concepts presents the universal drama of man immersed in his moral insufficiency, spiritual and physical decay, also limited and passing as a creature burdened with sin.

2) The Pauline image of the future life accentuates its moral and ontological exigencies, but above all it stresses the dimension of being with God. Almost all the expressions of this semantic field carry the privative alpha that marks an absolute opposition between the reality of God and men.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. 2 Apoc. Bar. 44:8-13. See also 2 Apoc. Bar. 74:2; 4 Ezra 7:29-32.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. *Sanh.* 92a; *Gen. Rab.* 12. Cf. STRACK–BILLERBECK, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, III, p. 479-481. On the future incorruptibility and immortality see also 4 Ezra 8:53-54.

<sup>134</sup> Cf. J.C. BEKER, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989, p. 170. See also B. LINDARS, “The Sound of the Trumpet: Paul and Eschatology”, *BJRL* 67/2:1985, p. 766-767.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. CAVALLIN, *Life after Death*, p. 88-90.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. MATAND BULEMBAT, *Noyau et enjeux*, p. 273.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 259.

3) Life in God's presence cannot be achieved with a purely human force, yet it calls for a substantial effort from the part of man. The transformation is both a divine gift and a result of the human ethical conduct. The double divine and human dimension of the process is clearly discernible in the verb κληρονομέω. Further, the Pauline choice of the verb ἀλλάσσω as a key word to describe the process does not bear any philosophical implications, pointing rather at the connection with the popular language of myth. There the word ἀλλάσσω is used to describe the changes operated by the divine agent. The notion is consequently developed and christologized with the next verb ἐνδύω, which defines the transformation as putting on the new self and imitating Christ. Christology emerges as a distinctive trait of the Pauline transformation and seals up its divinely-human character.

4) Ultimately, Paul places the transformation in the scenario of the end, because then the fruits of the relation with the Risen Lord and the abundance of life in him will be fully revealed. It is a mystery (μυστήριον) which cannot be proved directly from the Scripture, but it makes a substantial part of the divine revelation, communicated personally to the Apostle. The idea of "mystery" stresses ultimately the Christological dimension of the transformation in Paul. It refers to the saving acts of God in Christ inaccessible to human reason and kept ready for the eschatological glory of those who received a revelation through the Spirit<sup>138</sup>.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY:

ARZT-GRABNER, P., *I. Korinther* [PKNT 2], Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006;  
CAVALLIN, H.C.C., *Life after Death: Paul's Argument for the Resurrection of the Dead in I Cor 15: Part I: An Enquiry into the Jewish Background* [ConBNT 7/1] Lund: Gleerup, 1974; DE BOER, M.C., *The Defeat of Death: Apocalyptic Eschatology in I Corinthians 15 and Romans 5* [JSNTSup 22], Sheffield: Academic Press, 1988, p. 132-38;  
MORISSETTE, R., «Un midrash sur la mort (1 Cor., XV, 54c à 57)», *RB* 79:1972, p. 161-188;  
PLEVNIK, J., *Paul and the Parousia: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation*, Peabody: MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997.

---

<sup>138</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 2:1.7; 4:1; cf. also 1:23-31. In 1 Cor 13:2 and 14:2 the mysteries are mentioned among other spiritual gifts and refer as in 1 Cor 15:51 to prophecy, while in Rom 11:25 they comprise God's plan and his saving action toward Israel. In deutero-Pauline letters, in Colossians μυστήριον denotes the whole saving action of God reassumed in Christ, who contains all the hope of the present and all of the glory that is to be revealed (Col 1:26.27; 2:2; 4:3). In Ephesians μυστηρίου lacking the eschatological element, turns to a present reality of the Church and the proclamation of Christ as the saving plan of divine wisdom (Eph 1:9; 3:3.4.9; 5:32; 6:19); In 1 Timothy, the formal use of μυστήριον should be understood in the sense of a basis for a particular mode of conduct (1 Tim 3:9. 16), while in 2 Thess 2:7 it is a secret decree of God which allows lawlessness to work still in the world. See also JOSEPHUS, *B.J.* 1:470; 1QM 14:9; 1QH 5:36. Cf. H. KRÄMER, «μυστήριον», *EDNT* II, p. 445.

## STRESZCZENIE

**ZNISZCZALNE, NIEZNISZCZALNE I KRÓLESTWO BOŻE.  
POLE SEMANTYCZNE IDEI PRZEMIANY W 1 KOR 15,50-53**

Jednostka retoryczna 1 Kor 15,50-53 daje dobry pogląd na różnorodność źródeł inspirujących Pawłową ideę transformacji. Paweł mówi zarówno do Greków jak i do żydów, obrazy mityczne i popularne idee filozoficzne przeplatają się z żydowską apokaliptyką. Greckie pojęcia użyte przez Pawła dla opisanego „zniszczalności” i „rozkładu” obecnego życia oddają uniwersalny dramat człowieka rozdartego pomiędzy własną skończonością a wezwaniem do królestwa Bożego. Podległość zniszczeniu to nie tyle efekt ograniczonej ludzkiej natury, co przede wszystkim skutek jej obciążenia grzechem. Z kolei „niezniszczalność” i doskonałość przyszłego życia to coś więcej niż doskonałe ciało. To uczestniczenie w boskiej naturze, absolutny dar Stwórcy, który równocześnie stawia przed człowiekiem pewne wymagania. Królestwa Bożego jako dar a zarazem wyzwanie skierowanego do człowieka spotykają w Pawłowej idei przemiany. Trzy czasowniki użyte przez Pawła, κληρονομέω, ἀλλάσσω, oraz ἐνδύω przedstawiają dynamiczny proces, w trakcie którego wierzący odpowiada na Boże wezwanie wiernością jego przykazaniom, i przyobleczeniem na siebie nowego „ja” w Chrystusie. Kluczowy czasownik ἀλλάσσω zawiera w sobie ciekawe nawiązania do popularnych greckich mitycznych koncepcji przemiany, podczas gdy sam proces opisany przez Pawła wykazuje pokrewieństwo z obrazami żydowskiej apokaliptyki. O oryginalności wizji przemiany u Pawła decyduje jej głęboki wymiar chrystologiczny. Jest ona przede wszystkim narzędziem pozwalającym żyć w obecności Pana.

**KEYWORDS:**

semantic, corruptible, incorruptible, kingdom of God, transformation, Jewish apocalyptic, Philo.

**SŁOWA KLUCZE:**

semantyka, zniszczalne, niezniszczalne, królestwo Boże, przemiana, apokaliptyka żydowska, Filon Aleksandryjski.