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AN EXEGESIS OF THE SEVENTH CHAPTER OF ROMANS
IN RELATION TO
PERSONAL CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

by
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	Page
Introduction	1
A. The Problem: The Relation of the Law to Personal Christian Experience	1
B. Method of Approach	4
C. Scope of the Study	6
D. Authorship and Date	6
I. The Structure of the Epistle	7
A. Theme of the Letter <u>[/The Gospel is the Revelation of the Righteousness of God through Faith apart from the Law/]</u>	8
B. A Discussion of the Book	13
1. Type of Letter, p. 13	
2. Recipients and Purpose, p. 15	
C. An Outline of the Book of Romans	17
II. The Relation of Chapter Seven to the Parts	21
A. The Relation of Chapter Seven to the Section	22
1. Answer to Problems in Chapter Five found in Chapters Six and Seven, p. 23	
2. Parallelism between Chapters Six and Seven, p. 25	
3. Climactic Position of Chapter Eight, p. 26	
4. Features of the Section, p. 28	
B. The Relation of Chapter Seven to the Book as a Whole	31
1. Final Answer to Relation of Law and Gospel in Chapter Seven, p. 31	
2. Purpose of the Law, p. 37	
3. Man's Relation to the Law, p. 40	
III. The Meaning of Law	42
A. Classical Greek	44
B. Hebrew Influence	45
C. General New Testament Usage	47
D. General Pauline Usage	48
IV. The Problem of the Law in Chapter Seven	51
A. The Limit of Law	53

1.	Death the End of Law, p. 54	
2.	Discussion of Illustration of Marriage and Law, p. 55	
3.	Purpose of the Law, p. 58	
4.	The Problems Raised, p. 59	
B.	The Relation of the Law to Sin	60
1.	Uses of "Law" in 7:7-13, p. 60	
2.	Paul's Defense of Legalism, p. 62	
3.	Intended Result of the Relation of Sin and Law, p. 64	
C.	Relation of the Law to Flesh	64
1.	The Uses of "Law" in 7:14-25, p. 65	
2.	Relation of the Divine Law to Flesh, p. 71	
3.	Paul's Relation to the Law, p. 73	
V.	Paul's Relation to the Law	74
A.	Paul's Autobiography	75
1.	Various Interpretations, p. 75	
2.	Paul's use of First Person Singular, p. 76	
B.	Paul's Pharisaic Experience	77
1.	Period of Innocency, p. 77	
2.	Life as a Pharisee = Death, p. 79	
3.	Universality of Paul's Experience, p. 79	
C.	Paul's Christian Experience	80
1.	Struggle against Law, p. 80	
2.	Arguments Supporting View That 7:14-25 Describes Unregenerate Man, p. 81	
3.	The Arguments Refuted and Positive Position Stated, p. 84	
Conclusion:	The Relation of the Law to Personal Christian Experience	93
A.	Function of Law in Relation to Life of Christian	94
B.	Paul's solution through His Personal Experience	95
C.	Application for All Christians	96
Appendix:	A Precis of Romans	98
Bibliography		102

INTRODUCTION

The Problem:

The problem of this paper is to discover the relation of the law to personal Christian experience as learned through the exegetical study of the seventh chapter of Romans. In the thinking of the contemporary church this relationship is by no means clear. The conflict between the antinomians and the legalists did not end in the apostolic age. In the words of Alex Vidler, "Many Christians today seem to be uncertain or confused as to what Christianity has to say about Law. Some even speak as though Christianity were the negation of the Law, as though it were a religion that replaces Law by Love."¹

This confusion may be seen in the writings of another British contemporary of Vidler, T. E. Jessop, who in a study of the Christian Ethic for the Student Christian Movement maintains that Augustine's phrase "Love God and do what you like" though too blunt a statement of the truth is, nevertheless, the truth.² Christianity in the truest sense is anti-nomian, though Augustine's statement is a dangerous summary. "The spiritually adult life is uncodifiable, a commerce with persons..., and general and absolute law, but only love, will lead us surely here...."³

Dodd points out that this view has been strong especially among some contemporary forms of neo-Protestantism where "there has

¹Alex R. Vidler, Christ's Strange Work, London (Longmans Green, & Co., 1944) p. ix.

²T. E. Jessop, Law and Love, A Study of the Christian Ethic, London (Student Christian Movement Press, 1940) p. 74.

³Ibid., p. 75.

been a strong bias against any understanding of Christianity as a new Law."¹ These groups feel that any descent from grace to law is a descent to a new legalism.

But according to Drewett this disparagement of the law is more than merely the attempt to avoid a new legalism. Drewett believes that the shift in teaching psychology from a negative to a positive emphasis and the general breakdown of a belief in an objective moral law has also contributed to a weakening of the position of the law.² The church has not only influenced the community, but the community has had a tremendous influence upon the church.

On the other hand we find a number of Christian spokesmen who are proclaiming the need for a return to the law. The unbridled freedom which contemporary Christians have mistakenly assumed as theirs is being recognized as both pragmatically and theologically untenable. Elton Trueblood in Alternative to Futility points out that this unrestricted freedom has resulted in an emptiness and a sense of futility which are the very contradiction of the Christian gospel and which provide no rock to build on in a time of strain. Speaking of the need for discipline in general he recalls that during the last war it was the Orthodox Jews, the Seventh-Day Adventists, the Mormons, i.e., the most disciplined groups, who maintained their faith under trial. And today it is the eccentric Christian groups who, having returned to a more rigid discipline, are showing the

¹C. H. Dodd, Gospel and Law: The Relation of Faith and Ethics in Early Christianity, New York (Columbia University Press, 1951) p. 65.

²J. Drewett, The Ten Commandments in the 20th Century, London (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1941) p. 9ff.

³E. Trueblood,

greatest Christian dynamic.¹ Many scholars are now asserting, as indeed many have always maintained, that "There is...Gospel in the Law, and Law in the Gospel."² In Christian doctrine the law and the gospel are set in opposition to each other and yet both are affirmed. It is true that we are no longer under the law, but the law still remains. It has not been and cannot be abrogated as long as this world remains in its fallen state. A Christian belongs to the Kingdom, and a kingdom implies a king who has authority and command. Obedience to God is just as much a part of the New Testament as it is a part of Deuteronomy, but it is a different kind of obedience.³

The tension between ethics and religion, between works and faith, between law and grace, has not been solved in Christianity. The two poles must be held together and can be understood only in their organic relation within the whole of the Gospel.⁴ Unless they are held together and understood in this fashion we fall either into libertinism or legalism. Dillistone, in discussing the place of the Spirit in the Old Testament, asserts a truth which is applicable here: "Without a framework of Law and Liturgy religion can easily degenerate into incoherence and extravagance. Yet it is equally true that unless priestly forms be polarized by the fresh and vital religion of the Spirit, they become hard and sterile."⁵ Thus in a very

¹E. Trueblood, Alternative to Futility, New York (Harpers, 1948) pp. 83-103.

²Vidler, op. cit., p. 4; cf. pp. 17-21.

³Dodd, Gospel and Law, pp. 36-38; cf. p. 70.

⁴Ibid., p. 4.

⁵F. W. Dillistone, The Holy Spirit in the Life of Today, Philadelphia (Westminster Press, 1947) p. 25.

brief way we have tried to show the confusion which exists in regard to the relation of law to personal Christian experience.

It is our aim to discover what the Scriptures have to say, and specifically, to discover what light Paul sheds upon this subject in the seventh chapter of Romans, for in this place in particular, Paul deals with the Christian's relation to the law. His thesis is that Christians once for all "were made dead to the law through the body of Christ."¹ We have been freed from the law as a woman whose husband has died has been discharged from the vows which bound her to her husband.

What, then, is the place of the law in personal Christian experience? Is the law dead? Is the Christian entirely free from the law's requirements to do as he pleases? Does the law merely serve to bring him to his knees and thereafter cease to have any authority? Our aim is to show that this is not the case, but that Paul regards the law as still in force and as continuing to speak with the highest authority.

METHOD OF APPROACH

It is impossible to interpret any portion of any book properly without seeing the particular part in its relation to the whole. As has been pointed out by one scholar the argument of the book is needed before there can be an exegesis of any part.² This is particularly true in any study of the Epistle

¹Romans 7:4.

²Otto Piper, "Exegesis of the Epistle to the Romans," Princeton Theological Seminary, 1952. (From notes on lectures delivered by O. Piper.)

to the Romans. Almost as many different themes have been attributed to the letter as there are interpreters. Many commentators have been unable to view the book in its totality. From Marcion on down there have been many who omitted certain portions from the Epistle as unauthentic.¹ In more recent times there have been strong arguments in favor of dropping chapters fifteen and sixteen as not a portion of the original letter. The final doxology, 16:25-27, has come in for special attack. There are valid reasons, however, for retaining all these portions and for regarding the whole letter as one unit.² This paper regards the Epistle to the Romans as it stands in the American Revised Version as a single whole.

Viewing the letter as a genuine whole, the method has been to analyze the structure in order to understand the progress of the argument. In the light of these facts the seventh chapter is shown in its relation to the section in which it stands and to the book as a whole. Special attention has been given to the usage of the word "law" as it is found in this chapter. Once having seen the chapter in its broader context, the problems of the chapter itself have been dealt with. Finally, the fruits of this study have been applied to the relation of law to personal Christian experience.

¹Wm. Sanday & A.C. Headlam, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, I.C.C., 5th ed., Edinburgh (T. & T. Clark, 1895), pp. lxxxv-xcviii. Sanday gives a review of the whole history of criticism on this subject.

²Ibid., p. xcvi. Cf. A. Deissmann, St. Paul, A Study in Social & Religious History. Deissmann believes Romans 16 is another letter written to Christians at Ephesus recommending Phoebe to them.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The seventh chapter of Romans does not present the sum total of Paul's views on the law. It deals only with the law in its relation to the individual. It says nothing, for instance, regarding the place of the law in the larger Christian society, a topic discussed in chapter thirteen.

Statements made about the law in chapter seven imply that the law continues to exist, but the method of fulfillment is reserved for the eighth chapter. Specific instructions for daily Christian conduct are found in 12:1-15:4; 16:17-20. However important these subjects may be, it has been necessary to limit this study almost exclusively to what Paul has to say on the subject in chapter seven.

AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

There is no serious doubt that the author of this letter is the Apostle Paul.¹ The date is generally agreed upon as between 57 and 58 A.D. although some more conservative scholars would give greater leeway and set the date between 55 and 58 A.D.² This date is arrived at by a dovetailing of the information given in Romans 1:10-13; 15:19-26 with the chronology of Acts 18:12; 20:3.³ From the chronology it is also agreed that the letter was written from Corinth during Paul's three month visit there.

¹E. H. Gifford, The Epistle to the Romans, London (J. Murray, 1886), p. 1. Cf. C. H. Dodd, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, New York (Harper, 1932), p. xiii.

²Sanday and Headlam, op. cit., p. xxxvi ff; Piper, in his lectures on Romans, extends the period from 55-58 A.D.

³G.O.Griffith, St. Paul's Gospel to the Romans, London (Blackwell, 1949), p. 173, gives a concise account of how the date is arrived at. Deissmann gives a thorough discussion of the Delphic inscription by which the date of Gallio's proconsulship at Achaia is arrived at. St. Paul. Appendix T.

CHAPTER I

THE STRUCTURE OF THE EPISTLE

Theme of the Letter

In Romans 1:16,17 Paul states the theme which he develops throughout the course of his letter: the gospel is the revelation of the righteousness of God through faith. The important facts about this gospel which Paul proclaims are that the gospel is powerful unto salvation and that it comes through Christ. From this moment onward to the end of the letter Paul drives home these points from one side and then another.

He points out first that all human righteousness has failed (1:18-3:20). The Jews especially, to whom God entrusted His law, have signally failed, but, in addition, all men stand to be condemned by the law. After this statement of man's situation Paul returns to his theme. Now, he declares, apart from law God's righteousness through faith has been revealed (3:21-5:21). This righteousness, he emphasizes, is "through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe."¹ In 3:21-31 Paul gives the essence of the relations of the gospel which are developed more fully in the succeeding chapters: the correlation between Christ and faith (3:22,25,26; 4:24; 5:1; 15:16); the universality of Christ's saving work (3:22,26,29,30; 4:13-16; 5:18; 10:11,12,13; 11:25-31); the effect of God's righteousness on sin (3:23,24; 5:7-11,19,21; 6:1-11; 8:1-5; 10:3-4); the effect of righteousness on the law (3:27,28,31; 4:13-15; 5:13,21; 6:14,15; 7:1-25; 8:1-4). The necessity of faith as a prerequisite to the revelation of God's righteousness is shown in the illustration of Abraham (4:1-25) and the subjective effects of the righteousness

¹Romans 3:22.

of God are brought in (5:1-21). In the next section Paul is dealing especially with the revelation of the power of God's righteousness (6:1-8:39): its power over sin, its power over the law, and its power in the spirit over the flesh. But he cannot stop here. He must also answer the problem of the relation of the new revelation of God's righteousness in Christ as it affects the history of God's chosen people. This he does in chapters 9-11. Finally he applies the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to daily human living (12:1-15:13), closing the letter with personal words to the recipients.

That the righteousness of God is the theme of the epistle is conceded by almost every commentator from Chrysostom¹ to the present day. Nygren says, "The whole epistle, as it proceeds, is nothing but a clarification of the contents of the 'righteousness of God' and the consequences...."²

There are a few who disagree with this view. Calvin states that the principal question of the Epistle is justification by faith, but he points out at the same time that this righteousness is that which alone comes to man, apprehended through faith in Jesus Christ.³ Otto Piper, in his lectures on Romans, states that "the correlation between Christ and faith forms the main theme of the Epistle to the Romans."⁴ This

¹John Chrysostom, "The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom," A Select Library of Post-Nicean Fathers of the Christian Church, ed. P. Schaff (New York, 1889), p. 349.

²Anders Nygren, Commentary on Romans, trans. by Rasmussen, Philadelphia (Muhlenberg, 1949), p.

³John Calvin, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, trans. by Sibson, Philadelphia (Whetham, 1836), p. xviii.

⁴Piper, "Exegesis of Romans," Lecture Notes.

would appear to be a quite different position from that held by the majority of scholars. A more careful scrutiny of this thesis, however, reveals that Dr. Piper is not so much at variance with general opinion as one might expect. In an article in Theology Today,¹ Piper points out that a distinction must be made between justification as a doctrinal subject and as an actual experience. It is this same distinction which he is attempting to make through presenting the theme of Romans as the correlation of Christ and faith. That correlation is a vital, dynamic experience through which God's righteousness is made manifest in men.

It is in this sense then that we must understand the theme of the epistle. A misinterpretation of the meaning of the theme leads to a misinterpretation of the letter as a whole, and such has frequently been the case. It is therefore necessary at the outset to arrive at a correct interpretation of *δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ*.

δικαιοσύνη comes from the root *ΔΙΚ* and refers to the character of the *δίκαιος*, thus meaning righteousness. In classical Greek *δικαιοσύνη* was used in the sense of legal justice or the business of a judge, as in Aristotle Pol. 4.4,14 *δικαιοσύνη δικαστική*.² In early Greek it meant "well ordered" or "observant of rules;" in later Greek it came to mean "well

¹Otto Piper, "Justification and Christian Ethics," Theology Today, Vol. VIII, No. 2, (July, 1951), pp. 167-177.

²H. S. Liddell & Scott, Greek-English Lexicon, Oxford, 1882, p. 371.

balanced" or as in Herodotus 7, 108 "legally exact," as to speak exactly. When referring to persons it means "meet, right, real, genuine, fair, moderate." Moulton and Milligan note that *δικαιοσύνη* was used as a title of Cleopatra (P. Rein 10.9) and in a petition to a commander the petitioner speaks of the negotiation of justice (*ἐπὶ τὸν τῆς δικαιοσύνης σου χρημάτων* B. G. ii. iv, 1138.4; B.C. 19).¹

Most frequently *δικαιοσύνη* is the Septuagint rendering for *tsedeg* or *tsedaqah*.² But though the two terms often coincide, they have different origins. *δικαιοσύνη* in Greek origins meant "the sum of virtue" or "the giving to each his due." *Tsedeg* means "to be in the right" rather than "to be righteous," and the verb *tsedaqah* was frequently used to mean "vindicate." Dodd makes the distinction clear when he says, "A ruler is thought of as 'righteous,' not so much because he observes and upholds an abstract thought of justice, but because he vindicates the cause of the wronged...."³

It is around these two renderings that the controversy over Paul's meaning of the term has centered. Does the righteousness of God become a part of man, or does it remain forever an activity of God? Hodge points out that historically there have been three general views of "the righteousness of God" as used in Romans. The Pelagian position is that the righteousness of God is not achieved by "obedience to ritual laws," but through

¹James H. Moulton & G. Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament, London (Hodder & Stoughton, 1949), p. 162.

²Joseph H. Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, New York (Harper Bros., 1889), p. 149.

³C. H. Dodd, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, New York (Harper Bros., 1932), p. 10.

works which are morally good. The Roman view is that this righteousness is not attained by works, ritual or moral, which are done apart from grace, but rather that these works which are done after regeneration by the aid of grace are of spiritual excellence. The Protestant position is that the righteousness of God is neither something done by or in us, but something "done for us and imputed to us."¹ It is impossible to give a history of exegesis on this subject within the scope of this paper. At the present time, however, Protestant scholars are inclined to include both the Greek notion of virtue and the Hebrew thought of vindication in their interpretation of Paul's phrase, δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ . It is an act of God yet it also becomes a state of man. Nygren says, "The righteousness of God is a righteousness which He reveals to us and permits us to share. Hence it is indeed man's righteousness too.... It is man's righteousness, not in the sense that it is of himself, achieved by him, but in the sense that it is proffered to him and accepted by faith."² The gospel, as Paul describes it, is a power which is able to transform man from one who is dead to sin to one who is alive in Christ (6:5-11), from one who is dead to law but alive to the Spirit (7:6; 8:1-4). Thus the righteousness of God which forms the theme of the epistle is both an attribute and an activity of God by which men are declared in

¹Charles Hodge, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Philadelphia (William & Martien, 1864), p. 46.

²Nygren, op. cit., p. 75. Cf. Sanday & Headlam, pp. 34-39. Sanday points out that justification is at first a forensic declaration of righteousness, but later becomes what the older theologians called sanctification. See also Dodd, Romans, p. 12.

right relations with God and are made right through faith in Christ. It is a vivid and vital experience which a man has with a living God. This experience comes about only through faith in Jesus Christ, apart from whom no human righteousness is possible and God's righteousness is not attainable. Such is the theme of the epistle.

A Discussion of the Book

Paul's letters frequently have been described as theological treatises or tracts written in letter form. This view has been held especially in regard to Romans. It is recognized as the most impersonal or systematic of any of his writings. A proper understanding of this issue is important to an understanding of the letter as a whole and especially the seventh chapter. If Paul is writing a theological treatise, it is much less likely that he would introduce any autobiographical confession, than if he were writing a personal letter. Tholuck illustrates the more radical view that Romans is written merely as a statement of universal doctrine to which the peculiar circumstances have been added as an appendage.¹ Weiss held that Romans was a summary of Paul's doctrine and that Rome just happened to be a convenient church to which he might address the summary. On the opposite side, Deissmann maintains that while this epistle is not so personal as some, it is still a real letter. Paul "...does not contemplate as his readers the literary public of his time, nor even Christendom in general; he addresses himself to a handful of people resident in the more

¹Gifford, op. cit., p. 20. Cf. Sanday & Headlam, p. xxxix f.

modest quarters of Rome, of whose existence the public knew practically nothing."¹ While the omission of ἐν Ρώμῃ (1:7,15) from mss. G² leads some scholars to believe that this was an encyclical letter, the evidence does not seem to be strong enough to maintain this position. Too many other portions of the letter have the personal touch. 1:11-13 strongly implies a specific group, as does 15:22-25,28,29. The personal greetings in chapter sixteen, if recognized as an integral part of the letter, obviously point to a particular group. A number of scholars, including Deissmann,³ believe, however, that chapter sixteen is not an organic part of the letter but a separate letter to the Ephesians. But Dodd, who makes a very careful study of the names mentioned, still feels that the necessity of making this chapter into a separate letter must still be proven.⁴ This is the position held in this study. Romans is a carefully thought out but thoroughly personal letter addressed to a group of people whom Paul wished to win for his support.

The immediate occasion for the letter is clearly stated. Paul completed his work in the East and after a trip to Jerusalem from Corinth (where he is probably writing the letter) he hopes to visit Rome on his way to Spain (15:22-29). This letter is written by way of introduction. Though he knows many Christians

¹Adolf Deissmann, St. Paul, A Study in Social and Religious History, trans. Strachan, New York (Hodder Stoughton, 1911), p. 22.

²D. E. Nestle, Novum Testamentum Graece, 20th ed., (Stuttgart, 1950) ad. loc., critical note.

³Deissmann, op. cit., pp. 19, 224.

⁴C. H. Dodd, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, p. xvii f. Dodd quotes Prof. Fetzmann: "A letter consisting almost entirely of greetings may be intelligible in the age of the picture post card; for an earlier period it is a monstrosity." (xix).

in the capital, he does not know them all, nor is he sure of his standing there. By this letter he hopes to prepare the way that his work may be prospered.

While the immediate occasion is clear, it is not so clear why Paul wrote as he did. Apart from the traditions very little reliable information is known about the Christian community in Rome at this date. The letter itself gives us but a few hints of the situation in the capital of the empire. There is no mention made of any church, although Paul usually addresses his letters to a church.¹ He frequently directs his words to Gentiles 1:13; 1:18-2:17; 11:11-24. On the other hand, he also seems to be speaking to a Jewish group 2:17-3:20; 7:1. The discussion of Abraham in chapter four seems to be directed mainly toward Jewish readers, and the presentation of Paul's thoughts on the future state of the Jews in 9-11 points strongly towards Jewish recipients. This emphasis upon the Jews has led Baur to believe that the letter was addressed mainly to Jewish Christians on the problem of the relation of Judaism and heathenism to each other and of the relation of both to Christianity.² In support of this view he considered that chapters 9-11 were the center of the whole epistle from which all the rest could be explained. The weight of evidence shows, however, that Paul has developed the structure of his letter much more carefully than Baur judged, and the discussion of the Jewish situation

¹See I Cor. 1:2; II Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:2; I & II Thess. 1:1; Phil. 4:15; Cor. 4:16 (implied).

²Gifford, op. cit., p. 10f., citing Baur, Paulus i, p.316.

alone cannot, according to any normal structural analysis, form the theme of the letter. The words addressed to the Gentiles must also be taken seriously. Furthermore, the fact that Paul, who considers himself an apostle to the Gentiles, addresses a letter to "those in Rome" would imply that there is at least a large Gentile element in the Christian community there.

It is questionable whether this Christian community was formed into a church.¹ As has been pointed out, the letter is not addressed to a church, but only "to all that are in Rome... called to be saints."² It is considered by some, therefore, that the Christians were a loosely organized group meeting in various houses throughout the city, knowing each other by hearsay but not directly.³

Whatever the physical situation is, it appears apparent from the letter that some tension existed between the Jewish and Gentile elements. The Jew especially seemed to be relying on the law and lauding himself over the Gentile Christian (2:17-24; 6:14). On the other hand the Gentile Christian would appear to be maintaining that he was not accountable for his actions prior to his conversion, because he was not a recipient of the revealed law (1:18-21). The Jewish Christian objects that Christianity as it is being taught denies the law (3:31; 7:7,12; 10:4; 13:10). Among the Gentile Christians there were some who tended towards anti-nomianism (6:1-7), but others still

¹Sanday & Headlam, op. cit., p. xxvf; xxxv. The authors give a thorough account of the origin of the church at Rome which need not be recounted here.

²Romans 1:7, cf. Gifford, op. cit., p. 6f; Griffith, op. cit., p. 14. Although Griffith states the position, he does not hold it himself.

³Sanday & Headlam, op. cit., p. xxc. Piper also holds to this position.

clung to the ritual practices of paganism, which they had maintained prior to conversion (14:1f). To all of them Paul is writing to show that the gospel is the supreme and controlling power to which all else is subordinate. The question is not whether a man must keep the Jewish law to be saved, but whether any human righteousness is acceptable to God. It is to this situation that Paul speaks declaring that all are one before God in their need for His righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ.

An Outline of the Book of Romans

- I. 1:1-17 Introduction
 - A.) 1:1-7 Salutation: Paul, a Servant to the Romans Concerning God's Son.
 - B.) 1:8-15 Paul's Desire and Plan to Visit Rome.
 - C.) 1:16-17 Theme: The Gospel of the Revelation of God's Righteousness to Faith.

- II. 1:18-3:20 The Failure of Human Righteousness.
 - A.) 1:18-32 Man's Corruption of Natural Revelation and Its Affect.
 - 1.) 18-23 Man corrupted God's Revealed Glory.
 - 2.) 24-25 Result: "God Gave Them Up...to Uncleanness."
 - 3.) 26-27 Result: "God Gave Them Up...to Vile Passions."
 - 4.) 28-32 Result: "God Gave Them Up...to a Reprobate Mind."
 - B.) 2:1-16 Man's Inexcuse and God's Equity in Judgement. "Thou art without excuse, O man...!"
 - C.) 2:17-3:20 The Special Failure of the Jews.
 - 1.) 17-29 Outward Obedience Vs. Inward Obedience. "Circumcision is that of the heart."
 - 2.) 3:1-8 The Value of Circumcision. "They were entrusted with the oracles of God."
 - D.) 3:9-18 All Are Under Sin.
 - E.) 3:19-20 The Failure of Righteousness Through the Law. "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

- III. 3:21-5:21 The Manifestation of God's Righteousness.
 - A. 3:21-30 God's Righteousness through Christ is Manifested Apart from the Law to All Believers.

- B. 3:31 Faith Establishes the Law
- C. 4:1-25 The Proof of Abraham: His Righteousness Came by Faith.
 - 1.) 1-9 Abraham's Faith Was Reckoned for Righteousness.
 - 2.) 10-12 Circumcision a Seal of the Righteousness by Faith.
 - 3.) 13-22 The Promise Made Not Through Law but Through Faith.
 - 4.) 23-25 Abraham the Example of Justification Through Christ.
- D. 5:1-21 The Result of God's Declared Righteousness.
 - 1.) 1-17 Justification brings Reconciliation.
 - 2.) 12-21 The Sovereign Reign of Grace over Man: Through Adam Death but through Christ Grace unto Eternal Life.
- IV. 6:1-8:39 The Righteousness of God in Salvation.
 - A. 6:1-23 New Life in Relation to Sin.
 - 1.) 1-11 Dead to Sin; Alive unto God in Christ.
 - 2.) 12-14 Let not Sin Reign, but Righteousness.
 - 3.) 15-23 Freedom from Sin; Servants of Righteousness.
 - B. 7:1-25 New Life in Relation to the Law.
 - 1.) 1-6 The Limit of the Law: "Ye were made dead to the law through...Christ; that ye should be joined to another."
 - 2.) 7-13 The Relation of the Law to Sin: "Sin... through the commandment...slew me."
 - 3.) 14-25 The Relation of the Law to Flesh.
 - C. 8:1-39 New Life in the Spirit
 - 1.) 1-11 The Spirit Gives Life.
 - 2.) 12-17 The Spirit Leads to Adoption.
 - 3.) 18-25 The Whole Creation Awaits Redemption in Hope.
 - 4.) 26-30 The Aid of the Spirit to Loving God.
 - 5.) 31-39 The Inseparable Love of God.
- V. 9:1-11:36 The Righteousness of God in History.
 - A. 9:1-33 The Sovereignty of God.
 - 1.) 1-5 Paul's Sorrow Over Glorious Israel.
 - 2.) 6-13 True Israel - the Children of the Promise.
 - 3.) 14-18 God Has Mercy on Whom He Will.
 - 4.) 19-29 God Has Willed to Have Mercy on Jew and Gentile.
 - 5.) 30-33 The Gentiles Have Attained the Righteousness of Faith, but the Jews Have Failed.
 - B. 10:1-21 Jewish Failure Through Unbelief.
 - 1.) 1-15 Salvation for Jew and Greek Dependent on Christ.
 - 2.) 16-21 The Jews' Refusal of the Word of Christ.
 - C. 11:1-36 God's Ultimate Plan.
 - 1.) 1-10 A Remnant is Elect.
 - 2.) 11-24 Israel Cut Off for the Ingrafting of Gentiles.
 - 3.) 25-32 All Israel Saved.
 - 4.) 33-36 A Doxology to God's Unsearchable Wisdom.

- VI. 12:1-15:13 God's Righteousness in Human Living.
 - A. 12:1-2 Sacrifice Your Bodies to Christ.
 - B. 12:3-8 Equality of Gifts in Christ's Body.
 - C. 12:9-21 The Supremacy of Love.
 - D. 13:1-7 Subjection to Higher Powers.
 - E. 13:8-10 Love Fulfills the Law.
 - F. 13:11-14 Alertness in Morality.
 - G. 14:1-12 Individual Responsibility to God.
 - H. 14:13-23 Responsibility to Each Other.
 - I. 15:1-13 Strong Support the Weak as Christ You.
- VII. 15:14-16:27 Closing Words.
 - A. 15:14-21 A Reminder of Paul's Authority and Purpose.
 - 1.) 22-29 Paul's Plans of a Stopover in route to Spain.
 - 2.) 30-33 Request for Prayer.
 - B. 16:1-24 Salutations and Final Remarks.
 - 1.) 1-2 Commendation of Phoebe.
 - 2.) 3-16 Various Salutations.
 - 3.) 17-20 Avoid Devisive Teachers.
 - 4.) 21-24 Salutations from Others.
 - C. 25-27 Benediction.

In presenting the above outline it is interesting to note the various analyses which commentators have made of this epistle. Hodge divides the letter into three main topics: 1) The doctrine of justification and its consequences, 1:16-8:39; 2) the call of the Gentiles and the future conversion of the Jews, 9:1-11:36; 3) practical exhortations 12:1-16:27. To the first main topic he gives the greatest emphasis, excluding chapters 9-11 from the doctrine of justification.¹ Gifford and

¹Charles Hodge, op. cit., pp. 13-16.

Sanday and Headlam, however, include chapters 9-11 as a part of the doctrinal discussion, but give the remaining chapters a subordinate position as if they were unrelated to the righteousness of God by faith.¹ Among the more recent commentators, Dodd sees that the theological discussion of the first eight chapters is leading up to the treatment of Christian ethics which comes in chapters 12-15:13; but he fails to see the relationship of chapters 9-11 to the whole. Of these chapters, he says that they "form a compact and continuous whole, which can be read quite satisfactorily without reference to the rest of the epistle...."² This failure by the majority of the commentators to see the unity of the epistle has best been remedied by Anders Nygren who, though he gives excessive weight to 5:12-21, views every action of the letter in the light of the theme.³ It is only by keeping in mind the unity of the thought that an adequate interpretation can be made.

¹See Gifford, op. cit., pp. 32,33. Cf. Sanday & Headlam, op. cit., pp. xliv - 1.

²Dodd, Romans, p. 148. Cf. "Contents."

³Nygren, op. cit., pp. 38-41.

CHAPTER II

THE RELATION OF CHAPTER SEVEN

TO THE PARTS

The Relation of Chapter Seven to the Section

The outline has shown that chapter seven is included in the section which deals with "The Righteousness of God in Salvation." In the first section Paul had shown that human righteousness had been a failure before the eyes of God. In the next section he had declared that God had now shown forth His own righteousness which is His gift to men through faith in Jesus Christ. After showing that this righteousness by faith was not a contradiction of God's promises, Paul in the fifth chapter describes the result of God's revelation. In the next section, beginning at 6:1, Paul describes the nature of the new life which comes as a result of the reception of God's righteousness by man. This fifth chapter, standing at the end of section two is of a transitional nature. It shows how God's righteousness (δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ) is manifested in justification (δικαίωσις) and at the same time deals with the results of that justification in the life of men, i.e., "peace with God."¹ God justifies man because Jesus died for him while man was still a sinner. As a result the believer finds joy in God through Christ.²

This description of the new life, however is not adequate in itself. The righteousness of God revealed in justification is only the first stage in God's work; the second stage, which is equal in importance with the first, is salvation.³ The new life of salvation needs a much fuller treatment than

¹Romans 5:1.

²Romans 5:7-11.

³C. H. Dodd, Romans, p. 77.

Paul gives it in chapter five. Furthermore, some problems are latent in that chapter which Paul feels he must bring out and answer.

In the first place, Paul has said, "For, if by the trespass of one, death reigned through the one, much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, even Jesus Christ,"¹ and later, "...where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly"² This raises the misunderstanding of 3:7, 8 all over again. The question there was, should we not continue to sin in order that grace may abound? It is now the time for Paul to treat this misunderstanding and he does so in chapter six.

Whether this question was raised by some converted pagans or by a group of Jewish Christians, we cannot be sure. In view of the fact that the question is first mentioned by Paul in his discussion of the Jews' position under God's wrath, we might be led to think that this was a misunderstanding on the part of the Jews alone. But there is good reason to believe that it was raised by both Jewish and pagan converts to Christ.³ We know that in Corinth Paul had to deal with the problem of libertinism among Gentile Christians and that "the grace of God" was a stumbling block to some. In view of the mixed character of the Christian community in Rome it is probable that Paul had to silence both groups.

¹Romans 5:17.

²Romans 5:20.

³C. H. Dodd, Romans, p. 84. Cf. I Cor. 5, 6; II Cor. 5:20f.

Another misunderstanding latent in chapter five also had to be faced: the misunderstanding concerning the law. Paul stated that while sin was in the world prior to the law, sin, nevertheless, was not imputed. Sin, prior to the Mosaic era, did not carry with it the same degree of guilt.¹ "The law came in besides, that the trespass might abound...."² Both of these statements tend to cause possible misunderstanding that the law, which God revealed through Moses, is evil even as sin is evil. Paul's derogations are adequately explained in chapter seven.

In this case also, the discussion of the law seems to be directed to the Jewish Christians alone. It is they who have held the law in such high regard, and, as may be seen in Galatians,³ it is the Judaizing group which has caused Paul so much trouble. It needs to be pointed out, however, that there were other groups in the Christian community who were also overly fastidious. In chapter fourteen Paul has to deal with some of these groups. Whether they came from the Orphic or Pythagorean sects, or perhaps from the Essenes we do not know.⁴ In any case it is clear from Paul's discussion of the law in chapter seven, that he is not merely seeking to clarify a misunderstanding that he regarded the Mosaic law as evil; he is also seeking to show the new position which the Christian holds in relation to any law. He is battling against legalism.

¹Swanday and Headlam, op. cit., p. 134. Cf. C. Hodge, op. cit., p. 246.

²Romans 5:20.

³Galatians 2, 3.

⁴C. H. Dodd, Romans, pp. 211, 212. Cf. Griffith, op. cit., pp. 145, 146.

Paul seems to be waging a continuous battle on two fronts. On the one front he must fight against those who would construe his gospel as libertinism, or find in it an excuse for libertinism, and on the other front he must fight against those who would construe his gospel as legalism, or supporting legalism.¹

Both chapters six and seven, as has been shown, grow out of questions in chapter five which Paul has raised in the course of his discussion on the results of God's righteousness. But there is an even closer parallelism between the two which needs to be observed. Perhaps this parallelism can best be seen by setting down the two chapters graphically side by side.

III. 4 The Result of God's Declared Righteousness

Conclusion: "The law came in besides, that the trespass might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly." 5:20.

Questions Raised

Questions Raised

"Shall we continue in sin?" 6:1.

(Implied) Shall we continue in the law? 7:1.

Ans. "We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?" 6:2.

Death
vs.
Life

Ans: "The law hath dominion over a man for so long time as he liveth." 7:1.

"Even so reckon yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus. 6:11.

Freedom based on Death in Christ

"Wherefore...ye were also made dead to the law through the Body of Christ that ye should be joined to another." 7:4.

"Present...your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." 6:13.

Purpose of Freedom

"That we serve in newness of spirit...." 7:6.

"The end of those things /sin/ is death...." 6:21b.

Result of Slavery

"The commandment...I found to be unto death...." 7:10.

¹Nygren, op. cit., pp. 252, 253.

"The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." 6:23.

Conclusion
Deliverance
in Christ

"Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ." 7:24.

The Essence of the New Life

8:1-29 New Life in the Spirit

"The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death." 8:2.¹

It will be seen from this graphic presentation that Paul is seeking to clarify the two problems which grew out of the preaching of his gospel. Paul's proclamation of God's grace was the proclamation of a new freedom,² yet the new liberty was always being misinterpreted. Some of the new Christians inferred from Paul's words that morality and law might both be taken lightly and followed this course with reckless abandon. Others, drawing the same inference from Paul's teaching were horrified and regarded Paul as an apostle of the devil rather than an apostle of Christ.³ Therefore, it is only after he has fully clarified these misconceptions by describing the basis for the freedom, the purpose of it, and the result of a life ruled by sin or law that Paul is able to proceed to the real essence of the Christian's new life, the life in Christ, in the Spirit.

No one who has made a study of these chapters can fail to recognize that chapter eight is the climax of this section.

¹Cf. Nygren, op. cit., p. 268.

²See Gal. 5:1, 13; Philemon 15,16; II Cor. 3:17, 18. ✓

³J. Stewart, A Man in Christ, New York, Harpers, n.d., pp. 194-196; Cf. E.D.Burton, A Critical Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, N.Y. Scribners, pp. 82,270,290f.

Charles Gore says of this chapter,

"If we were to represent the Epistle to the Romans as a bas relief, there would be two passages which would have to stand in the highest relief -- the end of the third chapter, in which St. Paul speaks of that free justification which is given to all men on the equal basis of faith in Christ the propitiation of their sins; and this eighth chapter in which he speaks of the triumph which belongs to the life of the justified, lived in the power of Christ's Spirit."¹

From the opening verse in which the note of "no condemnation" is struck to the triumphant ode to God's love at the end, the chapter rings with the sound of peace and hope and life.

Each of the three previous chapters ended on the note of union with Christ,² but chapter eight begins on that note: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Repeatedly in the first paragraph this thought is emphasized (8:1, 9, 10, 11.). "Christ" and "the Spirit" are used almost interchangeably.³ The conception of union with Christ is the theme of chapter eight and is, as a matter of fact, the very "heart of Paul's religion."⁴ Union with Christ is the real resolution of misunderstanding regarding sin and the law. Through Christ sin is condemned in the flesh (8:3) and through the Spirit the law is actually fulfilled in men. If the Christian is indebted to anything, then, it is neither to sin nor to law but

¹Charles Gore, St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, New York, Scribners, 1899, vol. I, p. 271.

²Romans 6:23, "in Jesus Christ our Lord"; 7:25, "through Jesus Christ our Lord."

³A. Deissmann, op. cit., pp. 125-128. "The formula 'in the Spirit,' which occurs only nineteen times in St. Paul, is connected in nearly all these passages with the same specifically Pauline fundamental notions as the formula 'in Christ.'"

⁴J. Stewart, op. cit. p. 147. Cf. A. Deissmann, op. cit., p. 128. "The formula 'in Christ'...occurs 164 times in St. Paul; it is really the characteristic expression of his religion."

to the Person of the Spirit of Christ who tells us that we are God's children. Waiting, therefore, is not without hope, and suffering is not without help. Indeed in all things the Christian is triumphant through the love of God in Christ Jesus. Such are the concluding remarks of Paul's discussion of the righteousness of God in salvation, which he addresses to both Jew and Gentile Christian alike. In them he gives a final answer to all objections.

There are certain features of this section (6:1-8:39) which are worthy of note for they will have a bearing on our future discussion of chapter seven. The first of these features has already been noted, the emphasis upon union with Christ. Not only is it repeated at the end of each chapter and developed more fully in 8:1-11, union with Christ is also dramatically pictures in 6:1-11. In 6:5 Paul clearly states "For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection...." Union is also the thought of 7:1-6, expressed in a picture of marriage both negatively in regard to the law, and positively in regard to Christ. It is this feature which, as we shall see, Paul presents as the resolution of the intolerable tension which exists under the law.

A second characteristic of this section which is brought out in every segment is the description of Christian life in terms of struggle. Although Paul has said in chapter five that "peace with God" is the result of justification,¹ such peace is not simply tranquility in the material sense of the word.

¹Romans 5:1.

Εἰρήνη in Pauline usage also carries with it the Septuagint sense of harmony, harmony with God.¹ Such a cessation of hostilities between man and God does not preclude any further struggle in the Christian's life in the flesh. Paul realistically recognizes the existence of struggle in the Christian's experience. In almost the same breath in which he speaks of the Christian's freedom from the bondage to sin, he also commands the Roman Christians not to let sin reign in their mortal bodies.² He points out that the Christian freedom is not a freedom from all authority, but rather an exchange of masters. The Christian is still a δούλος.³ The struggle with the law, mentioned in chapter seven, must be left for a later discussion in this paper, but the fact that this feature appears has a bearing upon the interpretation of 7:7-25. Even chapter eight, which, according to Hodge, gives a picture of the complete security of those who confide in Christ,⁴ presents, at the same time, a picture of suffering, pain, and battle.⁵ The Christian life is one of inward security, but outwardly there are buffetings and perils on every side.

A third feature of this section is the contrast made between death and life. Nygren even goes so far as to say that chapter eight is Paul's presentation of the Christian's freedom from death.⁶ In this place, however, Nygren seems to have gone too far. While the term "freedom from" is not used in the purely

¹E. Burton, op. cit., pp. 424-426.

²Cf. Romans 6:5, 6 and 6:12.

³Romans 6:18, 19.

⁴C. Hodge, op. cit., p. 388.

⁵Romans 8:18-35.

⁶A. Nygren, op. cit., pp. 304-347.

negative sense, but positively as meaning freedom from one thing for another, i.e., for life,¹ the outstanding characteristic of chapter eight is not freedom from death but rather life in the Spirit. Whereas "death" and "life" have occurred repeatedly throughout the previous chapters, it is the frequent mention of the Spirit which stands out. Death, rather than being a subject merely of chapter eight, is used, in contrast with life, as a feature of the entire section. Death is something which has already taken place for the Christian, and this fact should be remembered in the discussion of chapter seven. The Christian has died to sin in baptism (6:1-4); he has died with Christ (6:8). Since Christ is in the Christian, "the body is dead because of sin."² Death is also the end of the road of sin, of law, and of flesh (6:21, 23; 7:9, 24; 8:6, 13).

Over against these views of death, life in Christ is always set in contrast. Repeatedly throughout these chapters Paul points out that the change from death to life has already come about for the person who is in Christ. Apart from Christ all ways lead to death; in Him is fulness of life.

¹Ibid., p. 308.

²Romans 8:10.

The Relation of Chapter Seven to the Book as a Whole

The relation of the law to personal Christian experience is not the major issue of the Epistle to the Romans, but in the discussion of righteousness of God by faith, the problem of law forms an undercurrent issue which must be faced. The question of the law as a way of salvation is constantly recurring throughout the early chapters, and must somewhere be dealt with completeness and finality.

In the theme of his letter Paul has stated five axioms about the Gospel. The Gospel is powerful. The Gospel is unto salvation. The Gospel is by faith. The Gospel is for everyone. The Gospel reveals God's righteousness. These axioms would cause immediately an antagonism among Jewish Christians who still honor the law. The antagonism would arise not so much from the axioms themselves as by what is implied in them. Each one implies that the law plays only a minor role in God's scheme of salvation, and such an implication strikes at the very heart of Judeo-Christian legalism. Paul does nothing to soften these truths, but rather builds on them and supports them in the early chapters until, in chapter seven, he gives a final answer to the relation of the law and the gospel.

In chapters 2:12-3:20 Paul brings out negatively the implication of his axiom that the gospel is for everyone by declaring that God is absolutely impartial in judgment. God will judge those outside of the law without the law and those under the law by the law.¹ Such a statement was a most brazen

¹Romans 2:12.

affront to many Jews who claimed exemption from God's judgment simply because they had the law. It was frequently said among the Jews that "Abraham sits at the gates of hell, and does not permit any wicked Israelite to go down to hell."¹ Because they were possessors of God's revealed law, they trusted in the words of the Wisdom of Solomon that God would show "great carefulness" in judging his sons who had given Him oaths and "good promises."² Against this attitude Paul speaks as a good Pharisee, for the Pharisees did teach that it was not the hearer of the law but the doer who was justified.³ But Paul was not merely contrasting hearing and doing here, he went further. Paul did not believe that even the doer of the law could obtain salvation. Rather Paul is asserting the more general principle that "To know God and His will is not perfect righteousness."⁴ The knowledge of God's law cannot save a man; indeed, it takes away all excuse. The Jew will be judged according to the law which he has received by his works; the Gentile will be judged according to the law which he has received by his works. All men are to come under judgment.

The negative side of the gospel, the revelation of God's wrath, is upon all. Paul makes this dogmatic statement of fact here. He does not explain, however, how God's wrath works. That question is reserved for the fuller discussion in chapter seven.

¹Gifford, op. cit., p. 72. Citing Bull's "Harns.Apost." cxvii, 6.

²The Wisdom of Solomon, 12:21,22.

³C. H. Dodd, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, p. 34.

⁴Nygren, op. cit., p. 120.

Paul does not deny that there is a difference in the light which men have received, and to this extent he follows the normal Jewish line of thought. In 2:17-29 he concedes that the Jews have "the form of knowledge and of the truth,"¹ and by "form" he does not mean something unreal as opposed to something real. In Paul's view the law of the Jews was "the real expression of Divine truth, so far as it went."² The law is holy, righteous and good.³ It is "the ordinance of God."⁴ Compared to this revealed law the Gentiles have only "the work of the law written on their hearts."⁵ This is not the natural law of Stoicism, as Dodd would claim, which was immanent in humanity and therefore on the same par with "the Law of Moses" of "the Law of Christ."⁶ Paul, who repeatedly states that Israel has received a revelation entirely unique among the nations, finds such a view repugnant.⁷ Nygren is more keen when he observes that the heathen does not have the law, but merely the works of the law written on his heart.⁸

Just because Israel has received the unique revelation Paul singles out the Jews for special attack. They have the law but rather than carrying out the law in their lives they rested on the possession. As Gifford points out, "The real foundation

¹Romans 2:20.

²Sanday and Headlam, op. cit., p. 65,66. Cf. Gifford, p.78.

³Romans 7:12.

⁴Romans 1:32.

⁵Romans 2:15.

⁶C. H. Dodd, Romans, p. 36.

⁷Romans 3:2; 9:4.

⁸Nygren, op. cit., pp. 123, 124.

of the prerogative of the Jews was the promise given to Abraham, the covenant of the law being subordinate and temporary. But the Jews had lost sight of this truth, and...rested supinely on the law as an assurance of God's favour...."¹ In his attack upon them, Paul declares that the law is only a sign of the covenant, and any infraction of the law leads to a forfeiting of the prerogatives. It is the inward, not the outward condition that counts. There the Jew is no better than the Gentile. Both stand in danger of the judgment.²

Paul's words about the law have been so negative and his attack upon the Jewish view so bitter that the authority and honor for the law appears to be totally undermined. This is Paul's intention. It is only after destroying the Jewish confidence in the law that the righteousness of faith can be seen as necessary. Until Paul can prove that the law is weak unto salvation, which he has done here, it is useless for him to present his major axiom concerning the gospel, that it is powerful unto salvation. Without such an attack the Jew might ask, "Why the Gospel? " But now the question legitimately arises, if the Jew with the law is no better than the pagan without it, why the law? What is the function of the law? Paul gives the answer to this question in its briefest form here in 3:20, hinting that a fuller explanation will come later. The function of the law is to give a consciousness of sin.

¹Gifford, op. cit., p. 77.

²Romans 3:19.

Whatever attack Paul made upon the law, he still had to face the fact that it was a true revelation of God's will. His high regard for the law made it necessary for him to clarify its function in God's plan. This he does along three different lines of argument (3:21-5:21). The law was not the final revelation of God nor the means of justification, but only a prelude to the Gospel to be fulfilled by faith. The law was not the means to righteousness, but only to further revelation of God's wrath. The law was not a preventative to sin, but only served to increase sin.

In 3:21-31 Paul states that the law was merely a witness to the righteousness of God by faith.¹ He concludes by pointing out that the law is actually fulfilled by the gospel of the righteousness of God by faith.² Thus the law cannot be an end in itself.

In order to understand how the gospel fulfills the law it is necessary to understand here what Paul means by "law", *νόμος*, even though a fuller analysis will follow later. Briefly there are three main usages of law: 1) *ὁ νόμος* denotes the law of Moses, 2) *νόμος* without the article, usually means law in general, 3) *νόμος* without the article sometimes refers to the law of Moses in its qualitative sense.³ There is, however, a further differentiation. The law of Moses is regarded by some as referring to the Old Testament generally, but by others as referring to the Mosaic institutions especially as

¹Romans 3:21.

²Romans 3:31.

³Sanday & Headlam, pp. cit., p. 58.

they were interpreted in legalistic Judaism.¹ Both Hodge and Gifford are of the opinion that Paul is referring to law in the general usage here.² The eternal principle of morality has not been abrogated, but instead more firmly established than before. Dodd, on the other hand, regards this instance of as referring to the whole Old Testament revelation.³ Sanday and Headlam take a third view that this refers to the Pentateuch "as the most conspicuous and representative expression of that great system of law which prevailed everywhere till the coming of Christ."⁴

This latter view is for all practical purposes the same as that of Hodge and Gifford, and in this verse Sanday's interpretation is more logical than that of Dodd. In 3:21 Paul has just said that the righteousness by faith is witnessed to by the law and the prophets, distinguishing the Pentateuch from the remainder of the Old Testament. In 3:28 Paul was referring to the law as the epitome of morality. It is, therefore, reasonable that he should use νόμος in the sense of the principle of morality here. That this principle is not annulled but, at last, firmly established is the argument of the subsequent chapters.

According to this view, then, the law was imposed by God to serve a purely minor function. This function was to

¹Hodge, op. cit., p. 158; cf. C.H.Dodd, Romans, p. 63, and Sanday & Headlam, p. 96.

²Ibid. Cf. Gifford, p. 95.

³C. H. Dodd, Romans, p. 63.

⁴Sanday & Headlam, op. cit., p. 96.

exclude all human boasting and to bear witness to the righteousness of faith. The gospel, now having been revealed, the law has fulfilled its function.

The second line which Paul's argument follows in describing the function of the law is that not merely was the law not the end of righteousness; it was not even the beginning. Instead the law only served to reveal more clearly God's wrath. Paul points out in 4:1-25 that the promise was made to Abraham prior to the giving of the law and that righteousness was reckoned to Abraham prior to circumcision.¹ The law and the promise are therefore mutually exclusive; any form of legalism is of no value for justification. Rather the law brings wrath.² Paul has stated this fact before,³ but here he goes a step further and states that the law is the cause of transgression. He puts it negatively, "When there is no law, neither is there transgression."⁴ The law "gives the quality of guilty transgression to sinful acts for which in its absence a man was not held responsible."⁵ Thus the law, far from being the foundation of the promise to Abraham and his seed, serves only to intensify God's wrath, making men more reprehensible than they were before.

¹Romans 4:9, 10.

²Romans 4:14, 15a.

³Romans 3:19.

⁴Romans 4:15b.

⁵Dodd, Romans, p. 69.

Such an assertion would be entirely obnoxious to the respectable Jew, who regarded the law as the way of salvation. Nevertheless, Paul does not attempt to soften his language. He merely states the case and leaves any explanation to a later chapter.

The final line of Paul's argument on the law, introduced in 5:12-20, is that the law was not a primary part of God's plan of salvation, but rather that it was, as Sanday describes it, an "after thought."¹ This almost sacrilegious description is perhaps the best paraphrase of Paul's bold statement, "The law came in besides...."² "It was superinduced on a plan already laid, and for a subordinate, although necessary purpose."³ Paul points out that prior to the law sin was in the world, but still men did not bear the full guilt of their sin. Although men had always been responsible, death during the period from Adam to Moses was tracable directly to the fall of mankind in Adam.⁴ The increase of sin, which came with the imposition of the law, was not merely the result of the law's coming. The law was imposed for the express purpose of increasing sin. As Nygren so aptly describes it, God introduced the law to call sin "into the arena of choice" where its powers could be displayed before the whole world.⁵

¹Sanday & Headlam, op. cit., p. 145.

²Romans 5:20.

³Hodge, op. cit., p. 278.

⁴Sanday & Headlam, op. cit., p. 270.

⁵Nygren, op. cit., p. 227.

Such a view of the law was not simply incomprehensible to the legalistic Jew, it was utter blasphemy. Nevertheless. Paul, the converted Jew, who was by no means antinomian either in spirit or in action, could not fail to see the law in its true relationship, and, seeing the truth, he could not fail to proclaim it, no matter how harsh the words might seem. In chapter seven he tries to prove this truth, not by means of hard logic, but by the much more telling argument of practical experience.

In chapter six the problem of the law is briefly introduced again, this time in relation to sin and grace. Paul has just called the readers to give themselves to God in righteousness, and what he says sounds almost like an echo of a Pharisaic exhortation to holiness all over again. What, then, is the difference between being under the law and being under grace? Paul's answer to the riddle is hardly more than a footnote, "a finger post,"¹ which directs men to what is to follow. The difference between being under law and being under grace is that when one is under grace sin no longer is regnant; sin no longer speaks with the voice of authority. "The power of sin is the law...,"² but grace frees man from the law.

The question immediately arises, "Is a man free to sin as much as he pleases just because he is free from the law?" Paul registers his violent repugnance to such a thought with a categorical "No!" Such a misunderstanding, he explains, is

¹Sanday & Headlam, op. cit., p. 161.

²I Corinthians 15:56.

based on a false concept of freedom. There is no such thing as complete freedom. Man was created by God as a sovereign being, but he can only maintain his sovereignty by making a clear distinction between the creature and the creator.¹ Man is free only as he is bound to God. Otherwise he becomes a slave to sin.

This explanation of man's freedom from sin still does not answer the question of man's relation to the law. All the sign posts have been pointing toward the more thorough explanation which comes in chapter seven, and here finally Paul deals with the problem. As Bruce describes it, Paul has presented the righteousness of God through faith alone, and that in order to do so he has been attempting to prove that righteousness cannot come by law, because of the general prevalence of sin and the effect of Adam's sin. Of chapter seven he says, "It must be shown that sin is a power at work in man as well as above him, influencing his character as well as his destiny.... To shut men up to a way of faith there is needed a demonstration of the sinfulness of human nature. This statement the apostle supplies in his statement as to the sinful proclivity of the flesh."² The Christian's relation to the law is likened to that of a marriage contract which endures only as long as a man lives. (The confusion within Paul's illustration will be dealt with in a later chapter of this study.) For the present we need only point out that the Christian is one who has died to the law

¹Piper, op. cit.

²Alexander Bruce, St. Paul's Concept of Christianity, New York, 1894, p. 138.

and is therefore free from its binding powers. Paul goes deeper than this statement in his analysis of the relationship. Under the law, no matter how much a man may strive to do that which is commanded, no matter how much he may desire to fulfill the law's precepts, he is totally incapable of doing so. Formerly he had said that hearing was not enough, now he mirrors to the most earnest legalist that doing is not enough, because perfect doing is impossible. The way of the law leads only to death.¹ The only escape is through Jesus Christ.

With this analysis Paul considers his answer to the legalists almost complete. It only remains to show in chapter eight how the ordinance of the law is fulfilled through the life in the Spirit. The law is not dead, but the person who lives in the Spirit is no longer subject to its deadly influence. From this point onward the law ceases to be an undercurrent issue in Paul's discussion. He merely mentions that "Christ is the end of the law,"² and that the expression of love is "the fulfillment of the law."³ The relative infrequency of the later use of the term points to the fact that, in Paul's mind at least, the issue has been settled. Prior to chapter seven *νόμος* is used in one form or another forty-one times. After chapter seven it occurs only eleven times. Through Christ a man is indeed dead to the law.

¹Romans 7:24.

²Romans 10:4.

³Romans 13:10.

CHAPTER III

THE MEANING OF LAW

Before going any farther in this study it is absolutely necessary to arrive at a clear meaning of νόμος, law, as it is used by the Apostle Paul. It has been observed that Paul is fighting against a misunderstanding of the law.¹ This misunderstanding certainly is not based on the confusion which occurred when the Septuagint translators of the Old Testament used the Greek νόμος indiscriminately for the Hebrew תורה, although the original meanings of those two words are quite different. The misunderstanding against which Paul was struggling was much more basic, growing out of man's sinful nature. Nevertheless, the modern student of the Apostle would be merely adding misunderstanding to misunderstanding if he did not have clearly in mind Paul's varied usage of the term νόμος.

Robertson made a masterful understatement when he said, "Νόμος is a word used with a deal of freedom by Paul."² Middleton admits, "...that there is scarcely in the whole New Testament any greater difficulty than the ascertaining of the various meanings of νόμος in the Epistles of St. Paul."³ The meanings vary so greatly even within a single verse that it is sometimes impossible to be sure of Paul's meaning.⁴ It is,

¹Nygren, op. cit., p. 227.

²A.T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, Nashville (Broadman, 1934) p.796.

³Gifford, op. cit., p. 41, citing Middleton, "On the Greek Article," p. 303.

⁴Ernest D. Burton, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, New York (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), p. 455. Burton points out that in Romans 2:25a,b, 26,27a,b it is questionable whether the law referred to is the divine law as a historic regime or as divine law in general "without reference to the manner of expression."

therefore, "of the highest importance to discriminate between those different usages which arise through different conceptions of what constitutes the revealed will of God...."¹

Classical Greek

Nómos is from the root *NEM* through *νέμω* which means "to deal out," "distribute," or "dispense." As an outgrowth of this usage *νέμω* came to mean "to distribute among themselves, possess."² From this meaning of *νέμω*, *νόμος* means properly "anything assigned or apportioned," "that which one has in use," or "possession." Hence, *νόμος* came to mean a "usage, custom, and all that becomes law thereby, a law, ordinance."³ In Hesiod, where it first appears, *νόμος* is used to describe the will of the gods over men or animals, and down until Biblical times, in extra-biblical language it was used to express the will of one mind or a group of minds over the minds or actions of others.⁴ Later *νόμος* followed two lines. In its looser sense it meant "convention;" in the stricter sense "rule as prescribed by authority." Under this latter classification, then, came a further division. *Nómos* is used either of a single rule, divine or human, or collectively, to describe a set of civil codes or unwritten principles as in Aristotle, *νόμος κοινός* (Rhet. I, 103).⁵

¹E.D.Burton, American Journal of Theology, "Redemption from the Curse of the Law", XI, (October, 1907), pp. 624-646.

²H.S.Liddell & R. Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, London, 1897, p. 997.

³Ibid., p. 1009.

⁴Burton, Galatians, p. 444.

⁵Ibid.

Later, among the Stoics, it was combined with $\phi\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$ to describe the law of nature, $\nu\acute{o}\mu\omicron\varsigma \phi\upsilon\sigma\iota\kappa\acute{\epsilon}\omega\varsigma$, the immanent principle underlying all things.¹ This last meaning is found in the Pauline writings together with other meanings growing out of the Hebrew meaning of $\nu\acute{o}\mu\omicron\varsigma$.

Hebrew Influence

"Law," in our English Bible, represents both the Hebrew word לְוַדָּה , Torah, and the Greek word $\nu\acute{o}\mu\omicron\varsigma$. This usage stems from the fact that our translations came originally from the Latin Vulgate and the Greek Septuagint where $\nu\acute{o}\mu\omicron\varsigma$ is used almost entirely as the rendering for לְוַדָּה . The two terms have quite different meanings, however. לְוַדָּה originally meant the direction given to another.² From this basic sense three meanings developed. Torah could mean: direction in the sense of instruction of a specific nature either as an oral or a written statute, or it could mean ethical or religious instruction generally of a parent or a prophet or, specifically, of the will of God as proclaimed by a prophet. Thus in Isaiah 1:10 the prophet cries, "Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom, give ear to the לְוַדָּה of our God...."³ It could also mean a formulated body of statutes either ethical, religious, or civil; the substance of them or the books containing the law.

¹Ibid. Cf. C.H.Dodd, The Bible and the Greeks, London (Hodder & Stoughton, 1935), pp. 25, 26.

²Burton, Galatians, p. 445ff.

³C.H.Dodd, The Bible and the Greeks, p. 31.

In the Apocrapha and Pseudopigrapha the tendency was to move away from the meaning "instructor" to "a definitely formulated statute or code," and from this to a conception of law in the abstract sense apart from any particular expression.¹

It has already been noted that the Septuagint almost invariably renders *דבר* by the Greek *νόμος*, even in such sections as Isaiah 1:10 mentioned above, although it is occasionally used to describe the civil law of a heathen nation. Thus *νόμος*, rather than retaining its original Greek meaning of custom, or, later, principle, came to be applied by Hellenistic Jews to the whole of Old Testament revelation.² "Thus," Dodd concludes, "the prophetic type of religion was obscured, and the Biblical revelation was conceived in a hard, legalistic way."³

There is abundant evidence to this hard legalism in the Gospels and in Paul's other writings.⁴ The multitude of restrictions which were laid down concerning the observance of the Sabbath is just one instance of the legalism.⁵ Among the Pharisees the law had become almost synonymous with the oral, human tradition. At the same time the difference between the Jewish attitude toward the law and the Greek attitude must be kept in mind. While the Greeks looked upon the law as growing out of human custom, the Jews looked upon the law as God's

¹Burton, Galatians, p. 446.

²C.H.Dodd, The Bible and the Greeks, p. 34. Cf. G.F.Moore, Judaism, p. 263f.

³Ibid., p. 34.

⁴Matt. 12:1-12; 23:13-28; Mark 2:23-28; John 5:1-16; Col. 2:8,16,17; Gal. 2:11ff.

⁵E. Schürer, A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ, 2nd ed., II, Edinburgh, (T.& T.CLARK), 1895, p. 97.

revelation of which they were the divinely ordained interpreters.

General New Testament Usage

There are two significant features in the non-Pauline usage of νόμος in the New Testament. First, νόμος is used in the imperative sense as it is in the Old Testament and also in the Greek.¹ Nowhere do we find "law" used as it is today, in the declarative sense, to describe the habits of nature. Always in Biblical thought law contains the thought of command which calls for obedience. The second feature of New Testament usage of the term, exclusive of Paul's writings, is that νόμος is almost always understood as stemming from divine authority. Jesus regarded law in this light, as something having a permanent authority,² but He proclaimed that the law was working toward an end, a telos. The law would ultimately find its full meaning only in Himself.

Any study of the meaning of νόμος leads ultimately to Burton's outstanding work in his commentary on Galatians. In this study he has referred to all except twenty-five of the references to νόμος in the entire New Testament.³ His work is so complete and his analysis so clear that it is the main

¹Burton, Galatians, p. 447.

²A. M'Caig, "Law in the New Testament," International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, ed. J. Orr, Chicago (Howard-Severance, 1930), pp. 1844-1852. Cf. Matt. 5:17; John 6:47.

³Burton, op. cit., pp. 447-460. Cf. James Strong, The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, New York, (Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1890), p. 588.

source used here. Burton classifies non-Pauline New Testament usage under four main headings. *νόμος* is used to refer to:

1. A single statute, either ethical, religious, or civil. There are only two occasions in non-Pauline writings where this occurs: Heb. 8:10; 10:16.
2. A book or books containing the law. This usage occurs a number of times in both John and Acts, once in Luke 24:44.
3. Law without any reference either to its source or authority. This usage occurs both in John and Acts. In John 18:31, for instance, the author quotes Pilate as saying to the Jews, "Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law."
4. Divine law. Burton has broken down this classification into four subheadings. Under two of these he classifies the remainder of the non-Pauline occurrences of .

General Pauline Usage

Because of the controversial nature of his writings, Paul uses *νόμος* with greater variety and in a much more complicated fashion than do the other New Testament writers. In addition to those uses mentioned above, Paul refers to the divine law in two other ways. The law may sometimes refer to divine law, without any idea of its expression in a historic regime. Burton discovers this usage in Romans 2:13,14d.¹ In addition Paul frequently refers to the law as a purely legalistic system, the only basis for salvation.

While Paul could not accept this view of the law as an interpretation of its true meaning, he is forced to use

¹Burton, Galatians, p. 457.

the word in this sense in his arguments with the Judaizers.¹ Thus a total of eight different renderings for νόμος are found in Paul.

The anarthous use of νόμος is especially important in an interpretation of that term in the writings of Paul. Moulton points out that, "...for exegesis, there are few of the finer points of Greek which need more constant attention than this omission of the article when the writer would lay stress on the quality and character of the object."² The qualitative use of νόμος is very evident in Paul. Of the 117 instances in which the term occurs, νόμος is used, it occurs without the article seventy-one times, whereas elsewhere in the New Testament νόμος is generally used with the article as referring to the Mosaic Law.³ "In Paul, however," says Slaton, "νόμος frequently occurs qualitatively, with special emphasis upon the essential law quality of law, its 'lawness' so to speak."⁴

The anarthous use of νόμος does not necessarily exclude the definiteness of the noun, however. Without the article νόμος may designate a definite law, as when Paul says in Romans 2:12 ὅσοι ἐν νόμῳ ἥμαρτον, διὰ νόμου κριθήσονται, whoever sinned in law through law will be judged. The reference, as seen

¹Ibid., p. 448, 458.

²James H. Moulton, Introduction to the Study of New Testament Greek, p. 83. Cited in H.E.Dana & J.R.Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, New York (MacMillan, 1927), p.150.

³A.W.Slaton, "Qualitative Nouns in the Pauline Epistles and Their Translation in the Revised Version," Historical and Linguistic Studies in Literature Related to the New Testament, Second Series, IV, 1., Chicago (University of Chicago Press, 1918), pp. 35-40.

⁴Ibid., p. 35.

by the context, here is to the Mosaic Law, yet the emphasis is not so much upon the particular code as upon the quality of the noun.¹ Paul's thought might be paraphrased, "Whoever sinned under law, by whatever name it goes makes no difference, through law will be judged." As here, so elsewhere the particular aspect of law which Paul means to emphasize must be learned as much from the context as from the term itself. The important point to recognize is that through the qualitative use of Paul is not condemning the Mosaic code as such, but that he is proclaiming a much more far sweeping spiritual freedom.² The vital question for Paul is not whether law is evil. It is utterly ludicrous to accuse Paul of antinomianism. The vital question is how are men "to be delivered from the dominion of sin and death into...the glorious liberty of the Kingdom of God?"³

¹Ibid., p. 35 footnote. Cf. Burton, Galatians, p. 456.

²Ibid., p. 38.

³T.W.Manson, "Jesus, Paul, and the Law," Judaism and Christianity, ed. E.J.Rosenthal, London (Sheldon Press, 1938), pp. 127-140.

CHAPTER IV

THE PROBLEM OF THE LAW IN CHAPTER SEVEN

Having dealt with the various meanings of the law and especially with those meanings which are found in Paul, it is now possible to analyze the problem of the Law as Paul discusses it in the seventh chapter. As may be seen in the outline, this chapter can be divided into three parts. In the first part Paul presents the limits of the law; in the second he shows the relation of the law to sin as it effects the individual; finally, in the third he shows the relation of sin to the flesh, again presenting the problem in its most personal aspects. As Bruce points out it is a matter of life and death to Paul that his gospel will stand the test. In this chapter Paul is testing the gospel by demonstrating the impossibility of law as a way of salvation.¹

Throughout this chapter there are three main questions which Paul seeks to answer: is the Christian actually free from the law, is the law sin, and what is the relation of law to the flesh? An adequate answer to ~~all~~ questions must be given in order to clarify the central problem of the chapter, the Christian's relation to the law. Unless the Christian adequately understands and affirms the answers which Paul gives, he will continue to have a false view of his relationship to God. On the one side he will think that the law has no more to say to him, that he can do as he pleases. He will believe, as Bonhoeffer puts it, that "grace alone does everything...and so everything can remain as it was before."² The Christian will think he can go on living just as the rest of the world lives.

¹Bruce, op. cit., p. 119.

²D. Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, trans. R.H.Fuller, New York (MacMillan, 1951), p. 37.

Such a view leads eventually to libertinism.

On the other side the Christian may think that, since he is free from the law, the law has become his ally, guiding him and directing him ever upwards to the higher life. This has been the view of the great majority of scholars. Calvin maintains that though the law condemns the unregenerate, yet "...it ought to have a better and more excellent use in the saints."¹ The law can lead the saints, Calvin believes, to a better understanding of God's will and to a greater motivation to obedience.² This view, however, directly contradicts what Paul says in 7:14-25: that the law is totally impotent to bring about the spiritual life in any form and merely leads to a new legalism.

Of all the modern commentators only Nygren seems to have discovered Paul's true meaning of the relation of the Christian to the law as a man who, because he lives in two aeons, lives in a constant state of tension in which the law is the expression of God's will but also the expression of His wrath.

The Limit of Law

In 7:1-6 Paul uses *νόμος* in three different senses: as law without any reference to divine authority, as a single statute, and as divine law in the sense of a legal system which is the only basis of salvation. He addresses this portion of

¹John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. J. Allen, I, ii, 7th Am.ed., Philadelphia (Westminster Press, 1936), p. 390.

²Ibid., p. 389.

his argument to those knowing law.¹ Here νόμος without the article refers to law in its most general sense. Paul is about to make a statement of fact which he assumes is familiar to every one who knows anything about law.² (νόμος as used anarthously here is indefinite; both Jew and Gentile are included in γινώσκουσιν ... νόμον .) The fact is that the law, ὁ νόμος , rules over man so long as he lives, but death brings an end to the law's control.³ This fact is the main point of the first paragraph and needs to be kept in mind during a study of the illustration and its application. If this single thought is not kept in mind, and one tries to interpret the following verses as a strict allegory, while he may not go "hopelessly astray,"⁴ the essential point of Paul's argument may be lost.

The second appearance of νόμος in 7:1 occurs with the article. Burton believes this usage is the same as that used previously, "law" without respect to its divine or human authority.⁵ Dodd points out that the law of marriage, which Paul undoubtedly already had in mind, is governed by the same regulations in both Jewish and Roman law.⁶ Although Paul would be inclined to think in terms of the Mosaic code with which he was more familiar,⁷

¹Romans 7:1.

²Burton, Galatians, p. 460. So Gifford, Hodge, Denny, ad. loc.

³Romans 7:1,2.

⁴Dodd, Romans, p. 101.

⁵Burton, Galatians, p. 360.

⁶Dodd, Romans, p. 100.

⁷Gifford, op. cit., p. 135, notes that the 'law of the husband' has its foundation in Gen. 2:21-24 and is enlarged upon elsewhere: Exod. 20:14; Dt. 5:18; 24:1-4; etc.

he undoubtedly chose an illustration of the fact he wished to prove which is applicable in all systems of law.

In the illustration *νόμος* is used both anarthously and with the article in 7:2a and b, 3 and refers to a particular statute, the law which binds a wife to her husband. Paul points out that a woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives, but if the husband dies she is free to be married to another man. In 7:4-6 he applies the illustration to his readers' situation. "Wherefore, my brethren, you also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ to the end that you might be joined to another, to him who was raised from the dead...."¹ "But now we have been loosed from the law having died to that in which we were held...."²

It is this application which has caused so much difficulty. To whom do the readers correspond? In the illustration the husband dies. This would make the readers correspond to the husband in the illustration. But in the application the readers are made free through their participation in the death of Christ whereas in the illustration the woman is made free through her husband's death. To compound the confusion in 7:6 Paul says the readers are loosed from the law as though the law corresponded to the husband in the illustration.

Any attempts to clarify the problem have only served to add more confusion. Some commentators have said the husband is our "old man," referred to in 6:6.³ The soul, thus liberated,

¹Romans 7:4.

²Ibid., 7:6.

³Gifford, op. cit., p. 135, following Augustine, Melancton, and others. Cf. Hodge, op. cit., p. 338. Cf. Sanday & Headlam, ad. loc.

is free to be joined to another. Hodge feels that this interpretation does not fit the context, although he does not explain how it is unfit. He prefers Chrysostom's interpretation that the wife is the Church and the first husband stands for the law, the Church being represented by the phrase *σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ*.¹ This explanation is impossible. Paul nowhere states that the law is dead. Throughout the Epistle Paul's argument has been just the opposite. The law is permanent, but we are free from its bondage. Nygren believes that there is no need whatsoever for matching the illustration and application. He says that it is unjustifiable to describe this as an allegory just because there happens to be here "an incidental play on words...."² The only point which Paul wishes to bring out is "that death ends the sway of the law."³

Nygren is right in placing the emphasis on the central point, but Paul has used the allegorical method before,⁴ and, although this is not a perfect allegory, a loose application of the illustration is not out of keeping with Paul's thought. If, as Gifford asserts, the husband in the illustration is equivalent to the old man, then there is an even stronger parallelism between chapters six and seven than was at first recognized. As the husband died, thus loosing the woman from his bonds, so the brethren, being joined to the body of Christ,

¹Hodge, op. cit., pp. 338, 339. Cf. Chrysostom, op. cit., p. 420.

²Nygren, op. cit., p. 273.

³Ibid., p. 270.

⁴Vid. Galatians 4:21-30.

enter into Christ's death with Him. "The body of sin"¹ is done away and they are free to be joined to another. Nygren objects that Paul is not thinking in terms of the believer's marriage to Christ,² but against this objection it is to be observed that Paul cannot conceive of freedom except as freedom in Christ. The only purpose of union with Christ in death, is union with Him in a new life.

The figure of marriage has been used frequently by the prophets to describe the relation of God to his people.³ Jesus has used the figure to describe His relationship to the Kingdom,⁴ and Paul himself has referred to marriage as the symbol of Christ's union with the believers.⁵ It is not at all surprising to find the same figure creeping in here, although only as a minor theme. The person who believes on Christ is made dead to the law through the body of Christ. The meaning of *εἰς τὸ* (7:4) is not absolutely clear. As Robertson points out, *εἰς τὸ* and the infinitive may signify either purpose or result, although it usually signifies purpose.⁶ Here, while the inevitable result of death with Christ is union with Him in a new life, the meaning which fits the context better is that of purpose. Throughout this section Paul has been speaking of the new life. The law came with the purpose of magnifying the

¹Romans 6:6.

²Nygren, op. cit., p. 273.

³Isaiah 54:4-6; Ezek. 16; Hosea 2:19ff.

⁴Matt. 22:212; 25:1-13; Luke 12:53ff.

⁵Ephesians 5:23-33; II Cor. 11:2.

⁶Robertson, op. cit., p. 1002f.

trespass,¹ but the purpose of union with Christ was that the believer might "walk in newness of life."² So here, though the emphasis is not so strong, the purpose of death to the old man is that we might be joined to another, Christ.

The minor problem of these verses having been settled, it is now possible to return to the main point which Paul makes: the power of the law is terminated by death. As has been seen the law does not die.³ In the remaining verses of this chapter, when Paul refers to the law he uses the present tense (7:7, 12, 14). In chapter eight Paul implies that the imperative quality of the law continues (8:2). In chapter thirteen, where Paul states that love is "the fulfillment of the law" (13:10), he again shows that law as an ethical principle is not abrogated.

It was impossible for Paul to consider the law dead. Paul was too much of a realist to do that. He not only recognized its existence, but he continued to show respect for the ceremonial rites of the Jewish law. He himself observed them,⁴ but at the same time he recognized that "...in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love."⁵ As far as Paul was concerned, obedience to ceremonial rites was purely secondary.⁶ The Christian's relation

¹Romans 5:20.

²Ibid., 6:4.

³Supra, p.56. in ms.

⁴Acts 16:3; 18:18; 21:17-26; 24:11-14; 28:17ff.
Cf. Deissmann, op. cit., p. 99ff.

⁵Galatians 5:6. Cf. I Cor. 7:19.

⁶Piper, op. cit., Notes.

to the law is one of complete freedom. The authority of the law as a scheme for salvation is no longer binding.¹

But in stating this fact Paul has raised two problems which show that the Christian's relation to the law are not so simple as it would appear at first. In 7:5 Paul says "For when we were in the flesh, the passions of sin which (were) through the law wrought in our members in order to bring forth fruit unto death...." The first problem deals with the old man, the man "in the flesh." What has become of this old man? Paul has said that he has been crucified with Christ,² but the Christian still lives in the body. What then is the relation of the law to the Christian as he continues to live in the body?

The second problem raised in the concluding verse of this first paragraph involves the goodness of the law itself. This problem has been introduced before (3:20; 4:15; 5:20); it is raised again here in a way that compells an explanation. The law, Paul says, actually wrought the passions which produced death. Is, then, divine law itself sin? If it is, then God might be charged with being the author of evil. This second problem is so compelling that Paul must address himself to it first.

Two questions arise in 7:7-13 and 7:14-25 which, for the sake of clarity, will be left to another chapter. The first question is whether or not Paul describes a personal experience

¹Deissmann, op. cit., p. 101.

²Romans 6:6; 7:4.

in these verses. If he does, the second question arises as to what portion, or portions, of his life is Paul here describing. While recognizing the difficulty of separating these questions from the study of the relation of the law to sin and to the flesh, this separation is being attempted for the sake of clarity. When the relations of the law to sin and the flesh have been clarified, then it will be possible to discover the relation of the law to personal experience.

The Relation of the Law to Sin

Having shown that the Christian is free from the law Paul is now compelled to answer the question, "Is the law sin?" Denney suggests that this was not merely a question raised by some of Paul's accusers alone, but that Paul raised it himself to "conciliate for his own mind the idea of liberation from the law with the recognition of the Old Testament revelation." He adds, "...it is because we all feel it in some form that this passage is so real to us. Our experience of the law has been as tragic as his, and we to ask how this comports with the idea of its Divine origin."¹

"Is the law sin?" What does Paul mean by "law" here? Burton claims that the apostle is using νόμος throughout vs. 7-13 in the sense of a "divine law viewed as a purely legalistic system made up of statutes on the basis of obedience or disobedience to which it justifies or condemns men as a matter of debt apart from grace...."² It is doubtful, however,

¹Denney, op. cit., p. 639.

²Burton, op. cit., p. 457.

whether this classification can include every occurrence of νόμος in these verses. In 7:7c, for instance, ὁ νόμος obviously refers to a specific statute. To other references to law in 7:7a,b,8,9, and 12, this rendering might also be applied.

The majority of commentators do not make the fine distinction of meaning which Burton does. Hodge defines ὁ νόμος as used in 7:7a as "the moral law, however revealed."¹ He adds, "It is not the law of Moses, so far as that law was peculiar and national, but only insofar as it contained a rule of duty." This meaning, which Hodge maintains throughout vs. 7-13, is considerably broader than Burton's "legalistic system." Indeed, it corresponds more closely with the latter's classification of the divine law generally conceived "without reference to the manner of its expression."² Gifford's view is closer to Burton's. He believes that Paul is using νόμος in the sense of a "principle common to law as law,"³ but that the apostle has the Mosaic code in mind. Denny comes closer to Burton than to any of the others when he notes that the anarthous use of νόμος in 7:7b "...shows that it is the legal, not the Mosaic character" which Paul has in view.

A few words need to be said by way of clarification between the phrases "Mosaic law" and "legalistic system." The "Mosaic law" as it is understood in this paper refers to the law of the Old Testament as distinct from the prophets, but which

¹Hodge, op. cit., p. 347.

²Burton, op. cit., p. 457.

³Gifford, op. cit., p. 137.

includes the ethical principle of love.¹ The "legalistic system" is the body of statutes within the Old Testament revelation which might be summarized in the command, "Do this and live...."²

It is this legalistic system which Paul is at pains to defend. It is not the ethicalism of the law which needs defense; everyone would admit that the ethicalism is good. Nor is it the covenant relationship which needs to be defended here; Paul has already proven, in chapter four, that the covenant made to Abraham does not rest on the law. What Paul must defend is the legalistic system which all Jews, including Paul, accepted as being of divine authorship.

Paul's manner of defense is to show the true relation of the law to sin. First he denies that the law itself is evil, but rather holy (7:7a). The holiness of a legal system, Paul points out, is not based on its power to save, but on the very opposite, on its power to make sin known, and, by bringing the sinner under the power of death, to expose the fiendishness of sin. This is the true relation of the law to sin, and Paul analyzes this relationship on the basis of his own personal experience, "...as indeed it must be in order to have any truth or value."³ As Calvin describes this condemning function of the law, it strips sin of its disguises.⁴ This first observable relation of the law to sin Paul has already mentioned in 3:20. Now he proves the fact from his own experience.

¹Deuteronomy 6:4,5.

²Vid., Burton, op. cit., p. 448.

³Gifford, op. cit., p. 137.

Paul says in 7:7 that he "did not know sin except through law." Thayer notes that *γινώσκω* refers to a knowledge based upon personal experience, whereas *οἶδα* in the following verse refers to a "mental perception."¹

Strangely, Gifford reverses this interpretation, but the majority of commentators follow Thayer.² The apostle is not referring to mere intellectual knowledge, but to a vivid and painful personal experience.

There is a second relationship described here also. Once sin is made known, the law becomes the basis of operations for sin,³ so to speak, and through the law sin works out all manner of lust. Law thus becomes an irritant to sin, so that instead of cauterizing sin already present, the law intensifies sin in man, making it worse than it was before.

Dodd says of this passage (7:7-13), "It is one of the most important teachings of modern psychology, and one most readily verifiable by analysis, that the attempt to repress an instinctive desire directly, seldom succeeds in its object."⁴ Paul's remedy, however, does not coincide with that of modern psychologists. While agreeing that desires cannot be repressed, he does not maintain that health will result from the mere freedom from repression.

¹Thayer, op. cit., p. 118.

²Gifford, op. cit., p. 137. Gifford says that *ἐγνων* signifies an "abstract metaphysical notion," while *ᾔδειν* refers to a "sensible experience." Cf. Hodge, p. 348; Nygren, p. 279.

³Thayer, op. cit., p. 90. *ἀφορμή*, "a place from which a movement or attack is made."

⁴Dodd, Romans, p. 110.

The psychologist would say, "Let up on the restraints," implying that these are evil. But Paul argues that the restraints themselves are holy and just and good. In relation to sin, the law is intended to be an irritant to further increase sin and thereby expose it even though it results in death.

Death is the intended result of the relation of sin and the law. But although Paul maintains that death is the result of this relationship, he is émphatic in maintaining that the legal system itself did not cause death. "But [it is] sin, in order that it might be seen to be sin, working death to me through that which is good, in order that sin through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure." This sentence with its threefold repetition of the word "sin," shows emphatically where Paul places the blame. Sin alone is the cause of death, but "the power of sin is the law."¹

Thus Paul points out the double function of the law in relation to sin: it is a revealer, uncovering the individual acts of sin; it is an irritant bringing sin to its fruition in death and thus showing sin in its true nature.

The Relation of the Law to Flesh

In the concluding verses of chapter seven Paul introduces two, or possibly three, meanings for νόμος which he has not used previously in this chapter, although in 7:14,16 he continues to refer to the law as a divine legal system. Since these new connotations are, in the first instance, predominantly

¹ I Cor. 15:56.

and, in the second instance, exclusively Pauline, and since there is some question as to their proper interpretation, a careful study of them is required.

In 7:14,16, as has been noted, it is generally agreed that Paul is referring to *νόμος* in the same sense as he has been in vss. 7-13. "The law is spiritual." This statement in itself does not prove that the law is divine. *Πνευματικός* may refer to the higher quality in man as opposed to the lower, or it may refer to a class of beings which are higher than man but lower than God,¹ but neither of these interpretations could be applied to *πνευματικός* as in the context. Paul contrasts the law's spiritual quality to his own fleshliness, and whenever *πνεύμα* and *σὰρξ* are set over against each other in Paul, the contrast is always that of man in his weakness as opposed to God.² The law is spiritual because it comes from God and thus takes the nature of its divine author.³ In this same sense Paul refers to the law in 7:16.

In 7:21, however, Paul states, "I discover, therefore, the law that to me willing to do good to me evil is present," and in vs. 23a, "...but I see another law in my members...." The law which Paul refers to in vs. 23a is obviously different from "the law of God" which he mentions in the verse immediately preceding, but the reference in 7:23a is not so distinct. Burton, whose classification has been used as a foundation for this study,

¹Thayer, op. cit., p. 523.

²Wm. B. Dickson, St. Paul's Use of the Terms Flesh and Spirit, Glasgow, (J. Maclehose, 1883), pp. 306, 311.

³Denney, op. cit., p. 641. Cf. Hodge, op. cit., p. 358.

includes both these references along with the "law of sin" in 7:23c,25 under the signification of "a force or tendency."¹

Many commentators, however, have tried to equate *τὸν νόμον* with the Mosaic law. In order to take this position the construction of the verse must be radically changed. Hodge quotes Tholuck's rendering, 'I find, therefore, that while I would do the law, (i.e., good), evil is present.'² Such a translation makes *τὸν νόμον* the object of *ποιεῖν* rather than of *εὐρίσκω*, an interpretation which strains the normal order of the sentence unwarrantably. Denney, however, objects that in rendering *τὸν νόμον* as "a force," a concept of modern scientific phraseology is being used which is out of keeping with Paul's thought. He, too, prefers to rewrite the sentence.³ Chrysostom adopts a variation of this interpretation. While recognizing a change from Paul's previous usage of *νόμος*, he is unwilling to give the term here the meaning of "force," preferring to say that this is a law like the Mosaic law, from neither of which do some people wish to free themselves.⁴ None of these interpretations, nor the others which seek to equate *τὸν νόμον* in 7:21 with the Mosaic law,⁵ do justice to the order of sentence as it stands. They must, therefore, be rejected.

Burton's interpretation remains. Is it possible that Paul would use *νόμος* in this sense of "a force or tendency" here

¹Burton, op. cit., p. 460.

²Hodge, op. cit., p. 368.

³Denney, op. cit., p. 642.

⁴Chrysostom, op. cit., p. 429f.

⁵Gifford, op. cit., p. 145.

in Romans but nowhere else? As has already been stated this rendering is found nowhere else in the New Testament, neither is it found in Old Testament usage. It is used occasionally in the Apocrapha (Wisdom 2:11;14:16), however, and is closely allied to "the Greek conception of νόμος as an immanent principle...."¹

Thus νόμος as force is not as modern as Denny believes.

Furthermore, although Paul's words usually show the influence of Hebraic thought more than Greek, he also exhibits freedom in adopting concepts from Greek culture to suit the exigencies of a particular situation, and there is no reason to doubt that he did so in this case. The majority of modern interpreters stand with Burton's interpretation of the law in 7:23c, including Hodge, Gifford, Sanday and Headlam.²

The use of νόμος with ἁμαρτία, the genitive of author, in 7:23c,25, adds strength to the above view. The law of sin cannot be equated with the law of Moses. Indeed Chrysostom admits that the "other law" of 7:23a is "not a law of good order,"³ but a tyrant who has occupied the palace of flesh. If the ἕτερον νόμον and ὁ νόμος τῆς ἁμαρτίας are to be equated, as seems the most natural, then it is obvious that "law" is being used in the sense of force or tendency. Thayer suggests in support of this position that "...the mention of the divine law causes those things even which in opposition to this law impel to action, and

¹Dodd, The Bible and the Greeks, p. 37.

²Hodge, et. al., ad. loc.

³Chrysostom, op. cit., p. 430.

therefore seem to have the force of law, to be designated by the term νόμος" ¹ There is sound basis, therefore, for taking νόμος in 7:21, 23a, c, 25 to signify a force or tendency.

The second usage of νόμος in vss. 14-25 which occurs for the first time in chapter seven occurs in 7:22, 23b, and 25a. Burton is not sure whether any of these occurrences of νόμος refer to the divine law as it is summarized in one ethical principle or to the divine law in general, apart from any particular expression. ² He leans toward classifying them all as ethical principle. The first and the last references can be discussed together, but the νόμος τοῦ νοῦς μου (7:23) ought to be handled separately.

Is there any need for the change of meaning between vss. 14, 16 and vss. 22ff? In the former verses it was observed that nomos referred to the divine law as a legal system. Could Paul say, "I delight in the legal system of God according to the inward man . . .," or "...I myself serve a legal system of God indeed in my mind . . .?" This question is intimately related to the questions of whether these verses are autobiographical and, if so, whether they refer to a pre- or post-conversion experience. If Paul is speaking of a Christian experience, it does not seem possible that he could say he rejoices in God's legal system in the inward man and that he serves it in his mind. The Christian cannot serve a legal system. If, on the other hand, Paul is

¹Thayer, op. cit., p. 427.

²Burton, op. cit., p. 460.

describing the experience of a non-Christian Jew, then he could say that he rejoices in God's legal system.

Such a narrow interpretation of the "law of God" is not required in these passages, however. In vss. 14,16 Paul still had to maintain that the legal system in itself was not evil; that part of the argument now being concluded, he is free to view the law in its larger aspects. A devout Jew, even of the strictest sect, would find joy, as Stewart points out, not so much in the letter as in the spirit of the law.¹ It is God's will more generally conceived which would give him assurance and comfort. Burton's view, is sound, therefore, that the occurrences of νόμος τοῦ Θεοῦ in vss. 22,25a could be either the law of God or an ethical principle or God's law generally conceived apart from any specific form of revelation.²

Is there reason for favoring the meaning of the law as ethically conceived rather than the signification of divine law in its broader aspects? Aside from Burton none of the commentators referred to in this paper have anything to say on the subject. Only the context and the other occasions of these usages can guide the student here. Both of these usages occur rarely. The occurrences of the law of God, "as divine law in general...without any reference to the manner of its expression,"³ are found by Burton only in Romans 2:13,14d;3:27;9:31 and possibly 2:25a,b,26,27a,b. The occurrences in chapter two refer to God's

¹Stewart, op. cit., p. 93.

²Supra., p. 5.

³Burton, op. cit., p. 456.

general revelation of His will to the heathen. The "law of righteousness" referred to in 9:31 signifies law in general as it might be discovered among either Jews or heathens; the same can be said of the reference in 3:27.

The law of God in Romans 7:22,25a, however, is found in a much narrower context. Paul completes his discussion of the heathens in the second chapter and thereafter addresses himself to Jews and Gentiles who have come under the Jewish-Christian teaching. The person whom Paul describes here, whether himself or his readers individualized, whether regenerate or unregenerate, would have a more specific conception of God's will in mind than that referred to in chapter two.

Thus the signification of the law of God as an ethical principle remains. This usage is found both in the synoptic Gospels and in James. It occurs in Paul in Galatians 5:14 and in Romans 13:8,10. In both these cases it refers to the Old Testament law which is fulfilled in the single ethical principle of love. If Paul is describing a Christian experience in Romans 7:14-25, then this is the only logical sense in which *νόμος τοῦ Θεοῦ* can be used here. If he is describing the experience of an unregenerate man, God's law conceived of as the ethical principle of love still fits.

The remaining occurrence of law in 7:14-25 is the *νόμος τοῦ νοῦ* in vs. 23b. There is generally agreement that this phrase corresponds to the "law of God in my inward parts" in vs. 22.¹

¹Calvin, Romans, p. 157f. Cf. Gifford, Burton, Denny.

Having distinguished the different meanings of law as they are used in vss. 14-25, it is now possible to discuss the relation of the divine law to the flesh. Stewart points out that Paul's teaching on the law "is at every point conditioned by his experience of what he calls 'the flesh!'"¹ What the apostle is striving to make clear in this impassioned chapter is that freedom from law is a necessary part of the Christian life, because the divine law, good, righteous, indeed, holy though it may be, is utterly impotent to bring goodness into practice. This is true of the law conceived either as a legalistic system or an ethical principle. Law conceived in either way is not evil but holy. It is not the law's holiness which is in question, but its function and its power which have been misconstrued.

From vs. 14 to the end of the chapter Paul elucidates the impotency of law over the power of sin in the flesh.² Paul begins by contrasting the law's spirituality with man's fleshliness (7:14). He uses the term *σάρκινός* here, rather than *σαρκικός*, to describe the individual's condition. (This latter term is found in the Byzantine text, but in none of the earlier mss., and may therefore be discarded in favor of Nestle's text.)³ *Σάρκινος* properly means "composed of flesh," rather than "having the nature of flesh," yet Thayer, who makes this distinction, insists that *σάρκινος* as used in 7:14 must convey the idea of *σαρκικός* with "an emphasis: wholly given up to the flesh, rooted in the

¹Stewart, op. cit., p. 98.

²Dickson, op. cit., p. 375. Cf. Nygren, op. cit., p. 284ff.

³Nestle, op. cit., p. 405.

flesh as it were."¹ The contrast which Paul is making, however, is not of an ethical nature. Rather it is the contrast between the nature of man as a creature as opposed to the nature of the divine law.²

But Paul's use of *σάρκινος* raises the whole question of what he means by *σάρξ*, a question which cannot be fully treated within the scope of this paper. It is the view of this student that Paul uses *σάρξ* in the Hebraic sense of "basar," rather than in the Greek philosophical sense. He nowhere speaks of flesh as something evil. As Dickson points out, Paul never propounds the theory that sin consists "...either in bodily matter, or in that aggregate of feelings and impulses associated with the bodily organism which constitutes the sensuous side of man."³

Paul first mentions "the flesh" in this chapter at vs. 5 where he says, "When we were in the flesh, the passions of sin which were through the law worked in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." Here he is using the term to describe the natural life of men apart from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the contrast being drawn between the spiritual life and the life of legalistic obedience.⁴ It is obvious that Paul is not referring to man's physical nature -- the man who writes is still a physical person; the apostle is describing man as a "secular" person in whom sin resides and, irritated by the law, brings man to death.

¹Thayer, op. cit., p. 569.

²Denney, op. cit., p. 641. Cf. Dickson, op. cit., p. 427.

³Dickson, op. cit., p. 316. Cf. Bruce, op. cit., p. 268ff.

⁴Calvin, Romans, p. 143. Cf. Griffith, op. cit. p. 18.

In 7:18 the phrase ἐν τῇ σαρκί again occurs. Paul says, "For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, no good dwells." He qualifies the "me" by adding, "in my flesh." There is a part of his nature, "like the id of modern psychology,"¹ as yet not subject to God's spirit, which is wholly devoid of good. Howevermuch he consents to the law, howevermuch he wishes to do the law's bidding, the law is impotent over that outward portion of his nature. In the inner portion of his nature, Paul rejoices in God's law, but there is another law which speaks not merely an imperative, but which works as a power, as a force.² Against these forces the divine law is helpless; it can only stand by and watch the individual be enslaved.

In 7:25 Paul concludes that inwardly, in his mind, he serves the law of God, but outwardly, in the flesh, in that portion of his nature which has not yet been subdued by Christ, he is a slave to the power of sin. No more penetrating analysis of the divine law could be made. The law can capture a man's mind, make a man long to follow its precepts. The law can become a man's ideal in which he finds joy. But the law can do nothing to bring into practice in a man the very imperative to which it has drawn his consent. The law is spiritual, and man is but a creature. It cannot enter into a man's total being and save him from the power of this world. Before the law the poor human creature can only say, "Thank God for Jesus Christ!"

¹Griffith, op. cit., p. 19. Cf. Calvin, op. cit., p. 155. Cf. Hodge.

²Romans 7:22.

CHAPTER V

PAUL'S RELATION TO THE LAW

Every attempt has been made in the previous chapter to study the law in its relationship to sin and the flesh from the personal method, in which Paul discusses the subject in Romans 7. This is not the method of most interpreters; they first settle the question of whether Paul is describing his own experience or not, and then discuss the subject of the law.¹ The usual method has been reversed here in the hope that previous analysis of the meaning of law as it is used in chapter seven would shed greater light on the relation of the Christian to the law.

Paul's use of the first person singular in 7:7-25 raises three questions: are these verses autobiographical or is Paul using the first person singular for dramatic effect? If these verses are autobiographical what period in his life is he describing in 7:7-13? What period in 7:14-25? The last question is vital to the thesis of this study. If Paul is describing his own post-Christian experience then the law is certainly not dead to the Christian. Although he is dead to the divine law as a legalistic system, as a basis of salvation, he is not dead to the law as a holy, spiritual revelation of God's will. Christ is the fulfillment of the law, but the law is not Christ. It exists apart from Christ to bring the Christian ever more constantly in subjection to Christ. Without further delay, these three questions will be discussed in their respective order.

¹ Stewart, op. cit., pp. 99-146. Cf. Dickson, op. cit., pp. 213-219; Dodd, Romans; etc.

Paul's Autobiography

Are these verses, 7:7-25, autobiographical? In the history of interpretation all sorts of explanations have been given for these verses. Paul's statement in 7:9, "But I was without the law once," has been interpreted by Theodoret as referring to Adam's state of innocency in Paradise. Celsus and Hilgenfeld went so far as to say that Paul referred to some pre-existent state of man, a state of which the Bible never speaks.¹ Chrysostom says the same verse refers, not to Paul's own experience, but to that of the Israelites in the pre-Mosaic period. Chrysostom bases his argument on the meaning of in this verse. Paul could not be referring to natural law, for no man, not even Adam, lived without the natural law. When Paul says that he was "without law," he must be speaking, therefore, of the Mosaic law, and, since he himself grew up under that code, this verse must apply to the pre-Mosaic period.² In the same way Chrysostom believes that in 7:14-25 Paul describes an earlier state of the human race, prior to Moses but after Adam, in order to show the necessity of grace.³ Gore believes these verses are merely a description of man's moral history.⁴

All these interpretations strain Paul's words unnecessarily. Paul had no desire to theorize about the state of Adam, and the essential fact about the pre-Mosaic period he has already brought

¹Gifford, op. cit., p. 138.

²Chrysostom, op. cit., p. 422ff.

³Ibid., p. 427f.

⁴Gore, op. cit., p. 246.

forth in chapter four. Gore's view, and, in fact, none of these interpretations, takes seriously Paul's use of the first person singular.

A survey of the usage of the first person singular in the Epistle to the Romans reveals that Paul uses this form of the verb, exclusive of Old Testament quotations and hypothetical questions, eighty-four (84) times, twenty-three of which occur in the seventh chapter. Exclusive of chapter seven in all of these appearances of the first person singular save one (3:7), the reference is obviously to Paul himself.

On eleven occasions, five of which occur in chapter seven, Paul uses the personal pronoun *ἐγώ* in conjunction with the verb. The occurrence of the first personal pronoun outside of chapter seven shows that Paul is laying even greater emphasis upon himself. "For I, even I myself, could wish to be anathema...." (9:4). "For I also, even I, am an Israelite...." (11:1). "I... I, even I, am an apostle of the Gentiles...." (11:13). "But I am persuaded, my brethren, even I myself, concerning you...." (15:14). This emphatic use of the personal pronoun elsewhere in the Epistle points to a similar usage in Romans 7 where it appears in verses 9, 10, 14, 17, 20, 24, 25.

Dodd notes that even if Paul "...is describing his own personal experience, he means to generalize from it...."¹ In I Corinthians 8:13 Paul describes his own habit as an example for other Christians to follow. In I Corinthians 13 the "I" could have been as easily replaced by "we". Dodd points out, however,

¹ Dodd, Romans, p. 104.

that Paul's usage of the first person singular is not a mere literary convention. In I Corinthians 8:13; 10:31-11:1 Paul "...commends his own practice for imitation by those who know him."¹ "It will in fact be found on examination that Paul rarely, if ever, says 'I' unless he is really speaking of himself personally, even if he means to generalize from the particular experience."² This conclusion reached by Dodd may be accepted as valid.

The vast majority of interpreters agree with Dodd that Romans seven is autobiographical. There are different interpretations given to autobiography, however, Denney describes 7:9 as "ideal biography." "There is not really a period in life to which one can look back as the happy time when he had no conscience"³ Sanday and Headlam describe these verses as "not imaginary but imaginative" autobiography.⁴ Such views, however, add little understanding of 7:14-25. Denny, especially, rather than solving the problem in 7:9, avoids it by dogmatically stating his own preconception of the nature of man. If these verses are autobiographical, and the study of the usage of the first person singular. leaves little doubt that this is so, then what Paul says about himself must be taken at its face value and interpreted accordingly.

Paul's Pharisaic Experience

The question of the period in Paul's life being described in 7:7-13 centers itself in the interpretation of 7:9. The views of a number of scholars who interpret this passage as non-Pauline

¹Ibid., p. 106.

²Ibid., p. 107.

³Denney, op. cit., p. 40.

⁴Sanday and Headlam, op. cit., p. 186.

have already been described and rejected.¹ One other theory ought to be mentioned. Hodge believes that 7:9 refers not to the pre-Mosaic period, nor to Paul's own childhood, which, he says, gives a very low sense to the design of the passage; this passage describes that time of false security which is common to all believers, although it is experienced by unbelievers as well.² Hodge's rejection of the autobiographical nature of this verse, however, is contradicted by his own argument at the end of his discussion of Romans 7, where he heartily defends the autobiographical character of verses 14-25.³ Most of the same arguments which are used there apply to this particular verse: the use of the first person, and the fitness of the picture as a description of Paul's own life.

Calvin's position is more tenable. He believes that there was a time when "...Paul, though trained in the law from birth, was so blind to its true meaning that he was 'without the law,' ignorant of the extent of its precept."⁴ Deissmann gives a slight variation of this interpretation.⁵ He suggests that there was a time in Paul's childhood, perhaps also alluded to in I Corinthians 11:13, when the young Saul visited the synagogue and heard the law read without hearkening to its commands. But one day the law was heard in all its commanding authority, and, from that time on there was no peace of conscience. In support

¹Supra., p. 75.

²Hodge, op. cit., p. 351f.

³Ibid., pp. 376-386.

⁴Calvin, Romans, p. 147f.

⁵Deissmann, op. cit., p. 63.

of this picture Deissmann adds that Jewish rabbis of a later period assumed that a child grew to the age of nine without any consciousness of sin.¹ Deissmann's position is that held by many modern commentators,² and, as will be seen, does not give a low sense to the design of the passage.

With the exception of verse 13, which is of a transitional nature, the main verbs in vss. 7-13 are all in the aorist tense, indicating punctiliar action.³ The reference is to action which took place in the past but is now over. It seems reasonable to suppose, then, that, apart from 7:9a, which describes his childhood, these verses describe in one sweep of the pen Paul's life as a Pharisee. That life was death. He knew the law, but his knowledge only provoked sin to greater acts of sinfulness. It is evident that Paul has not given a complete narrative of his early years. Beyond his brief statement one cannot and need not go. The essential points are that there was a period of "innocency," then death.

Having taken Paul's description at its face value, it is then perfectly legitimate to take cognizance of the broader implications as do all commentators. Paul obviously was not writing about himself for the sake of his own glory, but was presenting his own experience because it was typical of all men who

¹Ibid.

²Dodd, Romans, p. 110f. Presents a very accurate picture of the carelessness of childhood. Cf. Sanday & Headlam, Gifford.

³H.E. Dana and J.R. Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, New York (MacMillan, 1950), p. 193ff.

come face to face with the law. Paul's experience, however, is not that of the Christian life as Hodge maintains.¹ Paul speaks unremittingly of the death which comes through the law. Four times he repeats the idea, vss. 10, 11, 13, and at the conclusion of 7:13 there is no mention of the release which comes through Christ as there is in 7:1-5 and 7:14-25. This is the picture of everyman's experience apart from Christ. It is an experience which knows no hope.

Paul's Christian Experience

Beginning at vs. 14 a change takes place in the picture which Paul is painting. There is no longer a picture of unremitting death, but rather a picture of a weak creature struggling against the forces of evil. Law is no longer a dread voice of doom, but that divine revelation which is the object of man's joy. If this passage is autobiographical, what period in Paul's life is the apostle now describing?

Since Augustine first propounded the theory that these verses described the experience of the regenerate man an endless battle has been waged between those who follow Augustine's view and those who follow the earlier Greek fathers in saying this passage portrays the unregenerate man.² Frequently this battle has degenerated because of preconceived notions of the meaning of sanctification. Two quotations serve to illustrate the point.

¹Hodge, op. cit., p. 347f.

²Ibid., p. 376

On the one side Stewart quotes Weiss as asking heatedly, "what would be the use of the new birth or redemption at all, if it could not end that miserable slavery?"¹ On the other side, Griffiths says, "...it is difficult to be patient with the contention that it was an experience of which he could have known nothing after his conversion. ...the intensity and violence of his language forbid the thought that its passion was no more than 'emotion recollected in tranquillity.'² Dickson's assumption that the question has finally been settled³ cannot be supported in the light of such contemporary studies such as those of Griffith and Nygren. Neither can Bruce's statement be accepted that this is an idle inquiry. This episode in the life of Paul has been compared to that one in the life of our Lord which He so graciously gave His followers to support them in their hours of trial, the episode of His temptation.⁴ If this is indeed the great St. Paul's own Christian experience, then there is hope for that weak and creaturely Christian, who today longs to be "numbered with the saints."

The main reasons in support of the view that 7:14-25 describes the unregenerate man may be summarized as follows:

- I. 1. The marked contrast in tone between chapters seven and eight show that a change has taken place from an

¹Stewart, op. cit., p. 99. Cited from J. Weiss, Das Urchristentum, 399, n.i.

²Griffiths, op. cit., p. 89.

³Dickson, op. cit., p. 213. The author gives a lengthy list of 19th century expositors who regard Paul as speaking of the unregenerate man.

⁴Stewart, op. cit., p. 102. Stewart fails to recognize that Jesus' temptation came after His call, after He had received the baptism of the Spirit.

unregenerate to a regenerate experience. Stewart asserts that anyone who reads these chapters consecutively will feel that he is passing into a "totally different atmosphere" in chapter eight.¹ Dickson notes the fact that the Spirit is never mentioned in chapter seven, whereas He is ever present in the following chapter.² In contrast to the Spirit, Paul only employs terms in chapter seven which describe man on his natural level, i.e., *ῥῶς, ὁ ἄνθρωπος*.

2. Paul's phrase in 7:24, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?", could not have been uttered by a Christian such as Paul. It is totally out of keeping with Paul's other pictures of his Christian life.³ Beet makes the charge that those who find Paul's picture in harmony with that of the Christian life only exhibit that they themselves have not advanced as they should.⁴ Sanday and Headlam point out that the term regenerate should be defined.⁵ If by regenerate, the interpreter means in the lower sense all baptized Christians, then this passage could properly portray their condition. If, however, the interpreter refers to regenerate in its higher sense, of the spiritual life such as Paul knew, such an interpretation could not be applied to the passage. Sanday and Headlam follow Gifford and Jackson in assigning this passage

¹ Stewart, op. cit., p. 99.

² Dickson, op. cit., pp. 215-219.

³ J. A. Beet, A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, London, 1877, p. 204ff.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Sanday & Headlam, op. cit., p. 185.

to the "inter regenerandum" period.¹

3. The fact that the name of Christ is not mentioned till the very end of the chapter shows that it is not till then that the victory is won.² Dodd, upon whom Stewart depends for this position, transposes vs. 25 and vs. 24 on the basis of Venema's conjecture.³ Dodd admits that while there is no manuscript evidence for this transposition, logic demands the change. "For it is scarcely conceivable that, after giving thanks to God for deliverance, Paul should describe himself as being in exactly the same position as before."⁴

4. Dodd presents another argument in support of the view that these verses describe the experience of the unregenerate.⁵ Beginning at 6:1, Dodd argues, Paul has been portraying the Christian as one who is free from sin. "It would stultify his whole argument if he now confessed that, at the moment of writing, he was a miserable wretch, a prisoner to sin's law (vss. 24, 23)."⁶

On the surface these arguments all seem logical, and, in the form in which they have been presented by scholars, the student is almost persuaded of their validity. But a closer study of the passage in its context reveals flaws in each argument which make them unacceptable.

¹Ibid.

²Stewart, op. cit., p. 99.

³Dodd, op. cit., p. 114f.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 107f.

⁶Ibid., p. 108.

1. The contrast in tone between chapters seven and eight cannot be denied. One is compelled to feel, as Stewart asserts, that he is entering a "totally different atmosphere."¹ The change of atmosphere, however, does not necessarily prove that a change of life has taken place. Dickson's sweeping declaration that all the wasted words of argument about this chapter would have been saved if men had only made the proper distinction between *νοῦς* and *πνεῦμα* only serves to show that he has misconstrued the meaning of *νοῦς* as used in this chapter.² It is true that Paul emphasizes the *νοῦς* in chapter seven, whereas the *πνεῦμα* receives the emphasis in the following chapter. But the *πνεῦμα* is not opposed to the *νοῦς* as Dickson supposes. The *νοῦς* is not merely the faculty of moral judgment.³ As it is used here it is, rather, that portion of the regenerate man which has already received the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.⁴ Even Althaus, who reasserts the view that Paul is here describing the unregenerate man, has to concede that *νοῦς* is being used in chapter seven in a different sense than elsewhere.⁵ He fails to recognize that in Ephesians 4:23 Paul refers to "the spirit of the mind" as directly opposed to "the spirit of the flesh." The "mind" as used in 7:14ff. is that of the inner man who has already been redeemed and turned towards God.

¹Supra., p. 82.

²Dickson, op. cit., p. 216.

³Ibid.

⁴A. B. Alexander, The Ethics of St. Paul, Glasglow (J. Maclehose, 1910), p. 65. Cf. Calvin, Romans, p. 157f.

⁵P. Althaus, Paulus und Luther über den Menschen, 1938. Cited in Nygren, op. cit., p. 289.

The contrast, therefore, is not between the unregenerate and the regenerate life. Neither is it the contrast between the Christian as he stands apart from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the Christian in the Spirit. As far as Paul is concerned, the former situation is a contradiction in terms.¹ Rather the contrast is between the Christian in his weak creatureliness and the Christian in his triumph. The contrast, as Nygren so well describes it, is that of a Christian living in two aeons.²

2. The argument that the picture of life presented here is out of keeping with Paul's other pictures of his own Christian life may be answered from two sides.

On the first side it should be pointed out that Paul does elsewhere speak of a continuous conflict during his days as an apostle. In I Corinthians 9:26, 27 Paul describes his struggle in terms of a boxing match against his own body. Elsewhere he vividly brings out the contrast between the treasure which is the Christian's and the imperfect vessel which contains that treasure.³ He says that he is "...pressed on every side, yet not straitened; perplexed, yet not unto despair; pursued, yet not forsaken; smitten down, yet not destroyed...." Such portraits of the apostle's life do not reveal an existence of complete tranquility. As Deissmann points out, "It is bad psychology to refer the words significant of depression exclusively

¹Nygren, op. cit., p. 294f.

²Ibid.

³II Corinthians 4:7-18.

to Paul's pre-Christian period, and to make only Paul, the Christian, speak the words from on high. Even as a Christian, Paul was swallowed up by the deep, just as, no doubt, when he was a pious Jew he saw the mountains "from whence cometh our help."¹ Beet's accusation that any interpreter has not advanced as he should who sees in this passage a mirror of his Christian life, can readily be refuted by the testimonies of the great Christian saints themselves. Luther, for one, declared that depression was necessary as a means to understanding the love and mercy of God.² To the end of his days Luther was troubled by such periods of profound discouragement and depression. Faith for Luther, as Bainton points out, "...was no pearl to mounted in a gold setting and gazed upon at will. Faith was ever the object of agonizing search."³

What makes this passage a Christian experience, as was shown,⁴ is the intersection of Jesus Christ into Paul's despair.

On the other side of the question of whether this passage can describe the regenerate experience, it must be shown that this picture does not correspond to Paul's picture of the unregenerate life. In Romans 1:18-3:20 Paul portrays that state. God gave the unbeliever up because, though he knew God, he neither glorified Him nor gave thanks to Him as God (1:21). The

¹Deissmann, op. cit., p. 68.

²R. Bainton, "Luther's Struggle for Faith," Church History, XVII (Sept. 1948), p. 198. Cited from M. Luther, Tischreden #4777.

³Ibid., p. 194.

⁴Supra., p. 183, 3.

heathens, "...changed the truth of God for a lie ..."(1:25),
"...refused to have God in knowledge..."(1:28)". They were
"...hateful to God..."(1:30), and, knowing God's law, they
deliberately did the opposite and even gave their "consent" to
those that did likewise (1:32).

This portrait stands in total contradiction to that
painted in chapter seven where the man "consents" to the law's
goodness (7:16), wishes to do good (7:19), rejoices in God's
law (7:22).

If Paul's picture in 7:14 does not portray the unbeliever
in general, neither does it portray the self-confident Jew in
particular who rests in the law, glories in God, and knows His
will, yet willingly contradicts God's commands, supposing that
the very possession of the divine law will save him. It has
been maintained by some that Paul is here portraying, not the
self-contented Jew, but the "...Jew who is one inwardly..."(2:29),"
the Pharisee of the Damascus road who is struggling with all his
might to fulfill the law, yet realizes how far short he falls.¹
But this position is undermined by Paul's statement in Ephesians
3:6 describing his own pride and self-assurance during that
period of his career. Looking back he can still remember that
he was "...as touching the righteousness which is in the law
found blameless."²

Since the experience in 7:14ff does not correspond to
Paul's portrait of the pagan, or the self-contented Jew, or even
to the earnest Pharisee, one is compelled to conclude that it must
be the picture of the Christian.

¹Dodd, Romans, p. 115.

²Nygren, op. cit., p. 286.

3. It is true that Christ's name is not mentioned until almost the end of the chapter, but it is untrue to the text to transpose 7:24 to the very end. As has been pointed out already, there is no manuscript evidence for such a change.¹ To be sure there are a number of expositors who do not accept the transposition and yet maintain that Paul is referring to the unregenerate experience.² Their interpretation of verses 24, 25 becomes slightly strained as a result. Gifford's statement is a good example. "At the crisis reached in vs. 23 there is first an irrepressible burst of anguish, and then a sudden revulsion of thanksgiving as the Apostle for a moment breaks away from the miserable past to the happy present, and then in the close of the verse returns more calmly to the general conclusion of his long description."³

Even this position, while more tenable than that of Dodd,⁴ does injustice both to the spirit and the letter of the text. It is true that verse 25 forms the conclusion of the "long description," but that description includes the verse immediately preceding. It cannot be taken as a parenthetical statement, as Gifford would interpret it. Furthermore the presence of *αὐτὸς* *εἶπεν* and the present tense in the last verse will not allow Gifford's interpretation that Paul has moved from the past to the present and back to the past again. Paul has used the

¹Supra., p. 83.

²Dennety, op. cit., p. 643. Cf. Gifford, Sanday & Headlam.

³Gifford, op. cit., p. 144.

⁴Supra., p. 83.

αὐτὸς ἐγώ to lay special emphasis on the fact that it is he himself who is speaking, and the present tense shows that the action is still going on. "I myself am continuing on the one hand to serve the law of God in the mind, but in the flesh the law of sin."

This failure by the majority of scholars of the school of Gifford and Dodd to take seriously Paul's use of the present tense has led to much of the difficulty in understanding chapter seven. The explanation that the present tense is clearly used to describe something which is past,¹ that it is used for the sake of vividness,² that this is idealized biography,³ or the mere avoidance of the issue altogether,⁴ is unacceptable. The change from the aorist to the present tense at 7:14 is obvious, and it is also obvious that Paul consistently uses the present tense through verse 25. How can the change be explained? Beet suggests that 7:7-12 describe Paul's spiritual death before he became a Pharisee, and that verses 14-25 describe that Phari-saical period.⁵ But the intensity, the passion, of the apostle's language are totally out of keeping with such a projection of himself into his former experience.⁶ Rather, the present tense shows that, in the course of his dictation, as Paul contemplates

¹Nygren, op. cit., p. 289. Cited from Althaus.

²Beet, op. cit., p. 205.

³Denney, op. cit., p. 641. Cf. Dickson, op. cit., p. 215ff.

⁴Sanday & Headlam, op. cit., p. 185. Cf. Dodd, Gifford.

⁵Beet, op. cit., p. 204ff.

⁶Griffiths, op. cit., p. 89.

the place of the law in his present life, his wretchedness, the consciousness of his repeated defeat by the power of sin, overwhelms him like an ominous cloud. But suddenly, when the cloud seems to cover the whole horizon of his life, he looks up and sees the light of Christ breaking through the darkness of his despair. It is certainly true, "No one could have written this passage but a Christian...",¹ but not for the reasons which Denney describes.¹ It could have been written by a Christian because only a Christian could have seen that radiant light of Christ.

4. The argument that a confession that the Christian is still under sin would destroy the design of the whole section remains to be answered. The answer is that Paul is not confessing that the Christian is under the power of sin; that matter has already been discussed in chapter six. The purpose of this chapter is to show the Christian's freedom from the law. But as Paul faces the Christian's relation to sin realistically in the previous chapter, so in chapter seven, he sees the Christian's relation to the law as it actually is. The same realism may also be seen in chapter eight.

In Romans 6 Paul declares that the Christian is free from sin through his death in Christ (vss. 1-6), but he does not say that the Christian is sinless, for he is still in his "mortal body" (vss. 12-14). In 6:17-19 Paul brings out the apparent contradiction of the Christian state. While acknowledging that his readers have already presented themselves to God as servants of righteousness, the apostle, in the same breath, exhorts them to

¹Denney, op. cit., p. 639.

present their members "as servants to righteousness unto sanctification." (vs. 19). This contradiction is resolved in 6:23b.

The pattern of Paul's argument is almost identical in Romans 7. The Christian is free from the law through death (vss. 1-5). The law resulted in death (vs. 7-13). This parallels 6:23a, but is enlarged by the perplexity of the problem to the recipients. Then the apparent contradiction is again seen (vss. 14-25). As Nygren describes the situation, "...even the Christian cannot attain to righteousness by way of the law."¹ Since the Christian still lives in the flesh, the resolution of his conflict is only through Jesus Christ.

The same pattern repeats itself in chapter eight. The chapter begins with the new life through the Spirit (vss. 1-11) followed by an exhortation not to be debtors to the flesh (vss. 12-17). Then follows a long description of the Christian conflict (vss. 18-30) and the triumphant resolution (vss. 31-39).

The conflict described in all these chapters is not one within the Christian soul. Paul nowhere in 7:14ff. portrays the Christian as a man divided against himself. His mind, his will, even his emotions are united. He serves the law of God with his mind (vss. 23, 25). He wills to do the good (vs. 19), and he hates the evil that he does (vs. 15). He is even able to say, "...it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells in me." (vs. 20.) The conflict is, therefore, that of an integrated man struggling to bring out in action the unity of purpose which is within.²

¹Nygren, op. cit., p. 296.

²Ibid., p. 293.

In Romans 7:14, then, Paul, the Christian, describes that struggle which he himself faced throughout his days against the sin in his flesh, and that dark despair which he faced when he looked upon the ideal of the law. He shows how utterly helpless even he is as a Christian filled with God's Spirit to fulfill the command of the law. He shows how utterly dependent he always was upon the grace of Jesus Christ. He seems to be saying, "Even as a Christian, when I gaze at the law, I am overwhelmed by my own weakness and am driven back to Jesus Christ!"

When Paul says that the Christians "were made dead to the law through the body of Christ,"¹ he meant just that. They are totally free from it. They may gaze on it and delight in it. They may strive to fulfill its commands, but they are not saved by their delight or their works. They are saved by the grace of God through Jesus Christ.²

¹ Ibid., p. 303.

² Romans 7:4.

CONCLUSION

THE RELATION OF THE LAW

TO

PERSONAL CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

In the introduction to this thesis, a brief summary was given of the confusion that exists today within the Church. Men today are still raising the question, "Is Christianity anti-nomian or is it a new form of legalism?" Actually Christianity exists in both forms. On the side of anti-nomianism there are those who feel that the Mosaic law does not speak to the Church today. Such a one is, for example, the theological student who says that the law concerning Sabbath observance no longer binds the Christian, since Christ fulfilled the law. On the side of legalism there are those who cling to a rigid observance of the Sabbath, such as the minister who refused to eat ice cream because it was purchased on Sunday.

Dillistone has suggested that there is no resolution to the tension which exists between law and grace.¹ The two poles of law and Spirit must be maintained in order for the Christian to avoid the pitfalls of libertinism or legalism. Is the life of tension which Dillistone thus describes in keeping with Paul's discussion of the problem?

The traditional view of the law is that it has a three-fold function in the life of man. These functions, which are set in a different order by different theologians,² are listed by Calvin³ as follows: 1) to lead men to grace by revealing God's righteousness and thereby exposing man's unrighteousness; 2) to restrain the unrepentant for the preservation of the community; 3) to provide a better understanding of the divine will and a greater motivation to obedience for the regenerate.

¹Supra., p. 3.

²Vidler, op. cit., pp. 20-46, holds that preservation is the first purpose of the law.

³Calvin, Institutes, II, pp. 382-389.

Both the first and the third function of the law, as they are thus presented, are discussed in the seventh chapter of Romans, and it may readily be seen that that chapter provides a sound foundation for the first function. There is some question, however, as to whether the third function of the law as it is traditionally held has such a solid footing in Romans 7. It is interesting to note that in Calvin's treatment of this topic, the Biblical quotations which support his position are all taken from the Old Testament, whereas those references which he makes to the New Testament are all of a negative nature.¹ Calvin readily admits that Paul's reasoning about the law is attended with difficulty, for the apostle extends "...the abolition of the law somewhat further..."² than the mere abrogation of legal rites and ceremonies. Thus we find that even one of the greatest expositors and theologians did not find a ready solution to the relation of law to Christian experience.

Paul provides a solution to this perplexing issue in Romans 7. The apostle's solution, however, is not theological or theoretical; it is experiential. Paul does not present a neat system by which the Christian may keep the law. He shows, in 7:14-25, by personal example, how the Christian actually lives in relation to the law.

Paul's solution is not to be found in anti-nomianism. This fact has been repeated frequently throughout these pages.³ Neither is Paul's solution to be described as a new form of

¹Ibid., pp. 388-395.

²Ibid., p. 393.

³Supra., pp. 39, 58

legalism, a free and ready subjection to the law in contrast to a previous forcible obedience.¹ Paul's solution is found in an entirely new type of existence, a life in union with Christ. "...Ye were made dead to the law through the body of Christ that you might be joined to another...."² The phrase "in Christ" or "through Christ," which describes this experience, is Paul's watchword³ and the solution to his struggle with the law.

The Christian is actually dead to the law through his union with Christ. He is not merely dead to its rites and ceremonies; he is dead to its imperative. He is no longer bound to it in any way, any more than a woman is bound to her deceased husband. In their fear of legalism, many interpreters have been afraid to accept the full implication of Paul's discussion of Romans 7:1-5. Freedom from the law is freedom from its binding power over the conscience,⁴ or it is freedom within the law, comparable to the freedom which a law-abiding citizen feels in contrast to the criminal.⁵ Alexander interprets Paul as not having changed his ideal essentially upon his conversion. His ideal "...still consisted in the fulfillment of divine righteousness."⁶ But Paul's concept of divine righteousness was radically changed upon his conversion. It ceased to be a righteousness

¹Vidler, op. cit., p. 49.

²Romans 7:4.

³Deissmann, op. cit., p. 128.

⁴Calvin, Institutes, p. 39.

⁵Gore, op. cit., p. 243.

⁶Alexander, op. cit., p. 97.

by law and became a righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ,¹
a righteousness through union with Him who is alone righteous.

The Christian is, therefore, totally freed from the law.
But the law still exists. The law is holy, righteous, and good.²
It is of divine authorship, spiritual.³ It is God's law.⁴
Such an expression of God's will, such a revelation of God
cannot be disregarded by Paul, the Christian, however free he
may be of its imperative, because he is under the imperative of
Christ. Being in Christ he cannot but consent to the law and
rejoice in it. This is not theory, but experience. The law
remains as God's revelation of His will, and, as Paul gazes at
the law he must, because he is in Christ, strive to become good,
as the law is good. Yet Paul's creatureliness, his weakness in
the flesh hinders him from making his own life in harmony to the
law from which he receives no help. Delight in it though he may,
the law makes him wretched to the point of death. But at the
moment of death, when the apostle is most keenly aware of his
utter helplessness, Jesus Christ breaks into the scene and rescues
him. The law is neither his guide nor his goal. Jesus Christ
is his all.

For the Christian today Paul's experience has but one
application. Let him rejoice in God's law because it is a revela-
tion of God's will, but let him submit himself to Christ and
Christ alone.

¹Romans 3:21.

²Romans 7:12

³Romans 7:14.

⁴Romans 7:22, 25.

APPENDIX

Precis

1:1 From Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, a message concerning God's Son, to all in Rome God's grace and peace.

1:8 I thank God for you all and pray that I may come to you with the gospel. For I am not ashamed of gospel for it is God's power to salvation, the righteousness through faith.

1:18 Now God's wrath is against all ungodliness, because men, knowing God, follow their own vain imaginations. Therefore God has given them up to themselves. He gave them up to dishonorable passions. He gave them up to reprobate minds because, knowing the commandment, they do the opposite. All men are to be judged, both the evil and the good, both those under the law and those apart from it. About you Jews who rest in the law, don't think it will protect you from judgment. Obedience to the law is an inward not an outward act. Certainly the Jew has an advantage, because he was entrusted with God's oracles, but his lack of faith cannot destroy God's faithfulness, neither can he sin carelessly thinking he will bring God glory. The truth is that all are under sin, and the law, which makes men know sin, brings all under judgment.

3:21 But now God has revealed his righteousness through faith in Christ apart from the law. This act does not abrogate, but establishes the law. Righteousness through faith actually preceded the law. Abraham, for instance, did not receive righteousness as a payment but as a free gift. Circumcision was only a seal of this prior gift. The promise of a seed came to him not through the law but through the righteousness of faith. Abraham's case is an illustration for us, that our justification

would come through faith in Jesus Christ. As a result of being justified by faith we have peace with God, access to him, and hope -- hope even in tribulation, because of God's love. For Christ died for us and reconciled us. Thus we can have joy in God through Christ. As sin entered the world through Adam bringing judgment on all, so righteousness entered through Christ bringing grace and life.

6:1 Are we to continue in sin just to show off this grace? Certainly not, for when we were baptized, we were baptized into Jesus' death in order that we might be raised with him in a new kind of life. Therefore, do not let sin lord it over you; you are under grace. Shall we sin just because we are under grace? Do not be foolish. You are a slave to the one to whom you pledged obedience, and you made that pledge to righteousness. Sin brings death; God's righteousness through faith brings life. From another side you are dead to the law for this new service. Is the law, then, sin? Certainly not. Through the law came a knowledge of sin, and through that knowledge, death. I know. The law says one thing; I do the other not because I want to but because in my flesh I can not help myself. Who can help me? Jesus Christ. The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus enabled me to do what the law could not. It changes my life from one in the flesh to one in the spirit. We, therefore, are debtors to the Spirit which tells us that we are children of God. So now even our sufferings as creatures may be endured in the hope of our bodily redemption which we have through the Spirit. The Spirit helps us in all our weakness, and we know that God's justification is sure for us. Therefore, in the love of God which we have in Christ we are more than conquerors.

9:1 But one thing breaks my heart. I wish I myself were anathema for the sake of my brethren of Israel for whom Christ came. Not that Israel is made up of the physical descendents of Abraham; those of the promise are the children of faith. Some God chose and others He rejected. Is God then unrighteous? Certainly not. His will is sovereign. Man has no right to answer back to God's sovereign will. From the very beginning he planned to make his mercy known through vessels of destruction, but their failure came through lack of faith. I dearly desire that Israel may be saved, but salvation can only come through faith in Jesus Christ by hearing the gospel preached. But they did not heed the preaching though they had every opportunity. Nevertheless a remnant, by grace, received Christ though the others hardened their hearts. Yet the failure of these others meant salvation to the Gentile world, and God is able again to restore even those who fell away. So in time all Israel will be saved. How unsearchable are God's judgments!

12:1 In the light of all this, make your souls an acceptable sacrifice to God in service. Use your gifts unboastingly, as God gave them to you. Let love motivate all your actions. Be subject to higher powers, since all power is of God. Remember, love is the fulfillment of the law. Salvation is near, therefore put on Christ.

14:1 As far as diet and days are concerned do not judge one another, but let each hold himself accountable to God's judgment for Christ is Lord of all. Instead of judging others, make sure that you are not causing someone else to stumble. All things are clean, but, if you take a stand, do so through faith.

15:1 Let the strong support the weak. Receive each other as Christ received you for Jesus is Christ of Jew and Gentile.

You are able, Christians, but I am writing to you with this boldness as a minister appointed of Christ, in order that the mission to the Gentiles may be more acceptable to God. Having finished the work in this area I hope to see you on my way to Spain and obtain your support. First, however, I must go to Jerusalem. Pray for me that I may be delivered on that trip.

I commend Phoebe to you. I salute many by name. Beware of those who cause division. The grace of Christ be with you. Others salute you. Now to him that is able to establish you be the glory. Amen.

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