

THE *CRUX INTERPRETUM* OF ROM 7,25b OCCASIONED BY HANS KLEIN'S INTERPRETATION: PROTESTANT AND ORTHODOX EXEGETICAL TRADITIONS IN DIALOGUE

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Abstract. Occasioned by Hans Klein's commentary, this study examines the history of interpretation of Rom 7:25b by comparing Protestant and Orthodox exegetical traditions. Klein, following Augustine and Luther, sees the verse as describing the believer's ongoing internal struggle (*simul iustus et peccator*). In contrast, Greek patristic exegetes assign the "divided self" to the unredeemed human, while highlighting the baptized believer's ability to overcome sin. The article suggests that although both traditions partly diverge from Paul's theological view, they can complement one another when not taken in an absolute sense. The study concludes with a pastoral caveat regarding the mindset of believers: while the Protestant perspective may lead to resignation and despair over sin, the Orthodox emphasis on spiritual perfection may foster neurotic dissonance and self-estrangement. A hermeneutical approach is proposed to help navigate everyday spiritual struggle, growth, and the path to sanctification.

Keywords: Luther, Augustine, patristic interpretation, New Testament hermeneutics, Pauline anthropology, Rom 7:25b.

1. Introductory Remarks

Professor Hans Klein worked for many years in the ecumenical setting of the University of Sibiu in Romania, where, as a Protestant theologian, he interacted daily with colleagues from the Orthodox Faculty of Theology and with Orthodox believers. It was only natural, then, that he placed particular emphasis on the dialogue between Western and Eastern Christian traditions. This is evidenced by his active role as a founding member of the *Eastern Europe Liaison Committee* (EELC) of the *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas* (SNTS) and his involvement in the symposia organized by the EELC on New Testament topics explored through the lens of both Eastern and Western New Testament scholars.¹

¹ See, for instance, the volume of the first symposium organized in 1998 in Romania: J. D. G. DUNN, H. KLEIN, U. LUZ, and V. MIHOC (eds.), *Auslegung der Bibel in orthodoxer und westlicher*