### ​**Title of proposal:** Digital Paul: Romans - Synchronic and Interdisciplinary Approaches

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### **Host Institution:** National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

## Summary and basic objectives of the project

The research project entitled “**Digital Paul: Romans Synchronic Interdisciplinary Approaches**” analyzes, for the first time in the wider area of the Eastern Mediterranean, the aforementioned epistle of Apostle Paul in three discreet and, at the same time, intertwined approaches: synchronic, interdisciplinary and intercultural; its deliverables comply with current research practices in regards to Open Access and Digital Format in the context of Digital Humanities (Schroeder, 2016).

*Romans* was composed in the cosmopolitan and multicultural Corinth of the 1st century and, for 2.000 years, has had a lasting influence on the history of Christianity and Europe; Important personalities such as Augustine and Luther have experienced *conversion* in their life through the study of this text, and, hence, *Romans* is a tenet in European thought and culture. In the 20th century, Karl Barth composed his monumental commentary on Romans and introduced, just after the tragedy of the *Great World War*, new trends in Theology, Philosophy, and Western thought (Hunsinger, 2000; Hunsinger, 1976; Webb, 1991).

The aforementioned influence of the Epistle is primarily rooted in the rhetoric competency of its author, who is preparing for his visit to Rome and Spain, clarifying certain misunderstandings that have arisen from his missionary activity around the Aegean Sea, first to *the Judeans and then to the Greeks*. Moreover, Paul is discussing diachronic and important issues which are still pertinent in postmodern aspects; the relationship of Christianity with the Law (both the Mosaic and the secular law), the mentality of the “chosen nation”, the interaction of identities in the same public space (human ego, i.e. conscience, will and action, human *προαίρεσις*, **“**Judeans and Greeks”, “strong” – liberal / “weak” – conservative, “chosen nation and political authority”). Some of the most widely known issues are excerpts from *Romans* where matters of identity, sexuality (homosexuality, social gender) and ecology are discussed.

This project aims to cover the lack of a commentary –both in Greek-speaking and Orthodox theological research– which incorporates the most current trends in Pauline Theology (“New Perspectives on Paul”) and, at the same time, underlining the rich hermeneutical tradition of the Ecclesiastical writers in East and West. Moreover, it will seek to semantically clarify important terms (righteousness, wrath, works of Law, conscience, body, flesh) and metaphors (such as the olive tree in chapters 9-11) by presenting and examining the linguistic context in which they appear (Hellenistic Greek, Jewish influences in regards to semantics, Latin – the lingua franca of the Roman Empire). The research is concluded with the examination of the reception of Romans beyond the fields of Biblical Studies, Theology and Religious Studies, as an emphasis is placed on its influence on the readers of the 20th and 21st century. Although extremely important and wide in scope, the study of the postmodern reception of Romans has remained an uncharted research territory. Moreover, the entirety of the project will incorporate the practices in the emerging field of Digital Humanities; apart from being available both in print and digitally, the research will be incorporated in an online platform in the form of a multimedia hypertext, following the standards set forth in similar projects (Hutchings, 2017; Almas & Berti, 2013). Specifically, the core of the research will focus on the examination of chapters 1-11 of the Epistle to Romans, by employing literary and rhetorical criticism, as well as identifying theological and anthropological issues. Moreover, the reception and influence of the Epistle will be examined and discussed in the context of religious movements, ideological and political issues, debates on ethics and law, scientific advances and cultural aspects of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Two of the key deliverables of this project will be a) print and digital edition (hypertext, lexical database, intertextual connections) with the participation of established and new scholars, (b) proceedings (in English) of an international conference which will emphasize the interdisciplinary approaches to the *Romans*.

## First stage of research: introductory remarks and synchronic approach

*Romans* is the most comprehensive and extensive of the epistles of Paul; it has often been characterized as the “Doctrinal Epistle” or the “Gospel of Apostle Paul”. Indeed, Romans –placed at the beginning of the “canon of Pauline epistles”– is the only epistle that has such a clear thematic outline in regards to theological and practical aspects. However, it should not be considered as an epitome / synopsis of his teachings or as a comprehensive theological thesis; the Eucharist –an important aspect of Pauline theology– is not discussed in *Romans*. Regardless, it discusses in a systematic manner a basic concept in Pauline theology: God’s commitment to His promises and the redemption of every person from sin and death. This justice –God’s justice– is achieved through the grace of Christ and faith / dedication to Him; there is no obligation to embrace the identity of a “chosen nation” (1:16-17). The only prerequisite is to be a member of the “new humanity” through faith / loyalty so as to be able to embrace sacrificial love –which is the completion / culmination of the Law– for the “other”. In this context, every person experiences the “now” (current) and, at the same time, the “not yet” (forthcoming) by releasing themselves from the oppressive rule of the flesh and the world. The metamorphosis of the individual from a descendant of the old Adam to a new being and their adoption by God (who is now called “Father”) are set forth by baptism and the charismatic influence of the Holy Spirit.

*Romans*, probably written in the winter of 56/57 CE in Corinth, at the beginning of Nero’s reign (the so-called “Quinquennium”, the first five years) has some key differentiations from the rest of the Pauline corpus: **(a)** it is addressed to a church (“Ecclesia” – the term is not found in *Romans*) which was not established by the Apostle or his circle of disciples. Further research (as derived from the list of greetings in the epilogue) reveals that the recipients are six or seven small congregations in Rome, comprised by Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians. The latter had recently returned to the Eternal City after the death of Claudius (54 CE), who, in 49 CE, had launched a pogrom; this action was spurred by conflicts in the Synagogue due to *Chrestus* (Suetonius, *Claud*. 25.4). Paul’s remarks indicate the preexistence of such hostility between Gentiles and Jews, due to different approaches on calendar and dietary issues (14-15), as well as the feeling of superiority cultivated in the two groups. It should be added the members of the congregations (250–500 persons) belonged to the lower social strata (their names are an indication), resided in the areas of Transtiberium/Travestere and Porta Cobena, and had an excellent knowledge of the Law (Torah) and Prophets (cf. 1:2;15:7-12).

 **(b)** Moreover, *Romans* is written when Paul believes that he has completed his missionary travels in the cities around the Aegean Sea (*πεπληρωκέναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ –* *Rom* 15:19). His focus now lies in visiting Spain, the edge of the Western world, where he would face new challenges and the conditions were unfamiliar to him: Latin was the prevalent language and there were rather small numbers of Jews and Synagogues in the context of which to begin his preaching. His primary goal is to lead the entirety of the nations to the new faith, as he firmly believes that this is the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy (*Is* 66:19-20, cf. *Rom* 15:18). *Romans* is his attempt to secure the confidence of the epistle’s recipients (belonging in a Church which Paul probably did not found), as well as create the conditions that would facilitate his arrival in Rome and his journey to Spain.

**(c)** As “λειτουργὸς Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ”, Paul must have had serious doubts if his offering of reconciliation and peace would be accepted by Jewish Christians, as well as if the “προσφορὰ τῶν ἐθνῶν” to “Mother Zion” and its Saints would convince his epistle’s recipients. He is endeavoring to deconstruct the image he has built and preceded him – at least in the large Jewish community of Rome.

As discussed in the summary of the project, the study of Romans is intertwined with important theological and social issues in the history of Christianity as well as the formation of Western thought (e.g. important thinkers as Augustine and Luther). Of key importance, however, is Karl Barth’s commentary, which was published in the 20th century and had a lasting influence in Theology and Philosophy (Greenman & Larsen, 2005; Cremer, 1995). It should be added that the Greek translation of his work appeared only recently (Barth, 2015), in an era of crisis and radical changes, as evidenced by the *Bulletin of Biblical Studies* (vol. 31). A series of research articles appeared (Bathrellos, 2016), which can be utilized in the context of a wider debate on the role of Theology in culture. The proposed research project on *Romans* aims in incorporating such views, so as to offer an interdisciplinary approach and move beyond the confines of a strictly hermeneutical methodology. Moreover, such approaches (e.g. Biblical Studies and Postmodernism) have appeared in prominent academic journals and monographs, but, in some cases, disregard the textual and social context of the original text. Key areas that are expected to be addressed in this research are the notion of the “chosen nation” and its pertinent ideologies, and the interaction of identities in public space. Such issues have a direct social impact not only in Greek society, but internationally, as they discuss issues brought forth by various fields: ecology, social gender, sexuality, political authority, antisemitism, and prevailing ideologies.

## Current research on Romans and the differentiation of the proposed project

It is widely known that the *New Perspective on Pauline Theology* (K. Stendahl, Ε.-P. Sanders, J. Dunn) has offered a new view on the intertestamental Judaism; stances that were established (e.g. neo-Lutheran hermeneutics and R. Bultmann) and considered Judaism solely as a legalistic religion, are now reconsidered. Augustine’s and Luther’s interpretations of Paul’s teachings on salvation are considered hermeneutically misguided; new research on the Jewish context of Paul’s theology sheds light on this problem (Atmatzides, 2007). Of special interest is Paul’s polemics against the deification of Caesar – an ideology heavily advocated by Rome.

At the same time, contemporary biblical research moves away from solely employing historical/critical methods (Despotis, 2009), and reassesses early Christian hermeneutics (especially that of Origen and J. Chrysostomus). Aside from the pivotal role they had in the formation of Christianity, these early writers had studied philosophy, rhetoric and experienced Pauline teachings in their Eucharistic and Ascetic aspects. Moreover, their contribution is important as they lived in cradles of Early Christianity, e.g. Antioch.

The absence of a contemporary commentary on Romans is evident in Greece, as there is no comprehensive study which deals with the rich hermeneutical tradition of East and West, and incorporates the recent trends of the New Pauline Perspective. Although important monographs dealing with specific excerpts of *Romans* (Khalil, 2004; Karakolis, 2004; Lampousi, 2003; Mpouras, 2005) have been published, and papers discussing the relation of the New Pauline Perspective to the hermeneutical tradition of the East have been presented (Despotis, 2014; Despotis, 2017), there has been no attempt to systematically produce a commentary both in Greece and internationally. A characteristic example is the commentary of V. Tsakonas on *Romans*, which was published in 1993; it only discusses the first three chapters and its bibliography is outdated. Likewise, the commentary by Voulgaris (Voulgaris, 2015) is mostly based on Chrysostomus and does not take into account recent trends in research.

A critical commentary on Romans –as proposed for this project– should represent the current state of research and take into account the social milieu and history of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, so as to contribute in current academic debate; the rise of nationalism (especially in certain Christian groups), and the tendency to interpret social issues in a strictly legalistic manner result in the eventual fragmentation of the Church. Moreover, the rise of antisemitism is partly based on an outdated view of Biblical Theology: the twofold aspects of “Law – Grace”. “Works – Faith” are considered antithetical, as the former parts are regarded as remnants of a legalistic Judaism. Salvation is considered a private affair and not related to the complete transformation of the individual; as such, it is incorrectly considered as only pertaining to the soul and its transition to heaven. Unlike *1 Corinthians* and *Ephesians*, *Galatians* and *Romans* have had little impact on Eastern readers; the “works of the Law” are interpreted as the ritualistic parts of the Torah, rather than the inherent identity adopted by a nation in order to differentiate itself from other nations, ideologies, and religions. Moreover, a pivotal event for the research course, will be the international Congress of SNTS (Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas) in Athens (2018), in which Prof. Sotirios Despotis is member of the organizing committee (<https://snts2018.org)>. This congress will be attended by internationally acknowledged scholars of Pauline studies.

## Synchronic Interpretation [undertaken by Prof. Sotirios Despotis and a doctoral student)]

The principal investigator will employ the synchronic method (Moor, 1995) in the interpretation of Romans, especially chapters 1-11. It should be noted that we do not propose that the core of the Epistle is limited to the first eight chapters nor that chapters 9-11 and 12-16 are simply addendums. They are integral parts in defining the message of Paul to his recipients. However, the sheer volume of bibliography would become unwieldly and would not be able to be processed within a three-year project. Moreover, important works will be considered and the focus on bibliography will be limited to the last thirty years. The aim is to present the current state of research and not to compile a historical overview of the interpretation of *Romans*. In this analysis, we will also be employing the Commentaries of Origen (Alexandria) and Chrystostomus (Antioch), as well as Augustine’s views, which had a profound impact on Luther and Western Christianity and society. Contemporary works, such as those of Jewett, Wilckens, Theobald, Dunn and Wolter, will also be discussed; they contain important research and represent both the old and the new Pauline perspectives, while they are indicative of the hermeneutical schools of Germany and the UK / USA. Moreover, they offer comprehensive overviews of the tendencies in Catholic and Protestant hermeneutics.

In regards to intertextuality, two main axes will be discussed; the relation of *Romans* to the Hebrew Scriptures and other Jewish texts, as well as its antithetic parallelism to the Roman propaganda in regards to *Pax Romana* and the role of the Empire. Besides, in contrast to *Revelation*, the views expressed in *Romans* regarding political authority are initially positively inclined. Moreover, the text (as early as its introduction) makes special connections to evidence from the Hebrew Scriptures (the Writings, words of God, Law, Prophets) which were, most likely, know to the Gentile Christians; a hypothesis is that they had studied those concepts in the Synagogue before they became Christians and they were baptized. Special emphasis will be placed on *Galatians*, which acts as a parallel / synopsis of *Romans*, although is differentiated in certain aspects (e.g. views on Israel) due to its different agenda. Moreover, recent hermeneutical methods, such as the application of embodied cognition (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999) and its emphasis on conceptual metaphor (Johnson & Lakoff, 2002) in biblical hermeneutics and religious studies (Feder, 2013; Watts, 2013; Zhong & Liljenquist, 2006), as well as the concept of (religious) conversion (Zock, 2006), which offers novel insights into the life in religious communities, identity formation, and the reinterpretation of society, history, and world by the individual, will be discussed and employed. Moreover, intertextual connections and influences (in the area of Cinema, Literature etc.) will be selectively noted.

## Lexicography, semantics and context [Undertaken by Dr. Stamatopoulos and Mr. Vasilakis (M.A. – doctoral student)]

For clarifying and identifying the semantic scope of the language of Romans there will be a distinct part in the project. Specifically, the lemmas in Romans will be indexed and grouped, not only on the basis of current bibliography, but by also utilizing the available electronic corpora, as they facilitate queries both on morphology and syntax. With the exception of recently published lexicons [(Clines, 1993)– completed in 2016], the vast majority of dictionaries of New Testament Greek (and Ancient / Hellenistic Greek as well) are based on the work of their editors or concordances. However, such practices have inherent disadvantages: a) the corpus of texts and the preliminary results (e.g. number of occurrences, textual variants etc.) are not accessible to third parties. Therefore, they cannot be externally validated or expanded as textual research progresses. b) the closed nature of such works does not allow for interdisciplinary usage and for the implementation in similar projects.

Moreover, the practices and directives of the European Union (e.g. CLARIN - European Research Infrastructure for Language Resources and Technology), as well as those adopted by Northern American academic institutions, emphasize open access to data (e.g. lemmas), statistical figures, morphology and take into account incorporation in larger projects​  (Hutchings, 2017). Important examples are the Ancient Greek and Latin Dependency Treebank (University of Leipzig), and the Perseus Project at Tufts University​ (Almas & Berti, 2013). In contrast to Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (TLG), which is maintained by the University of California, Irvine, the aforementioned projects are: a) open and free to the public, b) aggregate massive amounts of minable metadata (morphology, syntax, semantics). For Biblical Hebrew, there is a similar open project (open to cloning, modification, and contribution) known as SHEBANQ (System for HEBrew Text: ANnotations for Queries and Markup) currently being developed and augmented by the Eep Talstra Centre for Bible and Computer (ETCBC) of Vrije University in Netherlands​ (van Hessen, 2017). Other closed projects include Thesaurus Linguae Latinae, Duke Documentary Papyri and Responsa (ancient and medieval Jewish Literature with an emphasis on rabbinical works). They are maintained without access to third parties and their usage has a significant cost on individual researchers and academic institutions.

The lemmas of Romans will be indexed in an electronic database and the source text will follow the widely accepted critical text of the New Testament​ (Nestle et al., 2012). Each lemma will be illustrated with a plethora of excerpts that will highlight the context in which it is used (e.g. Hellenistic authors, texts from the Septuagint, ancient Jewish and Latin terminology) as well as accompanied by a select number of references to recent studies (articles and monographs). As stylistics is an important part of a text, there is a provision for statistical data (frequency, single occurrences) in regards to syntactical structures that deviate from typical Hellenistic Greek. This basic part of the project will contribute to a *Lexicon Paulinum* and provide the necessary data for the semantic analysis of important theological terms that are found in the epistle. The need for contemporary, comprehensive lexicon of the New Testament is widely acknowledged; this project will remain open and available to all interested lexicographers and take into account recent research that suggests that its scope should expand to earlier (e.g. Hellenistic literature, Septuagint) and later resources​ (Hasselbrook, 2011; Lee, 2003; Gathercole, 1999). Moreover, another point raised by researchers will be partly addressed: the need for updated evidence on definitions and semantic notions​ (Bromiley, Friedrich, Kittel, & Pitkin, 1964; Louw & Nida, 1989) in the light of new textual discoveries (Collins, 2012; Volodymyr & Larysa, 2015; Zsupan-Jerome, 2017)​.

To illustrate the possible outcomes of such a research proposed by this project, we will be briefly examining some key terms that need further elucidation. The following graph is a proof of concept of the digital lexicon and its usage.



The term ***δικαιοσύνη*** in Biblical Greek does not convey the meaning of following and practicing the law (in contrast to Ancient / Hellenistic Greek and Latin), but focuses on the response of someone in a relationship. In the Bible, it can have a diverse array of meanings: 1) kindness, mercy, charity, benevolence (*Zech* 9:9; *Is* 45:1). So, ***δικαιοσύνη*** of God can refer to the acts of kindness and salvation for the benefit of God’s people / the righteous. 2) the mode of salvation / justification (*Rom* 10:3). 3) salvation / glory / richness (*Rom* 1:16). 4) «δικαιοσύνη» and «δικαιοῦσθαι» ἐκ πίστεως / ἐκ Θεοῦ» in early patristic tradition have a wide array of meanings that cannot be easily incorporated in a single definition. They refer to a dynamic state which begins by the conversion to Christ, is understood by participating in ecclesiastical life and mysteries, is characterized by morality and is perfected in the world to come (eschatological reference). It is condition that characterizes the individual; the faith that leads to ***δικαιοσύνη*** is not only a mental state, but it is inherently connected to his/her morality (cf. Chrystostomus).

## Timetable, budget

The basic timetable for the proposal is the following and it is organised in six (6) six-month terms:

* 1st term: access and collection to bibliography, commencement and initial setup of the electronic platform using the infrastructure of Okeanos (GRNET's cloud service, for the Greek Research and Academic Community)
* 2nd – 5th term: synchronic methodology and hermeneutics, collection of data for the lexicographical and semantic study of *Romans*. The research team will also fully utilize the infrastructure of the Host Institution (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens) to disseminate the ongoing research (bilateral Erasmus agreements, IT services for the project’s website and the multimedia platform on which the material will be presented.
* 4th and 5th term: international conference on the Bible and Digital Humanities
* 6th term: editing and publication of the proceedings of the conference, as well as the final version of the research project. Article submission to academic journals in fields pertinent to the research (indicatively: Biblical Studies, Digital Humanities, Semiology, Lexicography, Sociology of Religion)

The draft budget of the proposed project is 200.000 euros. The main expenses are geared towards the salaries of upcoming researchers (doctoral and postdoctoral), so as to provide them with incentives to produce high-caliber work, publish their findings in academic journals, and participate in international conferences. Special provisions have been made for the percentage the host institution receives (10% of the predicted budget, according to ELIDEK guidelines) and the possibility of a researcher receiving her/his Ph.D. and continuing as a postdoctoral fellow in the project. The remaining sums are geared towards obtaining access to electronic resources (i.e. TLG) and basic equipment for the development of the e-corpus and database (computers). The software will be open-source; therefore, it will not incur further costs and will abide by the research principles set forth by the EU, as discussed in this proposal. Hosting will be provided by the Okeanos infrastructure / National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, and will not incur any budget increases.

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| Expense | Cost per month | Total cost |
| Principal Investigator | 800 | 28800 |
| Postdoctoral Researcher (Dr. Stamatopoulos) | 1800 | 64800 |
| Doctoral Researcher 1 (full-time) | 900 | 32400 |
| Doctoral Researcher 2 (Mr. Vasilakis - part-time over a 36-month period) – not eligible for funding (working abroad) | 0 | 0 |
| Host Institution (ELKE) | n/a | 20000 |
| Equipment | n/a | 10000 |
| Access to TLG (three-year period) | n/a | 380 |
| Travel Costs (Research Team) | n/a | 7000 |
| Operating Expenses | n/a | 2220 |
| Access to e-resources | n/a | 5000 |
| Other costs  | n/a | 13000 |
| Books (print editions) | n/a | 5400 |
| Conference, Publications | n/a | 11000 |
| Total Budget |  200000 |

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