

“A Spiritual Portrait of a Believer”:

**A comparison between the emphatic “I” of
Romans 7, Wesley and the Mystics**

by

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Foreword

In many ways, this project is the result of a lifetime; and in that sense it is necessary to thank everyone with whom I have crossed paths. Specifically, I truly have been blessed by everyone in all the congregations that I have served and by those with whom I have had the privilege to live and serve with in the Philippines and in Lithuania. It is within these settings that I saw in everyday life what “Christian Spirituality” truly is. It is also for these settings that this project was intended. It is Steven Van Zanen, my colleague at Lithuania Christian College, who was instrumental in the “birth” of the idea to pursue this project. I would like to thank Prof. Gert Steyn of the University of Pretoria, for his willingness to take me as a student. It was because of his guidance, patience and willingness to persevere during those times when I just wasn’t getting it, that undergird this project. I can still remember his comment to me: “Please take my comments as intended” that demonstrated his compassion which made me feel that I was more than just name.

I would like to thank my son Jeremiah and his wife Susan: for allowing me to be a fellow traveler with them in their own journey; for their love and support of me during some very difficult days and for their perseverance in continuing the journey themselves.

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I am extremely proud of my family for the people that they are. They are examples of love, which is so desperately needed in the world today.

Finally, I want to thank the Lord Jesus for without His love for me, his life, death and resurrection, this project couldn't even be an idea. It is for Him and His people that this project is intended. I pray that in some small way this project will help strengthen God's people.

Summary

The focus of this study is to discover the identity of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 with the added purpose of attempting to “draw” a spiritual portrait of a mature Christian believer. To accomplish this purpose, the process was as follows: The examination of Rom 7, within its context, with the purpose of trying to discern the “*experience*” of the emphatic “I” in Rom 7 that Paul is describing. This examination consisted of a researching of Rom 1-8, (the context of Rom 7) and an examination of Rom 7, itself. The next step in the process was to compare the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7, as found within its context of Rom 1-8, with what Paul wrote elsewhere on the experience of new life in Christ for Christian believers. The purpose of this comparison was to discover if Paul had a “consistent” portrait of spirituality and Christian maturity. The final step was to compare the experience described by Paul, both in Rom 7 and in the wider Pauline Corpus with the experience of Wesley, which he calls “perfection”, and the Mystical experience, which they call the “spiritual marriage.

The study of Wesley consisted in the study of what Wesley wrote concerning “perfection”. He stated that “perfection” was not sinless perfection, but purity of intention, a heart of love to God. The perfect, according to Wesley, still struggle with “infirmities”, areas of their lives that lead them to commit mistakes. Mistakes, Wesley said, were not sins, because they were committed against the will of the perfect. What is to be seen is that Wesley’s description of the “perfect” shows that the mature Christian believer has a heart, an intention to live for Christ, but at times falls short.

This was the same conclusion drawn from the Mystics’ teaching on the “spiritual marriage” which the Mystics describe as the highest experience a Christian believer can

experience in this life. This experience has been shown to be a heart for God, a desire to live solely for Christ. The “spiritual marriage” is not an experience of sinless perfection.

The study of Romans, Wesley, the Mystics, coupled with the wider study of the secondary literature, shows that there is a remarkable consistency in the teaching and understanding between Paul, Wesley and the Mystics that the closer a Christian believer gets to God, the more this Christian believer is aware of his or her own sinfulness.

The conclusion to be drawn from this study, and hence the “spiritual portrait of a believer”, is that the identity of the empathic “I” is of a regenerate Christian believer, one who is growing ever closer and closer to God and at the same time is in “pain” over the remaining effects of sin. This has important implications for Christian Spirituality and for the face of the Christian church in society.

Key Terms

1. Paul
2. Romans
3. Wesley
4. Mystics
5. Perfection
6. Spiritual Marriage
7. Spirituality
8. Experience
9. Justification
10. Sanctification

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Abbreviations

NIV.....	New International Bible
NASB.....	New American Standard Bible
NRSV.....	New Revised Standard Version
CEV.....	Contemporary English Version

Abstract

The focus of this study is to discover the identity of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 with the added purpose of attempting to “draw” a spiritual portrait of a mature Christian believer. To accomplish this purpose, the process is as follows: An examination of Rom 7, within its context, is conducted. This examination is followed by an attempt at determining the experience of the emphatic “I” found within Rom 7. The next step in the process is to compare the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7, as found within its context of Rom 1-8 with what Paul wrote elsewhere on the experience of new life in Christ for Christian believers. The purpose of this comparison is to discover if Paul had a “consistent” portrait of spirituality and Christian maturity. The final step is to compare the experience described by Paul, both in Rom 7 and in the wider Pauline Corpus, with the experience which John Wesley called “perfection”, and with the Mystical experience called the “spiritual marriage”.

The study of Romans, Wesley, and the Mystics, coupled with the wider study of the secondary literature showed that there is a remarkable consistency in the teaching and understanding that the closer a Christian believer gets to God, the more this Christian believer is aware of his or her own sinfulness. Paul, in describing the experience of the emphatic “I”, is describing a person who is becoming more and more aware of his or her own sinfulness.

The conclusion to be drawn from this study is that the identity of the emphatic “I” is of a regenerate Christian believer, one who is growing ever closer and closer to God and at the same time is in “pain” over the remaining effects of sin.

Ten Points

1. The identity of the “emphatic ‘I’” in Rom 7 is that of a regenerate Christian believer. This is established within the context of Rom 1-8 (the immediate context of Rom 7); the Pauline Corpus; compared with Wesley and the Mystics.
2. This study attempted to investigate the “experience” of such a regenerate believer. This calls for an interdisciplinary and an holistic approach.
3. The experience of Paul in Rom 7 and those of Wesley on “perfection” and the mystics on “spiritual marriage” are similar experiences.
4. The portrait of a spiritual believer looks as follows according to the experience described by Paul, Wesley and the Mystics: a heart desire to obey God; being single focused, Wesley described this as purity of intention; a heart of love to God and to neighbor; a “not yet having reached sinless perfection” aspect which results in a passionate pursuit of Christian growth.
5. The contribution of this investigation has far reaching implications for Christian Spirituality: by bringing together the various understandings of Christian Spirituality that exist in the Church today. These various understandings of Christian Spirituality tend to exclude these other understandings; thus a clearer understanding of Christian Spirituality will result in a far more agreed upon teaching to Christian believers and seekers.
6. The contribution of this investigation also has far reaching implications for the role of the church in society: first of all, if as is proposed, that Christian Spirituality and Maturity are indeed described within Rom 7, then an agreement on this may bring the various branches of the Christian Church closer together. This will result in a more “unified picture” of the Church and thus society will see the Church as more than a human institution. When society once again views the Church as more than a human institution, this will affect the relationship between the Church and society in positive ways.
7. A more universal agreement as to the nature of Christian Spirituality will do much to bring the Church closer together and thus to fulfill the words attributed to Jesus in John 17; that we might be one as he and the Father are one.
8. A clearer understanding of Christian Spirituality and Maturity will aid in the individual growth of Christian believers because it will provide a more focused “direction” and give “steps” to guide the believer along the way.
9. Whereas “becoming like Jesus” is an admirable goal, what does that mean for the one who is not sinless like Jesus? Can one be “like Jesus” and not be sinless? An understanding of Christian Spirituality not only gives a clearer understanding of Christian Maturity, but it also builds into this understanding the reality that Christian believers are not yet sinless, thus, relieving, in part, the guilt that is carried around by Christian believers.
10. A further contribution of this study is an understanding that sin results in many, often unconscious aspects of not only the individual but also of society. This clearer understanding will result in an attempt to change the individual’s and societies view and treatment of others.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Reasons for this study

The focus of this study is to discover the identity of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7. This will be done first by examining Rom 7, within its context and determining the experience of the emphatic “I.” Then, comparing the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7, as found within its context of Rom 1-8 with what Paul wrote elsewhere on the experience of new life in Christ for Christian believers. Finally, comparing this experience with the experience of Wesley called “perfection” and the Mystical experience called the “spiritual marriage”. The decision to discover the identity of the emphatic “I” by this approach, that is researching the context of Rom 1-8, then focusing the research on Rom 7 coupled with the comparison of the experience of the emphatic “I” with the experiences of Wesley’s “perfection” and the Mystical “spiritual marriage” is based on the realization that a study of the text of Rom 7, within its context of course, has not lead to a clear understanding and agreement of the identity of the emphatic “I”. The various opinions in disagreement with each other, found within the literature regarding the identity of the emphatic “I” is proof enough to support this statement. To make up for this lack of clarity based on the textual study alone, the decision was made to add to the textual study the comparison of the emphatic “I” with the experiences of Wesley’s “perfection” and the Mystical “spiritual marriage” to aid in the discovery of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7. A further reason for utilizing this approach is that the context is vitally important to a text. For instance, the context of Rom 7 is, in its comprehensive sense the epistle to the Romans. The context of the epistle to the Romans is the theological understanding of Paul and his

contemporaries. This theological understanding, or wider context to the epistle to the Romans, is not found simply within Romans, but is found within the total Pauline corpus. Paul did not write the epistle to the Romans in isolation from either the rest of his writings, his theological understanding nor in isolation from the theological understanding of his contemporaries. One can go on to say the context of Rom 7 is: (1) the epistle to the Romans (2) Paul's theological understanding found within the wider Pauline corpus (3) the theological understanding of Paul's contemporaries.¹ Therefore, to include this wider context for understanding the identity of the emphatic "I" is a natural step.²

My proposal, therefore, will attempt to dispel the mist of ambiguity, the variety of opinions that causes confusion, threatens the unity of the church and stymies Christian sanctification. The identity of the emphatic "I" of Rom 7 is in the center of this storm. By the emphatic "I", I mean Paul's frequent and repetitive use of the first person singular in Rom 7. The reason for narrowing the focus of this study to the identity of the emphatic

¹ Paul himself states that he went to Jerusalem twice and shared with the disciples. The first time he met with Cephas and stayed with him for 15 days (Gal 1:18). The second time that Paul went to Jerusalem and met with the other disciples was 14 years later (Gal 2:1). During this second visit to Jerusalem, Paul met with the disciples and at that time he "submitted to them the gospel" which he was preaching amongst the gentiles (Gal 2:2). Paul's report of this meeting was that not even Titus was compelled to be circumcised (Gal 2:3) and that the other disciples agreed that Paul was entrusted with the gospel to the Gentiles while Peter was entrusted to the gospel to the circumcised (Gal 2:7). The result of the meeting was that it was recognized that God's grace was working through Peter *and* through Paul (Gal 2:8, 9). What this tells us is: that before the writing of the N.T. documents, there was an oral understanding of the gospel that, at least in essence was agreed upon by the disciples and Paul. This is confirmed by Paul in Gal 1, 2 and by Peter where Peter calls Paul's writings scripture (2 Pet 3:15, 16). This common, agreed upon, oral understanding of the gospel, then, is part of the wider context of Rom 7.

² See also J.G. Van der Watt who writes: "one should be cautious in speaking of the 'soteriology of John, James, Hebrews, Peter or Paul', implying that they represent independent, inclusive, and complete soteriological systems" ("Soteriology of The New Testament: Some Tentative Remarks," in *Salvation in the New Testament: Perspectives on Soteriology* (ed J.G. Van der Watt; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 505-522). In addition N.T. Wright claims that some of the extra-Biblical books, such as Wisdom of Solomon "provide significant partial parallels, and possibly even sources for some of the ideas of the New Testament, not least in the writings of Paul" (*Simply Christian* New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 177).

“I” is that this identity is of utmost importance to the church. If the identity of the emphatic “I” is a person under the law, then for Christians, this chapter of Romans has no relevance. This identification would also cause a serious problem with Rom 7’s placement in the sequential order of the epistle to the Romans.³ If the identity of the emphatic “I” is a mature, spiritual Christian believer, this will add to the Christian Church’s understanding of itself.

The identity of the emphatic “I” is a scholarly problem and is the purpose of this study. Christians, who live in unredeemed bodies, are looking for redemption. They are groaning with the burden of their unredeemed bodies. Rom 8:18-24, at least, means that Christians struggle with, are in pain over and are in conflict with their unredeemed bodies. The opinion of this study is that Rom 8:18-24 is the summary and Rom 7 is the fuller description of the struggle of Christians in unredeemed bodies. Thus, it can be stated that Rom 8:18-24 and Rom 7 are describing the same experience. The discovery of the identity of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is of prime importance. This is why the place to begin in this search is with the text itself. The reason for this is that in the Protestant tradition, Scripture has a central place. Standing within this tradition, it is thus important to begin with Scripture. It is to be noticed that in the second Epistle of Peter, Peter included Paul’s writings in the category of Scripture (2 Pet 3:15, 16). This categorization

³ There are many outlines of the order and structure of Romans. For a discussion on this issue see chapter 2 of this study. The order of Romans is important because within the order and “flow” of Romans, it can be seen that Rom 5-8 discusses life after justification. (Rom 5:1 begins with “After being justified...”). This phrase introduces the section of Rom 5-8 that follows. According to the flow and the “order” of Romans starting at 5:1 it must be seen that Rom 5-8 discusses life “after justification.” Thus, Rom 7, being in the section that discusses life after justification, also must be discussing life after justification. J. Smart concurs when he states that Rom 5-8 “traces the dimensions of the revolutionary change which the new righteousness makes in human life” (*Doorway To A New Age: A Study of Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (New York: Joint Commission on Education and Cultivation Bd. of Missions, United Methodist Church, 1972), 27).

is important when, according to the view that undergirds this study and undergirds Paul's own thinking, which is that Scripture is inspired (2 Tim 3:16).

The literature states that Romans⁴ has been called Paul's most important letter.⁵ Barclay states that Romans "is the nearest approach to a systematic exposition of Paul's own theological position, independent of any immediate set of circumstances."⁶ Godet states that "Romans is intimately bound up with the personal experiences of its author" and that "Romans contains the essence of Paul's teaching."⁷ Westerholm writes that Romans "is a more systematic statement of fundamental Pauline convictions than is any other extant letter."⁸ Hiebert claims that "Romans is one of the most profound books in existence."⁹ Moule, in describing the Epistle to the Romans, departs from the above authors when he writes, "The Epistle to the Romans was, when produced infinitely more than the resultant of Paul's mind and life, it was and is an oracle of God, a Scripture, a revelation of eternal facts and principles by which to live and die."¹⁰ Epp agrees with Moule's statement concerning Romans, when he says that Romans is "the gospel of God."¹¹ Brown confesses that the debates over the ideas in Romans have split Western

⁴ For a good summary of the different positions taken in the debate on Romans see J. Miller, "The Romans Debate: 1991-2001," *CurBS* 9 (2001): 306-349.

⁵ S. Westerholm, *Preface To The Study of Paul: A Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), intro.

⁶ W. Barclay, *The Letter to The Romans* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), 1.

⁷ F. Godet, *Commentary on The Epistle To The Romans* (trans. A. Cusin; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1956), 6.

⁸ S. Westerholm, *Preface*, intro.

⁹ D. Edmond Hiebert, *An Introduction To The New Testament: The Pauline Epistles, Vol. II* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1954), 163; see also M. Gorman, *Apostle of The Crucified Lord* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 338, who is also of the same opinion as Hiebert.

¹⁰ C.G. Moule, *The Epistle of St. Paul to The Romans* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1899), 7.

¹¹ T. Epp, *How God Makes Bad Men Good: Studies in Romans* (Lincoln, Nebraska: Back To The Bible, 1978), 10. See also F.F. Bruce who writes that "if Paul's claim to have the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16) is well founded, then we may confidently turn to the letters of Paul to find the significance of the Jesus of history unfolded," *Paul and Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), 56. In addition, J. L.

Christianity.¹² Osborne is of the opinion that Romans is a “letter to a historical church and was addressing problems in that church,”¹³ and that Paul did not write it to be “a compendium of his systematic theology.”¹⁴ Although Osborne goes on to add that “most of the epistle does not address the Roman Christians as directly as Paul’s other epistles address their audiences. Therefore, while he was addressing the Roman church, he intended it to sum up the issues regarding the gospel truth for all churches.”¹⁵

A view that deviates from the above is Tobin’s view. He is of the opinion that Paul wrote Romans in response to the Romans’ misgivings about Paul himself and also to “correct” his, that is Paul’s, earlier “immoderate” position regarding the law as found in the epistle to the Galatians.¹⁶

The above statements concerning the Epistle to the Romans are clear evidence why scholars should study this epistle. The epistle to the Romans, being the Gospel of God, according to Epp, contains the “heart” of God for the human race. In studying the epistle to the Romans, one studies God's desire, purpose and work in and for the human race. When one “enters” the epistle to the Romans, one “enters” the “heart” of God. One must, therefore, “walk” carefully, humbly, reverently – all the while employing the full range of academic “tools” at one's disposal.

Moule’s description of Romans as an oracle of God, a Scripture, a revelation of eternal facts and principles by which to live and die, expresses the view that Romans is an

Eason calls Romans Paul’s “most important work,” and “the most important book in our Bible, next to the Four Gospels,” *The New Bible Survey* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963), 451.

¹² R. Brown, *An Introduction to The New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 559.

¹³ G. Osborne, *Romans* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 21.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁶ G. Anderson, review of T. Tobin, *Paul’s Rhetoric in Context: The Argument of Romans*, *CBQ* 67 (2005): 726-727. The comparison of Paul’s use of the law in Romans and Galatians is beyond the scope of this study and will not be undertaken here.

important field of research. However, Romans, being a revelation by which to live and die, according to Moule, is more than scientific research. Revelation is that which God has revealed or given. Romans as a revelation of God, becomes an essential aspect of life. When one understands Romans as revelation, then, the study of Romans takes on an experiential and sacred reason for its study. The reason for stating this is that within Romans is an aspect, a dimension of life that God has given to the human race.¹⁷

Other reasons for discovering the identity of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 exist. According to Brown, the debates over Romans have split Western Christianity. The support for Brown’s statement is found in the various opinions regarding the identity of the emphatic “I” that has resulted in the formation of various denominations. These denominations have little if any connection with those formed based on a differing opinion of the emphatic “I.” Such is the evidence of the fractured condition of Western Christianity. This fractured condition manifests itself in the various groupings of Christian believers who do not relate or at times recognize the existence of each other.¹⁸ These fractured groupings are an expression of the failure of Western Christianity to fulfill the prayer of Jesus. This prayer is that believers might be one (John 17:21). A brief survey of the various opinions on the identity of the emphatic “I” is listed later in this chapter.

Thus to summarize: *This study is an attempt, in the midst of the tempest of life, to help the Christian Church experience God, the only true Reality, a little deeper.*

¹⁷ This understanding will be seen through this study. To summarize it here is to say that the dimension of life God has given is what is described by Wesley and the Mystics as the “pinnacle” of life experienced in this life.

¹⁸ The point to be emphasized here is that the fractured Church is evidence of the disunity of the Body of Christ and the need for this study to aid the Church in the growth to holiness, unity and perfection.

2. Contribution

The contribution of this study is multi-dimensional. The first dimension of the contribution of this study is the clarifying of the identity of the emphatic “I.” This understanding will be done through the study of Rom 1-8, the context surrounding Rom 7. This will then be followed by an in-depth study of Rom 7. Out of this in-depth study of Rom 7 and the study of Rom 1-8, the experience¹⁹ of the emphatic “I” will be determined and described. This experience will then be compared to the experience described by the Mystics called the “spiritual marriage” and also compared to Wesley’s teaching on “perfection.” When this comparison is done, it will be seen that the emphatic “I” is a mature, spiritual believer.

The understanding of the identity of the emphatic “I” will help the Christian Church fulfill its purpose.²⁰ The purpose of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ (Matt 28:18-20). This purpose is echoed by Paul in Phlp 2:1-11 when he states that Christians are to become like Christ (Phlp 2:5). T. Dubay echoes this dimension of the contribution of this study.²¹ The point of Dubay’s comments is the reminder that the

¹⁹ For a definition of the terms used in this study, see the section of terms used in this chapter.

²⁰ This understanding of the identity of the emphatic “I” will contribute to the Church’s growth in sanctification. Growth in sanctification will occur when Christian believers understand, not only who the emphatic “I” is but also that the emphatic “I” is representative of all mature, spiritual believers. This understanding will aid believers in their growth in sanctification and will free them from fear of their own imperfection; see also D. Nicholl, *Holiness* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2005), 13.

²¹ T. Dubay writes: “Because men and women of heroic virtue are fully responsive to the Holy Spirit, they are the best exegetes of the divine word inspired by the same Spirit. One has only to compare the biblical commentaries of Augustine or Bernard to the often-jejune explanations of mere technicians. The latter may excel in philology or archeology, they may summarize a variety of opinions offered through the ages and in our own day as to what this or that text means, but they are no match for the personal

Bible points to and expounds a deep relational experience found within the words, facts, debates and discussions of the Bible itself.²² This experience is at times missed by some who concentrate on the “factual dimension” and do not delve into the relational meaning of the text. It is this relational element that this study hopes will contribute to the life of the Christian Church. See also, J.W. Dixon, Jr. who wrote on the dilemma facing many who teach in religion departments at universities.²³ Dixon’s article expresses very clearly that at times and places the relational dimension of the text of the Bible has been missed. In agreement with Dixon is C. Finney,²⁴ T. Langford²⁵ and a host of others.²⁶

depth and wisdom found in the patristic commentaries and in the concrete lives of the saints, whether these later were scholars or not. In fact, as I was writing these lines I referred to several contemporary exegetes for their insights into four texts we shall touch upon in the next few paragraphs. These passages deal with our deep interpersonal immersion in God, indeed, with our transformation into the Trinitarian life. I found no sufficient explanation of a single text. One exegete made no comment whatsoever on Eph 3:19, even though he was prolix about its preceding context—a remarkable omission. The impression this gives that while he and the others show some facility with factual details, they are at a loss and strangely silent in matters pertaining to deep communion with God”, (*Fire Within* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 11). See also M. Downey, “A Half Commitment? Toward a Reconfiguration of the Cistercian Charism,” *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 2 (2005): 191-203).

²² P. Ryan: “When reason and love work together, reason is absorbed into love and becomes a deeper knowledge, an understanding, an insight that is one with love,” (“Sensus Amoris: The Sense of Love in Two Texts of William Saint Therry,” *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 2 (2005): 163-172).

²³ J. Dixon posits: “Professors in religion departments are not required to be religious, but I suspect a majority are. Those who are are caught in the dilemma of faith and belief, and it is more acute for them, since their work requires verbal statements. At the same time, the price of admission that departments of religion must pay to the university is that they not serve the interests of the church (although, curiously, every other school and department is free to serve its constituent community outside the university). It is not only a price of admission (a political fact), but a requirement of their work as a mode of scholarship. However, often it may be violated, free inquiry, not the propagation of faith, is the defining characteristic of the university,” (“What Should Religion Departments Teach?” *ThTo*, 4 (1990): 364-372). In addition see H. Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1981), 39-40; T. Oden, *Requiem* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 40.

²⁴ C. Finney, *Revival Lectures* (Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell, no date given), 253.

²⁵ T. Langford has written: “J. Wesley was a practical theologian; his theology was ‘Practical Divinity.’ But what is practical theology as Wesley employed it? Practical divinity, for Wesley, treats theology as intrinsically related to life; conversely, theological themes cannot be separated out and interpreted independently as an intellectual enterprise. Practical divinity is intentionally transformative, it underwrites proclamation and the nurturing of Christian life; on the contrary, practical theology is neither a distanced reflection upon life nor an intellectual interpretation of life. Practical divinity is pragmatic in the sense that it operates on the conviction that knowledge is only gained through engagement; contrariwise, knowledge is not found through spectatorship as an abstract observer. Practical divinity holds text (biblical) and context (social and cultural) in tight tension; each requires the other for insight and interpretation. Conversely, practical theology never allows a historical text or an

The second dimension of the contribution of this study is to attempt to discover if Paul's Jewish experience played a "sub-conscious" role in his understanding of the struggle between good and evil as seen in the experience of the emphatic "I" and the cry of "O wretched man" in Rom 7. In understanding Paul's Jewish experience one will then be able to discover if Paul's Jewish experience led to the cry of "O Wretched Man" which would then state that the emphatic "I" of Rom 7 is an unregenerate person. If, however, Paul's Jewish experience did not directly lead to the cry of "O wretched man," then, there must be another reason for this cry. This "other reason" must then be Paul's Christian experience, i.e. life after justification.

The second dimension of this study, therefore, is not a completely different or unrelated dimension to the first dimension. The two dimensions of the contribution of this

independent social order to function as a matrix of interpretation", (T. Langford, ed., *Doctrine and Theology in The United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1991), 10).

²⁶ See also F. Herzog who states: "So it is not just a matter of relating doctrine to life, but of doctrine itself being that life," ("United Methodism in Agony," in *Doctrine and Theology in The United Methodist Church* (ed., T. Langford; Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1991), 26-38); S. Ogden, "Doctrinal Standards in The United Methodist Church," in *Doctrine and Theology in The United Methodist Church* (ed., T. Langford; Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1991), 39-51); L. Howe, "United Methodism in Search of Theology," in *Doctrine and Theology in The United Methodist Church* (ed., T. Langford; Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1991), 52-63. R. Heitzenrater, "In Search of Continuity and Consensus: The Road to the 1988 Doctrinal Statement," in *Doctrine and Theology in The United Methodist Church* (ed., T. Langford; Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1991), 93-108; D. Metz, *Studies in Biblical Holiness* (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1971), 106; St. John of the Cross, *The Collected Works of St. John of The Cross* (trans. K. Kavanaugh and O. Rodriguez; Washington D.C.: ICS Publications, 1991), 667; E. Arnold, *The Early Christians: After The Death of The Apostles* (Rifton, New York: Plough Publishing, 1972), 40; H.J. Flanders, R.W. Crapps, D. Smith, *People of the Covenant: An Introduction to The Old Testament* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1973), 17; D. Bonhoeffer who writes in a letter to E. Bethge, dated July 18, 1944; *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Letters and Papers from Prison* (ed., E. Bethge; New York: The MacMillan Company, 1971), 362; G. Davenport, *Into The Darkness* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 289; K. Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction* (trans., G. Foley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 199. M. Cavit, *The Three Ways* (Wilmore: Marshall Cavit, 1979), 100-102; E. Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of The Church, Faith and The Consummation, Vol. III* (trans., D. Cairns; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962); R. Mason, *The Church that Jesus Built* (Kansas City: The Brown-White Company, no date given), 163; D. Nicholl, *Holiness*, 25.

study come together to form a colorful and intricate mosaic while aiding the Christian Church to grow in holiness.

A third dimension is the comparing of the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 with the experience that John Wesley teaches in his doctrine of “perfection” and the Mystical experience called the “spiritual marriage”. This comparison will demonstrate that Paul, Wesley and the Mystics are all describing the same experience in Christ, drawing a vivid spiritual portrait of a believer.

3. Methodology

The focus of this study will be twofold. First, I will investigate Paul’s use of the emphatic “I” in Rom 7. The identity of the emphatic “I” refers either to the unregenerate person under the law or the regenerate person. The view that Paul is referring to the regenerate person has sub-views.²⁷ I will argue that not only is Paul referring to a regenerate person but further that he is describing the experience of a spiritually mature²⁸ Christian. Secondly, I will contend that the experience of Rom 7 is similar to the experience that Wesley portrays in his doctrine of “perfection” and to the experience pictured by Teresa of Avila, the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*, and to Julian of

²⁷ See in this chapter, the section on views of the emphatic “I” in the section on the brief history of the problem.

²⁸ Mature is a word that is hard to define. My understanding is as follows: Maturity is living up to what we have attained in the Christian life (Phlp 3:15, 16). Maturity does not denote having reached the state of sinless perfection (Phlp 3:12-16). Maturity is being able to distinguish good from evil (Heb 5:14). A definition of mature which is helpful is as follows: mature is “having reached a state of full natural development” (*Webster’s Dictionary of the English Language, The New Lexicon and Encyclopedic Edition* (New York: Lexicon Publications, Inc., 1989), 617). In addition, R. McGee, *The Search For Significance* (Houston, Texas: Rapha Publishing, 1990), 29; See also L. Binstock, *The Power of Maturity* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1969).

Norwich in their conception of the “spiritual marriage”. By illuminating the parallels between Paul’s use of the emphatic “I”, Wesley’s doctrine of “perfection” and the Mystics’ concept of “spiritual marriage”, it will be seen that they all describe a similar experience.²⁹

I intend to use a wholistic approach which addresses (a) Scriptural text; Rom 7 and its context of Rom 1-8 are primary examples (b) tradition with John Wesley as the primary example and (c) experience with the Mystics as primary examples.³⁰

I will attempt to show that the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is the same experience that Paul called new life in Christ and the same experience called by Wesley as “perfection” and the Mystics as “spiritual marriage”.³¹ I will attempt to do this, first by examining the context of Rom 1-8 and discovering Rom 7’s “place” within the context and discussion found within Rom 1-8. Afterwards a concentrated examination on Rom 7 will be undertaken. The purpose of this examination will be to describe the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7. Then I will research the Pauline Corpus and examine other texts where Paul wrote of the same experience which he called new life in Christ. Afterwards an examination of the experience Wesley called “perfection” and the Mystical experience called the “spiritual marriage”, as described by Julian of Norwich,

²⁹ The use of the word “experience” is intentional. In this understanding, experience is the word that seeks to define and describe the dynamic, living encounter that occurs between the Divine and, in this study, the Christian believer. It is to be admitted that this definition is not entirely satisfactory. However, underlying this study is a recognition that not everything connected with the study of and relationship to God is reducible to terms and understanding.

³⁰ It is also possible to relate Rom 7 to Scripture, Wesley to experience and the Mystics to tradition.

³¹ The point to be held in mind is that the discussion here is on the commonality of *experience* rather than on the *canonicity* of the documents. The writings of Wesley and the Mystics are not on the same level as Paul. Paul’s writings are canonical. Wesley’s and the Mystics are not canonical. The question under discussion is not on canon. The question under discussion is: Are the experiences that Wesley and the Mystics had with God, and the *experience* that all Christian believers today can have with God, similar *experiences* with Paul’s *experience*?

Teresa of Avila and the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* will be undertaken. After examining Wesley's "perfection" and the Mystical experience called the "spiritual marriage", a comparison will be made between the experience described by Paul, primarily in Rom 7, but, authenticated in his other writings as the new life in Christ, with Wesley's "perfection" and the Mystical experience called the "spiritual marriage". The purpose of this comparison will be to discover the identity of the emphatic "I" of Rom 7.

The stated parameters of this study being the comparison of the experience of the emphatic "I" of Rom 7 with Wesley's teaching on "perfection" and that of Teresa of Avila, Julian of Norwich and the *Cloud of Unknowing*, is based on theological reasons.³² The decision to discover the identity of the emphatic "I" by this approach, that is researching the context of Rom 1-8, then focusing the research on Rom 7 coupled with the comparison of the experience of the emphatic "I" with the experiences of Wesley's "perfection" and the Mystical "spiritual marriage", is based on the realization that a study of the text of Rom 7, within its context has *not* lead to a clear understanding and agreement of the identity of the emphatic "I". The various opinions in disagreement with each other, found within the literature regarding the identity of the emphatic "I" is proof enough to support this statement. To make up for this lack of clarity based on the textual study alone, the decision was made to add to the textual study the comparison of the

³² In addition, G. Osborne writes, in reference to Rom 1:2-4: "Paul now describes the gospel he has been sent to proclaim...he tells us it was promised beforehand in the Old Testament. Throughout Romans, Paul will be anchoring his theological points in Old Testament truth. This statement in verse 2 established the promise-fulfillment pattern that will dominate his use of the Old Testament". He says further that the "Bible as a whole and not just the New Testament, forms the gospel" (*Romans*, 29-30). One can say that the context of the epistle to Romans was Paul's theological understanding which was part of the theological understanding of the other disciples (see Gal 2:1,2) and the part of the theology of the Old Testament. Thus, the context of Rom 7 is Rom 1-8, the whole epistle to the Romans, the Pauline corpus and the common understanding of the gospel held by Paul and the disciples (see footnote #1 of this chapter).

emphatic “I” with the experiences of Wesley’s “perfection” and the Mystical “spiritual marriage” to aid in the discovery of the spiritual portrait of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7.

While the agreement and disagreement with Wesley’s “perfection” ebb and flows, the fact still remains that John Wesley has been a significant contributor to the Christian Church’s understanding of perfection. The choice of including Wesley as a stated parameter of this study, in no way lessens the contribution of others who have discussed the concept of perfection. The simple fact remains that, whether one agrees or disagrees with Wesley’s teaching on “perfection”, John Wesley is known for his emphasis upon this topic.

The choice of the other parameter of this study being the Mystics: Teresa of Avila, Julian of Norwich and the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* is based on the fact that these three constitute the core of the Western Christian Church’s mystical understanding.³³

In further support of these two parameters is the fact that both of these parameters discuss the same experience in Christian growth and holiness.³⁴ When it is seen that the mystical experience called the “spiritual marriage” is also an experience of love;³⁵ as is Wesley’s “perfection”, it will be clearly understood that these two experiences are the same. The comparison of the experience described by Wesley and the Mystics with the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is only natural when it is seen that all three of

³³ Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love* (ed., H. Backhouse; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1996), preface.

³⁴ A more detailed explanation to this statement is further developed in this chapter.

³⁵ A. Royo and J. Amann, *The Theology of Christian Perfection* (Dubuque, Iowa: The Priory Press, 1962), 558. K. McDowell, *Nothing But Christ* (St. Meinrad, Indiana: A Grail Publication, 1953), 113; Sister M. E. Mason, *Active Life and Contemplative Life* (Milwaukee: The Marquette University Press, 1961), 113; E.A. Stewart, *Jesus the Holy Fool* (Franklin, WI: Sheed and Ward, 1999), 195; G. Thils, *Christian Holiness* (trans., J.L. Farand; Tielt, Belgium: Lannoo Publishers, 1961), xi.

these sources are indeed describing a similar experience.³⁶

The parameters of this study, being Wesley, the Mystics and Rom 7, it will be seen that this study will not draw out a direct connection between Wesley and Paul or the Mystics and Paul. This means that there will be no research to discover Wesley's and the Mystics' use of and dependence on Paul and Romans. The reason for this is to research as independently as possible the *experience* described by Wesley in his doctrine of "perfection", the "spiritual marriage" of the Mystics and Paul's emphatic "I" of Rom 7. If, as will be shown by this study, these three "independent teachings"³⁷ are discussing the same experience, it will aid in the discovery of the emphatic "I" as described in Rom 7.

Now it is to be recognized that Wesley and the Mystics depended upon Paul and the epistle to the Romans, as well as the rest of the Scriptures, both Protestant and Catholic. This dependence is not doubted or questioned. The point is not to disavow any dependence on Paul or to state that Wesley and the Mystics are equal with Paul, in terms of canon,³⁸ but to examine the three experiences, as independently as possible, compare them and make a conclusion based on this examination and comparison. Wesley, Paul

³⁶ A. Royo and J. Amann write clearly that "complete Christian perfection is found only within the mystical life," (*The Theology of Christian Perfection*, 178).

³⁷ For a clear statement of Wesley's dependence on Paul see C. Meyers who puts forth the opinion that J. Wesley got his teaching on sanctification from Rom 6, 8, C. Meyers, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (Bantam/Doubleday/Dell Publications; 1992), 817. For a discussion of the similarities of Paul and Wesley see M. Gorman, who calls Paul a "pastoral theologian," M. Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, 31ff. See also Wesley's statements concerning himself where he says that he writes "plain truth for plain folks," *The Works of John Wesley* (Franklin, Tenn.: Providence House Publishers, 1995, Vol. 5), 2. This discussion does not compare/contrast Paul and Wesley, it does, however, state that Paul wrote for people's understanding. This was also what Wesley did. This leads to the conclusion that Paul and Wesley were theologians of the same "stripe." They both were not theologians according to the common understanding of a theologian. M. Gorman says it this way: "For some people a theologian is someone who writes learned, theoretical tomes and is out of touch with the daily life of real people (and perhaps even with God). Paul was certainly not a theologian in that sense," *Apostle of The Crucified Lord*, 131.

³⁸ For a discussion on the meaning of "canon" see W. Abraham, *Canon And Criterion In Christian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

and the Mystics have all contributed to the Church's theology and practice, though not equally. If all are describing a similar experience, as this study holds, then, it seems that the best method is to examine them independently and then compare them, thus establishing their similarities.

The emphatic "I" is found within the context of the epistle to Romans. Thus, the beginning point of this study is the analyzing of the context of Rom 7, which is Rom 1-8.³⁹ Following this analysis will be an exegetical study of Rom 7. The study of the context of Rom 7 is important because context helps determine the meaning of specific texts and phrases. The context of Rom 7 illustrates the teaching concerning the work of God because of the human situation. When one understands the human situation, both before and after salvation, one is better able to understand the context surrounding the emphatic "I". To understand the human condition before and after salvation will help in determining the identity of the emphatic "I". Is the emphatic "I" a person who has experienced salvation or one who has not?

The context is important because it is a linguistic principle that the context helps determine the meaning of a text and/or phrase. Lexicons give a small understanding of the meaning of a word. A lexicon does not always give the everyday nuance of the word. One loses much of the everyday nuance of a word or only partially understands the meaning of

³⁹ The immediate context of Rom 7 is Rom 1-8; however, as has been discussed above, the wider context of Romans is the Gospel tradition. See G. Osborne who writes, in reference to Rom 1:2-4: "Paul now describes the gospel he has been sent to proclaim...he tells us it was promised beforehand in the Old Testament. Throughout Romans, Paul will be anchoring his theological points in Old Testament truth. This statement in verse 2 established the promise-fulfillment pattern that will dominate his use of the Old Testament," (*Romans*, 29). He also says that the "Bible as a whole and not just the New Testament, forms the gospel," (*Romans*, 30). One can say that the context of the epistle to Romans was Paul's theological understanding which was part of the theological understanding of the other disciples (see Gal 2:1,2) and the part of the theology of the OT.

that word by only looking at the lexicon. An understanding of the context in which a word and/or phrase is found helps explain the everyday nuance and usage.

The parameters of the study of the context of the Epistle of Romans will be limited to chapters 1-8, the doctrinal section of the Epistle. The reason for this is Rom 1-8 is the doctrinal section of the Epistle. Chapters 1-8 contain the “teaching” or the “seed” which is included and used for exhortations in the “practical” section of the Epistle. Another way to say this is that the “doctrinal” section of the Epistle contains all that is included in the “practical” section of the Epistle. The “practical” section of the Epistle is the practical living of the teaching contained within the “doctrinal” section. When a need arises, there will be a “cross-referencing” to the applicable sections of the “practical” section. This “cross-referencing” will consist of a further explanation of the teaching found within the “doctrinal” section, more specifically of Rom 7.

The progression of this study will be to examine Rom 1-8, then moving to Rom 7 and finally focusing on the verb tenses found within Rom 7 itself. The epistle to the Romans is a systematic explanation of the Gospel. Thus, the teaching of Rom 7 concerning the emphatic “I” and the relationship of the emphatic “I” to the rest of Romans is important. This relationship of the emphatic “I” and the rest of the epistle to the Romans is the reason the context of Rom 1-8 is studied. Chapter 2 of this study will focus on the analysis of the text of Romans. Beginning with the larger context of Rom 1-8, moving then to Rom 7 and finally, looking at the verbal usage found within Rom 7 itself.

The context will help determine if the emphatic “I” is a regenerate individual or unregenerate individual. If Paul is referring to an unregenerate person, then the

experience described in Rom 7 is not the experience of a regenerate person and could not be the experience of the “spiritual marriage” as found in the writing of Teresa of Avila, Julian of Norwich and *the Cloud of Unknowing*. Nor could it be Wesley's teaching of “perfection”. Wesley’s doctrine of “perfection” will be briefly discussed in this chapter and more fully in chapter 5 of this study.

If the emphatic “I” is a regenerate or unregenerate person, what then does it mean to be regenerate? Boice defines regeneration as rebirth.⁴⁰ Rebirth is a spiritual work of God in the human soul. Rebirth is not a physical second birth. A spiritual work means the regenerate person has not entered again into their mother’s womb and been born a second time. Regeneration, being a spiritual work of God in the human, is a spiritual birth.

Regeneration, as a spiritual birth, is the experience where God makes alive, spiritually, the human person. To be made alive spiritually means that the person’s fundamental desire is now to please God in Christ in all things.⁴¹

Thus it can be seen that regeneration is an act of God in which new life is experienced by the Christian believer. Because regeneration is an experience, it can be seen that an understanding of regeneration is important to this study, as this study is researching and the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 with the experience Wesley called “perfection” and the experience the Mystics called the “spiritual marriage”.

Following the contextual study of Rom 1-8, the study of the text of Rom 7 will be undertaken and will include, examining the verb tenses used throughout the chapter. This detailed look will include a discussion of the Greek verb tenses, grammatical forms and

⁴⁰ J.M. Boice, *Foundations of The Christian Faith* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 391.

⁴¹ For a fuller description of Paul’s understanding of regeneration as a new life with the fundamental desire to please God in all things, see 2 Cor 5:9.

studies of individual Greek words used within Rom 7. This detailed examination of Rom 7 will be in chapter 3 of this study.

What is important in this study of the verb tenses is the change of verb tenses of Rom 7. To state this more specifically, Rom 7:1-13 uses primarily the aorist tense. One view of the meaning of the different tenses used is that this section of Rom 7 discusses Paul's past. This opinion is not based only in the use of the aorist tense, but is also found within the context surrounding the verses.

Rom 7:14-25 begins another section of Rom 7. In this section, the primary verb tense used is the present tense. Stedman insists this section describes Paul's experience at the time of writing.⁴² Wesley, however, writes that in this section Paul is describing a man under the law.⁴³ Barth agrees with Stedman who records that Paul is not, in Rom 7:14-25, describing the situation before his conversion. What Paul is describing, according to Barth, is Paul's past, present and future existence, because Paul is describing a man broken by the law.⁴⁴ Because of the various and opposite opinions regarding the identity of the emphatic "I" of Rom 7, I include a brief survey of the various opinions later in this chapter. One question I will ask in this section is, of whom is Paul writing? One way this question will be answered is by evaluating the aorist and the present tenses of the verbs used. To help answer this question, one must ask, what are the meaning and importance of the change of the primary verb tense used in these two sections of Rom 7? The question concerning the tenses used in Rom 7 would not be of such importance if the "change" of verb tenses in these two sections was not so dramatic, or of such a wide

⁴² R. Stedman, *From Guilt to Glory* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1978), 230.

⁴³ J. Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament* (2 vols; Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1983), 33.

⁴⁴ K. Barth, *The Epistle to The Romans* (trans., E. Hoskyns; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 270.

usage. By wide usage is meant that in these two sections the primary verb tense used is the aorist in Rom 7:1-13, and the present in Rom 7:14-25. The discussion of the verb tenses in these two sections must remain a part of this study. The reason for this is the verb tense that is predominately used in both sections, coupled with the dramatic change of verb tenses, which separate this passage into two sections. In addition, if the use of the verb tense in the two sections were not so heavily weighted in one tense, then, perhaps the change in tenses would not be important.

Within this study, the question explored is, does the change in verb tense imply/reflect a change in Paul's life experience? In other words, is Paul expressing, by the change of verb tenses, a change in his life? To ask the question in another manner: Is Paul, by changing verb tenses, stating that, in his own life a dramatic change has occurred in his relationship to the Law and to Christ? Or is Paul simply using a writer's technique to teach his readers?

After the examination of the context of Rom 1-8 and the detailed study of Rom 7 has been undertaken, the next step will be to research Paul's teaching on the new life in Christ, which is found throughout the Pauline corpus. Understanding the Pauline teaching on the new life in Christ and experience of salvation in discovering the identity of the emphatic "I" of Rom 7 will aid in the discovery of the identity of the emphatic "I." An analysis of the text and the context of Rom 7 is only one part of the equation in discovering the identity of the emphatic "I." The other part of the equation is to examine and compare the experience of the emphatic "I." If, as is the opinion of this study, the emphatic "I" of Rom 7 is Paul, but not simply Paul, but Paul as a representative of mature, spiritual Christians, then the experience of the emphatic "I" will be looked at, not

only within the context of Romans, but also within the context of the wider teaching of Paul, found primarily within Colossians and Galatians, but also including the teaching of other Biblical passages that have relevance to the topic of the experience of Christians. It is the opinion of this study that Colossians⁴⁵ is part of the Pauline Corpus and will be used as such. This comparison/contrast will be made in chapter 4.

The epistle to the Romans is a description of life lived in relationship with God. If, as this study will attempt to show, Rom 7 is a description of a mature,⁴⁶ spiritual Christian, then Rom 7, within the context of Romans, describes life, but not just life, but life lived on the highest plain possible in this world.

The experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 will then be compared with John Wesley's doctrine of “perfection”. This comparison will be made in chapter 5 of this analysis. Many have misunderstood Wesley's understanding of “perfection”. However, John Wesley said that the doctrine of “perfection” was the grand *depositum*, which, God had given the Methodists and the propagating of this doctrine was the main reason that

⁴⁵ The debate over whether Paul wrote the letter to the Colossians is an ongoing debate. D. Guthrie states the position for Pauline authorship: “The strongest arguments for Pauline authorship are the indisputable nature of the external evidence and the inseparable connection of the Epistle with Philemon,” *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1970), 554. He adds “There is no shred of evidence that the Pauline authorship of the whole or any part of Colossians was ever disputed until the nineteenth century. It formed part of the Pauline Corpus as far back as can be traced, and evidence of such a character cannot lightly be swept aside” (554). See also P.J. Gräbe, “Salvation in Colossians And Ephesians,” in *Salvation in the New Testament: Perspectives on Soteriology* (ed. J.G. van der Watt; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 287-304. Thus, in this study the position taken is that Paul is the author of Colossians. See also W. Countryman, *Dirt, Greed and Sex* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 97.

⁴⁶ *Webster's Dictionary of the English Language, The New Encyclopedic Edition* (New York: Lexicon Publications, Inc.), 1989, defines mature in this manner: “having reached a state of full natural development, or relation to the time when development is complete,” (617). Paul defines mature as “living up to what we have attained” (Phlp 3:15, 16). Maturity is not sinless perfection (Phlp 3:12) but a pressing on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of us (Phlp 3:12). To use a Non-Pauline definition of mature, Heb 5:14 defines mature as being able to distinguish good from evil; G. Getz states that “the supreme mark of maturity is love”, *A Profile of Christian Maturity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 91.

God raised up the Methodists.⁴⁷ Wesley said that “perfection” is “purity of intention, dedicating all the life to God. It is giving God all our heart; it is one desire and design ruling all our tempers. “Perfection” is the devoting not a part but all of our soul, body and substance to God.”⁴⁸ Wesley's doctrine of “perfection”, when understood as purity of intention, is the abundant life that Jesus Christ said was the reason He came to this world (John 10:10). When it is understood that Wesley's doctrine of “perfection” is the abundant life that Jesus came to bring, it can be seen that Wesley's doctrine of “perfection” can be considered Gospel.⁴⁹

The next direction that the teaching of Rom 7 and the emphatic “I” will be discussed is in relation to the Mystical experience called the “spiritual marriage”. The teaching of the “spiritual marriage” will be taken from the writings of Julian of Norwich,⁵⁰ St. Teresa of Avila,⁵¹ and the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*.⁵²

The *Cloud of Unknowing*, Teresa of Avila's *Interior Castle* and Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love* form the very heart of Western mysticism.⁵³ Thus, in studying these three Mystics, one is also studying that which forms the very core and center of the Mystical tradition in the Western Church. This means that the teachings of Julian of Norwich, Teresa of Avila and the *Cloud of Unknowing* form a very important and essential part of the teaching of the Western Church. The Mystics themselves and the

⁴⁷ J. Wesley, “Letter To Robert Carr, Dated Sept. 15, 1790,” *The Works of John Wesley*, 1995:9.

⁴⁸ J. Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, Sermon, *The Works of John Wesley 11* (CD-ROM; Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 1995), 444.

⁴⁹ J. Wesley calls his teaching on “perfection” “the gospel”. He says, “The gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness.” Faith working by love “is the length and breath and depth and height of Christian perfection,” *The Works of John Wesley*, 321.

⁵⁰ Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, xx.

⁵¹ St. Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle* (trans., E. Peers; New York: Image Books, 1989), 42.

⁵² Anonymous, *The Cloud of Unknowing* (ed. W. Johnston; New York: Image Books, 1973), 59.

⁵³ Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, preface.

Catholic Church call the teaching of these Mystics, “Gospel”.⁵⁴ The reason for comparing the experience of the emphatic “I” with the writings of these mystics is that the “spiritual marriage” is considered as the highest spiritual plain where a human can live in this life. Another name for this highest plane is holiness.⁵⁵ The comparison of the experience of the emphatic “I” with the experience called the “spiritual marriage” will be found in chapter 6.

In chapter 7 will be found a summarization of chapters 1-6 and a comparing of Wesley’s doctrine of “perfection” with the Mystical experience called the “spiritual marriage”. To compare Wesley’s doctrine of “perfection” with the Mystics is a very natural comparison. Wesley stated that a contemplative, i.e. mystic, taught him that holiness or “perfection” was also “union” with God.⁵⁶ Thus, it can be seen that Wesley’s doctrine of “perfection” and the Mystical teaching on “union” with God⁵⁷ are not two widely divergent teachings, but that they are similar teachings. Therefore, it is only natural to compare them in this study. The comparison of Wesley’s “perfection” and the Mystical experience called the “spiritual marriage” will reveal that the “spiritual marriage” is very similar to Wesley’s doctrine of “perfection”, understood as purity of intention. It is true that Wesley says Rom 7 describes a person under the Law and not a

⁵⁴ T. Dubay, *Fire Within*, 10.

⁵⁵ T. Dubay states, “A book on advanced prayer is a book on advanced joy. It is a love story, a book about being loved and loving totally. It is a book on holiness, the heights of holiness to which the Gospel invites everyone,” *Fire Within*, 5.

⁵⁶ J. Wesley said “Soon after, a contemplative man convinced me still more than I was convinced before, that outward works are nothing, being alone; and in several conversations instructed me, how to pursue inward holiness, or a union of the soul with God,” *Journal*, May 24, 1738, *The Works of John Wesley I* (CD-ROM; Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 1995), 100; See also D. Nicholl, who writes that “holiness is a call to absolute union with the Holy One,” *Holiness*, 60.

⁵⁷ The “spiritual marriage” is called “union” by Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle*, 13, 14.

regenerate individual.⁵⁸ However, Wesley's teaching and *experience* of "perfection" does seem to echo the experience called the "spiritual marriage". The reason for this comparison is that Wesley's doctrine of "perfection" and the "spiritual marriage" appear to be discussing the same experience of life.⁵⁹ This experience is a life of spiritual closeness and authenticity.

Chapter 7 will also bring together the various strands of this study, the textual analysis, the comparison of the *experience* of new life in Christ, the comparison of the experiences of Wesley's "perfection" and the Mystical "spiritual marriage". These sources, Wesley's doctrine of "perfection", the mystical teaching on the "spiritual marriage" and Rom 7 are discussing life lived on the highest plain possible in this life.⁶⁰

Life lived on the highest plain possible, in this world, is the very message and experience of the "spiritual marriage" of the Mystics and of John Wesley's doctrine of

⁵⁸ Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on The New Testament*, 33-34.

⁵⁹ T. Dubay writes: "contemplation, i.e. advanced prayer, is the gradual growth toward the heights of transforming union that produces an accompanying heroic holiness. Teresa holds strongly that sanctity blossoms along with the development of infused contemplation" (3). John Wesley writes, "Christian perfection, therefore, does not imply (as some men seem to have imagined) an exemption either from ignorance, or mistake, or infirmities, or temptations. Indeed, it is only another term for holiness. They are two names for the same thing. Thus, every one that is holy is, in the Scripture sense, perfect. Yet we may, lastly, observe that neither in this respect is there any absolute perfection on earth. There is no perfection of degrees, as it is termed; none which does not admit of a continual increase," *The Works of John Wesley*, 5; Wesley's Sermon, *Christian Perfection*, 5; Vol.6, *The Works of John Wesley 11* (CD-ROM; Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 1995). Here it can be clearly seen that the teaching of the Mystics concerning the "spiritual marriage", i.e. advanced prayer, and Wesley's teaching on "perfection" are similar teachings. The Mystics call the "spiritual marriage" transforming union or holiness and Wesley calls "perfection" holiness as well. Thus it can be seen that the Mystics and Wesley are attempting to describe the same experience.

⁶⁰ The connection between the Mystical experience called the "spiritual marriage" or transforming union and Wesley's teaching on "perfection" with Paul can be seen in Rom 7, the purpose of this study, but also in Tit 2:12 where we read that we are to give up everything that does not lead to God. The Mystics "ask not a whit more or less," Dubay, *Fire Within*, 6. Wesley calls "perfection" as holiness and says this: "remember, the essence of Christian holiness is simplicity and purity; one design, one desire; entire devotion to God." J. Wesley, "Letters to a Member of the Society," *The Works of John Wesley 12* (CD-ROM; Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 1995), 289. It can be seen that the Mystics and Wesley are describing the same experience, in today's terminology called entire devotion. This is the very call of Paul as seen in Tit 2:12 and as it will be seen through this study, in Rom 7. Dubay confirms this connection when he writes that the teaching of Teresa is nothing but the Gospel, *Fire Within*, 10.

“perfection”. Thus, a comparison study of Rom 7, within the context of Romans, with the study of the “spiritual marriage” and John Wesley’s doctrine of “perfection” will then lead to the conclusion, that these three are describing a similar experience of life.⁶¹

4. Parameters

To discover the identity of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7, certain parameters are to be set. These will provide the framework for the “spiritual portrait” of a believer as pictured by Paul in Rom 7. The parameters relate to Scripture, tradition and experience. The **Scriptural** parameters of the study: The text of the Bible is the primary source and criterion for Christian doctrine and study.⁶² In addition, the text of Rom 1-8 will be the focus area of study, with the emphasis on Rom 7. There will be, further, a discussion that will involve parts of the wider Pauline Corpus.

Along with the text, the **tradition** of the church guides one to a fuller understanding. This means that one cannot ignore what the church has affirmed in the past. The study of the text today must be carefully done, keeping in mind the study of the text done “yesterday” – which can be called tradition. The tradition of the church is an integral aspect of biblical studies. To quote the Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church: “Christianity does not leap from the New Testament times to the present as though nothing were to be learned from that great cloud of witnesses in

⁶¹ For a good study on Paul as a mystic, see E. Underhill, *The Mystic Way* (Atlanta, Ariel Press, 1992), 132-162. In addition, A. Segal states that “mystical experience started or aided Paul’s conversion,” *Paul the Convert* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 117.

⁶² N. Alexander, ed., *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1992), 77.

between. For centuries, Christians have sought to interpret the truth of the gospel for their time. In these attempts, tradition, understood both in terms of process and form, has played an important role.”⁶³ Tradition is an important dimension of both the life of the church and of the scientific study of the text. The elements of this study, which I classify as tradition, are Wesley's doctrine of “perfection”, the teaching of the “spiritual marriage” found within the writings of Teresa of Avila, Julian of Norwich, the author of *the Cloud of Unknowing*, and the various opinions of commentators of Romans.

Another aspect of the parameters of this study will be **experience**. Experience does not determine the meaning of the text. However, the text understood as revelation, does teach experience. Interpreting experience in the light of scriptural norms is fundamental.⁶⁴ Experience used as a parameter within this study means that the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 will be evaluated and compared with the experience that Wesley writes about in his doctrine of “perfection” and with the experience of the “spiritual marriage” found within the writings of Teresa of Avila, Julian of Norwich and the author of *the Cloud of Unknowing*. I have chosen the experience of “perfection”, according to Wesley and the experience of the “spiritual marriage” found within the writings of the Mystics because these experiences, according to Wesley and the Mystics themselves, are the highest spiritual state a human being can attain in this life. This experience will then be compared with the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 to see if the two experiences are the same experience. If they are the same experience, then the conclusion must be that the emphatic “I” is a mature, spiritual believer.

⁶³ N. Alexander, *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, 79. See also A. Outler, “The Wesleyan Quadrilateral—In John Wesley,” in *Doctrine and Theology in The United Methodist Church* (ed., T. Langford; Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1991), 75-90.

⁶⁴ N. Alexander, *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, 81.

The stated parameters of this study, which are scripture, tradition and experience, lead to the question: are these three of equal value? The answer to that question, according to the Protestant thought is no. However, tradition and experience are aspects of the meaning that are found within the text,⁶⁵ which is not dead but living. This expresses the understanding that meaning is inherent within the text itself and one can verify this meaning by tradition and experience. Tradition and experience do not determine the meaning of the text, nor are they equals to the text. However, tradition and experience are part of the meaning found within the text itself and contribute to the discovery of the meaning found within the text.

5. Justification for the chosen methodology

It is to be admitted that this study does not fall within the traditional boundaries of an exclusive New Testament research project. However, as it relates to both the areas of *New Testament theology and hermeneutics* it is not out of place to investigate the relation between Romans 7 in comparison with Wesley and the Mystics. This study is simultaneously *an interdisciplinary study*. It attempts to be a *wholistic approach* to the thesis in the relation to various disciplines. Because of this wholistic approach, this study will relate to Systematic Theology, (or Dogmatics), Church History and Spirituality. There are certain drawbacks to this study. One drawback is that the wholistic approach will make it difficult to “locate” this study traditionally and exclusively only in a specific

⁶⁵ For a fuller discussion see R.A. Muller and J.L. Thompson, eds., *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 335ff. See also T.Campbell, “Scripture as an Authority in Relation to Other Authorities: A Wesleyan Evangelical Perspective,” *QR* 3 (1991): 33-40.

academic discipline. Another drawback is that this study, being a wholistic study, will incorporate various approaches, thoughts and methodologies from Systematic Theology and Church History. The drawback to this type of study is that there will be times and aspects of this study that these inter-disciplinary connections will create a sense of broadness and of generality, that is a sense of being general. This approach has not always been openly embraced. It is to be openly admitted that this approach is an experiment, but, an experiment that I am convinced will accomplish the stated goals. In addition, underlying this interdisciplinary approach is an understanding that, not only the broader Pauline corpus, but also the broader theology of the NT ought to be taken into account during our investigation of the spiritual portrait of the believer that Paul wrote about in Rom 7. This understanding is spoken of by Paul in Gal 1:11-2:2 where he states that the Gospel he received is from God and not from humankind and that when he, Paul, went up to Jerusalem and spoke with the apostles, they did not contribute anything to Paul's understanding of the Gospel.⁶⁶ Finally, the approach of this study being interdisciplinary⁶⁷ and concerned with the sanctification of the Christian Church is an attempt to offer the Church a small taste of that experience offered by God of the pinnacle of life's purpose. Dubay writes: "Disregard for life's ultimate realities, life's most enriching experiences as epitomized by the saints, is runaway escapism."⁶⁸ Similarly, Cushman writes that John

⁶⁶ A. Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1968), 34.

⁶⁷ N. Brox writes that "the center of Pauline theology is the center of all Christian preaching and faith. There is nothing central in Paul's preaching that is not also central for the other NT writers," *Understanding the Message of Paul* (trans., J. Blenkinsopp; Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), 43; J. Dunn, *The Theology Of Paul's Letter To The Galatians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 34.

⁶⁸ T. Dubay, *Fire Within*, 4.

Wesley was an example of the inter-twining of doctrine and Christian experience.⁶⁹

6. Terminology

6.1 Spiritual Marriage

Those who support the viewpoint of a “spiritual marriage”,⁷⁰ have a particular understanding of what the concept means. Here follows a brief summary of the experience of “spiritual marriage”. The “spiritual marriage” is an experience of union between the believer and God. This union with God “is effected by likeness: We must be made like unto God if we are to be united to Him.”⁷¹ This likeness to God is a likeness where God takes complete possession of the soul.⁷² When a person is completely possessed by God, this “being possessed” is seen both in the words which a person speaks, in the deeds which they do and is seen in the resolution of the will to be God's person completely.⁷³ Another way to say this is that when a person is completely possessed by God, their words and deeds, that is their outer lives, reflect being possessed by God. Their words and deeds become words and deeds of love for the neighbor. Being

⁶⁹ R. Cushman has written: “In his little essay *The Character of a Methodist*, first published in 1742, Wesley provided an example of his understanding of the relationship between doctrine and the life of Christian experience. In the essay, doctrine and life are viewed inseparable; the one demands the other. Wesley is saying that the character of a Methodist is (or should be) exhibitivite of the individual's Christian doctrine; and, conversely, that essential doctrine is (or should be) constitutive of the Christian life”, *John Wesley's Experimental Divinity* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1989), 62, 63.

⁷⁰ I list only a few. T. Merton, T. Dubay, Teresa of Avila, Julian of Norwich, John of the Cross, the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*; Mother Teresa; H.W. Smith.

⁷¹ T. Dubay, *Fire Within*, 53.

⁷² St. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle*, 59. See also St. Ignatius, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (trans. A. Mottola; New York: Doubleday, 1989), 103 who writes: “Love consists in a mutual interchange by the two parties, that is to say, that the lover gives to and shares with the beloved all that he has or can attain, and that the beloved act toward the lover in like manner.”

⁷³ St. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle*, 61.

possessed by God is also reflected in the will of the person to be God's person. To be God's person means that the person has set their heart, which is the will, on living for God and attempting to please God in all things.

6.2 Perfection

In Wesley's understanding, holiness and "perfection" were names for the same experience.⁷⁴ He defines "perfection" as purity of intention,⁷⁵ which he meant as the dedicating of all the life to God.⁷⁶ He further defines "perfection" as:

In one view, it is purity of intention, dedicating all the life to God. It is giving God all our heart; it is one desire and design ruling all our tempers. It is the devoting not a part but all of our soul, body and substance to God. In another view, it is all the mind which was in Christ, enabling us to walk as Christ walked. It is the circumcision of the heart from all filthiness, all inward as well as outward pollution. It is a renewal of the heart in the whole image of God, the

⁷⁴ J. Wesley's sermon, *Christian Perfection*, Vol. 6, 5; See also R.E. Cushman, *Wesley's Experimental Divinity*, 48.

⁷⁵ "Intention is an act of the will, for to tend to something belongs to the motive power of the human act, which is the will. It is defined as the efficacious desire to attain the end through the means. Intention is concerned not only with the ultimate end but also with intermediate ends," F. Cunningham, *The Christian Life* (Dubuque, Iowa: The Priory Press, 1959), 52.

⁷⁶ J. Wesley's writing, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, Vol. 11, p. 444. See also R. Cushman who defines holiness as: "On its negative side, holiness is a sensibility of and aversion to the unholy. On its positive side it is a cleaving to the Holy. Hence it activates the first Great Commandment. It is in fact, the acknowledgement and embodiment of this commandment as a *way of life*. This is 'experimental divinity' in practice," *Wesley's Experimental Divinity*, 36. See also D.S. Metz, *Studies in Biblical Holiness*, 94, who writes: "The essence of this state of holiness or perfection is love to God and man, purity of motivation, and cleansing from inherent sin. But because of finite qualities which still bear the scars of sin; this same believer will *not perfectly* fulfill God's law. Thus perfection in one respect, and imperfection in another, may consistently meet in the same person," 228. In fact, Metz titles his chapter on perfection, *Imperfect Perfection*, 221.

full likeness of him who created it. In yet another, it is loving God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves. Take it in which of these views you please (for there is no material difference) and this is the whole and sole perfection...which I have believed and taught for these forty years, from the year 1725 to the year 1765.⁷⁷

Wesley also taught that “perfection” was the humble, patient love of God and neighbor ruling in the heart and life of the believer and thus controlling the believer’s actions, words and thoughts.⁷⁸ For Wesley, “perfection” was an experience of the soul. This means that “perfection” was always seen and experienced in the life of the believing sinner. Wesley also taught that when one arrived at “perfection”, one knew experientially that they had arrived.

6.3 Experience

The use of the word “experience” is intentional. In this understanding, experience is the word that seeks to define and describe the dynamic, living encounter that occurs between the Divine and, in this study, the Christian believer. It is to be admitted that this definition is not entirely satisfactory. However, underlying this study is a recognition that not everything connected with the study of and relationship to God is reducible to terms and understanding. Dubay says concerning experience: “We cannot, of course, offer a logical definition of experience via genus and specific difference. Like existence and being,

⁷⁷ J. Wesley’s sermon, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, Vol. 11, 444.

⁷⁸ J. Wesley’s writing, *Brief Thoughts on Christian Perfection*, Vol. 11, no page number given; see also M. Cavit, *The Three Ways*, 100-102; H. Stimmel *The Goals of Jesus* (Nashville: Tidings, 1961), 46-55.

experience is so basic that it falls into no ready category.”⁷⁹ He goes on to summarize his understanding of experience when he says, “experience is an awareness caused by contact with an objective other, and in this contact affectivity predominates.”⁸⁰ By affectivity Dubay means the affections, the feelings that are aroused by this contact.⁸¹ One last comment by Dubay on experience is needed at this point and will be expanded on in chapters 2-6 of this study. He says, “Experiences change us for better or for worse.”⁸² This concept/comment is important to this study because underlying this study is the understanding that human beings, and in the case of this study, Christian believers, are changed in their encounter with the Living God. It is this change that the Mystics call the “spiritual marriage”, Wesley calls “perfection” and Paul in Rom 7 is describing by use of the emphatic “I”.

6.4 Mature

Mature is a word that is hard to define. My understanding of mature is as follows. Maturity is living up to what we have attained in the Christian life (Phlp 3:15, 16). Maturity does not denote having reached the state of sinless perfection (Phlp 3:12-16). Maturity is being able to distinguish good from evil (Heb 5:14). A definition of mature which is helpful is as follows: mature is “having reached a state of full natural development.”⁸³

⁷⁹ T. Dubay, *Fire Within*, 39.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 39, 40.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 40.

⁸³ *Webster's Dictionary of the English Language, The New Lexicon and Encyclopedic Edition* (New York: Lexicon Publications, Inc., 1989), 617; See also footnote # 46 of chapter 1 of this study.

6.5 Tradition

Along with the text, the tradition of the church guides one to a fuller understanding; one cannot ignore what the church has affirmed in the past. The study of the text and the results of that study that has been done yesterday can be called tradition. The tradition of the Christian Church, found in the study done and the results of that study which has been done “yesterday” is an integral aspect of not only biblical studies and theological studies, but also the life of the Christian Church.⁸⁴

6.6 Scripture

The text of the Protestant Bible is the primary understanding of Scripture. The Protestant understanding of Scripture contains the traditionally held 39 “books” of the Old Testament and the 27 “books” of the New Testament. In addition, Scripture is also a theological concept that has influenced cultures and societies.

6.7 Regeneration

Regeneration, as a spiritual birth, is the experience where God makes alive, spiritually, the human person. To be made alive spiritually means that the person’s fundamental desire is now to please God in Christ in all things.

⁸⁴ N. Alexander, *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, 79. See also A. Outler, “The Wesleyan Quadrilateral—In John Wesley,” *Doctrine and Theology in The United Methodist Church*, 75-90.

7. Brief Survey of the Problem

Since the identity of the emphatic “I” is of such utmost importance to the church and thus to the world, there have been many views given by theologians for the emphatic “I” of Rom 7. These views are grouped into two main categories, namely: A regenerate person, or an unregenerate person.

Each of the two categories for the identity of the emphatic “I” contains many views that are similar, but also have aspects that are different. Within the category of “regenerate person” of the identity of the emphatic “I,” there are views that agree that the emphatic “I” is a regenerate person, though differing in various aspects. This is also true for the category of “unregenerate person.” There are views that state that the emphatic “I” is an unregenerate person, however, these views do not agree with other views as to whom this unregenerate person is.

Following will be a survey of the views of the emphatic “I” according to the two main categories. This survey will also look at many of the views that are contained within each main category. The survey begins with looking at the view that states that the emphatic “I” is an unregenerate person.

7.1 Unregenerate Person

7.1.1. Person under the Law

The survey of opinions regarding the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 begins with the view held by John Wesley. Wesley's view of the emphatic “I” is that this person is a person under the

law.⁸⁵ Wesley said that the emphatic “I” is a man under the law; one who is trying to serve God, but is failing to do so. By a man under the law, Wesley meant the person who is in the process of repentance.⁸⁶ The man/woman under the law comes to a realization that he or she is a sinner and that God is not only merciful, but also, in Wesley's words, “a consuming fire”. This person is beginning to understand the inner, spiritual meaning of the law of God and sees how far short of God's glory s/he has fallen. S/he understands that s/he deserves God's punishment for his/her sins and s/he desires to escape God's wrath. The person under the law has not yet repented and thus is not born-again.

Clarke, following Wesley, holds to the opinion that if Paul is describing himself in his regenerate state, this view has most pitifully and most shamefully not only lowered the standard of Christianity, but has also destroyed its influence.⁸⁷ Clarke writes that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 refers to all who are under the law.⁸⁸ Also Austin Busch who writes that Rom 7:5-25 is a meditation on the primeval transgression.⁸⁹ Busch's opinion is that in Rom 7:5-25 Paul assumes the identity of Eve in the scene of the transgression recorded in Gen 3.

A slight variation of this view is one that is held by Thomas Schreiner. He holds the view that the emphatic “I” does not refer to all Christian unbelievers, but only to those

⁸⁵ J. Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, 33-34; See also, M. Black, *The New Century Bible Commentary: Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 94; M. Gorman, *Apostle of The Crucified Lord*, 371-374; J. Lambrecht, *The Wretched “I” and its Liberation: Paul in Romans 7 and 8* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 90.

⁸⁶ J. Wesley, “Spirit of Bondage and Adoption”, Sermon, *The Works of John Wesley 5* (CD-ROM; Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 1995), 101.

⁸⁷ A. Clarke, *Commentary: Romans through Colossians* (Albany, Oregon: Sage Software, 1996), 205-6). See also H. Lockyer, *All The Apostles Of The Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), 213.

⁸⁸ A. Clarke, *Commentary: Romans through Colossians*, 198. J.C. Beker also is of this opinion, *Paul the Apostle* (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1980), 106.

⁸⁹ A. Busch, “The Figure of Eve in Romans 7:5-25,” *BibInt* 12 (2004): 1-36.

who delight in the law, but are unable to keep it.⁹⁰ The objection to this view is that no one is able to keep the law (Rom 3:10-18; Gal 3:10-14; 19-29).

Another variation of this view is put forth by Byrne who claims that the emphatic “I” is a “reflection, from a Christian perspective upon the experience of life under the law apart from the grace of Christ.”⁹¹ He puts forth three reasons for his position: “1. There is the clarity of Paul’s earlier insistence that believers have been freed from the law, 2. There is the notorious ‘absence’ from Rom 7:14-25 of all references to the Spirit, 3. Only the ‘pre-Christian’ reference of Rom 7:14-25 preserves the contrast Paul has set up in Rom 7:5b between life in the ‘flesh’ and life in the ‘spirit’.”⁹² In an attempt to answer Byrne’s objections, a few thoughts will be given here. This whole study, however, is an attempt to answer Byrne’s objections regarding the emphatic “I” being a regenerate Christian believer. 1. Byrne writes that Paul has set forth that believers are free from the law and thus, the emphatic “I” must be unregenerate. I would like to know which law the believer has been set freed from in Rom 7? Paul writes of a number of laws in Rom 7. He writes of the law of God, the law in the mind, which serves God in Christ or the law in the flesh (Rom 7:25). Is the believer freed from all of them? If not, which one/ones? Byrne is not clear in his statements. 2. In Rom 1-4 there is also no reference to the “Spirit.” In response to Byrne: Does this mean that the Spirit is absent from these pages and from what these pages are describing? It seems that the lack of the word “spirit” is a weak peg to hang your hat on. According to Wesley, prevenient grace, which is the work of the Holy Spirit, is present in all people, from the very beginning and before they are

⁹⁰ T. Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 1998), 388.

⁹¹ B. Byrne, *Romans* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 226.

⁹² *Ibid.*

aware of it.⁹³ 3. Byrne claims only the pre-Christian reference preserves the picture that Paul has set forth.⁹⁴ However, this study will show that it is only the picture of a mature, regenerate Christian believer that preserves the picture that Paul is putting forth.

Sanders objects to this view forth. He is of the opinion that “Jewish altar ritual did not stand out as being excessive, burdensome or anxiety producing.”⁹⁵ This appears to agree with Paul’s own assessment as found in Phlp 3:4-6 and Gal 1:13-14. Sanders goes a step further when he makes the claim that Judaism’s most distinctive point was the extending of the law to every part of a person’s life and as such it was more concerned with what people did than with what people thought.⁹⁶

7.1.2. Unregenerate Humanity faced with the Mosaic Law

Fitzmyer holds the view that Paul is writing of unregenerate humanity faced with the Mosaic Law, but seen by a Christian.⁹⁷ Stifler also falls into this category, however with a slight variation. He says that Rom 7 “shows in detail the operation of the law on the Romans.”⁹⁸ These views assume that unregenerate humanity knows the Mosaic Law and desires to keep it.⁹⁹ Rom 7:15 states that what “I” do, “I” do not understand, nor do “I”

⁹³ J. Wesley, “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” Sermon, *The Works of John Wesley* 6 (CD-ROM; Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 1995), 44.

⁹⁴ See also E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 192 who holds the same position as Byrne.

⁹⁵ E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE-66 CE* (London: SCM Press, 1992), 191.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 420.

⁹⁷ J. Fitzmyer, *Romans: The Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 465. See also K. Kuula whose opinion is that the “I” is a pre-Christian person, M. Reasoner, review of K. Kuula, *The Law, The Covenant and God’s Plan, Volume 2, Paul’s Treatment of the Law and Israel in Romans*, *CBQ* 68 (2006): 151-152.

⁹⁸ J. Stifler, *The Epistle to The Romans* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 102.

⁹⁹ A question regarding Fitzmyer’s position and all those who say that the emphatic “I” is unregenerate is: Does unregenerate humanity truly exert this much effort and care in seeking God’s law, something that unregenerate humanity hates or has so little concern for? See J.D. Pentecost, (Pentecost, *Designed To Be Like Him*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1982), for an opposing position to Fitzmyer. Pentecost writes: “From

desire (θέλω) to do it. However, what “I” hate, this “I” do. Θέλω denotes the active resolution, the will urging onto action.¹⁰⁰ If Fitzmyer is correct, then what Rom 7:15 means is that unregenerate humanity hates sin and truly desires to do what God wants them to do. However, the Scriptures, which are to be understood as the Scriptures of many within the Protestant wing of the church, are very clear when it states that there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God (Rom 3:11). In Rom 3:11 the word translated “seeks” is ἐκζητέω, which means “to seek out, search for, desire, seek to get”.¹⁰¹ Louw and Nida define ἐκζητέω as “to exert considerable effort and care in learning something—to make a careful search, to seek diligently to learn, to make an examination.”¹⁰² In this study, the experience of the emphatic “I” will be compared with the experience of Wesley’s perfect believer and the experience of those who have experienced the “spiritual marriage”. This experience will then be compared with the desire of the regenerate and the unregenerate. Then, the desire of the emphatic “I” will be compared with the desire of those who have experienced the “spiritual marriage” and the desire of the perfect, found within Wesley’s doctrine of “perfection.”

What does the emphatic “I” desire? This question is important in determining the identity of the emphatic “I.” The reason for this is that the desire of the emphatic “I” is expressive of the experience of the emphatic “I.” The text of Romans and other passages

these passages (the passages in his book on pages 72-74), it is very clear that because of Adam’s sin the will of the creature was deadened toward God. The natural man cannot obey God. The natural man has no desire to obey God. He is by nature a rebel. He is lawless, and he manifests his lawlessness and rebellion against God by living under the dominion of sin, serving as a vassal of sin.” Now, the fulcrum of the discussion seems to be whether the unregenerate desire God. The answer to that according to the Bible is no. See also Rom 3:10-18.

¹⁰⁰ G.R. Berry, *A Dictionary of New Testament Greek Synonyms* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 25.

¹⁰¹ W. Arndt and W. Gingrich, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 240.

¹⁰² J. Louw and E. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 331.

found within the Protestant Scriptures describe very clearly the desire of the regenerate and unregenerate. This desire will then be compared with the desire of the emphatic “I” in helping to determine the identity of the emphatic “I.”

7.1.3. History of the Jews under the Law

Moo is of the opinion that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7:14-25 is “the history and experience of the Jews under the Law”.¹⁰³ Moo goes on to say that the main topic of Rom 7:14-25 is “not human nature or anthropology, but the Mosaic Law”.¹⁰⁴ This, according to Moo, means that whoever the emphatic “I” of Romans is really, is of secondary importance. What is important in this section, according to Moo, is the Mosaic Law. Moo would have us believe that what Paul is teaching in this section is that people must be released from bondage to the Mosaic Law to be joined to Christ. Now, it is reasonable to assume, that no Christian would disagree with Moo's statement. However, one could question where Moo is placing the emphasis in this chapter. Should the emphasis be placed on the Mosaic Law, when throughout this chapter, Paul is writing in an emphatic style, concerning “I”? To place the emphasis on the Mosaic Law seems to miss the emphasis written in the text itself. The text, by repeating so often, places the emphasis on the “I”, not on the Mosaic Law. One can also question whether every mention of “law” in Rom 7 is a reference to the Mosaic Law or is a reference to “another law”.

Another objection to Moo's position is that Paul in Rom 2:17-29 describes a totally different picture of Jewish self-complacency. In this description, the Jews boasted in God (Rom 2:17), they not only know God's will, they also approve those things which

¹⁰³ D. Moo, *The New International Commentary: Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 423.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 423.

are essential (Rom 2:18), they have been taught from the Law (Rom 2:18), they were confident that they were a guide to the blind, a light to those who were in darkness (Rom 2:19), and they considered themselves correctors of the foolish, teachers of the immature (Rom 2:20). This description of the Jew, by Paul himself, gives a totally different picture of the experience and cry of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7. Paul’s description of the Jews in Rom 2 is not enough to lay aside the view that the emphatic “I” is the history of the Jews under the law.

A variation of Moo’s position is the position of Conybeare, who is of the opinion that Rom 7 is “the description of the struggle of Paul as a Pharisee, growing in awareness of the law.”¹⁰⁵ The same objections to Moo’s position will also be seen to fit for Conybeare’s position.

7.1.4. An Unregenerate Person under Conviction

A slight variation of a man under the law is Buswell’s view. He claims that the wretched man of Rom 7 is Paul under conviction of the Holy Spirit prior to his conversion on the road to Damascus.¹⁰⁶ Buswell’s view, again, does not take into serious consideration the change of verb tenses in Rom 7. Nor does his view address the same struggle with sin that Paul describes in Rom 8.

Other objections to this view: the consistent use of the present tense throughout Rom 7:14-25 in contrast to the use of the past tense in Rom 7:7-13. This will be explained further in chapter 2 of this study, however, let it be stated here that if Paul wanted to continue to describe his past in Rom 7:14-25, he could have used the past tense

¹⁰⁵ W.J. Conybeare, and J.S. Howson, *The Life and Letters of St. Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 52.

¹⁰⁶ J.O. Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 115.

like he did in Rom 7:7-13. A better explanation is needed to explain the dominant use of the past tense in Rom 7:7-13 and present tense in Rom 7:14-25 than vividness.¹⁰⁷ A further objection to this view is the order found in Rom 7:25, where the emphatic “I” praises God for Jesus Christ, then summarizes his struggle with indwelling sin. The point is: what unregenerate person praises and thanks God for Jesus Christ and sees Christ as the answer to his/her struggle with sin?¹⁰⁸

7.2 Regenerate Person

The survey of the opinions regarding the identity of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 now will cover the views that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is a regenerate person.¹⁰⁹

7.2.1. Paul the Believer

The Reformation changed the way many people understood various doctrines held by the existing church. One view that the Reformation has changed is the way certain people understood the identity of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7. Many of those who trace their theological heritage to the Reformation hold the view that the identity of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is Paul, the believer. This is the view supported by Guthrie,¹¹⁰ Dunn,¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ See C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 157, for a further discussion of this position.

¹⁰⁸ An objection to the view that the emphatic “I” is unregenerate is C.E.B. Cranfield’s position. He claims that the reason many would hold the position that the emphatic “I” is unregenerate because of “the failure to grasp the full seriousness of the Christian’s obligation to express his gratefulness to God by the obedience of life” *The Epistle to the Romans*, 169.

¹⁰⁹ One of the main objections to the view that the emphatic “I” is a regenerate person is Paul’s description of being a slave under the power of sin, C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 158.

¹¹⁰ D. Guthrie, ed., *The New Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 1028.

¹¹¹ J. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary: Romans 1-8* (Dallas: Word Books, 1998), 406.

Murray,¹¹² Cranfield,¹¹³ Bartlett,¹¹⁴ Bruce,¹¹⁵ and Smart.¹¹⁶ These are just a few who are of this opinion.

7.2.2. Paul as a Representative of all Believers

The view that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is Paul the believer speaking from his own experience, but, as a representative of believers in general.¹¹⁷ Dunn agrees with this view when he writes that throughout this section (Rom 7:7-25), Paul uses the first person singular, I/me. Dunn is of the opinion that it was clear enough in Rom 7:7-13 that the emphatic “I” was Adam, not Paul himself as such or indeed any individual in particular, but man (Adam), every human being, fallen humanity.¹¹⁸ Dunn would have the reader believe that the transition to the first person “I” in Romans 7:7 from the more general “we” of Rom 7:1-6 signals to the readers that what seems as a generalization from Paul's personal experience is intended also as a statement of typical experience.¹¹⁹ Dunn holds the opinion that the emphatic “I” is not just Paul or even Paul in particular, but every human being, which includes Paul. Thus, as Paul describes his own experience as a believer in Christ, what he is really doing is sharing the common experience of all believers.

¹¹² J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 258.

¹¹³ C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1985), 155.

¹¹⁴ C.N. Bartlett, *Romans: Power for Modern Man* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1953), 76.

¹¹⁵ F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 151.

¹¹⁶ J. Smart, *A Doorway To A New Age*, 75.

¹¹⁷ D. Guthrie, *The New Bible Commentary*, 1028. See also D.B. Garlington who is of the opinion that the emphatic “I” is both Paul's personal experience and Paul the representative of all. He further claims that the discussion which states that the “I” is Paul the representative of everyone but is not Paul's personal experience is “convoluted,” *Faith, Obedience and Perseverance* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1994), 113. See also P. Melancthon, *Commentary on Romans* (trans. F. Kramer; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992), 162, who is of the opinion that the emphatic “I” is “converted.”

¹¹⁸ J. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary: Romans*, 404.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 399.

7.2.3. Paul acting out of character as a Christian

Moule argues that Rom 7:14-25 is Paul's "confession, not of a long past, not of an imagined experience, but of his normal experience always, when he acts out of character as a regenerate man".¹²⁰ One then needs to ask, what is the normal experience of a regenerate person? Moule affirms that Rom 8 is "how to walk to please God".¹²¹ This seems to be Moule's answer as to the normal experience of a regenerate person.

7.2.4. Paul the Believer when he "seeks" holiness by the Law

McClain offers the opinion that the identity of the emphatic "I" of Rom 7:14-25 is "of a regenerate man who is trying to be holy by keeping the law".¹²² McClain's view, also, does not take into consideration the change of verb tenses used in this chapter. One can also question whether, in Rom 7, every mention of the word "law" is a reference to the Mosaic Law? In Rom 7, law is a term that describes a power that resides in the members of the body (Rom 7:23). These two facts make us question McClain's view.

7.2.5. Paul the Believer viewing himself from the holiness of God's Law

Another view is of Ferguson, who asserts that "the apostle is viewing himself from one particular aspect, namely in the light of the holy and spiritual law of God. In that light, even as a believer, indwelling sin is revealed in all its ugly rebellion against God."¹²³

Herschel Hobbs would also belong to this category of scholars. He states that the

¹²⁰ C.G. Moule, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans*, 194-5.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 204.

¹²² A. McClain, *Romans: The Gospel of God's Grace* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), 150.

¹²³ S. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1996), 160.

experience Paul is describing is “post-conversion.”¹²⁴ He also goes on to claim that Paul, through the experience of the emphatic “I” is describing Christians who are still living in a fleshly body.¹²⁵

7.3 Barth’s View

The discussion concerning the identity of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 would be much easier if the only views held were the above: that is, that Paul is either talking about an unregenerate person or a regenerate person. This however, is not so. Barth is of the opinion that, “Paul is describing his past, present and future existence. He portrays a situation as real after the episode on the road to Damascus as before it. He is writing about a man broken in two by the law”.¹²⁶ In many ways, Barth's position is a combination of the views that Paul is describing an unregenerate person and a regenerate person. Although it is questionable whether Wesley and others who hold the view that the identity of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is an unregenerate person would embrace Barth's view. Barth's view does not explain the drastic change of verb tenses beginning at Rom 7:14. In Rom 7:6-13 the aorist tense is predominately used. Beginning with Rom 7:14, the present tense is predominately used.

A variation of this view is the view espoused by Griffith-Jones who claims that Paul is describing all humanity by his use of the “I.”¹²⁷ The “I,” according to Griffith-Jones, is a person that exists only in the letter of Romans.¹²⁸ Griffith-Jones is of the

¹²⁴ H. Hobbs, *New Men in Christ* (Waco: Word Books, 1974), 96.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹²⁶ K. Barth, *The Epistle to The Romans*, 270.

¹²⁷ R. Griffith-Jones, *The Gospel According to Paul* (New York: Harper/San Francisco, 2004), 420.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 419.

opinion that Paul, by his use of the “I” is attempting to draw people into a right mind which will converge in baptismal rebirth.¹²⁹

8. Concluding statement

The discovery of the identity of the emphatic “I” is a topic that needs to be researched and discovered. This research will be made from within the text of Romans and then compared with the experience of the regenerate found within Pauline and non-Pauline texts within the Protestant Bible. Finally, the experience of the emphatic “I” will then be compared with Wesley’s doctrine of “perfection” and the experience of the “spiritual marriage”, found within the writings of Teresa of Avila, Julian of Norwich and *the Cloud of Unknowing*. When this study and comparison has been done, the conclusion will be one of two positions. The first position is that the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is the experience of a mature, spiritual Christian believer or secondly that this comparison will show that the experience of the emphatic “I” is of a non-regenerate person.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 419.

Chapter 2: The Context of Rom 7

1. Outline of Rom 1-8

The most immediate context of Rom 7 is Rom 1-8. To begin to gain an understanding of Rom 1-8 as the context of Rom 7, a bird's eye view is offered. This bird's eye view is in the form of an outline. The following outline is this author's but is only one of many. The purpose of this outline is to demonstrate, in a preliminary way, the order and "flow" of Romans. This outline only covers Rom 1-8, which is the portion of Romans that is under investigation.

1.1-7: Introduction

1.8-15 Prayer of Thanksgiving

1.16-17: Power of the Gospel

1.18-2.28: Need for righteousness

1.19-32: Failure of Gentiles

2.1-28: Failure of Jews

3.1-3.31: True circumcision

3.1-8: Advantage of Jews

3.9-20: Condemnation of Jews and Gentiles

3.21-31: Provision for righteousness

3.21-4.25: Means of justification

4.1-25: Righteousness of God is portrayed

4.1-8: Justification of Abraham

4.9-12: Futility of circumcision

4.13-15: Futility of law

4.16-25: "Example" of justification

5.1-8.39: God's grace in salvation

5.1-11: Grace's nature and the need of grace

5.12-14: Sin and death through Adam

5.15-17: Grace and life through Christ

5.18-21: Summary of this section on grace

6.1-2: Question of sin and grace

6.3-5: Meaning of baptism

6.6-11: Dying and living with Christ

6.12-14: Call to Christian commitment

6.15-23: Question of loyalty

- 7.1-25: Conflict of desires
- 7.1-6: Analogy of marriage and death
- 7.7-13: Purpose of law
- 7.14-23: Inner warfare
- 7.24-25: Hope of victory
- 8.1-8: Though struggle with sin, there is freedom in the spirit
- 8.9-13: The indwelling spirit
- 8.14-18: Adoption through the spirit
- 8.19-25: Redemption in the spirit
- 8.26-27: Intercession of spirit
- 8.28-30: Purpose of God's love
- 8.31-39: Power of god's love

2. Rom 1-4

One area of research to discover the identity and to construct the spiritual portrait of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is within the text of Romans itself. The journey to the discovery of the identity of the emphatic “I” will begin with an analysis of the text of Rom 1-8.¹ A brief look at the context of Rom 1-8 will now be undertaken. The purpose of this is to find Rom 7's “place” within the “flow” of the epistle to the Romans.

¹ M. Gorman claims that Rom 5-8 “spells out the meaning and character of justification,” M. Gorman, *Apostle of The Crucified Lord*, 363. Gorman, also, in his discussions states that Rom 5-8 is a whole, thus, one must see Rom 7 within the discussion of justification. See also D.B. Garlington, who also claims that Rom 5-8 is a whole, *Faith, Obedience and Perseverance*, 114, 115. He further states that “the substructure of Romans 5-8 can be viewed as the passing of the old creation and the advent of the new. This program particularly comes to light in the series of antitheses constructed by Paul. (1) 5:1-21: the justification of life in Christ vs. the condemnation of death in Adam. (2) 6:1-7:6: resurrection life and deliverance from sin in Christ vs. death and bondage to sin and the law. (3) 7:7-8:39: life and liberty in union with Christ and the indwelling Spirit vs. captivity to the flesh, even in spite of indwelling sin and the believer’s groaning for the redemption of the body (7:14-25: 8:18-25). In each division of chaps 5-8, the motif of the believer’s definitive break with the past and his entrance into a new state of affairs stands out in prominent relief: an old pattern of existence is broken in order that a new mode of life may begin. Or, as stated in the previous chapter, from a slightly adjusted vantage point chaps. 5-8 are to be regarded as a unified block bound together by a common theme: the hope of eternal life on the basis of justification, despite the present reality of suffering and the prospect of physical death,” D.B. Garlington, *Faith, Obedience and Perseverance*, 115.

In Rom 1-4, Paul presents² the teaching of justification/righteousness by faith. Rom 1-4 presents the human situation in sin, the purpose of the Law, the truth that there is no righteousness in obeying the Law, but righteousness comes only by faith. Rom 1-4 also presents God's answer to the human situation, Jesus Christ.

It is in Rom 1:16, 17 that the central thesis of Romans is presented.³ The central thesis of Romans is the Gospel.⁴ The Gospel is the power of God for salvation. The term, salvation in Romans, is a comprehensive term that describes the total work of God in restoring humanity to right relationships. These restored relationships include right relationships between God and the individual; between the individual and others; between the individual and self; and between the individual and the cosmic order, which includes

² L. Keck is of the opinion that Paul, in Romans, writes about “Jesus exactly what Paul needs to advance his argument and no more,” L. Keck, “Jesus in Romans,” *JBL* 3 (1989): 443-460. It is for these reasons, according to Keck, that Paul, in Romans does not discuss topics such as the Eucharist and others. For a view that is not altogether in opposition, yet, not fully supportive of Keck, see E. Wong, who is of the opinion that Paul just alludes to Jesus’ tradition in Romans. He is also of the opinion that Paul “de-radicalized” Jesus’ ethical sayings, E. Wong, “The De-Radicalization of Jesus’ Ethical Sayings in Romans,” *NovT* 3 (2001): 245-263.

³ K. Stendahl disagrees with this statement. He claims that the “climax of Romans is Rom 9-11” and “the focus of Romans is the relation between the Jews and the Gentiles, not the notion of justification.” K. Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*, (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1976), 4. Stendahl’s position is in opposition to Paul’s claim of Rom 1:1-17 in which Paul writes that the gospel of Jesus Christ is his very purpose in life (Rom 1:1) and that the preaching of the gospel was his service to God (Rom 1:9). Paul also states that the true relation between Jews and Gentiles is only through Jesus Christ (Rom 3:9; 4:9, 10-12, 16; 5:1; see especially Rom 9:1-3).

⁴ R. Gundry states that “the great theme of Romans is justification by God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ” *A Survey of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, Academie Books, 1981), 276. This statement is one that can be agreed with in part and one that, in part, can be disagreed with. The whole issue is: What is meant by justification? R. Brown is in agreement with this. He writes: “Another major scholarly debate is centered on whether for Paul God simply declares people upright by a type of judicial sentence (forensic or declarative justification) or actually changes people and makes them upright (causative justification)” *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 577. See a further discussion of imparted versus imputed righteousness later on in this chapter and in chapter 3 of this study. For a different view see H.C. Kee who would have the reader understand that the dominant theme in Paul’s thought was the creation of Adam and Eve, *Understanding the New Testament* (New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1993), 249, 250. Now, it is to be agreed that Paul, especially in Rom 5 wrote on the creation of Adam and Eve. However, to call this a dominant theme of Paul is to miss Paul’s own expressed theme, that is the Gospel (Rom 1:16, 17; Gal 1:1-12; for a few examples). G. Osborne is of the opinion that: “if we consider that Paul includes all the various themes together under the rubric of “gospel,” that may well tie the letter together,” G. Osborne, *Romans*, 21, 22.

the individual's place and right functioning in creation.⁵ It is within this central thesis of Romans that righteousness is presented. Righteousness describes, firstly, the right relationship between creation and God.⁶ It is also within Rom 1:16, 17 that Paul states the fundamental relationship between righteousness and faith.

Rom 1:18 - 3:20⁷ is a description of the human situation. This section can be broken down into subsections. The first is Rom 1:18-32, dealing with the guilt of humanity. The second subsection is Rom 2:1-16,⁸ which describes the judgment of God. The third subsection is Rom 2:17-3:8. This subsection describes the Jews and their relationship with the law. This section is an expansion of the statement in the central thesis of Romans that righteousness is by faith and, though not stated in Rom 1:16, 17, not through the law. The relationship between faith/righteousness and the law will be treated fully by Paul, beginning in Rom 4. The fourth subsection is Rom 3:9-20 where Paul returns to the universal condition of humanity. This is summed up in the words, "there is none righteous" (Rom 3:10). God's answer to the human situation is found in Rom 3:21-4:25. This subsection begins to treat fully Paul's statement in the central thesis of Romans that righteousness is by faith. Rom 4 gives the foundation for righteousness by

⁵ A complete development of all these relationships is beyond the scope of this study. However, this study will look at the primary restored relationship included in salvation. The primary relationship is between the individual and God. Because this study will focus on this primary relationship, there will be a "choosing" of terms and phrases to examine. There is no thought of being comprehensive, as that is beyond the scope of this study. It is to be admitted that the choosing of terms and phrases to examine is somewhat arbitrary.

⁶ A deeper look at righteousness will be presented later on in this chapter.

⁷ W. Walker is of the opinion that Rom 1:18-2:29 is "a non-Pauline interpolation". He bases his opinion on language, context and ideational content, W. Walker, "Romans 1:18-2:29: A Non-Pauline Interpolation?" *NTS* 45 (1999): 533-552. The very basis of Walker's position, that is, that language, context and ideational content which he says argues for a non-Pauline interpolation are the very factors that argue for Pauline authorship. See this study for support of this position.

⁸ S.J. Gathercole states that Rom 2:14-15 does not refer to the Gentiles but is a further shaming of the Jews. S.J. Gathercole, "A Law unto Themselves: The Gentiles in Romans 2:14-15 Revisited," *JSNT* 3 (2002), 27-49.

faith. This foundation is what God has established in ages past. This foundation is the relationship between righteousness and faith. Again, it must be understood that the statement that righteousness is by faith means that righteousness is not found in the law. Paul quotes Abraham as an example that God is not doing a new thing or is not rejecting what He has already done, that is to establish righteousness in the law.⁹ In the example of the righteousness of Abraham, by faith and not by the law, Paul demonstrates that what God is doing through Jesus Christ, which is to make righteous those who believe, is the very principle that God has established from of old. Thus, Paul is stating that God has not established righteousness by the law, only to discard this righteousness with the coming of Christ. The example of Abraham demonstrates that God has, from ages before, established the principle that righteousness is by faith.¹⁰

3. Rom 5

Rom 5 lists the fruit or results of righteousness by faith.¹¹ These fruits are peace and assurance. The second half of Rom 5 details how sin entered the human race by the race's

⁹ E. Adams makes the claim that Rom 4:20 is “a backward glance to Rom 1:21.” This backward glance, according to Adams reflects a structural contrast between Abraham’s faith and Gentile disobedience; a contrast “likely to have been intended by Paul,” E. Adams, “Abraham’s Faith and Gentile Disobedience,” *JSNT* 65 (1997): 47-66.

¹⁰ The discussion between righteousness in the old or first covenant that is by the law and between righteousness in the new or second covenant, which is by faith, is an on-going discussion. However, the example of Abraham and the many Old Testament examples of righteousness by faith should put to rest this discussion. Thus, a joining of this discussion seems unnecessary.

¹¹ G. Osborne writes: “There seems to be a significant shift of focus between chapters 1-4 and chapters 5-8, with the former centering on the necessity of faith for salvation and the latter on the effects of that salvation on the lives and experiences of believers,” G. Osborne, *Romans*, 124.

involvement in Adam.¹² In Rom 5, Paul is also beginning to describe Christian living.¹³ He has presented the “theological” foundation of justification by faith. He is now moving into the doctrinal section of the “living” of the faith. Black agrees with this statement when he writes that Rom 5 “marks a transition from the thesis of justification to that of the spiritual life of Christian believers.”¹⁴ Thus, it is to be seen that there is a definite transition beginning in Rom 5. This transition is to a fuller explanation and description of righteousness by faith. This means that the transition seen in Rom 5 connects Rom 6-16 with Rom 1-4. The transition found in Rom 5 is not from one thesis to another. Black claims, the transition is from theory to experience.¹⁵ Paul writes in Rom 5:1 that the justified, the righteous have peace with God.¹⁶ The peace of God is the present experience of the justified/righteous, leads to rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God¹⁷ (Rom 5:1-2). The hope of the glory of God is the “regaining” for the justified/righteous of that which was lost. Rom 3:23 states that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Sin has caused the human race to lose the glory of God. Justification in Christ returns to the believer the glory of God.

¹² G. Osborne describes Rom 5:12-21 as Paul describing the “primary barrier between people and God—the sin and guilt inherited from Adam,” Osborne, *Romans*, 136; See also S. Porter who claims that Rom 5 is a diatribe, “The Argument of Romans 5: Can A Rhetorical Question Make A Difference,” *JBL* 4 (1991): 655-677.

¹³ G. Osborne, *Romans*, 125.

¹⁴ M. Black, *The New Century Bible Commentary: Romans*, 74.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ J.R.W. Stott, *Men Made New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), 9, 10; B.H. Carroll, *Studies in Romans* (Nashville: The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1935), 48; K. Barth, *The Epistle to The Romans*, 150; C.E.B. Cranfield, *The International Critical Commentary: The Epistle to the Romans*, 253; C. Breytenbach, “Salvation of the Reconciled (With A Note On The Background of Paul’s Metaphor of Reconciliation),” in *Salvation in The New Testament: Perspectives on Soteriology* (ed. J.G. van der Watt; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 271-286.

¹⁷ A full explanation of the glory of God is beyond the scope of this study. However, in my understanding the glory of God is what God intended the human race to be. The glory of God must be part of the salvation experience. Salvation, then, is a regaining of that which God intends for each and everyone (1 Cor 3:18).

The hope of the glory of God is the justified/righteous' present experience. The hope of the glory of God is not only a future transaction.¹⁸ The full experience of the glory of God is still future. However, the justified/righteous have the present experience of the hope of the glory of God.¹⁹ This can be seen in the words “we have” in Rom 5:1. It is to be recognized that there are within the Greek manuscripts a disagreement in Rom 5:1 with the tense of “we have.”²⁰ Some Greek manuscripts have the present tense for “we have”²¹ and others use the subjunctive.²²

The difference can be understood as the present tense stating a fact, “we have peace with God,” and the subjunctive, “let us have peace with God.”²³ The difference may be understood in experiential terms. The present tense states the fact that the justified has now peace with God. The subjunctive exhorts the justified to experience the peace of God that is given in Christ. The subjunctive reminds the justified to remember in the midst of life's trials and difficulties, the peace of God that is theirs in Christ.

The justified, knowing and experiencing peace with God are then able to rejoice in sufferings (Rom 5:3). The reason for this is the knowledge that Christ has reconciled the justified and God (Rom 5:10) and that, sufferings are not to be seen as God's punishment (Rom 5:9). Sufferings are to be seen as part of the journey to fully

¹⁸ C. Breytenbach calls “the crucifixion an eschatological event, a prolepsis of judgment.” Breytenbach, “The ‘For Us’ Phrases In Pauline Soteriology: Considering Their Background and Use,” in *Salvation in The New Testament: Perspectives on Soteriology* (ed. J.G. van der Watt; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 163-185.

¹⁹ For a fuller discussion on realized eschatology, see the section on *conformity to Christ* in chapter 4 of this study.

²⁰ A comparing of which manuscripts are earlier and which are later, which manuscripts carry more authority and which less, is not the point of this study. As is seen in the discussion of above, both tenses are of value to the discussion.

²¹ \aleph^a , B³, G^{gr}, P, Ψ , 0220^{vid}, 88, 104, 326, 330, 451, 629, 1241, 1739, 1877, 1881, 1984, 2127, 2492, 2495, *Byz Lect*, syr^h, cop^{sa}. UBS³.

²² \aleph^* , A, B*, C, D, K, 33, 81, 181, 436, 630, 1962, 1985. UBS³.

²³ The subjunctive can be understood as a hortatory subjunctive. A hortatory subjunctive is a mood that exhorts someone to do, have, experience something.

experiencing the glory of God. This is seen in Rom 5:3-5 where Paul writes that the reason the justified can rejoice in sufferings is because sufferings produce perseverance, perseverance produces character, this character is the transformed holy image of God, part of the glory of God (2 Cor 3:18). The experience of being transformed into the image of God produces hope in the justified. Hope is produced in the justified through the process of being transformed because the reality of being transformed is evidence of God's presence (Rom 8:9-11). The justified/righteous are also reconciled with God and saved from God's wrath (Rom 5:9-11). Thus, it can be understood that the term "justified" is very important to the understanding of the experience of the Christian and very important in the discussion of this study on the identity of the emphatic "I".

The context of Rom 5:1-10²⁴ clearly states that justification is experiential and that it is not simply a declaration. Rom 5:1 states that the righteous, are "justified by faith." The Greek word to be examined in this phrase, is δικαιοθέντες, an aorist passive participle. Dana and Mantey state that, "Antecedent action relative to the main verb is ordinarily expressed by the aorist or perfect participles."²⁵ This is to say that, ordinarily, but not always, the action of the aorist participle occurs before the action of the main verb. In Rom 5:1, the main verb is "we have."²⁶ The time of the action of the aorist participle will occur before the action of the main verb. Thus, the basic idea of the relation of the aorist participle and the main verb is to be understood as: "being justified," the aorist participle, occurs before the "having," the main verb, of peace with God.

²⁴ J. Murphy-O'Conner states that Rom 6-8 expands Rom 5:1-11; J. Murphy-O'Conner, *Paul His Story* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 201.

²⁵ H.E. Dana and J. Mantey, *A Manuel Grammar of The Greek New Testament* (New York: MacMillian Pub., 1955), 230.

²⁶ See discussion above concerning the subjunctive and present tenses in Rom 5:1 in footnote # 23 of chapter 2 of this study.

The aorist participle, δικαιοθύντες, comes from the verb, δικαίω. Arndt and Gingrich list an understanding for δικαίω: “To show justice, do justice, vindicate, treat as just, be acquitted, be pronounced and treated as righteous, make free or pure, be set free from.”²⁷ This definition sets the parameters for the discussion for the word “justification”. The question that is to be examined is: does justification mean to make righteous or to pronounce righteous? To state this question in the more historic terminology: Is righteousness imputed or imparted?

Girdlestone writes that δικαίω is to make righteous or to acquit.²⁸ He goes on to say that “the verb קָדַשׁ is rendered δικαίω almost everywhere in the Septuagint.”²⁹ קָדַשׁ has as its root meaning “conformity to an ethical or moral standard”.³⁰ According to Gesenius קָדַשׁ is “to be straight, hence to be true, sincere, to be just, righteous, to declare any one just or righteous.”³¹ Holladay agrees with Gesenius when he claims that קָדַשׁ is to “be just, righteous, vindicated, make someone appear righteous, innocent, declare someone to be in the right.”³² Δικαίω,³³ according to J. Lust, is “to pronounce and treat as righteous, to justify, to vindicate, to acquit, to be shown to be righteous.”³⁴ Fitzmyer says that in the Septuagint, δικαίω normally has a declarative, forensic meaning.³⁵ For Louw and Nida δικαίω is: “to cause someone to be in a proper or right relation with

²⁷ W. Arndt & W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament*, 197.

²⁸ R. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of The Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 162.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 162.

³⁰ R. Laird Harris, ed., *Theological Wordbook of The Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 752.

³¹ H.W.F. Gesenius, *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon of The Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 702.

³² W. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of The Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 303.

³³ The answer to the question of whether righteousness is imputed or imparted will be drawn from the context of Romans itself.

³⁴ J. Lust ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint, Part I* (Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1992), 115.

³⁵ J. Fitzmyer, *Romans: The Anchor Bible*, 117.

someone else, to put right with, to cause to be in a right relationship with.”³⁶ They go on to say that, “Some scholars interpret δικαίω, δικαίωσις, δικαιοσύνη as meaning ‘forensic righteousness’, that is to say, the act of being declared righteous on the basis of Christ’s atoning ministry, but it would seem more probable, according to Louw and Nida, that Paul uses these expressions in the context of the covenant relation rather than in the context of legal procedures.”³⁷ Louw and Nida emphasize that δικαίω is *primarily* covenantal and relational and is not *primarily* legal in its meaning. This is important to the discussion. When a sinner is made righteous, that sinner is not simply *declared* “legally” righteous, but enters a covenantal relationship. It is in this covenantal relationship that the sinner is righteous; it is within this covenantal relationship that the sinner is both righteous and is declared righteous. According to Kittel δικαίω is “to make righteous.”³⁸

Within the discussion concerning δικαίω that is found within the lexicons, it can be seen that the meaning of δικαίω has both a legal and a causative element to it. This must mean that to be righteous means both a declaration and an experience. Thus, it is to be seen that δικαίω is both declarative and causative. Is the discussion concerning justification, whether it is imputed or imparted missing the “boat”? Are there truly grounds for a separation and a dividing between the imputation and impartation of righteousness? When it is written that δικαίω means to be just, righteous and to be declared righteous, it is seen in the above definitions that justification or righteousness is both imparted and imputed. This will also be seen further in the context of Romans.

³⁶ J. Louw and E. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Based on Semantic Domains*, 452.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 452.

³⁸ G. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament 4* (trans. G. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1964), 211.

Justification is righteousness, Girdlestone claims. He writes that, “The ideas of righteousness, justification and acquittal all cluster around one verbal root, and are seen to be parts of one whole.”³⁹ He expands upon this idea when he puts forth the opinion that “to be justified, to be accounted righteous, and to have the gift of righteousness of God, are three aspects of one and the same thing.”⁴⁰ Runyan agrees in principle with this understanding. He says that the Wesleyan understanding of justification is that justification is primarily “the healing power of love rather than simply being let off from the penalty one should rightly bear.”⁴¹ Stedman agrees that justification is more than a declarative act. He claims that to be justified is to have been given the gift of righteousness, which is “the gift of God’s loving acceptance.”⁴² Although Stedman is not saying the exact same thing as Runyan, Stedman does affirm that to be justified is more than a declarative act.⁴³ To be justified is to be given a gift. This gift is righteousness. The point to be brought out here is that Stedman states that justification is the same as righteousness, which is a gift that is given and received. A gift is something that the receiver is in possession of. Thus, according to Stedman, Christian believers are in possession of righteousness. To be in possession of righteousness is more than simply being declared righteous. Osborne is in agreement with the position that righteousness is

³⁹ R. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of The Old Testament*, 159.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁴¹ T. Runyan, *The New Creation: John Wesley’s Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 29; R. Maddox also agrees with Runyan in this understanding of justification, R. Maddox, *Responsible Grace* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), 29.

⁴² R. Stedman, *From Guilt to Glory*, 8.

⁴³ R. Stedman seems to contradict himself later on in his own book. On page 129 he writes, “Justified is to be declared the righteous friend of God,” *From Guilt to Glory*, 129. How to reconcile Stedman’s two statements? He writes: “to be justified means to be given the gift of righteousness” (8), he states even clearer that to be justified is to be “made” righteous (166), and “to be justified means to be declared the righteous friend of God” (129). Does Stedman contradict himself? Perhaps the apparent contradiction of Stedman’s two statements is not a true contradiction. Perhaps Stedman truly holds to the position that justification is both declared and actual or to state in other terms, imputed and imparted.

not “an either-or-situation.”⁴⁴ By that he means that “the primary force of righteousness in Paul centers on the legal act of God whereby the repentant sinner is declared right by God and brought into a right relationship with him, resulting in right living.”⁴⁵

The prominent idea that has come out of the above discussion is that justification or righteousness, which is one and the same thing, is both a declarative act and a creative act. The declarative act states that the sinner is declared to be righteous. The creative act actually makes the sinner righteous, i.e. brings the repentant sinner into a right relationship with God, resulting in right living.

However, not all agree with that. McClain asks, “What does it mean to be justified?” He answers his own question when he writes, “the word justify means to pronounce a man righteous. He is not made righteous, but pronounced righteous and treated as if he were righteous.”⁴⁶ Moule agrees with McClain. Moule says: “He who justifies you does not educate you or inspire you up to acceptability. He pronounces you acceptable.”⁴⁷ Smart claims that justification means God's acceptance of the sinner as righteous in spite of the fact that in some degree he continues to be a sinner.⁴⁸ Barth

⁴⁴ G. Osborne, *Romans*, 42.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁴⁶ A. McClain, *Romans: The Gospel of God's Grace*, 107; M. Gorman states that righteousness is both “judicial” and “relational,” *Apostle of The Crucified Lord*, 2004, 138, 201.

⁴⁷ C.G. Moule, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans*, 1899, 96. See also J.D. Douglas who says that “justification means men are not actually righteous, but that they are declared righteous,” J.D. Douglas, ed., *The New Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 1104. J. Murray also states that “justification is forensic, that is God declares the Christian believer as righteous,” J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 170. The objection to this view is that there seems to be no taking into account 1 Cor 1:30 where Paul states that Christ has become sanctification, righteousness and redemption to the Corinthian Christians. The indwelling Christ has become righteousness to the Corinthian Christians. It does not say that Christ is only accounted righteousness to the Corinthian Christians. It says that Christ *has become* righteousness to the Corinthian Christians.

⁴⁸ J. Smart, *Doorway To A New Age: A Study of Paul's Letter to The Romans*, 58.

agrees with the idea that justification means to be declared righteous.⁴⁹ He affirms “by faith we attain the status of those who have been declared righteous before God. By faith we are what we are not.”⁵⁰

Righteousness, however, is not only imputed, but righteousness is also imparted. Beet affirms that justification denotes “to make righteous, but always in a forensic or subjective sense.”⁵¹ He clarifies what he means when he writes “to be justified denotes never impartation of inward righteousness, but always a declaring or treating as righteous.”⁵² However, a forensic righteousness without actual conformity to the moral law is worthless.⁵³ Beet states further that justification is followed by adoption and by the gift of the Spirit. The Spirit, according to Beet is the animating principle of a new life.⁵⁴ What Beet means is that justification is accompanied by adoption into God's family and the reception of the Spirit into the human heart. The reception of the Holy Spirit into the human heart is the new birth, or regeneration. The new birth imparts to the believer a new life. This new life is the life of Christ. The life of Christ certainly must be seen as righteous.

If righteousness is always accompanied by the reception of the Holy Spirit, as Beet states, how then can righteousness be simply a declaration? To make this statement is to divorce the reception of the Holy Spirit from righteousness. This cannot be done. Paul writes that Christ has become for us righteousness (1 Cor 1:30). Paul writes the

⁴⁹ E. Bancroft agrees with the view that justification is a declarative act, E. Bancroft, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids,: Zondervan, 1925), 234; See also C.L. Feinberg, *The Fundamentals for Today* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publication, 1958), 187.

⁵⁰ K. Barth, *The Epistle to The Romans*, 149.

⁵¹ J.A. Beet, *Exposition on Romans* (CD-Rom; Albany, OR: Sage Software, 1996), 115.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 116.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

same in 1 Cor 5:16-21 where he states that Christ was made sin that in him we might become the righteousness of God. These two verses do not say that we might be declared righteous. They are very clear in that they say Christ has become righteousness and that Christian believers might become righteous in Christ. The operative word in this discussion is “become.” Become means more than to be declared. Become is an experiential term which describes something that which has happened to someone.

The reception of the Holy Spirit into the heart of the Christian believer means that Christ is in the believer; this is to be understood as Christ in the person of the Holy Spirit. Rom 8:9 states that if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, that person does not belong to Christ. Rom 8:10 then states that if Christ is in you, the body is dead, but the spirit is alive because of righteousness. In these two verses a comparison/contrast is being made. The comparison/contrast is between those who have and those who do not have the Spirit (Rom 8:9) and Christ (Rom 8:10).

Christ has become for the believer, righteousness. Christ is actual righteousness. Christ is not simply declared righteousness. When Christ indwells the believer, Christ, as actual righteousness, through the Holy Spirit, is actually, experientially, indwelling the believer. This means that the actual righteousness of Christ is in the believer. The believer is righteous with the righteousness of Christ. This must be an actual experience. Christ actually indwells the believer. Christ is also actually righteous. Thus, when Christ, who is actual righteousness, indwells the believer, that believer is actually righteous.

Thus, it can be seen that righteousness is both imputed and imparted to the justified. To further develop this: A legitimate question to be asked is: Can people be justified to God without being transformed? Is justification simply a declarative decision

by God that leaves the sinner as he or she is? Brown is of the opinion that this is not possible. He claims that the declarative decision of justification has an element of power that accompanies it. He goes on further to state that this element of power is causative.⁵⁵ Brown's view is close to Beet's view in that both of them do not make a sharp division between the declarative act of justification and the causative act of justification. Haldane claims that many Christians are afraid to give the Scriptural language its full meaning. This full meaning is that when the Scriptures say that believers are made righteous, they are made righteous, they are not simply reckoned as righteous.⁵⁶ Haldane disagrees with those commentators who say that the believer, in justification, is simply declared to be righteous. He goes so far as to say that God “never accounts anyone to be what he is not in reality”.⁵⁷ Haldane would say that justification is both a declarative and a causative act. In this Bloesch would agree. He asserts that although justification is primarily forensic or legal, it also contains a mystical element in which righteousness is implanted in the believer as life. Bloesch says that Christians are not only declared righteous, they are also made righteous.⁵⁸ In his combining of the declarative and the causative elements in justification, Bloesch understands that the declarative righteousness is completed, while the making or becoming righteous is incomplete. Packer agrees with those who hold that righteousness is both declarative and experienced. Packer claims that justification is not simply God declaring the sinner to be something that s/he is not. What God does, according to Packer, is to “constitute” the sinner righteous by imputing the righteousness

⁵⁵ R. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 577.

⁵⁶ R. Haldane, *Exposition of the Epistle to The Romans* (Evansville: Sovereign Grace Book Club, 1958), 145.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁵⁸ D. Bloesch, *Jesus Christ: Savior and Lord* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 177.

of Christ to the sinner. In this “imputing” God does not “see” the sinner by him or herself. God sees⁵⁹ the sinner, who is now a believer, in Christ. God is then “able” to declare⁶⁰ what is actually true of the believer, that is, the believer is actually righteous.⁶¹

There are several questions that arise from Packer's position. The first question is: What does he mean by “constitute?” Constitute means to “compose or make up, appoint, elect, enact, establish”.⁶² Since to constitute means to “make,” how can God “constitute” sinners righteous without imparting to them actual righteousness? To impute means to charge, attribute or ascribe something to someone. Packer states righteousness is by imputation, not by impartation.⁶³ He also states that justification is a forensic, declarative action of God.⁶⁴ Therefore, according to Packer's view, God “makes” believers righteous by declaring that they are righteous.

The second question, which arises from Packer's view, is: is imputation more than simply a declaration? If in the declaration of God, believing sinners are “made” or constituted, righteous, then, indeed, there is a “causative” element to imputation and imputation is not simply or only a declaration.

⁵⁹ R. McGee is of the opinion that when God “sees” us in Christ, He sees us as we truly are, and that is truly righteous. He writes: “When God considers (i.e. reckons) you, does He deceive Himself in some way or does He know who you truly are? If He knows who we truly are, then why do we preface His understanding of us with phrases such as ‘in God’s eyes we are righteous’ or ‘forgiven’ or ‘loved’ or ‘pleasing’ and so on. Are we trying to say that God is not living in reality? That He is somehow involved in self-deception? Is He just some old grandparent type who wants to overlook the faults of His grandchildren? Either He really knows who you are or He doesn’t,” R. McGee, *The Search For Significance*, 41.

⁶⁰ R. McGee holds the opinion that to “declare” is to make. He writes: “God works by *fiat*, meaning that He can create something from nothing simply by declaring it into existence. God spoke, and the world was formed. He said, ‘Let there be light,’ and light appeared. The earth is no longer void because God sovereignly created its abundance. In the same way, we *were* condemned, but *now* we are declared righteous,” R. McGee, *The Search For Significance*, 43.

⁶¹ J.I. Packer, *Keep in Step with The Spirit* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell, 1984), 958.

⁶² *Webster's New School and Office Dictionary*, 176

⁶³ J.I. Packer, *Keep in Step with The Spirit*, 958.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 957.

Ladd writes that justification is a both declarative act and an actual righteousness. This righteousness is not an ethical perfection, but it is sinless-ness in the sense that God no longer counts his or her sin against them. Ladd posits that the righteous person is not simply “regarded” as righteous. This person is actually righteous. His definition of justification is that justification is both an ethical quality and a relationship. Here it can be understood that the relationship that the believer has with God in Christ makes that believer actually righteous. The righteousness of the relationship between God and the believer is an actual righteousness and is “no more a fiction than ethical righteousness.”⁶⁵

This idea by Ladd, that a believer is righteous in terms of his or her relationship with and in Christ, adds an element to the discussion of justification that perhaps, may answer the question: Is justification imparted or imputed? In Ladd's understanding, justification is both imparted and imputed. This is, in essence, similar to the conclusion that was reached concerning Packer's view. In the debate over imputation and impartation, it is possible that the gap between the two is not as wide as the literature seems to indicate. A preliminary conclusion can be reached concerning justification: Justification has both a declarative and a causative element.

Bancroft holds the view that God does not simply “declare” sinners as righteous. His position is that: “God does not justify ungodly men in their ungodliness. He pronounces them just only as they are united to Christ, who is absolutely just, and who by His Spirit, can make them just, not only in the eye of the Law but in moral character.”⁶⁶ Bancroft's view states that God declares sinners righteous because they are, on the basis of their union with Christ, righteous. Stewart asserts that union with Christ affects the

⁶⁵ G.E. Ladd, *A Theology of The New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1974), 446.

⁶⁶ E. Bancroft, *Christian Theology*, 238.

total moral aspect of the person.⁶⁷ Packer states that because of our union with Christ, we are as righteous as is God's own Son.⁶⁸ It is now to be seen that God does not declare the sinner to be something that s/he is not. Justification is possible, because justification is always accompanied by union with Christ.

Calvin holds the view that believers are actually righteous in Christ and not simply declared righteous. Calvin states the grace of justification is not separated from regeneration.⁶⁹ Regeneration is the theological term for the new birth. The new birth or regeneration is the work of God whereby God “implants” within the believer new life. Anderson says that the new birth or regeneration transforms a person into someone who didn't exist before.⁷⁰ This new person that is “created” by the implantation of new life⁷¹ is a righteous person. The reason for this is that the new life that is implanted, or one can say imparted in regeneration, is the life of God. God's life, which is another way of saying God, is righteous. Owen who says that the Holy Spirit, whom is given at the new birth, is the Spirit of sanctification and of purity agrees with this.⁷² This is further confirmed by Bancroft who writes that, “No member could be joined to Christ without partaking of that which Christ is, the righteousness of God.”⁷³

Regeneration, or the new birth, is intimately connected to justification.⁷⁴ A sinner cannot be justified without being born-again. A sinner who is born-again is justified.

⁶⁷ J. Stewart, *A Man in Christ: The Vital Elements of St. Paul's Religion* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 2002), 164.

⁶⁸ J.I. Packer, *Keep in Step with The Spirit*, 953.

⁶⁹ J. Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion* (The Library of Christian Classics in 2 Volumes; ed. J. McNeil; trans. F.L. Battles; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1993), 739.

⁷⁰ N. Anderson, *Victory Over The Darkness* (Crowborough: Monarch, 1990), 45.

⁷¹ R. McGee, *The Search For Significance*, 106; also Eph 2:5.

⁷² J. Owen, *Of Communion with God* (CD-Rom; Albany, OR: Sage Library, 1996), 256.

⁷³ E. Bancroft, *Christian Theology*, 74.

⁷⁴ N. Anderson states that “salvation is not a future condition, it is a present transformation,” N. Anderson, *Victory Over Darkness*, 44.

There can be no simple declaration of righteousness without the accompanying presence of the Holy Spirit, the righteous life of God, imparted and indwelling within the soul of the believer. Thus it is to be understood that righteousness is both declarative and creative. It is declarative because God “reckons” the believing sinner as righteous (Rom 5:23-25). Righteousness is also creative because in the new birth God creates a new person with a new life. This new life is from above (Rom 8:11).

The new birth or regeneration creates within the believer a new person.⁷⁵ Within Rom 7, Paul uses the phrase, “the inner man” and “in my mind.” Haldane puts forth the proposition that the “inner man” and “my mind” are the renewed self.⁷⁶ Anderson claims that the inner man is “my new self, where my spirit and God's spirit are in union.”⁷⁷ The word used in Rom 7:23, 25 which is translated “mind” is νοῦς, which means: “mind, attitude, and way of thinking as the sum total of the whole mental and moral state of being.”⁷⁸ This definition states that the νοῦς is not simply the thought processes. The νοῦς is also the moral center of the person. Berry agrees with this understanding of the νοῦς. He says that the νοῦς is “distinctly the reflective consciousness, it is the organ of moral thinking and knowing, the intellect of moral sentiment.”⁷⁹

When Paul is writing in Rom 7 about the struggle that is going on in “his mind” and in the “inner man,” what he is writing about then, is the renewed self, the moral center of the believer. This is seen in Rom 7:22 where Paul writes that he agrees with the law in the “inner man/person.” However, he sees another law in the members his body, a

⁷⁵ L. Brown, *The Doctrine of Salvation* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1978), 84.

⁷⁶ R. Haldane, *Exposition of the Epistle to The Romans*, 299.

⁷⁷ N. Anderson, *Victory Over The Darkness*, 85.

⁷⁸ W. Arndt & W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament*, 544.

⁷⁹ G. R. Berry, *A Dictionary of New Testament Greek Synonyms*, 25.

law which wages war with the law of his mind, νοῦς (Rom 7:23). In these two verses, Paul compares the inner man/person with the νοῦς. It is in the νοῦς where the desire to obey God is located (Rom 7:25). The desire to obey God is the evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit within the justified (Phlp 2:13). The presence of the Holy Spirit within a person is evidence that that person belongs to Christ, that is, is justified (Rom 8:9, 10). The Holy Spirit makes alive or renews (Rom 8:10). The renewed self is the renewed νοῦς where the Holy Spirit dwells. Thus, it can be seen that when Paul is writing about the inner person, he is referring to the νοῦς. In addition, Louw and Nida state that ἐλογίσθη means: “to put into one’s account, to charge to one’s account.”⁸⁰ This meaning of λογίζομαι is found in Rom 4:4 where the difference between gift and obligation are discussed. There is in this verse the idea of that which is actual versus that which is simply considered as belonging to someone. The one who works, their wages actually are theirs. The wages are not simply to be reckoned but considered as⁸¹ actual righteousness imparted to the believer. Thus, righteousness is declared, that is imputed by God. Righteousness is also given, that is imparted by God by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Righteousness - is it imparted, imputed or both? After reviewing some of the opinions regarding this question, it is important to return to the text of the Bible. Paul writes that, Abraham was reckoned as righteous by God. The word translated reckoned is ἐλογίσθη which means: “to hold a view, to have an opinion, to consider, to regard.” From this definition, it can be seen clearly that the lexical meaning of ἐλογίσθη is that righteousness is indeed imputed to Abraham. This is stated in Rom 4:22. Abraham believed God and God reckoned Abraham as righteous. Further, Paul writes in Rom 4:9

⁸⁰ J. Louw & E. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Based on Semantic Domains*, 583.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 366.

that righteousness was reckoned,⁸² ἐλογίσθη, to Abraham. In this verse the imputation of righteousness is held. Abraham's righteousness was imputed to him by God. The imputation of righteousness to the Christian believer is also taught by Paul (Rom 4:23, 24). Thus, it can be understood that righteousness is imputed to the Christian believer. Paul goes on to write that Christ "has become the righteousness of God" for the believer, (1 Cor 1:30). The indwelling of the Spirit, i.e. Christ, is an actual experience for the Christian believer. It can be said that in the indwelling of Christ, Christ's righteousness is imparted to the believer. The Holy Spirit does not leave his "holiness" behind when he indwells the believing sinner. When the Holy Spirit indwells the repentant sinner, the Holy Spirit brings with him, his holiness. This holiness, along with the Holy Spirit, indwells the Christian believer. Thus, it can be seen that Paul teaches that righteousness is both imputed and imparted. In addition is Du Toit who is of the opinion that there is a "strong correlation between Rom 5:1 and Rom 8:31-39 and that the aorist participle in Rom 5:1 should be read together with the present participle in Rom 8:34. He concludes from this correlation that justification is both a finished experience and an on-going experience.⁸³ This perspective is important in understanding the experience of the emphatic "I" of Rom 7. This statement will be developed further in chapter 7 of this study.

⁸² P. McReynolds translates ἐλογίσθη as "was reasoned," P. McReynolds, *Word Study Greek English New Testament* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1983), 558. See also page 73ff of this chapter of this study for a more detailed definition of ἐλογίσθη.

⁸³ A. Du Toit, "Forensic Metaphors in Romans," in *Salvation in the New Testament; Perspectives on Soteriology* (ed. J.G. van der Watt; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 213-246.

4. Rom 6

Paul begins Rom 6⁸⁴ with a question. This question is: Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? Paul's answer is, "of course not!" How can those who have died to sin still live in sin? Rom 6:2-4 states that all those who have been baptized⁸⁵ into Christ, have been baptized into Christ's death.⁸⁶ Therefore, those who have been baptized into Christ's death have been buried with Christ in order that as Christ was raised from the dead, the justified might walk in newness of life.

This new person, Paul writes, has died to sin (Rom 6:2, 10, 11). In Rom 6:2, the tense of the verb is the aorist. This means that the believer has died to sin.⁸⁷ The believer is not dying to sin. If the believer has died to sin, in what manner has the believer died to sin? Haldane says that the believer has died to sin in terms of their state before God. He claims that the phrase "died to sin" does not refer to their moral character or to their conduct.⁸⁸ His understanding of the phrase "died to sin" means that believers are freed from the guilt of sin. He also writes that believers are not dead to sin in terms of sin's

⁸⁴ F.F. Bruce entitles Rom 6-8 as the "Way of Holiness" *The Letter of Paul to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 45. The importance of this title is that Rom 7 is included within this section and is thus considered by Bruce as part of the discussion of the "way of holiness." See also M. Gorman who claims that Rom 5-8 "spells out the meaning and character of justification," M. Gorman, *Apostle of The Crucified Lord*, 363. M. Gorman, also, in his discussions states that Rom 5-8 is a whole, thus, Rom 7 is to be seen within the discussion of justification.

⁸⁵ The relationship between baptism and death is beyond the scope of this study. In addition, the mode of baptism is also beyond the scope of this study. This study accepts the reality of a relationship between baptism and Christ's death. However, a fuller investigation of this relationship waits another study. M. Gorman's opinion is that the major focus in Rom 6 is not baptism but is on the contrast between the pre- and post baptismal life," *Apostle of The Crucified Lord*, 368.

⁸⁶ C. Clifton Black writes that there is "no such thing as a Pauline doctrine of death." Paul, according to Black inherited numerous "perspectives" on death from the culture in which he lived, C. Clifton Black, "Pauline Perspectives on Death in Rom 5-8," *JBL* 3 (1984): 413-433.

⁸⁷ C.N. Bartlett asks, "Does Paul mean that Christian believers are sinless?" He answers his own question in the negative. He goes on to say that what Paul had in mind is that those who have died to sin, that is those who have been saved from sin do not continue as a deliberate choice to live in sin. Bartlett summarizes his position when he says that for those who have died to sin, "to sin is no longer the purpose of their lives." C. N. Bartlett, *Romans: Power For Modern Man*, 67.

⁸⁸ R. Haldane, *Exposition of the Epistle to The Romans*, 241.

power or the believer's love of sin.⁸⁹ Haldane's understanding of the phrase "died to sin" then is an understanding of the believer's legal or forensic relationship to God. He does not think that the phrase "died to sin" has any reference at all to the believer's moral life or conduct. Osborne, on the other hand states that Rom 6 shows that justification and sanctification are not two separate experiences but, that "justification is the first moment of sanctification: it launches a process."⁹⁰

Rom 6:2 states that you died to sin. Therefore, consider, λογίζομαι, yourselves dead to sin. Rom 6:2 states a fact. Rom 6:11 urges the justified to understand⁹¹ themselves in light of the fact of Rom 6:2, which uses the indicative mood; while Rom 6:11 uses the imperative mood. The indicative is the mood of certainty.⁹² The imperative is the mood of command or entreaty.⁹³

When Rom 6:11 exhorts the believer to consider yourselves dead to sin, what does it mean? The answer to that question begins in Rom 6:12, which states that the justified are not to let sin reign in their mortal bodies that its lusts are obeyed. Reign means to control, to lead, to be the dominant force. To reign also means that something is present. If the justified were dead to sin in that they were not responsive to sin, then this exhortation makes no sense. What can be seen is that sin is present and that it can be obeyed by the justified. Paul exhorts the ones who have died to sin to count themselves dead to sin, that is to not let sin reign.⁹⁴ In this aspect, then, Haldane is correct. The

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 242.

⁹⁰ G. Osborne, *Romans*, 147.

⁹¹ J.D. Pentecost, writes that the word reckoned in Rom 6:11 is "a word which literally means to count a thing to be true," *Designed To Be Like Him*, 125.

⁹² J. Louw & E. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Based on Semantic Domains*, 583.

⁹³ H.E. Dana and J. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of The Greek New Testament*, 168.

⁹⁴ G. Osborne states it this way: "We have died to sin (v.2) but now must "consider" ourselves on a daily basis to be dead to sin," Osborne, *Romans*, 156.

phrase died to sin in Rom 6:2 does not mean that sin is not present in the justified and that the justified are not responsive to sin.⁹⁵ Osborne is of the opinion that “died to sin” means that the Christian believer is no longer under the power of sin.⁹⁶

To count yourselves dead to sin means also to not offer your body to sin as instruments of wickedness, but to offer your body an instrument of righteousness (Rom 6:13). One idea present here is that there is still a choice within the ones who have died to sin that is the justified. The justified can either present their bodies as instruments of wickedness or of righteousness. There still exists within the ones who have died to sin the possibility of choosing to present their bodies as instruments of wickedness, or to state it simply, to sin. This is also evident in Rom 6:1. Paul writes, shall we continue in sin? No, the answer is, because we have died to sin (Rom 6:2). Here again is seen the possibility of the ones who have died to sin to continue in it. The very existence of the question found in Rom 6:1 is clear evidence that the possibility still exists for those who have died to sin, to still sin.

Thus, the meaning of the phrase died to sin must be close to Haldane’s statement. He states that the phrase died to sin is a legal, forensic meaning. However, when Haldane states that the phrase died to sin has nothing to do with the moral conduct of the believer. This must be looked at very carefully.

The phrase died to sin does have a legal, forensic meaning. It also refers to the believer’s moral conduct. Paul writes that the deeds of the flesh are evident (Gal 5:19). He also lists what the fruit of the Spirit is (Gal 5:22). It is very clear, when reading these

⁹⁵ R. Stedman states it this way: “the phrase “we died to sin” does not mean that sin is dead in me,” R. Stedman, *From Guilt to Glory*, 173.

⁹⁶ G. Osborne, *Romans*, 149.

two lists that they are actions, behaviors connected to the moral conduct of the believer. The believer, the justified is exhorted to not live according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. This exhortation is certainly an exhortation to holy living. Thus, it must be seen that Haldane is correct in his statement that the phrase died to sin has a legal, forensic meaning. It must also be seen that he is incorrect when he states that the phrase died to sin does not have reference to a believer's moral life.

The statement that the meaning of the phrase died to sin is both legal, (forensic) and has a moral aspect, is supported by Stott. According to him, the meaning of the phrase "died to sin" must be understood from all three uses of the phrase in Rom 6. He is of the opinion that the meaning of the phrase must be common to all three uses in Rom 6. In other words, the phrase "died to sin" cannot mean one thing in one verse in Rom 6 and have another meaning in a different verse in Rom 6. He calls this a fundamental principle of Biblical interpretation, that the same phrase, which occurs more than one time in the same context, must have the same meaning.⁹⁷ It is probable that a word used more than once within the same context has the same meaning. However, to fully agree with Stott that a word used more than once within the same context "must" have the same meaning is still a matter of discussion.

Stott's view is that the phrase "died to sin" is a description of what has happened to the believer in union with Christ.⁹⁸ In Christ the believer has died to sin. Because of our union with Christ, when Christ died to sin, we died to sin. Stott writes that the phrase "died to sin" does not mean however, that the believer has become unresponsive to the

⁹⁷ J.R.W. Stott, *Men Made New: An Exposition of Romans 5-8*, 39.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

influence of sin.⁹⁹ Because of his view, that is, that the same phrase which occurs more than once in the same context must have the same meaning, to understand the meaning of the phrase, one must look at all three uses. The meaning of the phrase “died to sin” when in reference to the believer, Rom 6:2,11 must have the same meaning in Rom 6:10, which is a reference to Christ. In Rom 6:10 the reference is to Christ's death to sin. In other words, if, the meaning of the phrase “died to sin” must have the same meaning in Rom 6:2, 10 and 11, then the meaning of the phrase in reference to the believer must have the same meaning in reference to Christ.

If the meaning of the phrase “died to sin” when used in reference to believers means that the believer is unresponsive to sin, then the meaning of the phrase “died to sin” when used in reference to Christ must also mean the same thing, that is Christ is now unresponsive to sin. Stott states that this cannot be. The reason that he says this is that he doesn't think that Christ was ever so responsive to sin that He needed to die to it. Thus, if the phrase “died to sin” when used in reference to Christ doesn't mean that Christ has died to sin so that He is now unresponsive to it, the same phrase when used in reference to believers can not mean that they are now unresponsive to sin.

Gifford disagrees with this position. Gifford would have it believed that the phrase “died to sin” means to be released from all power and influence of sin.¹⁰⁰ He claims that what Paul means is that for the believer, to live in sin is inconsistent with the fact that s/he has died to it. However, for Gifford, the phrase “to live in sin” means more than to commit sin. To live in sin means, for Gifford, “to have sin as the element in which

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁰⁰ E.H. Gifford, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (London: John Murray, 1881), 125.

we live, the moral atmosphere which our souls breath.”¹⁰¹

Gifford’s overall position may not be that far from the position of Stott and Haldane. Gifford’s position is based on his understanding that to live in sin means more than to commit sin. To live in sin is to have one’s fundamental orientation to sin. This means that one has chosen to let sin reign in their mortal body. To commit sin, on the other hand, can be done by those who have set their fundamental orientation to obey Christ (Phlp 2:13). Thus, one can agree with Gifford when he states that to live in sin means more than to commit sin. However, it has already been shown that Gifford’s statement, that to die to sin means to be freed from all power and influence of sin is incorrect.

Bartlett is in agreement with Gifford on the meaning of the phrase “died to sin.” Bartlett’s understanding of the meaning of this phrase is that the principle of sin has been slain.¹⁰² The death of the principle of sin means that the believer no longer, by deliberate choice, continues to live in sin. The death, to sin, means that the purpose of the believer has changed. The believer no longer has sin as his or her purpose. The purpose of the believer is now to live in righteousness. This statement Godet agrees with. Godet has written that the phrase “died to sin” means that “just as a dead man does not revive and resume his former occupations, neither does the believer return to his old life of sin”.¹⁰³ He does not mean sinless perfection, however. Godet understands the phrase “died to sin” to mean that the believer’s will has made an absolute break with sin.¹⁰⁴ To understand

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² C.N. Bartlett, *Romans: Power For Modern Man*, 68.

¹⁰³ F. Godet, *Commentary on The Epistle To The Romans*, 236.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 238.

Godet's view, one must understand that Godet states that sin exists only in the will.¹⁰⁵ He also claims that sin is the “principal of revolt whereby the human will is used against the Divine.”¹⁰⁶

According to Godet, the meaning of the phrase “died to sin” is that the will of the believer has made a radical break with sin.¹⁰⁷ At one time, the will of the person served and lived for sin. The human will was set on sin. Sin was its purpose and its master. This will was in revolt against God. When conversion occurred, the will of the person made a break with rebellion and became a “patriot”. In this context, the “patriot” is understood as a person who wants to serve, to obey God. If sin is rebellion, then repentance and obedience can be seen as patriotism. Now, it must be understood, that the use of the word “patriot” and “patriotism” is not used in terms of human relationship to their countries and to flag waving. The meaning of this word is used only in this context to mean one's relationship to God.¹⁰⁸ At one time a believer was a rebel. Conversion is the time when the rebel no longer rebels but has now changed one's heart in terms of one's God and now desires to obey God.

The various opinions regarding the phrase “died to sin” maybe closer to each other than the literature leads a reader to believe. These groups of commentators are not writing about absolute sinless perfection. They are describing what Finney would call the ultimate intention of life.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 204.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 204.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 236. N. Anderson agrees with Godet when Anderson says that “the moment you said “yes” to Christ your old self was gone,” N. Anderson, *Victory Over Darkness*, 44.

¹⁰⁸ For an explanation describing “patriot” and “rebel” see E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 220; see also R. McGee, *The Search For Significance*, 14-15; J. Bunyan, *Grace Abounding* (New Kensington: Whitaker House, 1993), 10.

The phrase death to sin sets the context for the phrase “old self” (Rom 6:6). The old self was crucified, that is has died. The old self is the self of the unbeliever. This refers to the person, who the believer was, before conversion. This is seen in comparing Rom 6:6 with Eph 4:22 and Col 3:9, where the same phrase, the old self is used.

In Eph 4:22, the old self is called the former way of life, which is being corrupted by deceitful desires. The believer is exhorted in Eph 4:24 to put on the new self, the one being created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. The phrase, to put on the new self means that the believer must be made new in the attitude of their minds, νοῦς (Eph 4:23). The fundamental orientation of the person is now Christ and to please Him (2 Cor 5:9).

The old self’s characteristics are expressed in Eph 4:25-32. These characteristics are desires, attitudes, viewpoints and perceptions as well as behaviors. Thus, in comparison, the new self that is being created in the image of God can also be understood as desires and attitudes. The whole person expresses a person’s attitudes, desires, perceptions and viewpoints. Thus, the old person in Rom 6:6 must be referring to the person before conversion.

This statement is further supported by Col 3:1-10. According to this passage, the believer is to set their hearts and minds on the Lord above (Col 3:1,2). The reason that they are to do this is that they have died (Col 3:3). This death cannot be understood as physical death. This death is to be understood as the death to sin as discussed above in reference to Rom 6:2.

Because the believer has died to sin, they are then to put to death the things of the earthly life (Col 3:5). Here it can be seen again that the death to sin does not mean an

inability to sin. The death to sin means choosing a different ultimate end. This ultimate end is to obey God. If death to sin means the inability to sin, then the exhortation to put to death the things of the earthly life has no meaning or relevance. If the believer is unable to sin, then the earthly nature no longer exists and there is no reason to put it to death.

The believer is also exhorted to not lie (Col 3:9) because they have taken off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in the image of its creator (Col 3:10). Here again, it is seen that the old self and the new self are found within desires, practices, attitudes and a fundamental relationship to God. The new self is the self that has as its fundamental desire to do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus (Col 3:17). To do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus must mean in part, to be obedient to God and to try and please Christ in all things. The old self, in contrast, must be the person whose fundamental desire is to do things, not in the name of the Lord Jesus.

The phrase “died to sin” needs to be seen in relation to the phrase the “old person”. Rom 6:6 states that the “old person” was crucified with Christ. These two phrases must be understood together. The reason for this is that the “old person” is the one who has died to sin.¹⁰⁹

The “old person” according to Gifford is the former self in the old corrupt and sinful condition.¹¹⁰ Bruce wants the reader to understand that the “old person” is the person we once were.¹¹¹ Moo writes that the “old person” is the whole person, what we were in Adam.¹¹² Cranfield claims that the “old man” or “old self” is the “whole of our

¹⁰⁹ J.D. Pentecost, *Designed To Be Like Him*, 114,115.

¹¹⁰ E.H. Gifford, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 128.

¹¹¹ F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, 137.

¹¹² D. Moo, *The New International Commentary: The Epistle to The Romans*, 373.

fallen human nature, the whole self in its fallen-ness.”¹¹³ Thus, it can be seen from the literature that the “old person” is the person the believer once was in Adam. To be in Adam is to be a rebel. The “old person” is the believer before the believer was a believer. To be in Adam is to be a sinner. This is seen in Col 3:9, 10.

The old self was crucified that the body of sin might be done away with. Rom 6:6 states: “For we know that our old self, ὁ παλαιός ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος, was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin”. In this verse the NIV calls the “old man” the old self. The NASB calls the “old man” the old self. The NRSV calls the “old man” the old self. In addition, the CEV calls the “old man” “the persons we used to be.” The old man/self was crucified with Christ in order that the body of sin might be done away with. There is a question as to the NIV's translation at this point. The translators of the NIV recognize that there can be another meaning to the Greek word translated “done away with.” This they recognize by placing a note at Rom 6:6 stating that the Greek word may mean something else other than “done away with”.

The Greek word translated “done away with” is καταργέω, which means: “make ineffective, powerless, idle, abolish, wipe out, and be released from an association with someone or something.”¹¹⁴ Within this definition by Arndt and Gingrich, the two definitions that the NIV uses can be seen. The task is now to determine the meaning that fits the context of Rom 6:6. To accomplish this task the context of Rom 6:6 will be looked at.

The context of Rom 6:6 is the description of the believer's union with Christ in

¹¹³ C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary*, 134.

¹¹⁴ W. Arndt & W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament*, 417.

Christ's death, burial and resurrection. In this context, it is stated that the old man/person was crucified with Christ in order that something might be done to the body of sin. If the body of sin is the human body that is controlled by sin, then, how can the human body be abolished when Christ was crucified? It is an obvious fact that believers still have their physical bodies. Thus, if the body of sin is the human body, then how can it have been done away with when it is still very much in existence? Paul writes that the ones who have died to sin, the ones in whom the body of sin has been dealt with, are to not let sin reign in their mortal bodies (Rom 6:12) nor to continue to present their bodies as instruments of wickedness but to present their bodies as instruments of righteousness (Rom 6:13). Here, the reality that those who have died to sin, those in whom the body of sin has been dealt with, still have their mortal bodies. Paul writes and says do not let sin reign in your mortal bodies. This must mean that those who have died to sin still have their mortal bodies. Thus, it is clear that the phrase that our body of sin might be done away with does not mean that our mortal bodies no longer exist. Thus the body of sin does not mean the mortal body.

The understanding that the body of sin does not mean the mortal body is seen in the literature that discusses the meaning of the body of sin. This phrase is found in Rom 6:6. Murray claims that the “body of sin” is the body as conditioned and controlled by sin, the sinful body.¹¹⁵ Cranfield would agree in part with this definition. He adds that the “body of sin” is the whole person controlled by sin. He goes on to posit that the “body of sin” and the “old man” are identical.¹¹⁶ McClain writes that the “body of sin” is the body

¹¹⁵ J. Murray, *The Epistle to The Romans*, 220.

¹¹⁶ C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary*, 134.

we have, in which sin finds an instrument.¹¹⁷ Moo disagrees with McClain. Moo asserts that the “body of sin” is not the physical body but the person as the instrument of contact with the world. He claims further that the “body of sin” is that aspect of the person which acts in the world and which is controlled by something else, either by the person's “new nature” or sin.¹¹⁸

On the surface, it would be easy to say that Moo's definition, in essence, is the same as McClain's. However, that may not be an accurate conclusion. Moo writes that the body of sin is the point of contact that the person has with the world. It is true, that the body is a person's point of contact with the world. It is also true to say that a person's mind is the point of contact with the world. It may also be true to say that a person's heart, soul and total being is the point of contact with the world. People do not “contact” the world with only “an aspect” of their total being, which is what Moo seems to imply that people do. Moo would have the reader believe that the body of sin is the aspect of the person which contacts and acts in the world. The total person has contact with and acts in the world. Thus, Moo's definition of the body of sin must be that the total person is the body of sin.

Gifford states that the “body of sin” is the body of the old man that was crucified. It is the natural body in its old condition, as the servant of sin.¹¹⁹ Bruce states that the “body of sin” is the sinful self. He further says that the body of sin is equivalent to the “flesh”, which he means is the unregenerate nature.¹²⁰ For Bruce the body of sin is not an aspect of the person, it is the total person. He then, would appear, to agree with Moo on

¹¹⁷ A. McClain, *Romans: The Gospel of God's Grace*, 144.

¹¹⁸ D. Moo, *The New International Commentary: The Epistle to The Romans*, 376.

¹¹⁹ E.H. Gifford, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 128.

¹²⁰ F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, 138.

the definition of the body of sin.

Beet holds the view that the “body of sin” is the sinner's own body in which sin has set up its royal throne.¹²¹ Sanday and Headlam agree with Beet in this definition of the body of sin. They write that the body of sin is the body of which sin has taken possession.¹²²

Thus, from the literature it can be seen that the phrase “body of sin” has reference to the relationship that the believer’s body has with sin. The literature is very clear, for the most part, to not simply call the physical body, the body of sin. There is no stating that the physical body is sinful because it is material. The conclusion to be reached is that the relationship that exists between the believer’s physical body and sin is called the body of sin.

On the other hand, if the meaning of καταργέω, in this context, is rendered ineffective, then, this would fit the context of Rom 6:6. The verse would then say: The old man/person was crucified with Christ in order that the body controlled by sin might be rendered ineffective, so that we no longer serve sin.

Paul writes that our old self was crucified with Christ, that our body of sin might be done away with that we should no longer be slaves to sin (Rom 6:6). To understand the meaning of the phrase that states that our body of sin might be done away with, it is important to understand the phrase that we should no longer be slaves to sin.

In Rom 6:2 it is stated in answer to the question of continuing in sin (Rom 6:1), how shall we continue in sin since we have died to sin? Paul writes that “we” have died

¹²¹ J.A. Beet, *Exposition on Romans*, 179.

¹²² W. Sanday and A.C. Headlam, *The Epistle to The Romans* (New York: Charles Scribner and Son's, 1879), 158.

to sin. He then states the old self was crucified with Christ,¹²³ that means has died, in order that the body of sin might be done away with (Rom 6:6). The body of sin was done away with in order that “we” will no longer serve sin. When the body of sin is done away with, this results in freedom from sin. The body of sin, thus, has a relationship with serving sin. In other words, it was the body of sin that was serving sin. Paul writes that those in whom the body of sin has been done away with are no longer serving sin and are now enslaved to God, that is, serving God (Rom 6:22). The, “we” who have died to sin are the ones who have been crucified with Christ. The “we” who have died to sin are also the ones who are no longer serving sin. Thus, the ones who have died to sin are the ones who are no longer serving sin. Thus, it can be seen that the body of sin is the person under sin’s control or mastery.

Paul writes that the justified are to consider themselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus (Rom 6:11).¹²⁴ Therefore, Paul writes, do not let sin reign in your mortal bodies that you should obey its lusts (Rom 6:12),¹²⁵ and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin, but present yourselves to God (Rom 6:13). The reason is so that sin should no longer be the masters of the justified, those who have died to sin (Rom 6:14). Here, it is clear that those who have died to sin are those in whom the body of sin has been dealt with. It is also clear that those in whom the body of sin has been

¹²³ J.I. Packer says that when a person is “crucified with Christ” this means that the negative reaction to the law has been dethroned in them and the creating in them of a heart after God. This heart’s passion is holiness, J.I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, 94 and a deep desire to know God and to please God, J.I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, 107.

¹²⁴ N. Anderson agrees with Paul. He says, “When your old self died with Christ on the Cross, your relationship with sin ended forever. You are no longer in the flesh, but in the spirit (Rom 8:1). Your old self, the sinner, and your old nature, are gone forever,” N. Anderson, *Victory Over Darkness*, 78.

¹²⁵ D. Francois Tolmie states that Paul in Rom 6:12-23 teaches that sin is attempting to “rule” the believer, D. Francois Tolmie, “Salvation as Redemption: The Use of ‘Redemption’ Metaphors in Pauline Literature,” in *Salvation in The New Testament: Perspectives on Soteriology* (ed. J.G. van der Watt; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 247-269.

dealt with still have their mortal bodies. Again, it is to be stated that when it is written so that the mortal body might be done away with, this does not mean the annihilation of the human body.

The body of sin is the human being under the mastery of sin. This is evident when Paul writes that those who have died to sin are alive to God in Christ Jesus (Rom 6:11). Being dead to sin and alive to God means that the justified are not presenting the members of their still existing bodies to sin but to God (Rom 6:13). Presenting oneself to God means that the person is not under the mastery of sin but is now serving God. Paul writes that a person freed from sin is one who is enslaved to righteousness that is to God (Rom 6:20, 22).¹²⁶

To have died to sin means that one is freed from sin (Rom 6:18). To be freed from sin is not through physical death, but through obedience to God and His teaching (Rom 6:17). Thus, it can be seen that to die to sin, in which the body of sin is dealt with, means that the person is no longer under sin's control but is now obedient to God (Rom 6:22).¹²⁷

¹²⁶ See D. Francois Tolmie, "Salvation As Redemption," 265-266 for a further discussion of "freedom" from sin being "slavery to God."

¹²⁷ R. Stedman's summary of Rom 6 is in agreement with this view. He summarizes: "What Paul makes clear in Rom 6 is that sin remains as an alien power trying to dominate and control our bodies and souls," R. Stedman, *From Guilt to Glory*, 190. In addition see E. Käsemann who writes concerning Rom 6:12-23 that "The apostle's concern is not with sinless-ness as freedom from guilt, but with freedom from the power of sin," *Commentary on Romans*, 174.

5. Rom 7

One view concerning Rom 7¹²⁸ is that Rom 7 is about the Law¹²⁹ and thus not applicable to Christians. However, this may not be an accurate statement. Rom 7 is written to Paul's brethren (Rom 7:1, 4). These two verses raise serious questions concerning the views that state that the emphatic "I" is anyone but a believer. Within Rom 7, Paul writes and says that the emphatic "I" has been released from the Law (Rom 7:6).¹³⁰ This statement alone raises serious questions concerning the view that the emphatic "I" is a person under the Law or is unregenerate. How can a person under the Law or an unregenerate person be a person who has been released from the Law? It can be stated at this point that the view that Rom 7 is not describing Christians because it is describing the Law must be seriously brought into question. The emphatic "I" also serves in newness of Spirit (Rom 7:6). To serve in newness of Spirit is to be understood as walking in newness of life (Rom 6:4).

¹²⁸ A. Segal is of the opinion that Rom 7 is in "the center of the darkest, thorniest and most disputed territory", A. Segal, *Paul the Convert*, 224. He also is of the opinion that Paul in Rom 7 is attempting to "meld two communities together," A. Segal, *Paul the Convert*, 253. The context of Rom 7 will show that Paul was writing about his relationship to law, the inner law and to the sin which remains within. The context does not support Segal's claim.

¹²⁹ G. Osborne writes: "There are two sections here. First, Rom 7:1-6 elaborates the 'not under law' of 6:14 and explains in more detail what this means, namely, that the bondage of the law has been broken. This is also the theme of chapter 6 as a whole, but 7:1-6 explains that the bondage has been broken by death, illustrating it with the metaphor of marriage (vv. 2-3), also a lifelong commitment broken only by death. The second section (vv. 7-25) takes up the dichotomy introduced in verse 6: the old way of the law (vv. 7-13) and the new way of the Spirit (vv. 14-25, paving the way for chap. 8), explaining how the law functions both positively and negatively. The view of some that this is an 'apology' for the law is partly true in the sense that Paul is clarifying his negative portrait in verses 1-6. But the negative effects of the law still continue. The law is not sin (v.7); it is holy, righteous, good (v.12) and spiritual (v.14); but it also produces coveting (v.8) as well as sin and death (vv. 9-11). So Paul seeks to show that while the law was a positive force, it had very negative effects," G. Osborne, *Romans*, 167. K. Haacker states that: "Rom 7 is fundamentally about the weakness of the law when confronted with human nature," I. H. Marshall, review of K. Haacker, *The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Romans*, *EvQ* 77 (2005): 272-274. A question in response to Haacker is: Is the law weak or is human nature weak? The law is spiritual (Rom 7:14), thus from God. Human nature is weak, due to corruption by sin. G. Osborne adds that the "actual purpose of the law was not to save but to identify sin," G. Osborne, *Romans*, 166.

¹³⁰ See L.S. Rehmann, "The Doorway Into Freedom: The Case of The Suspected Wife in Romans 7:1-6," *JSNT* 79 (2000), 91-104 for an interpretation of the "suspected wife" as *sotah*, a woman whose jealous husband suspects of adultery. For a different view see Osborne who claims that Paul in Rom 7:1-6 is using a metaphor to explain a lifelong commitment broken only by death, Osborne, *Romans*, 167.

Those who walk in newness of life are those who have been buried with Christ in baptism (Rom 6:4). How can a person who is still under the law, that is a non-Christian, walk in newness of life, serve in newness of spirit and have been buried with Christ? The reality is a non-Christian cannot fit this description. It is only a Christian who fits this description. Thus, it can be seen from the context of Romans, that Rom 7 is describing a Christian. This understanding will be further explained and strengthened by the discussion that follows.

Rom 6 and 7 both state that justification by faith, the imputation and impartation of Christ's righteousness, to believers, does not lead to licentiousness. Paul states that justification by faith is the foundation of holiness. The teaching of these two chapters is that the one who is justified by faith will also begin the journey of sanctification, the becoming holy in daily experience. At justification, a believer enters into union with Christ. This union with Christ is the basis for sanctification. A believer, who is in a living, dynamic union with Christ, will also be in the process of becoming holy, that is sanctification. Stewart echoes this when he affirms: "There is no such thing as a union with Christ which does not have the most far reaching effects in the moral sphere. The man who comes to be in Christ has found the Supreme ethical dynamic."¹³¹ This understanding is very important, not only to the thesis of this study, but in Christianity itself.¹³² In addition, Osborne writes that "justification and sanctification are not two separate experiences but interconnected aspects of salvation. Justification is the first

¹³¹ J. Stewart, *A Man in Christ: The Vital Elements of St. Paul's Religion*, 157.

¹³² To attempt a detailed defense of this statement is beyond the scope of this study. It is to be stated, however, that faith without the accompanying works, is dead, see Jam 2:14-26. The further question of James' place in the Canon is also beyond the scope of this study.

moment of sanctification.”¹³³

The Christian is to consider him or herself dead to sin (Rom 6:7-11). However, being dead to sin cannot mean that the body is unresponsive. It is to be seen that the phrase dead to sin means freed from sin (Rom 6:7). Being freed from sin means: (1). Freed from sin's penalty and condemnation (Rom 8:1). The one who is freed from sin expresses this freedom in not letting sin reign in their mortal bodies that the lusts of sin would be obeyed (Rom 6:12). It is written, “Don't obey sin's lusts.” This must mean that in the mortal bodies of those who have died to sin are sin's lusts, (2). Freedom from sin also means not presenting the members of their bodies to sin as instruments of sin. This on the other hand means that the members of the body are presented to God as instruments of righteousness (Rom 6:13), (3). Being freed from sin also means that one is a slave to righteousness (Rom 6:18). (4) Freedom from sin is thus seen in a heart commitment to Christ and His teaching (Rom 6:17). (5). Being freed from sin is expressed and seen in sanctification (Rom 6:22). As it has been stated, justification, the dying to sin and being enslaved to God results in sanctification. If the identity of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is found out to be a regenerate person, then this will lead to the need for further exploration as to the nature of sanctification. This further exploration of the nature of sanctification and of the more detailed examination of Rom 7 will be found in chapter 3 of this study.

¹³³ G. Osborne, *Romans*, 91.

6. Rom 8

Rom 8¹³⁴ continues the discussion of the sanctification of the believer.¹³⁵ Rom 7 begins the discussion of the struggle within the Christian. Rom 8 continues this discussion and explains further that Christians “groan” waiting for the redemption of the body (Rom 8:23). The groaning of Christians waiting for their bodies’ redemption are those who in whom the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled, those who do not walk according to the flesh, but who walk according to the spirit (Rom 8:4). This is referring to mature, spiritual Christians (Rom 8:12-15), those who are described as living in bodies that are dead to sin (Rom 8:10, 11). Mature Christians groan, waiting, for the redemption of their bodies. According to Rom 6, these bodies are dead to sin. The teaching that these bodies are dead to sin and that these groan must mean that there is a struggle going on within mature, spiritual Christians with sin. As will be seen later on, this teaching, that there is a struggle going on in the mature, spiritual Christian, is confirmed in other passages of Scripture. Osborne is of the opinion that Rom 7 describes life in the flesh and Rom 8 life in the Spirit.¹³⁶

Rom 8 is a chapter that describes how a Christian is to please God. However, within Rom 8, itself, is a description of not only how to please God, there is also within Rom 8 a description of the struggle within the believer with sin, the Christian who is

¹³⁴ G. Montague puts forth the opinion that Rom 8 describes the role of the Holy Spirit in the Christian believer’s life, *The Living Thought of St. Paul* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1966), 181. E. Käsemann states that Rom 7 and Rom 8 form a unity, E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 191.

¹³⁵ M. Gorman calls Rom 8 “the climax of the section of Romans that begins at Rom 5:1,” M. Gorman, *Apostle of The Crucified Lord*, 374.

¹³⁶ G. Osborne, *Romans*, 167.

walking to please God.¹³⁷

Rom 8:7 describes a mindset set on the flesh. The mindset set on the flesh is the mindset of unbelievers (Rom 8:5, 6, compare with Rom 8:9, 10). The description of the mindset set on the flesh, which is not the mindset of Christians, is that this mindset does not, nor is it able to, subject itself to the Law of God. Rom 8, certainly a chapter that discusses the sanctification of Christians, clearly states that the mindset of Christians is subject to the Law of God. Christians are not free from obeying the spirit of the Law of God. In fact, the essence of salvation is the desire to obey God and to please Christ (2 Cor. 5:9).

The context of Rom 8:9-17 is that of a Christian believer living in a dead body. This dead body still is able to do misdeeds, though the mindset of the Christian is on obeying the law of God. Yet, this person, who has the Spirit of God dwelling within, is called an heir of God.

Rom 8:9-27 is a description of a Christian, who, still groans because he or she is still living in an unredeemed body (Rom 8:23),¹³⁸ who still struggles with weakness (Rom 8:26), who, lives in a body which is dead because of sin, yet their spirit is alive because of righteousness (Rom 8:10). In Rom 8:10 is a clear description of a Christian believer whose spirit desires holiness and righteousness while their body desires sin. This is the very same description of the emphatic “I” in Rom 7:22-25 where it says that there

¹³⁷ P. Melancthon says that Rom 8:1 “does not claim that there is no sin in the pious, but no condemnation,” *Commentary on Romans*, 163.

¹³⁸ S. Eastman claims that the reference to the “body” in Rom 8:23 can be understood in both an individual manner as referring “to those who are the Sons of God, that is, those who are led by the Spirit in the warfare against the flesh” and in a corporate sense as the full adoption of the Jewish people in the redemption through Christ.” S. Eastman, “Whose Apocalypse? The Identity of the Sons of God in Romans 8:19,” *JBL* 2 (2002): 263-277.

are two “laws” within the emphatic “I”. One “law” desires to obey God and the other “desires” sin (see especially Rom 7:23, 25). Thus, Rom 8:10 confirms the conclusion that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is a Christian believer.

Christian believers also live in bodies where they still suffer (Rom 8:18).¹³⁹ Christian believers are exhorted to put to death the deeds of the body (Rom 8:13). This can only be understood in the sense that the body still has deeds that must be put to death. If that is not the case, why then, would Christians be exhorted to put to death non-existent deeds? The body that is dead because of sin, which the believer has, cannot be dead in the sense that it does not function nor is it dead in the sense of not being physically alive. Dead because of sin means that the body is not alive in the sense that it has no relation to God. This is another way to say that the body is unredeemed (Rom 8:23). The word unredeemed means that the body is still in bondage to sin. The word used in Rom 8:23 to describe the “redemption” of the body is ἀπολύτρωσις, which means “recall of captives from captivity through the payment of a ransom for them”.¹⁴⁰ Louw and Nida define ἀπολύτρωσις as: “to release or set free, with the implied analogy to the process of freeing a slave.”¹⁴¹ Stott enlarges on this definition of redemption when he says, “To redeem is to buy or to buy back, whether as a purchase or a ransom. Inevitably, then, the emphasis of the redemption image is on our sorry state, indeed our captivity, in sin.”¹⁴² Rom 8:20-23 explains that creation itself is waiting to be set free into the freedom of the children of God. The freedom of the children of God is understood as freedom from sin

¹³⁹ The suffering of Rom 8:18 is certainly suffering from persecution, but it is also suffering from living and groaning in a body dead because of sin; see Rom 8:23.

¹⁴⁰ R. Trench, *Synonyms of The New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1980), 290.

¹⁴¹ J. Louw & E. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Based on Semantic Domains*, 488.

¹⁴² J.R.W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 175.

and corruption. God's children experience this freedom now in the experience that is called the first fruits (Rom 8:23). This means that Christians have the Holy Spirit now and the presence of the Holy Spirit is the first fruits of the fullness that is to come. The experience of the first fruits is a freedom from sin (Rom 6:7). The Christian is then freed from sin. However, within this experience of freedom there is the groaning waiting for the full redemption of the body (Rom 8:23). The body in which Christians are still living is a dead body (Rom 8:10). Now of course, this does not mean that the body is dead in the sense that it cannot nor does not respond to the various stimuli. Free Christians are living in dead bodies. These are bodies that cause Christians to groan and to respond in ways that the believer does not want or desire.¹⁴³

How does the description of Christians who suffer because they live in unredeemed bodies, as recorded in Rom 8, differ from Rom 7:14-25? A tentative answer would be that the description of the struggle within the Christian who is walking to please God, as described in Rom 8 is not different than the description of the emphatic "I" found in Rom 7. It can also be said that Rom 7:14-25 is an enlargement of the struggle found in Rom 8.¹⁴⁴

7. Concluding Statement

The identity of the emphatic "I" and his/her spiritual portrait, in part, come out of the

¹⁴³ M. Gorman, *Apostle of The Crucified Lord*, 374-378, contains his discussion on the "struggle" of Christians which is found in Rom 8.

¹⁴⁴ This statement will be seen in more detail in chapter 3 of this study.

study of the context of Rom 1-8. The order and context of Rom 1-8 leads to the tentative conclusion that the “emphatic I” of Rom 7 is a Christian believer. Rom 1-4 describe the sinfulness of the human race and the provision that God has provided for salvation, which is faith in Christ. Rom 5 discusses the fact of justification. Rom 6, following Rom 5’s discussion of justification, describe in detail the Christian believer’s freedom from sin, positionally in Christ. Rom 7, following Rom 6’s description of the freedom of Christian believers in Christ, describe the present experience of Christian believers. Although they have been freed from sin in Christ, they still are in unredeemed bodies. The fact that Christian believers, in this world, are still living in unredeemed bodies is further stated in Rom 8:23. Rom 8 then describes the ever more and more victorious life that can be lived by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 3: A Detailed Examination of Romans 7

The context of Rom 7 was examined in chapter 2 of this study. This chapter will consist of a deeper examination of Rom 7.¹

1. An Examination of Justification and Sanctification

The identity of the emphatic “I” is dependent in part on understanding the experience of justification and sanctification. There can be no justification without sanctification. Justification is understood as momentary; sanctification, however, is understood in three ways: momentary, process and final. Sanctification as momentary is to be seen in justification. This means that when a person is justified, that person is also sanctified. When a person believes in Christ, this person becomes “in Christ.” Christ is now their sanctification. This can be seen in 1 Cor 1:30 where it is written that “it is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God, which is our righteousness, holiness and redemption.” The word translated “righteousness” is δικαιοσύνη, which means: “uprightness, justice as a characteristic of a judge, in a moral and religious sense\uprightness, righteousness, the characteristic required of men by God, righteousness in the sense of fulfilling the divine statutes, righteousness, uprightness as the compelling motive for the conduct of one's whole life.”²

¹ Robinson writes that “more ink has been spilled over Rom 7:7-8:4 than any other,” J.A.T. Robinson, *Wrestling With Paul* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1979), 82.

² W. Arndt & W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament*, 196.

Holiness in the NIV is translated from ἁγιασμός, which means: “holiness, consecration, sanctification; the use in a moral sense for a process or, more often, its result (the state of being made holy).”³ Girdlestone says that ἁγιασμός should best be translated as sanctification.⁴ He goes on to say that true sanctification is the separation of the spirit from all that is impure and polluting.⁵ This separation of the spirit from all that is impure is sanctification considered as a process. This means that sanctification is not completed in this life; the process of sanctification is a life-long process.⁶ Käsemann adds that sanctification is the living out of justification.⁷ Murphy-O’Conner is of the opinion that “For the followers of Christ, Christ’s victory is a victory in principle; it must be translated into reality with the aid of the Spirit.”⁸

When a person believes in Christ Jesus, the Holy Spirit indwells that person. The Holy Spirit, being God's Spirit, is righteousness, sanctification and holiness. The Holy Spirit is not only imputed to the believer. The Holy Spirit actually indwells the believer. The Holy Spirit is “given” or one can say, “imparted” to the believer. This is to say that when a person is declared righteous, that is justified, that person is also indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The believer is not only indwelt by the Holy Spirit; the believer is also righteous. The righteousness of the believer is both imputed, that is reckoned to the believer because of the righteousness of Christ (Rom 4:22-25), and the righteousness of Christ is imparted to the believer. This is done through the actual indwelling of the Holy

³ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴ R. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of The Old Testament*, 180.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ There is a life-long growth that takes place for the Christian. This growth process occurs both before the moment of sanctification and afterwards.

⁷ E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 183.

⁸ J. Murphy-O’Conner, *Paul His Story*, 201.

Spirit in the believer. The Holy Spirit is the righteousness of the believer.⁹

Sanctification as final is experienced when Christ appears. It is written that when He appears, we will be like Him (Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 3:18).

2. A Definition of Sin

To understand the experiences of justification and sanctification, it is necessary to understand the concept of sin. The most fundamental understanding of “sinner” is one who lives in sin.¹⁰ Sin is defined as rebellion.¹¹ Murphy-O’Conner claims that Paul uses ἁμαρτία in an unusual way.¹² He is of the opinion that Paul used *sin* “to crystallize his vision of society as the victim of a massive disorientation. The origin of this disorientation is to be traced back to the sin of the one person, (Rom 5:12).”¹³ Neyrey is of the opinion that sin “is a personified agent of Satan, the twin of death.”¹⁴ Also S. Paul Schilling who puts forth his understanding of sin as “trusting ourselves rather than God, placing ourselves in the center instead of the One who alone is our true Center and substituting our own limited ends for the inclusive purposes of God.”¹⁵ Jones posits that

⁹ See 1 Cor 1:30.

¹⁰ This statement will be explained further in the discussion that follows.

¹¹ See D.B. Garlington, *Faith, Obedience and Perseverance*, 84-107 for his discussion of sin. In summary, he states that sin is “idolatry, rebellion” (93,100). See also S. Marrow, *Paul: His Letters and His Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 211.

¹² J. Murphy-O’Conner, *Paul A Critical Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 335.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 336.

¹⁴ J. Neyrey, *Paul: In Other Words* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990), 173.

¹⁵ S.P. Schilling, “Evil and Freedom Revisited,” *QR* 4 (1991): 4-17. For an interesting variant on this understanding of autonomy see J.Vogelsang who defines modernism as “marked by belief in the autonomous nature of the self or individual, faith in technology and reason as the tools for progressively improving the human condition,” (Doing the Right Thing in a Postmodern Society, *QR* 4 (1992): 3-13). The relationship between sin and modernism is beyond the scope of this study. What is

sin at its core is “the arrogance of taking things for granted.”¹⁶ In response to Jones’ position¹⁷ is the various terms used for sin throughout the Bible and the account of the Fall¹⁸ in Gen 3.

Sin as rebellion can be seen from Gen 3:5.¹⁹ This passage states: “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” In Hebrew the word translated “like” is כ, which means: “as, like”, according to Holladay²⁰ and Harris.²¹ The Septuagint translates כ as ὡς, which means: “like, as.”²²

It is clear that by the meaning of both the Hebrew and the Greek for the word “like” in Gen 3:5 that the essence of sin is the attempt or desire to be “like, as” God. The attempt or desire to be “like” God means that the sinner has placed something else in the place of God. To place something else in the place of God means that God has been “removed” from the place that belongs to Him. The desire or attempt to be “like” God means that God is not the One who is the Lord of the sinner. This means that the sinner is not listening to, nor obeying God. The attempt or desire to be “like” God means that the

interesting in this discussion, however, is the point of intersection between sin and modernism which is the autonomous self. See also A. Du Toit, “Forensic Metaphors in Romans,” 213-246.

¹⁶ W.P. Jones, “In Wait for My Life: Aging and Desert Spirituality,” *QR* 2 (1992): 17-27.

¹⁷ It is hard to find Jones’ position that the core of sin is taking things for granted as recorded in Gen 3 and also in the various terms for sin used throughout the Bible.

¹⁸ Whether Gen 3 is viewed as the account of the Fall of the human race or as a religious story which conveys truth, the essence is the same in regards to the essence of sin as choosing self over God.

¹⁹ S.P. Schilling who claims that he has taken his understanding of sin, (see chapter 3 of this study), from Gen 3, who says that Adam and Eve “trusted the serpent instead of God (You will not die) and succumbed to the temptation to eat the fruit which would give them knowledge equal to God’s: (Your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil,” S.P. Schilling, *Evil and Freedom Revisited*, 11.

²⁰ W. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of The Old Testament*, 149.

²¹ *Theological Wordbook of The Old Testament*, 425.

²² J. Lust; ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint, Part II* (Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1996), 527.

sinner is one's own god, or is one's own highest authority.²³ To say this in another fashion is to say that whatever is a person's highest authority will determine for that person what is "right or wrong" or "good and evil" for that person. Gen 3:5 states that the desire to be "like" God meant that Adam and Eve replaced God, in their own lives, with another authority. This "other" authority determined for them what was "good" and "evil" or it can be said, "right" and "wrong." Thus, this "other authority" has become god to that person. The reason for this is: only God has the "right" to determine good and evil, right and wrong. Whatever determines good and evil, right and wrong, is a person's god. God has been replaced either by the sinner him or herself or by something of the sinner's choosing. This is rebellion, the refusal to obey God as God, which is the essence of sin.²⁴

The essence of sin, being the refusal to obey God as God, leads to a discussion of the understanding of sin.²⁵ In addition, the Old Testament states that there are two fundamental categories of sin. These two categories of sin are: unintentional sin (Lev 4, 5) and willful sin (Num 15:30). Lev 5:17 defines unintentional sin. This verse states: "If a person sins and does what is forbidden in any of the Lord's commands, even though he does not know it, he is guilty and will be held responsible." The second category of sin is the willful sin. Willful sin is translated from the Hebrew and means "sins with a high hand" (Num 15:30).

Within the Old Testament teaching there is forgiveness for unintentional sins.

²³ D.B. Garlington states that Gen 3's account of the fall of Adam is to the "effect that Adam endeavored to set himself in the place of God," *Faith, Obedience and Perseverance*, 90.

²⁴ Mr. B. Carradine, *The Old Man* (Albany, Oregon: Sage Library, CD, 1996), 263; also R.S. McGee, *The Search For Significance*, 15.

²⁵ F. Josephus, in writing about Adam and Eve, says that sin is "thinking that they were happier than they were before, as they discovered what they were in want of" ("The Antiquities of the Jews, Book I," *Josephus, Complete Works* (trans., W. Whiston; Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1981), 26).

This is recorded throughout Lev 4, 5. However, for sins “with a high hand,” there is no forgiveness offered, according to the Old Testament. This understanding is also stated in Heb 10:26 where it is written that if we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left. The word in Heb 10:26 which has been translated “deliberately” is ἐκούσιως - which means “willingly, without compulsion, deliberately.”²⁶

Not all agree with the above statements, however. Wesley is of the opinion that sin is “a voluntary transgression of a known law.”²⁷ Purkiser says that Wesley's definition of sin “is a useful and scriptural formulation.”²⁸ Barth is in agreement with Wesley's definition of sin when he writes that sin is “the willful and conscious dishonoring of God.”²⁹ However, there are some difficulties with this definition.

The first difficulty to be listed is: What does Wesley do with the many Greek and Hebrew words that define sin as more than a “willful violation of a known law?” How will Wesley answer the Old Testament teaching that there are willful and unintentional sins? What will Wesley do with the understanding of sin, as “ignorance of what one ought to have known?” These are only two of the difficulties that cause one to question Wesley's definition of sin. There maybe help from Finney, however, in answering these questions. Finney states that sin is a wrong aim or intention.³⁰ According to Finney, sin is to choose the wrong ultimate and supreme end of life. When a person chooses something

²⁶ W. Arndt & W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament*, 243.

²⁷ J. Wesley, “On Perfection,” *The Works of John Wesley* (Sermon; CD-ROM; Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 1995), 417.

²⁸ W.T. Purkiser, *Exploring Our Christian Faith* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1960), 211.

²⁹ K. Barth, trans. by E. Hoskyns, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 192; K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, (trans G.W. Bromiley; New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961), 120-132.

³⁰ C. Finney, *Finney's Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1976), 117.

other than God as the ultimate and supreme end, purpose of life, this is to sin. Both, Finney and Wesley seem to have as their fundamental understanding of sin as, volitional. The ability to choose would imply knowledge of the choices available.

The word for sin that truly is the most difficult for Wesley's definition of sin is ἀγνόημα, which means, according to Trench, “ignorance of what one ought to have known.” Arndt and Gingrich define ἀγνόημα as “sin committed in ignorance.”³¹

If sin is only a willful transgression of a known law, then the sinner must “know” the law that is being transgressed. It stands to reason that “an unknown law” cannot be willfully violated. The question that Wesley's definition of sin does not answer is: How can a sinner willfully violate a known law in ignorance? This is a very important question. Both Trench and Arndt and Gingrich define ἀγνόημα as a sin committed in ignorance. In combining this word with Wesley's definition of sin, there are difficulties in holding strictly to the understanding of sin as a willful transgression of a known law. The conclusion, therefore is, that it is impossible to hold strictly to Wesley's definition of sin and to include all of the words that the Scripture uses to define sin.

The above is not the only difficulty that arises out of Wesley's definition of sin. Lev 4, 5 state that a person can sin unintentionally. The word translated “unintentionally” is: שגגה, which means, according to Holladay, “commit error, sin inadvertently.”³² שגג is also defined as a “sin which may result from two causes. These causes are negligence or ignorance. Either the perpetrator knows the law but unintentionally violates it or he acts without knowing he did wrong.”³³

³¹ W. Arndt & W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament*, 11.

³² W. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of The Old Testament*, 360.

³³ *Theological Wordbook of The Old Testament*, 904.

These definitions add another question to Wesley's definition of sin. How can a sinner sin willfully “unintentionally?” If sin is only a willful violation of a known law, then a sinner cannot sin “unintentionally.” According to Wesley, every sin must be a willful, intentional transgression of a known law. His definition states that there simply cannot be any sins committed “unintentionally.” Nor, according to Wesley, can there be any sins committed in ignorance.³⁴

Finney writes that, “Sin consists in selfish ultimate intention.”³⁵ He goes on to say that holiness always is singleness of eye or intention.³⁶ His understanding of sin and holiness leads Finney to the conclusion that no blame or charge can be laid against someone if their intention is pure. Finney states that the human obligation is not to be measured by the “views God has” concerning an object of choice.³⁷ Human responsibility is determined by that human's knowledge. If a person's intention is equal to his or her knowledge, then that person's obligation and obedience is perfect.

Finney's definition and understanding of sin has within it the same major components that Wesley's definition of sin has. Wesley and Finney's definition of sin focuses on the “will” or “intention” as the focus of sin. Both of their views place a lot of emphasis on the knowledge of the person. Also, their views seem to leave out some of the

³⁴ The answer to this question may be found in Wesley's definition of sin, as a willful transgression of a known law, coupled with his use of infirmities that cause the Christian believer to make mistakes. Mistakes may be the unintentional sin of the Old Testament.

³⁵ C. Finney, *Finney's Systematic Theology*, 119.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 39. See also A. Edersheim who states that “the sin-offering and the trespass-offering applied only to sins through ignorance in opposition to those done presumptuously (or with a high hand). For the latter the law provided no atonement. By sins through ignorance we are to understand, according to the Rabbis, not only such as were committed strictly through want of knowledge, but also those which had been unintentional or through weakness, or where the offender at the time realized not his (*sic!*) guilt,” *The Temple* (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans, 1982), 128.

³⁷ C. Finney, *Finney's Systematic Theology*, 41.

words and concepts that the Old and New Testament use for sin.³⁸

To discover the identity of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7, a further examination of the teaching of sin must be undertaken. The above discussion has covered some Scriptural words used for sin, especially the words found in the New Testament. There has also been a brief look at the Old Testament's teaching on the two categories of sin, which is intentional and unintentional. However, the journey to discovering the identity of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 must now lead to a discussion of original sin.

Although the phrase “original sin” is not found within Rom 5-8, the teaching of original sin is found within Rom 5 in the discussion concerning the First and Second Adams. It is for this reason that the phrase “original sin” is included in this study.

In the discussion concerning original sin, Berkhof posits that original sin has two elements included within it. The first element is original guilt and the second element is original pollution.³⁹ By original guilt, Berkhof means the guilt of Adam's sin, as the federal head of the human race, was imputed to all his descendants.⁴⁰ Berkhof teaches that “in Adam” all sinned and the guilt of that sin is imputed to all. Adam, being the federal head of the human race, sinned and thus every member of the human race sinned

³⁸ L. Richards in defining sin writes: “On the one hand Scripture says sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4). On the other hand, sin is described as a principle living in and with us, warping us against our will (Rom 7:16-25). The biblical words for sin reflect this same duality. One set of Old Testament words pictures sin as rebellion: conscious acts willfully taken against what we know to be right. Another set of Old Testament words portray sin as falling short: missing the mark in spite of our best efforts to hit the target God has set before us. The New Testament words carry the same meanings. Willful sin involves the choice of wrong. But the other kind of sin throws us into a different turmoil. The other kind of sin forces us to suffer the effects of what we have not chosen. We suffer for what we are,” *Remarriage: A Healing Gift From God* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1981), 45. The above definition for sin is Richard's. The position in today's New Testament studies is that the understanding of sin as “missing the mark” is not an accurate definition for sin. The purpose for including L. Richard is to show that sin is many faceted and that there is not complete agreement on the definition of sin; for a summary of the various meanings of sin, see T. Brittain, *The United Methodists: What We Believe and Why* (Columbus, Georgia: Brentwood Christian Press, 1986), 36-40.

³⁹ L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1984), 245-6.

⁴⁰ See also R.S. McGee, *The Search For Significance*, 15.

“in Adam”.

He further claims that the teaching that all sinned “in Adam” is found in Rom 5:12-19. Finney, in disagreement with Berkhof, claims concerning Rom 5:12-19 that the Bible once and only intimates that Adam's first sin has in some way been the occasion of all people.⁴¹

Finney's comment needs to be discussed. He affirms that the Bible “once and only once” in an incidental way, claims that Adam's first sin has affected the human race. Now, if the Bible teaches in just one place other than in Rom 5:12-19 that Adam's sin has affected the entire human race, then Finney's comment must be discarded. The reason for this is that Finney's emphasis was on “once and only once,” that the Bible teaches that Adam's sin has affected the entire human race. There is at least one other place that the Bible teaches that “in Adam” all die. This place is 1 Cor 15:22. In Adam all die” is the English translation. Death is the result of sin (Rom 6:23), the Bible states. Thus, when 1 Cor 15:22 claims that “in Adam” all die, the question to be asked is: How do all die in Adam?

Rabbinic theology states that, “the judgment in heaven makes the community responsible for the sins of the individual. They indeed fall heavily into the scale, but not on the ground of imputation, but by reason of solidarity, which was very strongly felt in the Ancient Jewish community.”⁴² Schechter goes on to infer “the great principle was: all Israel are surety for one another.” He defines this by saying that Israel, according to Ancient Rabbinic teaching, is like one body and one soul, if one of them sinned, they are

⁴¹ C. Finney, *Finney's Systematic Theology*, 189.

⁴² S. Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology: Major Concepts of The Talmud* (New York: Schocken Books, 1909), 191.

all punished.⁴³ The point here is that Ancient Rabbinic theology teaches the solidarity of Israel. Israel is “surety” for one another. In other words, what one does, affects the whole.⁴⁴ It is important to remember that Paul, being a Jewish Christian, carried many of the Jewish beliefs with him after his conversion on the road to Damascus.

This is what Paul is stating in Rom 5:12-19 and 1 Cor 15:22. Paul is stating that the human race is a whole, that there are not “races” but one race, the human race. He is also stating that the human race's federal head, which is defined as representative for the whole race, was Adam and now is Christ⁴⁵. Joubert holds the position that Paul’s use of Adam and Christ in Rom 5:12-21 are representatives of two different spheres.⁴⁶ His understanding seems to be in agreement with the position of Christ being the Second Adam that is Christ as the Federal Head of the human race.

To deny the federal headship of Adam, which Finney seems to do, is to deny the federal headship of Christ. If Adam is not the representative of the race in his actions in the Garden, then Christ is not the representative of the race in His actions on the Cross. Paul's point in Rom 5:12-19 is not only to discuss “original sin” as occurring in Adam but also to discuss “righteousness” being given in Christ. In this discussion, Adam and Christ are compared and contrasted. They are compared in that both of their actions have affected the whole race (Rom 5:17-19). They are contrasted in that the “one sin” of Adam has brought the whole race into sin (Rom 5:15); while the gift of righteousness is given

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ W. Barclay agrees with this position regarding the solidarity of the nation, (*The Letter to the Romans*, 79).

⁴⁵ See M. Gorman, *Apostle of The Crucified Lord*, 208.

⁴⁶ S.J. Joubert, “ΧΑΡΙΣ In Paul: An Investigation Into The Apostle’s ‘Performative’ Application Of The Language of *Grace* Within The Framework Of His Theological Reflection On The Event/Process of Salvation,” in *Salvation in The New Testament: Perspectives on Soteriology* (ed. J.G. van der Watt; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 187-211.

because of the many transgressions (Rom 5:15, 16). The point at issue is that Rom 5:12-19, while not being the only place in the Bible where the federal headship of Adam is taught, does teach that Adam's sin is the sin of all the race, thus all are guilty because of the sin of Adam.

The federal headship of Adam and Christ offer help in understanding Finney's and Wesley's emphasis on sin as volitional, even though the biblical text states that sin is more than willful. As Schechter stated, rabbinic theology taught that Israel was surety for one another. According to Rabbinic theology, what one did, all did. Thus, according to Rabbinic theology and Rom 5, when Adam chose to sin, the whole human race chose to sin. In other words, the first act of sin was not only a private affair, but it was a cosmic affair. The first act of sin was indeed volitional.

In 1 Cor 15:22, the Greek word for "die" is ἀποθνήσκουσιν – in the present tense. This would seem to indicate that not only have all people "died" in Adam, but those who are still in Adam are still dying.⁴⁷ This can be understood in the sense that in Adam, all have died; that is in their relationship to God all are dead. The answer to this "death" is the experience called regeneration or the new birth. Regeneration infuses in and imparts to the believing sinner a new life, God's righteous and holy life. In the experience of regeneration the sinner and God are now reconciled.

The present tense of "dying" which is stated in 1 Cor 15:22 can be understood as a living experience of being dead in relationship to God. Those who are still "in Adam" have not only "died" in the sense that their relationship with God does not exist, but, those who are still "in Adam" are dying in the sense that, even in their physical life, they

⁴⁷ It is true that the present tense can be used in an historical sense to describe the past. However, the present tense is also used to describe the present.

do not have true life. Living in their physical life they simply exist. To exist means that day-by-day they die a little more.

The main point to be brought out here is that those who are dying are dying “in Adam.” There is then a relationship between dying and being “in Adam.”

The second element that is included in original sin, according to Berkhof, is original pollution.⁴⁸ By original pollution, Berkhof means: the absence of original righteousness and the presence of evil.⁴⁹ Berkhof also is of the opinion that original pollution is called total depravity. He defines total depravity in this manner “the inherent corruption extends to every part of man's nature, to all faculties and powers of both soul and body.”⁵⁰ Again, Finney disagrees with Berkhof. Finney's position is that sin must be a choice or intention and not a substance.⁵¹ In this Baruch is in agreement. He is of the opinion that sin “is not a thing. It is not a genetic defect.”⁵²

Finney defines moral depravity as selfishness.⁵³ He explains that moral depravity

⁴⁸ L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 246.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 246-7. See also, H.R. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, (New York, Harper Torchbooks, 1951), 112.

⁵¹ C. Finney writes: “We deny that the human constitution is morally depraved, because it is impossible that sin should be a quality of the substance of soul or body. It is, and must be, a quality of choice or intention, and not of substance. To make sin an attribute or quality of substance is contrary to God's definition of sin” (*Finney's Systematic Theology*, 185); See also A. Barnett, *The Church: Its Origin and Task* (Nashville: National Methodist Student Movement, 1960), 62-64.

⁵² M. Brauch, *Hard Sayings of Paul* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 28.

⁵³ C. Finney's complete definition of moral depravity is: “Moral depravity does not consist in, nor imply a sinful nature, in the sense that the substance of the human soul is sinful in itself. It is not a constitutional sinfulness. It is not an involuntary sinfulness. Moral depravity consists in selfishness; in a state of voluntary committal of the will to self-gratification. It is a spirit of self-seeking, a voluntary and entire consecration to the gratification of self. It is selfish ultimate intention; it is the choice of a wrong end of life; it is moral depravity, because it is a violation of moral law. It is a refusal to consecrate the whole being to the highest well-being of God and of the universe, and obedience to the moral law, and consecrating it to the gratification of self. Moral depravity sustains to the outward life, the relation of a cause. This selfish intention, or the will in this committed state, of course, makes efforts to secure its end, and these efforts make up the outward life of the selfish man. Moral depravity is sinfulness, not of nature but of voluntary state. It is a sinfully committed state of the will to self-indulgence. It is not a sinful nature, but a sinful heart. It is a sinful ultimate aim or intention,” (*Finney's Systematic Theology*, 167).

is located in the will or ultimate intention. The wrong ultimate intention, of course, is expressed in sinful words, thoughts and deeds. But a wrong ultimate intention or will is not always expressed in sinful words, thoughts or deeds. Sometimes a wrong ultimate intention is expressed in “moral” behavior. This moral behavior is not an expression of a true desire to serve and please God. If the ultimate intention or will is set on self-gratification, it does not matter what kind of behavior is expressed - the will is sinful.

Berkhof says that original pollution is not a change in the substance of the soul nor is it something “infused” into the human soul.⁵⁴ In this Berkhof and Finney agree. Berkhof also claims that the sinner, apart from the grace of God in conversion, cannot “change his fundamental preference for sin and self to love for God.”⁵⁵ Again, there is the agreement between Finney and Berkhof in that the will of the sinner is set on self and not on God. Finney claims that the will set on something else other than God, as the ultimate intention in life, is moral depravity. Berkhof asserts that original pollution extends further than the will. Original pollution extends to all the faculties not just the heart or will.⁵⁶

Original sin⁵⁷ in all its dimensions “damages” the person in “all of his/her faculties” by the presence of evil in the soul.⁵⁸ Sin does not just damage the will of the person. Sin damages the total person. This understanding is supported by M. Henry who states that Paul, in Rom 7:19-23, is complaining about the indwelling corruptions which

⁵⁴ L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 246.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 247.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 248.

⁵⁷ Melancthon defines original sin as “a certain corruption in the nature of man which is condemned by the Law of God,” P. Melancthon, *Commentary on Romans*, 160.

⁵⁸ G. Noyce writes: “Original sin means at very least that everyone needs God. Our experience of that need may take the form of guilt or fear, or existential anxiety or a lost sense of purpose for our lives, of despair or an unforgiving resentment and spitefulness against the human community,” G. Noyce, “Presuming Pain,” *QR* 4 (1993), 65-69.

remain.⁵⁹ Henry goes on to say that “the remainders of indwelling sin are a very grievous burden to a gracious soul.”⁶⁰

The damage of sin and original sin that is done to “all the faculties” means that the sinner is damaged on all levels of their being. When it is stated that sin and original sin damage all levels of a person’s being, what is meant is both the conscious and sub-conscious levels. The reason for this is that original sin damages “all the faculties” of a person. The effect that original sin has had on every human being is one of distortion, twisting, and depraving. This means that when people act, behave and live, they act out of a damaged being. The reality is that, apart from God, no one knows the extent of the damage that original sin has caused in the heart, mind, and soul of people. Original sin also damages people differently. This is to mean that sin damages one person in one way and will damage another person in a different way. The particular individual is not fully aware of the damage done to him/her by original sin. Thus, when a person acts, behaves and lives, they act out of the damage done to them by original sin.

The discussion of original sin leads to another of the words or phrases that Paul uses in the context of Rom 5-8. The word that will now be examined is “flesh.” Murray says that the flesh is the “complex of sinful desire, motive, affection, propensity, principle

⁵⁹ M. Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible in One Volume* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1960), 1770.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 1770. See also C.G. Boeree, *Personality Theories: “Sigmund Freud,”* internet article copyright 1997. Boeree summarizes Freud’s position in this manner: “The unconscious is the source of our motivations. It includes all the things that are not easily available to awareness.” See also M. Fogiel, *The Psychology Problem Solver*, (Research and Education Association, 1980), 481; L. Meyers & N. Grossen, *Behavioral Research: Theory, Procedure and Design* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1974), 25; R. Watson, *Psychology of The Child* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1965), 15. In addition see L.D. Weatherhead who states: “From both parents and teachers, then, on the one hand, and from the collective unconscious, on the other, we build up a ‘super-ego’. The source of authority of the ‘super-ego’ remains unconscious,” *Psychology, Religion and Healing* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1951), 317. And again L.D. Weatherhead posits that from the “depths of the unconscious” we are swayed,” (*Psychology, Religion and Healing*, 319).

and purpose. And to live after the flesh is to be governed by that complex.”⁶¹ Barclay writes that flesh is human nature apart from and unaided by God.⁶² Stewart is of the position that flesh is human nature in its frailty and weakness and need of help. It is a person apart from God.⁶³ Stewart's definition of “flesh” moves beyond the definition that Murray offers. Stewart says that flesh is “man apart from God.” This is much different than saying that flesh is desire, motive or purpose.

Anderson records that the flesh “is that tendency within each person to operate independent of God and to center his interests on himself.”⁶⁴ He also claims that the flesh is his learned independence.⁶⁵ Moo writes that the flesh is not the human body, but the worldly orientation that all people share.⁶⁶

Gifford, in his understanding of “the flesh” sees in its usage two different meanings. The first meaning which Gifford has of “the flesh” is a state in which believers once lived but no longer.⁶⁷ By this understanding, Gifford means that the flesh has reference to sinners; this is to say those who have not experienced regeneration. According to this understanding, once a sinner believes the Gospel and is born-again, that person is no longer “in the flesh.” This understanding of “flesh” is to be understood as relational. The sinner, that is the one in the flesh, has a different relationship with God than the believer, those who are not “in the flesh.” The flesh in the sinner is not simply

⁶¹ J. Murray, *The Epistle to The Romans*, 293.

⁶² W. Barclay, *The Letter to The Romans*, 93; S.B. Marrow, *Paul, His Letters and His Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 232.

⁶³ J. Stewart, *A Man in Christ: The Vital Elements of St. Paul's Religion*, 104.

⁶⁴ N. Anderson, *Victory Over The Darkness*, 81.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁶⁶ D. Moo, *The New International Commentary: The Epistle to The Romans*, 486.

⁶⁷ E.H. Gifford, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 136; see also G.T. Montague, *The Living Thought of St. Paul*, 175.

fallen nature,⁶⁸ which is how Epp defines the flesh,⁶⁹ but, for the sinner, the flesh is their moral center. Gifford's second understanding of flesh is the “seat of moral weakness and temptation to which believers are still subject.”⁷⁰

Smart defines the flesh as the total life of the old era, which is to say those who are in Adam.⁷¹ Ladd also defines flesh as man as a whole, seen in his fallen-ness, opposed to God.⁷² He goes on to say that the phrase “in the flesh” means life that is lived solely on the human level. This life that is lived on the human level, excludes everything else, especially God.⁷³

Flesh is then to be understood in two lights. The first understanding for flesh is to be unregenerate, that is to still be in Adam. In this understanding of flesh, flesh means the total person. This person, however, is in opposition to God, that is in rebellion against God. The person who is “in the flesh” or who “lives according to the flesh” is the person whose god is not the true and living God. This person, in following their god, lives a life in violation of God's law. To be in the flesh, or to live according to the flesh, means that the person's moral center is not God in Christ. It must be stated and understood that the life of the person in the flesh or who lives according to the flesh, maybe moral, that is, this person may live a life that follows accepted human standards. However, the essence of sin and the meaning of “in the flesh” have nothing to do with morality. The essence of

⁶⁸ W. Barclay states that flesh is “human nature in all its weakness and its vulnerability to sin.” He summarizes his understanding of flesh when he says that flesh is the “lower side of man’s nature” (*The Letter to the Romans*, 102). See also G.T. Montague, *The Living Thought of St. Paul*, 3.

⁶⁹ T. Epp, *How God Makes Bad Men Good: Studies in Romans*, 139; S.B. Marrow, *Paul: His Letters and His Theology*, 232, where he writes that flesh “expresses all that is not God.”

⁷⁰ E.H. Gifford, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 136. See also F.F. Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans*, 42, where he states the flesh is the propensity to sin inherited from Adam.

⁷¹ J. Smart, *Doorway To A New Age: A Study of Paul's Letter to The Romans*, 105.

⁷² G.E. Ladd, *A Theology of The New Testament*, 472.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 483; and also G. Hawthorne, R. Martin, D. Reid, eds.; *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 304.

sin and the meaning of “in the flesh” are relational. The person who does not have a correct relationship with God in Christ is “in the flesh”. It does not matter how this person lives. This person's life maybe more caring, more compassionate, more law-abiding than Christians; however, this person is still in the flesh, that is they are not regenerate. To be in the flesh, then, means that the person does not have a correct relationship with God.

The second understanding of flesh is that part of the fallen human being which remains in the believer. The person who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord is born-again. This person has experienced regeneration. They, therefore, are no longer in the flesh, but in the Spirit. In the flesh and in the Spirit are contrasted with each other in Rom 8:8, 9. Those who are in the flesh are not able to please God (Rom 8:8). This means that they are unregenerate. Those who are in the Spirit have the Spirit of God dwelling within them. These people are born-again, that is they are regenerate.

The person who has been born-again, though not being in the flesh, still has the flesh remaining within him or her.⁷⁴ Thus, to be in the Spirit, means that in the believer remains the flesh, or the residue of the old person,⁷⁵ the person who was in the flesh, but is now no longer. This can be seen stated by Paul in Rom 13:14. He writes that we are to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. Here it is stated that within those who have put on the Lord Jesus Christ remain the flesh.

The flesh is understood as lusts that are contrary to Christ (Rom 13:8-14). Paul

⁷⁴ N. Anderson defines the new birth in this manner: “When you were born-again, your old self died and your new self came to life and you were made a partaker of Christ's divine nature. But your flesh remains. You brought to Christ a fully conditioned mind-set and life-style developed apart from God and centered on yourself. You learned to live your life independent of God. It is the learned independence that makes the flesh hostile toward God,” (*Victory Over The Darkness*, 82).

⁷⁵ D. B. Garlington, *Faith, Obedience and Perseverance*, 131-133.

writes that love is the fulfillment of the law (Rom 13:8-10). Within this discussion, Paul states that love, the fulfillment of the law⁷⁶ does no wrong to anyone (Rom 13:8). Paul then quotes part of the 10 commandments (Rom 13:9) and says that the purpose of the 10 commandments is summed up in the saying, “you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Rom 13:9). Here it is clearly stated that the purpose of the law is love. He then states that love, which does no wrong to a neighbor, is contrasted to the lusts of the flesh, which remain in the one who has put on the Lord Jesus Christ and which are in part to be understood as violating the law, which does not love others. Paul also writes that the lusts of the flesh are seen in carousing, drunkenness, in sexual promiscuity, sensuality, in strife and jealousy (Rom 13:13). He then states that the lusts of the flesh remain within those who have put on the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 13:14).

The next phrase to be examined in the journey to discovering the identity of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is the phrase “sold under sin,” which is found in Rom 7:14.

3. Sold Under Sin

Gifford has written that “sold under sin” means “that the man is thus described as having been brought under the dominion of sin as completely as a slave under the power of the master to whom he has been sold.”⁷⁷ Murray agrees with Gifford in the definition of the phrase “sold under sin.”⁷⁸

⁷⁶ M. Gorman, *Apostle of The Crucified Lord*, 218.

⁷⁷ E.H. Gifford, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 140.

⁷⁸ “It is one thing to sell oneself to do iniquity (see Ahab in 1 Kgs 21:20, 25) and it is another to be sold under the power of sin. In the former case the person is the active agent, in the latter he is subjected to a

Before commenting, it is necessary to look into the Old Testament at 1 Kgs 21:20, 25: “Ahab said to Elijah, ‘So you have found me, my enemy!’ ‘I have found you’, he answered, ‘because you have sold yourself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord’” (NIV). 1 Kgs 21:25 states: “There was never a man like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, urged on by Jezebel his wife.”

In 1 Kgs 21:20,25, the word translated “sold” is *התמכר*, meaning “sell.”⁷⁹ *מִשָּׂה* is used in the hithpael form, which is primarily reflexive in meaning. It more often indicates an action less directly affecting the subject, and describes it as performed with regard to or for oneself, in one's own special interest.

To return to Rom 7:14, the word used is *πυπράσκω*, which means: “sell someone.”⁸⁰ The form of this word used in Rom 7:14 is a perfect passive participle. Dana and Mantey write that the “tense of the participle, as to kind of action, is the same as in the finite moods.”⁸¹ They go on to describe the perfect tense as “the tense of completed action. Its basal significance is the progress of an act or state to a point of culmination and the existence of its finished results.”⁸² Dana and Mantey, as that use of the verb that denotes the subject as receiving the action, describe the passive voice.⁸³

It can be seen that the form of the verb in Rom 7:14 that is translated “sold under sin” is a perfect, passive participle. The perfect tense is the tense that describes a completed action with continuing results. In this context, then, it can be seen that the

power that is alien to his own will. It is the later that appears here in Rom 7:14. It becomes clear how different are the two states, that of one man who with resolute and abandoned will sells himself to iniquity and that of the other who reproaches himself for the sin he commits and bemoans his being carried away captive by it,” (J. Murray, *The Epistle to The Romans*, 260).

⁷⁹ R.L. Harris, ed., *Theological Wordbook of The Old Testament*, 504.

⁸⁰ W. Arndt & W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament*, 659.

⁸¹ H.E. Dana & J. Mantey, *A Manuel Grammar of The Greek New Testament*, 230.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 200.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 161.

action of “selling” the person by sin is over. The results of that action remain, however.

The passive voice describes the subject as being acted upon. In other words, something or someone else is acting upon the subject of the passive voice. The context of Rom 7:14 states that the emphatic “I” has been acted upon by sin. This means that the emphatic “I” is not the one performing the action. Thus, the emphatic “I” has not sold itself to sin.⁸⁴ The emphatic “I” has been sold by sin. Sin is “the one” which has performed the action of selling the emphatic “I”.

The description by Dana and Mantey in regards to the perfect tense and the passive voice agree with the opinion of Murray that there is a difference between selling oneself to sin, as Ahab did, and being sold by sin, as the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 was.

Another word in Rom 7:14 to be discussed is “carnal”. This word in the Greek is σάρκινος, which means: “fleshy, made of flesh, fleshly, belonging to the realm of the flesh in so far as it is weak, sinful and transitory, carnal in older usage.”⁸⁵ Arndt and Gingrich claim that σάρκινος has two fundamental meanings. These meanings are: made of flesh and carnal. Trench disagrees in part with this understanding of σάρκινος. He claims that σάρκινος means: having flesh for its material. He asserts further that words which end in -ινος most frequently designate the stuff of which anything is

⁸⁴ D.B. Garlington is of the opinion that the selling to sin, of which Paul wrote about, has to do with the “I’s” “capture and subjection to death at the hands of sin, the condition of the “I” within the epoch of sin and death. But taking into account the more distant background, it also makes sense to see an allusion to Adam’s sin as the occasion when all in union with him became sold under sin,” (*Faith, Obedience and Perseverance*, 123). He states further that “the starkness of the language does not necessarily preclude Paul the believer, even in view of the aorists of 7:4-6, because, as in chap. 6, the early aorists (6:1-11) are qualified later by the exhortation for the Christian to become what he already is. In fact, it is characteristic of chaps. 6-8 for Paul to state a proposition in seemingly absolute terms and then qualify. Theologically speaking, this is due to the salvation-historical fact that a new beginning has been made in Christ without the total obliteration of the present evil age,” (123, 124).

⁸⁵ W. Arndt & W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament*, 743.

made.⁸⁶

Trench does not agree with Arndt and Gingrich in their giving to σάρκινος the meaning of “carnal.” Trench claims that “carnal” is the meaning of σαρκικός.⁸⁷ He writes further that the man/person, who gives to the flesh a place that does not belong to it, is σαρκικός. When the flesh is under the authority of the Spirit, then all is well. But when the flesh is not obedient to the Spirit, but asserts its own, then it is the source of all sin and all opposition to God.⁸⁸

The emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is σάρκινος, made of flesh, and not σαρκικός, actively opposed to God. This understanding helps in the discovery of the identity of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7. The reason for stating this is that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 desires to serve God (Rom 7:22) and thus it must be seen that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is not in opposition to God.

4. The Desire of the Emphatic “I”

The emphatic “I” does not desire to sin. This is seen in Rom 7:15 where it states “what I am doing, I do not desire to do”.⁸⁹ This leads to the statement that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is in agreement with the law of God (Rom 7:16). The emphatic “I” calls the law of

⁸⁶ R. Trench, *Synonyms of The New Testament*, 272.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, F.F. Bruce agrees with Trench in his understanding of σάρκινος, which means, according to Bruce, “fleshly, i.e. unscriptural,” (*The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, 152).

⁸⁸ R. Trench, *Synonyms of The New Testament*, 273.

⁸⁹ D. Harrington states it this way in his comments on Rom 7:15: “I am completely at a loss to account for my own behavior. Means: (1) The sense could be that I do not understand my own behavior—that is the gap between what I want and what in fact I do, alternately, but less likely, (2) the sense could be that I do not approve of my own behavior,” (*Romans* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 231).

God, “good,” καλός, (Rom 7:16). Καλός means, according to Berry, “beautiful, physically or morally. It is however, distinctly the beauty which comes from harmony, the beauty which arises from a symmetrical adjustment in right proportion, in other words, from the harmonious completeness of the object concerned.”⁹⁰ Louw and Nida define καλός as “pertaining to a positive moral quality, with the implication of being favorably valued, good, fine, praise worthy.”⁹¹ In other words, the emphatic “I” considers the law of God as a morally harmonious whole. The law is not just “good.” The law, to the emphatic “I” is something that brings moral harmony to, not only the one who obeys it, but to all of life. The emphatic “I” also states that he/she is in agreement with the Law, that is, that s/he desires to obey it (Rom 7:16, 22). The emphatic “I” desires to do the good (Rom 7:19). The good is to be understood as obeying the law of God. The emphatic “I” desires to do the good. The good is the law of God, according to the emphatic “I.” The emphatic “I” also agrees with the law of God. The conclusion based on the statements of the emphatic “I” is that the emphatic “I” desires to obey the law of God. It can be seen from the above statements, that the “will” of the emphatic “I” is set on obeying the law of God, that is, set on doing the good.

The emphatic “I” acts and does both “what it desires” and “what it does not desire.” The desires of the emphatic “I” which leads to “action” can be found in Rom 7:15b, 15c, 16a, 19a 19b, 20a. Within these verses three words are used. J. Lambrecht says that ποιέω, πράσσω and κατεργάζομαι are synonyms and mean “do”.⁹²

⁹⁰ G.R. Berry, *A Dictionary of New Testament Greek Synonyms*, 19.

⁹¹ J.P. Louw & E.A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Based on Semantic Domains*, 743.

⁹² J. Lambrecht, “The Line of Thought in Romans 7, 15-20,” *Bib* 3 (2004): 393-398.

This study will first look at what the emphatic “I” desires to “do” and will then look at what the emphatic “I” does not desire to “do”.

The desire of the will of the emphatic “I” is to do the good. This is very important. The word for “desire” is θέλω, which means: “the active resolution, the will urging on to action.”⁹³ This means that the “will” of the emphatic “I” is truly set on doing the good. It can also be seen that the emphatic “I” not only 'desires' to do the good, but, according to the meaning of θέλω, the emphatic “I” is also acting on that desire. Doing the good is not simply a passing thought to the emphatic “I.” The emphatic “I” has set their will, which also includes their acting in conformity with their will, on doing the good. The emphatic “I” not only “desires” to do the good, but is also acting and attempting to do the good, which is to obey the law of God.

Another factor that is to be seen in Rom 7:15-23 is that the emphatic “I” does what it does not desire (θέλω) to do. This certainly must be understood as the emphatic “I” as acting against its will. This is to say that the emphatic “I” does what it does not “will” to do. The emphatic “I” does that which it does not desire to do (Rom 7:15-23). The doing of that which the emphatic “I” does not desire” is not intentional. If it was intentional, then the emphatic “I” could not say that he/she does not desire to do it. It is to be seen that the emphatic “I” does things “unknowingly” or “does not understand what it does.” The doing of things “unknowingly” is the result of original sin and is the actions which come out of the “unconscious aspects” of a person.⁹⁴

⁹³ G.R. Berry, *A Dictionary of New Testament Greek Synonyms*, 25.

⁹⁴ See the discussion on original sin, earlier in this chapter for a clarification on what is meant by the “unconscious” aspects of a person.

The unconscious aspects of the behavior of the emphatic “I” comes from a number of reasons. Here, it must be said that the emphatic “I” is not robotic, that is, the emphatic “I” acts without any knowledge of what it is doing. The word “know,” γινώσκω, can also mean, “understand.”⁹⁵ What is to be seen in this is that the emphatic “I” acts without always understanding why it acts in a particular way.

The behavior of the emphatic “I” comes out of many “subconscious” reasons.⁹⁶ The discussion above⁹⁷ concerning original sin damaging the total person must include damage done on levels of a person’s being that he/she is not aware of. These levels of a person’s being are levels out of which a person acts, thinks, and chooses. These subconscious reasons include family background.⁹⁸ The emphatic “I” has learned ways of acting, relating, understanding, speaking, and being by living in a family. These “learned” behaviors are for the most part “subconscious.” That is to say that the person will act in a

⁹⁵ W. Arndt & W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament*, 161.

⁹⁶ See also M. Fogiel, *The Psychology Problem Solver*, 481; Lawrence Meyers and Neal Grossen, *Behavioral Research: Theory, Procedure and Design* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1974), 25; S.P. Schilling who writes: “All human beings are from an early age inescapably influenced by the families and societies in which they belong through no choice of their own. Before the child is able to make ethical distinctions, he or she unconsciously adopts the ways of thinking and acting observed in the parents. By the time moral accountability is attained, ideas of what is right and wrong are already deeply ingrained and the deeds that embody them have become habitual. As we grow older, we are potently influenced by the mores of the various communities to which we belong, and the achievement of independent judgment always has to contend with the pressure, indeed often with the authority of the practices accepted as normative by our peers,” (*Evil and Freedom Revisited*, 12); See also R. Bellah, R. Madsen et al., *Habits of the Heart* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 275-296; A. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 342; A. Sung Park, *Racial Conflict & Healing: An Asian-American Theological Perspective* (New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 96-98; R. Schreier, *Constructing Local Theologies* (New York: Orbis Books, 1986), 93; S. Haurwas, *After Christendom?* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 18; T. Oden, *Agenda For Theology: After Modernity...What?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 195-199; D. Seamands, *Healing for Damaged Emotions* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1986), 92.

⁹⁷ See chapter 3 of this study for a discussion on original sin.

⁹⁸ M. Fogiel, *The Psychology Problem Solver*, 432; J.E. Horrocks, *Assessment of Behavior* (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., 1966), 694; D. Hamer & P. Copeland, *Living With Our Genes* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 25; A. Adler, *Understanding Human Nature* (W.B. Wolfe, trans.; New York: Greenberg Publishers, 1946), 5; R. Pollack, *Signs of Life: The Language and Meanings of DNA* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1994), 30.

way that reflects their family background without “knowing” or “understanding” that they are acting “out of the learned behaviors” which are the result of his/her family background.

Another of the subconscious reasons out of which the emphatic “I” acts and which “form” him/her is the cultural setting⁹⁹ in which each and every person grows. Within a person's cultural environment is their particular family background, the 'regional' culture in which they live and grow, the ethnic grouping to which they belong, the nation to which they belong, the purpose for which they live their lives, the faith to which they have embraced, and decisions that they have made throughout their lives. These factors form, influence and are the “source” out of which people act and behave. As it has been stated in the discussion over family background, these factors also, are for the most part, “subconscious.” That is that they form, influence people without the individual's conscious realization. People act, behave, speak and possess and exhibit a multitude of many other behaviors, subconsciously, from theses and other factors that they are not aware of.¹⁰⁰

A third “grouping” of “subconscious” factors that form, or influence, people is original sin. Every human being has been affected by original sin.¹⁰¹

The family background, regional culture in which they live and grow, ethnic grouping, national culture and other factors “form” each and every person. The formation made by the various factors in a person's life, is, as has been said, “subconscious.” This means that the values, ways of thinking and behaving, which are “normative” for that

⁹⁹ M. Fogiel, *The Psychology Problem Solver*, 46, 433. Also W.P. Jones, “In Wait for My Life,” 18-19.

¹⁰⁰ M. Fogiel, *The Psychology Problem Solver*, 45.

¹⁰¹ See the discussion on original sin, corruption and depravity, earlier in chapter 3 of this study.

particular region and group become part of the “subconscious” ways of acting of each and every person. In other words, very few, if any, “know” or understand to the full extent why they act and behave.¹⁰² Thus, when the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 states that it does not understand what it is doing, this may be seen as a very insightful statement regarding the complexity of a human being and the reason why the emphatic “I,” while growing closer and closer to God in holiness, sees him or herself and cries out, “O wretched man” (Rom 7:25).

The emphatic “I”, at times acts out of the “subconscious”¹⁰³ factors that have formed and influenced it and not out of its will.¹⁰⁴ The emphatic “I” cries out that it does what it hates and that this means that the indwelling sin is the one that is performing these hated deeds (Rom 7:15-17). This cry, coupled with the statement that there is in the members of the body a different law which is at war with the mind affirms that within the emphatic “I” there is the mind to do the will of God and there is also within the members of the body the “sub-conscious” factors that have influenced and formed it.

¹⁰² J.A. Beet states: “For not what I wish: accounts for not knowing what results he is working out, by saying that his conduct is not determined by, but runs counter to, his own will,” *A Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to The Romans* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1887), 212; See also B. Byrne, *Romans*, 231, for agreement with this position. See also H. Arnold who writes: “Natural emotions or images in the fantasy can frequently be traced back to earlier impressions on our feelings,” *Freedom From Sinful Thoughts* (Rifton, New York: Plough Publishing House, 1973), 39. However, for an opposing view see J.G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), 127, who writes: “Rom 7:15, 19 come from Greek literature, (Euripides Medea, about to slay her children, she laments, ‘I know that what I am about to do is evil, but passion is stronger than my reasoned reflection,’ ‘these verses,’ J.G. Gager, continues, “evoke not Jewish but specifically Greek dilemmas. Paul unsurprisingly uses Greek tradition to convince Greeks.” J.G. Gager’s position ignores the context of Rom 7. The context of Rom 7 is a person under the spotlight of the law of God and sees him or herself as a sinner. The frequent use of the “law” in Rom 7 is enough to seriously question J.G. Gager’s position. In addition, for an opposing view to J.G. Gager see M. Gorman, who states that it is hard to “imagine a more tortured reading of Romans, one more driven by ideology than by historical or textual reality than Gager,” *Apostle of The Crucified Lord*, 343-344).

¹⁰³ See also D.B. Garlington, *Faith, Obedience and Perseverance*, 86, 87 for his defining of sin as “a state of estrangement and condemnation”.

¹⁰⁴ G. Osborne, in principle, agrees. He states that “culture, to some extent, does condition the conscience,” However, G. Osborne states very strongly that because of the “created order, everyone is without excuse for their sin,” (*Romans*, 48).

It can be seen from the statements of the emphatic “I” that it fails to completely accomplish what it desires and what it has set its will on. In Rom 7:20 it is written that the emphatic “I” does what it does not desire (θέλω) to do. This means that the 'will' of the emphatic “I” is not only set on doing the good; the will of the emphatic “I” is set against sin.¹⁰⁵ The emphatic “I” itself cries out that it does not desire (θέλω) to do what, at times it does. There is to be seen in this statement that not only does the emphatic “I” not desire (θέλω) to act against the law of God, but the emphatic “I” is also 'acting' in conformity with its desires. From this it can be seen that the emphatic “I” is doing what it can to obey the law of God and to not sin. The meaning of θέλω leads to this understanding. As it has already been stated, θέλω means more than simply “desire”. It means “desire” which leads to action. The action, which comes out of this “desire”, must be action that is in conformity with this “desire”. Thus, it can be seen that θέλω means desire that is accompanied by action which is in agreement with the desire.

The sinful mind that is the unregenerate person cannot please God, nor is it able to (Rom 8:7). The sinful mind belongs to those who are in the flesh (Rom 8:8). Those who are in the flesh are those who do not have the Spirit of God (Rom 8:9). This means that those who are in the flesh are not Christians. Those who do not have the Spirit of God do not belong to Christ (Rom 8:9). The ones who are in the flesh are not able to please God (Rom 8:8), nor do they desire to please God. Packer is in agreement here. He states that the person who has not experienced the new birth has no desire for true holiness. The reason for this, according to Packer, is that this desire for holiness comes from “the

¹⁰⁵ S.P. Schilling writes: “Sensitive Christians who are honest with themselves know from experience what Paul is talking about when he writes, ‘I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do.’ There are many times when we feel not free but bound, lacking the strength to act as we really want to” (*Evil and Freedom Revisited*, 11).

motivational level” in a person and that in a person who has not experienced the new birth, this “motivational level” is controlled and dominated by sin.¹⁰⁶ The desire to please God, on the other hand, is the evidence of God dwelling within (Phlp 2:13). In Phlp 2:13 it is written that it is God who works in you to will, desire, θέλειν, and to act according to His good purpose.

Those who do not have the Spirit of God follow their own ungodly desires.¹⁰⁷ The ones who do not have the Spirit of God have set their minds, or wills, on the things of the flesh (Rom 8:5). The mind, the will, set on the things of the flesh means that the mind, or will, is not set on the things of God (Rom 8:5). The mind set on the flesh is enmity towards God (Rom 8:6), not submission to the law of God, nor is it able (Rom 8:7). Here it can be seen that the mind /will set on the flesh cannot agree with the law of God. The reason for this is that the law of God does not belong to the realm of the flesh. A further statement is that the mind set on the flesh and the mind that is set on the law of God is against each other (Rom 8:5-7). The mind set on the flesh, being against the law of God and being opposite to the law of God leads to the result that the mind set on the flesh is at war with the law of God and will not desire to obey the law of God. Thus, when the mind is set on the things of the flesh, the law of God is not an object that the fleshly mind desires. The mind set on the flesh is not set on the things of God (Rom 8:5). The mind set on the flesh, which means those who are in the flesh, are those who do not desire the things of God in order to do them or to obey them (1 Cor 2:14). Here, it must be seen that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 must be a Christian, that is one whose mind set on knowing, obeying and desiring the things of God as expressed in and through the law of God (Rom

¹⁰⁶ J.I. Packer, *Keep In Step With The Spirit*, 107.

¹⁰⁷ Jude 18, 19.

7:15).

The emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is not perfect. This reality can be seen throughout Rom 7.¹⁰⁸ The emphatic “I” says: “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do” (Rom 7:15). Two facts are to be noticed from this verse. The first is that the emphatic “I” does things “unknowingly” or “does not understand what it does.” Here, it must be said that the emphatic “I” is not robotic, that is, the emphatic “I” does not act without any knowledge of what it is doing. The word, “know”, γινώσκω, can also mean, “understand.”¹⁰⁹ This is confirmed by Louw and Nida when they define γινώσκω as: “to come to an understanding as the result of ability to experience and learn-to come to understand, to perceive, to comprehend.”¹¹⁰ What is to be seen in this is that the emphatic “I” acts without always understanding why it acts in a particular way.¹¹¹

The second fact that is to be seen in Rom 7:15 is that the emphatic “I” does what it does not desire (θέλω) to do. This certainly must be understood as the emphatic “I” as acting against its will. This is to say that the emphatic “I” does what it does not “will” to do. The situation where the emphatic “I” is acting against its will is also seen in Rom 7:19. Here it is stated that the emphatic “I” does not do what it desires (θέλω) to do. In Rom 7:19 it can thus be clearly seen that the emphatic “I” does what it does not desire (θέλω) to do.

The emphatic “I” of Rom 7 has two “laws” within them, out of which they act, speak and behave. When the emphatic “I” acts not consistent with their will, their desire,

¹⁰⁸ See also J.W. Shepherd, *The Life and Letters of St. Paul*, (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1950), 404.

¹⁰⁹ W. Arndt & W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament*, 161.

¹¹⁰ J.P. Louw & E.A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Based on Semantic Domains*, 382.

¹¹¹ B. Byrne, *Romans*, 231.

(θέλω); the emphatic “I” is not the one acting, but the “sin that indwells in them.” Here it can be seen that there are two “laws” out of which the emphatic “I” acts. The first law is the will, or the desire (θέλω), and the second law is the “sin that indwells.” The emphatic “I” calls the “sin which indwells” another law which operates within the members of their body (Rom 7:23). This “second” law is a law that is in opposition to their will, their νοῦς, which is, according to Berry, the “moral center of a human being.”¹¹² Louw and Nida agree with Berry when they write that νοῦς means: “a particular manner or way of thinking.”¹¹³

This struggle of the emphatic “I” with this other law, which operates within the members of the body, is not a struggle between the material and the spiritual. The law that operates within the members of the emphatic “I” which is in opposition to their will is the sin that indwells them (Rom 7:15). The emphatic “I” goes on to say that when they sin, when they act against their will (νοῦς), it is not they who are sinning, but the sin that indwells them (Rom 7:20). The emphatic “I” acts, at times consistent with their will (νοῦς), and at other times, the emphatic “I” acts not consistent with their will, but in opposition to it.

The experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 can be described in this manner. The emphatic “I” of Rom 7 has set their will (νοῦς), on the good, that is on pleasing God by obeying His law. However, at times, the emphatic “I” finds that it acts in opposition to their will. In these times of acting in opposition to their will, the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 fails to do what is right, holy and well pleasing in the sight of God. In other words, the

¹¹² G.R. Berry, *A Dictionary of New Testament Greek Synonyms*, 25.

¹¹³ J.P. Louw & E.A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Based on Semantic Domains*, 350.

emphatic “I” sins.

Because the emphatic “I” does sin, a discussion on sin,¹¹⁴ at this point is appropriate. Wesley defined sin as a willful transgression of a known law.¹¹⁵ The question that is to be asked is: Does the emphatic “I” sin willingly? The answer to that question is negative. The desire of the emphatic “I” is to do what pleases God. Rom 7:15, 18, 19, 20 all clearly state that the emphatic “I” desires, not to sin, but to please God. Rom 7:15 states: “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate I do.” Here it can be clearly seen that the emphatic “I” does not do what it wants, or desires (θέλω), to do. The emphatic “I” cries that I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. These verses clearly state that the desire of the emphatic “I” is to do what is good, what is pleasing to God.

The emphatic “I” sins, but he/she sins “unwillingly” (Rom 7:16). The emphatic “I” does not desire to sin, nor does the emphatic “I” ‘will’ sin. Because the emphatic “I” does not sin willingly nor will to sin, the sin of the emphatic “I” must belong to Wesley's

¹¹⁴ See C. Anderson Scott, *Christianity According to St. Paul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 51ff for a discussion on “sin as a subjugating power and sin as expression of thought and deed in its relationship to corrupt personality”. See also W. Grundmann’s article “The Teacher of Righteousness of Qumran and The Question of Justification by Faith in the Theology of St. Paul,” in *Paul and The Dead Sea Scrolls*, (ed. J. Murphy O’Conner; New York: Christian Origins Library, 1990), 112, where he says that “sin is a breaking away from God.” F. Cunningham defines sin as: “A human action lacking its proper ordination to the true ultimate end of man; it is a voluntary act including in its concept an essential disorder, a lack of conformity with right reason and divine law,” *The Christian Life* (Dubuque: Iowa, The Priory Press, 1959), 167. In addition see M. Gorman, *Apostle of The Crucified Lord*, 133ff for his discussion on sin. See also D.B. Garlington, *Faith, Obedience and Perseverance*, 84-107 for his discussion of sin. In summary, he states that sin is “idolatry, rebellion,” (93,100).

¹¹⁵ J. Wesley, “*On Obedience to Parents*,” *The Works of John Wesley* (Sermon; CD-ROM; Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 1995), 107. F. Cunningham, agreeing with Wesley, states that “only the will is the sufficient and completing cause of sin’s being accomplished, just as the will alone is the sufficient and completing cause of any other human act,” (*The Christian Life*, 178). In addition see M. Gorman, *Apostle of The Crucified Lord*, 33.

categories of mistakes or involuntary failings. Wesley said that the Christian who is perfect in love would, as long as they are in a mortal body, make “mistakes.” He writes: “Christian perfection does not imply an exemption either from ignorance or mistakes or infirmities.”¹¹⁶ He also asserts that weaknesses and infirmities will remain while this corruptible body remains.¹¹⁷ Wesley defined infirmities as involuntary failings.¹¹⁸ Thus, according to Wesley's own definitions, it must be seen that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 sins, not willingly, but unwillingly, that is involuntarily.

5. The Wretched Man

At this point I return to the discussion of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7. The emphatic “I” desires to do what is good and pleasing to God (Rom 7:15-25). While desiring to do what is good and pleasing to God, the emphatic “I” also realizes that it does not always act the way it desires. The emphatic “I” does desire to please God and at times accomplishes its desire. The emphatic “I” claims that it does serve God in the will, νοῦς. The word translated “serve” is δουλεύω, which means: “be a slave, perform the duties of a slave, serve, obey” especially in the expression δουλεύω τῷ θεῷ, serve God, where God is thought of as κύριος and man as δοῦλος. It can be seen from this that the emphatic “I” does desire to serve God and at times accomplishes this desire.

¹¹⁶ J. Wesley, *Christian Perfection, The Works of John Wesley, Vol. 6* (Sermon; CD-ROM; Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 1995), 5. See also chapter 5 of this study for a further discussion of Wesley's infirmities and mistakes.

¹¹⁷ J. Wesley's sermon, *The End of Christ's Coming*, Vol. 6, 277.

¹¹⁸ J. Wesley's sermon, *The First Fruits of The Spirit*, Vol. 5, 92.

However, the emphatic “I” does not always act in a way that is consistent with its desire to please God. When the emphatic “I” acts in a way that is contrary to its own desire to please God, this acting not in conformity to its own desire to please God, causes the emphatic “I” to cry out in anguish and pain. This cry is “O Wretched Man.”

The emphatic “I” of Rom 7 desires to please God, yet at times fails to accomplish its own desire of pleasing God (Rom 7:15-20). This failure to please God causes the emphatic “I” sorrow and pain (Rom 7:24). However, it must be said, that the sorrow and pain that the emphatic “I” experiences is not only for what it does, that is for its failure to please God (Rom 7:15); the sorrow and pain of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is also because of what it is. Rom 7:24 states that the emphatic “I” not only is in pain for what it does (Rom 7:15-19), but also for the fact of its own existence and condition. The cry of “Wretched Man” is not simply a cry of pain and anguish over one's acts, deeds, misdeeds and failures. The cry of “Wretched Man” is also a cry over one's true and sinful condition. The word *ταλαίπωρος* means: “wretched man.”¹¹⁹ The cognate *ταλαιπωρία* means: “wretchedness.”¹²⁰ *Ταλαιπωρία* describes the inner, existential condition of the *ταλαίπωρος*. It can be seen from this that *ταλαιπωρία* describes the condition of being wretched. For a soul to cry out that it is “wretched” means that the soul has seen itself in the light of God's holiness and greatness. The reason for this is: the only place a soul will see its own wretchedness is in the light of God's holiness and greatness.¹²¹ Thus, when the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 cries out that it is “wretched,” this means that the emphatic “I” has

¹¹⁹ W. Arndt & W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament*, 803.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 803.

¹²¹ D. Guthrie posits that Paul is viewing himself in the light of God's law, *The New Bible Commentary*, 1029. This in essence is in agreement with seeing oneself in the light of God's holiness. God's law is an expression of God's holiness, thus, both statements are saying the same thing. See also J.W. Shepherd's book, *The Life and Letters of St. Paul*, 404-407 where agreement with Guthrie's position is put forth.

seen itself in the light of God's holiness and greatness. The cry of the emphatic "I" can be seen as the cry over its own "wretched" condition.

The emphatic "I" of Rom 7 also sees itself as, it truly is, "A wretched person" (Rom 7:24). The emphatic "I" desires to please God (Rom 7:15, 19, 20). This desire of the emphatic "I" to please God is evidence that it is a Christian believer (Phlp 2:13). Packer confirms this understanding of the desire to please God is the evidence of Christian salvation.¹²² The emphatic "I" also knows that it commits sins. This is also evident from Rom 7:15, 19, and 20 where it says that the emphatic "I" does what it does not desire. The "doing" recorded in these verses is a testimony by the emphatic "I" that it has and is, at times, still committing sins. However, starting from Rom 7:22, the discussion by the emphatic "I" goes to a different dimension. The "testimony" of the emphatic "I" begins to describe not just its own "committing" of sin, but the existential existence of the emphatic "I." The emphatic "I" sees within itself an existential "rift".¹²³ There is the inner person (Rom 7:22) who desires to serve God (Rom 7:25) and there is the "other law" (Rom 7:23) which wages war against the inner person. This existential "rift" causes the emphatic "I" to cry out "O Wretched Man, who will save me from the body of this death" (Rom 7: 24). This is not a cry of a person who is still under the law, which is to say who is unregenerate.¹²⁴ This is a cry of a regenerate believer who is approaching ever closer to God. The emphatic "I" of Rom 7 is a believer who sees the truth that he or she not only commits acts of sin, but that they are also, in the existential

¹²² J.I. Packer, *Keep In Step with The Spirit*, 94.

¹²³ R. Stedman puts it this way. He writes that "It is in his spirit that he is made a slave to righteousness, while in his soul the struggle with sin goes on," (*From Guilt to Glory*, 231).

¹²⁴ J.W. Shepherd, *The Life and Letters of St. Paul*, 406.

self, sinners.¹²⁵ To be a sinner, in this sense, is to see oneself as “a lump of sin.” To see oneself as “a lump of sin” is to realize that there is nothing good within oneself, that is apart from Christ.

To see oneself as a “lump of sin” is not the expression of a poor self-perception but recognition of one’s true condition, i.e. a good self-perception. Within the study of psychology is the discussion between the organized and disorganized self. Guthrie states that Paul in Rom 7:15-19 is viewing himself within this psychological discussion of the organized and disorganized self.¹²⁶ Barclay agrees with this when he says that in Rom 7:14-25, Paul “is baring his very soul; and he is telling us of an experience which is the very essence of the human situation.”¹²⁷ Black is also in agreement with this assessment of Rom 7:14-25 as being an explanation of the psychological experience¹²⁸ of not only the human situation, but he would add that Rom 7:14-25 is also the psychological description of the experience of salvation.¹²⁹ J. Smart agrees to the position just stated. He puts forth the opinion that the Coming of Christ, i.e. salvation, does not put an end to the dividedness of the self, the person, the Christian believer. The Coming of Christ, i.e. salvation, not only does not put an end to this dividedness in the Christian believer, but salvation, Christ, exposes the full depth of this division.¹³⁰ Stedman agrees with this

¹²⁵ E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 209. For an opposing view see E.H. Maly, *Romans*, (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1979), 60.

¹²⁶ D. Guthrie, *The New Bible Commentary*, 1029; for an opposing view see B. Rigaux, *Letters of St. Paul*, (Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago, 1962), 51 who states that “any attempt to establish a psychological preconditioning process towards conversion is not sound.” See also W. Hamilton, *The Christian Man* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), 43.

¹²⁷ W. Barclay, *The Letter to The Romans*, 98. See also, E.A. Wcela, *Paul the Theologian* (New York: Pueblo Publishing, 1977), 52; A. Das, *Paul and Jews* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 148.

¹²⁸ B. Rigaux, however, disagrees, *Letters of St. Paul*, 51.

¹²⁹ M. Black, *The New Century Bible Commentary: Romans*, 85.

¹³⁰ J. Smart, *Doorway to a New Age: a Study of Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 100.

understanding.¹³¹

6. A Discussion of Paul's Jewish Experience

To develop the idea, that Rom 7 is describing the experience of a mature, Christian believer and not a person under the law or of Paul the Jewish believer struggling with the law, further, a look at Paul's Jewish background will be undertaken. Paul, before his conversion to Christianity, was a Jewish believer. He immediately recognized the threat to Judaism that belief in Jesus posed. He quickly became the most ardent persecutor of Christianity.¹³² However, a question to be asked is: Did Judaism place its followers under such a strain to live according to its precepts? Sanders does not think so. He is of the opinion that "Jewish altar ritual did not stand out as being excessive, burdensome or

¹³¹ He states: "Our bodies and souls, which have functioned for years under the control of sin, are still going on in the same way, living according to the patterns built up under the reign of sin. Our habits, thoughts and actions are already established along wrong lines. That is where the evil and sin in a believer's life come from. His spirit is freed from sin, his soul and body are yet under its control," (R. Stedman, *From Guilt to Glory*, 177). See J.W. Shepherd who writes that "the body of man is of flesh and blood. It is the half-wrecked body of death, doomed to pass away and be succeeded by a spiritual body. The present body is full of weakness and the seat of temptations to evil," (*The Life and Letters of St. Paul*, 404). See also E. Palmer, *Salvation By Surprise: A Commentary on the Book of Romans* (Waco: Word Books, 1975), 86 who states that Paul in Rom 7:18-8:10 discusses the nature of mankind, that is body, flesh, mind and spirit and then goes on to discuss the "crisis, the civil war that harasses the Christian person with painful tensions within his/her very nature (7:14-25)." Also, C.K. Barrett, *A Commentary on The Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 152, who claims that Paul, in Rom 7:14-25 writes that this paragraph concerns "insights from the Christian life"; See also W. Baird, *Paul's Message and Mission* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960), 107, 155 who agree with this position. For an opposing view, W.D. Davies writes that "we may assume in Rom 7 Paul reflects the rabbinic doctrine of the two impulses," (*Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1948), 27). Also J.C. Beker, *Paul The Apostle*, 217.

¹³² W. Barker, *Everyone in the Bible* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1966), 276; G.T. Montague, *The Living Thought of St. Paul*, 3.

anxiety producing.”¹³³ Stendahl agrees with Sanders and claims the very same thing for Paul.¹³⁴ He states that Paul suffered no qualms of consciousness over his experience as a Jew.¹³⁵ Gathercole also agrees. Furthermore, he is of the opinion that Jewish writers

¹³³ E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE-66CE*, 191; J. Fitzmyer, *According to Paul* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 8.

¹³⁴ He writes, “No where in Paul’s writings is there any indication that he had any difficulties in fulfilling what he a Jew understood to be the requirements of the law.” He further claims that Paul, the Jew, before his conversion to Christianity, never expressed any remorse, even for his persecution of the Christians. It was only after his conversion to Christianity that Paul felt remorse for this behavior (K. Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*, 12, 13). See also P. Achtemeier, *Romans* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 127 who states: “There is no evidence, when Paul does mention his life as a Pharisee that the law drove him to despair. In fact, quite the opposite is the case. Paul claims that far from being in despair at his supposed inability to fulfill the law, he was in fact quite convinced he had fulfilled it (Phlp 3:6; Gal 4:14); Achtemeier goes on to say: “Paul’s shift in attitude toward the Law was not motivated by despair at his inability to fulfill the law,” (127); E.P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 154, who writes, “Paul’s critique of Judaism is a critique which covers what Judaism is by definition. He does not say that the law was unable to be fulfilled by some and is therefore inadequate as a means of righteousness; nor does he say that fulfilling it leads to self-righteousness on the part of a few. Inability and self-righteousness do not figure at all in his statements about the law”. He also claims that “for most Jews in Paul’s day, the laws demands were held in tension with a gracious framework of election and provision for failure” (155); S. Westerholm, *Israel’s Law and the Church’s Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 220; who posits that the “evidence of the epistles does not support the view that Paul, before his encounter with the risen Christ, was tormented by an inability to keep the law”; J. Ziesler, *Pauline Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 103, who puts forward the same position when he argues that “Judaism did not suppose that people could earn God’s favor. On the contrary, favor was freely given, without deserving on Israel’s part, in election and covenant. The role of the law was to show the nation how to live within that covenant in order to maintain (not create) the relation to Yahweh. Its role was not to enable people to find a place within the community of Israel in the first place. More over, perfect obedience was not expected and there were means of atonement and forgiveness.” Das agrees (*Paul and The Jews*, 155) and further states that “nowhere does Paul ever say that he had harbored any doubts about his elect status as a Jew. As a Pharisee, he was blameless. He was a guide to the blind, alight to those in darkness,” (A.A. Das, *Paul and The Jews*, 187); C.J. Roetzel, *The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 7; N. Brox, *Understanding the Message of Paul*, 15; M. Taylor, *Paul: His Letters, Message and Heritage* (New York: Alba House, 1997), 174; C. Augrain, *Paul: Master of the Spiritual Life, Vol.2* (New York: Alba House, 1968), 44; J.W. Shepherd, *The Life and Letters of St. Paul*, 404; F.F. Bruce, *Paul and Jesus*, 25-26.

¹³⁵ His description of Paul is that: “Paul experienced no troubles, no problems, no qualms of consciousness, no feelings of shortcomings. He was a star pupil, the student to get the thousand dollar graduate scholarship in Gamaliel’s seminary, if we can trust Acts 22:3” (K. Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*, 12-13). See also J. Fitzmyer who, in his book, *According to Paul*, 8, states that “Paul did not look back, even as a Christian, at his Jewish past as one of failure to cope with the demands of the Law.” J. Fitzmyer, in quoting Paul’s own assessment of himself, claimed that Paul considered himself blameless (Phlp 3:6), *According to Paul*, 8; G.T. Montague, *The Living Thought of St. Paul*, 3, states that “Paul was genuinely convinced that he was championing the rights of God (Acts 26:9) when he was persecuting the Church.” A. Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1980), 177-180. For an opposing view see H. Lockyer, *All The Apostles Of The Bible*, 213. He puts forth the opinion that “Paul had been exceedingly sensitive to the requirements of the Law, which he himself had observed most meticulously, yet doubts arose that the Law was able to save a man

themselves felt that “Israel was an obedient, holy and pious nation” and that “the element of obedience was indeed believed by a number of Jewish writers of the Second Temple Period, to be not only possible but also accomplished, both by the nation as a whole and by individuals.”¹³⁶ This appears to agree with Paul’s own assessment as found in Phlp 3:4-6 and Gal 1:13-14.¹³⁷ In addition, in Acts 22:20, Luke records Paul as stating that he, Paul, stood watching the stoning of Stephen and gave his approval to Stephen’s death. This certainly does not imply a man who was divided against himself and the law. Sanders, in apparent agreement with the above, makes the claim that Judaism’s most distinctive point was the extending of the law to every part of a person’s life and as such it was more concerned with what people did than with what people thought.¹³⁸ Fitzmyer seems to agree with Sanders when he writes that Paul was proud of his life as a Jew of the Pharisaic tradition.¹³⁹ Montague, also in agreement, claims that Paul was “convinced that he was championing the rights of God (Acts 26:9) when he was persecuting the Christian Church.”¹⁴⁰ Stendahl agrees with this understanding of Paul the Jew. He claims further that most of Paul’s theology and anthropology “clearly reveals his Jewish background”¹⁴¹

accused. Gradually he came to despair of ever fulfilling the demands of the Law, and his intense, almost savage attempt to obliterate Christianity only reflected a sense of insecurity prompted by misgivings and doubts.”

¹³⁶ S. Westerholm, review of S. Gathercole, *Where is Boasting*, *JQR* 95 (2005): 700-704.

¹³⁷ S. Marrow agrees. He writes: “He speaks of his former life in Judaism as one in which he advanced beyond many of his own age among his people. So extremely zealous was he for the traditions of his fathers (Gal 1:13, 14)—which was no idle boast and certainly no small accomplishment. Reluctant though he was to boast, there can be no mistaken his pride in what he was. This is a point of utmost importance,” (*Paul: His Letters and His Theology*, 30).

¹³⁸ E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE-66 CE*, 420.

¹³⁹ J. Fitzmyer, *Paul and His Theology*, (Englewood, Prentice Hall, 1987), 28.

¹⁴⁰ G.T. Montague, *The Living Thought of St. Paul*, 3.

¹⁴¹ J. Fitzmyer, *Paul and His Theology*, 28.

and that Paul was a “very happy Jew.”¹⁴² Bruce agrees with this position. He writes that “Until the last moment of his pre-Christian career, Paul showed himself to be (in his own words) ‘as to zeal a persecutor of the church’ (Phlp 3:6).”¹⁴³ Marrow, in agreement, writes that not only did Paul know who he was but he was proud of who he was.¹⁴⁴ The fact that Paul was proud of who he was as a Jew is extremely important in understanding Paul’s conversion. Paul’s conversion was not a result of inner turmoil, anguish or guilt.¹⁴⁵ Joubert also agrees when he writes that Paul “was convinced that he would be raised from the dead in glory, because he was ἄμεμπτος according to the δικαιοσύνη required by the law (Phlp 3:6).”¹⁴⁶

Rigaux sums up this position when he puts forth the opinion that “the reasoning underlying any attempt to establish a psychological pre-conditioning process towards conversion in the case of Paul is not sound.”¹⁴⁷ What Rigaux is stating is that to try and find psychological reasons in Paul the Jew which made Paul the Jew a “wretched man” is, in Rigaux’s own words, “not sound.”

F.F. Bruce who in his understanding of Rom 7:14-25, argues that Rom 7:14-25 is “a self-portrait of a man who is conscious of the presence and power of indwelling sin in

¹⁴² K. Stendahl states very frankly “Paul, a very happy and successful Jew, one who can even when he thinks about it from his Christian perspective, say, ‘as to the righteousness under the law (I was) blameless’ (Phlp 3:6) (*Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*, 12-13).

¹⁴³ F.F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 73.

¹⁴⁴ S. Marrow, *Paul: His Letters and His Theology*, 30.

¹⁴⁵ S. Marrow writes: “For all too often, Paul’s conversion is seen in light of the great conversions of a sinful Augustine, a tormented M. Luther, or an anguished P. Claudel; guilt, anguish, and human frailty in quest of forgiveness, healing and hope. This was not the case with Paul. He was not having what in today’s jargon is called an identity crisis - far from it. He knew all too well who he was and was more over proud of what he was,” (*Paul: His Letters and His Theology*, 30).

¹⁴⁶ S.J. Joubert, “ΧΑΡΙΣ in Paul,” 195-196.

¹⁴⁷ B. Rigaux, *Letters of St. Paul*, 51.

his life and hates it.”¹⁴⁸ Bruce goes on to describe the person of Rom 7:14-25 as “an anguished soul.”¹⁴⁹ Packer agrees with this understanding of Rom 7:14-25.¹⁵⁰ If Judaism did not place its followers under strain to obey, as Sanders and others puts forth,¹⁵¹ then Bruce’s statement that Rom 7:14-25 as the self-portrait of a man¹⁵² who *hates* the indwelling sin seem to be at odds with Paul being a “happy Jew” if the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is unregenerate. However, if Rom 7 is describing a mature, spiritual Christian believer who is more and more conscious of his/her broken-ness before God and not a person under the law or Paul the Jew,¹⁵³ then there is no discrepancy between Paul the happy Jew and the wretched man of Rom 7. What can be seen from Paul’s own background is that as a Jewish believer, he considered himself legalistically righteous

¹⁴⁸ F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, 152.

¹⁴⁹ F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, 151. D.B. Garlington also agrees that Rom 7:14-25 is a description of a person struggling with sin. He further states that “it is the very presence of strife which argues forcefully that this segment of Romans is the product of Paul’s Christian consciousness. Whereas in vv.7-13 Paul is simply dead because of sin—revealing law, in vv.14-20 (21-25) he is actively resistant to the impulses of indwelling sin in that he *wills* to do what is right—in itself a sign of life,” (*Faith, Obedience and Perseverance*, 120).

¹⁵⁰ He writes, “The belief that full deliverance from all known sin is enjoyed by consecrated, spirit-filled Christians makes reading Rom 7:14-25 impossible in the natural way. Rom 7:14-25 is best seen as a frank and representative acknowledgement by a lively, healthy Christian (Paul) that sin, stirred up in him by the very law that forbids and condemns it, still controls him to an extent that is grievous to contemplate,” (J.I. Packer, *Keep In Step With The Spirit*, 161). See also B.H. Carroll, *Studies in Romans*, 70, whose position is that, Paul in Rom 7:14-25, writes that a believer is chained to a dead body. Carroll writes: “He alive, that body dead. It was a miserable condition: ‘Who will deliver me from this body of death?’” See also C.E.B. Cranfield who writes that “it is only in the Christian believer, that the corruption of fallen human nature appears conspicuously,” (*The Epistle to the Romans: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary, Vol. I*, 359).

¹⁵¹ See the discussion above for some of the other commentators who agree with this position.

¹⁵² F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, 151. Bruce claims that Rom 7:14-25 is the “personal experience of an anguished soul.” This person is the Christian who lives in 2 worlds simultaneously and there will always be tension.”

¹⁵³ A. Ross & M.M. Stevenson claim that Paul wrote Romans “out of a powerful firsthand experience of being a Jew seeking to live by the law, judging others, opposing and persecuting the church,” *Romans* (Louisville: Geneva Press, 1999), 44. The opposing view is given by E.P. Sanders who claims that “there is no charge that Judaism historically includes what we now call self-righteousness; nor is there a charge that individual Jews harbored that attitude,” (*Paul, the Law and the Jewish People*, 157); Also P. Achtemeier, (*Romans*, 149). See also E.P. Sanders, *Paul, The Law and the Jewish People*, 154ff for a discussion that states in summary that Paul’s critique of Judaism is not one in which he claims that the law was unable to be fulfilled. See the discussion in this chapter of this study regarding “Paul the happy Jew” for a counter to Ross and Stevenson.

(Phlp 3:6) and did not hate his own flesh nor did he see himself as a wretched man. The change from happy Jew to wretched man is the change that occurs at regeneration and growth in grace.

In addition, if Rom 7 is describing Paul the “happy Jew”, there is a discrepancy with Paul “the happy Jew’s” opinion of Jesus Christ as found in Rom 7:25 and 1 Cor. 15:9. Paul stated that he persecuted the Church of God (1 Cor 15:9). It is also to be understood that Paul’s persecution of the Church was also a persecution of Jesus Christ (Acts 9:4). Why would Paul the “happy Jew” offer thanks to God-through Jesus Christ our Lord and at the same time be persecuting Jesus Christ? Paul the “happy Jew” would not cry out “Thanks be to God –through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 7:25).

Paul, in addition, calls Jesus, “our Lord” (Rom 7:25). A Jewish believer would not consider Jesus, “Lord”. Thus, it can be seen that Rom 7 cannot be describing Paul the Jewish believer. Thus it is to be seen that Rom 7 and the experience of the emphatic “I” is describing a spiritually mature Christian believer who acknowledges Jesus as “Lord”.¹⁵⁴

The realization of the believer growing closer to God is the very thought, realization and expression of the emphatic “I.” The emphatic “I” of Rom 7 sees it-self as a sinner and realizes that within itself, apart from Christ, there is nothing good in it (Rom 7:18). The cry of the emphatic “I” of “Wretchedness” is the cry of a mature Christian believer.¹⁵⁵ Stott agrees with this view of the “wretched man.” His position is that the cry

¹⁵⁴ See W. Baird, *Paul’s Message and Mission*, 107 and J.W. Shepherd, *The Life and Letters of St. Paul*, 406.

¹⁵⁵ Those who claim that the cry “Wretched Man” is the cry of the unregenerate do not take into account F.F. Bruce’s claim that “we have no evidence that Paul, before his conversion, suffered from an uneasy conscience,” (*The Letter of Paul to the Romans*,139). In fact, Paul’s own statement is that as to righteousness, which was found in the law, he was blameless (Phlp 3:6). There certainly is no uneasy conscience in Paul, according to Paul’s own statements. Paul adds to his self-appraisal before his

of the wretched man/person can only be that of a regenerate believer.¹⁵⁶ Smart makes the same claim when he says that in Rom 7, Paul is laying bare his struggle that he still has with sin and that all Christian believers still have with sin.¹⁵⁷ Stedman agrees with this position when he writes that “it is a struggle to re-educate the soul and the body and we fail many times.”¹⁵⁸

7. Analysis of verb tenses used in Rom 7

The predominant tense used in Rom 7:7-13 is the aorist tense. The predominant tense used in Rom 7:14-25 is the present tense. The meaning of the tenses used in Rom 7 cannot be determined apart from the overall contextual setting and meaning of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7.

The overall contextual meaning and setting of the emphatic “I” is, as has been shown, to be a believer. When it is understood that the emphatic “I” is a believer, then the meaning of the tenses used in Rom 7 can be arrived at. The meaning of the tenses used in

Christian conversion in Gal 1:14 where he claimed that he was advancing in Judaism beyond many of his contemporaries. Again, we find in Gal 1:14 no uneasy conscience regarding sin.

¹⁵⁶ J.R.W. Stott says that the cry of the wretched man can only be a regenerate believer. His full reasons for stating this are: “Now who but a mature Christian believer thinks and talks of himself like that? The unbeliever is characterized by self-righteousness and would never acknowledge himself a miserable creature. The immature believer is characterized by self-confidence and does not ask who is going to deliver him. Only the mature believer reaches the place of self-disgust and of self-despair. It is one who recognizes with clarity that in his flesh dwells nothing good” (*Men Made New: An Exposition of Romans 5-8*, 72-3); In addition see P.A. Feider, *Paul’s Letters* (Mystic, CT.: Twenty-third Publications, 1982), 89; See also chapter 7 of this study for a list of other scholars who hold this position. See E.A. Wcela, *Paul The Theologian*, 52 for an opposing view. He says that the “I” sums up the experience of all human beings; also L. Cerfaux, *The Spiritual Journey of Saint Paul* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968), 121.

¹⁵⁷ J. Smart, *Doorway to A New Age: A Study of Paul’s Letter to The Romans*, 75; R.J. Austgen, *Natural Motivation in the Pauline Epistles* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 105.

¹⁵⁸ R. Stedman, *From Guilt to Glory*, 178.

Rom 7 must be and is a statement concerning the life of the emphatic “I”. The use of the aorist/past tense used in Rom 7:7-13¹⁵⁹ must be referring to a time in the life of the emphatic “I” before the writing of the letter of Romans.¹⁶⁰ The use of the present tense in Rom 7:14-25 must be referring to the life of the emphatic “I” at the time of the writing of the letter to the Romans.¹⁶¹

The analysis of the verb tenses used in Rom 7 shows that there is a line of demarcation at verse 14. Before this line of demarcation, the predominate verb tense used is the aorist. The aorist tense is regarded as punctiliar.¹⁶² This means that the action of the aorist tense maybe represented as a point. Chamberlain has written that the aorist tense “expresses punctiliar action in past time.” He goes on to say that the term aorist means undefined. He defines this by saying that the action is stated without describing it.¹⁶³

If Rom 7:7-25 was describing the “present” life of the emphatic “I”, then, there would be no reason at all to use the aorist tense in Rom 7:7-13 and the present tense in Rom 7:14-25. If the whole passage of Rom 7:7-25 was describing the “present” life of the emphatic “I,” then the dramatic change of the verbal tenses would have no meaning at all. If Rom 7:7-25 was describing the “present” life of the emphatic “I”, then the present tense or the aorist tense could have been used throughout Rom 7:7-25 with the same meaning

¹⁵⁹ J. Neyrey’s opinion is that Rom 7:7-12 tells the story of the attack by Evil Spirits, (*Paul: In Other Words*, 174).

¹⁶⁰ D.B. Garlington’s claim is that there is a continuity between Paul’s experience in Rom 7:7-13, which is describing his past and Rom 7:14-25, which is describing Paul’s present. He bases his opinion on the imperfect which is used in Rom 7:7 which he says is describing Paul’s coveting. He states that the imperfect used here is describing a continuing experience; an experience that Paul still is facing, (*Faith, Obedience and Perseverance*, 121).

¹⁶¹ In disagreement with this statement is E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 199. Käsemann is of the opinion that Rom 7:7-13 refers to the pious Jew and in Rom 7:14-25 the subject of the “I” is broadened to include all sinners, (*Commentary on Romans*, 195).

¹⁶² H.E. Dana & J. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of The Greek New Testament*, 179.

¹⁶³ W.D. Chamberlain, *An Exegetical Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1941), 75.

and emphasis. However, since there is such a sharp distinction in Rom 7:7-25 of the verb tenses used, this distinction must have a meaning in itself. The meaning of the distinction of the verb tenses used in Rom 7:7-25 is a description of the life of the emphatic “I” into two different “parts.” Rom 7:7-13 describes the life of the emphatic “I” before a life changing event and Rom 7:14-25 describes the life of the emphatic “I” after this life-changing event. Rom 7:7-13 describes the “past” life of the emphatic “I” while Rom 7:14-25 describes the present life of the emphatic “I”. The life changing event that divides the life of the emphatic “I” must be an event of such magnitude that the emphatic “I” sees its life as having two different “parts”. The two different “parts” of the life of the emphatic “I” are set out by the predominate use of the aorist tense in Rom 7:7-13 and the present tense used in Rom 7:14-25. The only event of such a magnitude could be the conversion of the emphatic “I”. Thus, Rom 7:7-13 describes the life of the emphatic “I” as an unbeliever and Rom 7:14-25 describes the life of the emphatic “I” as a believer.

After the line of demarcation at verse 14, the predominate tense used in Rom 7 is the present tense. The fundamental idea of the Greek present tense is of progress.¹⁶⁴ Chamberlain expands on this idea when he writes that the present tense normally expresses continued action going on at the time of writing or speaking.¹⁶⁵

The dramatic change in tenses at Rom 7:14 from the aorist/past to the present states that there was a dramatic change in the life of the emphatic “I”. Robinson disagrees with this position. He is of the opinion that the present tense in Rom 7 “is to express the purely general proposition that the law is spiritual.”¹⁶⁶ He goes on further to add that the

¹⁶⁴ H.E. Dana & J. Mantey, *A Manuel Grammar of The Greek New Testament*, 181.

¹⁶⁵ W.D. Chamberlain, *An Exegetical Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 70.

¹⁶⁶ J.A.T. Robinson, *Wrestling With Paul*, 88.

difference in the tenses used in Rom 7 is not “between what I was and what I am”.¹⁶⁷

There are many opinions regarding the identity of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7. The context of Rom 1-8 and especially the text of Rom 7 itself teach that the identity of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is Paul, a representative of all believers.¹⁶⁸ The question remaining is a question concerning Paul’s spiritual maturity as this representative of all believers. Was the emphatic “I” an immature believer or as this study holds, a mature, spiritual believer? The understanding that the emphatic “I” is a mature, spiritual believer will be strengthened in the chapters that follow.

8. The Law in Rom 7

Throughout Rom 7 Paul writes concerning the Law.¹⁶⁹ The use of Law is in reference to: (1) the Mosaic Law and (2) a power residing within the emphatic “I”. The two uses of the Law will become clearer in this section.

Paul writes that the believer has died to the Law through the death of Christ (Rom

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ E. Käsemann disagrees. He posits that the I “concerns that person who lives in the illusion that he can and should help himself and thereby repeats the story of Adam even when he is acting piously and ethically” (*Commentary on Romans*, 210). This study is an attempt to answer Käsemann’s position.

¹⁶⁹ For a summation of the various positions on Paul and the Law, see *Paul and the Law*, by V. Koperski, (New York: Paulist Press, 2001); Also F. Amiot, *How To Read Paul* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1964), 29ff; In addition, for a new understanding of the “commandment” of Rom 7: 9-11 which Jervis says that “the commandment” is the “commandment inherent to life in Christ” and not the commandment of Torah, see A. Jervis, “The Commandment which is Life (Romans 7.10): Sin’s Use of the Obedience of Faith,” *JSNT* 27, No. 2(2004) 193-216. Also P. Berthoud, “The Covenant and The Social Message of Amos,” *EuroJTh* 2 (2005): 99-109; N.T. Wright who writes that “the Law is not a convenient moral guide, ancient and venerable. It is that the Torah, like the Temple, is one of the places where heaven and earth meet,” N.T. Wright, *Simply Christian* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 132. Wright is of the opinion that Christians are not meant to perform the Jewish Law, (*Simply Christian*, 131).

7:4). This mention is to the Mosaic Law. In Rom 4-6, Paul has written that righteousness is not found in keeping the law. Righteousness is found only in faith in Christ. He uses the illustration of marriage to explain that the believer has been set free from the law by the death of Christ. However, Paul goes on to write that the believer has not been freed from the law and now lives in lawlessness. The believer, in being freed from the law has been “enslaved to another law” (Rom 7:4; see also Rom 6:15-22). This new law is God in Christ. The believer, in being freed from the law is not free to do anything. The believer is freed from sin to righteousness. The evidence that a person is a believer is that his or her desire is to obey and please God in Christ (Phlp 2:13).

Rom 7:1-6 presents two laws. One law is death; the other law is life (Rom 7:4-6). The difference between the two laws are found in the terms spirit and written code (Rom 7:6). The law that is life is the law of Christ (Rom 8:2) is of the spirit. The law that is death is a written code. The law of written code is no longer in force. The death of Christ has set people free from this law. The law that is in force is the law of the spirit of Christ. The law of the written code and the law of spirit are both termed “law”. This is very important to remember for the discussion of law in Rom 7.

Because people have been set free from the written code, Paul then asks: is the law sin (Rom 7:7)? The answer given by Paul is no, not in any way. He writes and says that one purpose of the law was to reveal sin (Rom 7:7; see also Rom 3:20-21). The law was never intended to make a person righteous (Rom 3:20, 21). Its purpose was to reveal the utter sinfulness of sin (Rom 7:13). The law reveals sin by arousing the sinful passions that exist within the flesh (Rom 7:5). It is also written that apart from law, sin is dead (Rom 7:8).

The use of law within Rom 7 must be understood within the context of Romans. When Paul writes that apart from law sin is dead, he is not only referring to the written code called the Mosaic Law.¹⁷⁰ He also means the law apart from the written code (Rom 2:12-15).

The law fulfilled its purpose in the life of Paul. He writes that at one time he was alive apart from the law, but when the law came, he died (Rom 7:7-10).¹⁷¹ The law not only revealed sin, it also brought death. The reason for this is that sin is death (Rom 6:23). The law revealed sin and aroused the sinful passions that resided in Paul. Thus, the law brought death.

Paul is quick to write that the law did not kill. He writes that sin took opportunity through the commandment, deceived him and then killed him (Rom 7:11). The law did not kill him (Rom 7:12, 13). Sin killed him, not the law. The law is holy and good. Sin took advantage of Paul and used Paul's passions and then killed him. This is a very important statement. Paul is writing very positively about the law. He goes on to say that the law is not only good and holy; it is spiritual (Rom 7:12-14).

Paul then asks: did the good become death for him? The answer is no, not in any fashion. It was sin that became death for Paul. This happened that the true nature of sin, its utter sinfulness, might be seen. The law is holy, good and spiritual. However, there is another "power" which Paul also calls a law. This power or law is sin that resides within the flesh (Rom 7:23). This power/law deceived Paul (Rom 7:11), took advantage of Paul's passions (Rom 7:5), killed him (Rom 7:11) then sold Paul as a slave (Rom 7:14). It

¹⁷⁰ H. Richards, *Reading Paul Today* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), 107.

¹⁷¹ The discussion of Rom 7:9, whether Paul is referring to the age of accountability is a very interesting study. However, it is beyond the scope of this study and will not be discussed.

is important to state again that sin did this to Paul. The Law did not do this to Paul.

The Law being good, holy and righteous (Rom 7:12) is not the “enemy” of the believer. Nor is the law to be ignored by the believer. Jesus came not to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. If the law is the enemy, the antithesis of faith and righteousness, then why did Jesus not abolish the law? The answer is that the law reveals sin and points to righteousness by faith in Christ (1 Tim 1: 8-11).

The law, having been fulfilled by Christ, is not to be seen in commands. The essence of the law is love (Rom 13:8-10). The essence of the law as love can also be seen in Jesus’ answer to the question of what is the greatest commandment. Jesus said that the greatest commandment is to love God with all that you are and your neighbor as yourself (Matt 22; 35-40). The essence of the law being love is also seen in Jesus’ description of the Pharisees and Scribes. He stated that they, in their following of commands, had abandoned the law of God and were following human traditions (Luke 7:5-8). Thus it is to be stated that the legalistic understanding of the law is of human origin and not divine. The law was never given simply as commands to be followed. The Law, summed up, is love. The law was not sent as a set of rules to obey, was sent as a means to aid people into a relationship with God. Wright says that the law was not sent to try and keep it and “earn God’s favor” but the law was given as a means to “express your gratitude, your loyalty, and your determination to live by the covenant because of which God rescued you in the first place.”¹⁷²

As has been stated above, the purpose of the law is to reveal sin (Rom 3:19-20). The revelation of sin would then lead people to faith as the means of being made

¹⁷² N.T. Wright, *Simply Christian*, 82.

righteous (Rom 3:31). Thus it is to be seen that the law and faith are not two opposite extremes or two different spheres. The law was never intended to make righteous (Rom 3:19-21). The law was to reveal sin and to establish faith as the means of being righteous (Rom 3:31). This progression and purpose of the law is clearly seen in Rom 10:4 where it affirms that Christ is the end, τέλος, of the law. Τέλος is understood as “end”¹⁷³ and as “purpose.”¹⁷⁴ Christ is the end and the purpose of the law. Here, the relationship between the law and faith is clearly seen. The law reveals sin and then leads people to Christ who is righteousness. The law was never intended to make righteous/perfect. The law is only a shadow. The reality is Christ (Heb 10:1).

Thus, it can be seen that the law and faith are not two opposite extremes. Nor are they opposed to one another. The problem arises between faith and law when the true purpose of the law is not seen, understood or is forgotten.

Rom 7:14-25 adds another dimension to the discussion concerning law. In this section law is also used of a power or principle that resides within the flesh. The use of law as the law of God is found in Rom 7:14, 16, 22 and 25. Law as a power/principle that resides within the flesh is found in Rom 7:15, 17-21, 23, and 25. This two-fold usage of law is important to recognize and to keep distinct in this discussion. Paul writes positively concerning the law of God as that which reveals sin then leads to faith in Christ. However, the usage of law as a power/principle that resides within the flesh and leads the emphatic “I” away from God cannot be the law of God. God’s law reveals sin; it never leads people away from God. Nor does the law of God present itself as something that it

¹⁷³ J.P. Louw & E.A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Based on Semantic Domains*, 638.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 784.

is not. The law of God was never intended to make righteous/perfect, but the law was always to reveal sin and to point to Christ, who is the fulfillment of the law. Thus it can be seen that in Rom 7, Paul is using the word law to refer to God's law and to a power/principle, which he calls law that resides within the flesh of the emphatic "I." This power/principle that resides within the flesh of the emphatic "I" Paul has already called sin (Rom 7:17-20).

9. Concluding Statement

To summarize this section on law it can be stated that the law of God is holy and does have a purpose. The purpose of the law is to reveal sin and lead people to faith in Christ. The law has a continuing purpose for the emphatic "I". As it is to be remembered, this study is presenting the emphatic "I" as a mature believer. This purpose of the law is to reveal sin, (Gal 3:19-29), the sin that remains within every believer and to lead every believer to holiness. This purpose, which is, to lead believers to holiness is clearly stated and seen in Rom 7 in the description and experience of the emphatic "I".

Chapter 4: The New Life in Christ in the Pauline Corpus

After examining the context of Rom 1-8 and focusing on Rom 7, this study will now examine the teaching of the new life in Christ found within the wider Pauline Corpus. The purpose in researching Paul's statements regarding the new life in Christ is to discover a Pauline description of salvation.¹ This will mean of course, looking beyond the writing of Romans. The selection of the passages² discussed below is based on the fact that these selected passages discuss the new birth, justification, sanctification and the flesh, i.e. the elements of the new life in Christ that are pertinent to this study. These elements³ are pertinent to this study because they describe not only God's action in salvation, but also the human experience in salvation that are fundamental to the experience of the new life in Christ. If, when comparing the experience of the new life in Christ within the Pauline Corpus with the experience of the emphatic "I" of Rom 7, the two experiences are found to be similar, then the conclusion is that the emphatic "I" of Rom 7 is regenerate.

¹ Salvation has been chosen as a comprehensive term for the experience that God grants to those human beings who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. It is understood that the previous statement can be a topic of discussion and debate. However, this is the understanding that has been gained from texts such as Rom 10:9, 10. See also L.S. Chafer, *Major Bible Themes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 181.

² The reason for choosing the passages studied below is that these passages do relate directly to the elements of salvation that are being discussed in this study.

³ Salvation is a many-faceted experience. Truly there are many other aspects of salvation that are not mentioned in this study. However, due to the scope of this study and the topic of experience, certain elements, of necessity, had to be left out. The fact that these elements have been left out of this study by no means implies that they are not important elements to the experience of salvation. What is meant is that they do not fit within the scope of this study.

1. New Birth

The new birth is the beginning of the Christian experience.⁴ A person, before the experience of the new birth, lives a life alienated from God and a life in rebellion to God (Rom 3:10-18). The life lived alienated from and in rebellion to God is more than simply an unethical or immoral life. There are many non-Christians who live a life of high ethical and moral standards. The life given in the new birth is not simply, or even to state primarily, an ethical or moral life.⁵ The life given in the new birth is God's life, which is brought to the believer and is experienced in, through and by the Holy Spirit.⁶ It must not be understood or thought that the above statements are expressing the idea that the life given in the new birth is an unethical or immoral life.⁷ God's life, though not primarily an ethical or moral life, is a holy life. There is a difference between an ethical or moral life and a holy life. When comparing Paul's statements regarding his former life as a Pharisee, Paul wrote that as for legalistic righteousness he was faultless (Phlp 3:6). Thus, it can be seen that a moral life is not enough for salvation. A person must be born-again.⁸ When a person is born-again, this person receives a new nature.⁹ This new nature, according to Chafer, "has divine qualities and longs after the things of God".¹⁰ Berkhof adds: "regeneration is the act of God by which the principle of the new life is implanted in man,

⁴ J.M. Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, 401.

⁵ T. Epp, *Flesh and Spirit in Conflict: Practical Studies in Galatians* (Lincoln, Nebraska: Back To The Bible Broadcast, 1968), 12.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 21; also Rom 8: 9, 10.

⁷ There is no intention of stating or supporting the idea, which has been called antinomianism.

⁸ See John 3:3. Of course the Gospel according to John is not in the Pauline Corpus. However, John 3:3 are the words of Jesus, at least as quoted by John. The reason for quoting this verse is that Paul claims to have met the Risen Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-9) and claims to have received the gospel through a revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal 1:12). Based on Paul's own claims, it can be argued that Jesus did have some influence on him.

⁹ L.S. Chafer, *Major Bible Themes*, 99.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

and the governing disposition of the soul is made holy”.¹¹ He goes on to posit that “in regeneration the sinful principle of the old life is replaced by the holy principle of the new life.”¹² What is to be understood in this is that at the moment of the new birth a divine nature, new life is implanted in the soul of the Christian believer. This divine nature, new life, as Berkhof states, is a holy disposition in the soul. This holy disposition of the soul, this new life, although within the Christian believer, has to penetrate the conscious life of the Christian believer.¹³

The difference between a moral life and the new birth lies in the fact that an ethical and moral life, even a life that is based on the written and revealed standards found in the Bible,¹⁴ lacks what is essential to a holy life. A holy life has as its essence conformity to God. This is so, because; a holy life given in the new birth is the work of the Holy Spirit who is given to and lives in and through a human being. Conformity to God is not primarily conformity to an ethical or moral standard. Conformity to God is essentially conformity to the heart and holiness of God.¹⁵ God's heart is a heart of love and righteousness, which includes justice, equality, compassion and passion for the world. Many people, in and outside of the Church, live high ethical and moral lives but lack love; for God, their neighbor or the world. Those who live high ethical lives without love, according to Paul, are nothing (1 Cor 13).

The new birth, as a life-birthing experience, gives a life that has God as its source.

¹¹ L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 469.

¹² *Ibid.*, 485.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ When the terms such as “bible” and “scripture” are used in this study, the meaning is of the Historic Evangelical Protestant understanding of Bible and Scriptures. In many cases, in this study, the words are used interchangeably.

¹⁵ C. Finney, *Finney's Systematic Theology*, 30.

This is to say that God is the origin, the source of the life of the new birth. When it is remembered that the life given in the new birth is the life of God, then the previous statement that the life given in the new birth has God as its source, is clarified.

The new birth is also a life that has God as its goal. Paul writes: “For we make it our goal to please Him” (2 Cor 5:9). The word φιλοτιμέομαι, means: “have as one's ambition, aspire.”¹⁶ Here, Paul states that the goal, the purpose of the Christian life, that is the life given by God at the new birth has a goal, a purpose. This goal, this purpose, is to please God in Christ Jesus. The very heartbeat of the life given in the new birth is to please God in Christ. The one who has experienced the new birth, their ontological reason, the purpose that they exist, is to please God in Christ. This reason to exist, that is to please God in Christ, is a conscious, intentional choice and an orientation and purpose.

The new birth is experienced when a person believes in Christ as Lord and Savior (Rom 10:6-13). In this passage, Paul states that righteousness is based on faith (Rom 10:6) and the object of this faith is Jesus Christ (Rom 10:6,7,9,11). The specific faith confessions are that Jesus is Lord and that God raised Jesus from the dead (Rom 10:9). The confession that Jesus is Lord has as its fundamental aspect obedience to Christ.¹⁷ There is also the faith that Jesus was raised from the dead. Paul teaches very clearly that Jesus died for transgressions and was raised because of justification (Rom 4:25). Thus, when Paul writes that one has to believe that Jesus was raised from the dead, behind this statement is the further understanding that Jesus died to save sinners (Rom 5:8). To put that in simple terms, the faith that leads to the new birth is faith in Jesus as Lord and

¹⁶ W. Arndt and W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament*, 861.

¹⁷ J.P. Louw & E.A. Nida, *Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament, based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 139.

Savior.

The emphatic “I” of Rom 7 also has as its desire to do what is pleasing to God (Rom 7:18). The emphatic “I” also has faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Rom 7:24, 25 clearly points out the faith of the emphatic “I” in Jesus as Savior. Who will deliver me from the body of death? The emphatic “I” asks. The answer given is that salvation and deliverance is found only in Jesus Christ (Eph 1:13). This is clearly a declaration of faith in Jesus as Savior. The emphatic “I” also desires to obey Christ as Lord. Rom 7:22 states that the emphatic “I” desires to obey the law of God, i.e. to obey God. Here is seen a declaration of commitment to Christ as Lord. The statement of faith in Christ as Savior and the commitment to him as Lord is the means by which a person is born-again. Thus, it must be seen that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is born-again, i.e. a Christian.

2. Justification and Sanctification

Paul writes and exhorts the believers to advance in holiness or sanctification (1 Thess 4:1). He writes that sanctification is living a life that is pleasing to God (1 Thess 4:1-30).¹⁸ A life that is pleasing to God begins at the new birth or justification. This means that justification is the beginning of sanctification.¹⁹ The one who has been justified has also been sanctified (1 Cor 6:11). This statement must be seen in two perspectives. The

¹⁸ E. Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 187; J. Reese. *First and Second Thessalonians* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1979), 43.

¹⁹ L.S. Chafer, *Major Bible Themes*, 189.

first perspective is that the one who has been justified has been sanctified in that they have begun the process of sanctification. To state the same thing in a different way is to say: The person who is not growing more and more Christ-like, which is another way of stating, sanctification, for this person, there maybe questions concerning whether that person has been justified. The second perspective is that sanctification is an act that God performs for the believer. Christ is the sanctification of the believer (1 Cor 1:30), according to Paul. Christ becomes²⁰ for the believer sanctification. Thus, when Christ and the believer come into union with one another, the believer is sanctified.

Justification and sanctification are not two totally separate and unrelated experiences. Justification is the “door” to sanctification. The one who has been declared righteous, which is justification, has also been born-again.²¹ The new birth is a relational, essential and ontological experience. What is meant is that the new birth is not just a moment to categorize and remember. The new birth is a life-breathing experience. The person who has been born-again has received and is living a new and entirely different life than that person lived before the experience of the new birth.²²

In justification, God declares the believing sinner not guilty.²³ In the Divine declaration of justification, God both imputes Christ's righteousness to the believer and imparts Christ's righteousness to the believer.²⁴ God imputes Christ's righteousness to the believer in that the believer is “in Christ” and the righteousness of Christ is then reckoned

²⁰ See further in this chapter for a more detailed discussion concerning the word *become*; in terms of Christ *becoming* the Christian believer's sanctification.

²¹ L.S. Chafer, *Major Bible Themes*, 189.

²² See above for clarification.

²³ L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 510; C.K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to The Corinthians* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968),60; R.F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, 113; K. Quast, *Reading The Corinthian Correspondence: An Introduction*, 37.

²⁴ This statement will be demonstrated in that which follows.

to the believer. Paul writes in the letter to the Romans that God “reckoned”, ἐλογίσθη, righteousness to both Abraham and to all others who believe in Jesus Christ (Rom 4:22-24). Λογίζομαι means: “reckon, calculate, take into account, evaluate, estimate, look upon as, consider”.²⁵ Thus, when a sinner believes in Christ, God reckons, considers the believer as righteous in Christ. In this reckoning, God imputes the righteousness of Christ to the believing sinner. In other words, the righteousness of Christ is applied to the account of the believing sinner. The believing sinner thus has Christ's righteousness imputed, calculated or reckoned to them.

Righteousness is imparted to the believer when the believer enters into a living relationship with Christ. As has been stated earlier, Christ has become²⁶ for the believer, sanctification (1 Cor 1:30). The indwelling Christ is the sanctification that is imparted to the believer. When Christ is given to the believer, then righteousness is also given or imparted to the believer. The reason for this is that Christ has become for the believer, sanctification (I Cor 1:30). Berkoff is of the opinion that sanctification is “a divine operation in the soul, whereby the holy disposition born in regeneration is strengthened.”²⁷ He also goes on to say that the believer is expected to co-operate with God in this work of sanctification.²⁸ Righteousness is thus imparted to the believer in

²⁵ *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament*, 475, 476.

²⁶ The emphasis here is on the phrase “has become”. Paul states very clearly that Christ “has become” sanctification to the believer. This is clearly an existential, experiential statement. The tense of the verb, which is aorist, also states a fact that is accomplished. Thus, Christ is now, at least in reference to the time Paul wrote or dictated 1 Cor, sanctification for the believer. The believer is sanctified because Christ is the believer's sanctification. This is an accomplished reality, experience for the believer.

²⁷ L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 532.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 532; C.K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to The Corinthians*, 218; K. Quast, *Reading The Corinthian Correspondence: An Introduction*, 62; E. Richard, *First and Second Corinthians*, 218; J. Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, (Wilmington, Delaware, Michael Glazier, Inc., 1999), 101; R. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997), 158; M.A. Getty, *First and Second Corinthians*, (Collegeville, MN., The Liturgical Press, 1983), 101; W. Barclay, *The Letters to The Corinthians*

regeneration when “the holy disposition is born”.²⁹

Sanctification is also a process of growing more and more Christ-like. Paul exhorts the Ephesians to put on the new self that has been created in the likeness of God (Eph 4:24). This “putting on” is the process of sanctification. This process of growing more and more Christ-like is not a process of gaining more and more of the Holy Spirit or of gaining more Christ. Sanctification, the process of growing more and more Christ-like, is the process of becoming, in experience, what the believer is already in Christ.³⁰ Stedman is of the opinion that sanctification is righteousness that has worked its way out to visibility.³¹ Cranfield agrees with the two definitions above concerning sanctification. He defines sanctification in this manner: “Those who have learned through the gospel message the truth of God's gracious decision on their behalf are under obligation to strive now with all their heart and strength to approximate more and more in their actual concrete living to that which in God's decision of justification they already are”.³² The obligation to strive with all the heart, after receiving the knowledge of the Word of Truth can be clearly seen in 1 Thess 4:1-12. This obligation to strive with all the heart is the process aspect of sanctification. The heart is of utmost importance in the process of sanctification. Sanctification is not simply the high ethical or moral life. Sanctification is the heart striving to become what God's action and decision on their behalf declares them to be.

(Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), 94; B. Fisk, *First Corinthians* (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2000), 60.

²⁹ L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 532.

³⁰ N. Anderson, *Victory Over The Darkness*, 86.

³¹ R. Stedman, *From Guilt to Glory*, 255.

³² C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary*, 128; P. Gräbe, *The Power of God in Paul's Letters* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 264.

According to Paul, sanctification is: avoiding sexual immorality (1 Thess 4:3); it is learning to control one's own body in a way that is holy and honorable (1 Thess 4:4); sanctification is not wronging a brother or sister (1 Thess 4:6). The teaching here is that wrong sexual behavior wrongs the people involved and takes advantage of them. However, it would be limiting of the teaching on sanctification to say that the admonition to learn to control one's own body is only discussing sexual behaviors. The context also teaches that any time a person acts out of any and all passionate lust that person wrongs and takes advantage of others. Sanctification is also living a life of love (1 Thess 4:9); it is to work with one's own hands (1 Thess 4:11), which means to work so that one is not always receiving, but is able to contribute and help others, which in reality is part of what it means to live a life of love.

Paul writes twice in 1 Thess 4:1-12 that sanctification is not perfection. He states that sanctification is the going on to perfection.³³ This is seen in 1 Thess 4:1 and 10. In these passages Paul acknowledges that the believers were living a life pleasing to God (1 Thess 4:1) and that they loved other Christians (1 Thess 4:10). However, the point to be made here is that Paul exhorts them to more and more live lives that are pleasing to God and to increase in their love for others. This means that they were not living and loving perfectly, there was room for growth. To not live and love perfectly means that there were areas of their lives that were not perfect and that needed to be changed or sanctified. This also means that within them were areas or parts of their lives that were sanctified and there were other areas or parts that were not.

This is exactly the teaching of Rom 7 concerning the emphatic "I". The emphatic

³³ E. Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 218; J. Reese, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 43; L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 485.

“I” desires to do the good but at times is not able to (Rom 7:15-20). Paul writes that in his flesh there is no good (Rom 7:18). Within this context, good can only mean that which is pleasing to God. This understanding is derived from the comparison/contrast that Paul makes throughout Rom 7 between the desire to do good and at times the inability to not do the good. Rom 7:25 is the capstone on the position that the good is doing what is pleasing to God. In this verse Paul states that in his mind he serves the law of God. The law of God is spiritual (Rom 7:14) it is not simply an external set of regulations. Nor is law in this context an antithesis to faith. To summarize that the good in the context of Romans is pleasing God, Paul defines pleasing God as the presenting of one’s body to God as a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1).

In addition to the desire to please God, the emphatic “I” also sees in his or her own life areas that are not yet sanctified (Rom 7:22, 23). The areas that the emphatic “I” states that they are not yet sanctified are the members of the body that are still under the control of the other law that wages war against their mind, heart and will. It can be seen that the experience of the emphatic “I” is a similar experience to the believers in Thessalonica.

3. Conformity to Christ

Sanctification is also seen in conformity to Christ.³⁴ To please God in Christ is by

³⁴ J.M. Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, 533.

conformity to Christ and by obedience to the words of Christ as Paul writes (Eph 5:1).³⁵ Conformity to Christ is to be understood as being imitators of God (Eph 5:1). Conformity to Christ is the goal of sanctification and thus is part of the discussion of sanctification. This conformity by obedience to Christ is not found in ethics or morality, but by conformity to the heart and holiness of God.

A digression at this point, maybe helpful in clarifying and strengthening the statement that conformity to God in holiness is conformity to God's heart of love. Conformity to God's heart of love is not seen primarily or even essentially, in ethics and

³⁵ Pauline authorship of Ephesians is held to in this study. D. Guthrie lists reasons for Pauline authorship: (1). Ephesians self-claims. That is in the opening of the letter, the writer not only claims to be Paul but also claims the authority of an apostle by the will of God. (2). External attestation. Guthrie writes: "Ephesians appears to have been in wide circulation by the middle of the second century among both orthodox Christians and heretics. It was included in the earliest formal Canon, that of Marcion (c.AD 140), though under the name of Laodiceans." Its Pauline origin was therefore at this time undisputed, since Marcion acknowledged only the apostle Paul as his authority. In the Muratorian Canon (c.AD 180) it was included under the Epistles of Paul. It forms part of the Pauline Epistles in the earliest evidence for the Latin and Syriac versions. (3). Pauline structure. (4). Language and literary affinities. (5). Theological affinities (*New Testament Introduction*, 479-482). Guthrie finishes his discussion for Pauline authorship with these words: "When all the objections are carefully considered it will be seen that the weight of evidence is inadequate to overthrow the overwhelming external attestation to Pauline authorship, and the Epistle's own claims. The fact that the writer plainly calls himself Paul has not been greatly stressed in the preceding discussion in order not to prejudice judgment. But in spite of the fact that pseudonymity is regarded by many modern scholars to have been an established practice among the early Christians, the advocates of the traditional view are entitled to emphasize the self-testimony of the Epistle as support for their position until some satisfactory explanation is found which accounts for the universal acceptance of the Epistle at its face value. To maintain that the Paulinist out of his sheer love for Paul and through his own self-effacement composed the letter, attributed it to Paul and found an astonishing and immediate readiness on the part of the Church to recognize it as such is considerably less credible than the simple alternative of regarding it as Paul's own work," (*New Testament Introduction*, 507, 508). While R.E. Brown includes Ephesians in the category of DeuteroPauline, (*An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 441); he states that the Pauline Corpus does not contain all of Paul's thought, so the fact that new ideas which are found in other epistles (by this is meant the DeutroPauline Corpus), does not prove that Paul could not have written this new idea, R.E. Brown goes on to further state that "one would need to show that this new idea could not come from Paul," (*An Introduction to the New Testament*, 437). J.O. Buswell is of the opinion that while it cannot be definitely proven that Ephesians is genuinely Pauline; there are other considerations that must be included. He ends his discussion on the authorship of Ephesians with these words: "If the maxim 'innocent until proven guilty' is applied here, then the tradition which accepts Paul as the author of Ephesians is more recommendable than the suggestion of an unknown author. The burden of proof lies with those questioning the tradition. The evidence produced by those who disagree with Pauline authorship is neither strong nor harmonious enough to invalidate the judgment of tradition," (*A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, 41). See M. Barth for a listing of the various positions in the debate over Pauline authorship of Ephesians, (*Ephesians 1-3* (New York: Doubleday, 1974), 28).

morality. This is seen in the Gen 3³⁶ account of the Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

According to the Biblical account³⁷ in Gen 3, Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden. The Garden of Eden was a paradise. In paradise, Adam and Eve lived according to the heart of God as expressed in God's words, His command. The day came when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and were cast out of the Garden of Eden and experienced spiritual death and began to die physically. The event, the decision that is called original sin was not an ethical or moral decision. The decision to eat of the fruit of the knowledge of the Tree of Good and Evil was a holy decision.

The source of holiness is the will, the spiritual heart.³⁸ Thus, it can be seen that the choice of Adam and Eve, coming from their will, was a holy decision and not just an ethical or moral decision. A holy decision is one in which the choice is made to obey God or not. An ethical or moral decision may include choosing to conform to a society's standards. In choosing to eat from the Tree of The Knowledge of Good and Evil, they were not making the choice to live a life of sinful actions. They were not rejecting the God given purpose and boundaries of sex. Adam and Eve were not choosing to steal each other's belongings and property. The choice of Adam and Eve to eat from the Tree of The

³⁶ Clearly Genesis is not included within the Pauline Corpus. However, it can be argued that Paul's understanding of Genesis influenced his understanding of the Gospel. He writes in Rom 5:12-21 that sin entered the world through one act of disobedience by Adam. Paul, in Rom 5 also compares and contrasts Christ's one act of righteousness with Adam's sin. Rom 5:12-21 is a clear reference to Gen 3. To include a discussion of Gen 3 in this study is to help understand Paul's perspective on sin and grace in Christ as he wrote in the book of Romans. To understand Paul's perspective of sin and grace in Christ is to understand Paul's teaching on the experience of salvation. It is when Paul's view of the experience of salvation is understood that this experience can be compared to the experience of the emphatic "I" of Rom 7.

³⁷ Whether one holds to the view that Gen 3 is an account of what happened or to the view that Gen 3 is a religious story that teaches a truth; the same fundamental truth is seen in both views. This truth is that Adam and Eve chose to disobey God with the intent of becoming like God. See further in this section for further clarification.

³⁸ C. Finney, *Finney's Systematic Theology*, 29.

Knowledge of Good and Evil was not a choice to lie to one another.

Adam and Eve chose “to be like God”. This statement, “To be like God”, must be understood as a desire to be God.³⁹ To be like God means that no longer is the person under the authority of, bound to obey, follow or even recognize, God as the True God. The choice of Adam and Eve to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was a choice, whereby they replaced the True God with themselves. They knew good and evil, right and wrong. It was their knowing that was their ultimate authority. No longer was God their ultimate authority. The choice to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was a choice to overthrow God and to replace God with themselves. This choice was not simply an ethical or moral choice.⁴⁰ This choice was an ultimate choice or a “holy choice”.

The essence of sin, therefore, is not simply ethical or moral. The essence of sin is rebellion. Rebellion may express itself in unethical or immoral behavior, but it does not always do so. Finney expresses the same when he writes that sin consists in selfish ultimate intention.⁴¹ A person can live a life of high ethical and moral standards and still be in rebellion to the authority by having a selfish ultimate intention or purpose for life. When God is not the purpose for one’s life, then, it matters not whether life is of a high and ethical quality or not. That life is a life lived in sin. The ultimate intention of a person is not God, but self or something else that has been chosen to replace God. The essence of sin, therefore, is not simply ethical or moral behavior, but a heart of rebellion and

³⁹ \supset means “like”. This particle expresses identity. It also means “agreement in kind: in the same way as, of the same sort as” according to W. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans, 1971) 149.

⁴⁰ See J. Bunyan, *Grace Abounding*, 13-19 for his description of the difference between moral and holy lives.

⁴¹ C. Finney, *Finney's Systematic Theology*, 119.

disobedience to God.⁴² The essence of holiness is not simply ethical or moral behavior but a will that is the spiritual heart in conformity to God's heart of love. This is so because holiness is the exact opposite of sin. Since the essence of sin is a heart of rebellion from God, holiness is a heart of obedience and relation to God. Finney asserts that holiness must always consist in singleness of eye or intention. It must consist in a supreme disinterested choice, willing or intending the good of God and of the universe, for its own sake.⁴³ Holiness desires ultimately one thing. Holiness is where the ultimate desire of the person is to please God.⁴⁴ Both desire and holiness find their source in the heart. Thus, holiness, according to Finney, is the heart desiring God. The desire for God is seen also in the actions one does. Paul exhorts the Ephesians to lay aside the former self and to put on the new self (Eph 4:22-24).⁴⁵ The Ephesians were Christians.⁴⁶ They did desire God in Christ; yet, Paul exhorted them to lay aside the former self and its practices and put on the new self. Here is seen both desire and action.

The two experiences of justification and of sanctification, that is declared righteous and the process of becoming righteous are also seen in Eph 4:22-24. The Ephesians were righteous; they were new creatures in Christ,⁴⁷ this is the declared righteous aspect of sanctification. Yet, at the same time, Paul exhorted them to lay aside the former self and put on the new self. Here is clearly seen the process of sanctification.⁴⁸

⁴² *Ibid.*, 37.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 76, 77. Also A. Nygren, *Agape and Eros* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1953), 104.

⁴⁵ See footnote #35 above this chapter for the reasons for Pauline authorship of Ephesians.

⁴⁶ Paul calls them saints and faithful in Christ (Eph 1:1).

⁴⁷ See also 2 Cor 5:17 for righteousness being a new *creature/creation* in Christ.

⁴⁸ T. Aquinas, *Saint Paul's Epistle to The Ephesians* (trans. M. Lamb; Albany, New York: Magi Books, 1966), 186; H.H. Hobbs, *New Men in Christ*, 85; R.P. Martin, *Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon*

Wesley has written that the “essential part of Christian holiness is giving the heart wholly to God”.⁴⁹ Again the idea of holiness and heart are combined. Holiness is the heart being presented to God as a living sacrifice. To state this in experiential terms, holiness is becoming what God wants the heart⁵⁰ to be. Wesley adds: “Entire sanctification, or Christian perfection, is neither more nor less than pure love”.⁵¹ By pure love he means love for God and for one’s fellow human being. Love for God and others results in actions.⁵² Again Wesley confirms the statement that the heart that desires God will put that desire into action.

The new birth, the implanting of the life of God in the soul of human beings, is a holy life. This holy life is a life lived in conformity to God's heart and holiness. The new life, which is the expression of the new birth, is the Christian believer being made a partaker of the divine nature.⁵³ The Holy Spirit is the new life produced in the soul of the

(Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991), 57. For a view that states the *putting on/putting off* that is part of the sanctification process is done in baptism see: M. MacDonald, *Colossians/Ephesians* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 305; L. Swain, *Ephesians* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1980), 87.

⁴⁹ J. Wesley, “Letter to Mrs. Elizabeth Bennis, of Limerick, Dated July 25, 1767,” Letter, *Works of John Wesley* (Franklin, TN; Providence House Publishers, 1995), no page number given.

⁵⁰ In this context, heart means the total person; see H. Nouwen, *The Way of The Heart*, 74.

⁵¹ J. Wesley, “Letter to Mr. Walter Churchey, of Brecon, Dated December 23, 1773,” Letter, *Works of John Wesley 12* (CD-ROM; Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 1995), 432. Wesley further explained perfection as love in his comments on 1 Thess 5:16. He wrote: “Rejoice evermore—in uninterrupted happiness in God. Pray without ceasing—which is the fruit of always rejoicing in the Lord. In everything gives thanks—which is the fruit of both the former. This is Christian perfection. Farther than this we cannot go; and we need not stop short of it,” (*Wesley’s Notes on the New Testament*).

⁵² J. Wesley, “His comments of James 2:22”, *Wesley’s Notes on the New Testament, Vol. II* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1983), no page number given.

⁵³ 1 Pet 1:4. The letters of Peter are not in the Pauline Corpus. However, it is fitting to include Peter in this discussion as Paul, himself states that he went up to Jerusalem and stayed with him for 15 days (Gal 1:18). According to Paul, 14 years later, he went again up to Jerusalem and submitted to them the Gospel that he preached; the other apostles contributed nothing to Paul in his understanding of the Gospel (Gal 2:1-6). In addition, the common thread (see chapter 1 of this study, section on the justification of the methodology for further discussion on this) that runs through the New Testament writers is seen. See also M. Borg, *The Heart of Christianity* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), 117, 121; D. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978), 149; B. Graham, *The Holy Spirit* (Waco: Word Books, 1978), 85.

human being at the moment of the new birth.

The Holy Spirit is not just a power, a substance or an influence. The Holy Spirit is a person.⁵⁴

The Holy Spirit, being a person is not divisible.⁵⁵ A substance can be divided into parts. A power can be diverted from its source. A person, however, is a whole.

When a person has received the person of the Holy Spirit, the entirety of the Holy

⁵⁴ L.S. Chafer, *Major Bible Themes*, 87; L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 95, 96; B. Graham, *The Holy Spirit*, 17; J. Girzone, *Trinity* (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 103; J.O. Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, 113; N. Alexander, *Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, 59; G. Wainwright, *Doxology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 87. In addition see the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Confession. See also the Nicene Creed which states that: “We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.” The emphasis in this is that the Holy Spirit “has spoken” through the prophets. A person speaks. While the discussion regarding the filioque clause in the Western Church’s version of the Nicene Creed is beyond the scope of this study; the words of Buswell are appropriate. He writes: “In regards to the Nicene Creed, the Western Church added the words filioque and the son. This phrase was added to convey the idea that in the eternal procession, the son is equally with the Father a source of the procession of the Spirit. Thus the Son is not in any sense subordinate. The word “procession” or “proceedeth” is a hindrance rather than a help. It gives us a vehicle of understanding the relationship between the Spirit and the Father and the Son. The Scripture does not teach the procession of the Spirit as a mode of expression of his eternal relationship within the Trinity,” (J.O. Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of The Christian Religion*, 119, 120). Although the Nicene Creed uses the term “proceedeth”, this term does not teach or imply that the Spirit is not a person. J.O. Buswell’s comments regarding the word “proceedeth” and its meaning for the eternal personhood of the Holy Spirit has much to merit. F.J. Sheed is of the opinion that the difference between the Eastern Church’s version of the Nicene Creed and the Western Church’s version is “more than verbal, but not a great deal,” (*God the Human Condition, Vol.I* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1966), 222). The separation of the Eastern Church and the Western Church, not simply based on the filioque clause, although in part based on this clause, is evidence enough that the difference between the two versions of the Nicene Creed is perhaps a great deal more than verbal. The personality of the Holy Spirit is taught in John 16:8 where he is said to reprove the world; The Holy Spirit teaches (John 14:26); He speaks (Gal 4:6); The Spirit leads (Gal 5:18). The Holy Spirit is called “God” (Acts 5: 3, 4). In addition the pronouns used of the Spirit imply His personality, see L.S. Chafer, *Major Bible Themes*, 89; R. Pache, *The Person and Work of The Holy Spirit* (trans. J.D. Emerson; Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), 11-19; J.I. Packer, “The Holy Spirit and His Work,” in *Applying the Scriptures* (ed. K.S. Kantzer; Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 51-76. Sheed says that the Spirit, like the Word is a person, not an “it”, (*God and the Human Condition, Vol.I*, 221). V.-M. Karkainen calls the Spirit the “medium of communion of Jesus with the Father and the mediator of the participation of believers in Christ,” (*The Doctrine of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 46).

⁵⁵ For a discussion concerning the Trinity, see St. Anselm, *St. Anselm Basic Writings* (trans. S.N. Deane; Chicago: Open Court, 1962), 158-189, esp. 166.

Spirit has been received.⁵⁶ When the entire Holy Spirit has been received, the nature of God has been received (2 Pet 1:4).⁵⁷ When the Holy Spirit of God has been received in the new birth, God's life is in the human being (Rom 8:10).⁵⁸ This does not mean that the human being becomes God. The human being only participates in the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4). Anderson affirms: “When you came into spiritual union with God through your new birth, you didn't add a new divine nature to your old sinful nature. You exchanged natures”.⁵⁹ He states further, that, in Christ, His divine nature constitutes your core essence.⁶⁰ Christ, thus, is the core essence of the Christian. This is another way of saying that Christ is the life of the Christian.

The Christian, the one who has been born-again, that is, who has received God's life, has God's life in him or her. As has been stated before, the new birth, which occurs at the same moment as justification, and is inseparable from it, is also the beginning of sanctification. The new birth, being the doorway to sanctification, is the beginning of a life long process of growth in Christ-likeness. This growth in Christ-likeness is a growth in transformation and being conformed to the image of Christ. Sanctification, being the growth in Christ-likeness, is not a process of gaining more of the Holy Spirit or more life from God. The new birth is the gift of the life of God, the Holy Spirit, to the believing sinner. When the Holy Spirit has been given, the entire Holy Spirit has been received. This is so, because the Holy Spirit, being a person, is not divisible. Therefore, when a

⁵⁶ C. Cousar, *A Theology of The Cross: The Death of Jesus in the Pauline Letters* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 40.

⁵⁷ See footnote #53 above this chapter for a further discussion on the inclusion of Peter's letter.

⁵⁸ Literally Rom 8:10 states that the Spirit, in this case the Holy Spirit, is life in the one in whom Christ dwells; this is referring to a Christian believer, for only Christian believers have Christ, the Holy Spirit within them (Rom 8:11). See also H.D. Betz, *Galatians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 280; T. Epp, *Flesh and Spirit in Conflict*, 12.

⁵⁹ N. Anderson, *Victory Over The Darkness*, 75.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 91.

believing sinner has been justified, and at the same moment has experienced the new birth, the entire life of God has been received and indwells in the believing sinner.

At the new birth, the believing sinner receives Christ, the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:17) Paul writing to the Church at Colossae⁶¹ states that, “Christ who is your life, is seated in the heavens” (Col 3:3, 4). In this verse, the word for life is ζωή– which means life in its principle.⁶²

In summary, ζωή is the opposite of death and sin. That which is opposite death and sin is true life and holiness. In looking at the understandings of ζωή, it can be understood that in the letter to the Church at Colossae where it is written that their life was hid in Christ, what is meant was that the essence of their life, the very life principle itself is hid in Christ. The reason for this is that life (ζωή) is Christ (Col 3:4).

It can also be understood from this that life (ζωή) is holy.⁶³ The reason for this is clear to see. Since life (ζωή) is Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ is holy, therefore, life (ζωή) is holy. It can also be stated that ζωή, because it is the life of Jesus, it therefore is holy. Because holiness is the quality of being holy, it is to be seen that holiness is simply the quality, the characteristic of Jesus Christ, who is the Second Person of the Trinity.

Thus, when Paul wrote to the Church at Colossae and said that their life (ζωή) is hid with God in Christ, Paul meant that the life principle, the very essence of their life, in fact, their very life itself was hid in Christ. It must also be seen that when Paul said that

⁶¹ The debate over whether Paul wrote the letter to the Colossians is an ongoing debate. Guthrie states the position for Pauline authorship. D. Guthrie writes “the strongest arguments for Pauline authorship are the indisputable nature of the external evidence and the inseparable connection of the Epistle with Philemon.” He goes on to add, “There is no shred of evidence that the Pauline authorship of the whole or any part of Colossians was ever disputed until the nineteenth century. It formed part of the Pauline Corpus as far back as can be traced, and evidence of such a character cannot lightly be swept aside” (*Introduction*, 554). See also M. Gorman *Apostle of The Crucified Lord*, 87ff for an opposing view.

⁶² G.R. Berry, *A Dictionary of New Testament Greek Synonyms*, 36.

⁶³ See again Col. 3:4.

the believer's life (ζωή) was not only hid in Christ, but, in actuality was Christ, for Paul claims that when Christ appears, who is your life (ζωή) (Col 3:4), Paul was saying that the life (ζωή) of the Christian is holy.

The believer is both declared holy and is holy, in their heart. Paul writes that God declares the believer righteous (Rom 4). Righteousness is thus imputed to the believer. The believer is also righteous because of Christ's indwelling (1 Cor 1:30). The indwelling of Christ is righteousness imparted to the believer. Christ is righteous and when he indwells the Christian believer by means of the Holy Spirit, actual righteousness indwells, or it can be said is imparted, to the believer. However, the believer must still grow and express in all the areas of their life, what they already are in Christ. The theological discussion over imputation and impartation of righteousness can be solved when it is remembered, that justification by God's declaration of right is always accompanied by the new birth, the actual giving or imparting of God's life, God's holiness, God's righteousness to the believing sinner. When the Holy Spirit indwells the believer, since the Holy Spirit is God's Spirit and is holy and righteous, the Holy Spirit, then actually brings with Himself to the believing sinner, the actual righteousness and holiness of God. The believing sinner then is actually holy and righteous in their heart. So, it can be seen that God declares the believer righteous while at the same time making the believer, in their heart, that is in their will, holy.

The Christian declared righteous by God at justification and made righteous by God by the new birth is still a person that is not yet perfect in the sense of absolute

conformity to the standards of God's holiness and person.⁶⁴ Col 2:6 teaches that⁶⁵ Christians are righteous yet at the same time must become righteous. This verse states: “As you have received Christ, walk in Him”.

The verb, “received” in this verse is in the indicative mood. In this verse the verb “received”, being in the indicative mood, is stating, at least in the mind of the speaker/writer a fact of actuality. This is to say that Paul, the writer/speaker, thought, when he wrote this verse, that the Christians had indeed, in all actuality, received Christ.

The other verb in this verse “walk” is in the imperative mood. Paul writes and states, “As you have received Christ, ‘walk’ in Him”. Walk means to live, to conduct one's life, to live a certain way. The meaning of Paul is clear. The Christians in Colossae had received Christ. Paul was then appealing to their will, their spiritual heart, to “walk, to conduct oneself, to live their lives according to Christ”. In this verse can be seen that Christians receive Christ. At the new birth, Christians receive Christ in the Holy Spirit. The receiving of Christ is not enough, however. Christians are to then live their lives. Christians have received Christ. They then must live what they have received.

When a sinner believes in Christ, God also imparts the righteousness of Christ to the believing sinner. This is seen in the fact that Christ is righteousness and is imparted or is actually given to the believer at the new birth. Paul writes and states that Christ is righteousness to the believer (1 Cor 1:30).⁶⁶ Paul does not say that Christ will be

⁶⁴ T. Epp, *Flesh and Spirit in Conflict*, 24, 75; 125.

⁶⁵ Again, Pauline authorship for Colossians is held and thus, can be included within this study.

⁶⁶ R.F. Collins, *First Corinthians* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 112, 113; C.K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 60; M.R. DeHann, *Studies in First Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), 27; K. Quast, *Reading The Corinthian Correspondence: An Introduction*, 37; R. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997), 33; J. Murphy O’Conner, *First Corinthians* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1979), 16;

righteousness to the believer. Paul writes and claims that Christ became (ἐγενήθη) righteousness to the believer. The righteousness of Christ becomes the righteousness of the believing sinner by imputation or by reckoning or crediting, as the NIV states it. God declares the believing sinner righteous at the moment of justification. Justification is the declaring by God that a believing sinner is righteous. At the moment of justification, the new birth occurs. Although separate in terms of theological discussion, justification and the new birth are simultaneous in experience. What this means is that when a person believes in Jesus Christ, that person is justified (Rom 5:1). At the very moment of justification, the new birth occurs. At the moment of the new birth, the Holy Spirit indwells the believing sinner, the “life” of God. The life (ζωή) of the believer is now the Holy Spirit (Gal 2:20; Col 3:3, 4) who is righteous. Christ, who is the Spirit (2 Cor 3:17) becomes the life of the believer (Col 3:3, 4), who is righteous. The believer’s life is actually righteous and not just declared righteous. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer is actual righteousness that is imparted to the believer by the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit at the moment of the new birth. Jesus Christ is the righteousness of the believer (1 Cor 1:30; Phlp 1:21; Col 3:4).

The Christian believer, although righteous by imputation and by impartation, is not perfect. The Christian believer, at this present time, is living in the now but not yet fully of the eschatological age.⁶⁷ This means that Christian believer’s “present

W. Barclay, *The Letters to The Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), 25; E. Wcela, *Paul The Pastor; His Teaching in The First Letter to The Corinthians*, 30.

⁶⁷ C.F.H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority, Vol. IV* (Waco: Word Books, 1979), 503; J.R.W. Stott, *The Contemporary Christian* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 375-392.

sanctification is not yet final glorification”.⁶⁸ Christians are told that when Christ returns, they will then be like him (1 John 3:2, 3).⁶⁹ The point to be made is that Christians, in this present life, are not yet glorified and must wait in partially fixed and partially broken bodies (Rom 8:23).⁷⁰

Ladd adds to the discussion of the now but not yet when he states that the Pauline statement that in Christ the old has passed away and the new is come as an eschatological statement.⁷¹ By this he means that the coming of Christ was not simply the coming of an individual, but the coming, the in breaking of a new age or aeon.⁷² A new age or aeon, it is true. But this new age is the kingdom of God.⁷³ Not only did Jesus preach and announce that the kingdom of God is near (Mark 1:15); Jesus Christ embodies the kingdom of God.⁷⁴ Tillich is of the opinion that the kingdom of God is the end of history.⁷⁵ The kingdom of God is not simply the end of history in terms of its finish, but the kingdom of God is also the aim of history.⁷⁶ For Tillich, the “past and the future meet in the present and both are included in the eternal now;”⁷⁷ or to say in the kingdom of God. This means that in the kingdom of God, the past and the future are present now. Thus, with Christ’s coming that is with the coming of the kingdom of God, there

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 498; Paul wrote that Christian believers are to “work out their salvation.” This is only possible because it is God who is in them creating the desire to be pleasing to Christ and giving the strength to grow in holiness or in working out their salvation (Phlp 2:12, 13).

⁶⁹ The reason John is quoted is that this study claims to be an experiment, see chapter 1 of this study; see also footnote #8 above of this chapter for a further clarification for the inclusion of John.

⁷⁰ L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 537; L.S. Chafer, *Major Bible Themes*, 209; G.E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 480; J.M. Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, 449.

⁷¹ G.E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 480.

⁷² *Ibid.* See also J. Dunn, *The Theology Of Paul’s Letter To The Galatians*, 47.

⁷³ W.D. Davies, *Invitation to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 147.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* See also P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Three Volumes in One* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 395.

⁷⁵ P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 394.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 395.

appeared “in Him” the “new humanity”.⁷⁸ This new humanity, new “man”, is composed of Jews and Gentiles (Eph 2:15), who live under God’s rule which is God’s kingdom.⁷⁹ In addition, it is to be understood that this new humanity already exists in Christ.⁸⁰ While Christians are living in the now but the not yet, in Christ they are participants, members of the new humanity (2 Cor 5:17).⁸¹ Thus, while they are living in the old age, in bodies not yet redeemed (Rom 8:23); they also belong to the new age or aeon.⁸² While living in bodies not yet redeemed, Christian believers groan waiting for the redemption of their bodies. This groaning is the cry of imperfection and the struggle with sin (Rom 8:18-39).

The cry of imperfection is the cry found throughout Rom 7. While the emphatic “I” cries because of imperfection, which is the struggle with another law that is in its members, the emphatic “I” of Rom 7, at the same time desires to be holy, perfect and pleasing to God. The distance between the heart's cry of the emphatic “I”, which is to be holy and pleasing to God and the actual experiential experience of the emphatic “I”, causes the emphatic “I” to cry out in deep “soulish” agony, “O Wretched Man”. The emphatic “I” is righteous by imputation and Paul’s ζῶή is actually righteous, by the impartation of the Holy Spirit. However, experientially, the emphatic “I” is not perfect. This experiential condition of not being perfect causes the emphatic “I” much pain and

⁷⁸ G.E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 480; J. Bunyan, *Grace Abounding*, 112-114.

⁷⁹ W.D. Davies, *Invitation to the New Testament*, 162.

⁸⁰ G.E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 480.

⁸¹ J.A. Fitzmyer holds that the new creation (new humanity) and the gradual transformation found in 2 Cor 3:18, while intimately related are not the same, (“Glory Reflected on the Face of Christ (2 Cor 3:7-4:6) and a Palestinian Jewish Motif,” *TS* 4 (1981): 630-644).

⁸² G.E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 480; T. Epp agrees with this discussion but uses the terms: “standing” or “position” to describe what Christian believers are in Christ, or as T. Epp puts it: “How God sees us in Christ and that is a finished work, complete and without flaws,” (*Flesh and Spirit in Conflict*, 74); and the word “condition” as Christian believers are now in this world. T. Epp writes: “In our condition on the earth the fallen sin nature is still with us and wants to control our bodies as before,” (*Flesh and Spirit in Conflict*, 75).

agony. The emphatic “I”, however, is not defeated or downtrodden by their experiential condition, even though the experiential condition of the emphatic “I” is far from their righteousness in Christ and the desire of the life that is to please God in all things. The emphatic “I” knows that Christ is righteousness and that, as the Mystics say, God sees the person as his/her desire. The *Cloud of Unknowing* asserts that “it is not what you are nor what you have been that God sees with His all-merciful eyes, but what you desire to be”.⁸³ Finney adds to this statement with these words: “Moral character no more lies in emotions than in outward action. It does not lie in thought or attention. It does not lie in the specific volition that directed the attention; but in that intention, or design of the mind, that produced the volition, which directed the attention, which again produced the thought, which again produced the emotion.”⁸⁴ Finney is of the opinion that a person’s “whole character is and must be as his intention”.⁸⁵ He defines intention as: “the motive, or reason behind an act”.⁸⁶ Motive is understood as “the sense of desire”,⁸⁷ thus, motive/intention⁸⁸ is desire. Desire, according to Finney and the *Cloud of Unknowing*, is character, i.e., who a person is. Once again the connection between heart (desire) and holiness is seen.

⁸³ Anonymous, *The Cloud of Unknowing* (ed. W. Johnston; New York: Image Books, 1973), 146.

⁸⁴ C. Finney, *Finney’s Systematic Theology*, 43.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 431.

⁸⁷ B. Cayne & D. Lechner, eds., *The New Lexicon Webster’s Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Lexicon Publications, 1989), 653.

⁸⁸ When C. Finney speaks of intention or desire in this way, he is referring to what he calls “ultimate intention”. By ultimate intention is meant: “the choice of any ultimate end implies that that is the thing, and the only thing, for which we live and act; that we aim at, and live for nothing else,” (*Finney’s Systematic Theology*, 34).

4. Flesh

Ladd says that flesh has the connotation of living life solely on the human level. The human level, according to Ladd, excludes everything related to God.⁸⁹ From this, it can be seen that one meaning of flesh⁹⁰ is viewpoint, sphere that is opposed to God.⁹¹ Because “flesh” means opposed to God; those who are in the flesh, cannot be in the Spirit and vice versa (Rom 8: 9, 10). Rom 8:9 affirms that those in whom the Holy Spirit dwells are not in the “flesh” but in the “spirit”. Those who are “not in the flesh but in the spirit” are not perfect. Rom 8:10, 11 goes on to state that if one is in the spirit, that is the Holy Spirit dwells within, he or she is not in the flesh. However, those who are not in the flesh do have a body that is made of flesh.

Paul writes that those in the Spirit live in bodies that are dead to sin (Rom 8:10). A body “dead to sin” cannot mean a body that is unresponsive to sin. Paul writes in Rom 8:12 exhorting those in the Spirit, those whose body “which is dead to sin” to not live according to the flesh. If bodies dead to sin means that the body is unresponsive to sin, Paul would not have to exhort the ones who are in the Spirit, those whose bodies which are dead to sin to not live according to the flesh.

Paul defines bodies dead to sin when he writes and states that he is σάρκινος (Rom 7:14). Trench writes that words with the termination in -ινος, designating as they

⁸⁹ G.E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 483; see also B. Graham, *The Holy Spirit* (Waco: Word Books, 1978), 90; K. Barth, *The Epistle To The Romans*, 284; T. Epp says that flesh is the “sinful element in man’s (people’s) nature,” *Flesh and Spirit in Conflict*, 128; J. Dunn is of the opinion that flesh, to Paul, was the “merely human appetites and desires,” (*The Theology of Paul’s Letter To The Galatians*, 108).

⁹⁰ For a fuller discussion of the term *flesh*, see chapter 3 of this study.

⁹¹ L.S. Chafer, *Major Bible Themes*, 190; K. Barth, *The Epistle To The Romans*, 284; see also Rom 8:7.

most frequently do, the stuff of which anything is made.⁹² The words with the termination in -ικος, in contrast, describe the “ruling principle”.⁹³ The σαρκικοί are those who allow the σάρξ, the flesh, a place that does not belong to it.⁹⁴ Trench goes on to say that σαρκικοί are those in whom the σάρξ, the flesh, is the ruling principle.⁹⁵ Paul is saying that he is made of flesh, i.e. has a body of flesh. He does not say, however, that his ruling principle is flesh.

This teaching is the same teaching found in Rom 7 regarding the emphatic “I”. Rom 7:21-25 states that within the body of the emphatic “I” are two laws⁹⁶ waging war against one another. These laws are located within the members of the body (Rom 7:23) and within the mind, νοῦς (Rom 7:23). There is a war waging between the body (flesh) of the emphatic “I” and between the mind/ spirit. The two opposing “forces” in this war are located in exactly the same aspects of the human being as described in Rom 8:10 and Rom 7. Thus leading to the conclusion that the emphatic “I” is a believer who, according to Col 2:6 must continue to grow and live in Christ.

In Col 3:1-10, Paul states, by means of the indicative mood, certain facts about the position of Christians in Christ. The verses which present the indicative mood, statement of actuality are: verse 1 (raised up with Christ); v. 3 (you died, the life of you has been hid in Christ in heaven; v. 9 (taken off old man/self); v. 10 (have put on the new man/self). By the indicative mood, Paul states that Christians have been raised with Christ, Christians are in heaven in Christ, Christians have put off the old man/self, and that

⁹² R. Trench, *Synonyms of The New Testament*, 272.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 269.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 273.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 274.

⁹⁶ The laws are “motivating powers”, T. Epp, *Flesh and Spirit in Conflict*, 21ff.

Christians have put on the new man/self. Paul's use of the indicative mood states that Paul doesn't *think* that these are facts of actuality. The use of the indicative mood states that Paul *considered* these as actual accomplished facts.

Within Col 3:1-10⁹⁷ are also found imperative verbs. Paul writes in verse 1: If you have been raised up with Christ (indicative), keep seeking the things above (imperative) and set your minds on the things above (imperative). The imperative mood is the mood of command or entreaty.⁹⁸ The imperative is also found in Col 3:9 where believers are exhorted to not lie to one another. In verse 12 the imperative is used to exhort believers to put on a heart of compassion that bears with each other and forgives one another. Believers are also exhorted to put on love (verse 14). There is also the exhortation in verse 15 to allow the peace of Christ to act as an umpire, judge or rule amongst them.

The indicative mood states a fact, while the imperative mood exhorts to do something. Paul writes and states certain things as a fact; by this he uses the indicative mood. He also wants the believers to do something; in these cases he uses the imperative mood. By the use of the indicative and the imperative can be seen the being righteous and the process of becoming righteous. Another way to state that is that in the use of the indicative and the imperative, it is seen that the believer is righteous, but must become in experience what he or she is in Christ.⁹⁹

Christ is the life of the believer (Col 3:4). This means that the believer's life is holy.¹⁰⁰ It is also true that the believer, in his or her, essential life (ζωή) is characterized

⁹⁷ Again, Pauline authorship is held.

⁹⁸ H.E. Dana & J. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of The Greek New Testament*, 174.

⁹⁹ H. Thielicke, *The Evangelical Faith* (trans. G.W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 122; also N.T. Wright, *Simply Christian*, 218-222.

¹⁰⁰ E. Best, *Second Corinthians* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1987), 56.

by holiness. Holiness, as understood and defined by the word ἁγιασμός, is both a process of becoming holy and the result of being made holy.¹⁰¹ As a Christian grows in sanctification, the Christian does not “gain” more of the Holy Spirit or of Christ. The Christian is holy because the life of the Christian is Christ and Christ, being the second person of the Trinity is holy. So when Christian believers grow in holiness, they express more and more in and through their lives the Christ who indwells them and is their life.

Believers are in Christ and are righteous. Yet, while being in Christ and righteous, believers must also use every effort to become in actual experience, what they are in Christ. Believers are righteous in Christ yet they also must become righteous in experience. This is exactly the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7. The emphatic “I” thanks God for the salvation that is in Christ Jesus (Rom 7:24, 25). The emphatic “I” writes that it is Christ who frees from the body of death, which is the body broken by sin and gives wholeness to the believer. This is a clear statement of faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus, it can be seen that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 must be a believer. The reason for stating this is that only believers have faith in the power of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for salvation.

Christians are exhorted to avoid the fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul (Gal 5:16, 17).¹⁰² If Christians were not exposed to or at times in contact with “fleshly lusts” the exhortation to avoid them would be empty and useless. The fact that Christians are exhorted to avoid these fleshly lusts means that Christians are exposed to them and

¹⁰¹ H.H. Hobbs, *New Men in Christ*, 85; R.P. Martin, *Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon*, 57.

¹⁰² C.B. Cousar, *Galatians* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1982), 138; T. Aquinas, *Saint Paul's Epistle to The Galatians*, (trans. F. R. Larcher; Albany, New York; Magi Books, 1966), 169; H.D. Betz, *Galatians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 279; W. Barclay, *The Letters to The Corinthians*, 94.

must do all they can to avoid them.¹⁰³

This must mean that the fleshly lusts “have access to the soul”. By having access to the soul is meant that the fleshly lusts must be able to interact, interfere and to trouble the soul. Fleshly lusts, which have access to the soul, must also be lusts, which are “internal” influences. Internal influences are influences within the Christian. External influences are influences, which are not “within” the Christian but are at some “distance” from the soul. Thus, it can be seen that the fleshly lusts are lusts, which are “within” the Christian that is part of who the Christian is.¹⁰⁴

To state that fleshly lusts are lusts within the Christian, as a part of the Christian's experience in this world, is confirmed by Gal 5:17.¹⁰⁵ Here, Paul writes that the flesh wages war against the spirit, in order that the Christian doesn't do what he or she desires to do. This means that, in the Christian are two “powers”, the flesh and the spirit. These two “powers” are at war with one another. The result of this war, at least at times, is that the Christian doesn't do what he or she truly desires to do.

This is the same experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7. The emphatic “I” desires to do what is good (Rom 7:18). The emphatic “I” also has a war being waged within (Rom 7:23).

¹⁰³ J. Murphy O'Conner, *First Corinthians*, 91, 92; R. Hays, *First Corinthians*, 158.

¹⁰⁴ M.R. DeHann, *Studies in First Corinthians*, 27; M.A. Getty, *First and Second Corinthians*, 46; C.B. Cousar, *Galatians*, 138; W. Barclay, *The Letters to The Corinthians*, 94. F. Matera takes the view that “spirit” and “flesh” in Gal 5:17 are describing two totally different ways of living. He states that the “Galatians must choose one or the other, they cannot choose both,” *Galatians*, (Collegeville, MN., The Liturgical Press, 1992), 200. While this is true, the context of Gal 5:17 states that the struggle of the Galatians is also internal and is not simply two different lifestyles that are unrelated to each other. The further context describes the struggle that is waging within the Galatians and not simply two roads at an intersection.

¹⁰⁵ T. Epp is of the opinion that Gal 5 “marks the turning point from doctrine to duty or privilege. It takes in all that has preceded by way of doctrine and focuses our attention on practical day-by-day living,” (*Flesh and Spirit in Conflict*, 114).

Paul calls the recipients of the Galatians' letter "brethren" (Gal 5:11). From this it is to be concluded that the context of Gal 5:17 is describing the situation of a Christian. Within this context is the phrase: "They are in conflict with one another, so that you do not do what you want." Here is a phrase describing the conflict within Christians. There is a war raging within them. The flesh and the spirit are in conflict with one another.¹⁰⁶

The context of Gal 5:17 is the discussion of Christian Freedom (Gal 5:13). Christian freedom is not being circumcised (Gal 5:2). Christian freedom is faith working through love (Gal 5:6). It is loving one's neighbor (Gal 5:14). Christian freedom is not giving an opportunity to the flesh (Gal 5:13). Here flesh does not mean the "stuff" of what the human body is made of, but must mean the psychological factor in man that serves as a willing instrument of sin and is subject to sin.¹⁰⁷ Christian freedom is walking in the spirit (Gal 5:16). Christian freedom is also fighting the war within (Gal 5:17).¹⁰⁸

Gal 5:17 which describes the war within the Christian must be seen in light of Gal 5:13, which states that Christian freedom is not giving the flesh an opportunity. Within the Christian is a struggle between the flesh and the spirit.¹⁰⁹ This struggle can also be seen as the attempt to not give the flesh an opportunity.¹¹⁰ These verses are describing

¹⁰⁶ See the section of flesh in this chapter and the further discussion of flesh in chapter 3.

¹⁰⁷ J.P. Louw & E.A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Based on Semantic Domains*, 323.

¹⁰⁸ M. Gorman, *Apostle of The Crucified Lord*, 219.

¹⁰⁹ H. Thieliicke states it this way: "As a justified person I am always becoming. I have to learn how justification relates to all aspects of my life. There may still be unredeemed areas in me. Many of my members are still numb and bloodless," (*The Evangelical Faith*, 122). Also, C. Osiek, *Galatians* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1980), 69; In addition, H.D. Betz states that the "theory in Gal 5:17 must be taken for what it says: the human body is a battlefield in which the powers of the flesh and the spirit fight against each other, so that the human will is disabled from carrying out its intentions. This is true of Christian experience, since only there we can assume the Spirit is present," (*Galatians*, 280).

¹¹⁰ T. Aquinas, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, 168; W. Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1976), 46; C. Osiek, *Galatians*, 68.

Christians, as only Christians can experience freedom.¹¹¹

Russell presents an opposing viewpoint when he states that the flesh/spirit discussion within Galatians does not “represent an internal duality within the Christian, but represent an external contrast between two conflicting eras or modes of existence with corresponding mindsets.”¹¹² He states further that flesh/spirit “identify the competing historical manifestations of the true people of God.”¹¹³ In answer to Russell, the context of Gal 5 makes it difficult to agree with Russell. The context of Gal 5 states that flesh/spirit are not “two external contrasts between two conflicting eras or modes” but two “powers” within the Christian believer. Christian believers are not to turn their freedom into an opportunity to the flesh (Gal 5:13). This opportunity is described by Paul as a “biting and devouring of one another” (Gal 5:15). In addition, if Christian believers “walk by the Spirit, they will not carry out the desires of the flesh” (Gal 5:16).

If flesh/spirit are two external modes of existence, as Russell states; how can Christian believers be in both modes at the same time? Paul writes that if one walks by the spirit, he/she will not carry out the desires of the flesh. Now, it would appear that if flesh/spirit were two different modes of existence with two different mindsets, as Russell states, then each mode of existence would have its own mindset. If a person is in one mode of existence, that person would have the specific mindset of that particular mode of existence. A person could not be in one mode of existence and have the mindset of the other mode of existence. This is according to Russell who has written that the discussion

¹¹¹ B. Graham, *The Holy Spirit*, 87; M. Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1114. D. Guthrie and J.S. Motyer, eds., *The New Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 1102.

¹¹² W.B. Russell, *The Flesh/Spirit Conflict in Galatians* (New York: University Press of America, Inc., 1997), 2.

¹¹³ W.B. Russell, *The Flesh/Spirit Conflict in Galatians*, 32.

concerning flesh/spirit in Galatians is not “internal” but “external”.¹¹⁴ Thus, it is to be seen that modes of existence with their own corresponding mindsets are not overlapping, but two separate and distinct.¹¹⁵ Paul writes, however, that Christian believers (one mode of existence, to use Russell’s terms) are faced with the “decision” of following either the flesh or the spirit (Gal 5:17). According to Russell’s own definition, this appears to be impossible.

Within the Christian, there is a conflict, a war. This conflict, this war, is between the flesh and the spirit/soul. This conflict, this war, at times results in the Christian not doing what he or she truly wants to do. The person, who has this conflict within, is a Christian believer. The reason for this statement is that this person truly desires to do the will of God as found within the law. Moule confirms this when he writes, “it is no experience of a half-renewed life to take delight with the law of God. It is utterly unlawful for a half-regenerate soul to describe itself so beset by sin that it is not “I” but sin that dwelleth within me.”¹¹⁶

The teaching of Rom 7 concerning the emphatic “I” is that the emphatic “I” also has a struggle with sin. What is important to notice is the phrase “so that you do not do what you want.” This phrase is found in Rom 7 at verses 15, 18, 19, 20, and 21-23. These verses state that there is a conflict within the emphatic “I”. This conflict is expressed and seen in the emphatic “I” not doing what he or she wants to do. The emphatic “I” wants to do the good that is to please God, yet, finds within a conflict, a war that at times prevents the emphatic “I” from accomplishing its desire of doing the good. It can be seen in the

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹¹⁶ C.G. Moule, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans*, 190.

comparison of Gal 5:17 and Rom 7 that the teaching is the same.¹¹⁷

5. The Imperfect Christian

Christians have been declared righteous by God at justification and have been made righteous, i.e. sanctified by God, in their heart, in the essence of their life, at the new birth. The sanctification of the Christian is seen in the heart's desire to obey God. Sanctified Christians are still not perfect human beings, however. The reason for this is the human person is a complex and inter-connected being. The human being is more than will, more than heart. The human being has other faculties, other aspects of their person. These other faculties also play a part in the believing sinner's choices, actions and behavior.¹¹⁸

The believing sinner can be said to be holy and not holy at the same time. This is seen in 2 Cor 4:7. Paul writes that Christians have the treasure of the Gospel of Christ in earthen vessels. There is the gift given by God to the believer, this is the treasure in the earthen vessels. Adam Clarke has this to say concerning 2 Cor 4:7. He writes: "Our

¹¹⁷ H.D. Betz, has a very interesting question in regards to the comparison of Gal. 5:17 and Rom 7. He asks, "If Gal 5:17 applies to the Christian and Rom 7:15-24 apply to the pre-Christian, what is the difference?" (*Galatians*, 279). He goes on to say that "in Rom 7-8 we find an even more developed and complex reworking of the elements which occur also in Gal 5" (280). Betz says that the "elements" which occur in Gal 5:17 and Rom 7 are the same. Although Betz clarifies what he means when he states that "Gal 5:17 is not simply an abbreviated and simplified form of what is in Rom 7" (280). If, as Betz states, the elements in Gal 5:17 and Rom 7 are the same elements, the conclusion to be drawn is that the experiences are the same. In addition, C. Osiek states that the "companion piece to Gal 5:16-25 is Rom 7:4-8:8," (*Galatians*, 68); Also, T. Epp writes that the "teaching in Gal 5 and Rom 7 is concerned with believers," (*Flesh and Spirit in Conflict*, 126); Also J. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul's Letter To The Galatians*, 110.

¹¹⁸ B. Longenecker, "Until Christ is formed in You: Suprahuman Forces and Moral Character in Galatians," *CBQ* 1 (1999), 92-108. In addition, see Chapter 3; section *Desire of the Emphatic "I"* of this study for a more detailed discussion concerning the various faculties that affect a Christian believer's behavior.

bodies are in a recoverable form: they are frail, and easily marred; the light and salvation of God in the soul of man is a heavenly treasure in a very mean casket.”¹¹⁹ Victor Paul Furnish disagrees with this position. He is of the opinion that Paul in 2 Cor 4:7 is using the image of an earthen pot to refer to “the mortal existence of himself and his apostolic associates.”¹²⁰ Furnish states that “Paul’s intention is certainly not to contrast our mortal flesh with our immortal soul.”¹²¹ He is of this opinion because he claims that the “‘word’ soul is not used in this part of the letter.”¹²² Furnish is correct in his statement that the “‘word’ soul is not used in this part of 2 Corinthians. However, the point that both Furnish and Clarke do make in common, although not in agreement with each other, is that within frail, broken bodies, God has placed a treasure. The vessel that holds the treasure is of a different “kind” than the treasure itself. There is that which is holy within that which is not holy. Julian of Norwich agrees with this when she writes: “As far as our essential nature goes, we are perfect, but in our physical nature, we fail.”¹²³ Best would agree with Clarke’s position, Julian of Norwich’s position and Furnish’s position. Best is of the opinion that what Paul had in mind “may have been his ministry or the light which shone in his heart when he became a Christian or the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. In fact, these three cannot be clearly marked off from one another.”¹²⁴ 2 Cor 4:7 is a description of the imperfect Christian; one who is righteous and yet at the same time

¹¹⁹ A. Clarke, *Clarke’s Commentary, Vol. 11: Romans to The Revelation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), 330; also W. Barclay, *The Letters to The Corinthians* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1956), 198; K. Quast, *Reading the Corinthian Correspondence* (New York: Paulist Press, 1994), 122.

¹²⁰ V.P. Furnish, *II Corinthians* (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 278; J. Lambrecht, *2 Corinthians*, 71; F. Fallon, *2 Corinthians* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1980), 38.

¹²¹ V.P. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 279.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love* (ed. H. Backhouse; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1996), 118.

¹²⁴ E. Best, *Second Corinthians* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1987), 40.

not perfect, perfect in the sense of sinless perfection. The being righteous and not yet, tells very clearly that Christian believers are in the process¹²⁵ of being transformed into the image of Christ, that is from glory to glory (2 Cor 3:18).¹²⁶

The description above, given by Julian of Norwich is of a Christian. Julian's description also describes the emphatic "I" of Rom 7. The emphatic "I" desires to please God but finds within it another force or power that is antagonistic to the desire it has to please God. This internal battle is stated in Rom 7:23. This must be seen as an experience of a Christian. The reason for stating this is that the very same internal struggle between the desire to please God and the "pull" to turn away from God is stated in Gal 5:17 – which states that the flesh (σάρξ) desires against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. This verse can be understood in that the flesh (σάρξ) remains in the believer. The flesh, the brokenness, fallen-ness and residue of both original sin and personal sin, remains within the believer. If the flesh did not remain within the believer, then this verse could not be speaking of a believer.

The evidence that the person described in Gal 5:17¹²⁷ is a believer¹²⁸ is that the person is exhorted to walk, live by means of the Spirit (Gal 5:16). It can be stated that only a believer is able to walk, live by means of the Spirit. This is because only Christians have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them (Rom 8:9-11). The believer who walks by the Spirit will not fulfill the desire of the flesh (Gal 5:16). Here it is evident that the believer, the one who has the Spirit, is also faced with the desires of the flesh. There is simply no

¹²⁵ J. Fitzmyer, "Glory Reflected on the Face of Christ (2 Cor 3:7-4:6) and a Palestinian Jewish Motif," 632.

¹²⁶ E. Best, *Second Corinthians*, 52; F. Fallon, *2 Corinthians*, 34; J. Lambrecht, *2 Corinthians*, 55, 56.

¹²⁷ J. Dunn says that Gal 5:17 is "one of the most striking verses Paul ever wrote," (*The Theology of Paul's Letter To The Galatians*, 109).

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

reason to exhort a believer to do something, i.e. walk by the Spirit, so that the believer will not do something else, fulfill the desires of the flesh, if the fulfilling of the desires of the flesh were not a possibility for the believer. The flesh is the result of damage done both by original sin and personal sin. Gal 5:17 exhorts the believer to not fulfill the desires of the flesh. Thus, if believers are exhorted to not fulfill the desires of the flesh, this must mean that believers have the flesh remaining within them.¹²⁹

The person in Gal 5:16-26 also has the possibility of being led by the Spirit of God (Gal 5:18). It is only the believer who is led, or follows the leading of the Spirit of God. Paul writes and says, “For the ones who are led by the Spirit of God, these ones are the Children of God” (Rom 8:14). Thus, it can be seen that the person described in Gal 5:16-26 who is being led by the Spirit of God must be a believer. The reason for this is that the ones who are being led by the Spirit, these ones are the Children of God, that is are believers.

The believer, as is seen in Gal 5:16-26, has the flesh remaining within him or her. This does not mean, however, that the believer is in the flesh. There is a difference between being in the flesh and the flesh remaining within the believer. As has already been stated, the flesh, which remains within the believer, is the residue, the damage done by original sin and personal sin. The fact of the flesh remaining within a believer is different than being in the flesh. Being in the flesh means that the person who is in the flesh has the flesh as the dominant and controlling principle in their life. Being in the flesh means that the person is living for the flesh. The flesh is the “god” of the person

¹²⁹ W. Wiersbe, *Be Free* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1984), 129; Also J. Dunn writes that, Paul in Gal 5:17, describes the Christian experience of “constantly being pulled in opposite directions,” He furthers states that “this condition of being pulled in opposite directions will last for believers so long as they continue in the flesh,” (*The Theology of Paul’s Letter To The Galatians*, 109).

who is in the flesh.

A Christian has the flesh remaining within him or her. A Christian, however, cannot be and is not in the flesh (Rom 8:9). The person who has the Spirit of God within them, that is a Christian believer, is not in the flesh, although the flesh remains within him or her. The fact of the Spirit's indwelling a believer proves that the believer is not in the flesh. The believer desires to be led by the Spirit of God and not the flesh. The believer desires to obey God and not the flesh. The presence of the Spirit of God within a person proves that that person is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit (Rom 8:9).

Christians, not in the flesh, but having the flesh within them, have an inner struggle, an inner warfare going on within. Gal 5:17 states that the flesh and the Spirit desire against each other, so that the believer does not do what he or she desires (θέλω). Here it can be seen that within a Christian is the desire (θέλω) to act, to do, and to live, to walk by the Spirit, so that the Christian is pleasing to God. Yet, at the same time, within the believer, who desires to please God, is another force, or power, that desires against the desire to please God. These two desires cause an inner warfare and inner struggle to occur within the Christian. Dunn says that the Christian believer is caught on both sides of this inner struggle.¹³⁰ By this he means that the flesh wars against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh, so that the Christian believer is unable to do what he/she desires to. Dunn goes further when he puts forth the opinion that Christian believers shouldn't be surprised at what desires arise within them in this struggle.¹³¹

While having this common desire to please God, both the Christian described in Gal 5:17 and the emphatic "I" find within them another force or power that is antagonistic

¹³⁰ J. Dunn, *The Theology Of Paul's Letter To The Galatians*, 109.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 110.

toward the desire within them to please God. This antagonistic force within the believer in Gal 5:17 and the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 causes the believer in Gal 5:17 and the emphatic “I” to, at times not do what they desire, but to do what they do not desire. Gal 5:17 clearly state that the warfare within the Christian causes the Christian to not do what they desire. Rom 7:15, 19, 23 are very clear in stating that the warfare within the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 causes the emphatic “I” to not do what it desires, but, at times to do what it does not desire (θέλω).

6. Concluding Statement

The new life in Christ within the Pauline Corpus is a description of what God does in the life of a person who believes in Jesus Christ (Rom 5:1). Paul states that a person in Christ is a new creation (2 Cor 5:17). However, as a new creation, Paul describes the believing Christian as one in whom a war occurs (Gal 5:17). This war is between the Spirit and the flesh. It has already been stated and noticed that the description of Gal 5:17 is of a believer. The emphatic “I” of Rom 7 must also be a believer because this person shares the same inner experience as the believer described in Gal 5:17.¹³² Both the Christian described in Gal 5:17 and the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 desire (θέλω) to please God. Both the Christian of Gal 5:17 and the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 have an inner warfare between the flesh and the Spirit. This warfare rages within each of them. Because the Christian of Gal 5:17 and the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 both desire (θέλω) to please God, and because

¹³² C. Osiek, *Galatians*, 68.

both the Christian of Gal 5:17 and the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 both have an inner warfare between the flesh and the desire to do what is good, that is to please God and to walk after the Spirit, the common experience of the Christian of Gal 5:17 and the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 leads to the conclusion that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is a believer.

The emphatic “I” is not perfect, nor does Paul make the claim for absolute perfection for himself or for other believers. In Phlp 3:12-21, Paul, writing to the Church at Philippi, states that he has not yet been made perfect. The word for perfect is: τελειόω – which means: “complete, bring to an end, finish accomplish, bring to its goal or to accomplishment in the sense of overcoming or supplanting of an imperfect state of things by one that is free from objection, completion, perfection, make perfect.”¹³³ Paul clearly means that he has not yet been made perfect. However, in v. 15 he states: “All of us who are perfect.” The word “perfect” here is translated by “mature”, according to the NIV. The word used in v. 15 for perfect or mature is: τέλειος.

It can be seen in this passage that Paul, not claiming to be perfect, yet, claims to be mature or perfect. He is not playing word games. He is simply stating that he has not reached absolute perfection, while reaching a state of maturity in the Christian life. The state of maturity or perfection mentioned by Paul is expressed by the Christian living in “lowly bodies” (Phlp 3:21). These “lowly bodies” are the bodies that are still damaged and twisted by sin. Mature Christians live in bodies that still bear the marks of culture, formation, decisions made and decisions not made. Mature Christians still live in bodies that still bear the damage done by original sin and personal sin. Mature Christians still live in bodies that have the flesh within. These “lowly bodies” cause the mature or perfect

¹³³ W. Arndt & W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament*, 809, 810.

Christian to be at war with oneself. To be at war with one self is the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7. This can be seen where the emphatic “I” states “I have the desire to do what is good, but I can’t carry it out” (Rom 7:18) and that what they do is not what they want to do (Rom 7:19). The inner warfare is most clearly stated in Rom 7:23 where the emphatic “I” writes that there is a law in the members of his/her body which is waging war against the law in his/her mind. The conclusion to be drawn here is that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is a mature believer, going on to perfection.

David is called “a man after God’s heart.” Luke quotes Paul in his sermon in Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:22).¹³⁴ This is the same description of David before he became King over Israel. The same is stated in 1 Sam 13:14. David is called, a man after the heart of God by Samuel when he told Saul that God was taking the kingdom from Saul and giving it to David. David, before he became king and after he had died, was called a man after God’s heart. It is only necessary to briefly look at the life of David to know that David was not a perfect man. He committed adultery with Bathsheba; had Uriah, Bathsheba’s husband killed, played favorites with his children, which then caused his children to turn on each other and even to turn on David himself.

Psalm 40 is called a Psalm of David.¹³⁵ In this Psalm, the Psalmist, thought by some to be David himself writes, that, “my iniquities have overtaken me, until I cannot

¹³⁴ Certainly, Acts is not in the Pauline Corpus, however, to use modern terms, Acts can be seen as a secondary source for understanding Paul. Paul himself writing (although there are questions of how much Paul himself actually wrote or how much he dictated and was written down by others) would be the primary source. Luke quoting Paul would be a secondary source.

¹³⁵ Reasons to include David are found in the previous footnote. Another reason is to trace Paul’s understanding of David so as to understand Paul’s perspective on the human experience in salvation. Paul puts forth David as an example of salvation. Paul putting forth David as an example of salvation is seen in the quote by Luke where Paul is supposed to have said that David is one who does the will of God (Acts 13:22). The person who does the will of God is a person who is in right relation with God, i.e. a Christian (compare this with Rom 3:10-18).

see” (Ps 40:12). David commits adultery, murder and in modern terminology, is a failure as a parent, yet is called a man after God’s own heart. Based on the perspective that David wrote Psalm 40, David confesses that his iniquities have overtaken him, until he cannot see, yet, he is still called a man after God’s own heart.

It can be seen in the life of David, a man who, desiring the heart of God, is also encompassed in a body that is not perfect. The desire of David is seen in the phrase, “A man after God’s own heart.” David truly desired to obey God and to please Him in all things. Yet, there was David himself, living in a body that has been twisted by sin, with mental impressions, thoughts, culture, ways of acting, ways of thinking, attempting to do something perfectly, yet, accomplishing it imperfectly, who has the desire to please God, summarized in the phrase, “a man after God’s own heart.”

A man/person after God’s own heart is exactly the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7.¹³⁶

The emphatic “I” states that they desire to do what is good (Rom 7:18). The emphatic “I” delights in God’s law (Rom 7:22). The emphatic “I” believes in and is thankful for Jesus Christ, the one who will deliver him/her from the body of death (Rom 7:24, 25). Thus, it can be seen that the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 coincides with the experience of David, a man after God’s own heart.

Paul writes in 2 Cor 5:1-10, “Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because

¹³⁶ The basis for this statement is the previous discussion on the now but not yet of the kingdom of God, the new humanity, Gal 5:17, 2 Cor 4:7, 2 Cor 3:18; David (a man after God’s own heart, although not a NT person, was an example of a righteous man that is found within the pages of the OT). For further clarification on this statement, see the remaining chapters of this study.

when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling.” In these verses Paul is writing about living in our mortal human bodies, yet, longing to be freed from this mortal, human bodies. He writes that we “groan”, while still in our mortal bodies. The word for groan is στενάζω - which means: to groan or sigh as the result of deep concern or stress.¹³⁷ In this understanding of στενάζω a sense of discomfort, disagreement and desire for something different. Arndt and Gingrich confirm this idea in their definition of στενάζω. They define στενάζω as: sigh, groan because of an undesirable circumstance.¹³⁸ The undesirable circumstance that Paul writes about in these verses is the fact that believers are living in imperfect bodies, or to use an earlier description, lowly bodies. These imperfect bodies affect Christians. The desire of the believer is to be clothed with their heavenly dwelling, that is to mean that the desire of the believer is to be made perfect, holy.

The teaching of 2 Cor 5:1-10 is that, even for the most perfect Christian, they are still in imperfect bodies. The believer desires to be clothed with their heavenly dwelling, that is, they desire to be holy. However, while desiring to be holy, the believer is affected by the imperfect body in which he or she lives. This circumstance, that is to desire to be holy, to be perfect, yet groaning and desiring to be holy, will continue as long as the believer lives in their present, mortal bodies.

The experience of desiring to be holy, yet groaning because of the affect that one's imperfect body has upon Christians as described in the Scriptures listed in this chapter is

¹³⁷ J.P. Louw & E.A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Based on Semantic Domains*, 305.

¹³⁸ W. Arndt & W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament*, 767.

the same experience that the emphatic “I” has. The emphatic “I” of Rom 7 shares the same experience that Christian believers, i.e. regenerate, have. This has been seen by comparing the experience of the emphatic “I” as found in Rom 7 with the experience as described elsewhere by Paul. The comparing of the experiences of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 and the experience of the regenerate, as recorded in other parts of the Pauline Corpus, leads to the conclusion that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is a mature spiritual Christian believer.

From the previous discussions certain understandings can be drawn: (1). Christian believers are righteous in Christ, (2). This righteousness, although complete in Christ, is not yet fully experienced or has yet to fully penetrate throughout the whole Christian believer, (3). This not yet fully experienced righteousness is experienced in a human body that within this body, a great struggle with the flesh and sin is occurring. Found within this struggle within a not yet redeemed human body, the Christian believer yearns and cries out for redemption (Rom 8:23). This crying out and yearning, which is the experience of Christian believers, is a similar cry and yearning experienced by the emphatic “I” of Rom 7. Because the cry and yearning of Christian believers (in the case of David of the righteous in the Old Testament) is similar to the cry and yearning of the emphatic “I”; the similarities of the cries and experiences leads to the conclusion that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 shares a similar experience as David, the man after God’s own heart.

In summary, the Christian believer is a new creation in Christ, yet, at the same time, this new creation in Christ still struggles with remaining sin and / or the brokenness of sin. This is the same experience that Paul describes in Rom 7 regarding the emphatic

“I”. Thus, the conclusion to be seen is that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is a new creation in Christ.

Chapter 5: Wesley's Doctrine of Perfection

In the journey to the discovery of the identity of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7, an evaluation of John Wesley's teaching on perfection will be undertaken. The reason for this is: John Wesley in his teaching on perfection writes about the highest state that a Christian can attain in this life. It is this state that is to be investigated; as it is the opinion of this study that Wesley's teaching on perfection very closely resembles the teaching of the experience of the emphatic “I” as seen in Rom 7.¹

Wesley was concerned that Christians should become “all” that God would have them be.² It was Wesley's opinion that Christians were not “all” that God intended them to be, apart from full sanctification. He also believed that the reason God raised up the people called Methodists was to propagate the doctrine of full sanctification.³

1. Salvation an Introduction

Salvation, in the Wesleyan view, had “two cardinal factors.” These factors were

¹ As it has been stated in chapter 1 of this study that the direct dependence of Wesley on Paul will be limited to the *commonality of experiences* described by Wesley and Paul. *The examination of the experiences being described by Wesley, Paul and the Mystics is the main point of this study and not the discovering of Wesley's and the Mystics dependence on Pauline statements.* To repeat the point made in chapter 1, the emphasis to be examined is on the commonality of the experiences being described. However there is a connection between Wesley and Paul. This connection is stated by R.E. Cushman, *John Wesley's Experimental Divinity*, 59.

² A. Outler's understanding is that holiness leads to happiness. *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1975), 84. If this understanding is disagreed with, then, the only other understanding is that immorality will lead to happiness.

³ J. Wesley wrote in a letter to Robert Carr Brackenbury, September 15, 1790, Vol. 13, 9.

forgiveness and sanctification.⁴ Forgiveness was the foundation of salvation for Wesley. However, sanctification dominates his whole theology. This is what will be seen as John Wesley's view of salvation; perfection and Christian experience are evaluated in light of Rom 7 and the emphatic "I".

John Wesley understood salvation as more than "simply not going to hell" and "going to heaven." Although, Wesley did indeed believe that the believer was saved from eternal damnation and had a place in heaven with God. Salvation for Wesley was a present experience. Wesley wanted for himself and for the people called Methodists a present experience and assurance that they were children of God. The idea that one had to "wait" until after death to be sure of one's salvation, for Wesley, was totally unscriptural.

Salvation, for Wesley meant a "present deliverance from sin, a restoration of the soul to its principle of health."⁵ Salvation was more than forgiveness. Salvation was more than simply not going to hell and going to heaven, someday, in the sweet bye and bye.⁶ Wesley believed that God intended all people to be restored to purity of soul, in this life.⁷

⁴ H. Lindstrom, *Wesley and Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1980), 217.

⁵ J. Wesley's sermon *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, Vol. 8, 47. See also Wesley's sermon, *Christian Perfection*, Vol. 6, 18. All Wesley quotes are taken from *The Works of John Wesley*, on compact disc, Providence House Publishers. Page numbers and volume refer to the numbering system contained on the compact disc itself. See also R.E. Cushman who puts forth this opinion: "Wesley believes with the Apostle (that is Paul) that through repentance, pardon and the renewal of the Holy Spirit, the regenerate mind is becoming conformed to the Holy Other. It is becoming restored and recreated in the image of God. This is Wesley's understanding of the Apostle's assurance for the justified sinner. This doctrine of the knowledge of faith—resting upon the Pauline teaching of the work of the Holy Spirit in and with forgiveness of sins and entailing the transformation of the mind and spirit of the believer—is a fundamental principle of the 'Scripture way of salvation' and therewith, of Wesley's experimental divinity" (*John Wesley's Experimental Divinity*, 58). See also J. Fuellenbach, *The Kingdom of God* (Manila: Divine Word Publications, 1987), 67; A. Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 253.

⁶ R. Cushman, *John Wesley's Experimental Divinity*, 143. He writes: "Wesley makes holiness as 'renewal of our souls in the image of God' and 'recovery of the divine nature' to be 'synonymous with salvation.'" And Cushman clearly states that "By salvation, Wesley means holiness of heart and life," (144).

⁷ A. Outler, (*Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit*, 87, 88); Also A. Outler: "Wesley was adamant on the point that if perfection is a human possibility at all, it must at least be possible *in the span of human life* and consequently, correlated with the whole process of Christian maturation and hope," (*John Wesley* (New

It was Wesley's conviction that God not only intended people to be restored to purity of soul, in this life, but that salvation itself was that restoration.

It is in the investigation of Wesley's conviction concerning salvation, that his understanding of the experience of perfection will be seen. It is this understanding that will then be compared to the experience of the emphatic “I” in Rom7. However, before this comparison can be made, Wesley's understanding of salvation and perfection must be understood and evaluated.

2. Beginning of Salvation

2.1. Justification

Salvation for Wesley began at the moment a believing sinner is justified.⁸ In Wesley's description of what occurs at the moment of justification, he writes that sin is only suspended, not destroyed and that the justified believer has two opposing principles within them.⁹

As has already been stated, salvation for John Wesley was a present experience of the soul being restored to health and purity. Present salvation, as Wesley emphasized, had two basic components. These components consisted of being saved from the guilt of all past sin and a being saved from the power of present sin.¹⁰ Wesley said that the being

York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 253). R.E. Cushman, agrees with this position, R. Cushman, (*John Wesley's Experimental Divinity*, 54).

⁸ Salvation, in all its elements is God-initiated. See P. Washburn, *United Methodist Primer* (Nashville; Tidings, 1969), 54.

⁹ J. Wesley's sermon, *The Scripture Way of Salvation*, Vol. 6, 45.

¹⁰ J. Wesley's sermon, *Salvation By Faith*, Vol. 5, 10.

saved from the guilt of and the consequences of past sin were called justification.¹¹ He also said that justification is another word for pardon. It also means the forgiveness of all our sins and our being accepted by God.¹² Justification for Wesley was not all of salvation, nor did justification contain all of salvation. Justification for Wesley was the beginning of salvation.

Justification for Wesley was the declaration by God that the believing sinner was forgiven and was then accepted by God as His child. Justification was that work which God did “for” the believer.¹³ In justification there was a relative change in the believer.¹⁴ By relative change, Wesley meant, primarily, that the believer's status was changed from an enemy to a child of God. This does not mean that Wesley believed that justification was only a declaration by God.¹⁵ However, his emphasis in justification was of a legal declaration by God of a “changed” status for the believer. For Wesley then, justification was the imputation of righteousness to the believing sinner. Wesley, in his *Notes on the New Testament* says, in reference to Rom 4:9 that righteousness is imputed to the believer.¹⁶

2.2 New Birth

Another aspect of salvation that Wesley emphasized was the new birth. He

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹² J. Wesley's sermon, *Scripture Way of Salvation*, Vol. 6, 44. See also R.E. Cushman who summarizes his understanding of Wesley's teaching on justification in these words: “Justification—God's acceptance of the sinner, for Christ's sake, in forgiveness of sins—is also reconciliation, because it is a reunion which replaces willful self-alienation from God,” (*Wesley's Experimental Divinity*, 62).

¹³ J. Wesley's sermon, *The New Birth*, Vol. 6, 66.

¹⁴ J. Wesley's sermon, *On Sin in Believer*, Vol. 5, 146.

¹⁵ *Wesley's Notes on the New Testament, Vol. II*, see his comment on Rom 5:18. He writes that “justification to life means that the sentence of God, by which a sinner under sentence of death is adjudged to life.”

¹⁶ J. Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, Romans 4:9.

believed that the new birth occurred at the same time as justification.¹⁷ His conviction was that, at the same moment a believing sinner was justified, he was also born of God. The new birth and justification, although occurring at the same time, according to Wesley, were not the same.¹⁸ Wesley did not make a temporal distinction between justification and the new birth. The person that was justified, was also, at the same moment, born again. He stated that justification was a relative change in the life of the believer, while the new birth was an actual change.¹⁹ This change is where the soul of the believer is restored to the image of God.

It is also to be noted that Wesley believed that the new birth was a part of sanctification. The new birth was not sanctification; the new birth was only a part of sanctification. Wesley called the new birth “the gate” to sanctification.²⁰ This was done, because Wesley believed that in the new birth, the believer was only beginning the road to sanctification. It is here that the gradual aspect of sanctification, according to Wesley, can be seen. He says that at the new birth, a believer's inward and outward conformity to the holiness of Christ begins.

When a person was born again, that person experienced an actual change in their soul. This change in the believer was the creation of the soul in the image of Christ. The soul, in the experience of the new birth, was renewed after the image of God.²¹

The change produced in the soul at the experience of the new birth was a change

¹⁷ J. Wesley's journal, July 3, 1759, Vol. 2, 492.

¹⁸ J. Wesley's sermon, *The Great Privilege of Those Born of God*, Vol. 5, 19.

¹⁹ R. Cushman, *Wesley's Experimental Divinity*, 62.

²⁰ J. Wesley's sermon, *The New Birth* Vol. 6, 74.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 71. See also R.E. Cushman, *Wesley's Experimental Divinity*, 78.

that affected the whole “manner of our existence.”²² He is of the opinion that the new birth is a change from “inward wickedness to inward goodness, an entire change of our inmost nature from the image of the devil (wherein we are born), to the image of God.”²³ This change produced in the soul by the Holy Spirit at the new birth is an actual change to righteousness and holiness. By actual change, Wesley meant that the soul was changed experientially/existentially. The change that occurred at the new birth was not simply a theoretical change; but was a real change.

The new birth to Wesley was the beginning of sanctification.²⁴ This means that the change that is called the new birth was, for Wesley, a monumental change in the life of the human being. In the new birth the person's whole inner nature changed. Wesley said that the soul was given a new principle at the new birth. This principle was the seed of holiness, which the believer was to grow into. The new birth, the giving of a new principle to the soul was a principle of life, of true love to God and to one's fellow human beings. This principle was also a principle of willing obedience to God.²⁵

It can be seen in Wesley's understanding of the new birth, that the new birth was truly a monumental change in the soul of the believer. To use the word monumental is not an overstatement. This can be seen from two perspectives. The first perspective in defense of the word monumental for the new birth is the Scriptures. The Scriptures²⁶ present the new birth as the work of God (John 3:3). The phrase in Greek that is

²² J. Wesley's sermon, *The Great Privilege of Those That Are Born of God*, Vol. 5, 224.

²³ J. Wesley's journal, Thursday, September 31, 1739, Vol. I, 225.

²⁴ J. Wesley's journal, July 3, 1759, Vol.2, 492. See also R.E. Cushman, *Wesley's Experimental Divinity*, 47.

²⁵ J. Wesley's sermon, *The Doctrine of Original Sin, Part V*, Vol. 9, 405. See also R.E. Cushman, *Wesley's Experimental Divinity*, 48.

²⁶ See chapter 1 of this study for definition of these terms.

translated “born again” is γεννηθῆναι ἄνωθεν– which literally means born from above.²⁷ This means that the new birth is the work of God and only the work of God.

The second perspective in defense of the word monumental for the new birth is John Wesley's description of the new birth.²⁸ John Wesley calls the new birth a “great change” which affects the whole soul of the believer. The change of the new birth is not simply an external change. The change is an inner change; it is a change of the principle of the soul from wickedness to holiness. The new birth, according to Wesley, is the life of God in the soul. The new birth was the human being's participation in the divine nature. This means that the heart of the human being has been renewed after the image of God.²⁹

The moment a person was born again, that person was justified. At the same moment that a person was justified, sanctification began.³⁰ At this moment, a person experiences a real as well as a relative change. The relative change was the change of the person's relationship with God. The person was once an enemy of God and at the moment of justification, the person became a child of God. This, according to John Wesley is the relative change that occurs in the life of a person at the moment of the new birth.

Wesley also said that, at the moment that sanctification began, a real change occurred in the life of the believer.³¹ This moment, the moment that sanctification began, was also the moment that the person was justified, which was also the moment that the

²⁷ W. Arndt & W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 77.

²⁸ J. Wesley's sermon, *The New Birth*, Vol. 6, 71, Wesley describes the new birth in this manner: “The new birth is the great change which God works in the soul when he brings it to life. It is the change wrought in the whole soul by the Almighty Spirit of God when it is created anew in Christ Jesus, when it is renewed after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness.”

²⁹ J. Wesley's journal, Thursday, September 13, 1739, Vol. I, 161.

³⁰ J. Wesley's sermon, *The Scripture Way of Salvation*, Vol. 6, 45; See E. Brunner who also sees justification and sanctification as a unity, *The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and the Consummation*, Vol. III, 293.

³¹ R. Cushman, *Wesley's Experimental Divinity*, 62.

person was born again. In other words, Wesley believed that at the moment a person was born again, justification occurred and was completed and sanctification began.

At the moment of the new birth, Wesley stated that a new principle was given to the soul. This principle was the creation of a new heart. Wesley taught that a newly born again person was not perfect. This person, although justified, born again and having begun the journey of sanctification, was still subject to the old nature.

There can be no question that pride; self-will, anger and unbelief are part of the old nature. If these “revive”,³² to use Wesley's term, in the newly born again person, this must mean that they still remain within the newly born again person. The “revival of sin” within the newly born again person, which means, according to Wesley, that sin was only “stunned” when the new birth occurred, means that sin also remains within the newly born again person.

However, John Wesley also said that those who are born-again “cannot sin.”³³ In this context, Wesley means by sin, a voluntary transgression of a known law.³⁴ He states that, “as long as the heart is set on God, he cannot voluntarily transgress any command of God, either by speaking or acting what he knows God has forbidden.”³⁵ What Wesley means is that if a believer's heart is continually set on God, and it must be remembered that, for Wesley, one of the marks of the new birth is “willing obedience” to God, then the believer whose earnest desire and passion is to obey God, and whose heart is

³² J. Wesley said that sin can “revive” in those who are born again, (J. Wesley's sermon, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, Vol. 11, 405).

³³ J. Wesley's sermon, *The Great Privilege of Those That Are Born of God*, Vol. 5, 227.

³⁴ J. Wesley defines sin as: “sin is an actual, voluntary transgression of a known law, of the revealed, written law of God, of any commandment of God, acknowledged to be such at the time of the transgression” (J. Wesley's sermon, *The Great Privilege of Those Born of God*, Vol. 5, 227).

³⁵ *Ibid.*

continually set on obeying God, that believer cannot sin because he or she will not, choose to violate a known law of God.

Wesley believed that the new birth was “a great change” in that the very life of God was given or it can be said, imparted, to the soul.³⁶ The life of God in the human soul, for Wesley is the new birth. When the life of God was in the human soul, John Wesley could not perceive how that soul would willingly choose to disobey God, by breaking one of God's known laws.

John Wesley said that a person who has been born again, born of God, couldn't sin.³⁷ John Wesley thus believed that those born of God couldn't sin. He clarifies this when he puts forth the statement that those born of God do not sin by any habitual sin, by any willful sin or by any sinful desire. He does say that those born of God do sin by “infirmities.”³⁸

In his sermon, “The Great Privilege of Those Born of God,” Wesley says that a born again person is subject to temptations and the revival of sin.³⁹ In another sermon, “Salvation by Faith”,⁴⁰ he claims that a born again person cannot sin. He writes that the born again person has power over both outward sin and internal sin. Wesley also is of the opinion that in a born again person, sin revives and the person is subject to temptations and even to sin, that is there is found within the person pride, self-will, anger and unbelief. This point is a major point of discussion in the discovery of the identity of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7. John Wesley believed that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 was not a

³⁶ R. Cushman, *Wesley's Experimental Divinity*, 48.

³⁷ J. Wesley's sermon, *The Marks of The New Birth*, Vol. 5, 214. See also R. Cushman, *Wesley's Experimental Divinity*, 81.

³⁸ J. Wesley's sermon, *Salvation By Faith*, Vol. 5, 11.

³⁹ J. Wesley's sermon, *The Great Privilege of Those Born of God*, Vol. 5, 231.

⁴⁰ J. Wesley's sermon, *Salvation by Faith*, Vol. 5, 11.

Christian but a person under the law, which is an unregenerate person. Part of the process of discovering the identity of the emphatic “I” is answering John Wesley's claim that a person who has been born again cannot sin, because they will not choose to violate one of God's laws.

Can a born again Christian sin? This is a very important question to answer in the journey to discover the identity of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7. It can be easily seen that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 not only can sin, but, does sin. One of the questions that will be asked at this point, but answered later in this study is: Does the emphatic “I” of Rom 7, when he or she does sin, do they sin willingly?

Before answering the question of whether John Wesley is correct in his understanding that a person born of God can not sin, it is important to understand John Wesley's view of sin.

In understanding John Wesley's view of sin, it must be understood that John Wesley believed in the total depravity of the human being before the new birth.⁴¹ John Wesley's understanding of total depravity is in line with the Reformation's teaching on total depravity.⁴² To understand Wesley's view of sin, one must begin with the fact that he held a view of total depravity that was in agreement with the Reformation. When it is understood that Wesley held a view of total depravity that is in line with the Reformation's understanding, then, it also will be understood that Wesley's different definition of sin does not come from a poor or unstable foundation. The foundation that Wesley had of the human being apart from the grace of God was the same foundation that

⁴¹ J. Wesley's sermon, *Of The Church*, Vol. 6, 398.

⁴² For a comparison and contrast of Wesley's understanding of total depravity with a Reformed understanding of total depravity, see Excursus A.

the Reformation had.

Sin for John Wesley was a willful transgression of a known law.⁴³ Wesley also says that all sin is a transgression of the law, but not all transgressions of the law are sin.⁴⁴ The distinction that Wesley is trying to make is that sin is a conscious, willful choice of the person. There are times when a person violates God's law, unknowingly and unintentionally. This, for Wesley was not a sin.

Sin, according to Wesley cannot be found in the body. Only the soul, Wesley said can be the seat of sin.⁴⁵ His position is that the phrase “sinful body” is never found in Scripture, it is totally unscriptural. He did not believe that a body or matter of any kind could be sinful. According to Wesley, only spirits are capable of sin.⁴⁶

Is the phrase “sinful body” found in Scripture? Rom 6:6 uses the phrase τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας. The translation of this phrase is the “body of sin”. Τῆς ἁμαρτίας is in the genitive case. Dana and Mantey say that the basal function of the genitive is to define.⁴⁷ They go on to say that a genitive defines by attributing a quality or relationship to the noun that it modifies.⁴⁸ In the phrase τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας the genitive τῆς ἁμαρτίας modifies τὸ σῶμα which is an articular noun. In following Dana and Mantey's explanation of the genitive, it can be seen that the genitive, τῆς ἁμαρτίας, attributes a quality to the noun, τὸ σῶμα. The quality that the genitive is attributing to the noun in this phrase must be a quality of sinfulness. In other words, the phrase maybe understood as: a body that has the quality of sinfulness. It is possible that a shorter way to say this

⁴³ J. Wesley's sermon, *On Perfection*, Vol. 5, 414.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 418.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ H. Dana & J.E. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 73.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 74.

phrase is: a sinful body.

There are other places in the New Testament, which state that the body is dead because of sin, or that sin is located within the body.⁴⁹ However, there is no need to look at the remaining verses that talk of the body, either being the location of sin or in some way being sinful. The reason for this is, John Wesley said, that the phrase “sinful body” is not found in the Scripture, that the phrase is unscriptural. Therefore, if there is only one instance in the New Testament where the phrase “sinful body” is used, then Wesley's statement must be seen as inaccurate. It has just been shown that Romans 6:6 uses the phrase “body of sin” or “sinful body”. The conclusion must then be that the phrase “sinful body” is indeed found in the New Testament.

However, it must be stated that the phrase “body of sin” in Rom 6:6 does not mean that the human body, being matter or physical is sinful because it is matter or physical. In one instance, John Wesley was correct in his statement concerning the phrase “sinful body”. The Bible does not teach dualism. By dualism is meant that the spiritual realm is good and the physical realm is sinful. When John Wesley said that the phrase “sinful body” is unscriptural, one of his meanings is that the body, created by God, is not intrinsically sinful. This means that sin is not found in the body, i.e. the flesh, bones or muscles of the body, but in the spirit or soul. Sin according to Wesley is not a physical substance; it is a willful choice.⁵⁰

It can be seen, therefore, that in one perspective, John Wesley is correct in his opinion regarding the phrase “sinful body.” Yet, he is incorrect in another perspective, in regards to the phrase “sinful body.” He is correct in that the body is not sinful because it

⁴⁹ Rom 7:24; 8:10, 23, to name a few.

⁵⁰ J. Wesley's sermon, *The Doctrine of Original Sin, Part V*, 408.

is flesh. He is correct in that sin is not found in the physical aspects of the human being. This means that sin is not a substance that clings to the bones, flesh or muscles. Wesley is correct in that sin is a spiritual problem. By this is meant that sin is located within the “non-physical” aspects of the human being and is not in the physical body itself, that is, sin is not a substance within the muscles, bones or flesh.

In discussing Wesley’s view of sin there is another phrase that is closely related to sinful body. This phrase is body of sin. John Wesley understood the phrase “the body of sin” to be equivalent to the old man.⁵¹ He said the “old man” was more than outward evil and sinful behavior. The “old man” was an evil heart, a heart of unbelief. In John Wesley's understanding, the “old man” was a corrupt heart.⁵² He further states that the “old man” was our old corrupt nature.⁵³ By this it can be seen that John Wesley identified the “old man” with “the body of sin”. It can be further understood that, John Wesley believed that the “old man” was the corrupt sinful nature of the unregenerate person. This can be seen in Wesley calling the “old man”, “a heart of unbelief.” A person who had a heart of unbelief, according to Wesley, is not a believer; this person is unregenerate.

In John Wesley's understanding of the new birth, which occurs at the moment of justification, a person is born of God. The new birth is the “great change wrought” in the human soul by God, when God creates the soul anew in Christ, after the image of God, in righteousness and holiness.⁵⁴ This means that the heart has been re-created in the image of God. This can only mean that the heart is righteous and holy. He lists these characteristics of the new birth: the soul is now sensible to God by experience, while

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 411.

⁵² J. Wesley's journal, Tuesday, July 31, 1738, Vol. 1, 214.

⁵³ J. Wesley's sermon, *On Dress*, Vol. 7, 26.

⁵⁴ J. Wesley's sermon, *The New Birth*, Vol. 6, 71.

before the new birth the soul was dead to God by experience. The eyes of understanding are now open and see that God is merciful to him/her a sinner and that he/she is reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.⁵⁵ Finally, Wesley also said that one of the marks of the new birth is a heart of willing obedience to God. John Wesley said that in regeneration the Holy Spirit “mortifies” the old man; the old corrupt nature. When the Holy Spirit “mortifies” the old man, the Holy Spirit also “breathes” a new life into the believer. In Wesley's words, “the one who was dead in sin is now dead to sin, and alive to God through Jesus Christ. God has created in him a clean heart.”⁵⁶

Wesley's clarifies his opinion when it is seen that the “new man,” according to Wesley is a good heart that is created in righteousness and true holiness.⁵⁷ The change from the old man to the new man, that is, the change from an evil heart of unbelief to a heart created in righteousness and holiness, John Wesley called the new birth.⁵⁸

In summary, John Wesley's understanding of the new birth is that the new birth “is a vast, inward change, a change wrought in the soul, a change in the whole manner of our existence, for from the moment we are born of God, we live in quite another manner than we did before, we are as it were in another world.”⁵⁹ Thus it can be understood that John Wesley's view of the new birth is of a tremendous change of God in the life and heart of a believing sinner. This understanding of the new birth caused Wesley to state that those born of God are totally different people than they were before. The fundamental difference is that before the new birth sinners were opposed to God and had no desire to

⁵⁵ J. Wesley's sermon, *The Great Privilege of those Born of God*, Vol. 5, 226.

⁵⁶ J. Wesley's sermon, *The Doctrine of Original Sin, Part V*, Vol. 9, 405.

⁵⁷ J. Wesley's journal, Tuesday, July 31, 1738, Vol. 1, 214.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Tuesday, July 31, 1738, 214.

⁵⁹ J. Wesley's sermon *The Great Privilege of those Born of God*, Vol. 5, 225.

obey God. After the change called the new birth, the believing sinner now has a heart desire to obey God in Christ.⁶⁰

2.3 Comparison of the New Birth and Justification

John Wesley stated that the new birth and justification, while occurring at the same time, were two different experiences. He compares and contrasts the two in this manner:

Justification is a relative change while the new birth is a real change in the life of the believer. Justification changes our relation to God in that being enemies of God we become Christian. The new birth changes our souls, so that by sinners we become saints. Justification restores us to the favor of God, while the new birth restores us to the image of God. Justification takes away our guilt and the new birth takes away the power of sin.⁶¹

3. Sanctification

Wesley taught that sanctification was the second component of salvation. Sanctification is the being saved from the power of sin and the root of sin.⁶² In the “order” of salvation, Wesley then held the view that sanctification was distinct and separate from justification.⁶³ Wesley taught that sanctification was of two “types.” He said that sanctification was gradual and instantaneous.⁶⁴ He put as much emphasis on the gradual

⁶⁰ See also R. Cushman, *Wesley's Experimental Divinity*, 143.

⁶¹ J. Wesley's sermon, *The Great Privilege of those Born of God*, Vol. 5, 224. See also Wesley's sermon, *The New Birth*, Vol. 6, 66, for another comparison/contrast between the new birth and justification.

⁶² J. Wesley's sermon, *On Working out our Own Salvation*, Vol. 6, 509.

⁶³ J. Wesley's journal, Thursday, September 13, 1739, Vol. 1, 240.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, December 5, 1762, Vol. 3, 142. See also P.S. Rees, who writes that “holiness is gift and growth,”

aspect of sanctification as he did on the instantaneous aspect of sanctification. However, the gradual aspect of sanctification seems to have gotten lost in the literature regarding Wesley and the instantaneous aspect of sanctification seems to have been emphasized.

John Wesley believed and taught that a believer could be fully or entirely sanctified in this life. To say the same thing in another way, Wesley believed that a believer could become perfect in this life. The next step in the journey to the discovery of the identity of the emphatic “I” of Romans chapter 7 is to examine John Wesley’s teaching on sanctification and perfection.

Wesley believed that at justification, the new birth occurred. He said that although they are different, yet they occur at the same time. He taught that the experiences of the justification and the new birth could not be separated. If a person was justified, that person was also born again or born of God. His teaching is that at the same moment a person is justified, that person is born again. Wesley, in his teaching on justification, also said that in a person that is “only” justified, sin and the flesh remain.

Wesley, however, was not content, either for himself or for other Christians to be “only” justified. He wanted all that he thought God intended for the believer. Wesley did not believe that God intended perfection or full salvation, only in the next life. He believed that God intended full salvation, perfection to be the normal experience of the Christian in this life. This belief was part of his teaching on sanctification.

At the moment a person was born again, the Holy Spirit changed the heart of the believer. This inner change was a change of inner wickedness to inner goodness. The person's heart was actually and really changed at the moment of justification and the

Triumphant in Trouble (Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell, 1957), 38.

moment that sanctification began.

3.1 Instantaneous aspect of Sanctification

The instantaneous aspect of sanctification⁶⁵ is where many commentators have focused their support or disagreement with Wesley.⁶⁶ This support and disagreement is seen today in one of the great divisions of the Church. Those who tend to disagree with Wesley's view of instantaneous sanctification are primarily in the Reformed wing of the Church. Those who tend to agree with Wesley's view of instantaneous sanctification tend to be in what is loosely called the Armenian wing of the Church. This is certainly not a hard and fast division; however, this division tends to be accurate in a very general way.

Sanctification, for Wesley began at the moment of the new birth.⁶⁷ The new birth was the door to sanctification. Wesley did not believe that the new birth was sanctification, but the new birth was only the door to sanctification. At the new birth, the gradual work of sanctification began. Gradual sanctification was the work of God in the life of the believer, leading the believer to the point where God cleanses the whole heart and soul. He believed that God would “speak” a second time to the believer, the first time was at justification, the second time God spoke to the believer would be the time when

⁶⁵ See J. Wesley's sermon, *On Working out our Own Salvation*, Vol. 6, 509 for his position that sanctification is both instantaneous and gradual. See also R.E. Cushman, *Wesley's Experimental Divinity*, 85. In addition see J. Dwight Pentecost, *Designed To Be Like Him*, 129; C.G. Trumbull, (*Victory in Christ*, Fort Washington, Penn: Christian Literature Crusade, 1959), 84). Also M. Cavit, *The Three Ways*, 67.

⁶⁶ E. Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and the Consummation*, Vol. III, 293, says that “sanctification as a matter of experience is accomplished in the individual man in a series of acts.”

⁶⁷ E. Brunner says that “sanctification can be used as a concept which embraces all God's action, in which also justification, regeneration and conversion are included,” (*The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and the Consumation*, Vol.III, 290).

God would cleanse the heart and make it clean.⁶⁸

When God spoke “a second time”⁶⁹ to the believer, this experience, Wesley called entire sanctification. Entire sanctification, for Wesley, was when the root of sin, the carnal mind and inbred sin were completely destroyed.⁷⁰ Wesley was convinced, it seems, that entire sanctification was an instantaneous sanctification. By this is meant that Wesley believed that entire sanctification occurred in a moment of time, as justification did.⁷¹ He went on to say that if there was no second change, which occurred instantaneously, after justification, the believer would and must remain full of sin till death. He went on to say that if the believer remained full of sin till death, then the believer would also remain guilty till death. This meant, according to Wesley that the believer would continually deserve punishment till death. He claims: “It is impossible the guilt or desert of punishment, should be removed from us, as long as all this sin remains in our heart.”⁷²

⁶⁸ J. Wesley's sermon, *The Repentance of Believers*, Vol. 5, 165. See also D.S. Metz, *Studies in Biblical Holiness*, 111 - who supports the view that sanctification is instantaneous.

⁶⁹ T. Jennings writes that Wesley's optimism about the “immediate effects of ...regeneration was assaulted not only by his own experience but by the testimony of experienced Christians (including some of the Moravians) and by analysis of the lives of new Methodists. It became clear that most did not find entire holiness at the point of initial transformation,” (“The Meaning of Discipleship in Wesley and the New Testament,” *QR* 1 (1993): 3-18).

⁷⁰ D.S. Metz, *Studies in Biblical Holiness*, 165; for an opposing view see E. Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and the Consummation*, Vol. III, 291, who says, “Sanctification stands alongside of justification as a second thing, which is not identical with justification. And this is the specific difference, that sanctification, in contrast to justification, is not thought of as a unique event which as such brings into being the new creature, but refers to the manner in which gradually, step by step, by those processes of growth characteristic of all things, a sinful, unsanctified man grows into a sanctified man. Sanctification then corresponds to the gradual growth of the new man as it proceeds under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Thus the action of the divine Spirit within the temporal process in its human, temporal aspect is what is meant, in contrast with justification which declares man righteous as a totality and at one moment.”

⁷¹ J. Wesley's sermon, *On Working Out Our Own Salvation*, Vol. 6, 509.

⁷² J. Wesley's sermon, *The Repentance of Believers*, Vol. 5, 165.

3.2 Gradual Aspect of Sanctification

Wesley also taught that sanctification was not only instantaneous, but also gradual.⁷³ He taught that sanctification was indeed experienced in an instant. However, before and after that instant called sanctification, he taught that there was a gradual work of sanctification.⁷⁴ Sanctification for Wesley had both an instantaneous aspect and a gradual aspect. God, in an instant, cleansed the heart of the believer. However, before and after that instant of cleansing, there is a journey of growth that must occur.

3.3 Impartation and Imputation of Righteousness

Within the history of the Church, another point of division has been the disagreement of whether righteousness is imputed to the believer or imparted to the believer. Wesley has been associated with the side that says righteousness is imparted to the believer. However, Wesley himself believed that righteousness was imputed to the believer in the act of justification. This is not to say that Wesley did not believe in righteousness being imparted to the believer, he did. Wesley also believed that righteousness was imputed to the believer as well. The imputation of righteousness to the believer was an aspect of justification, while the impartation of righteousness to the believer was an aspect of sanctification.

⁷³ M.B. Wynkoop writes: "In Wesleyanism, sanctification is both imputation and an impartation. It has in it elements of crisis and process," *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1972), 306; Also R. Maddox, "Holiness of Heart and Life: Lessons from North American Methodism." *AsTJ* 2 (1995): 151-172.

⁷⁴ J. Wesley's writing, *Brief Thoughts on Christian Perfection*, Vol. 11, no page number given.

4. Perfection

4.1 What Perfection Is not

Wesley is known for his teaching on holiness or perfection.⁷⁵ He said that at sanctification, the heart is cleansed; the carnal mind and inbred sin are also destroyed. This experience John Wesley called perfection. It must be stated that John Wesley did not believe in sinless perfection.⁷⁶ He believed that the heart is cleansed and made pure or perfect, however, his understanding of perfection, was not sinless perfection. He writes that the phrase “sinless perfection” was a phrase that he never used.⁷⁷ He also says that the phrase “sinless perfection” is not Scriptural.⁷⁸

4.2 What Perfection Is

In Wesley’s understanding, holiness and perfection were names for the same experience.⁷⁹ He defines perfection as purity of intention,⁸⁰ which he meant as the dedicating of all the life to God.⁸¹

⁷⁵ There are objectors to Wesley’s doctrine of perfection. In Excursus B I have listed the objections that Wesley himself faced and his answers to them.

⁷⁶ L.W. Wood, *Pentecostal Grace* (Wilmore, Kentucky: Francis Asbury Publishing Company, 1980), 155.

⁷⁷ J. Wesley’s writing, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, Vol. 11, 396. See also his writing, *Brief Thoughts on Christian Perfection*, Vol. 11, no page number given.

⁷⁸ J. Wesley’s letter to Mrs. Maitland, May 12, 1763, Vol. 12.

⁷⁹ J. Wesley’s sermon, *Christian Perfection*, Vol. 6, 5. See also R.E. Cushman, *Wesley’s Experimental Divinity*, 48.

⁸⁰ “Intention is an act of the will, for to tend to something belongs to the motive power of the human act, which is the will. It is defined as the efficacious desire to attain the end through the means. Intention is concerned not only with the ultimate end but also with intermediate ends,” F. Cunningham, *The Christian Life*, 52.

⁸¹ J. Wesley’s definition of perfection: He said that “in one view, it is purity of intention, dedicating all the life to God. It is giving God all our heart; it is one desire and design ruling all our tempers. It is the devoting not a part but all of our soul, body and substance to God. In another view, it is all the mind which was in Christ, enabling us to walk as Christ walked. It is the circumcision of the heart from all filthiness, all inward as well as outward pollution. It is a renewal of the heart in the whole image of God, the full likeness of him who created it. In yet another, it is loving God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves. Take it in which of these views you please (for there is no material difference)

Wesley also taught that perfection was the humble, patient love of God and neighbor ruling in the heart and life of the believer and thus controlling the believer's actions, words and thoughts.⁸² For Wesley, perfection was an experience of the soul. This means that perfection was always seen and experienced in the life of the believing sinner. Wesley also taught that when one arrived at perfection, one knew experientially that they had arrived.

4.3 Aspects of Perfection

In Wesley's understanding of salvation, for a believer to “arrive” at perfection, that believer must first be sanctified. The reason for this is that at justification, the believer is only partially renewed, partially purified and only partially sanctified. There still remains within the believer, at justification, sin. Although the sin that remains in the believer at justification is subdued, it is not destroyed.

4.3.1. Purity of intention

Perfection for Wesley centered in the will, the intention of the person and spread out

and this is the whole and sole perfection...which I have believed and taught for these forty years, from the year 1725 to the year 1765.” (Wesley's writing, “A Plain Account of Christian Perfection,” Vol. 11, 444). See also R.E. Cushman who defines holiness according to Wesley as: “On its negative side, holiness is a sensibility of and aversion to the unholy. On its positive side it is a cleaving to the Holy. Hence it activates the first Great Commandment. It is in fact, the acknowledgement and embodiment of this commandment as a *way of life*. This is ‘experimental divinity’ in practice,” *Wesley's Experimental Divinity*, 36. See also D.S. Metz, *Studies in Biblical Holiness*, 94, 228. He writes: “The essence of this state of holiness or perfection is love to God and man, purity of motivation, and cleansing from inherent sin. But because of finite qualities which still bear the scars of sin; this same believer will *not perfectly* fulfill God's law. Thus perfection in one respect, and imperfection in another, may consistently meet in the same person;” In fact, Metz titles the chapter on perfection, *Imperfect Perfection*, 221. T. Jennings gives this summary of holiness according to Wesley, (“*The Meaning of Discipleship in Wesley and the New Testament*,” 7); See also R.E. Cushman, (*Wesley's Experimental Divinity*, 228).

⁸² J. Wesley's writing, *Brief Thoughts on Christian Perfection*, Vol. 11, no page number given; see also M. Cavitt, *The Three Ways*, 100-102 for his description of holiness being love.

through the whole life of the believer. One way of defining perfection, for Wesley, was purity of intention.

In one view, it is purity of intention, dedicating all the life to God. It is giving God all our heart; it is one desire and design ruling all our tempers.⁸³

4.3.2. Entire Devotion

Wesley also understood perfection as the dedication of the entire person to God.

It is the devoting not a part but all of our soul, body and substance to God.⁸⁴

4.3.3. A Heart of Devotion

Wesley also defined perfection as a heart of devotion that not only desired to live as Christ lived, but did live as Christ lived. A heart of devotion is also understood as the entire mind that was in Christ, enabling us to walk as Christ walked.⁸⁵ By mind, Wesley meant the thoughts, purpose, intentions and direction of life. He also meant “to walk” as the living, moment by moment, day by day in the same manner in which Christ lived.

4.3.4. A Heart Renewed to the Image of God

Perfection for Wesley was also to be understood in a heart that has been renewed in the

⁸³ J. Wesley's writing, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, Vol. 11, 444. See also D.S. Metz, *Studies in Biblical Holiness*, 102; P. Nellas who writes that “The completion of the participation of the human will in Christ, the Christification of the will, is the content of the spiritual life at its highest stage; it functions as love and is called holiness,” (*Deification In Christ* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 138); C. Selecman & G. Jones, *The Methodist First Reader* (Nashville: Methodist Evangelistic Materials, 1961), 58. For 2 views that are similar to Wesley's view, see K. Barth's essay, “The Gift of Freedom” in *The Humanity of God* (trans. J.N. Thomas & T. Weiser; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1976), 77; R. Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 68; R. Foster, *Freedom of Simplicity* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 101.

⁸⁴ J. Wesley's writing, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, Vol. 11, 444; See also E. Arnold & E. Arnold, *Seeking For The Kingdom of God* (Rifton, New York; Plough Publishing House, 1974), 116.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

image of God. Perfection is a heart that is freed from all inward and outward pollution and corruption from sin. The reception of this new heart occurred at the new birth and was completed at perfection. It is the circumcision of the heart from all filthiness, all inward as well as outward pollution. It is a renewal of the heart in the whole image of God, the full likeness of him who created it.⁸⁶

4.3.5. A Heart of Love to God and Neighbor

Wesley understood perfection as a heart that truly loved God and truly loved one's neighbor. He never separated the love of God from the love of neighbor. Thus, in his understanding of perfection, love of neighbor was always a very vital ingredient. In yet another, it is loving God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves.⁸⁷

4.3.6. Imperfection or Not Sinless-ness

a. Mistakes

Wesley did not teach sinless perfection. He taught that the perfect would be liable to

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 444.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* See also R. Cushman, *Wesley's Experimental Divinity*, 87, who writes: "Those suspicious of easy ecumenicity regularly overlook the point that the unanimity of the heart which Wesley applauds actually invokes Paul's definition of saving faith: 'For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved' (Rom 10:10). In Wesley's view, such a person is already the subject of saving faith and so may be presumed to have crossed the only threshold to the Christian life. Moreover, those who find in this camaraderie of 'heart-religion' a want of doctrinal sobriety easily miss the import of the rightness of heart that invites community. The relationship captured in the phrase, 'right, as my heart is with thy heart,' is, for Wesley, fulfillment of the second great commandment. And that is impossible without fulfillment of the first, the love of God, as in Mark 12:29-30. The two together signify one who is 'going on to perfection.' Thus, rightly understood, this almost proverbial Wesleyan invitation to Christian fellowship may be seen, however surprising, as doctrinally cogent by Wesley's standards. In it there is affirmation of an indissoluble complementary and union of those two pillars of Wesley's 'experimental divinity,' that is, justification by grace through faith and sanctification, i.e., Christian life going on to perfection." For a slightly different view, but one that is in agreement with Cushman, see A. Outler, "Introduction To The Report of The 1968-72 Theological Study Commission," *Doctrine and Theology in The United Methodist Church* (ed., T. A. Langford; Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1991), 21.

mistakes as long as they are in corruptible bodies.⁸⁸ By mistakes, Wesley meant transgressions, which were the result of ignorance, partial knowledge or infirmities. Wesley said that every human being, even the “perfect” have a “disordered brain.”⁸⁹ This disordered brain would show itself in false judgments. These false judgments would then lead the person to mistakes in the way the person relates, speaks and even treats other people. These mistakes are mistakes, if, they are not done intentionally by the person.⁹⁰ Mistakes which are not done intentionally, come out of the unconscious aspects of the human person. Wesley taught that the sanctified, at times, act out of the unconscious aspects of his or her being. This acting out of the unconscious aspects, in Wesley’s theology, is the same teaching that is found in Rom 7:15 where the emphatic “I” does that which they do not understand.

If a person, out of a partial or wrong knowledge of another person or situation, acts in the best understanding that is to be had at the moment, then, even if that person mistreats another person, that person has not sinned.⁹¹

⁸⁸ J. Wesley’s sermon, *Christian Perfection*, Vol. 6, 3. See also D.S. Metz, *Studies in Biblical Holiness*, 228. For an interesting comparison see M. Gorman *Apostle of The Crucified Lord*, 133, 134 for his understanding of sin and sins. He states: “Paul believes that the fundamental human problem, experienced by Jews and Gentile alike, is not merely sins (plural) but sin (singular). Sin operates as a kind of power within and upon the human race. It manifests itself in sins, or inappropriate ways of relating both to God (idolatry rather than faith) and to other humans (immorality and injustice rather than love). Being under the power of sin is like having an addiction; addicts are enslaved to their addiction as if to a master. Human beings are thus covenantally (morally and spiritually) dysfunctional.” What is interesting in Gorman’s discussion is that he, like Wesley, makes a distinction between sinful acts and the inner source causing those acts.

⁸⁹ J. Wesley’s sermon, *Heavenly Treasure in Earthen Vessels*, Vol. 7, 347.

⁹⁰ J.C. Cho says that Wesley was “conscious of the grave result of even the unconscious sin occasioned by the infirmities in the sanctified,” (“Adam’s Fall and God’s Grace: John Wesley’s Theological Anthropology,” *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 3 (1986): 202-213.

⁹¹ J. Wesley’s sermon, *On The Fall of Man*, Vol. 6, 219. Wesley defined mistakes as “ignorance, is in our present state, inseparable from humanity. Every child of man is in a thousand mistakes and is liable to fresh mistakes every moment. And a mistake in judgment may occasion a mistake in practice, yea naturally leads thereto. I mistake, and possibly cannot avoid mistakes, the character of this or that man. I suppose him to be what his is not, to be better or worse than he really is. Upon this wrong supposition I behave wrongly to him, that is more or less affectionately than he deserves. And by the mistake which is

J. Wesley was of the opinion that as long as Christians were in corruptible bodies believers will

be liable to mistakes.⁹² He defines mistakes in these words:

Even those who stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free, who are now really perfect in love, may still be an occasion of temptation to you; for they are still encompassed with infirmities. They may be dull of apprehension; they may have a natural heedlessness, or a treacherous memory; they may have too lively an imagination. And any of these may cause little improprieties, either in speech or behavior, which, though not sinful in themselves, may try all the grace you have; Especially if impute to perverseness of will (as it is very natural to do) what is really owing to defect of memory, or weakness of understanding---if these appear to you to be voluntary mistakes, which are really involuntary. So proper was the answer which a saint of God (now in Abraham's bosom) gave me some years ago, when I said, 'Jenny, surely now your mistress and you can neither of you be a trial to the other, as God has saved you both from sin!' 'O Sir', said she, 'if we are saved from sin, we still have infirmities enough to try all the grace that God has given us!'⁹³

It can be seen from this that Wesley did not teach sinless perfection.

b. Infirmities

In Wesley's understanding and teaching of perfection, mistakes were a part of the life of the perfect, as well as infirmities. Wesley defined infirmities as involuntary transgressions of the law.⁹⁴ He elaborates on his definition of infirmities as: "Involuntary transgressions or sins of infirmities as the saying a thing we believe true, though in fact it prove to be false, or the hurting our neighbor without knowing or designing it, though these are deviations from the holy, acceptable and perfect will of God, yet they are not properly

occasioned by the defect of my bodily organs I am naturally led so to do."

⁹² See J. Wesley's sermon, *On Perfection*, Vol. 6, 412; *On Reading the Time*, Vol. 7, 73; and his journal, July 20, 1761, Vol. 3, 69.

⁹³ J. Wesley's sermon, *On Temptation*, Vol. 6, 479.

⁹⁴ J. Wesley's sermon, *The First Fruits of The Spirit*, Vol. 5, 92.

sins.” In his sermon, “Christian Perfection,” Wesley writes a more detailed definition of infirmities. He states:

Even Christians are not so perfect as to be free from ignorance, error or infirmities. Only let us not give that soft title to known sins, as the manner of some is. But I mean, hereby, not only those which are properly termed bodily infirmities, but all those inward and outward imperfections which are not of a moral nature. Such as the weakness of slowness of apprehension, incoherency of thought, irregular or heaviness of imagination, the want of a ready or retentive memory, slowness of speech, impropriety of language, ungracefulness of pronunciation, to which one might add a thousand other defects either in conversation or behavior. These are the infirmities which are found in the best of men and from these none can hope to be properly freed, til the Spirit returns to God that gave it.⁹⁵

D.S. Metz, in agreement with Wesley posits this concerning infirmities:

1. Infirmities are failures to keep the law of *perfect obedience*, given to Adam in Eden. This law no man on earth can keep, since sin has impaired the powers of universal humanity. Sins are offenses against the law of love, the law of Christ....”
2. Infirmities are an *involuntary* outflow from our imperfect moral organization. Sin is always *voluntary*.
3. Infirmities have their ground in our *physical* nature, and they are aggravated by *intellectual* deficiencies. But sin roots itself in our *moral* nature, springing either from the habitual corruption of our hearts, or from the unresisting perversion of our tempers.
4. Infirmities entail regret and humiliation. Sin always produces guilt.
5. Infirmities in well-instructed souls do not interrupt communion with God. Sin cuts the telegraphic communication with heaven.
6. Infirmities, hidden from ourselves, are covered by the blood of Christ without a definite act of faith. Sins demand a special resort to the blood of sprinkling and an act of reliance on Christ.
7. Infirmities are *without remedy* so long as we are in the body.
8. A thousand infirmities are consistent with perfect love, but not one sin.⁹⁶

Further on infirmities F. Cunningham writes: “By no means are all of our actions perfectly voluntary. Some are less voluntary, others completely voluntary. There are four impediments to voluntary: violence, fear, concupiscence (which is defined as the

⁹⁵ J. Wesley’s sermon, *Christian Perfection*, Vol. 6, 4-6.

⁹⁶ D.S. Metz, *Studies in Biblical Holiness*, 232-233.

privation of rectitude in the sense of appetite as a result of original sin. In its strict sense, it is the desire of the sense appetite for a sensible good) and ignorance.”⁹⁷ Cunningham goes on to state that habits are also principles which cause the human to act.⁹⁸ He defines habit as “a quality difficult to uproot by which a man is well disposed or ill disposed regarding either his nature or his operations.”⁹⁹ Cunningham goes further and lists four sources of habits: “beginnings from nature, the work of man, the role of God, and environment.”¹⁰⁰

John Wesley did not call mistakes or involuntary transgressions, sins.¹⁰¹ Because John Wesley defined sin as a voluntary transgression of a known law and he understood infirmities as involuntary and have no concurrence with the will¹⁰² then involuntary transgressions/infirmities and mistakes were not sins. The reason for this is that according to Wesley, mistakes and infirmities flow from the corruptible state of the body and do not flow from the will of the person,¹⁰³ and thus are in no way contrary to love and thus are not sin.¹⁰⁴

Wesley made a distinction between voluntary and involuntary transgressions of the law. In Wesley's thinking, only the voluntary transgression was a sin. The distinction between voluntary and involuntary transgressions of the law arose out of Wesley's belief that only the soul/spirit could sin, the body could not be the seat of sin. The body was only the “instrument” of the sinful soul. Because only the soul could sin, and because in

⁹⁷ F. Cunningham, *The Christian Life*, 33ff.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 118-121.

¹⁰¹ J. Wesley's sermon, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, Vol. 11, 396.

¹⁰² J. Wesley's sermon, *Salvation By Faith*, Vol. 5, 11.

¹⁰³ For a further discussion of infirmities, see chapter 3 of this study in the discussion on acting from unconscious reasons.

¹⁰⁴ J. Wesley's sermon, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, Vol. 14, 396.

the soul is the location of the will of the human being, then, only the soul could “choose” to act, speak, obey or disobey God. This means that when the soul intends to obey God, yet, for some reason beyond the control of the soul, the soul does something that is a deviation from God's perfect, pure and holy will, this is not properly a sin.

c. In the Flesh and Walking by the Flesh

John Wesley in his teaching on perfection said that the perfect will make mistakes and will not arrive at sinless perfection in this life. In his explanation of “imperfect perfection” he made a distinction between being in the flesh and walking by the flesh. He said that at the new birth, the person is given a new heart, a heart created in righteousness and true holiness. He also is of the opinion that at the new birth the carnal mind is totally destroyed.¹⁰⁵ He finds it impossible to be reconciled to God if the carnal mind remains in the believer. Wesley's understanding of the carnal mind is “enmity towards God.”¹⁰⁶ The carnal mind is not just enmity towards God; it is direct enmity against God.¹⁰⁷ According to Wesley, the carnal mind is not just direct enmity against God; the carnal mind is “essential enmity” against God.¹⁰⁸ He further defines his understanding of the carnal mind when he says that the carnal mind is “the entire universal corruption of our nature.”¹⁰⁹ If that were not enough, Wesley adds, that the carnal mind is the “mind, the inclination, the whole bias of our evil nature, which is enmity against God.”¹¹⁰

According to Wesley, the carnal mind, being enmity towards God, infects the

¹⁰⁵ J. Wesley's sermon, *On Sin in Believers*, Vol. 5, 153.

¹⁰⁶ J. Wesley's sermon, *Justified by Faith*, Vol. 5, 59.

¹⁰⁷ J. Wesley's sermon, *Heavenly Treasures in Earthen Vessels*, Vol. 7, 344.

¹⁰⁸ J. Wesley's writing, *The Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained*, Vol. 8, 473.

¹⁰⁹ J. Wesley's sermon, *Sermon on The Mount/Discourse I*, Vol. 5, 254.

¹¹⁰ J. Wesley's sermon, *The Doctrine of Original Sin, Part II*, Vol. 9, 272.

whole soul of the person.¹¹¹ Because the carnal mind is enmity towards God, it cannot be subject to God's law. The carnal mind, being enmity towards God, is opposition to spiritual truths and is an aversion to receiving spiritual truths.¹¹² The carnal mind is equivalent to those who are in the flesh. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God, according to Wesley. This is so because those who are in the flesh, that is the carnal mind, being enmity against God, are “utterly indisposed for such an obedience, as the relation between God and man requires.”¹¹³ This also true, because, the carnal mind is enmity against God, and those who are enemies of God, cannot, at the same time, be the friends of God. When Wesley said “friends of God”, what he meant is that those who are friends of God desire to obey God. When Wesley said that those who are enemies of God, that is in the flesh, what he meant is that these people do not desire to obey God.

Therefore, according to Wesley, when a person is born again, that person is reconciled to God. This means that the enmity between that person and God no longer exists. The person who has been born again is no longer an enemy of God and is now a friend of God. Another way of saying that is that at the new birth the existential desire of the person changes from a desire of not obeying God to a desire to obey God. Thus, if in a person, the carnal mind remains, that person cannot be reconciled to God. He states that it is impossible for a person to be, at the same time, an enemy of God, with no desire to obey God and a friend of God, whose existential desire is to obey God. Wesley would say that it is impossible for a person to love God and hate God at the same time.

However, Wesley's position is not as clear and as simple as it would seem. He

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹¹² J. Wesley's sermon, *The Doctrine of Original Sin, Part VII*, Vol. 9, 447.

¹¹³ J. Wesley's sermon, *The Doctrine of Original Sin, Part V*, Vol. 9, 408.

also says that in those who are justified, a mind “which is in some measure carnal” remains.¹¹⁴ His stating that the carnal mind still remains in them that are regenerate, although it does not reign further complicates his own position.¹¹⁵

In his attempts to clarify his position, Wesley taught that being in the flesh and walking after the flesh are two different concepts. He defines the flesh as: “(1) a want of original righteousness (2) a natural propensity to sin.”¹¹⁶ By a want of original righteousness, Wesley taught that humanity was created in the image of God, which means that human beings were righteous and holy. When humanity sinned, humans lost that righteousness and holiness. When Wesley said that the flesh is a natural propensity to sin, he meant that in the human being there is an aversion to what is good and an inclination to what is evil.¹¹⁷ Wesley also claims that the flesh signifies corrupt nature.¹¹⁸ The flesh, according to Wesley, is also the evil nature.¹¹⁹ The natural state of the human being, Wesley called the flesh.¹²⁰

The flesh, according to Wesley, signified the fallen, sinful nature of the human being. To be in the flesh was to be an enemy of God. This meant that the one who was in the flesh, could not please God, nor did that person want to please God. Those who are in the flesh are the unregenerate persons, that is, those who are not born again.¹²¹

Wesley taught that to be in the flesh was one thing, but to walk after the flesh was another. By walking after the flesh, Wesley means not only obeying the flesh, but being

¹¹⁴ J. Wesley’s sermon, *The Repentance of Believers*, Vol. 5, 161.

¹¹⁵ J. Wesley’s sermon, *The Scripture Way of Salvation*, Vol. 6, 50.

¹¹⁶ J. Wesley’s sermon, *The Doctrine of Original Sin, Part V*, Vol. 9, 407.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ J. Wesley’s sermon, *The First Fruits of the Spirit*, Vol. 5, 88.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ J. Wesley’s sermon, *The Witness of our Own Spirit*, Vol. 5, 140.

¹²¹ J. Wesley’s sermon, *The Doctrine of Original Sin, Part II*, Vol. 9, 272.

ruled by the flesh.¹²²

Flesh, according to Wesley, remains in the believer after justification. Within the believer are two contrary principles, flesh and spirit.¹²³ The flesh remained in a believer after justification. Wesley taught that at justification a believer was only partially cleansed, purified and sanctified.¹²⁴ A believer was not completely renewed, purified and sanctified, until the moment of entire sanctification. Until the moment of entire sanctification, the flesh, the evil nature remained in a believer. Although the flesh remained in the believer, the flesh did not rule the believer. The flesh desired to rule, but, at the new birth, a new life was given to the believing sinner and this new life, also wanted to rule the believer. Within the believer was therefore a struggle between the flesh's desire to rule and the new life's desire to rule.¹²⁵

5. Conclusion to section on Wesley's Perfection

Perfection, according to Wesley was a pure heart, which resulted in purity of intention. This being said, it must also be said that Wesley never taught that the one who was "perfect" was free from temptations, mistakes or involuntary transgressions.¹²⁶ Wesley also said that perfection was love. He said: "What is implied in being a perfect Christian? He said that the perfect Christian is one who loves God with all his heart, mind, and

¹²² J. Wesley's sermon, *On Sin in Believers*, Vol. 5, 154.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ J. Wesley's journal, May 17, 1740, Vol. 1, 272.

¹²⁶ J. Wesley's writing, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, Vol. 11, 396.

soul.”¹²⁷ Perfection, then for John Wesley was a person who loved God with all their heart, mind and soul. The perfect Christian would not only love God, but would love their neighbor as themselves.¹²⁸

John Wesley taught that even the “perfect” could be the occasion of temptation to others. The reason being is that the “perfect” are still affected by the infirmities that remain within them.¹²⁹ In his understanding of perfection he writes that the perfect in love are still “encompassed with infirmities and liable to mistakes, from which words and or actions might follow, even though the heart was all love.”¹³⁰ He goes on to say, “although saved from sin, believers still have infirmities enough to try all the grace God has given.”¹³¹

He clearly points out that perfection does not mean perfection in knowledge, freedom neither from ignorance nor from mistakes and infirmities, but perfection is the heart that loves God and neighbor and that love is expressed in a heart of obedience.¹³² Thus, it can be seen that John Wesley's perfection was an “imperfect perfection.” The perfect loved God with all that they are and all that they have. The perfect also love their neighbor as themselves. The perfect, however, are not perfect in the sense of attaining to God's absolute perfection. Wesley believed that no one in this life would ever attain to

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ C. Wesley's hymn *Jesus, United by Thy Grace*, expresses, not only this two-fold aspect of holiness or *perfection*, but also describes the manifold aspects of *perfection*, (“*Jesus, United by Thy Grace*,” *United Methodist Hymnal*, R.K. Feaster, publisher; Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), 561; See also E.L. Cattell, *The Spirit of Holiness* (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1977), 38; G.A. Turner, *Christian Holiness in Scripture, in History and in Life* (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1977), 52-53.

¹²⁹ J. Wesley's sermon, *Christian Perfection*, Vol. 6, 4, 5. See also D.S. Metz who writes: “A person may have infirmities, and yet be motivated by perfect love,” (*Studies in Biblical Holiness*, 233).

¹³⁰ J. Wesley's writing, *A Preface to a Treatise on Justification*, Vol. 10, 327.

¹³¹ J. Wesley's sermon, *On Temptation*, Vol. 6, 479.

¹³² J. Wesley's writing, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, Vol. 11, 374.

God's absolute perfection. On the other hand, it was Wesley's belief and teaching that a believer could reach “perfection,” though not sinless perfection, in this life. He did not think that perfection was reserved for a certain few. He believed that perfection was the normal experience of the Christian. Wesley also believed that perfection was God's intention for the believer in this life.

Perfection, according to Wesley, did not mean freedom from mistakes, infirmities, temptations or ignorance. He defines perfection as purity of intention, which means desiring nothing more than God.¹³³ However, because the perfect are still in imperfect, corruptible bodies which, are at times in opposition to God's perfect and holy will and which do influence the words, thoughts and actions of the perfect this means, according to him, that the Christian life is a life of continual warfare, or outward and inward trials.¹³⁴

A concluding quote from Wesley will show that what Wesley meant by both the continual struggle faced by the perfect and his understanding of perfection itself.

John Wesley wrote: “He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, I largely showed that God never deserts any man, unless he first deserts God, and that from bodily disorders, on the one hand and violent temptations on the other hand, every believer may be happy as well as holy, and walk in the light all the days of his life.”¹³⁵

It can be seen that for Wesley, the perfect Christian is a believer whose heart is fully God's and who desires to obey God in all things. The perfect Christian, while having a heart of willing obedience to God, also lives in imperfect bodies. Thus, it is to be

¹³³ J. Wesley's sermon, *The Witness of Our Own Spirit*, Vol. 5, 141.

¹³⁴ J. Wesley's journal, May 17, 1740, Vol. 1, 272.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, January 31, 1767, Vol. 3, 271.

understood that for Wesley, the perfect Christian had a heart of obedience, yet, was surrounded by an imperfect body. The imperfect body of the perfect Christian does have influence on how the words, actions and thoughts of the perfect Christian. This situation results in the perfect Christian, while desiring to obey God but, at times seeing and experiencing that their actual words, actions and thoughts are not in conformity to God's will. John Wesley stated that Christians who are perfected in love will, at times, act, behave, speak, and think, not out of their "will," which has been perfected in love, but will act out of their infirmities.¹³⁶ By infirmities, Wesley meant those aspects of the human being's life that have been damaged by sin and conditioned by original sin, culture and upbringing. Wesley also said: "even those who are perfect in love, may still be an occasion of temptation to you, for they are still encompassed with infirmities."¹³⁷ Again it is to be stated that Wesley's doctrine of perfection did not mean absolute perfection that is the attaining to the standard of God's holiness. In Wesley's doctrine of perfection, he taught that those who are perfect in love will have struggles with and will act out of their infirmities. Wesley further states that the Christian who is perfect in love is still liable to mistakes.¹³⁸

Wesley writes: "Sins of infirmities are involuntary failings as the saying a thing

¹³⁶ J. Wesley said it this way: "Christians are not so perfect as to be free either from ignorance or error. We may thirdly add, nor from infirmities. Infirmities are (1). Bodily infirmities (2) all those inward or outward imperfections which are not of a moral nature. Such are weakness or slowness of understanding, dullness or confusedness or apprehension, incoherency of thought," (Wesley's sermon, *Christian Perfection*, Vol. 6, 4).

¹³⁷ J. Wesley's sermon, *On Temptation*, Vol. 6, 479.

¹³⁸ Again Wesley's words are appropriate: "While we are in the body we cannot be wholly free from mistakes. Notwithstanding, all our care, we shall still be liable to judge wrong in many instances. And a mistake in judgment will very frequently occasion a mistake in practice, nay a wrong judgment may occasion something in the temper or passions, which is not strictly right. It may occasion fear or ill-grounded hope, unreasonable love or unreasonable aversion. But all this is no way inconsistent with perfection." J. Wesley's sermon, *On Perfection*, Vol. 6, 414.

we believe true, though in fact it prove to be false, or the hurting our neighbor without knowing or desiring it.”¹³⁹ Within this quote by Wesley are several very important words and phrases that need to be noticed and examined. The first is Wesley's word “involuntary.” He writes that “sins” of infirmities are involuntary failings. By involuntary, he means that the failings are not voluntary, that is that the person who acts does not act voluntarily or willfully. In other words, the Christian who is perfected in love, at times will do, fail to act, think, speak, and behave the way that both they and God want. In these times of “involuntary” failings, the Christian who is perfected in love will act in ways that they do not desire to. It must be understood that when a Christian who is perfected in love fails but not voluntarily, the will of the Christian who is perfected in love, will not be in agreement with the “involuntary” failings. In other words, the times when the Christian who is perfected in love fails, “involuntarily,” at these times, the will of the Christian is not in agreement with what the Christian is doing.

The second word or phrase to be noticed is: “without knowing or desiring it.” Wesley made this comment after stating that Christians who are perfected in love will “involuntarily” fail. Christians who are perfected in love will at times “involuntarily” fail “without knowing or desiring it.” These words and phrases from Wesley himself state that the Christian who is perfect in love, may and will do things that they do not want to do. These unwanted, yet accomplished acts result in wrong judgments, wrong behaviors and even hurting of one's neighbor.¹⁴⁰ These unwanted acts are the result, not of a willful choice of the person, but are the result of the person's cultural and family upbringing and original sin and come out of the damage that sin has done in that person's life.

¹³⁹ J. Wesley's sermon, *The First Fruits of the Spirit*, Vol. 5, 92.

¹⁴⁰ See footnote # 93 above, this chapter.

6. Comparison of Wesley's Perfection and the Experience of the Emphatic "I" of Rom 7

The experience that Wesley describes for the Christian who is perfect in love is similar to the experience of the emphatic "I" of Rom 7. Both, the emphatic "I" and the Christian who is perfect in love both desire to do what is right and holy in the sight of God. The emphatic "I" desires to do the "good" (Rom 7:16, 19). The Christian who is perfect in love has a pure intention to love God and one's neighbor. Here it can be seen that the Christian who is perfect in love and the emphatic "I" of Rom 7 both desire to do what is holy and well pleasing in the sight of God.

The Christian who is perfect in love and the emphatic "I" of Rom 7 not only have the common experience of desiring to do what is holy and well-pleasing in the sight of God, which results in pleasing God in all things, but they also share another common experience. This second shared experience is the occasional failing to do what is good and loving. When they fail to do what is good, loving, and well pleasing in the sight of God, they do what fails to meet God's standard.

The emphatic "I" of Rom 7 and the Christian who is perfect in love fail at times to do what is holy and well pleasing in the sight of God. Wesley's position is that the Christian who is perfect in love will fail "involuntarily." What Wesley means is that the "will" of the Christian who is perfect in love will be set on doing what is holy and well-pleasing in the sight of God, but at times, the Christian will act out of something other than their "will." Wesley claims that at these times the Christian who is perfect in love acts out of their infirmities. Wesley claims that there are two "sources" within the Christian who is perfect in love, out of which they will act, speak, and behave. The first

of these “sources” is the “will”; the second of these “sources” are the “infirmities.”

As it has been seen in chapter 2 of this study, the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 also has two “sources” within them, out of which they act, speak, and behave. When the emphatic “I” acts not consistent with their will, their desire, the emphatic “I” is not the one acting, but the “sin that indwells in them.” Here it can be seen that there are two “sources” out of which the emphatic “I” acts. The first source is the will, the desire, and the second source is the “sin that indwells.” The emphatic “I” calls the “sin which indwells” another law which operates within the members of their body (Rom 7:23). This “second” law is a law that is in opposition to their will, their $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ - which, according to Berry, is the “moral center of a human being.”¹⁴¹ It can be seen that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 has two sources out of which they act, speak and behave. The first source is their $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$, their will. The second source is a “law” which operates within the members of their bodies.

The struggle of the emphatic “I” with another law that operates within the members of their body is not a struggle between the material and the spiritual. The law that operates within the members of the emphatic “I” which is in opposition to their will is the sin that indwells them (Rom 7:15). The emphatic “I” goes on to say that when they sin, when they act against their will, it is not they who are sinning, but the sin that indwells them (Rom 7:20). The emphatic “I” acts, at times consistent with their will and at other times, the emphatic “I” acts not consistent with their will, but in opposition to it.

Wesley said that the Christian who is perfect in love acts, at times consistent with their will and at other times acts in opposition to their will. When the Christian who is perfect in love acts in opposition to their will to please God, Wesley said that they were

¹⁴¹ G.R. Berry, *A Dictionary of New Testament Greek Synonyms*, 25.

acting out of their infirmities and what they did, he called mistakes. Wesley said and taught in his doctrine of *perfection* that Christians who are perfect in love act, at times out of their will and at other times the Christian who is perfect in love will act, not out of their will, but will act out of another source which is located within them. This other source cannot be the will of the Christian who is perfect in love. The reason for this is that the will of the Christian who is perfect in love is set on pleasing God in all things. This other source, though not the will, must be found within the Christian who is perfect in love. Somewhere within the Christian who is perfect in love is another “source” out of which they act, speak, and behave. Wesley called this other source “infirmities.” The infirmities of a Christian who is perfect in love are found within them, but not within their will. Because the infirmities of a Christian who is perfect in love are found within them and are not their will; the infirmities of a Christian who is perfect in love are found within their members. The infirmities of Wesley are similar to the “unconscious” factors that influence a person’s decision and out of which they act. By this it can be seen that with Wesley’s infirmities affecting the “perfect” Christian and the “unconscious factors” affecting the mature Christian, there are similar factors working within both the “perfect” Christian and the mature Christian which affect them and cause them to act, think, choose, at times, not according to their will but which are part of their experiences.

Wesley said that Christians who are perfect in love at times fail to meet God's standard. When these Christians fail to meet God's standards, they act in opposition to their will and act involuntarily. Wesley is describing an experience where a Christian who is perfect in love, one could also call this Christian a spiritually mature Christian, fails to do what is right, good and well-pleasing in the sight of God. At the same time, while

failing to meet God's standard, the Christian who is perfect in love, also acts in opposition to their will, because the perfect Christian has set their will on pleasing God.

The experience of desiring to be and do what God desires, yet, at times failing to meet God's standard of love is the same experience of the emphatic "I" of Rom 7. The emphatic "I" of Rom 7 has set their will on the good, that is on pleasing God by obeying his law. However, at times, the emphatic "I" finds that it acts in opposition to their will. In these times of acting in opposition to their will, the emphatic "I" of Rom 7 fails to do what is right, holy, and well pleasing in the sight of God. What can be seen from these common experiences of the Christian who is perfect in love and the emphatic "I" of Rom 7 is that both act against their desiring, their will, when they fail to do what is good, loving, and well-pleasing in the sight of God.

Wesley defined sin as a willful transgression of a known law.¹⁴² The question that is to be asked is: Does the emphatic "I" sin willingly? The answer to that question is "no". The desire of the emphatic "I" is to do what pleases God. Rom 7:15, 18, 19, 20 all clearly state that the emphatic "I" desires, not to sin, but to please God. Rom 7:15 states: "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." Here it can be seen that the emphatic "I" does not do what it wants, what it desires to do. Rom 7:18-20 states: "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is in my sinful nature; for I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it." These verses make it clear that the desire of the emphatic "I" is to do what is good, what

¹⁴² J. Wesley's sermon, *On Obedience to Parents*, Vol. 7, 107.

is pleasing to God. These verses also state that the emphatic “I” does not desire to sin.

The emphatic “I” sins but sins “unwillingly” (Rom 7:16). The emphatic “I” does not desire to sin, nor does the emphatic “I” will sin. Because the emphatic “I” does not sin willingly nor will to sin, the sin of the emphatic “I” must belong to Wesley's categories of mistakes or involuntary failings. Wesley said that the Christian who is perfect in love will, as long as they are in a mortal body, make “mistakes.” He writes: “Christian perfection does not imply an exemption either from ignorance or mistakes or infirmities.”¹⁴³ He also states that weaknesses and infirmities will remain while this corruptible body remains.¹⁴⁴ Wesley defined “infirmities” as involuntary failings.¹⁴⁵ Thus, according to Wesley's own definitions, it must be seen that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 sins, not willingly, but unwillingly, that is involuntarily.

7. Concluding Statement

When the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is compared to the experience of Wesley's Christian who is perfected in love, it can be seen that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 and the Christian who is perfected in love share a similar experience. This is another way of saying that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 and Wesley's Christian who is perfected in love experience a similar experience.

¹⁴³ J. Wesley's sermon, *Christian Perfection*, Vol. 6, 5.

¹⁴⁴ J. Wesley's sermon, *The End of Christ's Coming*, Vol. 6, 277.

¹⁴⁵ J. Wesley's sermon, *First Fruits of The Spirit*, Vol. 6, 92.

Chapter 6: The Teaching of Three Mystics

1. Introduction

The experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 will be compared to the spiritual experience which is described by three mystics. The purpose of this comparison is to help in discovering the identity of the emphatic “I” and in the constructing of the spiritual portrait of the emphatic “I”. These mystics are: St. Teresa of Avila, Julian of Norwich and the Cloud of Unknowing. The comparison of the mystical writings with the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 will aid in the discovery of the identity of the emphatic “I”. St. Teresa of Avila wrote the *Interior Castle* and Julian of Norwich wrote *Revelation of Love*, and the author, who wrote the *Cloud of Unknowing*,¹ form the very heart of Western mysticism.² Thus, in studying these three Mystics, one is also studying that which forms the very core and center of the Mystical tradition in the Western Church. This means that the teachings of Julian of Norwich, Teresa of Avila and the *Cloud of Unknowing* form a very important and essential part of the teaching of the Western Church. The Mystics themselves and the Catholic Church call the teaching of these Mystics, Gospel.³ The reason for comparing the experience of the emphatic “I” with the mystical writings of these mystics is that the “spiritual marriage” is considered as the highest spiritual plain where a human can live in this life. Another name for this highest

¹ An unknown English monk who wrote the *Cloud of Unknowing* in the fourteenth century, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, 7.

² Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, preface.

³ T. Dubay, *Fire Within*, 10.

plane is “holiness”.⁴

Julian of Norwich was a mystic who was born May 8, 1373. The date of her death is unknown, although some think that she may have still been living in 1428;⁵ however, this is questioned. Julian’s name is unknown.⁶ She lived as a hermit in a two-roomed dwelling “propped against the walls of St. Julian in Conesford Street church.”⁷

Teresa of Avila, a mystic who died in 1579,⁸ wrote the *Interior Castle* in 1577.⁹ Teresa lived in various locations throughout Spain.

The author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* was an English monk who wrote the *Cloud of Unknowing* in the fourteenth century. The identity of this monk is unknown.¹⁰

To draw the “spiritual portrait of a Christian believer” the experience as described by Paul in Rom 7 was studied, then is to be compared to the experience of the Church.¹¹ It is the purpose of this chapter to study the experience of the Mystics, called the “spiritual marriage” and to compare it to Wesley’s doctrine of “perfection” and the experience described by Paul in Rom 7. The purpose of this comparison is to show that Paul in Rom 7, John Wesley and the Mystics are all describing a similar experience of a mature, spiritual Christian believer.¹²

⁴ T. Dubay states, “A book on advanced prayer is a book on advanced joy. It is a love story, a book about being loved and loving totally. It is a book on holiness, the heights of holiness to which the Gospel invites everyone,” (*Fire Within*, 5).

⁵ Julian of Norwich, *Revelation of Love*, preface.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, viii.

⁸ St. Teresa, *Interior Castle*, 7.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁰ W. Johnston, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, 7. The biographical information for these three mystics is sparse. This is evidence that they are true mystics as their intent was to focus people’s attention on God and not on themselves, See also (St. Teresa, *Interior Castle*, 14).

¹¹ As it has been stated in chapter 1 of this study that the dependence of the Mystics on Paul will be seen in the commonality of the experience that the Mystics teach with the experience that Paul teaches.

¹² For objections to the Mystical experience called “the spiritual marriage” see Excursus C.

The study of the mystical experience called the “spiritual marriage”¹³ will be compared to Wesley's experience of “perfection”. These two experiences,¹⁴ the “spiritual marriage” and Wesley's experience of “perfection” will then be compared to the experience that is recorded of the emphatic “I” in Rom 7. The assumption of comparing the “spiritual marriage” and Wesley's experience of “perfection” is that these two experiences are similar experiences of mature spiritual Christians.¹⁵ This similar experience of the “spiritual marriage” and “perfection” will then be compared to the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7. This comparison will help in answering the question: Is the experience of the “spiritual marriage” and of “perfection” similar to the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7?

Those who support the viewpoint of a “spiritual marriage”,¹⁶ have a particular understanding of what the concept means. Here follows a brief summary of the experience of “spiritual marriage”. The “spiritual marriage” is an experience of union between the believer and God. This union with God “is effected by likeness: We must be made like unto God if we are to be united to Him.”¹⁷ This likeness to God is a likeness where God takes complete possession of the soul.¹⁸ When a person is completely

¹³ This chapter will be a discussion on the Mystics teaching on the *spiritual marriage* and not on the differences between the theology of the Roman Catholic and the theology of the Protestant Church. Thus, there will be no comparison/contrast between Protestant theology and Roman Catholic theology. The core of the Mystical teaching on the *spiritual marriage* can be seen as the essential Gospel. This common essence is holiness. This common essence is the thesis of this study and will be shown throughout.

¹⁴ See chapter 1 of this study for a definition and understanding of the word “experience” as used in this study.

¹⁵ This study will confirm this statement.

¹⁶ I list only a few: T. Merton, T. Dubay, Teresa of Avila, Julian of Norwich, John of the Cross, the author of the Cloud of Unknowing; Mother Teresa; H.W. Smith.

¹⁷ T. Dubay, *Fire Within*, 53.

¹⁸ St. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle of Teresa of Avila*, 59. See also St. Ignatius, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, 103 who writes: “Love consists in a mutual interchange by the two parties, that is to say,

possessed by God, this “being possessed” is seen both in the words which a person speaks, in the deeds which they do and is seen in the resolution of the will to be God's person completely.¹⁹ Another way to say this is that when a person is completely possessed by God, their words and deeds, that is their outer lives, reflect being possessed by God. Their words and deeds become words and deeds of love for the neighbor. Being possessed by God is also reflected in the will of the person to be God's person. To be God's person means that the person has set their heart, which is the will, on living for God and attempting to please God in all things.

It must be stated from the outset that in the study on the Mystical experience, called the “spiritual marriage”, that the extraordinary experiences of some of the mystics are not an integral part of the experience called the “spiritual marriage”. The Mystics taught that the extraordinary experiences, or as they were called “favors of God,” were usually given to the beginners, the immature, the weakest, and the ones who were just starting the journey towards union with God.²⁰

The mature believers, according to the teaching of the Mystics, would no longer experience these extraordinary experiences. The reason for this is that the mature believers were living in the union of their wills with the will of God.²¹ This union of wills, in this life, is the highest experience that a human being can have with God. The extraordinary experiences were given to encourage the believer to go forward to the “spiritual marriage”. The Mystics teach that many people, who experienced the

that the lover give to and share with the beloved all that he has or can attain, and that the beloved act toward the lover in like manner.”

¹⁹ St. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle of Teresa of Avila*, 61.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 62.

²¹ H.W. Smith, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell, 1952), 115.

extraordinary experiences, never, in this life, reached the “spiritual marriage”, that is the union of their wills with the will of God. It is also true, according to the Mystics, that many, who have never experienced the extraordinary experiences, reached the “spiritual marriage”, that is, the union of their wills with the will of God, in this life.

It is important to state that the extraordinary experiences are not an integral part of the “spiritual marriage” and to make it clear that the “core” experience of the “spiritual marriage”, which this study is concerned with, will not discuss further the extraordinary experiences of certain of the Mystics. It is enough to say that the extraordinary experiences are not necessarily a part of the union of the human will with the will of God. The union of the human will with the will of God can be experienced, and normally is, without the extraordinary experiences.

2. “Spiritual Marriage” and Teresa of Avila

Teresa of Avila calls perfection the “spiritual marriage”.²² Teresa insists that perfection consists “in the love of God and of our neighbor.”²³ According to Teresa, love consists,

²² St. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle of Teresa of Avila*, 42. St. John calls perfection “union” (St. John of the Cross, “The Dark Night,” Book 2, chapter 3, *The Collected Works of St. John of The Cross*, (trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriques; Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1991), 399). In the understanding of the Mystics, however, “union” and the “spiritual marriage” were synonymous terms. In addition, perfection is also understood in terms of perfect in love; Mother Teresa defines *perfection* in this manner. She writes: “In loving and serving, we prove that we have been created in the likeness of God, for God is love and when we love we are like God. This is what Jesus meant when he said, ‘Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect,’” *Jesus: the Word to be Spoken* (New York: Walker and Company, 1987), 66, 67. This understanding of perfection can be seen as being similar to Wesley’s understanding of perfection. In addition, the discussion concerning union as union of wills, the human and Divine can be seen to be synonymous with Wesley’s understanding of perfection, sin and holiness. For substantiation of this see chapter 4 of this study on Wesley and chapter 6 of this study.

²³ St. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle of Teresa of Avila*, 42.

not in the person's own happiness, but in the determination of the will to please God in everything and to love one's neighbor.²⁴

V. Lossky, writes that “union with God is brought about by love.”²⁵ St. John of the Cross states that perfection is perfect love.²⁶ As it has been stated above, St. Teresa calls the spiritual marriage love. Thus, it can be seen that the spiritual marriage and union with God are synonymous phrases and concepts. In addition, J. Welch writes: “Union with God in the center provides a unique view of the world. The spiritual marriage does not take a person from the world, but allows the person to find a place in the essential unity of all creation. The Union with God bears fruit in an androgynous living which realize its intrinsic relationship to all other life and existence.”²⁷ Here it can be seen that J. Welch interchanged the phrases “spiritual marriage” and “union with God,” thus, stating that the two phrases are describing the same experience.

The soul that has experienced the “spiritual marriage” has all that it desires. This is so, because all that the soul in the “spiritual marriage” desires is God. By this is meant that the soul that has experienced the “spiritual marriage”, lays no claim upon “the things of the world.” The soul, which has experienced the “spiritual marriage”, is able to function and to “use” the things of the world without being controlled by them or without having the “need” to own them. The soul, which has experienced the “spiritual marriage”, seeks and desires only God and to serve and to please Him.

²⁴ St. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle of Teresa of Avila*, 76.

²⁵ V. Lossky, *The Vision of God* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983), 133.

²⁶ St. John of the Cross, “The Dark Night,” *The Collected Works of St. John of The Cross*, 439.

²⁷ J. Welch, *Spiritual Pilgrims: Carl Jung and Teresa of Avila* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 184, 185.

According to Teresa, a soul progressing²⁸ towards the “spiritual marriage” is a soul that is growing in its knowledge of God and of itself. This is to say that a soul progressing towards the “spiritual marriage” is growing in the knowledge of God and of self. The reality is that a soul that is learning more about God is also learning more about itself. This is to state, very clearly, that the experience called the “spiritual marriage” is not identified with absolute perfection or the “arriving” at a final point. In some ways, the “spiritual marriage” is not “arriving at all.” The “spiritual marriage” can be seen as a “beginning” point for the soul.²⁹ There is much growth in the knowledge of God and self that occur after the experiencing the “spiritual marriage”.

The soul, progressing towards the “spiritual marriage”, and the ones that have experienced the “spiritual marriage”, learn more about God and themselves. In this knowledge the soul discovers the beauty of God and the sinfulness of itself. Teresa states it this way: “The better the soul gets to know the greatness of God, the better it comes to realize the misery of its own condition.”³⁰

Teresa writes that the soul in the “spiritual marriage” desires to please God in all things. This desire is so overwhelming that the soul, although desiring to please God in all things, realizes that it can do very little for God, in comparison to its desires to please God.³¹ In other words, the soul, which has experienced the “spiritual marriage”, desires to

²⁸ T. Dubay, in summarizing the teaching of the saints claims that the saints teach that “it is the gradual growth toward the heights of transforming *union* and nothing less that produces an accompanying heroic holiness,” (*Fire Within*, 3).

²⁹ St. John of the Cross, *The Collected Works of St. John of The Cross*, 445.

³⁰ St. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle of Teresa of Avila*, 91. See also T.A Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (trans. L. Sherley-Price; New York: Penguin Books, 1952), 85 who writes: “At times, God will withdraw from you; at times you will be troubled by your neighbor, and, what is more, you will often be a burden to yourself.” See also St. John of the Cross, “The Spiritual Cantic,” *The Collected Works of St. John of The Cross*, 504.

³¹ St. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle of Teresa of Avila*, 107.

please God in all things. This desire is of such a nature that, it can be called overwhelming. This means that the soul's passion, breathe and reason for existence is to please God.

The soul, which has this overwhelming desire to please God, is also aware, that, in all actuality, it can do very little for God. This realization, when compared to the overwhelming desire of the soul to please God, causes the soul “pain.” In other words, the soul that has experienced the “spiritual marriage”, desires to please God in all things, but it also realizes that it cannot accomplish even a portion of its desire to please God.

The teaching of the *Interior Castle* is that the soul, which has experienced the “spiritual marriage”, while desiring to please God and growing in this desire to please God, also becomes clearer as to its own self. The soul realizes that there is still within it areas and times of self-love, or the lack of love towards others.³² The soul, in seeing how far it truly is from God, although having experienced the “spiritual marriage”, realizes that in it, there is nothing good. The soul also realizes that if there is any good in it, this good is the gift of God and not from itself.³³ This certainly means that the soul, which has experienced the “spiritual marriage”, is a soul captivated by God and not a self-righteous soul. This means that the soul, which has experienced the “spiritual marriage”, is a soul secure in the grace of God and is not trying to earn or work its way toward heaven.

In this experience of the “spiritual marriage”, where the soul sees itself as a sinner, yet growing ever closer to God, can be seen the common experience of the Mystics.³⁴

³² *Ibid.*, 114.

³³ *Ibid.*, 128.

³⁴ A.G. Sertlanges, *Spirituality* (trans. by the Dominican nuns of Corpus Christi Monastery; New York: McMullen Books, 1954), 99; T. Merton, *Life and Holiness* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963), 9; G. Thils, *The Theology of Christian Perfection* (Dubuque, Iowa: The Priory Press, 1962), 137.

Teresa, whom has been recognized as one who experienced the “spiritual marriage”, calls herself a worm.³⁵ Here can be seen the “I am” and the “I am not yet” of the “spiritual marriage”. The “I am” is the experience of union of the human will with the will of God. The “I am not” is the reality that the soul, which has experienced the “spiritual marriage”, sees ever clearer, that there is still so much more of the soul which has not yet been transformed into the image of Christ.

In this experience of growing ever closer to God, the soul desires more and more to be completely united to God. Along with this desire of the soul to be completely united to God is a realization that, in the experience of the “spiritual marriage”, there is an uncompleted union with God. The will of the soul, in the “spiritual marriage”, has become one with the will of God. Yet, the soul is more than simply will. There are other aspects, dimensions and depths of the soul than simply “will”. It is in these other aspects, dimensions and depths of the soul that the “uncompleted” union with God is seen and experienced.

When the soul experiences the “spiritual marriage”, there is a union of the human will with the will of God. Yet, the soul is more than simply “will.” There are indeed other aspects and dimensions of the soul that, in this life, do not experience union with God. This “uncompleted” union with God is torture for the soul.³⁶ The reason for this is that the soul, in growing ever closer to God, sees its own self in a clearer and clearer way. Although the soul is being transformed into the image of Christ, there yet remain in the soul many imperfections and areas which are still broken. These imperfections and

³⁵ St. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle of Teresa of Avila*, 153; H.W. Smith, *The Christian’s Secret of a Happy Life*, 115-118.

³⁶ St. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle of Teresa of Avila*, 163.

broken areas cause the soul pain.³⁷ The soul's one desire is God and union with Him. Union with God, according to the teaching of the Mystics, means conformity with God. The areas of unconformity with God, the still remaining imperfections and broken areas, become increasingly painful to the soul, as the soul desires more and more to be pleasing to God and to experience complete union with God.

The desire of the soul to be completely pleasing to God by means of union and conformity to God means that the soul desires not to sin, that is to displease God. The fact that the soul is not yet perfect, in the understanding of glorification, means that the soul still stumbles and falls, although not willingly. This reality, of still falling and stumbling, although unwillingly, causes the soul to be greatly distressed. This distress comes out of the knowledge that the soul, although with an overwhelming desire to please God, still commits many sins and feels that it is unpleasing to God.³⁸

Teresa says that the soul that has experienced the “spiritual marriage”, which is the union of the will of the soul with the will of God,³⁹ in this life, is never free from

³⁷ T. Merton, *Life and Holiness* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963), 12; G.Thils, *Christian Holiness*, 250; F.W. Faber, *Growth in Holiness* (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1960), 1; R. Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 3; A.G. Sertlanges, *Spirituality*, 99.

³⁸ St. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle of Teresa of Avila*, 164.

³⁹ H.W. Smith, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*, 340. She defines union of wills in this manner: “But do not let us make a mistake here. I say we must ‘give up’ our wills, but I do not mean we are to be left will-less. We are not so to give up our wills to be left like limp nerveless creatures, without any will at all. We are simply to substitute for our foolish, misdirected wills of ignorance and immaturity the higher, divine, mature will of God. If we lay the emphasis on the word ‘our,’ we shall understand it better. The will we are to give up is our will, as it is misdirected, and so parted off from God’s will, not our will when it is one with God’s will; for when our will is in harmony with His will, when it has the stamp of oneness with Him, it would be wrong for us to give it up,” (*The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*, 126). She goes on to describe this union of wills in this manner: “For far more glorious than it would be to have Christ a dweller in the house or in the heart is it to be brought into such a real and actual union with Him as to be one with Him—one will, one purpose, one interest, one life,” (340).

temptation nor free from sorrow for their sins.⁴⁰ The freedom from temptation and from sorrow for sins, according to Teresa, occurs only in the next life that is in heaven.⁴¹ Teresa goes on to say that the more a soul receives from God, the greater the soul's sorrow and distress for its sins.⁴² Teresa states very plainly and clearly that no soul, especially the ones who have experienced the “spiritual marriage”, will ever forget “the miserable state it was once in.”⁴³

The “spiritual marriage” is not an experience of absolute perfection, in this life. Teresa states that as long as the soul lives in a mortal body, the soul will always have failures.⁴⁴ This is clearly stating that the experience of the “spiritual marriage” is not talking about absolute perfection or to use the phrase, “sinless perfection.”⁴⁵ The union of the will of the soul with the will of God is indeed a blessed experience; however, because the soul is more than “will,” with other aspects, dimensions and depths, and these other aspects, dimensions and depths have not been completely transformed, the soul, which has experienced the “spiritual marriage”, will have times of failures, temptations and falling.⁴⁶

The desire of the soul in the “spiritual marriage” is to please the Lord in all things. This desire is also expressed in the soul's agony and distress over its sins, failures and lack of conformity to the image of Christ. The soul's desire to please the Lord is so great

⁴⁰ St. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle of Teresa of Avila*, 170. Also, T.A. Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (trans. Leo Sherley-Price; New York: Penguin Books, 1952), 86; Mother Teresa, *Jesus: the Word to be Spoken*, 65.

⁴¹ St. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle of Teresa of Avila*, 170.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* See also T. Merton, *Life and Holiness*, 12; G.Thils, *Christian Holiness*, 250; F.W. Faber, *Growth in Holiness*, 1; R. Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing*, 3; A.G. Sertlanges, *Spirituality*, 99.

⁴⁵ See previous footnote.

⁴⁶ H.W. Smith, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*, 115-118; 125; 340.

that to displease the Lord, or to think that one has displeased the Lord, or even to come short of complete conformity to Christ is more painful than the torments of hell.⁴⁷

When Teresa states that to displease the Lord is more painful than the torments of hell, it can be seen that the soul's desire to please the Lord is so great, that the thought of displeasing the Lord is a greater torment than hell itself. This desire, to please the Lord, as experienced in the “spiritual marriage”, with the knowledge that the soul is not absolutely perfect, is a painful experience for the soul. Teresa, in this quote, calls herself “wicked”. This quote is from a person who had experienced the “spiritual marriage”. Her view of herself was of a sinner, saved by grace, but of a sinner, who fell far short of God's glory. She called herself “wicked,” one who deserves eternal hell. This personal view of her was not just the view that Teresa held concerning herself in the beginning stages of the journey towards the “spiritual marriage”, that is in the beginning stages of her spiritual life. This view was Teresa's personal view of herself as one who had experienced the “spiritual marriage”. In other words, Teresa's view of herself, after she had experienced the “spiritual marriage” was that she was “wicked.” It must be remembered that the experience, called the “spiritual marriage”, was the experience the Mystics considered the highest spiritual experience a person could experience in this life.

Teresa states that in the “spiritual marriage”, the will is united with the will of God. Although the will of the soul is united with the will of God, the soul still stumbles and falls. The will, being united to the will of God, can be said to be perfect, yet it is not

⁴⁷ St. Teresa of Avila writes these words: “I can tell you truly, that wicked as I am, I have never feared the torments of hell, for they seem nothing by comparison with the thought of the wrath which the damned will see in the Lord's eyes—those eyes so lovely and tender and benign. I do not think my heart could bear to see that; How much more will anyone fear this to whom He has revealed Himself,” (*Interior Castle of Teresa of Avila*, 187).

absolutely perfect, that is in the state of sinless perfection or glorification. The will that is perfect is affected by other factors in the human being. These other factors, Teresa calls the faculties, which, according to Teresa, are separate from the soul.⁴⁸

The will can be perfect, or one with the will of God, yet, at times is buffeted by other factors of the soul, the soul's other aspects, dimensions and depths; those areas yet transformed to the image of Christ. These other factors, although not originating in the will, have a power to influence the choices of the person.⁴⁹

The soul that has experienced the “spiritual marriage” is not free from the risk of backsliding. This is also to say that the soul that has experienced the “spiritual marriage” is not free from temptations, stumbling and sin. If the soul, even after experiencing the “spiritual marriage” is not free from the risk of backsliding, then that must mean that the soul is still troubled by temptations and sins. If the soul can backslide, then it must also be able to sin.

The reason that the soul is not free from backsliding, temptations and sins is the other factors of the soul, the different dimensions, aspects and depths of the soul that influence the human being through the faculties. These other factors are a power and have power in the life of the human.

The “spiritual marriage” is an experience where the soul does have peace, although all around the soul that is in the “rest” of the body, there are trials, temptations, struggles and failures. Teresa says “it must not be thought that the faculties and senses and passions are always in a state of peace, though the soul itself is...it is difficult to

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 217.

understand how the soul can have trials and afflictions and yet be in peace.”⁵⁰

According to the teaching of Teresa, the soul's afflictions and pains arise from its intense desire to please God, while knowing at the same time, that it falls short of its own desires. This must be part of the truth, for Teresa states that the torments of hell are nothing compared to the thought of displeasing the Lord. There is also the truth that the will of the soul, being united to the will of God, is also affected and influenced by the other factors in the life of the human person.⁵¹

Teresa teaches concerning the “spiritual marriage” that the experience of the “spiritual marriage” is not an experience of sinless perfection or of glorification.⁵² The “spiritual marriage” is an experience where the will of the soul is united to the will of God so that the will of the soul begins to “will” what God wills. When the soul wills what God wills, the soul also sees itself more and more clearly. It is in the seeing of itself as broken, sinful and far from coming close to accomplishing its own desires that is to be pleasing to God, that the soul experiences the greatest agony. This agony is the failure to fulfill its own desires, which is to be completely what God wants it to be.

The soul, which has experienced the “spiritual marriage”, also sees itself as a broken, sinful entity; this is seen when Teresa called herself “wicked.” This does not mean that Teresa was living a life of willful sin, for the essence of the “spiritual marriage” is a will that has started to will what God wills. However, because the human

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 218.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 226: “Do not, of course, for one moment imagine that, because these souls (in the Spiritual Marriage) have such vehement desires and are so determined not to commit a single imperfection for anything in the world, that they do not in fact commit many imperfections and even sins. Not intentionally, it is true, for the Lord will give such persons very special aid as to this. I am referring to venial sins, for from mortal sins, as far as they know, they are free, although they are not completely proof against them; and the thought that they may commit some without knowing it will cause them no small agony.”

⁵² See above, this chapter.

being is a complex and inter-related being,⁵³ the different unconscious aspects of the human being also influence the choices of the will.

The “spiritual marriage” is not concerned with visions and other extraordinary experiences. Teresa affirms that the greatest gift from God, which is experienced in the “spiritual marriage”, is a life that is an imitation of that life which was lived by the Lord Jesus Christ.⁵⁴ Teresa goes on to say that the purpose of prayer and the “spiritual marriage” is a life that is pleasing to God.⁵⁵ If one experiences visions and the other extraordinary experiences, one is to leave these behind in the pursuit of the “spiritual marriage”, where the will of the soul is united to the will of God.

2.1 Comparison of Teresa of Avila and the Emphatic “I” of Rom 7

Teresa of Avila says that the soul, which has experienced the “spiritual marriage”, desires to please God in all things.⁵⁶ However, this soul has also gained a clearer understanding of God's greatness and the misery of its own condition.⁵⁷ When the soul, which has experienced the “spiritual marriage”, which means that the desire of this soul is to please God in all things, realizes that it rarely accomplishes its own heart's desire, that is to please God in all things, this realization causes the soul “torture.”⁵⁸ Teresa, one who is recognized by the church as one who experienced the “spiritual marriage”, when looking at herself in the light of God's holiness and greatness, called herself “worm.”⁵⁹ From this

⁵³ See chapter 4 of this study for a more detailed discussion.

⁵⁴ St. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle of Teresa of Avila*, 227.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 228.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 153.

it can be seen that, according to Teresa of Avila, the Christian who has experienced the “spiritual marriage” has a view of him or herself that can be described in modern psychological terms as “poor”. When one truly sees themselves in the light of God's holiness and greatness, one cannot walk away from that encounter with a view of self that in modern psychological terms would be considered a “high” self-image. However, when one truly sees oneself in the light of God's holiness and greatness and one is able to “walk” away, the self-perception that one will take with them is truly realistic.

The emphatic “I” of Rom 7 desires to do what is good and pleasing to God (Rom 7:15-25). While desiring to do what is good and pleasing to God, the emphatic “I” also realizes that it does not always act the way it desires. The emphatic “I” does desire to please God and at times accomplishes its desire. The emphatic “I” says that it does serve God in the will.

However, the emphatic “I” does not always act in a way that is consistent with its desire to please God. When the emphatic “I” acts in a way that is contrary to its own desire to please God, this acting, which is not in conformity to its own desire to please God causes the emphatic “I” to cry out in anguish and pain. This cry is “O Wretched Man.”

The cry of the emphatic “I” of “O Wretched man” is a similar cry as that of Teresa when she called herself a “worm.” Teresa says that even the soul, which has experienced the “spiritual marriage”, will still be troubled by temptations and failings.⁶⁰ The reality of failing causes the soul in the “spiritual marriage” to “sorrow” over its sins.⁶¹

Teresa says that the soul, which has experienced the “spiritual marriage”, desires

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 171.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 170.

to please God in all things. This soul, while desiring to please God in all things, also realizes that it rarely truly accomplishes its own heart's desire. This realization causes the soul in the “spiritual marriage” to cry out in pain and anguish. The soul, which has experienced the “spiritual marriage”, also sees itself very clearly in the light of God's holiness and greatness. This vision also causes the soul in the “spiritual marriage” to cry out in pain and anguish.

Teresa's description of a soul that has experienced the “spiritual marriage” can be seen as the same experience that John Wesley described as the Christian who is perfect in love,⁶² yet acts involuntarily out of their infirmities.⁶³ This is also the same experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7, who desires to do what is good, yet at times fails to perfectly and fully accomplish its desire of pleasing God in all things.

3. The Cloud of Unknowing

Teresa of Avila is not the only mystic who wrote on the experience of union with God. The book, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, was written to help those who have been called to the life of contemplation, which is a form of prayer, to arrive at union with God. *The*

⁶² T. Merton, *Life and Holiness*, 24; G. Thils, *Christian Holiness*, xi; A. Royo & J. Amann, *The Theology of Christian Perfection*, 124; Sister M.E. Mason, *Active Life and Contemplative Life* (Milwaukee: The Marquette University Press, 1961), 113; E.A. Stewart, *Jesus the Holy Fool* (Franklin, WI: Sheed and Ward, 1999), 195. See V. Lossky, *The Vision of God*, 133 who writes that “union with God is brought about by love.”

⁶³ T. Merton, *Life and Holiness*, 12; G. Thils, *Christian Holiness*, 250; F.W. Faber, *Growth in Holiness*, 1; R. Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing*, 3; A.G. Sertlanges, *Spirituality*, 99.

*Cloud of Unknowing*⁶⁴ calls the experience of oneness with God, “union”; while Teresa of Avila calls the same experience, the “spiritual marriage”. The names are different; however, the experience is similar.

The Cloud of Unknowing is a book that describes a way of contemplation, which, is a form of prayer. Contemplation leads to an experience, which is called union with God in a communion of love and desire.⁶⁵ This *union* with God is experienced through desire. *The Cloud of Unknowing* also states that the access to heaven is through desire.⁶⁶ This desire is a desire to please God, which is also the love of God in the will.⁶⁷

Here, it can be seen the similarity between the teaching of Teresa of Avila and the “spiritual marriage” with the experience that *the Cloud of Unknowing* calls “union” with God. These experiences are similar, even though the terms used to describe them, are different.

This desire to please God, which is also termed love, is indeed, the very life of the spirit, according to *the Cloud of Unknowing*.⁶⁸ This is to say that the true life is found in a true, passionate desire of the will to live for and to please God in all things. Again, the similarity between the teaching of Teresa of Avila's “spiritual marriage” and the “union” of God as taught by *the Cloud of Unknowing* can be seen.

The Cloud of Unknowing states the will is the spiritual heart.⁶⁹ This is to say that the will is the center of the human being. This desire, which is centered in the will, the

⁶⁴ *The Cloud of Unknowing* was written in the fourteenth century by an unknown monk of the Church. Because the author of *the Cloud of Unknowing* is unknown, when this study refers to the teaching of *the Cloud of Unknowing*, instead of the author's name being stated, this study will state, *the Cloud of Unknowing* states.

⁶⁵ Anonymous, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, 59.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 113.

spiritual heart, is of extreme importance to the experience of union with God. The reason for this is because the true ardent and passionate desire is the person him or herself. The *Cloud of Unknowing* says it in this manner: It is not what you are, nor what you have been, that God sees with His all-merciful eyes, but what you desire to be.⁷⁰

The meaning of this is that the will's desire, the will's passionate, ardent desire, its foundational desire, is what the person is. If a person, on the foundational, primal level of their being, that is of their spiritual heart, the will, desires something, this something is, according to the *Cloud of Unknowing*, their God. In knowing what one's foundational desire is, which reflects what the person's God is, also reflects and reveals what the person him or herself truly is. The desire of a person who is united to God through a communion of love and desire is the result of the work of God in the heart.⁷¹

When the desire of a person is foundational and is passionate for God, this desire reveals that the heart, i.e. the will, is pure.⁷² A pure will, which is the spiritual heart of the person, is seen in a foundational, passionate desire to please God in all things. This teaching does not mean that the will will not be influenced by other factors. What is being said is that the will, the spiritual heart of the person, is pure when its foundational, passionate desire is to please God in Christ in all things. The will is influenced by other factors. These other factors are “outside” of the will itself. As to the will, it is pure, when it desires nothing but God.

The desire of the person united to God leads the person to a restless state. This is

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 110. Here again, can be seen the similarity between the teaching of *The Cloud of Unknowing* and Teresa of Avila in her teaching on the “Spiritual Marriage”. This teaching can also be seen to be similar to the Protestant teaching on salvation by grace and not by works. The similarity with John Wesley’s teaching on perfection is also evident.

⁷² Anonymous, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, 110.

so because the soul that is truly seeking God will never rest contentedly with anything less than God.⁷³ When a person has experienced God, then that person will never be contented with anything other than God. The book, *The Cloud of Unknowing* describes a form of prayer, called contemplation. Contemplation aids people in their journey to experience God in the fullest that is possible in this life. The experience that *the Cloud of Unknowing* is describing is the experience of being bound to God through love and desire. During the time of contemplation, the mind is centered solely on its desire for God, to the exclusion of all else. During the time of contemplation, there will be times when unwanted thoughts will enter the mind. *The Cloud of Unknowing* writes that these unwanted thoughts are not sin, but the consequences of original sin that the soul is burdened with.⁷⁴

Here it can be seen that *the Cloud of Unknowing* is not teaching a state of sinless perfection. Whether one agrees with the teaching of *the Cloud of Unknowing* that “unwanted thoughts entering the mind during contemplation are the consequence of original sin” or whether this point is disagreed with, the point to be made here is that *the Cloud of Unknowing*, while teaching a form of perfection, that is the union of the soul with God through desire and the will; *the Cloud of Unknowing* is also teaching that the soul is affected by factors “outside” of the will, these factors the *Cloud of Unknowing* calls the consequences of original sin.

The Cloud of Unknowing goes on to say that the soul, united to God, is forgiven and cleansed; it is still burdened with the consequences of original sin. This means that although the heart, which is the will, is “pure;” the soul still finds itself in a struggle

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

against the consequences of original sin. *The Cloud of Unknowing* also states that it is impossible to avoid all faults and failings in this life.⁷⁵ Here again it is seen that *the Cloud of Unknowing* is not teaching an experience of sinless perfection. *The Cloud of Unknowing* is teaching that the will can be pure, while at the same time, the soul (or person) is buffeted by temptations, struggles and failings.

The work of prayer (contemplation) leads a person to a clearer realization and understanding of self. *The Cloud of Unknowing* claims that the nearer a person comes to the truth, which is Jesus Christ, the more sensitive the soul is to error.⁷⁶ This error that the person comes to understand more and more, the closer the soul comes to God, is primarily the error, the sinfulness, the failings of its own self.⁷⁷

The teaching is that, in growing closer to God, which is seen in the use of the word “humble,”⁷⁸ for only a person who is close to God is truly humble, the closer a person is to God, the more a person will see their own failings, which are the result of original sin. There are two types of sins being taught here. The first is willful sin, which the soul, united to God, does not normally commit. The other type of sin can be called unintentional sin, which is the consequence of original sin that is the brokenness of the human condition due to the Fall in the Garden of Eden. The human soul, even the soul united to God through a communion of love and desire is effected and troubled by

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁷⁷ “A man is humble when he stands in the truth with a knowledge and appreciation for himself as he really is. And actually, anyone who saw and experienced himself as he really and truly is would have no difficulty being humble, for two things would become very clear to him. In the first place, he would see clearly the degradation, misery and weakness of the human condition resulting from original sin. From these effects of original sin man will never be entirely free in this life, no matter how holy he becomes. In the second place, he would recognize the transcendent goodness of God as he is in himself and his overflowing, superabundant love for man” (*The Cloud of Unknowing*, 65).

⁷⁸ See the previous footnote for the definition of “humble” and its context.

unintentional sin; the sins which are the result of original sin, the brokenness of the human being due to the Fall in the Garden of Eden. Here it can be seen that the *Cloud of Unknowing* is teaching that the will, the spiritual heart, can be pure, while the human still struggles with temptations, failings and sins.

The Cloud of Unknowing defines perfection as a good will.⁷⁹ By this it can be seen that perfection, according to *the Cloud of Unknowing*, is volitional, that is rooted in the will. If the will is pure, if the intention is pure, then there is perfection. Perfection can and does exist, surrounded by struggles, failings, temptations and a realistic view of oneself, that is as a degraded human being, due to original sin. By this understanding, it can be seen that *perfection*, according to *the Cloud of Unknowing*, is not absolute perfection that is sinless perfection. Here, again, can be seen the similarity of *the Cloud of Unknowing*, with Teresa of Avila and with John Wesley's doctrine of *perfection*.

The will is pure, that is perfect, however, there are other faculties of the human being that are not perfect. *The Cloud of Unknowing* asserts that the soul united to God in a communion of love and desire is perfect. However, according to the teaching of *the Cloud of Unknowing*, that soul, that is the one united to God in a communion of love and desire, is still burdened with liabilities on account of original sin.⁸⁰

The Cloud of Unknowing has a view of creation that says that the faculties of the human race were all ordered before sin entered the world. However, after the Fall in the Garden of Eden, all of the human being was distorted and broken. This, in a simplistic way, means that the human faculties work, but not the way they were created by God to work.

⁷⁹ Anonymous, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, 111.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 134.

The primary work of God, according to *the Cloud of Unknowing*, in this world, is to restore the will to its original purity. In the next life, which is in heaven, God will transform all of the rest of the faculties. However, in this world, God is primarily transforming the will of the believer to its original purity. This is not to say that in this primary work of God; God is not doing a work in the other faculties as well. God is indeed working in the other faculties of the human being in this life. Because the human being is a complex, yet, inter-related being, that is to say, that the human being cannot divide itself into different, unrelated sections; when one aspect of the human being is restored and transformed by God, this affects the total person.

The fact that all of the faculties of the person, in this life, are not purified completely means that the believer may misunderstand something and act from that misunderstanding. This acting from misunderstanding may lead to problems and the hurting of self or others. However, according to the teaching of *the Cloud of Unknowing*, if the will is pure, that is, if the spiritual heart of the person is set on loving and desiring God, then the person can be called perfect.

Perfection in this life, according to *the Cloud of Unknowing*, is not sinless or pain free. There is a sorrow that accompanies perfection. In the experience of the uniting of the will with God in a communion of love and desire, a union that goes beyond what one has done, there is a sorrow for one's sins. This sorrow is the sorrow that a believer, one united to God in a communion of love and desire, which is a perfect believer, has.⁸¹

⁸¹ *The Cloud of Unknowing* states: "The sorrow I speak of is genuine and perfect; and blessed is the man who experiences it. Every man has plenty of cause for sorrow, but he alone understands the deep universal reason for sorrow who experiences that he is. Every other motive pales beside this one. He alone feels authentic sorrow who realizes not only what he is, but that he is" (*The Cloud of Unknowing*, 103).

The sorrow that *the Cloud of Unknowing* is speaking about is the sorrow that goes beyond the sorrow for one's actions, but is the sorrow that one - united to God in a communion of love and desire - feels for oneself. This is to say that there is a sorrow that believers feel for their actions, their sins and failings. However, according to *the Cloud of Unknowing*, there is a deeper sorrow that only the spiritually mature experience. This sorrow is a sorrow that the spiritually mature believer experiences when they come to terms with the fact that not only are their actions sinful, but, in the very essence of who they are, they too are sinful.

This sorrow is not just a sorrow for one's actions, words, non-actions and lack of words. This sorrow is a sorrow that one is, that is, that one exists. The reason for this sorrow is the deep pain over one's sinful being and not just over one's sinful actions. The pain the spiritually mature believer feels over one's "being" is a far deeper and greater pain than the pain over one's sinful actions.

The Cloud of Unknowing teaches that the spiritually mature experiences sorrow⁸² because the spiritually mature Christian believer has come to the point where he/she sees him/herself as a wretched lump called sin.⁸³ This wretched lump of sin is "part and parcel of the person's very being."⁸⁴

The spiritually mature believer experiences a sorrow that is extremely deep and painful. At this, the believer is led to despair over their sinful condition.⁸⁵ Here it can be

⁸² See previous paragraph for the understanding of the sorrow which is being referred to.

⁸³ Anonymous, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, 102.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *The Cloud of Unknowing* writes: "For as often as he would have a true knowing and feeling of God in purity of spirit (insofar as that is possible in this life), and then feels that he cannot for he constantly finds his knowing and feeling as it were occupied and filled with a foul, stinking lump of himself, which must always be hated and despised and forsaken, if he shall be God's perfect disciple, taught by Him

plainly seen that the spiritually mature believer, God's perfect disciple, taught on the mounts of perfection, is also the same person who despairs over the fact that, he or she is a sinful creature. This despair comes out of the knowledge that one is a sinner, far from God's perfection, yet, united to God in a communion of love and desire. Here, we see *the Cloud of Unknowing's* teaching that when a believer is united to God in a communion of love and desire, that is perfection, according to *the Cloud of Unknowing's* own definition, yet, this very same “perfect believer” is at the same time, at times driven to deep despair over the fact that he/she has committed and are committing sinful deeds and words, and more importantly, is experiencing a sorrow that he/she is a sinful creature.

The desire to be holy and perfect, while surrounded by brokenness, that is, by a self that is far from perfect and at times almost swallowed up by despair over one's being, one's sinful creaturely being, is called by *the Cloud of Unknowing*, “self knowledge”. In self-knowledge the person sees him or herself, as he or she truly is, “a miserable and defiled creature less than nothing without God.”⁸⁶ Here again is seen the teaching that the spiritually mature person has a passionate desire to please God, yet at the same time can be said to despise oneself because of their sinfulness and the remaining imperfections.

3.1 Comparison of the Cloud of Unknowing and the Empathic “I” of Rom 7

The author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* describes perfection as a “good will”.⁸⁷ A good will is a will that desires to please God in all things. However, the Christian with a

alone on the mounts of perfection—he almost despairs for the sorrow that he feels, weeping, lamenting, writhing, cursing and blaming himself’ (*The Cloud of Unknowing*, 104).

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 111.

“good” will is not a Christian who has reached sinless perfection in this life.⁸⁸

Even the holiest person, in this life, is not free from the effects of sin. This means that the holiest person will still struggle and at times fail to accomplish what it desires, and this is to please God in all things. This failure to accomplish its own desire of pleasing God causes the holiest of souls a deep sorrow. However, the deepest sorrow of a person who has arrived at the “spiritual marriage” is the sorrow that they are. This sorrow is an existential sorrow that comes from the understanding that one falls so far short of God’s glory. It is this sorrow that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 experiences when he/she cries out “O Wretched Person.”

The soul which realizes that it not only commits acts of sin, but that, in the very core of its being, it is sinful, is the soul which experiences deep authentic sorrow. The soul which is simply repentant for what it does has not yet experienced the union of God that the *Cloud of Unknowing* is attempting to describe. The soul that is simply repentant for what it does has not experienced this deep sorrow. This sorrow, which the *Cloud of Unknowing* is attempting to describe, is of a kind that causes the soul to moan and cry out in anguish over its own existence. When a soul has experienced the union of God, according to the *Cloud of Unknowing*, this soul will repent over its very existence and being. Wherever this soul goes, it is still near the “pit” of its own being. This soul can run as far and as fast and as long as it is possible to run, yet, when it stops it will realize that it

⁸⁸ Here the words are appropriate: “A man is humble when he stands in the truth with a knowledge and appreciation for himself as he really is. And actually, anyone who saw and experienced himself as he really and truly is would have no difficulty being humble, for two things would become very clear to him. In the first place, he would see the degradation, misery and weakness of the human condition resulting from original sin. From these effects of original sin man will never be entirely free in this life, no matter how holy he becomes. In the second place, he would recognize the transcendent goodness of God as He is in Himself.” (*Ibid*, 65).

can not run away from itself.⁸⁹ This realization, that the soul is sinful in its very core, causes the soul, which has experienced union with God, deep sorrow. According to the *Cloud of Unknowing*, when the soul sees its true condition, it will have seen itself “as it really is a miserable and defiled creature less than nothing without God.”⁹⁰ This is what causes the soul to sorrow not only over what it does, but that it is.

The *Cloud of Unknowing* also teaches that the soul, which has experienced union with God, will, as long as it is in this life, struggle with temptation. The *Cloud of Unknowing* states that, “the remnants of original sin will plague you to the grave despite all your efforts.”⁹¹ Here, it can be seen that the *Cloud of Unknowing* is not teaching sinless perfection, when it describes “union” with God. The soul, which has experienced union with God still struggles and is plagued by temptations. The teaching of the *Cloud of Unknowing* concerning union with God also states that the closer a “man comes to the truth the more sensitive he must become to error.”⁹² This means that the closer a person comes to God; the clearer the person will see itself. When a soul is growing closer to God, this soul will also become more and more aware of the areas in its own life that are far from God. The error that the *Cloud of Unknowing* refers to is not only the error “in” the world, but more importantly the error that is in the person, which is growing closer, and closer to God. As Teresa called herself a “worm”, The *Cloud of Unknowing* also shares the same view of self. It is to be remembered that this view comes from one who

⁸⁹ See Chapter 2 where the “broken-ness” of the human being as a result of sin (Rom 5) is discussed and Chapter 4 where a wider look at the Pauline Corpus was done regarding Paul’s position that the mature, Christian believer, in this life, is righteous but in experience must become what they are in Christ, i.e. righteous.

⁹⁰ Anonymous, *Cloud of Unknowing*, 89.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 91.

has experienced union with God. The *Cloud of Unknowing* says this about the self: “This foul, wretched lump called sin is none other than yourself.”⁹³ By this quote, it can be seen that The *Cloud of Unknowing* and Teresa of Avila, both mystics, share the same view of themselves. This view is that they are a “worm” and “foul.” Again, it is to be stated that this view is of a mature Christian, one who has experienced union with God and in Teresa's terms, the “spiritual marriage”.

The *Cloud of Unknowing* describes perfection as a “good will”.⁹⁴ By a good will, the *Cloud of Unknowing* means “a will that is harmoniously attuned to God's will in an abiding contentedness and enthusiasm for all He does.”⁹⁵ The *Cloud of Unknowing* describes desire as “the access to heaven.”⁹⁶ Desire, is also, according to The *Cloud of Unknowing*, “what God sees with His all merciful eyes. It is not what you are nor what you have been that God sees with His all merciful eyes, but what you desire to be.”⁹⁷

The emphatic “I” of Rom 7 desires to please God, yet at times fails to accomplish its own desire of pleasing God (Rom 7:15-20). This failure to please God causes the emphatic “I” sorrow and pain (Rom 7:24). However, it must be said, that the sorrow and pain that the emphatic “I” experiences is not only for what it does, that is, for its failure to please God (Rom 7:15); the sorrow and pain of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is also because of what it is. Rom 7:24 states that the emphatic “I” not only is in pain for what it does (Rom 7:15-19), but also for the fact of its own existence and condition. The cry of “Wretched Man” is not simply a cry of pain and anguish over one's acts, deeds, misdeeds,

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 146.

and failures. The cry of “Wretched Man” is also a cry over one's true and sinful condition. For a person to cry out that it is “wretched” means that the person has seen itself in the light of God's holiness and greatness. The reason for this is: the only place a soul will see its own wretchedness is in the light of God's holiness and greatness. Thus, when the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 cries out that it is “wretched”, this means that the emphatic “I” has seen itself in the light of God's holiness and greatness. The cry of the emphatic “I” can be seen as the cry over its own “wretched” condition.

The experience described by the *Cloud of Unknowing* and the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 over their sinful condition are similar experiences. Both the *Cloud of Unknowing* and the emphatic “I”, not only are in sorrow over their failure to please God, but are also in deep agony over the fact that they are truly wretched sinners and not just people who commit acts of sin. The agony over one's being, or condition, is a deep agony of the soul. By this is meant that the pain, or agony, of the soul is of such a nature that the soul, at times is in deep despair.⁹⁸

The Christian who has experienced union with God will see him or herself as a “foul, stinky lump,” which must be hated, despised and forsaken. This is a similar experience by Paul in the cry of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7, when the emphatic “I” cries out, “O wretched man”. Both cries are cries of despair over self. Both cries are cries of a spiritually mature Christian who is growing closer and closer to God and at the same time sees themselves as sinners, wretched and to be despised.

⁹⁸ “For as often as he would have a true knowing and feeling of God in purity of Spirit (insofar as that is possible in this life); and then feels that he cannot for he constantly finds his knowing and feeling as it were occupied and filled with a foul, stinky lump of himself, which must always be hated and despised and forsaken, if he shall be God's perfect disciple, taught by Him alone on the mounts of perfection—he almost despairs for the sorrow that he feels, weeping, lamenting, writhing, cursing and blaming himself,” *Ibid.*, 104.

4. Julian of Norwich

Another Mystic who writes about union with God is Julian of Norwich who writes and claims that visions and other mystical experiences are no guarantee of greater spirituality. What is important, according to Julian, is a life lived in union with God. This life is a life of love, which is demonstrated by obedience.⁹⁹ What is important to note is that Julian writes this, after having, what she calls “*revelations that come from God*”. This means that although she had experienced revelations¹⁰⁰ she writes to others and teaches that these revelations are not the most important aspect of the spiritual life.

The most fundamental and important aspect of the spiritual life is the desire for God. The soul longs for God. According to Julian, nothing less than God Himself can satisfy us.¹⁰¹ The soul, which has been touched by the Holy Spirit, longs for the fullness that can only come from union with God Himself. It is for this reason that visions and other mystical experiences are not fundamental to the spiritual life. Julian, along with the majority of mystics, says that a person may experience visions and other mystical experiences without experiencing the fullness that comes from union with God. Mystical experiences, in and of them are no guarantee that the one who has experienced these mystical experiences is more spiritual or even good. Julian writes and claims that, “the revelation itself does not make me good.”¹⁰²

Julian of Norwich believes and writes that the “human being will not seek or respond to God, unless God first reaches out and reveals Himself to the human being.”¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, xx.

¹⁰⁰ There is no attempt to credit or discredit Julian's claims.

¹⁰¹ Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, 11.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 21.

In this statement can be seen the teaching that we love God, because He first loved us. In Julian's teaching can be seen the priority of God's grace and the response of the human being. God first reaches out in grace to the human being. The response of the human being is based on God first reaching out to the human being in grace. When God does reach out to a human being in grace, grace then urges that human being to respond to God by seeking God with a fervent longing.¹⁰⁴

It can be understood from the above that the response of the human being to the grace of God as defined by Julian, is a fervent longing for God. Whereas other commentators would write and define the human response as faith, Julian is of the opinion the human response to God's grace is a fervent longing and seeking for God Himself. There is no intention to state that Julian of Norwich did not believe that the human response to God's grace is faith. The intention here is to state that a fervent longing for and seeking for God Himself characterize the faith of the human being, who has been touched by the grace of God, according to Julian. In other words, for Julian, faith is experienced and expressed in a fervent longing for God. Julian did believe that the person must believe the truth of the Gospel. She writes that the beginning of the spiritual life is when a person starts to "hate sin and to amend their ways, according to the laws of Holy Church."¹⁰⁵ Here can be seen, that Julian of Norwich believed that faith was the revelation given by God to the human race through the Church. Faith, however, was expressed and experienced in the human soul as a fervent longing for God and a desire to obey God. Faith was not, for Julian, only or even primarily an adherence to the correct dogma. Faith was, indeed, holding to the correct doctrine. However, faith was also an

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 150.

experienced event, a living relationship of desire for God.

For Julian of Norwich, the seeking for God, in this life was the highest experience that a person can have. She puts forth the proposition that, “As long as God allows us to struggle on this earth, seeking God is as good as seeing.”¹⁰⁶ The seeking for God, according to Julian, is the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul of the believer.¹⁰⁷ The Holy Spirit works in the soul of the believer to cause that believer to desire God. The desire for God is the work of the Holy Spirit. It can be drawn out from these statements, that to desire God is to have God. In other words, the desire for God, being the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul, is also the proof or evidence that the seeking believer has God living in their soul that is to have God in their life. It can be further stated that only the one who truly is seeking for and longs for God, is a true believer.

Julian's anthropology begins with the fact that all human beings are sinful.¹⁰⁸ She writes and states that, “we must see clearly that in ourselves we are entirely sinful and wretched.”¹⁰⁹ She claims further that, “every man is sinful and will always be to the end of his days.”¹¹⁰ Her view of the sinfulness of the human being does not undergo a radical change, even for the believer who has experienced union with God. She writes that the closer a believer comes to God, that person must and will continue to see themselves as sinful.¹¹¹ By this is meant that Julian of Norwich is not teaching an experience of sinless perfection. The closer a believer comes to God that is the more spiritually mature a

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Some hold the opinion that Julian “departed from traditional Augustinian understandings of sin,” J. Wiseman, review of D. Nowakowski Baker, *Julian of Norwich: Showings From Vision to Book*, CHR 3 (1995): 439.

¹⁰⁹ Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, 159.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 159.

person is, the clearer that person's understanding of their own sinfulness will be. According to Julian, even the spiritually mature commit sin unintentionally.¹¹²

Julian of Norwich states that there are two basic categories of sin¹¹³. These categories of sin are: intentional sin and unintentional sin. She writes: “Do not be too upset with the sin you commit without meaning to.” This must mean that, according to Julian, the believer will face struggles with sin all their time in this world. It also means that the believer will sin, although not intending to sin. The believer, even the spiritually mature believer, will sin “against one’s own will,” that is “without meaning to.”

Julian also states that the believer will sin “habitually”. This does not mean that the believer will live a wanton life of sin or will live in habitual sin. She states that the spiritual life begins when a person has begun to “amend their ways according to the Holy Law of the Church.”¹¹⁴ The Holy Law of the Church certainly states and maintains that a person who lives a wanton life of sin will not be tolerated or allowed within the Church. When a person has begun to amend their ways according to the Holy Law of the Church, this means that the person has accepted the Church's view of sin while at the same time this person desire to live apart from sin. This being said, when Julian writes that the believer will sin “habitually” she must mean that the believer will never, in this life, arrive at an experience of sinless perfection. Julian holds this position for the beginner in

¹¹² Julian of Norwich writes concerning sin which is committed unintentionally. This idea is very similar to Wesley’s idea of sin as a willful transgression. Julian’s words are: “Do not be too upset by the sin you commit without meaning to, and here I understand why the Lord looked at the servant with pity instead of blame. In this fleeting life we are not expected to live entirely without blame and sin. He loves us eternally though we sin habitually, and very gently he reveals himself to us. Then we quietly sorrow and grieve, turning to gaze at this mercy, accepting that we do nothing but sin. When we fall and when we rise again, we are very precious to him and are protected by the same love. In God's view we do not fall, and in our view we do not stand” (*Ibid.*, 164).

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 150.

the spiritual life and for the mature believer. This is seen in the above quote where Julian writes “in this fleeting life we are not expected to live entirely without blame and sin” and “accepting that we do nothing but sin.”¹¹⁵

The closer a believer comes to God, the more mature a believer is, will be seen in their view of themselves. Julian writes: When our blindness or weakness makes us fall, then our kind Lord gently touches us and calls us. He wants us to look how wretched we are and humbly face up to it.¹¹⁶

The continuing realization that one is a sinner, wretched before God, is the teaching of Julian. This does not mean that she was a defeated Christian. She writes that God does not want the believer to be “preoccupied with self-accusations and wallowing in self-pity”¹¹⁷ but wants the believer to turn to Him and draw ever closer to Him. There is a difference between wallowing in self-pity because of one's sin and in having a realistic view of who one is, that is, before God, a wretched sinner. It must not be thought that Julian was teaching morbid self-reflection. Julian was teaching that mature believers will have a true and realistic view of themselves. This true, realistic view will be that the believer, no matter how mature, is still a sinner. In today's terminology, Julian teaches that a mature believer will have a “positive self-image.” This is certainly not saying that Julian teaches that everyone is “okay”. What is to be understood from the teaching of Julian of Norwich is that a positive self-image is a true image of oneself. This must mean a view that one is indeed, before God, a sinner.

According to Julian of Norwich, union with God is experienced in the will. She

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 161.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

writes: “What is important is this holy act of saying ‘yes’--this inner decision that we are for Him, in heart and soul and with all our strength.”¹¹⁸ Here it can be seen that the “decision” to live for God, is both a holy act and an act which is fundamental. The decision to live for God is made and maintained in the will of the human being. Thus, union with God is experienced in the will.¹¹⁹ The will is set on God, on living for God, on following the footsteps of Jesus, this is union, and this is perfection, according to Julian. Although the will is set on following Christ, the believer will still struggle with temptations, failings and sin. This is another way of stating that Julian held to two fundamental categories of sin; intentional and unintentional.

The believer who experiences union with God, experiences the highest blessing that God gives in this life. Union with God is seen in the will of the human being united with God's will and is seen in the believer's fervent desire to be closer and closer to God. This fervent desire to be closer and closer to God, which is the experience of the mature believer, is accompanied by a “hate and a despising of the sin which remains in the life of the believer.”¹²⁰

It can be seen that Julian teaches that mature believers, at times hates and despises themselves. They hate the remaining sin in their lives. They hate the fact that they are more than ones who “commit” sin, but that they are sinners. This realization that one is a sinner in the most essential part of their being, Julian calls “darkness”. It is a “darkness”

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹¹⁹ See the discussion above concerning union of the human will with the will of God.

¹²⁰ Julian of Norwich states this concerning the ongoing struggle of the spiritually mature. She writes: “At times we hate and despise our evil inclinations and everything that could make us sin, physically and spiritually. Christ is our protector and we shall never just submit to the darkness, but anguish under it and hang on, in pain and sorrow, praying through to the time when God again reveals Himself to us. We stand in this tangle all the days of our life” (*Ibid.*, 107).

under which the mature believer will “anguish in pain and in sorrow.” This “darkness” is a pain greater than hell itself.¹²¹

This pain, which is greater than the pains of hell itself, is because of the remaining sin in the life of the believer. The believer desires to be pleasing to God in all things, yet sees that there are areas in its own life which are far from being what the believer desires to be. The not being what one desires to be is a great sadness and pain, to the mature believer.

The anguish that Julian is writing about is the anguish of a mature believer. The beginner in the spiritual life, the immature believer, knows that he/she commits sin, yet has not arrived at the point where he/she despise him/herself because he/she is a sinner.¹²²

The soul that is living in harmony with nature and grace can only be a mature believer. Immature believer's lives are not lived in harmony with either nature or grace. To the mature believer, sin is “incomparably vile and painful than hell itself.” This is to say that the mature believer would rather, if given a choice, “go to hell” than displease their Lord. Even the mere thought of displeasing the Lord is painful to the mature believer. The mature believer, in this life “never ceases from moaning, crying and longing till the face of the Lord is clearly seen.”¹²³

4.1 Comparison of Julian of Norwich and the Emphatic “I” of Rom 7

Julian of Norwich writes that those who experience union with God also see that sin is vile and horrible. She also says that the closer a Christian comes to God; the more he/she

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 154.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 130.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 147.

will see him/herself as wretched.¹²⁴

Julian writes that to the believer who has experienced the “spiritual marriage”, sin is more painful than hell itself. The mystics taught that the closer one came to God, the clearer they saw their own sinfulness. A believer who was growing closer to God, saw themselves not only as a sinner in the sense of one who commits acts of sin, but also in the light and truth that they are “a lump of sin.” This revelation was a painful experience for the believer. The believer who had experienced the “spiritual marriage” desired to be pleasing to God in all things. This desire, that is to be pleasing to God in all things, was the fundamental desire of the believer who had experienced the “spiritual marriage”. When a Christian believer, who desires to be pleasing to God in all things, sees him/her self as a “lump of sin”, this revelation is extremely painful.

Julian of Norwich expresses the same view of a Christian who has experienced union with God as does Teresa of Avila and as does the *Cloud of Unknowing*. These three mystics state that the closer a person comes to God, the clearer that person sees him or herself. The self-perception of a person who has experienced union with God or the “spiritual marriage” is one where the person sees themselves as “wretched,” “a lump of sin” and “a worm.”

The experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 when compared with the mystical experience called the “spiritual marriage” leads to the conclusion that the emphatic “I” is

¹²⁴ Her words are: “When we by God's grace and with His help, live in harmony with nature and grace, we shall see the truth that sin is incomparably more vile and painful than hell itself. It is a horrible sight for the soul who wishes to be lovely and shining.” *Ibid.*, 130. Also F. Huntley has written: “Not that we require an absolute perfection (which, as it is incident to none, so if it were would exclude all need and use of meditation), but rather an honest sincerity of the heart, not willingly sinning, willingly repenting when we have sinned,” *Bishop Joseph Hall and Protestant Meditation in Seventeenth-Century England* (F. Huntley; Binghamton: Center for Medieval & Early Renaissance Studies, 1981), 76.

a mature Christian. The reason for stating this is that the believer, who has experienced the “spiritual marriage”, is painfully aware of their own broken-ness and sin.¹²⁵

5. Concluding Statement

The experience described by Julian of Norwich, Teresa of Avila and the *Cloud of Unknowing*, called in various places the “spiritual marriage” and *Union with God*, is the highest experience, according to the Mystics, that a human believer can have in this life. When this experience is compared with Wesley’s doctrine of *perfection*, it is seen to be a similar experience. When Wesley’s doctrine of *perfection* and the Mystical experience called the “spiritual marriage” are compared with the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7, it is seen that the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is also a similar experience that is called the “spiritual marriage” and Wesley’s doctrine of *perfection*. Because these experiences are similar, then the identity of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is to be known and his/her spiritual portrait “painted”. The conclusion to be drawn is that the emphatic “I” is regenerate.

¹²⁵ See above, in this chapter for a fuller explanation.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The identity of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 and his/her spiritual portrait is an important element in the sanctification of the Christian Church.¹ To discover the identity of the emphatic “I,” Rom 1-8 has been researched with a focusing on Rom 7.² During the study of Rom 7, the predominate verb tenses used in Rom 7 have been examined. The purpose of this has been to try and discover if Paul, by using the aorist in Rom 7:7-13 and the present tense in Rom 7:14-25, was trying to make a statement about a major change which occurred in his own life.³ The context and statements of the emphatic “I” in Rom 7 have also been examined. In addition, Rom 7, within its context of Rom 5-8 has been looked at. The next stage in the discovery of the identity of the emphatic “I” has been to look at Paul’s statements elsewhere in the Pauline Corpus.⁴ The reason for this is to compare Paul’s statements in Rom, especially Rom 7 with what he has written elsewhere. The underlying purpose has been to try and discover a Pauline “thought” running through his writings. If what Paul wrote in Rom 7 concerning the emphatic “I” is consistent with what he wrote elsewhere concerning Christian believers, then, it is to be concluded that Paul, in Rom 7 was writing about a Christian believer.

After examining Rom 1-8, the experience of the emphatic “I” was also looked at. This was done primarily through the studying of the “statements” of the emphatic “I” as found in Rom 7. This was done to try and discover the “experience” of the emphatic “I.” This experience was then compared with the experience which John Wesley called

¹ See Chapter 1 of this study for the reasons and support of this statement.

² See Chapter 2 and 3 of this study.

³ Again see Chapter 3 of this study for the detailed discussion of the verb tenses used in Rom 7.

⁴ See Chapter 4 of this study.

“perfection” and the experience the Mystics called the “spiritual marriage” or union with God. The purpose of comparing the experience of the emphatic “I” with Wesley’s “perfection” and the Mystics’ “spiritual marriage” was to discern whether these experiences are similar.⁵ The reason for this was: Wesley’s “perfection” and the Mystics’ “spiritual marriage” are considered to be the highest experiences a Christian believer can experience in this life.⁶ The comparing of the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 was then done with the experience of “perfection” and the Mystical experience called *the* “spiritual marriage”. The purpose of this comparison was to see if there were similarities between the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 and Wesley’s “perfection” and the “spiritual marriage” of the Mystics. If there were similarities found between these experiences, this would also lead to the conclusion that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 was a mature, Christian believer.

The following is a summation of the characteristics of the emphatic “I,” followed by a summation of Wesley’s “perfection” compared with the emphatic “I,” which is then followed by summations of the three Mystical writers: Julian of Norwich, Teresa of Avila and the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, which is then compared to the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7. Lastly, there is a concluding statement where the various strands of this study are brought together.

⁵ The dependence of J. Wesley and the Mystics on Paul, for this study, was limited to the comparison of the *experiences* of Wesley, the Mystics and Paul. It was discovered that J. Wesley and the Mystics did write on a common experience with Paul, thus, demonstrating Wesley’s and the Mystics’ dependence upon Paul.

⁶ For the explanation of this statement, see Chapter 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 of this study.

1. Characteristics of the Emphatic “I”

The emphatic “I” does not desire to sin, as can be seen from Rom 7:15 where it states “what I am doing, I do not desire to do.” This leads to the statement that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is in agreement with the law of God (Rom 7:16). The reason for this statement is that the emphatic “I” states that s/he⁷ is doing what s/he hates (Rom 7:15). The emphatic “I” also states that s/he is in agreement with the Law, that is, that s/he desires to obey it (Rom 7:16, 22). The emphatic “I” says that it desires to do the good (Rom 7:19). The emphatic “I” also agrees with the law of God. The conclusion based on the statements of the emphatic “I” is that the emphatic “I” desires to obey the law of God.

It can be seen from the above statements, that the “will” of the emphatic “I” is set on obeying the law of God, that is, set on doing the good. The desire of the will of the emphatic “I” is to do the good. This is very important. The word for “desire” is θέλω, which means: “the active resolution, the will urging on to action.”⁸ This means that the “will” of the emphatic “I” is truly set on doing the good. Doing the good is not simply a passing thought to the emphatic “I.” The emphatic “I” has set his will, which also includes his acting in conformity with his will, on doing the good. The emphatic “I” not only 'desires' to do the good, but is also acting and attempting to do the good, which is to obey the law of God.

However, the emphatic “I” fails to completely accomplish what it desires and

⁷ Although the masculine pronoun is used, this does not limit the identity of the emphatic “I” to Paul. This study shows that the emphatic “I” is a mature, spiritual Christian believer. The term is used in this study as an umbrella term to include Paul, J. Wesley, Teresa of Avila, Julian of Norwich, the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* and every other mature, spiritual Christian believer. Of course, this includes men and women. So, when the masculine pronoun is used in Rom 7 in reference to the emphatic “I,” it is to be understood that this has reference to all mature, spiritual Christian believers, regardless of gender.

⁸ G.R. Berry, *A Dictionary of New Testament Greek Synonyms*, 24.

what it has set its will on. Rom 7:20 states that the emphatic “I” does what it does not desire (θέλω) to do. This means that the 'will' of the emphatic “I” is not only set on doing the good, the will of the emphatic “I” is set against sin. The emphatic “I” itself says that it does not desire (θέλω), to do what, at times it does. There is to be seen in this statement that not only does the emphatic “I” not desire to act against the law of God, but the emphatic “I” is also “acting” in conformity with its desires. This means that the emphatic “I” is doing what it can to obey the law of God and to not sin. As it has already been stated, θέλω means more than simply “desire”. It means 'desire' which leads to action. The action that comes out of this “desire,” must be action, that is, in conformity with this “desire”. Thus, it can be seen that θέλω means desire that is accompanied by action which is in agreement with the desire.

The emphatic “I” as a mature believer means that the emphatic “I” cannot be in the flesh. To be in the flesh means to have a mind set on sin. The sinful mind cannot please God, nor is it able to (Rom 8:7). The sinful mind belongs to those who are in the flesh (Rom 8:8). Those who are in the flesh are those who do not have the Spirit of God (Rom 8:9). This means that those who are in the flesh are not Christians. Those who do not have the Spirit of God do not belong to Christ (Rom 8:9). The ones who are in the flesh are not able to please God (Rom 8:8), nor do they desire to please God. The desire to please God is the evidence of God dwelling within (Phlp 2:13). Paul writes in Phlp 2:13 that it is God who works in you to will, desire (θέλω) and to act according to his good purpose.

The Philippians statement is better understood in Rom 8:5: that the ones who do not have the Spirit of God have set their minds, their wills on the things of the flesh (Rom

8:5). The mind, the will set on the things of the flesh means that the mind, the will is not set on the things of God (Rom 8:5). The mind set on the flesh is enmity towards God (Rom 8:6). The mind set on the flesh, also, is not in submission to the law of God, nor is it able (Rom 8:7). Here it can be seen that the mind, the will set on the flesh, cannot agree with the law of God. The reason for this is that the law of God does not belong to the realm of the flesh. A further statement is that the mind set on the flesh and the mind set on the law of God are against each other (Rom 8:5-7). The mind set on the flesh, being against the law of God and being opposite to the law of God, resulting in the mind being at war with the law of God, will not desire to obey the law of God. Thus, when the mind is set on the things of the flesh, the law of God is not an object that the fleshly mind desires. The mind set on the flesh is not set on the things of God (Rom 8:5), the mind set on the flesh, which means those who are in the flesh, are those who do not desire the things of God in order to do them or to obey them (1 Cor 2:14). The conclusion drawn from the discussion concerning the mind and the flesh is that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 must be a Christian, that is one whose mind is set on knowing, obeying, and desiring the things of God as expressed in and through the law of God (Rom 7:15).

The emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is not perfect.⁹ This reality can be seen throughout Rom 7. The emphatic “I” claims: “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do” (Rom 7:15). Two facts are to be noticed from this verse.

⁹ J.W. Shepherd puts forth this understanding regarding Paul and the emphatic “I” who cried out, ‘O wretched man’: “Paul did not exaggerate his own condition or that of anyone who is a Christian, hard pressed in the struggle to overcome the old man and put him off. Paul had to overcome much of the Pharisaical pride and many other frailties in his human nature.” He writes further that “Paul has not yet reached perfection. He is not yet free from imperfection and faults” (*The Life and Letters of St. Paul*, 406). See also O. Chambers *My Utmost For His Highest*, (ed. J. Reimann; Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publications, 1992), September 18 reading, no page given.

The first is that the emphatic “I” does things “unknowingly” or “does not understand what it does.” Here, it must be said that the emphatic “I” is not robotic, that is, the emphatic “I” acts without any knowledge of what it is doing. The word “know” (γινώσκω) can also mean, “understand.”¹⁰ What is to be seen in this is that the emphatic “I” acts without always understanding why it acts in a particular way. There are many “subconscious” reasons why people act in the ways that they do.¹¹ These subconscious reasons include family background. Everyone has learned ways of acting, relating, understanding, speaking, and being by living in a family, the culture in which they live, and sin, both original and personal.¹² These “learned” behaviors are for the most part “subconscious.” That is to say that the person will act in a way that reflects their family background without “knowing” or “understanding” that they are acting “out of the learned behaviors” which are the result of their family background, culture and or sin, both personal and original.

The family background, regional culture in which they live and grow, ethnic grouping, national culture and other factors “form” each and every person. The formation made by the various factors in a person's life, is, as has been said, “subconscious.” This means that the values, ways of thinking and behaving, which are “normative” for that particular region and group become part of the “subconscious” ways of acting of each and every person. In other words, very few, if any, “know” or understand to the full extent why they act and behave. Thus, when the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 states that it does not

¹⁰ W. Arndt & W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, 161.

¹¹ See chapter 2 and 3 of this study for a detailed examination of these unconscious reasons for a person's behavior, which at times, determine their thoughts, actions, and behaviors.

¹² For a further discussion of these factors that form a person, see chapter 2 and 3 of this study and the concluding statement of this chapter of the study.

understand what it is doing, this may be seen as a very insightful statement regarding the complexity of a human being.

Another factor that is to be seen in Rom 7:15 is that the emphatic “I” does what it does not desire (θέλω), to do. This certainly must be understood as the emphatic “I” as acting against its will. This is to say that the emphatic “I” does what it does not “will” to do. The situation where the emphatic “I” is acting against its will is also seen in Rom 7:19. Here it is stated that the emphatic “I” does not do what it desires (θέλω), to do.

The emphatic “I,” at times acts out of the “subconscious” factors that have formed and influenced it and not out of its will. The emphatic “I” cries out that it does what it hates and that this means that the indwelling sin is the one that is performing these hated deeds (Rom 7:15-17). This cry, coupled with the statement that there is in the members of the body a different law which is at war with the mind affirms that within the emphatic “I” there is the mind to do the will of God and there is also within the members of the body the “sub-conscious” factors that have influenced and formed it.

2. Wesley and the Emphatic “I”

John Wesley stated that Christians who are perfected in love¹³ will, at times, act, behave, speak, and think, not out of their “will,” which has been perfected in love, but will act out

¹³ “Perfection” as understood by J. Wesley – and also the Mystics - is perfect love. See also Mother Teresa, *Jesus: the Word to be Spoken* (New York: Walker and Company, 1987), 66, 67.

of their infirmities.¹⁴ By infirmities, Wesley meant those aspects of the human being's life that have been damaged by sin and conditioned by culture and upbringing. Wesley also said: "even those who are perfect in love may still be an occasion of temptation to you, for they are still encompassed with infirmities."¹⁵ Again it is to be stated that Wesley's doctrine of "perfection" did not mean absolute perfection that is the attaining to the standard of God's holiness. In Wesley's doctrine of "perfection", he taught that those who are perfect in love will have struggles with and will act out of their infirmities. Wesley further states that the Christian who is perfect in love is still liable to mistakes.¹⁶

Wesley writes: "Sins of infirmities are involuntary failings as the saying a thing we believe true, though in fact it prove to be false, or the hurting our neighbor without knowing or desiring it."¹⁷ Within this quote by Wesley are several very important words

¹⁴ J. Wesley said it this way: "Christians are not so perfect as to be free either from ignorance or error. We may thirdly add, nor from infirmities. Infirmities are (1). Bodily infirmities (2). all those inward or outward imperfections which are not of a moral nature. Such are weakness or slowness of understanding, dullness or confusedness or apprehension, incoherency of thought" (J. Wesley's Sermon, *Christian Perfection*, Vol. 6, 4). See also A. Edersheim who states that "the sin-offering and the trespass-offering applied only to sins through ignorance in opposition to those done presumptuously (or with a high hand). For the latter the law provided no atonement. By sins through ignorance we are to understand, according to the Rabbis, not only such as were committed strictly through want of knowledge, but also those which had been unintentional or through weakness, or where the offender at the time realized not his guilt," (*The Temple*, 128).

¹⁵ J. Wesley's sermon, *On Temptation*, Vol. 6, 479.

¹⁶ Again J. Wesley's words are appropriate: "While we are in the body we cannot be wholly free from mistakes. Notwithstanding, all our care, we shall still be liable to judge wrong in many instances. And a mistake in judgment will very frequently occasion a mistake in practice, nay a wrong judgment may occasion something in the temper or passions, which is not strictly right. It may occasion fear or ill-grounded hope, unreasonable love or unreasonable aversion. But all this is no way inconsistent with perfection" (J. Wesley's Sermon, *On Perfection*, Vol. 6, 414). See also M. Simons, "Foundation of Christian Doctrine," *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, (ed. J.C. Wenger; trans. L. Verduin; Scottdale, Penn.: Herald Press, 1956), 188. M. Simons wrote: "My good reader, examine the Scriptures correctly and you will find that to the free children of God there is no liberty promised as to the flesh here on earth." It is to be admitted that M. Simons would not be included in the category of "holiness writers." However, he is saying the same thing as J. Wesley. Both are saying that the Christian believer is not free from the flesh in this life. Simons admitted his own failings as a Christian believer, ("Why I do Not Cease Teaching and Writing," *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, 310). He does however reject perfectionism. Simons called perfectionism, "sham holiness" (*The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, 311). J. Wesley would also reject perfectionism.

¹⁷ J. Wesley's sermon, *The First Fruits of the Spirit*, Vol. 5, 92.

and phrases that need to be noticed and examined. The first is Wesley's word "involuntary." He writes that "sins" of infirmities are "involuntary" failings. By involuntary, he means that the failings are not voluntary, that is that the person who acts does not act voluntarily or willfully.¹⁸ In other words, the Christian who is perfected in love, at times will do, fail to act, think, speak, and behave the way that both they and God want. In these times of "involuntary" failings, the Christian who is perfected in love will act in ways that they do not desire to. It must be understood that when a Christian who is perfected in love fails but not voluntarily, the will of the Christian who is perfected in love, will not be in agreement with the "involuntary" failings. In other words, the times when the Christian who is perfected in love fails, "involuntarily," at these times, the will of the Christian is not in agreement with what the Christian is doing.

The second word or phrase to be noticed is: "without knowing or desiring it." Wesley made this comment after stating that Christians who are perfected in love will "involuntarily" fail. Christians who are perfected in love will at times "involuntarily" fail "without knowing or desiring it." These words and phrases from Wesley himself state that the Christian who is perfect in love, may and will do things that they do not want to do. These unwanted, yet accomplished acts result in wrong judgments, wrong behaviors and even hurting of one's neighbor.¹⁹ These unwanted acts are the result, not of a willful choice of the person, but are the result of the person's cultural and family upbringing and original sin and come out of the damage that sin has done in that person's life.

The experience that Wesley describes for the Christian who is perfect in love is

¹⁸ For a fuller discussion of Wesley's use of the term "involuntary" see chapter 5 of this study.

¹⁹ J. Wesley shows us that he made a distinction between acts that are willful and acts that come out of a person's character which has been formed by sin, culture and upbringing (J. Wesley's sermon, *On Temptation*, Vol. 6, 479).

similar to the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7.²⁰ Both, the emphatic “I” and the Christian who is perfect in love both desire to do what is right and holy in the sight of God. The emphatic “I” desires to do the “good” (Rom 7:16, 19). The Christian who is perfect in love has a pure intention to love God and one's neighbor. Here it can be seen that the Christian who is perfect in love and the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 both desire to do what is holy and well pleasing in the sight of God.

The Christian who is perfect in love and the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 not only have the common experience of desiring to do what is holy and well-pleasing in the sight of God, which results in pleasing God in all things, but they also share another common experience. This second shared experience is the occasional failing to do what is good and loving. When they fail to do what is good, loving, and well pleasing in the sight of God, they do what fails to meet God's standard.

The emphatic “I” of Rom 7 and the Christian who is perfect in love fail, at times to do what is holy and well pleasing in the sight of God. Wesley's position is that the Christian who is perfect in love will fail “involuntarily.” What Wesley means is that the “will” of the Christian who is perfect in love will be set on doing what is holy and well-pleasing in the sight of God, but at times, the Christian will act out of something other than their “will.” Wesley claims that at these times, the Christian who is perfect in love acts out of their infirmities. Wesley claims that there are two “sources” within the Christian who is perfect in love, out of which they will act, speak, and behave. The first

²⁰ As it has been stated in chapter 1 of this study that the direct dependence of J. Wesley on Paul will not be researched and thus the direct dependence of Wesley on Paul is not a part of this study. The examination of the *experiences* being described by J. Wesley, Paul and the Mystics is the main point of this study and not the discovering of Wesley's and the Mystics dependence on Paul. To repeat the point made in chapter 1, the emphasis to be examined is on the commonality of the experiences being described.

of these “sources” is the “will”; the second of these “sources” is the “infirmities.”

As it has been seen in chapter 2 of this study, the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 also has two “sources” within them, out of which they act, speak, and behave. When the emphatic “I” acts not consistent with their will, their desire, the emphatic “I” is not the one acting, but the “sin that indwells in them.” Here it can be seen that there are two “sources” out of which the emphatic “I” acts. The first source is the will, the desire, and the second source is the “sin that indwells.” The emphatic “I” calls the “sin which indwells” another law which operates within the members of their body (Rom 7:23). This “second” law is a law that is in opposition to their will, their $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ - which is, according to Berry, the “moral center of a human being.”²¹ It can be seen that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 has two sources out of which they act, speak and behave. The first source is their $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$, their will. The second source is a “law” which operates within the members of their bodies.

The struggle of the emphatic “I” with another law that operates within the members of their body is not a struggle between the material and the spiritual. The law that operates within the members of the emphatic “I” which is in opposition to their will is the sin that indwells them (Rom 7:15).²² The emphatic “I” goes on to say that when they sin, when they act against their will, it is not they who are sinning, but the sin that indwells them (Rom 7:20). The emphatic “I” acts, at times consistent with their will and at other times, the emphatic “I” acts not consistent with their will, but in opposition to it.

Wesley said that the Christian who is perfect in love acts, at times consistent with their will and at other times acts in opposition to their will. When the Christian who is perfect in love acts in opposition to their will to please God, Wesley said that they were

²¹ G.R. Berry, *A Dictionary of New Testament Greek Synonyms*, 25.

²² See chapter 2 and 3 of this study.

acting out of their infirmities and what they did, he called mistakes. Wesley said and taught in his doctrine of “perfection” that Christians who are perfect in love act, at times out of their will and at other times the Christian who is perfect in love will act, not out of their will, but will act out of another source which is located within them. This other source cannot be the will of the Christian who is perfect in love. The reason for this is that the will of the Christian who is perfect in love is set on pleasing God in all things. This other source, though not the will, must be found within the Christian who is perfect in love. Somewhere within the Christian who is perfect in love is another “source” out of which they act, speak, and behave. Wesley called this other source “infirmities.” The infirmities of a Christian who is perfect in love are found within them, but not within their will. Because the infirmities of a Christian who is perfect in love are found within them and are not their will; the infirmities of a Christian who is perfect in love are found within their “members.”

Wesley said that Christians who are perfect in love at times fail to meet God's standard. When these Christians fail to meet God's standards, they act in opposition to their will and act involuntarily. Wesley is describing an experience where a Christian who is perfect in love (one could also call this Christian a spiritually mature Christian), fails to do what is right, good and well-pleasing in the sight of God. At the same time, while failing to meet God's standard, the Christian who is perfect in love, also acts in opposition to their will, because the perfect Christian has set their will on pleasing God.

The experience of desiring to be and do what God desires, yet, at times failing to meet God's standard of love is a similar experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7. The emphatic “I” of Rom 7 has set their will on the good, that is on pleasing God by obeying

his law. However, at times, the emphatic “I” finds that it acts in opposition to their will. In these times of acting in opposition to their will, the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 fails to do what is right, holy, and well pleasing in the sight of God. What can be seen from these common experiences of the Christian who is perfect in love and the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is that both act against their desiring, their will, when they fail to do what is good, loving, and well-pleasing in the sight of God.

Wesley defined sin as a willful transgression of a known law.²³ The question that is to be asked is: Does the emphatic “I” sin willingly? The answer to that question is no. The desire of the emphatic “I” is to do what pleases God. Rom 7:15, 18, 19, 20 all clearly state that the emphatic “I” desires, not to sin, but to please God. Rom 7:15 states: “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.” Here it can be seen that the emphatic “I” does not do what it wants, what it desires to do. Rom 7:18-20 states: “I know that nothing good lives in me, that is in my sinful nature; for I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.” These verses make it clear that the desire of the emphatic “I” is to do what is good, what is pleasing to God. These verses also state that the emphatic “I” does not desire to sin.

Rom 7’s relation with Rom 8 will confirm the statement that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is a mature, Christian believer. Rom 8 is a continuation of the discussion concerning the sanctification of the believer. Rom 7 begins the discussion of the struggle within the Christian with remaining sin. Rom 8 continues this discussion and explains

²³ J. Wesley’s sermon, *On Obedience to Parents*, Vol. 7, 107.

further that Christians “groan” waiting for the redemption of the body (Rom 8:23). The groaning of Christians waiting for their bodies’ redemption are those who in whom the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled, those who do not walk according to the flesh, but who walk according to the spirit (Rom 8:4). This is referring to mature, spiritual Christians (Rom 8:12-15), those who are described as living in bodies that are dead to sin (Rom 8:10, 11). Mature Christians groan, waiting, for the redemption of their bodies. According to Rom 6, these bodies are dead to sin. The teaching that these bodies are dead to sin and that these groans must mean that there is a struggle going on within mature, spiritual Christians with sin. Rom 8 is a chapter that describes how a Christian is to please God. However, within Rom 8, itself, is a description of not only how to please God, there is also within Rom 8 a description of the struggle within the believer with sin, the Christian who is walking to please God.

Rom 8:7 describes a mindset set on the flesh – which is the mindset of unbelievers (Rom 8:5, 6, compare with Rom 8: 9, 10). The description of the mindset set on the flesh, which is not the mindset of Christians, is that this mindset does not, nor is it able to, subject itself to the Law of God. Rom 8, certainly a chapter that discusses the sanctification of Christians, clearly states that the mindset of Christians is subject to the Law of God. Christians are not free from obeying the spirit of the Law of God. In fact, the essence of salvation is the desire to obey God and to please Christ (2 Cor 5:9).

The context of Rom 8:9-17 is that of a Christian believer living in a dead body. This dead body still is able to do misdeeds, though the mindset of the Christian is on obeying the law of God. Yet, this person, who has the Spirit of God dwelling within, is called an heir of God.

Rom 8:9-27 is a description of a Christian, who, still groans because s/he is still living in an unredeemed body (Rom 8:23), who still struggles with weakness (Rom 8:26), who, lives in a body which is dead because of sin, yet their spirit is alive because of righteousness (Rom 8:10). In Rom 8:10 is a clear description of a Christian believer whose spirit desires holiness and righteousness while their body desires sin. This is the very same description of the emphatic “I” in Rom 7:22-25 where it says that there are two “laws” within the emphatic “I.” One “law” desires to obey God and the other “desires” sin (see especially Rom 7:23, 25). Thus, Rom 8:10 confirms the statement that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is a Christian believer.

Christian believers also live in bodies where they still suffer (Rom 8:18).²⁴ Christian believers are exhorted to put to death the deeds of the body (Rom 8:13). This can only be understood in the sense that the body still has deeds that must be put to death. If that is not the case, why then, would Christians be exhorted to put to death non-existent deeds? The body that is dead because of sin, which the believer has, cannot be dead in the sense that it does not function nor is it dead in the sense of not being physically alive. Dead because of sin means that the body is not alive in the sense that it has no relation to God. This is another way to say that the body is unredeemed (Rom 8:23). The word unredeemed means that the body is still in bondage to sin. Rom 8:20-23 explains that creation itself is waiting to be set free into the freedom of the children of God. The freedom of the children of God is understood as freedom from sin and corruption. God’s children experience this freedom now in the experience that is called the “first fruits”

²⁴ The suffering of Rom 8:18 is certainly suffering from persecution, but the context states that Christians also suffer from living in a body dead because of sin. The groaning of the Christian believer is due, in part to his or her living in a body dead because of sin.

(Rom 8:23). This means that Christians have the Holy Spirit now and the presence of the Holy Spirit is the first fruits of the fullness that is to come. The experience of the first fruits is a freedom from sin (Rom 6:7). The Christian is then freed from sin. However, within this experience of freedom there is the groaning waiting for the full redemption of the body (Rom 8:23). The body in which Christians are still living is a dead body (Rom 8:10). Now of course, this does not mean that the body is dead in the sense that it cannot, nor does not, respond to the various stimuli. Free Christians are living in dead bodies. These are bodies that cause Christians to groan and to respond in ways that the believer does not want or desire.

The emphatic “I” sins “unwillingly” (Rom 7:16); this is stated in Rom 7 and is confirmed in Rom 8. The emphatic “I” does not desire to sin, nor does the emphatic “I” ‘will’ sin. Because the emphatic “I” does not sin willingly nor will to sin, the sin of the emphatic “I” must belong to Wesley's categories of mistakes or involuntary failings. Wesley said that the Christian who is perfect in love will, as long as they are in a mortal body, make “mistakes.” He writes: “Christian ‘perfection’ does not imply an exemption either from ignorance or mistakes or infirmities.”²⁵ He also states that weaknesses and infirmities will remain while this corruptible body remains.²⁶ Wesley defined “infirmities” as involuntary failings.²⁷ Thus, according to Wesley's own definitions, it must be seen that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 sins, not willingly, but unwillingly, that is involuntarily. When the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is compared to the experience of Wesley's Christian who is perfected in love, it can be seen that the emphatic

²⁵ J. Wesley's sermon, *Christian Perfection*, Vol. 6, 5.

²⁶ J. Wesley's sermon, *The End of Christ's Coming*, Vol. 6, 277.

²⁷ J. Wesley's sermon, *The First Fruits of The Spirit*, Vol. 6, 92.

“I” of Rom 7 and the Christian who is perfected in love share the same experience. This is another way of saying that the empathic “I” of Rom 7 and Wesley's Christian who is perfected in love are one and the same.

Based on the context and wider study, it is to be seen that Rom 7:14-25 is an enlargement of the struggle that Christian believers have with remaining sin. The discussion of this struggle with remaining sin is started in Rom 7 and is continued in Rom 8.

3. The Mystics and the Emphatic “I”

3.1 St. Teresa of Avila

The Mystics state that the “spiritual marriage” is the highest state that a Christian can enter in this life. This experience will now be compared to the experience of the emphatic “I” and to Wesley’s doctrine of “perfection”.

Teresa of Avila says that the soul, which has experienced the “spiritual marriage”, desires to please God in all things.²⁸ However, this soul has also gained a clearer understanding of God's greatness and the misery of its own condition.²⁹ When the soul, which has experienced the “spiritual marriage”, which means that the desire of this soul is to please God in all things, realizes that it rarely accomplishes its own heart's desire, that is to please God in all things, this realization causes the soul “torture.”³⁰ Teresa, one who

²⁸ Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle*, 107.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 91.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 163.

is recognized by the church as one who experienced the “spiritual marriage”, when looking at herself in the light of God's holiness and greatness, called herself “a worm.”³¹ From this it can be seen that, according to Teresa of Avila, the Christian who has experienced the “spiritual marriage” has a view of him or herself that can be described in modern psychological terms as “poor.” When one truly sees themselves in the light of God's holiness and greatness, one cannot walk away from that encounter with a view of self that in modern psychological terms would be considered a “high” self-image. However, when one truly sees oneself in the light of God's holiness and greatness and one is able to “walk” away, the self-perception that one will take with them is truly realistic.

The emphatic “I” of Rom 7 desires to do what is good and pleasing to God (Rom 7:15-25). While desiring to do what is good and pleasing to God, the emphatic “I” also realizes that it does not always act the way it desires. The emphatic “I” does desire to please God and at times accomplishes its desire. The emphatic “I” says that it does serve God in the will.

However, the emphatic “I” does not always act in a way that is consistent with its desire to please God. When the emphatic “I” acts in a way that is contrary to its own desire to please God, this acting not in conformity to its own desire to please God, causes the emphatic “I” to cry out in anguish and pain. This cry is “O Wretched Man.”

The cry of the emphatic “I” of “O Wretched Man” is a similar cry by Teresa when she called herself a “worm.” Teresa says that even the soul, which has experienced the “spiritual marriage”, will still be troubled by temptations and failings.³² The reality of

³¹ *Ibid.*, 153.

³² *Ibid.*, 171.

failing causes the soul in the “spiritual marriage” to “sorrow” over its sins.³³

Teresa says that the soul, which has experienced the “spiritual marriage”, desires to please God in all things. This soul, while desiring to please God in all things, also realizes that it rarely truly accomplishes its own heart's desire. This realization causes the soul in the “spiritual marriage” to cry out in pain and anguish. The soul, which has experienced the “spiritual marriage”, also sees itself very clearly. It sees itself in the light of God's holiness and greatness. This vision also causes the soul in the “spiritual marriage” to cry out in pain and anguish.

Teresa's description of a soul that has experienced the “spiritual marriage” can be seen as a similar experience that John Wesley described as the Christian who is perfect in love, yet acts involuntarily out of their infirmities. This is also the same experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7, who desires to do what is good, yet at times fails to perfectly and fully accomplish its desire of pleasing God in all things.

3.2 The Cloud of Unknowing

The author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* was also a mystic. This unknown person describes “perfection” as a “good will.”³⁴ A good will is a will that desires to please God in all things. However, the Christian with a “good” will is not a Christian who has reached sinless perfection in this life.³⁵

Even the holiest person, in this life, is not free from the effects of sin. This means that the holiest person will still struggle and at times fail to accomplish what it desires,

³³ *Ibid.*, 170.

³⁴ Anonymous, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, 111.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.

and this is to please God in all things. This failure to accomplish its own desire of pleasing God causes the holiest of souls a deep sorrow. However, the deepest sorrow of a person who has arrived at the “spiritual marriage” is the sorrow that they are. This sorrow is an existential sorrow that comes from the understanding that one falls so far short of God’s glory. It is this sorrow that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 experiences when he/she cries out “O Wretched Man” (Person).³⁶

The soul, which realizes that not only that it sins, but that it is sinful, experiences deep authentic sorrow. This statement is to be understood in the sense that the soul which realizes that it not only commits acts of sin, but that, in the very core of its being, it is sinful, experiences deep authentic sorrow. The soul, which is simply repentant for what it does, has not yet experienced the union of God that the *Cloud of Unknowing* is attempting to describe. The soul that is simply repentant for what it does has not experienced this deep sorrow. This sorrow, which the *Cloud of Unknowing* is attempting to describe, is of a kind that causes the soul to moan and cry out in anguish over its own existence. When a soul has experienced the union of God, according to the *Cloud of Unknowing*, this soul will repent over its very existence and being. Wherever this soul goes, it is still near the “pit” of its own being. This soul can run as far and as fast and as long as it is possible to run, yet, when it stops it will realize that it can not run away from itself.³⁷ This realization, that the soul is sinful in its very core, causes the soul, which has experienced

³⁶ As stated by *The Cloud of Unknowing*: “the sorrow I speak of is genuine sorrow and perfect, and blessed is the man who experiences it. Every man has plenty of cause for sorrow, but he alone understands the deep universal reason for sorrow, who experiences that he is. Every other motive pales besides this one. He alone feels authentic sorrow who realizes not only what he is, but that he is” (*Ibid.*, 103).

³⁷ See Chapter 2 of this study, where the “broken-ness of the human being as a result of sin (Rom 5), and chapter 4 where a wider look at the Pauline Corpus was done regarding Paul’s position that the mature, Christian believer, in this life, is righteous but in experience must become what they are in Christ, i.e. righteous.

union with God, deep sorrow. According to the *Cloud of Unknowing*, when the soul sees its true condition, it will have seen itself “as it really is a miserable and defiled creature less than nothing without God.”³⁸ This is what causes the soul to sorrow not only over what it does, but that it is.

The *Cloud of Unknowing* also teaches that the soul, which has experienced union with God, will, as long as it is in this life, struggle with temptation. The *Cloud of Unknowing* states that, “the remnants of original sin will plague you to the grave despite all your efforts.”³⁹ Here, it can be seen that the *Cloud of Unknowing* is not teaching sinless perfection, when it describes union with God. The soul, which has experienced union with God still struggles and is plagued by temptations. The teaching of the *Cloud of Unknowing* concerning union with God also states that the closer a “man comes to the truth the more sensitive he must become to error.”⁴⁰ This means that the closer a person comes to God; the clearer the person will see itself. When a soul is growing closer to God, this soul will also become more and more aware of the areas in its own life that are far from God. The error that the *Cloud of Unknowing* refers to is not only the error “in” the world, but more importantly the error that is in the person, which is growing closer, and closer to God. As Teresa called herself a “worm,” The *Cloud of Unknowing* also shares the same view of self. It is to be remembered that this view comes from one who has experienced union with God. The *Cloud of Unknowing* says this about the self: “This foul, wretched lump called sin is none other than yourself.”⁴¹ By this quote, it can be seen that The *Cloud of Unknowing* and Teresa of Avila, both mystics, share the same view of

³⁸ Anonymous, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, 89.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 102.

themselves. This view is that they are a “worm” and “foul.” Again, it is to be stated that this view is of a mature Christian, one who has experienced union with God and in Teresa's terms, the “spiritual marriage”.

The *Cloud of Unknowing* describes “perfection” as a “good will.”⁴² By a good will, the *Cloud of Unknowing* means “a will that is harmoniously attuned to God's will in an abiding contentedness and enthusiasm for all He does.”⁴³ The *Cloud of Unknowing* describes desire as “the access to heaven.”⁴⁴ Desire, is also, according to The *Cloud of Unknowing*, “what God sees with His all merciful eyes. It is not what you are nor what you have been that God sees with His all merciful eyes, but what you desire to be.”⁴⁵

The emphatic “I” of Rom 7 desires to please God, yet at times fails to accomplish its own desire of pleasing God (Rom 7:15-20). This failure to please God causes the emphatic “I” sorrow and pain (Rom 7:24). However, it must be said, that the sorrow and pain that the emphatic “I” experiences is not only for what it does, that is for its failure to please God (Rom 7:15); the sorrow and pain of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is also because of what it is. Rom 7:24 states that the emphatic “I” not only is in pain for what it does (Rom 7:15-19), but also for the fact of its own existence and condition. The cry of “Wretched Man” is not simply a cry of pain and anguish over one's acts, deeds, misdeeds, and failures. The cry of “Wretched Man” is also a cry over one's true and sinful condition. For a person to cry out that it is “wretched” means that the person has seen itself in the light of God's holiness and greatness. The reason for this is: the only place a soul will see its own wretchedness is in the light of God's holiness and greatness. Thus, when the

⁴² *Ibid.*, 111.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 146.

emphatic “I” of Rom 7 cries out that it is “wretched,” this means that the emphatic “I” has seen itself in the light of God's holiness and greatness. The cry of the emphatic “I” can be seen as the cry over its own “wretched” condition.

The experience described by the *Cloud of Unknowing* and the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 over their sinful condition are the same experiences. Both the *Cloud of Unknowing* and the emphatic “I” are not only in sorrow over their failure to please God, but are also in deep agony over the fact that they are truly wretched sinners and not just people who commit acts of sin. The agony over one's being, over one's condition is a deep agony of the soul. By this is meant that the pain, the agony of the soul is of such a nature that the soul, at times is in deep despair.⁴⁶

The Christian who has experienced union with God will see him or herself as a “foul, stinky lump,” which must be hated, despised and forsaken. This is a similar experience by Paul in the cry of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7, when the emphatic “I” cries out, “O Wretched Man.” Both cries are cries of despair over self. Both cries are cries of a spiritually mature Christian who is growing closer and closer to God and at the same time sees themselves as sinners, wretched and to be despised.

3.3 Julian of Norwich

Julian of Norwich writes that those who experience union with God also see that sin is vile and horrible. She also says that the closer a Christian comes to God; the more they

⁴⁶ “For as often as he would have a true knowing and feeling of God in purity of Spirit (insofar as that is possible in this life); and then feels that he cannot for he constantly finds his knowing and feeling as it were occupied and filled with a foul, stinky lump of himself, which must always be hated and despised and forsaken, if he shall be God's perfect disciple, taught by Him alone on the mounts of perfection—he almost despairs for the sorrow that he feels, weeping, lamenting, writhing, cursing and blaming himself” (*Ibid.*, 104).

will see themselves as wretched.⁴⁷

Julian writes and says that to the believer who has experienced the “spiritual marriage”, sin is more painful than hell itself. The mystics taught that the closer one came to God, the clearer they saw their own sinfulness. A believer who was growing closer to God, saw themselves not only as a sinner in the sense of one who commits acts of sin, but also in the light and truth that they are “a lump of sin.” This revelation was a painful experience for the believer. The believer who had experienced the “spiritual marriage” desired to be pleasing to God in all things. This desire, that is to be pleasing to God in all things, was the fundamental desire of the believer who had experienced the “spiritual marriage”. Based on Julian’s writings quoted above, it is seen that when this believer, who desired to be pleasing to God in all things, saw him/her self as a “lump of sin,” then, this revelation was extremely painful.

Julian of Norwich expresses the same view of a Christian who has experienced union with God as does Teresa of Avila and as does the *Cloud of Unknowing*. These three mystics state that the closer a person comes to God, the clearer that person sees him or herself. The self-perception of a person who has experienced union with God or the “spiritual marriage” is one where the person sees themselves as “wretched,” “a lump of sin” and “a worm.”

The experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 when compared with the mystical experience called the “spiritual marriage” leads to the conclusion that the emphatic “I” is a mature Christian. The reason for stating this is that the believer, who has experienced

⁴⁷ Her words are: “When we by God's grace and with His help, live in harmony with nature and grace, we shall see the truth that sin is incomparably more vile and painful than hell itself. It is a horrible sight for the soul who wishes to be lovely and shining” (Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, 130).

the “spiritual marriage”, is painfully aware of their own broken-ness and sin.⁴⁸

4. New Life in Christ and the Emphatic “I”

Christian believers are new creations in Christ, this means that they have a new life in Christ (2 Cor 5:17). Although Christian believers are new creations in Christ, there still remains within these new creations the flesh that is in warfare with the Spirit (Gal 5:17). This experience of the Christian believer as a new creation in Christ will be compared to the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7.

The emphatic “I” of Rom 7 desires to please God but finds within it another force or power that is antagonistic to the desire it has to please God. This internal battle is stated in Rom 7:23. This must be seen as an experience of a mature Christian. The reason for stating this is that the very same internal struggle between the desire to please God and the “pull” to turn away from God is stated in Gal 5:17. This passage, that is Gal 5:17, is almost universally accepted as the experience of a Christian. This passage, Gal 5:17, states that the flesh, σάρξ, desires against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. Rom 8:9-27 is a description of a Christian, who, still groans because s/he is still living in an unredeemed body (Rom 8:23), who still struggles with weakness (Rom 8:26), who, lives in a body which is dead because of sin, yet their spirit is alive because of righteousness (Rom 8:10). In Rom 8:10 is a clear description of a Christian believer whose spirit desires holiness and righteousness while their body desires sin. This is the very same description

⁴⁸ See this chapter for a fuller explanation of this statement.

of the emphatic “I” in Rom 7:22-25 where it says that there are two “laws” within the emphatic “I.” One “law” desires to obey God and the other “desires” sin (see especially Rom 7:23, 25). Thus, Rom 8:10 confirms the conclusion that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is a Christian believer. Rom 7:23 can be understood in that the flesh remains in the believer. The flesh, the brokenness and residue of both original sin and personal sin, remains within the believer. If the flesh did not remain within the believer, then this verse could not be speaking of a believer. The context of Gal 5:16-26 provides ample evidence that the description of Gal 5:17 is of a believer.⁴⁹

The evidence that the person described in Gal 5:17 is a believer is that the person is exhorted to walk and live by means of the Spirit (Gal 5:16). Only a believer is able to walk and live by means of the Spirit. This is because only Christians have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them (Rom 8:9-11). The person in Gal 5:16-26 also has the possibility of being led by the Spirit of God (Gal 5:18). It is only the believer who is led, or follows the leading of the Spirit of God. Paul writes and says, “For the ones who are led by the Spirit of God, these ones are the children of God (Rom 8:14). Thus, it can be seen that the person described in Gal 5:16-26 who is being led by the Spirit of God must be a believer. The reason for this is that the ones who are being led by the Spirit, these ones are the believers.

The believer, as is seen in Gal 5:16-26, has the flesh remaining within him or her. This does not mean, however, that the believer is in the flesh. There is a difference between being in the flesh and the flesh remaining within the believer. As has already been stated, the flesh, which remains within the believer, is the residue, the damage done

⁴⁹ See chapter 4 of this study for a detailed discussion regarding Gal 5:17 and its context.

by original sin and personal sin. The fact of the flesh remaining within a believer is different than being in the flesh. Being in the flesh means that the person who is in the flesh has the flesh as the dominant and controlling principle in their life. Being in the flesh, therefore, means that the person is living for the flesh. The flesh is the “god” of the person who is in the flesh.

The believer who walks by the Spirit will not fulfill the desire of the flesh (Gal 5:16). Here it is evident that the believer, the one who has the Spirit, is also faced with the desires of the flesh. There is simply no reason to exhort a believer to do something, i.e. walk by the Spirit, so that the believer will not do something else, i.e. fulfill the desires of the flesh, if the fulfilling of the desires of the flesh were not a possibility for the believer. Because the flesh is the result of damage done both by original sin and personal sin, the believer, who is exhorted to not fulfill the desires of the flesh, must have the flesh remaining within them.

A Christian has the flesh remaining within him or her. A Christian, however, cannot be and is not in the flesh (Rom 8:9). The person who has the Spirit of God within them, that is a Christian, a believer, is not in the flesh, although the flesh remains within him or her. The fact of the Spirit's indwelling a believer proves that the believer is not in the flesh. The believer desires to be led by the Spirit of God and not the flesh. The believer desires to obey God and not the flesh. The presence of the Spirit of God within a person proves that that person is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit (Rom 8:9).

Christians, not in the flesh, but having the flesh within them, have an inner struggle, or inner warfare, going on within. In Gal 5:17 it is recorded that the flesh and the Spirit desire against each other, so that the believer does not do what he or she desires.

Here it can be seen that within a Christian is the desire ($\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega$) to act, to do, to live, to walk by the Spirit, so that the Christian is pleasing to God. Yet, at the same time, within the believer, who desires to please God, is another force, power, that desires against the desire to please God. These two desires cause an inner warfare and inner struggle to occur within the Christian.

The description of Gal 5:17 is the same description that John Wesley gives for a Christian who is perfect in love. The description of Gal 5:17 as the inner struggle of a believer is the same description of a Christian who has reached the “highest state” a Christian can reach in this life. This “highest state” or experience is called by the mystics “union with God” and or the “spiritual marriage”. The description of Gal 5:17 as a Christian who struggles with the flesh, Wesley's Christian who is perfected in love and the mystical experience called the “spiritual marriage” or *union with God*, is the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7. The reasons for stating this are: both Gal 5:17 and the emphatic “I” desire ($\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega$) to please God. Rom 7:19 states that the emphatic “I” desires to do the good, the will of God as expressed in the law. As it has been seen in chapter 4 of this study, Gal 5:17 states that the inner struggle which is between the flesh and the Spirit results in the Christian not doing what he or she desires.

While having this common desire to please God, both the Christian described in Gal 5:17 and the emphatic “I” find within them another force, or power, that is antagonistic toward the desire within them to please God. This antagonistic force within the believer in Gal 5:17 and the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 causes the believer in Gal 5:17 and the emphatic “I” to, at times not do what they desire, but to do what they do not desire. Gal 5:17 affirm that the warfare within the Christian causes the Christian to not do

what they desire. Rom 7:15, 19, 23 are very clear in stating that the warfare within the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 causes the emphatic “I” to not do what it desires, but, at times to do what it does not desire.

It has already been stated and noticed that the description of Gal 5:17 is of a believer. The emphatic “I” of Rom 7 must also be a believer because this person shares the same inner experience as the believer described in Gal 5:17. Both the Christian described by Paul in Gal 5:17 and the emphatic “I” of Rom 7, desire to please God. Both the Christian of Gal 5:17 and the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 have an inner warfare between the flesh and the Spirit. This warfare rages within each of them. Because the Christian of Gal 5:17 and the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 both desire to please God, and because both the Christian of Gal 5:17 and the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 have an inner warfare between the flesh and the desire to do what is good, that is to please God and to walk after the Spirit, the common experience of the Christian of Gal 5:17 and the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 leads to the conclusion that the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is a Christian believer.

5. Rom 7 and the Emphatic “I”

The main emphasis of Rom 7 is the depth, the extent of the problem of sin and from which the believer in Christ has been delivered. Rom 7 is emphasizing the total depravity of the believer. Rom 7 is a spiritual/psychological portrait of a believer who realizes the depth and extent of the problem of sin in their own life. Rom 7 is also a celebration of deliverance, by the believer, from what they have been delivered from. Rom 7, describes

the depth and extent of sin in the life of the believer, yet, at the same time, Rom 7 is a celebration by the believer, while still struggling with sin, of their own deliverance from that sin, by the blood of Christ. This can be seen in Rom 7:25 – which is a hymn of praise and thankfulness for redemption in Jesus Christ. The portrait of Rom 7 is of a believer⁵⁰ who realizes that, in their flesh, there is nothing good and that they, even after justification, even after experiencing the “spiritual marriage”, even after experiencing “perfection” in Wesleyan understandings, are still sinners, still a “lump of sin.”⁵¹

The emphatic “I” as a mature believer is also seen in the tenses used in Rom 7. The predominant tense used in Rom 7:7-13 is the aorist/past tense. The predominant tense used in Rom 7:14-25 is the present tense. As it has been discussed in chapter 2 of

⁵⁰ “The seventh chapter of Romans gives us Paul’s testimony concerning this warfare within himself,” J.D. Pentecost, *Designed To Be Like Him*, 79.

⁵¹ W. Elwell and R. Yarbrough also support the position that Paul in Rom 7:7-25 is writing about the struggle that Christian believers wage with sin, *Encountering the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 280. D. Guthrie states that Rom 7:7-25 is best understood as a regenerate man. The reasons he gives are very illuminating, being that “we have no picture of the unregenerate experience per se but we do have the righteous man’s retrospect for he alone is in a position to assess the slavery of sin,” *The New Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans, 1970), 1028. He goes on to say that Rom 7:7-25 is “Paul’s self-estimate as viewed in the light of God’s law,” *The New Bible Commentary*, 1029; J. Calvin states that “man is held captive by the yoke of sin that he can of his own nature neither aspire to good through resolve nor struggle after it through effort” (J. Calvin, *Institutes of The Christian Religion*, 309). Here it can be seen that J. Calvin states that the unregenerate is not able to aspire (desire) or struggle after good. This being said, according to J. Calvin, the emphatic “I” who desires to do the good, must be regenerate. J.I. Packer also agrees: “The belief that full deliverance from all known sin is enjoyed by consecrated, spirit-filled Christians makes reading Rom 7:14-25 impossible in the natural way. Rom 7:14-25 is best seen as a frank and representative acknowledgement by a lively, healthy Christian (Paul) that sin, stirred up in him by the very law that forbids and condemns it, still controls him to an extent that is grievous to contemplate” (J.I. Packer, *Keep In Step With The Spirit*, 161). B. Metzger, however disagrees. He says that Rom 7:7-23 is “Paul’s reflection on the past, namely what a life lived under the Mosaic law looks like,” B. Metzger, ed., *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993), 661. There are many reasons to disagree with Metzger. One is that the Bible teaches that unregenerate does not seek God (Rom 3:10-18). Another reason is that the cry of: “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ” Rom 7:25 is part of Rom 7. An important question is: Which Non-Christian believer thanks God for Jesus Christ? Also Rom 7:25, after thanking God for Jesus Christ, clearly states that the emphatic “I” serves, with his mind, the law of God, while with the flesh he serves the law of sin. He is clearly seen the struggle within a Christian believer. The reason being is that only a Christian believer will thank God for Jesus Christ. A. McClain also disagrees. He says that “God wrote Rom 7 to warn men and women, believers and unbelievers, that there is no holiness by works of the law,” A. McClain, *Romans: The Gospel of God’s Grace*, 152. Also B. Carradine, 11.

this study, there are many differing opinions regarding the meaning of the predominant tenses used in Rom 7. The meaning of the tenses used in Rom 7 cannot be determined apart from the overall contextual setting and meaning of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7.

The overall contextual meaning and setting of the emphatic “I” is, as has been shown, to be a Christian believer. When it is understood that the identity of the emphatic “I” is a Christian believer, then the meaning of the tenses used in Rom 7 can be arrived at. The meaning of the tenses used in Rom 7 is a statement concerning the life of the emphatic “I.” The use of the aorist/past tense used in Rom 7:7-13 describes a time in the life of the emphatic “I” before the writing of the letter of Romans. The use of the present tense in Rom 7:14-25 refers to the life of the emphatic “I” at the time of the writing of the letter to the Romans.

If the whole passage of Rom 7:7-25 was describing the “present” life of the emphatic “I,” then the dramatic usage of the verbal tenses would have no meaning at all. If Rom 7:7-25 was describing the “present” life of the emphatic “I” then the present tense or the aorist tense could have been used throughout Rom 7:7-25 with the same meaning and emphasis. However, since there is such a sharp distinction in Rom 7:7-25 of the verb tenses used, this distinction must have a meaning in itself. The meaning of the distinction of the verb tenses used in Rom 7:7-25 is a description of the life of the emphatic “I” into two different “parts.” Rom 7:7-13 describes the life of the emphatic “I” before a life changing event and Rom 7:14-25 describes the life of the emphatic “I” after this life-changing event. Rom 7:7-13 describes the “past” life of the emphatic “I” while Rom 7:14-25 describes the present life of the emphatic “I”. The life changing event that divides the life of the emphatic “I” must be an event of such magnitude that the emphatic “I” sees

its life as having two different “parts.” The two different “parts” of the life of the emphatic “I” are set out by the predominate use of the aorist tense in Rom 7:7-13 and the present tense used in Rom 7:14-25. The only event of such a magnitude could be the conversion of the emphatic “I.” Thus, Rom 7:7-13 describes the life of the emphatic “I” as a pre-Christian and Rom 7:14-25 describes the life of the emphatic “I” as a Christian believer.

6. Concluding Statement

The emphatic “I” of Rom 7 sees itself as it truly is; “a wretched person,” (Rom 7:24). It desires to please God (Rom 7:15, 19, and 20), but knows that it commits sins. This is evident from Rom 7:15, 19, and 20 where it says that the emphatic “I” does what it does not desire. The “doing” recorded in these verses is a testimony by the emphatic “I” that it has and is, at times, still committing sins. However, starting from Rom 7:22, the discussion by the emphatic “I” goes to a different dimension. The “testimony” of the emphatic “I” begins to describe not just its own “committing” of sin, but the existential existence of itself. It sees within itself an existential “rift.” There is the inner person (Rom 7:22) who desires to serve God (Rom 7:25) and there is the “other law” (Rom 7:23) which wages war against the inner person. This existential “rift” causes the emphatic “I” to cry out “O Wretched Man, who will save me from the body of this death.” (Rom 7:24). This is not a cry of a person who is still under the law, which is to say who is unregenerate. This is a cry of a regenerate Christian believer who is approaching ever

closer to God. While approaching closer to God, the emphatic “I” sees itself clearer and clearer. This self-perception is painful to the emphatic “I.” The pain comes from the fact that sin is not simply a legalistic keeping of the law, but, sin is everything that falls short of God’s glory.⁵² Paul states the same thing in Rom 2:12. He writes that those who sin without the law will perish without the law. Here it can be seen that Paul is saying that sin is greater or deeper than mere transgression of the law. Sin is that which falls short of God’s glory. The emphatic “I” of Rom 7 is an early Christian believer who sees the truth that s/he not only commits acts of sin, but that they are also, in the existential self, sinners.⁵³ To be a sinner, in this sense, is to see oneself as “a lump of sin” – as would later be similar in the understanding of the Mystics. To see one self as “a lump of sin” is to realize that there is nothing good within oneself, that is apart from Christ. This is similar to Paul’s understanding and theology (Phlp 3:1-14).

The realization of the believer growing closer to God is the very thought, realization and expression of the emphatic “I.” It sees itself as a sinner and realizes that within itself, apart from Christ, there is nothing good in it (Rom 7:18). The cry of the emphatic “I” of “Wretchedness” is the cry of a mature Christian believer. Stott agrees

⁵² A. McClain recognizes this and says that “sin is a greater thing than mere transgression of the law. Sin is lawlessness. It exists where there is no law” (A. McClain, *Romans: The Gospel of God’s Grace*, 136). J.I. Packer agrees with this assessment when he claims that “getting beyond conflict, outward or inward, in our pursuit of holiness in the world is an escapist dream” (J.I. Packer, *Keep In Step With The Spirit*, 111).

⁵³ J. Murray states that the Paul of Rom 7:22 is a Christian believer because he has the mind of the spirit (Rom 8:6). Murray’s reason is that Paul’s mind was not enmity towards God or God’s law. Paul’s mind joyfully delighted in God and the law of God. This, according to Murray, means that the delight in the mind of Paul of Rom 7:22 is evidence that Paul truly loved God and obeyed God. The question that comes out of this is: How can you delight in God and be an enemy of God? (J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 258).

with this view of the “wretched man”.⁵⁴ He states that only a mature Christian believer would think and talk of him/herself in this manner. Stott also says that this cannot be a sinner, for a sinner does not see him/herself as a miserable sinner. He goes on to say that this cannot be an immature believer, for an immature believer is characterized by self-confidence.⁵⁵ According to Stott, only the mature believer reaches the place of self-disgust and of self-despair. He states further that only a mature believer is one who recognizes with clarity that in his flesh dwells nothing good.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ J.R.W. Stott, *Men Made New*, 72-73. A very serious objection to the view that the emphatic “I” is unregenerate is Cranfield’s position. He claims that the reason many would hold the position that the emphatic “I” is unregenerate is because of “the failure to grasp the full seriousness of the Christian’s obligation to express his gratefulness to God by the obedience of life” (C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary*, 169). Also, E. Palmer (*Salvation By Surprise: A Commentary on The Book of Romans*, 84) who claims that Rom 7:14-25 “sets the Christian person free from a tyranny, the tyranny of the presumption that I am flawless;” also K. Burbulyus who writes concerning the inner struggle that is recorded in Rom 7:14-25: “Sios kovos iki galo nepazista moralistai ir idealistai, o tik krikscionys,” and “Tikras krikscionis, esantis Vispaties maloneje, isoriskai ivykdo Istatyma, bet vidinai labai jaucia ta kova,” *Kas Slypi Sventojo Rasto Zodyje* (Vilnius, Lithuania: Apyausrio leidykla, 2002), 660.

⁵⁵ A. Nygren is in agreement. He states that “only that love which pronounces judgment on all that is not love is in the deepest sense a restoring and saving love,” A. Nygren, *Agape and Eros* (New York: Harper, 1969), 104.

⁵⁶ J.R.W. Stott, *Men Made New*, 72-73. See also: E. Peterson, *The Message* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1994), 317. See also F.F. Bruce (*The Letter of Paul to the Romans*, 43); C.E.B. Cranfield, (C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans; A Shorter Commentary*, 165); R. Haldane, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans*, 300; Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, (American Edition, eds.; J. Pelikan and H. Lehman, trans. W.A. Lambert; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1943), 451, 452). According to Luther, the cry of the emphatic “I” must be a Christian believer, because deep in the heart of the unregenerate, they hate the Law. J. Owen is in agreement with this position, J. Owen, *Of Communion with God*, 242. See also J. Owen, (*Gospel Grounds and Evidences of the Faith of God’s Elect* (Albany, Oregon: Sage Library, CD, 1996), 65); A. Murray (*Absolute Surrender* (Springdale: Whitaker House, 1981), 80). So also G. Ladd, *A Theology of The New Testament*, 131; T. Dubay is also in agreement. He writes concerning Teresa of Avila, “We find in these meetings with ‘His majesty’ an explanation of how and why St. Teresa viewed her sins with such horror. Tepid, lukewarm people consider this hatred for sin, even venial sin, as being a sentiment overblown by the saints, but that is because they know so little about what being in love is like. Mediocrity has little contact with infinite purity, goodness and love.” T. Dubay, *Fire Within*, 26; J.A. Beet *A Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to The Romans*, 212; W. Hulme, *Dealing With Double-Mindedness* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 110; H. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer* (New York: Image Books, 1979), 84; J. Stalker, *Life of Christ* (London: Fleming H. Revell, 1909), 44. Also P. Melancthon, *Commentary on Romans*, 160. He further writes: “The justified please God on account of Christ, although sin still clings to them. He does not say that there is no sin in the pious, but no condemnation,” *Commentary on Romans*, 163; C. Allen, *God’s Psychiatry* (Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell, 1953), 101. P. Rees writes: “Holiness is gift and grace. It casts out sin, yet leaves the heart of the one so cleansed unceasingly sure both of unworthiness and of disparity between it and the vision of God’s perfection,” *Triumphant in Trouble*, 38, 39; C. Sheldon, *In His Steps* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1988), 23; C. Swindoll, *Improving Your Serve* (Waco: Word Books, 1981), 173; T.M.

The emphatic “I” is not perfect. The cry of imperfection is the cry found throughout Rom 7. However, the emphatic “I” of Rom 7 desires to be holy, perfect and pleasing to God. The distance between the heart's cry of the emphatic “I” which is to be holy and pleasing to God, and the actual experiential experience of the emphatic “I” causes it to cry out in deep agony, “O Wretched Man.” This experiential condition of not being perfect causes the emphatic “I” much pain and agony. The emphatic “I” however, is not defeated or downtrodden by its experiential condition, even though its experiential condition is far from its righteousness in Christ and the desire of the life that is to please God in all things. It knows that Christ is its righteousness and that, as the Mystics say, God sees the person as their desire. The *Cloud of Unknowing* agrees with this when it says: “It is not what you are nor what you have been that God sees with His all merciful eyes, but what you desire to be.”⁵⁷ The knowledge that Christ is the righteousness of the emphatic “I”, even though the experiential condition of the emphatic “I” is far from its righteousness in Christ, causes it to cry out in agony (Rom 7:24) and also in victory (Rom 7:25). The situation of the emphatic “I” is, at the same time, one of agony and of victory. It desires to be holy and pleasing to God, yet, the closer it grows to God, the clearer it sees itself, sees that its motives are mixed with self, sees that even in its best moments the emphatic “I” is infinitely far, experientially speaking, from God's actual righteousness. Packer says that “increased holiness means an increased sensitivity to what

Rhodes, *Contemplating the Cross* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1998), 12, 13; C. Swindoll, *Living Above The Level of Mediocrity* (Waco: Word Books, 1987), 271; also P. Gräbe, *The Power of God in Paul's Letters*, 261; F. Tuoti, “Contemplative Prayer: Antidote for An Ailing Generation,” *Merton Annual* 16 (2003): 27-40; J.M. Gustafson, *Christ and the Moral Life* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), 67.

⁵⁷ Anonymous, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, 146.

God is and hence a clearer estimate of one's own sinfulness."⁵⁸ The emphatic "I" is not satisfied with a declaration of being righteous. It desires to be experientially what it is in Christ, that is, to be experientially righteous. Paul states this also in Phlp 2:12, 13 where he exhorts the Philippians to "work out their salvation" because it is God in them enabling them to desire to be holy and to grow, i.e. to work out their salvation.

The cry of the emphatic "I" is the cry of a Christian believer who desires to be holy, but in growing closer to God realizes that it is, experientially, far from God's perfection.⁵⁹ This knowledge causes agonizing pain⁶⁰ to the emphatic "I". However, at the same time it cries out in agony⁶¹ over its experiential distance from God's righteousness, it knows that "in Christ" (1 Cor 1:30; Rom 5:19; 2 Cor 5:21; Phlp 3:9; 1 Cor 1:2) it is actually righteous and one day knows that it will become in experience what it is "in

⁵⁸ J.I. Packer, *Keep In Step With The Spirit*, 106. See also T. Merton, *Contemplative Prayer* (New York: Image Books/Doubleday, 1996), A Monk of The Eastern Church, *Orthodox Spirituality* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), 98.

⁵⁹ Those who claim that the cry "Wretched Man" is the cry of the unregenerate do not take into account F.F. Bruce's claim that "we have no evidence that Paul, before his conversion, suffered from an uneasy conscience" (F.F. Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans*, 139). In fact, Paul's own statement is that as to righteousness which was found in the law, he was blameless (Phlp 3:6). There certainly is no uneasy conscience in Paul, according to Paul's own statement. Paul adds to his self-appraisal before his Christian conversion in Gal 1:14 where he claimed that he was advancing in Judaism beyond many of his contemporaries. Again, we find in Gal 1:14 no uneasy conscience regarding sin.

⁶⁰ K. Barth, (*Dogmatics In Outline*, (trans. G.T. Thomson, Phlposophical Library, New York, 1949), 150); K. Barth *The Word of God and The Word of Man* (trans. D. Horton; New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957), 317.

⁶¹ E. Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith, and the Consummation*, 292; R. Foster, *Prayer* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992), 121; R. Coleman, *The New Covenant* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1984), 115; C. Miller, *Into the Depths of God* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2000), 32; J. Bunyan, *Grace Abounding* (New Kensington, PA.: Whitaker House, 1993), 161-3; R. McGee, *The Search For Significance*, 116; V. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of The Eastern Church* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), 205; Bishop K. Ware, *The Orthodox Way* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998), 107; P. Yancy, *What's So Amazing About Grace* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 273; H. Nouwen, *The Way Of The Heart*, 79; W. Hamilton, *The Christian Man* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), 36; D. Bubna, *Building People* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1978), 152,153; G. MacDonald, *Restoring Your Spiritual Passion* (New York: Oliver Nelson, 1986), 218.

Christ.”⁶²

As has been shown in chapter 2 of this study, the order of Rom 5-8 is very descriptive of the conclusion that the “emphatic I” of Rom 7 is a Christian believer. Rom 5 discusses the fact of justification. Rom 6, following Rom 5’s discussion of justification, describe in detail the Christian believer’s freedom from sin, positionally in Christ. Rom 7, following Rom 6’s description of the freedom of Christian believers in Christ, describe the present experience of Christian believers. Although they have been freed from sin in Christ, they still are in unredeemed bodies. The fact that Christian believers, in this world, are still living in unredeemed bodies is further stated in Rom 8:23. Rom 8 then describes the ever more and more victorious life that can be lived by the power of the Holy Spirit.

While desiring to be holy, the emphatic “I” knows that experientially it is far from God's holiness.⁶³ The emphatic “I,” being a mature, Christian believer, as all people have,

⁶² R. Stedman writes that “It is in his spirit that he is made a slave to righteousness, while in his soul the struggle with sin goes on,” R. Stedman, *From Guilt to Glory*, 231. See also H.A. Ironside, *Full Assurance* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1937), 80-84; J. Bridges, *The Practice of Godliness* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1983), 65 J. Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness*, (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1978), 48ff; A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God* (Camp Hill, Pennsylvania: Christian Publications, INC., 1982), 90, 102,105. J.D. Pentecost, *Designed To Be Like Him*, 79; K. Barth, *The Word of God and The Word of Man*, 317; G. MacDonald, *Ordering Your Private World* (New York: Oliver Nelson, 1985), 153; L. Richards, *Remarriage: A Healing Gift From God*, 45; K. Strong, *All The Master’s Men* (Chappaqua, New York: Christian Herald Books, 1978), 54; C. Swindoll, *Strengthening Your Grip* (Waco: Word Books, 1982), 196-197; D. Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (trans. R.H. Fuller; New York: Collier Books, 1963), 317; C. Swindoll *The Grace Awakening*, (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1990), 232; J.O. Sanders, *Shoe—Leather Commitment*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1990), 179; D. Hartman and D. Sutherland, *A Guidebook to Discipleship* (Irving, California: Harvest House Publishers, 1960), 59; C. Swindoll, *Improving Your Serve* (New York: Bantam Books, 1986), 192; L. Richards, *Becoming One In The Spirit* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1977), 67; V. Grounds, *Radical Commitment* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1984), 45; Major W.I. Thomas, *The Saving Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1961), 149; D. Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (trans. J.W. Doberstein; New York: Harper & Row, 1954), 113; M. Cavit, *The Three Ways*, 67-70; K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 129; J.M. Bonino and N.O. Miguez, *That You May Have Life* (New York: The Mission Education and Cultivation Program Department for the Women’s Division of The General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church), 49; W. Hulme, *Dealing with Double-Mindedness* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 110; R. Coleman, *The New Covenant* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress, 1984), 115; R. Coleman, *Nothing To Do But Save Souls* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1990), 82.

⁶³ J.W. Shepherd, *The life and Letters of St. Paul*, 407. See also R. Austgen, *Natural Motivation in the Pauline Epistles*, 105. Also R.T. Kendall who is of the opinion that many “so called problems” in the

has learned ways of acting, relating, understanding, speaking and being by living in a family. These learned behaviors are for the most part “subconscious.” That is to say that the person will act in a way that reflects their family without “knowing” or “understanding.” Here is seen the cry of the emphatic “I” in Rom 7:15, where it was said that “what I do, I do not know or understand.”

Another of the subconscious reasons out of which people act and which “form” people is the cultural setting in which each and every person grows. Within a person's cultural environment is their particular family background, the “regional” culture in which they live and grow, the ethnic grouping to which they belong, the nation which they belong, the purpose for which they live their lives, the faith to which they have embraced, and decisions that they have made throughout their lives. These factors form, influence and are the “source” out of which people act and behave. As it has been stated in the discussion over family background, these factors also, are for the most part, “subconscious.” That is that they form, or influence, people without the individual's conscious realization. People act, behave, speak, possess and exhibit a multitude of many other behaviors, subconsciously, from theses and other factors that they are not aware of.

A third “grouping” of “subconscious” factors that form, or influence, people is original sin. Every human being has been affected by original sin.⁶⁴ The effect that original sin has had on every human being is one of distortion, twisting, and depraving. This means that when people act, behave and live, they act out of a damaged being. The reality is that, apart from God, no one knows the extent of the damage that original sin

lives of Christian believers are really a thorn in the flesh, which Kendall posits keeps Christian believers from far more serious problems, R.T. Kendall, *The Thorn In The Flesh* (Lake Mary, Florida: Charisma House, 2004), 216.

⁶⁴ For a detailed discussion of original sin, sin and consequences, see Chapter 2 of this study.

has caused in the heart, mind, and soul of people. Original sin also damages people differently. This is to mean that sin damages one person in one way and will damage another person in a different way. The particular individual is not fully aware of the damage done to him/her by original sin. Thus, when a person acts, behaves and lives, they act out of the damage done to them by original sin.

This distance from the desire of its own heart and its actual experiential condition causes the emphatic “I” deep pain. However, at the same time that the emphatic “I” cries out in deep pain because of its experiential distance from God's holiness, the emphatic “I” knows that, in Christ, it is actually righteous and this causes the emphatic “I” to cry out in victory.⁶⁵

One of the main objections to the view that the emphatic “I” is a regenerate person is Paul's description of being a slave under the power of sin. C.E.B. Cranfield's position here is illuminating. He writes:

We ought to ask ourselves whether our inability to accept this expression as descriptive of a Christian is not perhaps the result of failure on our part to realize the full seriousness of the ethical demands of God's law (or of the gospel). Are we not all of us too prone still to understand them legalistically, as did the young man who could say, ‘Master, all these things have I observed from my youth’ (Mark 10:20)? And is it not true that the more the Christian is set free from legalistic ways of thinking about God's law and so sees more and more clearly the full splendour of the perfection towards which he is being summoned, the more conscious he becomes of his own continuing sinfulness, his stubborn all-pervasive egotism?⁶⁶

As the literature shows, there is a remarkable consistency in the teaching and understanding that the closer a Christian believer gets to God, the more this Christian

⁶⁵ D. Bonhoeffer, *My Utmost For His Highest* (ed. J. Reimann; China, Discovery House Publishers, 1992), March 1 entry.

⁶⁶ C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans, A Shorter Commentary*, 158.

believer is aware of his or her own sinfulness.⁶⁷ Paul, in the describing the experience of the emphatic “I” is describing a person who is becoming more and more aware of his or her own sinfulness. The teaching of the literature is in conformity with Paul, both in Rom 7 and in the wider Pauline Corpus, in describing a person who is growing closer to God.

In the “painting” of the spiritual portrait of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7, the identity of the emphatic “I” has been reached. The conclusion to be drawn from this study is that the identity of the emphatic “I” is of a regenerate Christian believer, one who is growing ever closer and closer to God.

⁶⁷ The consistency in this understanding and teaching is seen in Protestant writers: J. Wesley amongst others, of the deeper life, Roman Catholic writers on the mystical life which concludes in the “spiritual marriage”/union with God and in the Orthodox writers on the mystical experience of union with God.

Excursus A – A Comparison of “total depravity”

A Reformed understanding of total depravity is given by L. Berkhoff. He says, “In view of its pervasive character, inherited pollution is called total depravity. This phrase is often misunderstood, and therefore calls for careful discrimination. Negatively, it does not imply: (1) that every man is as thoroughly depraved as he can possibly become; (2) that the sinner has no innate knowledge of the will of God, nor a conscience that discriminates between good and evil; (3) that sinful man does not often admire virtuous character and actions in others, or is incapable of disinterested affections and actions in his relations with his fellow-men; nor (4) that every unregenerate man will, in virtue of his inherent sinfulness, indulge in every form of sin; it often happens that one form excludes the other. Positively, it does indicate: (1) that the inherent corruption extends to every part of man's nature, to all the faculties and powers of both soul and body; and (2) that there is no spiritual good, that is, good in relation to God, in the sinner at all, but only perversion” (*Systematic Theology*, 246, 247).

Here follows Wesley's definition of total depravity. He writes that depravity means that all “are prone to all evil, averse to all good; insomuch that we are not only sick, but dead in trespasses and sins, till God breathes upon the dry bones and creates life by the fruit of his lips. Yea, suppose God has now thoroughly cleansed our heart and scattered the last remains of sin; yet how can we be sensible enough of our own helplessness, our utter inability to all good, unless we are every hour, yea, every moment, endued with power from on high? Who is able to do think one good thought, or to form one good desire, unless by that almighty power which works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure?”“ (J. Wesley's sermon, *Of the Church*, Vol. 6, 398).

When comparing Berkhof and Wesley's definition of depravity, there is to be seen much that is the same, especially the fundamental understanding and teaching that without the grace of God, all people are not able to chose God or to desire to obey God's will. This inability to desire God is seen even clearer in Wesley's teaching on preventing grace. He writes that preventing grace is included in the “entire work of salvation from the first dawning of grace in the soul till it is consummated in glory. If we take this in its utmost extent, it will include all that is wrought in the soul by what is termed natural conscience, but more properly preventing grace—all the drawings of the Father, the desires after God, if we yield to them, increase more and more—all that light wherewith the Son of God “enlightens every one that cometh into the world” showing every man to do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly with his God—all the conviction, which his spirit from time to time, works in every child of man, although it is true, the generality of men stifle

them as soon as possible and after a while forget or at least deny that they had them at all” (J. Wesley’s sermon, *Scripture Way of Salvation*, Vol. 6, 44). See also J. Wesley’s journal, June 28, 1740, Vol. 1, 280; Tuesday July 13, 1756, Vol. 2, 377; his sermon, *The Witness of the Spirit*, Vol. 5, 134; his sermon, *The means of Grace*, Vol. 5, 187; his sermon, *Sermon on the mount, Discourse 3*, Vol. 5, 9. 290, and his sermon, *On Working Out Our Own Salvation*, Vol. 6, 509 where he says that preventing grace is the first desire to please God, the first dawn of light concerning his will and the first transient conviction of having sinned against him.” In this same sermon J. Wesley says, concerning preventing grace, “that no man alive is entirely destitute of what is vulgarly called natural conscience. But this is more not natural; it is more properly called preventing grace,” 512.

Excursus B – Objections to Wesley’s doctrine of perfection

I list only the objections to Wesley and not the objectors. The reason for this is that the objections and not the objectors to Wesley will undermine Wesley’s *perfection*. In addition, the objections that are raised against Wesley today are the same objections Wesley himself faced. Because the objections today are the same ones that Wesley himself faced and answered, what is important to this study is how Wesley answered these objections. If there are objections that nullify Wesley’s doctrine, then, this would shipwreck the comparison of Wesley’s *perfection* with the experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7. I will, in Wesley’s own words, list the objections and his answers to these objections. Here follows Wesley’s words:

“I proposed, in the second place, to answer some objections to this scriptural account of perfection. One common objection to it is, that there is no promise of it in the word of God. If this were so, we must give it up; we should have no foundation to build upon: For the promises of God are the only sure foundation of our hope. But surely there is a very clear and full promise that we shall all love the Lord our God with all our hearts. So we read, (Deut. xxx. 6,) ‘Then will I circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul.’ Equally express is the word of our Lord, which is no less a promise, though in the form of a command: ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind’ (Matt. xxii. 37). No words can be more strong than these; no promise can be more express. In like manner, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,’ is as express a promise as a command. 2. And indeed that general and unlimited promise which runs through the whole gospel dispensation, ‘will put my laws in their minds, and write them in their hearts,’ turns all the commands into promises; and, consequently, that among the rest, ‘Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus’. The command here is equivalent to a promise, and gives us full reason to expect that he will work in us what he requires of us. 3. With regard to the fruit of the Spirit, the Apostle, in affirming, ‘the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance,’ does, in effect, affirm, that the Holy Spirit actually works love, and these other tempers, in those that are led by him. So that here also, we have firm ground to tread upon; this scripture likewise being equivalent to a promise, and assuring us

that all these shall be wrought in us, provided we are led by the Spirit. 4. And when the Apostle says to the Ephesians, (iv. 21-24,) ‘Ye have been taught, as the truth is in Jesus,’ — to ‘be renewed in the spirit of your mind’, and to ‘put on the new man, which is created after God’, — that is, after the image of God, — ‘in righteousness and true holiness’, he leaves us no room to doubt, but God will thus ‘renew us in the spirit of our mind’, and ‘create us anew’ in the image of God, wherein we were at first created: Otherwise it could not be said, that this is ‘the truth as it is in Jesus’. 5. The command of God, given by St. Peter, ‘Be ye holy, as he that hath called you is holy’, in all manner of conversation, implies a promise that we shall be thus holy, if we are not wanting to ourselves. Nothing can be wanting on God's part: As he has called us to holiness, he is undoubtedly willing, as well as able, to work this holiness in us. For he cannot mock his helpless creatures, calling us to receive what he never intends to give. That he does call us thereto is undeniable; therefore he will give it if we are not disobedient to the heavenly calling. 6. ‘The prayer of St. Paul for the Thessalonians, that God would ‘sanctify’ them throughout, and ‘that the whole of them, the spirit, the soul, and the body, might be preserved blameless’, will undoubtedly be heard on behalf of all the children of God, as well as of those at Thessalonica. Hereby, therefore, all Christians are encouraged to expect the same blessing from ‘the God of peace;’ namely, that they also shall be ‘sanctified throughout, in spirit, soul, and body;’ and that ‘the whole of them shall be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ’. 7. But the great question is, whether there is any promise in Scripture that we shall be saved from sin. Undoubtedly there is. Such is that promise, (Psalm cxxx. 8,) ‘He shall redeem Israel from all his sins;’ exactly answerable to those words of the angel, ‘He shall save his people from their sins’. And surely ‘he is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God through him’. Such is that glorious promise given through the Prophet Ezekiel: (xxxvi. 25-27:) ‘Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them’. Such (to mention no more) is that pronounced by Zechariah, (Luke 1. 73-75) ‘The oath which he swore to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies,’ (and such, doubtless, are all our sins,) ‘to serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life’. The last part of this promise is peculiarly worthy of our observation. Lest any should say, ‘True, we shall be saved from our sins when we die’, that clause is remarkably added, as if on purpose to obviate this pretence, all the days

of our life. With what modesty then can any one affirm, that none shall enjoy this liberty till death? 8. 'But', say some, 'this cannot be the meaning of the words; for the thing is impossible. It is impossible to men: But the things impossible with men, are possible with God. Nay, but this is impossible in its own nature: For it implies a contradiction, that a man should be saved from all sin while he is in a sinful body'. Here is a great deal of force in this objection. And perhaps we allow most of what you contend for. We have already allowed that while we are in the body we cannot be wholly free from mistake. Notwithstanding all our care, we shall still be liable to judge wrong in many instances. And a mistake in judgment will very frequently occasion a mistake in practice. Nay, a wrong judgment may occasion something in the temper or passions which is not strictly right. It may occasion needless fear or ill-grounded hope, unreasonable love or unreasonable aversion. But all this is no way inconsistent with the perfection above described. 9. You say, 'Yes, it is inconsistent with the last article: It cannot consist with salvation from sin.' I answer, It will perfectly well consist with salvation from sin, according to that definition of sin, (which I apprehend to be the scriptural definition of it,) a voluntary transgression of a known law. 'Nay, but all transgressions of the law of God, whether voluntary or involuntary, are sin': For St. John says, 'All sin is a transgression of the law'. True, but he does not say, All transgression of the law is sin. This I deny: Let him prove it that can. To say the truth, this is a mere strife of words. You say none is saved from sin in your sense of the word; but I do not admit of that sense, because the word is never so taken in Scripture. And you cannot deny the possibility of being saved from sin, in my sense of the word. And this is the sense wherein the word sin is over and over taken in Scripture. 'But surely we cannot be saved from sin, while we dwell in a sinful body.' A sinful body? I pray observe, how deeply ambiguous, how equivocal, this expression is! But there is no authority for it in Scripture: The word sinful body is never found there. And as it is totally unscriptural, so it is palpably absurd. For no body or matter of any kind, can be sinful: Spirits alone are capable of sin. Pray in what part of the body should sin lodge? It cannot lodge in the skin, nor in the muscles, or nerves, or veins, or arteries; it cannot be in the bones, any more than in the hair or nails. Only the soul can be the seat of sin. 10. 'But does not St. Paul himself say, 'They that are in the flesh cannot please God?'' I am afraid the sound of these words has deceived many unwary souls; who have been told, Those words, they that are in the flesh, mean the same as they that are in the body. No; nothing less. The flesh, in this text, no more means the body than it does the soul. Abel, Enoch, Abraham, yea, all that cloud of witnesses recited by St. Paul in the eleventh of the Hebrews, did actually please God while they were in the body, as he himself testifies. The expression, therefore, here means neither more nor less than they

that are unbelievers, they that are in their natural state, they that are without God in the world.

11. But let us attend to the reason of the thing. Why cannot the Almighty sanctify the soul while it is in the body? Cannot he sanctify you while you are in this house, as well as in the open air? Can the walls of brick or stone hinder him? No more can these walls of flesh and blood hinder him a moment from sanctifying you throughout. He can just as easily save you from all sin in the body as out of the body. ‘But has he promised thus to save us from sin while we are in the body?’ Undoubtedly he has: For a promise is implied in every commandment of God: Consequently in that, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. For this and every other commandment is given, not to the dead, but to the living. It is expressed in the words above recited, that we should walk in holiness before him all the days of our life. I have dwelt the longer on this, because it is the grand argument of those that oppose salvation from sin; and also, because it has not been so frequently and so fully answered: Whereas the arguments taken from Scripture have been answered a hundred times over.

12. But a still more plausible objection remains, taken from experience; which is, that there are no living witnesses of this salvation from sin. In answer to this, I allow, (1.) That there are not many. Even in this sense, there are not many fathers. Such is our hardness of heart, such our slowness to believe what both the Prophets and Apostles have spoke, that there are few, exceeding few, true witnesses of the great salvation. (2.) I allow that there are false witnesses, who either deceive their own souls, and speak of the things they know not, or speak lies in hypocrisy. And I have frequently wondered, that we have not more of both sorts. It is nothing strange, that men of warm imaginations should deceive themselves in this matter. Many do the same with regard to justification: They imagine they are justified, and are not. But though many imagine it falsely, yet there are some that are truly justified. And thus though many imagine they are sanctified, and are not, yet there are some that are really sanctified. (3.) I allow that some who once enjoyed full salvation have now totally lost it. They once walked in glorious liberty, giving God their whole heart, rejoicing, evermore, praying without ceasing, and in every thing giving thanks. But it is past. They now are shorn of their strength, and become like other men. Yet perhaps they do not give up their confidence; they still have a sense of his pardoning love. But even this is frequently assaulted by doubts and fears, so that they hold it with a trembling hand

13. ‘Nay, this,’ say some pious and sensible men, ‘is the very thing which we contend for. We grant, it may please God to make some of his children for a time unspeakably holy and happy. We will not deny, that they may enjoy all the holiness and happiness which you speak of. But it is only for a time: God never designed that it should continue to their lives’ end. Consequently, sin is only suspended: It is not

destroyed.’ This you affirm. But it is a thing of so deep importance that it cannot be allowed without clear and cogent proof. And where is the proof? We know that, in general, the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. He does not repent of any gifts which he hath bestowed upon the children of men. And how does the contrary appear, with regard to this particular gift of God? Why should we imagine, that he will make an exception with respect to the most precious of all his gifts on this side heaven? Is he not as able to give it us always, as to give it once? as able to give it for fifty years, as for one day? And how can it be proved, that he is not willing to continue this his loving kindness? How is this supposition, that he is not willing, consistent with the positive assertion of the Apostle? who, after exhorting the Christians at Thessalonica, and in them all Christians in all ages, to ‘rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks, — immediately adds, (as if on purpose to answer those who denied, not the power, but the will of God to work in them,) ‘For this is the will of God concerning you in Christ Jesus.’ Nay, and it is remarkable, that, after he had delivered that glorious promise, (such it properly is,) in the twenty-third verse, ‘The very God of peace shall sanctify you wholly: And the whole of you’, (so it is in the original,) the spirit, the soul, and the body, shall be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; he adds again, ‘Faithful is he that hath called you, who also will do it. He will not only sanctify you wholly, but will preserve you in that state until he comes to receive you unto himself.’ 14. Agreeably to this is the plain matter of fact. Several persons have enjoyed this blessing, without any interruption, for many years. Several enjoy it at this day. And not a few have enjoyed it unto their death, as they have declared with their latest breath; calmly witnessing that God had saved them from all sin till their spirit returned to God. 15. As to the whole of the objections taken from experience, I desire it may be observed farther, either the persons objected to have attained Christian perfection, or they have not. If they have not, whatever objections are brought against them strike wide of the mark. For they are not the persons we are talking of: Therefore, whatever they are or do is beside the question. But if they have attained it, if they answer the description given under the nine preceding articles, no reasonable objection can lie against them. They are superior to all censure; and every tongue that riseth up against them will they utterly condemn. 16. ‘But I never saw one,’ continues the objector, that answered my idea of perfection. It may be so. And it is probable (as I observed elsewhere) you never will. For your idea includes abundantly too much; even freedom from those infirmities which are not separable from a spirit that is connected with flesh and blood. But if you keep to the account that is given above, and allow for the weakness of human understanding, you may see at this day undeniable instances of genuine, scriptural perfection.

III. 1. It only remains, in the Third place, to expostulate a little with the opposers of this perfection. Now permit me to ask, Why are you so angry with those who profess to have attained this? and so mad (I cannot give it any softer title) against Christian perfection? — against the most glorious gift which God ever gave to the children of men upon earth? View it in every one of the preceding points of light, and see what it contains that is either odious or terrible; that is calculated to excite either hatred or fear in any reasonable creature. What rational objection can you have to the loving the Lord your God with all your heart? Why should you be afraid of it? Would it do you any hurt? Would it lessen your happiness, either in this world or the world to come? And why should you be unwilling that others should give him their whole heart? or that they should love their neighbors as themselves? — yea, as Christ hath loved us? Is this detestable? Is it the proper object of hatred? Or is it the most amiable thing under the sun? Is it proper to move terror? Is it not rather desirable in the highest degree? 2. Why are you so averse to having in you the whole mind which was in Christ Jesus? — all the affections, all the tempers and dispositions, which were in him while he dwelt among men? Why should you be afraid of this? Would it be any worse for you, were God to work in you this very hour all the mind that was in him? If not, why should you hinder others from seeking this blessing? or be displeased at those who think they have attained it? Is any thing more lovely? any thing more to be desired by every child of man? 3. Why are you averse to having the whole ‘fruit of the Spirit’ — ‘love, joy, peace, longsuffering, meekness, gentleness, fidelity, goodness, temperance?’ Why should you be afraid of having all these planted in your inmost soul? As against these ‘there is no law’, so there cannot be any reasonable objection. Surely nothing is more desirable, than that all these tempers should take deep root in your heart; nay, in the hearts of all that name the name of Christ; yea, of all the inhabitants of the earth. 4. What reason have you to be afraid of, or to entertain any aversion to, the being ‘renewed in the whole image of him that created you?’ Is not this more desirable than any thing under heaven? Is it not consummately amiable? What can you wish for in comparison of this, either for your own soul, or for those for whom you entertain the strongest and tenderest affection? And when you enjoy this, what remains but to be ‘changed from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord?’ 5. Why should you be averse to universal holiness, — the same thing under another name? Why should you entertain any prejudice against this, or look upon it with apprehension? whether you understand by that term the being inwardly conformed to the whole image and will of God, or an outward behaviour in every point suitable to that conformity. Can you conceive any thing more amiable than this? anything more desirable? Set prejudice aside, and surely you will desire to see it diffused over all the

earth. 6. Is perfection (to vary the expression) the being ‘sanctified throughout, in spirit, soul, and body?’ What lover of God and man can be averse to this, or entertain frightful apprehensions of it? Is it not, in your best moments, your desire to be all of a piece? — all consistent with yourself? — all faith, all meekness, all love? And suppose you were once possessed of this glorious liberty, would not you wish to continue therein? — to be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ? 7. For what cause should you that are children of God be averse to, or afraid of, presenting yourselves, your souls and bodies, as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God? — to God your Creator, your Redeemer, your Sanctifier? Can any thing be more desirable than this entire self-dedication to him? And is it not your wish that all mankind should unite in this reasonable service? Surely no one can be averse to this, without being an enemy to all mankind. 8. And why should you be afraid of, or averse to, what is naturally implied in this; namely, the offering up all our thoughts, and words, and actions, as a spiritual sacrifice to God, acceptable to him through the blood and intercession of his well beloved Son? Surely you cannot deny that this is good and profitable to men, as well as pleasing to God. Should you not then devoutly pray that both you and all mankind may thus worship him in spirit and in truth? 9. Suffer me to ask one question more. Why should any man of reason and religion be either afraid of, or averse to, salvation from all sin? Is not sin the greatest evil on this side hell? And if so, does it not naturally follow, that an entire deliverance from it is one of the greatest blessings on this side heaven? How earnestly then should it be prayed for by all the children of God! By sin I mean a voluntary transgression of a known law. Are you averse to being delivered from this? Are you afraid of such a deliverance? Do you then love sin that you are so unwilling to part with it? Surely no. You do not love either the devil or his works: You rather wish to be totally delivered from them; to have sin rooted out both of your life and your heart. 10. I have frequently observed, and not without surprise, that the opposers of perfection are more vehement against it when it is placed in this view, than in any other whatsoever. They will allow all you say of the love of God and man; of the mind which was in Christ; of the fruit of the Spirit; of the image of God; of universal holiness; of entire self-dedication; of sanctification in spirit, soul, and body; yea, and of the offering up of all our thoughts, words, and actions, as a sacrifice to God; — all this they will allow so ‘we will allow sin, a little sin, to remain in us till death.’ 11. Pray compare this with that remarkable passage in John Bunyan’s ‘Holy War’ When Immanuel, says he, ‘had driven Diabolus and all his forces out of the city of Mansoul, Diabolus preferred a petition to Immanuel, that he might have only a small part of the city. When this was rejected, he begged to have only a little room within the walls.’ ‘But’ Immanuel answered, ‘he should have no

place in it at all; no, not to rest the sole of his foot. Had not the good old man forgot himself? Did not the force of truth so prevail over him here as utterly to overturn his own system? — to assert perfection in the clearest manner? For if this is not salvation from sin, I cannot tell what is. 12. ‘No,’ says a great man, ‘this is the error of errors: I hate it from my heart. I pursue it through all the world with fire and sword.’ Nay, why so vehement? Do you seriously think there is no error under heaven equal to this? Here is something which I cannot understand. Why are those that oppose salvation from sin (few excepted) so eager, — I had almost said, furious? Are you fighting *pro aris et focis*? for God and your country? for all you have in the world? for all that is near and dear unto you? for your liberty, your life? In God's name, why are you so fond of sin? What good has it ever done you? what good is it ever likely to do you, either in this world, or in the world to come? And why are you so violent against those that hope for a deliverance from it? Have patience with us, if we are in an error; yea, suffer us to enjoy our error. If we should not attain it, the very expectation of this deliverance gives us present comfort; yea, and ministers strength to resist those enemies which we expect to conquer. If you could persuade us to despair of that victory, we should give over the contest. Now we are saved by hope: From this very hope a degree of salvation springs. Be not angry at those who are ‘*felices errore suo*, happy in their mistake’. Else, be their opinion right or wrong, your temper is undeniably sinful. Bear then with us, as we do with you; and see whether the Lord will not deliver us! whether he is not able, yea, and willing, to save them to the uttermost that come unto God through him” (Wesley’s sermon, *On Perfection*, Vol. 6, 415-424).

Thus, the objections that Wesley himself faced concerning his doctrine of *perfection* are listed and answered by Wesley himself. As it can be seen from Wesley himself, he found no validity in the objections, nor, according to Wesley, did the objections deny or disprove his teaching on *perfection*.

Excursus C: Objectors to the Mystical teaching on the “Spiritual Marriage”

The objectors will not be listed. What is important is the objections themselves and not those who object. The reason for this is: it is the objections that may undermine the teaching concerning the *spiritual marriage*. T. Dubay summarizes these objections and offers a counter to these objections. I will quote T. Dubay for the purpose of giving these objections and his counters. He writes that “the most frequent objection bears on the *nada* doctrine, the drastic detachment taught by the Mystics. Death to one’s senses and desires is unhealthy if not impossible, it is said, ‘We understand better today that we can find God not in negation but in affirmation, joy and celebration. Mortification, penance and self-denial are considered to be of the old school, whereas an emphasis on delight and jubilation is more appealing nowadays.’ T. Dubay’s counter is: ‘People who argue against detachment and self-denial are perhaps unaware that they are simultaneously rejecting the same teaching found in the New Testament. Jesus lays it down that to be his disciple, anyone and everyone must ‘renounce *all* that he possesses, not just part or most of it (Luke 14:33). In Titus 2:12 we read that ‘what we have to do is give up *everything* that does not lead to God.’ Teresa and the Mystics ask not a whit more or less.”

The second objection concerns those who have “dabbled in Christian and oriental mysticisms and consider that they are more or less indistinguishable.”

His counter is that “an expert will not make this astonishing mistake of not recognizing the vast gulf between the two. Buddhist ‘contemplation’ is impersonal, not a love matter at all, whereas Christian mysticism is preeminently a profound personal love union with God.”

The third objection T. Dubay lists concerns the Teresian mansions: Those who make this objection claim that the Teresian mansions have psychological explanations.

“His counter is that the best response to these objections is experience, the experience of advanced contemplation” (*Fire Within*, 5-8).

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