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The Place of Romans 7 in the Argument of Romans – (Yet) Another New Look...

Dan Wu

Romans 7 has an integral place in the argument of the letter's central section (ch. 5–8), which expounds the assurance of the great hope of glory that comes with the gospel. Within this section, chapter 7 forms a validation of the consistency of this gospel against misunderstanding and false inference. In seeking to show its consistency, Paul demonstrates its trustworthiness, and hence help the Romans to stand firm in the gospel of grace. This article will examine in outline the purpose and theme of Romans, turn to an analysis of Romans 5–8, then treat chapter 7 in depth, before drawing some conclusions from the study.

1. Introduction

The issue of the place of Romans 7 in the argument of the letter hardly needs introduction. If the seventy weeks of Daniel 9:24-27 are the 'dismal swamp of Old Testament criticism',¹ then the 'P' of Romans 7 may well be its New Testament counterpart. This article is a fresh attempt to clarify the place and significance of Romans 7 within the flow of the letter overall, and especially in its key central section, chapters 5–8. A brief conclusion on the consistency of such a reading, its benefit in understanding Romans 7 and some implications for further study will follow.

2. The Occasion, Purpose and Theme of Romans

A proper discussion of Romans 7 must begin with an examination of the occasion, purpose and theme of Romans; for as Donfried notes, 'if one does not know the original intention of a document one can hardly interpret its contemporary meaning with accuracy and precision'.² Unfortunately, this has proved to be no easy task, especially in light of the rise of various critical methods over the last two centuries, and debate continues on. However, we may make the following comments.

Occasion

We are given clues to the occasion of the letter in 1:8-15 and 15:14-33. Here

Paul outlines his plans, which fit well with the accounts in Acts 20:3ff. Also, Paul's host, Gaius, mentioned in Romans 16:23, is most likely the same person as referred to in 1 Corinthians 1:14. From this evidence, we may say that Romans was written during the three months Paul stayed in Corinth (Acts 20:3), before returning to Jerusalem in 56/7 AD.³

Purpose

The picture is not so clear when we approach the purpose of the letter. Since Baur's work, there has been a move away from Melancthon's standpoint that Romans constitutes a *christianae religionis compendium*,⁴ 'more or less timeless truth about God and humankind presented in a consistent system of thought'.⁵ Instead, focus has been on ascertaining the concrete historical setting for the letter as the determinant of purpose.⁶

In this search, three basic approaches have arisen—each with a seemingly infinite number of permutations—one which attributes the purpose of Romans to *Paul's personal concerns*, rather than the Roman situation (either his anxiety at the upcoming meeting with the Jerusalem council⁷ or the mission to Spain);⁸ the second which sees Paul addressing *the Roman situation itself* (either in terms of the apostolicity of the church⁹ or Jew-Gentile relations within the church),¹⁰ and finally the third, in which *multiple purposes* are suggested.¹¹

Given such an array of choices, a statement of purpose seems an elusive exercise. However, a suggestion may be made. In ascertaining the purpose of the letter, of prime importance should be *what is explicitly stated by the author in the text of the letter*, rather than what may be inferred from the 'sub-text', whether historico-cultural or theological.¹² We may outline what Paul himself says in the letter's introduction and conclusion as follows.¹³

Paul has been set apart for the gospel of God. This gospel is what God promised in the prophets and brought to pass in his Son (1:1-4). Further, he and his fellows (apostles?) were commissioned to bring about 'the obedience of faith' (1:5). He desires greatly to see the Romans, in order to strengthen them (1:11), which is then further explained as 'mutual encouragement of faith' (1:12). In 1:13 he gives his reason for wanting to visit them, namely to 'reap some harvest among you as well as the rest of the Gentiles'. He then brings his introduction to a climax with his obligation to preach to all, his eagerness to fulfill that obligation (1:15), and his 'unashamedness' of the gospel.

In his conclusion, Paul says he has written to them ‘boldly by way of reminder’ (15:15). He further mentions the reason for his delay in coming to see them—his mission work in the East (15:22-3)—before expressing his wish to see them and be helped on his journey by them (15:24). He then appeals for their support in prayer (15:30-33). He closes with a warning and exhortation not to move away from the gospel (16:17-20), before a final recapitulation of his introduction, with the key concept being their ‘strengthening’ (16:25).

From the above, we may say that Paul’s primary purpose in writing Romans was the strengthening of the Roman Christians by the gospel. Paul wrote primarily in order to fulfil his apostolic commission to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, which the letter itself forms a part of.¹⁴ Further, given the references to shame, persecution, division and deception, he writes to defend the gospel as the true and legitimate fulfilment of the Old Testament plan of God (1:2)—not so much for his sake, needing to justify or prove himself to the Romans, but by way of ‘reminder’, and ‘strengthening’; in other words, for their sake, that they might stand firm in the truth against error and persecution.

Theme

Given the tight interweaving of purpose and theme, only a brief statement will be made here.¹⁵ As with purpose, there have been suggestions that Romans contains multiple themes, which render the attempt to find a single one reductionistic. Thompson argues that this is the case with the two most popular suggestions in modern scholarship: the ‘righteousness of God’ and ‘Salvation–History’. After demonstrating their inadequacy as the integrating theme of Romans, the alternative Thompson suggests (with which this article agrees) is that the theme of Romans is ‘the gospel’.¹⁶ Thompson draws attention to the thematic statement of 1:16-17, and points out that the focus of the verses is neither ‘the righteousness of God’, nor ‘the power of God’, although both feature. The focus lies in the referent of both, the gospel (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον).¹⁷ Thompson sums up—

Only ‘the gospel’ is broad enough to encompass the entire argument of this epistle. εὐαγγέλιον and its cognates are prominent both at the beginning and end of Romans, forming an *inclusio* which underlines the importance of this concept...it is the gospel itself which holds the various topics of Romans together.¹⁸

3. Romans 5–8

The Extent of the Unit: 6–8 or 5–8?

We now turn to a discussion of the unit in which chapter 7 falls. As Byrne notes, ‘an appreciation of the structure of a Pauline letter is vital for a correct understanding of any particular passage’.¹⁹ In his discussion on Romans 1–8, Byrne notes that earlier scholars placed the division at chapter 6, with chapters 1–5 treating justification, and ch. 6–8 sanctification. More recently, however, the break has been placed after chapters 4, with chapters 1–4 concerned with justification and chapters 5–8 concerned with the new life which results from this justification; a view this article supports. There are several strengths to this view.

- (a) There are strong verbal and thematic ties between 5:1–11 and 8:18–39: love, justify, glory, peace, hope, tribulation, save and endurance, which provide support for a coherent unit from chapters 5–8, forming somewhat of an *inclusio*.²⁰
- (b) The question of 6:1 follows on directly from 5:21. It would seem strange to introduce a major break here, given such immediate continuity of thought.
- (c) While an argument may be made on grammatical grounds for locating chapter 5 with chapter 4,²¹ it makes better sense to take 5:1 as beginning a new section, albeit based on the material of chapters 1–4. The use of the participle *δικαιωθέντες* lends weight to this, as it ‘sums up the central teaching of Romans 1–4’.²² Now that Paul has made his point about justification, he is ready to develop the next stage of his argument.
- (d) Most compellingly, in our view, is the fact that the subject matter of ch. 6–8, indicated by Paul’s rhetorical questions in 6:1, 15, 7:7, 13—sin, law, death, righteousness, grace and life—are transparently driven by the material in ch. 5, particularly the summary of 5:18–21. It is our view that 5:12–21 forms the basis of the ensuing discussion of chapters 6–8.

In summary, the whole unit (ch. 5–8), needs to be taken into account in order to properly discern and understand the argument of chapters 6–8, and thus the place chapter 7 in that argument.

The Theme, Structure and Argument of Romans 5–8

Theme

It has been recognised of late in Pauline scholarship that the overall theme of ch. 5–8 is the assurance of glory.²³ This may be seen from the *inclusio* of 5:1–

11 and 8:18-39,²⁴ both of which ‘affirm, against the threat of tribulation and suffering, the certainty of the Christian’s final salvation’.²⁵ On the basis of the justification brought about by the gospel of Christ in chapters 1–4, the believer may be certain of being brought to glory.

Structure

Suggesting a satisfying structure for chapters 5–8 is a difficult task. Several suggestions have been made, but they do not seem to fit Paul’s own. Nygren famously proposed a thematic sequence of freedom from powers: wrath (ch. 5), sin (ch. 6.), law (ch. 7) and death (ch. 8).²⁶ However, this view has likewise been famously dismissed as an ‘overly simple...thematic proposal’ that does not take into account ‘the subtleties and complexities of Paul’s argument’.²⁷

Moo has suggested a chiasmic structure based around the *inclusio* passages:

- A 5:1-11 – assurance of future glory
- B 5:12-21 – basis for this assurance in the work of Christ
- C. 6:1-23 – the problem of sin
- C’ 7:1-25 – the problem of the law
- B’ 8:1-17 – ground of assurance in the work of Christ, mediated by the Spirit
- A’ 8:18-39 – assurance of future glory.²⁸

Although more sensitive to Paul’s train of thought than Nygren, we may offer the same critique of Moo, particularly in his dealing with 7:1-8:17. As we shall see, the relationship between them is not as simple as he suggests.

On the other side of the spectrum, Witherington and Hyatt, basing their reading of Paul on classical rhetoric, offer no less than five separate arguments in this section, with one of those arguments in four sub-sections.²⁹ If Nygren and Moo may be accused of excessive systematization, Witherington and Hyatt are open to the charge of making Paul’s argument appear somewhat disjointed and piecemeal.³⁰

In attempting to set forth a satisfying structure, we need to pay careful attention to the actual thought-flow of the chapters. We should also note that Paul’s argument, both here and in the letter in general, does not come in the form of a simple linear progression of thought. While there is a discernible structure and

movement, there is also much overlap of material and elaboration of earlier ‘sketches’. As Tobin puts it, ‘each successive stage is a development of, and a response to, the previous stage’,³¹ to which we may add Wright’s likening of Romans to a symphony overture, in which themes developed later in the piece are hinted at, or a master painter’s work, which is begun with broad brush strokes, with the details then being filled in. We thus suggest the following structure:

5:1-11	Assurance of peace, hope and glory in the gospel
5:12-21	The basis of this hope: the triumph of grace over sin
6:1-14	Sin and grace: union with Christ means death to sin, life to God
6:15-23	Sin, grace and law: freedom from sin means slavery to God
7:1-6	The believer dead to the law, to bear fruit for God
7:7-25	The old life in the flesh, resulting in condemnation
8:1-17	The new life in the Spirit, resulting in eternal life
8:18-39	Assurance of final glory

Argument

Given the overarching theme spelt out above, this paper contends that the argument of chapters 5–8 is to validate the truth and consistency of this gospel, and hence its trustworthiness. The assurance of the believer is guaranteed by the surety of the gospel in which he or she believes. Thus Paul begins in 5:1-11 with an initial sketch of his theme of assurance, which will be returned to in greater development in 8:18-39. He then gives the basis for assurance, in the conquest of Christ over sin in 5:12-21. Of particular importance to the present study is the conclusion presented in 5:18-21. There Paul presents in kernel the key terms and relationships that will dominate ch. 6-8: law, sin, grace, death, life, righteousness.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8:1-17 validate, elaborate and defend this basis in the face of misunderstanding and criticism, given the parameters drawn from 5:18-21. Chapter 6 launches a series of formal questions (indicated by the construction $\text{T}\acute{\iota}\ \sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu$ and Paul’s emphatic reply $\mu\grave{\eta}\ \gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\iota\tau\omicron$). Paul presents a series of potential, but misled objections to the gospel of grace, which are then successively dismantled and shown to be without merit. The two sections (ch. 6:1-14 and 15-23) are introduced by similar questions, but with different foci. Moo notes that the question in 6:1 is ‘a question of sinning *in order to gain more grace*’, while in 6:15 it is a question of ‘sinning *because of grace*’.³³

Through answering these two questions, though, Paul develops the thought of 5:21, the reign of grace leading to life (cf 6:12-14, 21-22).

The language of slavery raises for Paul the issue of the Law and its function within Salvation History. In chapter 7, he expounds what was said in 5:20, and explains how the Law functioned to condemn those in the flesh. However, that condemnation has paradoxically been fulfilled in us *through Christ*, thus resulting in freedom for believers from the Law. This freedom is stated in 7:4-5, and developed in 8:1-17.

Paul thus draws out the themes raised in 5:12-21, the basis of assurance, and through his engagement with objections to the gospel, strengthens and validates the gospel, enriching his readers' understanding of God's plan in the gospel, before returning to a now developed statement of assurance in 8:18-39.

4. Exegesis of Romans 7

Preliminary Observations

We are now in a position to commence closer examination of chapter 7. First, however, two preliminary observations must be made regarding the understanding of chapter 7. In order to grasp it, we will engage briefly with Dunn's work on the passage.

In his 1974 Tyndale lecture, Dunn stated of Romans 7 'our understanding of it will in large measure determine our understanding of Paul's theology as a whole, particularly his anthropology and soteriology'.³⁴ The key to this understanding, for Dunn, revolved around the identification of the subject of verses 14-25. Dunn's own position was that the passage described Paul's continuing experience as a believer, reflecting the now-not yet tension of existence in the eschatological overlap.³⁵ Despite giving a thorough treatment on the subject, however, Dunn made two serious errors which have skewed discussion away from the true focus of the chapter.

Dunn's first error was to miss the interpretive centre of the chapter. The meaning of the passage does not revolve around verses 14-25, but verses 1-6. In these verses, the main point of the chapter is made: in Christ, the believer was put to death to the law, in order to belong to Christ (v. 4).³⁶ The rest of the passage develops this point.

His second error was to mistake the main subject matter of the verses. Dunn argues that it revolves around the exact referent of the ἔργω. However, as Moo and others have seen, ‘Anthropology...is a subordinate issue in Romans 7. The main topic is the Mosaic law’.³⁷ While this is broadly correct, we will have cause to nuance Moo’s view after examination of chapter 7.

Structure and Exegetical Reflections

The structure of chapter 7 and the flow of Paul’s argument may be summarized as follows:

- 7:1-6 — We died to the law so that we live for Christ
 - 7:1 — general principle: the law only binds as long as a person lives
 - 7:2-3 — illustration from the law
 - 7:4 — we died to the law through the body of Christ, to bear fruit for God
 - 7:5 — when in the flesh, sin worked in our members for death
 - 7:6 — now, released from law through death, we serve in new life
- 7:7-25 — when we were in the flesh
 - 7:7-12 — law and sin produced death
 - 7:13-25 — the inability of the flesh results in condemnation
- 8:1-17 — now, we serve in new life
 - 8:1-11 — there is no condemnation
 - 8:12-17 — walk by the Spirit

The above structure may be supported by several exegetical observations:³⁸

- (a) The foundational place of 7:1-6 in the chapter is strengthened by its grammatical and verbal links to chapter 6. Grammatically, ἡ ἀγνοεῖτε ‘implies that Paul is elaborating on a point he has just made’.³⁹ Verbally, there are several parallels between 7:1-6 and chapter 6.⁴⁰ These indicate ‘vv. 1-6 serve structurally as a gathering up of the main thrust of chapter 6, but now with reference to the law...introducing the chief emphases of chapter 7’.⁴¹
- (b) Verses 1-4 state that the believer is free from the law, having died with Christ. Despite the difficulty of the illustration, the overall thrust of the passage, expressed in verse 4, is clear. The believer has died to the law in

the death of Christ. The use of the passive verb ἐθανατώθητε hints at the solution to the inability of the flesh to fulfil the Law, which will come in 8:3: God did what those in the flesh could not *for* them.

- (c) Verse 5 explains verse 4 (note the explanatory γὰρ), speaking of the time in the past (ὄτε) when ‘we’ were living in the flesh, under the law. It should also be noted that the key category under scrutiny in the chapter is not pre-Christian, Christian, autobiographical or representative Jew, but ‘fleshly’ versus ‘spiritual’ (c.f. 7:5, 14, 18, 8:3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13). 7:7-25 speaks of anybody who lives ‘in the flesh’.
- (d) 7:6 draws a contrast with 7:5, and speaks of the present (νῦν δὲ) in which ‘we’ are freed from the law, and now serve in the Spirit. Thus 7:5-6 are programmatic for what follows, with 7:7-25 spelling out life ‘in the flesh’ and 8:1-17 the new life of the Spirit. In particular, the νῦν δὲ anticipates the ἄ ρα νῦν of 8:1. It should also be noted that at 8:9, we are again ‘not in the flesh’, strengthening the view that 7:5-6 present a snapshot of what is to come.
- (e) 7:14-25 is not the be-all and end-all of the interpretation of ch. 7. That place belongs to 7:1-6. Instead, its part in the chapter is clearly to expound 7:13. In 7:13, Paul asks how it is that the good law can produce death in him. His answer in 7:14-25 is that his flesh is of such inability (v. 18) and perversion (v. 23) that in its grasp, the good law is twisted around to become the ‘law of sin’ (v. 23), resulting in death (v. 24).
- (f) Commentators have noted the shift of tense from Aorist in 7:7-13 to Present in 7:14-25. This has led some to conclude that in 7:14-25, Paul speaks of a current experience, and hence of the Christian life. However, verbal aspect studies have demonstrated that this need not be the case. The Present tense, indicating imperfective aspect, may simply mark Paul’s shift from narration (vv. 7-13) to description (vv. 14-25). This accords well with d), above.
- (g) As noted in the preliminary observations, the referent of the pronoun ἐγώ, has been a storm-centre for commentators. We will not attempt a full discussion of the various positions here, but will note that in addition to the work on verbal aspect referred to above, the rise of Rhetorical Criticism has brought increasing awareness of ‘Speech in Character’

(προσωποποιία) as a form of address. It is at least likely that Paul is making some use of this technique in communicating the experience of life in the flesh.

- (h) The way that ὁ νόμος is taken will affect our understanding of the passage, particularly in 7:21-25. Does it refer to the Mosaic Law, Graeco-Roman law or a general principle? Morrison and Woodhouse have demonstrated thoroughly the validity of taking the references to ‘law’ in chapter 7 as consistently referring to the Law of Moses; the adjectival genitives then refer to the Law as it is used and twisted by the flesh, so becoming ‘the law of sin’ (τῷ νόμῳ τῆς ἁμαρτίας, 7:23). Consistent with his use earlier in Romans (3:1-20, and especially 5:18-21), sin and law together result in increase of sin, and the resulting condemnation.
- (i) As noted previously, 8:1ff develops 7:6, the new life in the Spirit. However, it also follows on from 7:25b grammatically (ἄρα νύν), and forms with it ‘one continuous argument’. The thrust of this argument is ‘It is this good law of Moses that condemns me (v. 25b) therefore there is no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus because they are set free from that law’.⁵² In saying this, it must be noted that we are suggesting that 8:1-17 be seen as part of the argument of ‘chapter 7’, in actuality, 7:1-8:17.

In summary, it may be seen that chapter 7 validates the place of the Law in the gospel. Paul’s gospel, contrary to accusation, is not anti-Law. Instead, in the gospel, the Law is given its proper place—the slavery of those in the flesh, such that they might come to see their sinfulness (7:13), realise their plight (7:21-24), and come to be freed from the flesh through the death of Christ (8:1-2). In this way, it explains and elaborates 5:20, ‘the law came in to increase the trespass’, and in so doing, ‘blackened the dark’ in preparation for the blaze of the glory of the grace of Christ.

We may also return at this point to Moo’s understanding of this passage. For Moo, the main subject of the passage is the Mosaic Law. However, this is not quite accurate, for if Paul is indeed here explaining 5:20, then the focus is not so much on a defence of the Law in and of itself, as a validation that *the gospel accounts for the true place of the Law*, and thus is a trustworthy basis for assurance of salvation.

5. Conclusions

Paul wrote the letter to the Romans as part of his commission as apostle to the Gentiles, seeking to strengthen them in their faith, and to confirm their trust in the gospel as the only way of salvation before God. Chapters 5-8 take up the theme of the assurance of future glory that belongs to the believer. Romans 5:12-8:17 spells out the basis of this assurance, in the plan of God to overcome the sin of humanity in Christ. Within the argument of these chapters, ch. 7 shows the place of the Mosaic Law in God's plan, both in convicting sinful humans of the helplessness of the flesh, and in leading to a validation of the gospel as 'the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes' (Romans 1:16), and hence completely worthy of the Romans' trust.

Two final implications may be drawn from this study. First, we must maintain the focus of the passage. Chapter 7 is not a 'defence of the goodness of the Law'. Paul does state that the Law is good, but this is not the main subject matter of the text. The main subject matter, as noted before, is the truth of the gospel, in which the Law is given its proper place. This may seem a minor distinction, but it is an important one. Tobin, for example, suggests that in Romans 7 Paul wanted his readers 'to understand that his view of the law [was] significantly different from what he wrote in Galatians, moving from being highly critical of it to 'defend[ing] the goodness of the Law and the holiness of its commandments'.⁵³ This is to over-read the goodness of the Law into the passage, and ultimately to attribute inconsistency to Paul's gospel.⁵⁴ His assertion that the chapter concerns 'The Goodness of the Law and its Limitations' indicates that he has mistaken the subject matter and Paul's argument in chapters 5-8, and hence skewed both.

Second, the place of chapter 7 in the argument of chapters 5-8 reinforces the fact that the Christian life or sanctification is not achieved by obedience to the Mosaic code. When taken in context, the Law clearly belongs together with slavery to sin and death—as Paul says, 'you died to the Law' (7:4), and 'we serve not under the written code but in the new life of the Spirit' (7:5). Thus Wright's suggestion that the new life consists of Spirit-enabled obedience to the Torah should be rejected.⁵⁵ As Morrison and Woodhouse put it, 'The process then is not one of setting ourselves to defeat the flesh by obeying the law but one of circumventing the flesh altogether by counting it dead and setting our minds on the Spirit'.⁵⁶

However, it must also be said that the place of the Spirit in ethics has been an area of weakness in Evangelical thinking. By contrast, for Paul, it seems to be the basis. The Spirit, who makes believers sons of God, is also the instrument by which ‘you put to death the misdeeds of the body’ (Rom. 8:13). Perhaps more thought and exegetical work is needed in this area of our thinking.

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ENDNOTES

1. A. Montgomery, *Daniel* (ICC, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1926), pp. 400-01.
2. K. P. Donfried, *The Romans Debate*, K. P. Donfried (ed.), (Minnesota: Ausburg, 1977), p. xi.
3. The dating and occasion is a rare area of agreement across scholarship on Romans. Even Bornkamm, for whom Romans is Paul’s ‘last will and testament’, is forced to date it in this period, and then ‘backdate’ or ascribe pseudonymity to apparently later letters, G. Bornkamm, ‘The Letter to the Romans as Paul’s Last Will and Testament’ in *The Romans Debate*, pp. 17-31.
4. C.f. Melancthon, *Commentary on Romans*, F. Kramer (trans.), (St. Louis: Concordia, 1992):11; ‘It contains the foremost and enduring topics of Christian doctrine.’
5. K. Haacker, *The Theology of Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, NTT, J. Dunn (ed.), Cambridge: CUP, 2003), p. 1.
6. Cf. A. J. M. Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans*, SNTW, J. Riches (ed.), (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988).
7. E.g. J. Jervell, ‘The Letter to Jerusalem’ in *Romans Debate*, 61-74.
8. E.g. R. Jewett, “Romans” in *The Cambridge Companion to St. Paul*, J. Dunn (ed.), Cambridge: CUP, 2003), pp. 91-104.
9. E.g. Klein, “Paul’s Purpose in Writing the Epistle to the Romans’ in *Romans Debate*,” p. 48, who argues that the issue behind Romans is Paul’s belief in the ‘need for an apostolic foundation’ for the church to be legitimate. Klein deems this ‘a shockingly authoritarian understanding of the apostolic office’. A better attempt has been made by Jervis, who sees the key issue not so much as the Romans’ lack, but Paul’s responsibility as their commissioned apostle to preach to them. See L. Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans: A Comparative Letter Structure Investigation* (JSNT Supp. 55, Sheffield: JSOT, 1991).
10. E.g. N. T. Wright, “Romans” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible: A Commentary in*

- Twelve Volumes* (Vol. X, Nashville: Abingdon Press: 2002), pp. 403-4.
11. E.g. D. Moo, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 20.
 12. This is not to deny the importance of these factors, but simply to say that if Paul tells his readers why he is writing, then that should take pride of place. For a fuller critique of the various positions, see M. Thompson, *The Christian Birthright: Personal Assurance in Romans 8* (Unpublished M. Theol. Thesis: A. C. T.), 1993.
 13. I.e. the 'Epistolary Frame'.
 14. Cf. Dahl, who describes Romans as 'preaching the gospel in writing': N. Dahl, "The Missionary Theology in the Epistle to the Romans," in *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), p. 75.
 15. This section is indebted to Thompson (1993), pp. 22-33.
 16. C.f. P. Stuhlmacher, "The Theme of Romans," *Australian Biblical Review* 36 (1988): 32.
 17. Thompson sees 'the gospel' as the referent of ἐν αὐτῷ in 1:17. While this is the majority view, there is a potential undermining argument if the referent is in fact τῷ/πιστεῦ, οἰοντι, the believer, which is grammatically possible.
 18. Thompson (1993), pp. 31-2.
 19. Brendan Byrne, "Living out the Righteousness of God: The Contribution of Rom 6:1-8:13 to an Understanding of Paul's Ethical Presuppositions," *CBQ* 43 (1981), 557.
 20. E.g. D. Moo, *Romans* (NICNT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).
 21. οὐ=ν is an inferential conjunction, a 'result or inference from what precedes' (BDAG).
 22. Moo (1996), p. 298.
 23. Moo, (1996), p. 302; Thompson (1993), p. 50.
 24. Cf. point a) in 'The Extent of the Unit'
 25. Moo (1996), p. 302.
 26. A. Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1949), 265-7.
 27. P. Meyer, "The Worm at the Core of the Apple: Exegetical Reflections on Romans 7," in *The Word in this World: Essays in New Testament Exegesis and Theology*, J. Carroll (ed.), NTL (London: John Knox, 2004), p. 67.
 28. Moo (1996), 294.
 29. B. Witherington III & D. Hyatt, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), viii-ix.
 30. To be fair, in the body of the commentary they follow the flow of Paul's thought. However, this flow does not seem to be reflected in their suggested structure.
 31. T. Tobin, *Paul's Rhetoric in its Contexts* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004), p. 86.

32. Wright (2002), Introduction.
33. Moo (1996), p. 398, italics original.
34. J. Dunn, "Rom. 7:14-25 in the Theology of Paul," *TZ* 31/5 (1975): 257.
35. *Ibid.*, 272-3.
36. Cf. T. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), p. 349: 'The central proposition in this unit is found in verse 4'.
37. Moo (1996), p. 409. See also Wright (2002), p. 549.
38. Observations (b) to (e) are indebted to B. Morrison and J. Woodhouse, "The Coherence of Romans 7:1-8:8," *RTR* 47 (1988): 9.
39. Moo (1996), p. 411.
40. See J. Little, "Paul's Use of Analogy: A Structural Analysis of Romans 7:1-6," *CBQ* 46/1 (2004): 83.
41. Dunn (1988), p. 359.
42. Contra Pietism.
43. Contra Dunn (1975).
44. Contra Moo (1996), p. 430.
45. E.g. P. Barnett, *Romans: The Revelation of God's Righteousness* (Ross-Shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2003), p. 167.
46. E.g. S. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek New Testament with Reference to Tense and Mood* (NY: Peter Lang, 1989).
47. See J. Lambrecht, *The Wretched "I" and its Liberation: Paul in Romans 7 & 8* (LTPM 14. Louvain: Peeters Press, 1992); M. Middendorf, *The 'I' in the Storm: A Study of Romans 7* (St. Louis: Concordia Academic, 1997).
48. E.g. T. Tobin, *Paul's Rhetoric in its Contexts* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004), 225ff.
49. With the exception of 8:2: 'the word *nomos* is used in a new way making a play on the word and in so doing indicating that in some sense the Spirit takes on the function of the Mosaic law as it sets us free from that law' (Morrison & Woodhouse, 1988), p. 13.
50. As Wright notes, Torah 'bifurcates'.
51. Morrison & Woodhouse (1988), p. 13.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
53. Tobin (2004), p. 219.
54. We would also add that it is to over-read Paul's criticism of the Law in Galatians (cf. Gal 3:21 'Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not!').
55. Wright (1991), p. 214.
56. Morrison & Woodhouse (1988), p. 15.