DOUGLAS J. MOO

ISRAEL AND PAUL IN ROMANS 7.7-12

The close relationship between sin and the law, a recurring theme in Romans 1-4 (3. 19; 4. 15; 5. 20), is given clearest expression in 7.1-6. In language reminiscent of the discussion of sin in chap. 6, the law is pictured as a power from whose lordship believers find release in Christ (vv. 4, 6) and as an instrument in the arousing of sinful passions which lead to death (v. 5). No wonder that Paul feels it necessary to defend the law from the charge that it is sin (v. 7; cf. v. 12), offering an explanation of the relationship between sin and the law which exonerates the latter (vv. 8-11). This explanation takes the form of a narrative in which sin is cast in the role of the active culprit, while the law is pictured as a passive instrument, used by sin as a ‘bridgehead’ (ἀνάγκη – vv. 8, 11) to deceive and bring death.

While the general intent of 7.7-12 is therefore clear, it is not at all clear whose experience it is which is presented in this narrative. Paul’s use for this purpose of the first person singular has stimulated endless discussion, most of it focused on the dogmatically-significant verses following 7.7-12. With respect to 7.7-12, however, four general approaches can be distinguished:

1) ἐγκάτωσε refers to Paul himself, who describes his own experience with the law as exemplary;
2) ἐγκάτωσε refers to Adam, or to mankind in Adam, the Genesis narrative being viewed as paradigmatic;
3) ἐγκάτωσε refers to Israel in its encounter with the law at Sinai; and
4) ἐγκάτωσε refers to man in general or to the Jewish people in general, the narrative style being treated as an idealized picture of human experience.

Views 2, 3 and 4 all assume that ἐγκάτωσε is a rhetorical figure of speech, an assumption which has been widely held since Kümmel’s monograph. Many have followed him also in maintaining a general application of the figure, as in view four, but it is becoming increasingly popular among adherents of this view, in contrast to Kümmel, to admit some allusion to Adam also. Fewer, although a significant number, have espoused the Adamic view, while the interpretation which applies Paul’s language to the history of Israel (view three) has been defended only sporadically. On the other hand, there has been, and continues to be, a significant number of scholars who deny any rhetorical significance to ἐγκάτωσε and who therefore defend an autobiographical interpretation.

Despite the relative unpopularity of the view – and the ease with which
it is often dismissed⁶— it is the purpose of this paper to suggest that Rom 7. 7–12 has as its main focus the giving of the law to Israel. To accomplish this, it will be argued: 1) that the focus of the text, νόμος, should probably be understood as a reference to the Mosaic law; and 2) that the narrative sequence of the text reflects a Pauline theological pattern having to do with the redemptive-historical experience of Israel with the law. In addition, however, I will argue that the first person style strongly implies some degree of autobiographical reference also.

I. ΝΟΜΟΣ IN ROM 7.7–12

That the Mosaic law is under discussion in 7. 7–12 is strongly suggested, first, by the commandment which Paul quotes in v. 7: οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις (‘you shall not covet’). To be sure, ἐπιθυμία, with the general sense of ‘illicit desire’, was sometimes singled out as the root sin (Philo, Spec. Leg. 4. 84–94; Jas. 1. 15) and Paul himself uses the word and its cognate verb in a general sense (see, e.g. 1 Cor 10. 6). But the negative formulation here, reproduced exactly in Rom 13. 9 with unmistakable reference to the decalogue, points to the tenth commandment specifically.⁷ However, the omission of objects after the verb suggests that Paul, like Philo (Decal. 142–153, 173) and the author of 4 Maccabees (2. 6) before him, uses the tenth commandment as a representative summation of the Mosaic law.⁸ It is this commandment in its generic significance, then, to which ἐντολή in vv. 8–11 refers, not to any specific commandment as such.⁹

A second reason for thinking that the Mosaic law is the focus in Rom 7. 7–12 arises from a consideration of Paul’s use of νόμος. Although he uses the term in more than one way,¹⁰ it is clear that νόμος, in the vast majority of occurrences, designates the Mosaic law. And, in this sense, νόμος is Israel’s peculiar possession. This is shown by the designation of Gentiles as τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα (Rom 2. 14; cf. 2. 12 [ἀνὸμος] and 1 Cor 9. 20–21) and of Jews as the possessors of ἡ νομοθεσία (Rom 9. 4; cf. 3. 2 [τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ]); by the fact that the law hinders the full incorporation of Jews and Gentiles into one people of God (Eph 2. 14–15; implicitly in Rom 3. 27–31); and, more tangentially by the concentration of references to the law in letters dealing with the Jewish-Gentile controversy. Only Romans 2, with its references to Gentiles who become ‘a law to themselves’ (v. 14), who ‘show forth the work of the law written on the heart’ (v. 15) and who do the law (vv. 26, 27), appears to contradict this limitation of the law to Israel.¹¹ However, in interpreting these references, we must keep in mind that in this same passage Paul has explicitly denied that the Gentiles possess the law. With this in mind, it can plausibly be argued that Paul speaks of the Gentiles’ confrontation with νόμος as a means of placing them in an analogous situation to Israel and thereby,
by highlighting Gentile fulfilment of the law, to indict self-complacent Judaism. It is not necessary to understand Paul as according to Gentiles possession of the specifically Mosaic torah. But whatever our interpretation, these verses clearly represent an exceptional use of νόμος. Paul’s clear tendency to view νόμος as a special gift to Israel stands against any ‘universalistic’ interpretation of Rom 7. 7–12.

If Paul generally confines the purview of νόμος to Jews, he also limits its duration in accordance with his redemptive-history perspective. While not as obvious in Romans 4 as in the parallel text in Galatians 3, the idea of the law as an entity with a specific purpose and with clear temporal limits is nevertheless clearly found in Romans. Rom 5. 13–14 characterizes the period from Adam to Moses as being ‘without law’, while 5. 20 portrays the law as an ‘intruder’ in salvation-history, ‘coming in’ between Adam and Christ. The discussion of the law in Romans 7 is organically linked to these references (particularly 5. 20) via 6. 14 (‘for you are not under law but under grace’). And the presentation of the law in 7. 1–6 as an imprisoning, sin-arousing power characterized by ‘oldness of letter’ in contrast to ‘newness of Spirit’—with its many obvious similarities to passages such as Galatians 2–3 and 2 Corinthians 3—indicates that Paul is still thinking, as in Romans 5, of the Mosaic law in its limited redemptive-historical function. But for Paul’s argument to make sense, the law defended in vv. 7–12 must be identical with the law portrayed so negatively in 5. 20, 6. 14 and 7. 1–6.

If the limitation of the law to Israel creates a difficulty for the universal application of Rom 7. 7–12, Paul’s temporal delimitation of the law constitutes a serious objection to the Adamic view. How could Paul feature Adam’s experience in a discussion about a law which he presents as entering the historical arena only with Moses? Proponents of the Adamic view customarily answer this question by suggesting that Paul assumes the view, attested in a number of Jewish sources, to the effect that Adam was given and made responsible for the torah in the garden. But not only is there no evidence for this view in Paul, it is most unlikely that he would have made any such assumption. The temporal limitation of the torah is a key element in Paul’s theology, a linchpin in his conception of redemptive history and a critical point in his polemic with Judaism. It is far too basic and significant a belief for Paul to have contradicted it without explanation in one of his most important discussions of the law. That Paul viewed Adam as, in some sense, a ‘prototype’ of man under the law is suggested by Rom 5. 14, but the similarity consists in the situation of confrontation with the divine demand; nothing indicates that the analogy must be extended to include possession of the same body of demands.

It seems best, then, to restrict the signification of νόμος/ἐντολή in Rom 7. 7–12 to that body of divine revelation which had its origin with Moses.
and found its τέλος in Christ (Rom 10. 4). Such a restriction effectively rules out the (purely) Adamic view as well as the interpretation which applies Paul’s discussion to humankind generally. A consideration of the narrative sequence will serve to narrow further the possibilities.

II. THE NARRATIVE SEQUENCE

The chiastically-arranged narrative of v. 8b–10a, in which sin moves from death to life while ἐγώ moves from life to death, presents a crucial interpretive problem. It is its ability to explain this sequence which comprises the great attraction of the Adamic interpretation. ‘Life’ and ‘death’ can be accorded their full theological meanings, referring, respectively, to Adam’s state before and after his disastrous confrontation with the divine commandment, and the springing to life of the previously inactive sin can be regarded as a fitting description of the role of the serpent in the garden. However, we have seen that, whatever its virtues, the Adamic view cannot satisfactorily be reconciled with the central concern of the text — the Mosaic toarah. How, then, do other views fare in explaining this sequence?

Proponents of the autobiographical view understand the transition of the ἐγώ from life to death as a description of one of three experiences in the life of Paul: 1) his childhood awakening to consciousness of guilt; 2) his realization, perhaps as a preliminary to his conversion, of the real meaning of the law and his own condemnation under it; 3) his inability to conquer the power of sin. None of these alternatives gives the verb ἔζω in the phrase ἔζω χώρας νόμου ποτέ (v. 9a) its full theological force, but this is not so great a problem as is sometimes asserted. Paul uses ἔζω of spiritual life rather infrequently and the only other occurrence of the verb in the imperfect in the Pauline corpus (Col 3. 7), for what it is worth, refers to simple existence. On the other hand, it is difficult to understand by ἀπέθανον (v. 10a) anything other than condemnation resulting from sin, what E. Best has recently called ‘realized eschatological death’. Clearly it is death in this sense which Paul highlights as the end result of ‘sinful passions’ in 7. 5 and which is explicitly denied to be the fault of the law in 7. 13. But since the argument in which vv. 8b–10a are imbedded focuses on death as eschatological penalty, the logic of Paul’s argument requires that this be the meaning of ἀπέθανον in v. 10 also. However, this meaning may be retained in the autobiographical view if Paul is regarded as looking back on his Jewish experience and, from his Christian insight, characterizing his relationship with the law as resulting in death.

However, another problem for the autobiographical interpretation is the sequence χώρας νόμου – ἐλθοῦσας ὑπὲρ τῆς ἐντολῆς. If this language is to
be applied to Paul’s life, it must be taken subjectively, as the description of a sudden, deepened understanding of the law or of the undertaking of a new responsibility for the law—perhaps at his transition to adulthood. Neither explanation is without problems. The former suggests a struggle with the law which appears to be inconsistent with Paul’s characterization of his experience under the law in Philippians 3. Nor do any of the New Testament accounts of Paul’s conversion suggest such a struggle. The latter view, on the other hand, assumes a more significant transition from childhood ‘innocence’ to mature awareness of and responsibility for the law than the available sources indicate. And both alternatives apply Paul’s ostensibly objective, descriptive language to the realm of the subjective consciousness. Not only is there no obvious reason for doing this, but the interpretation of vv. 8b–10a in terms of personal awareness also implies a view of the law at variance with the context. That is, when the ‘coming of the commandment’ is referred to Paul’s real understanding of the law and his death as his realization of guilt, the role of the law is that of revealer. But while some reference to this revelatory function of the law may be present in v. 7, the focus in the immediate context of vv. 8b–10a is on the law as a stimulant of sin and instrument of death.

Therefore, while the autobiographical interpretation of the narrative is not impossible, the need to interpret the language in terms of Paul’s consciousness renders the view improbable. It is necessary to seek more satisfactory explanations of this sequence.

The rhetorical view has little to offer at this point. The interpretation itself is usually established via negationis: no single set of circumstances, it is argued, can satisfactorily account for all the details of the text, so a generalized situation is posited, according to which any real historical sequence is denied. Now the denial of historical sequence may be necessary if, indeed, no single situation, or plausible combination of situations, can be discerned in the text without doing violence to it. But the passage certainly appears to depict a historical sequence, with the consistent use of the past tense (contrast 7. 14–25). And we would contend that a reading of 7. 8–10 against the background of some other Pauline texts makes it possible to isolate such a situation.

In Rom 4. 13–16, Paul denies the efficacy of the law as a means of securing the promise with its inheritance. Dependence on the law (ἐκ νόμου – v. 14) effectually nullifies the promise because (v. 15a) the law produces wrath. The following clause (v. 15b) appears to supply the reason why the law has this effect—transgression comes with the law. Crucial for understanding this text is the recognition that Paul carefully distinguishes παράβασις and ἁμαρτία, using παράβασις only of the failure to meet a specific expressed requirement. In Rom 4. 15, then, the point is that the law, far from enabling one to establish a claim upon God, drives
one deeper into despair by making him individually responsible for a specific set of commandments.

Probably Rom 5. 20a should be understood in a similar manner: the law increased ‘the trespass’ (note the singular παράπτωμα and the link created thereby with Adam [vv. 15, 17, 18]) because it set a standard by which wrongdoing could be revealed as rebellion against God.39 This understanding of the law is found elsewhere in Paul (Gal 3. 19; 2 Cor 3. 6–7; 1 Cor 15. 56), and comes to expression in a roundabout way in Rom 5. 13–14. These verses, which are apparently intended to substantiate or explain something in v. 12 (γάρ), focus on the period between Adam and Moses, when ‘there was no law’.40 During this time, Paul asserts, ‘death reigned, even over those who did not sin in the likeness (δομοίωμα) of Adam’s transgression (παράβασις)’. Significantly, Paul appears to regard this reign of death as somehow anomalous (ἄλλα – v. 14) because the law with its sin – ‘reckoning’ effect did not yet exist (v. 13b).41 It is difficult to determine precisely what ‘reckon’ (ἐλλογεῖται) in v. 13 signifies, but the express mention of παράβασις in v. 14 suggests that Paul is thinking of the deepened personal responsibility for sin which comes with an express revelation of the divine requirement.42

Returning now to the narrative sequence of Rom 7. 8b–10a, it should be evident that this text fits very nicely into the theological pattern we have isolated, particularly as it is found in Rom 5. 13–14.43 The ‘coming to life [again]’ of the previously inert sin (v. 8b) is a vivid portrayal of what Paul describes more prosaically in 1 Cor 15. 56b: ‘the power of sin is the law’. And the ‘death’ of the ἔγκο of the coming of the commandment corresponds closely with Paul’s understanding of the Mosaic law as an instrument which imprisons under sin (Rom 7. 6; Gal 3. 22, 23), enables wrongdoing to be ‘charged’ to each individual’s account as trespass (Rom 5. 13, cf. Gal 3. 19) producing wrath (Rom 4. 15) and death (2 Cor 3. 7). Even the ‘life’ of the ἔγκο before the coming of the commandment (v. 8b) can be compared with Paul’s description of the situation of people before Sinai whose sins were not ‘reckoned’ as they were after the possession of the law (Rom 5. 13). These indisputable similarities between the narrative of Rom 7. 8–10 and Paul’s theology of the Mosaic law lead to the conclusion that Paul in this passage depicts the effect of the giving of the law on Israel. ‘When the commandment came’ can then be taken naturally as a reference to the promulgation of the Sinaitic revelation.

Against this interpretation, it is frequently urged that it is illegitimate to give to the terms ἔκκό and ἀπέθανον anything less than their full theological meanings. Certainly Paul viewed all men, Jews and Gentiles, as standing under God’s condemnation before the giving of the law (cf. Rom 5. 13–14), and we have seen that ‘death’ in Rom 7. 5–13 clearly involves eschatological penalty. But while ἀπέθανον cannot designate the initial
sentence of death imposed upon individual Israelites, it can be suggested that Paul views the law as that instrument which brought the sentence of death to Israel as a collective body, formed definitively in and through the Sinai experience.45 Paul’s references to the law elsewhere as ‘the power of sin’ (1 Cor 15. 56b), an instrument of wrath (Rom 4. 15), the letter that kills, a ‘ministry of death’ (2 Cor 3. 6, 7) and the criterion of Israel’s judgment (Rom 2. 12), demonstrate that Paul did indeed view the law in this way. On the other hand, there is no reason why ἐκτιμοῦ need have any theological force at all – Paul rarely uses the verb with this meaning; as we have seen, he never elsewhere uses life/death in that order in a theological contrast, and ‘life’ plays no role in the discussion of Romans 7.46

A further consideration which may help explain the strength of Paul’s language is the polemical context of his argument. For Jews, the giving of the law was viewed as providing Israel an opportunity to secure life,47 indeed, although probably not typical, at least one tradition claims that original sin was taken away from Israel at Sinai.48 While agreeing with Judaism that the law had a positive life-securing purpose (ἐκτιμοῦ – v. 10), Paul emphatically denies that this had been its effect. Rather than preventing sin,49 the law had stimulated sin (cf. 5. 20, 7. 5),50 and ‘imprisoned’ Israel in that sin (Gal 3. 22, 23; cf. Rom 7. 6). Thus, with this background in mind, and with some hyperbole, Paul argues essentially that the giving of the law meant for Israel not life, but death.

Thus, while it can be argued that the Adamic view offers a more natural explanation of ἐκτιμοῦ and ἀπέθανον, we have seen that these terms can also be appropriately applied to the situation of Israel. However, the fact that the text can, to some extent, be applied to either Adam or Israel does demonstrate, as we suggested above, that Paul sees a basic similarity in the situations of Adam confronted by the Paradise command and Israel confronted by the law.51 But, we would maintain, Paul is speaking in this text of the latter, as the focus on the Mosaic law demonstrates. Linguistic52 and conceptual parallels with the Paradise narrative are due to the intrinsic similarities of the two situations.

III. WHY ἐγὼ?

If, as we have argued, Rom 7. 7–12 portrays the experience of Israel at Sinai, it will be necessary to understand ἐγὼ as a rhetorical device. That ἐγὼ can have a rhetorical significance was demonstrated by Kümmel. And, further, it is clear that ἐγὼ, when used rhetorically, need not include reference to the speaker or author. But, against Kümmel, it must be questioned whether it is legitimate to remove all autobiographical force from the pronoun when it occurs in a context like Romans 7. Of the examples of rhetorical ἐγὼ which Kümmel cites, seven occur in an explicitly hypothetical
construction,\textsuperscript{53} six in a deliberative style\textsuperscript{54} and one (probably) in a quotation.\textsuperscript{55} The inherently ‘unreal’ nature of these constructions is so different from the narrative and confessional style of Romans 7 that it is hardly fair to compare them. On the other hand, none of the four narrative passages mentioned by Kümmel clearly excludes the author.\textsuperscript{56} Since Kümmel’s monograph, appeal to several passages in the Dead Sea Scrolls has been made in order to buttress the ‘purely’ rhetorical view (IQS 11. 9–10; 1QH 1. 21–23; 3. 24–26).\textsuperscript{57} But here, too, the first person singular construction, while generalizing, almost certainly includes the writer.\textsuperscript{58} Nor do there appear to be any occurrences of the first person singular in a narrative construction in Paul which exclude the apostle.

In light of this, it would seem probable that some reference to Paul himself must be included in any acceptable interpretation of Romans 7.\textsuperscript{59} This is not, however, to go back to the autobiographical interpretation and jettison the view of the text which we have argued above. It suggests, rather, that in Romans 7 εγώ has been used because Paul identifies himself, in a ‘corporate’ sense, with the experiences of his own people. Galatians 2. 18–21, another Pauline εγώ text, may involve a similar ‘corporate’ relationship between Paul and Israel.\textsuperscript{60} Furthermore, it is possible that a plausible background (source?) for this use of the first person singular can be identified. The closest parallel to the style of Romans 7, as Luz suggests, is the use of the first person singular in passages such as Jer 10. 19–22 and Mic 7. 7–10, Lam 1. 9–22; 2. 20–22 and Pss Sol 1. 1–2. 6 to represent Jerusalem or Israel.\textsuperscript{61} Clearly the ‘I’ in these passages is a rhetorical device, employed to narrate with intense subjective language the horrors which have befallen the city and the people. At the same time, however, elements of personal identification on the part of the writer with the situation are always close at hand.

In vv. 7–12, then, it seems best to conclude that Paul describes the experience of Israel at Sinai but uses the first person because he himself, as a Jew, has been affected by that experience. In vv. 14–25, where the subsequent struggle of Israel under the law is depicted, Paul writes with more subjectivity because the struggle is one that he has to some extent personally experienced. Its ability to explain the perplexing combination of objective narrative and subjective confession in Romans 7 is a further strength of the view which has been presented.\textsuperscript{62}

IV. CONCLUSION

We therefore conclude that Rom 7. 7–12 employs a vivid narrative style in order to give a theological interpretation of Israel’s encounter with the law at Sinai. This interpretation is superior to the Adamic view because it takes naturally Paul’s focus on the Mosaic law and fits better with Paul’s
salvation-historical scheme. On the other hand, this ‘redemptive-historical’ view is to be preferred over both the autobiographical and rhetorical approaches because it retains more of the objective, historical force of Paul’s language. And, finally, the focus on Israel presumed in this view is in keeping with the increasingly recognized need to put the Jewish question at the heart rather than the periphery of Romans.

NOTES

[1] Thus 7. 7–12, while offering what may be termed an ‘apology for the law’, also affirms and explains the fact that the law has become sin’s ally (see R. Schnackenburg, ‘Röm 7 in Zusammenhang des Römerbriefes’, Jesus und Paulus: Festschrift für Werner Georg Kümmel zum 70. Geburtstag [ed. E. E. Ellis and E. Grässer; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1975] 292). In light of this, it is preferable to take ἄλλα in v. 7 as restrictive (‘No, but it is true that . . .’) rather than as adversative (‘No, on the contrary . . .’) (W. G. Kümmel, Römer 7 und das Bild des Menschen im Neuen Testament: Zweil Studien [Tü 52; Munich: Kaiser, 1974] 47); contra, e.g., C. E. B. Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans [ICC n.s.; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975, 1979], 1.347–8.


that 'desire' without object is found in Ἰερ ωs. Ezek. 10. 17, that Ἰερ. Ἐνωs. likewise uses the root ἠμμα (whose Heb. equivalent is sometimes translated with ἀπημα in LXX) in Gen 3. 6, and that b. Sabt. 145b-146a says that 'desire' was injected in Eve by the serpent. But the first reference proves no more than that, as argued above, there was a tendency in some circles to absolutize 'coveting', while the other two are tangential to the issue. In fact, Lyonnnet furnishes no evidence that Jews ever interpreted the Paradise commandment as a prohibition of 'coveting'. It should also be noted that ἀπημα and its cognates do not occur in Genesis 1-3, but are used in Ps 100 (106) 14 with reference to the wilderness generation (cf. J. G. Stralen, 'A Note on the Old Testament Background of Romans 7:7', Luth Theo Jour 15 (1981) 23-5).


Kilmel, Römer 7, 56. Gundry ('Moral Frustration', 232) argues that the commandment has specific reference to sexual lust here but, although 4 Macc 2. 6 occurs in a context having to do with sex, Paul's own usage and the context give no support to this restriction.

In Romans, ἀᾳμα is used of the Pentateuch (Rom 3. 21), of the OT as a whole (3. 19), possibly of secular law (7. 1-3 [so W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902) 172; but cf. Kilmel, Römer 7, 38]), and with the more general sense of 'force' or 'principle' (3. 27 ἐκ [probably; though see G. Friedrich, 'Das Gesetz des Glaubens. Röm. 3. 27', TZ 10 (1954) 401-17], 7. 21; 7. 23 [probably in the first and third occurrences], 7. 25β; 8. 2 [probably in the first occurrence; possibly in the second], 9. 31 b [possibly]).

The attempt to discern different meanings of ἀᾳμα by means of the presence or absence of the article (many older commentators; cf. e.g. Sanday-Headlam) has now been generally (and properly) abandoned (see the early discussion in Edward Grice, Die paulinische Lettre vom Gesetz nach den vier Briefen [Freiburg and Tübingen: Mohr, 1884] 5-8).

The view of Barth (A Shorter Commentary on Romans [Richmond, Va.: John Knox, 1959] 36); cf. also Cranfield, Romans, 1. 156) that Gentile-Christians are intended in these verses would remove this inconsistency, but the position has many difficulties.

Käsemann, Romans, 62-4.


Stauffer, 'Ἐγγύς', 358; Schenk, 'Ἐνομία', 550-1; Karl Prüm, 'Rom 1-11 und 2 Kor 3', Bib 31 (1950) 177-80. Contra, e.g. C. R. Barrett, who says of Rom 7, 'It is in the last analysis the meaning of religion that is analyzed here' (A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans [HTNC; New York: Harper & Row, 1957] 140).

While the verb παραιτοφαμεναι need not indicate a hostile action (Cranfield, Romans, 1. 292; Käsemann, Romans, 158), it does clearly characterize the law as a temporary and essentially negative element in the Heidgeschichte (Käsemann). As R. Scroggs says, 'The Apostle thus dethrones Moses from his position of life-giver via salvation through Torah' (The Last Adam: A Study in Paul's Theology [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966] 2).

Schnackenburg ('Römer 7', 291) points to this connection as well as to a number of parallels between 7. 1-6 and 8. 15-23.


In 7. 6, the phrase ἐπιλατοφαμεναι ἐκ [ἐκείνων] ἐν ἡ κατοχήμασθαι is reminiscent of Gal 3. 22-25 (this parallel as well as the grammar shows that ἀἠμα, not ἀημα, should be understood as the antecedent of ἐκ) [Kilmel, Römer 7, 42; Cranfield, Romans, 1. 338-9; Käsemann, Romans, 189-90; contra Sanday-Headlam, Romans, 175). Schneider ("Letter and Spirit", 203) lists several striking parallels between 2 Cor 3. 7-18 and Rom 7. 1-6.


[21] The statement that men living between Adam and Moses ‘did not sin in the likeness [μιμωδείς] of Adam’s transgression’ implies a parallel between Adam and those who were subject to the Mosaic law.

[22] Against Longenecker ( _Paul_ , 94-5) who, sensitive to the difficulty of finding a pre-mosaic νόμος in Paul, seeks to salvage the Adamic view by suggesting that Adam possessed according to Paul a prototype of the _torah_.

[23] See Kämmel, _Römer_ 7, 51.


[25] Other, less difficult, problems confront the Adamic view: 1) the interval of time during which εγώ is without the law is difficult to fit into the Paradise narrative; 2) the contrast ‘sin was dead’ (v. 8b) ‘sin sprang to life’ (v. 9b) suggests that sin existed as a force in the world (not just in the serpent) before the commandment came; 3) Adam is, of course, not named (for these criticisms and others, see: Gundry, ‘Moral Frustration’, 230-1; Benoit, ‘La Loi’, 493; Bornkamm, ‘Sin, Law and Death’, 93).


[29] Of the 59 occurrences of ἐν ὑμῖν in the Pauline corpus, only nine refer probably to spiritual life (Rom. 1: 17; 6: 13; 8: 13; 10: 5; 2 Cor. 8: 4(?); Gal. 2: 19; 3: 11; 3: 12; 5: 25) (See on this Bandstra, _Law_, 137 and the survey of usage in Kämmel, _Römerbrief_, 2,445–6). Dunn’s attempt to bolster the autobiographical interpretation by appealing to Paul’s death/life language ( _Romans_ 7, 261) fails because only here does Paul speak of a transition from life to death.


[31] Calvin, _Romans_, 255; Hodge, _Romans_, 224; Murray, _Romans_, 1, 251; Bandstra, _Law_, 137.


[34] In one place ( _Rom. Vers.,_ 293-9), Philo speaks of a child’s first seven years as being without good and evil, but he elsewhere ( _Leg. Gal.,_ 210) indicates that the Jewish child learned the law at an early age. The rabbis testify to some increase in responsibility for the law as a child grows (cf. _m. Abot_ 5: 21), but the same texts also indicate that children were taught the law from a very early age (See on this point Kämmel, _Römer_ 7, 51 and Longenecker, _Paul_, 91–2). However, Gundry is correct in pointing out that the autobiographical view demands nothing more than an increased sensitivity to the law; the degree to which the law was taught to the child is strictly immaterial (‘Moral Frustration’, 233). In this case, the difficulty is in understanding ἐν ὑμῖν ἐν ὑμῖν ὑμῶν νόμον νόμον as a reference to this sensitivity to the law.

[35] It is debated whether v. 7 introduces this idea of the revelatory function of the law, the meanings to be assigned ἐν ὑμῖν and γινώσκει being the crucial issue. These verbs have been taken in two general senses: 1) experientially – involvement in sinning itself (Kämmel, _Römer_ 7, 45; R. Bultmann, _Theology of the New Testament_ [2 vols.; New York: Scribner’s, 1951, 1955], 1, 265; Bornkamm, ‘Sin, Law and Death’, 102; H. Schlier, _Der Römerbrief_ [HTKNT; 2nd ed.; Freiburg: Herder, 1957] 1, 231)
Thus, for instance, Kümmel finds no fixed experience depicted and takes voré (v. 9) 'ganz allgemein den Lebenszustand' (Römer 7, 132-3) — similarly, H. Conzelmann (An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament [London: SCM, 1960]) 233 argues that Paul replaces Adam with himself, the Adamantine man, and thus draws time together into one point.'

So Küsemann, Romans, 121.

Cf. Rom 2. 23; 4. 15; 5. 14; Gal 3. 19; 1 Tim 2. 14(?) and J. Schneider, 'Παπάγαυος', TDNT 5 (1967) 739.

Cranfield, Romans, 1.292-3. The view according to which the increase of trespass involves the attempt to base one's existence on fulfillment of the law will be discussed at a later point.

The mention of this specific period of time makes it clear that ἀνευρέσεις refers to the Mosaic law in these verses. To interpret Paul as implying the existence of law at all periods (Murray, Romans, 1.18-9; F. W. Danker, 'Romans V. 12: Sin Under Law', NTS 14 [1967-8] 430-13) is to misunderstand the text and Paul's doctrine of the law (see on this point C. K. Barrett, From First Adam to Last: A Study in Paul's Theology [New York: Scribner's, 1962] 15, 23-4).

This emphasis could mean that Paul intends vv. 13-14 as support for a 'corporate' interpretation of v. 12d: the death of people before the law can be fully explained only by reference to Adam's 'transgression' (Riederbos, Paul, 96; Sandy-Headlam, Romans, 135). N. A. Dahl (Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977] 91) argues from these verses that only from Adam to Moses did people die because of Adam's sin. Against Weidner (The Theological Structure of Romans V.12', NTS 19 [1972-3] 352), it is not necessarily sin against the law (Mosaic) which the argument of vv. 13-14 presupposes, but sin against any revealed commandment.

ἐλαφρά, used elsewhere in the NT only in Philemon 18, means 'to charge someone's account' (RAG; cf. H. Preisker, 'Ἐλαφρά', TDNT 2 [1964] 517) and suggests, therefore, the idea of personal responsibility. Clearly, in light of Romans 1-3, Paul cannot mean that men bear no responsibility for their sins before the law. For variations of the view presented here in this text, see: Preisker, 'Ἐλαφρά', 517; Barrett, Romans, 112; Cranfield, Romans, 1.282; E. Jungel, 'Das Gesetz zwischen Adam und Christus: Eine theologische Studie zu Röm 5, 12-21', ZTK 60 (1963) 54; G. Friedrich, 'Ἀμαρτία ὧδε ἐλαφράνεσθαι Ῥώμ. 5, 12', TLZ 77 (1952) cols. 523-4; W. Grundmann, 'Ἀμαρτία', TDNT 1 (1964) 310; J. Cambier, L'Evangile de Dieu selon l'Epître aux Romains; Vol. I: L'Evangile de la Justice et de la grâce (Stud Neot 3; Brussels and Louvain: Desclée, 1967) 250-5. Schoeps cites a possible rabbinic parallel (Pesiq. R. 107a); 'Had I not received the law, I would have been as one of the heathen nations, for whom there is neither recompense nor punishment' (Paul, 191).

Several scholars point to 5. 13-14 as a crucial parallel to 7. 7-12: Schrenk, 'Ἐνθάλη', 351 (chap. 5 is indispensable as a key to R. 7); Grundmann, 'Ἀμαρτία', 310; Benoît, 'La Loi', 486-7; Feuillet, 'La plan salutifique', 371-2; Schoeps, Paul, 191; F. J. Leenhardt, The Epistle to the Romans (Cleveland and New York: World, 1961) 186. In addition to 5. 13-14, Michel (Römer 127) compares also 4. 15. The objections of F. Brandenburg (Adam and Christus: Exegetisch-Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Röm, 5:12-21 [1 Kor 15]) [WMANT 7; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1962] 209-214 to the juxtaposition of 5. 13-14 and 7. 7-12 are based on his own understanding of the former text and on an unjustified insistence that ἀνευρέσεις must be given a theological meaning. If, then, Brandenburg's interpretation of 5. 13-14 is rejected, there is no reason to refrain from comparing the two texts (Küsemann, Romans, 196-7).

While it is possible that the preposition ἀνευρέσεις has lost its basic force ('again') (Cranfield, Romans, 1.352; Küsemann, Romans, 1977), the only other occurrence of the verb in Paul (Rom 13. 9) and the contrast with ἁπάντος ('inactive'; cf. Jas 2. 26) suggest that the verb should be translated 'sprang back to life'. In this case, the reference may be back to Adam (Lambrecht, 'Romans
7; 24; Wright, 'Messiah and People of God', 151) or, with the Adamic view, to the sin which, according to Jewish tradition, was already dormant in Adam (B. J. Malina, 'Some Observations on the Origin of Sin in Judaism and St. Paul', CBQ 31 [1969] 30-1).


[46] The other alternative is to give ἐκκαθαρία a relative force (Benoit, 'La Loi', 487: man lives before the law in the sense 'd'une vie relative en ce sens qu'il n'est pas en rébellion ouverte contre Dieu et surtout qu'il n'est pas sous le joug du dévérou imposé seulement par le péché formel'. Cf. also Cranfield, Romans, 1.351-2).

[47] On the power of the toarah to give life, see Pirqé 'Abot 6. 7 ('Great is toarah, for it gives to them that practice it life in this world and in the world to come'); Ps Sol 14. 2; Bar 3. 9; Lev. Rab. 18. 3; Exod. Rab. 32. 1; t. Šabb. 15. 17 and the discussion in E. E. Urbach, The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs (2 vols.; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1979), 1.424-6 and Schoeps, Paul, 175. E. P. Sanders (Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977]) has contested the view that early Palestinian Judaism saw the law as a means of earning salvation; the law was rather the means of maintaining one's place in the covenant. This is not the place to discuss his thesis and for our purposes it is not crucial to distinguish the earning from the maintaining of covenant life.

[48] b. Šabb. 145b-146a (see Urbach, Sages, 1.429-430).

[49] b. Qidd. 30a: 'Even so did the Holy One, blessed be He, speak unto Israel: "My children, I created the evil desire but I [also] created the toarah as its antidote; if you occupy yourselves with the toarah, you will not be delivered into its hand"' (see Moore, Judaism, 1.491).

[50] We presume that Paul views Israel's sinning as transgressions against the law. Bullmann ('Romans 7', 154; Theology, 1.262-4) followed by others (Bornkamm, 'Sin, Law and Death', 90-1; R. Jewett, Paul's Anthropological Terms: A Study of their Use in Conflict Settings [AJU 10; Leiden: Brill, 1971] 145-6) has argued that this sinning involves especially the 'sin against grace', the effort to fulfill the law as a means of securing righteousness. However, while Paul castigates Israel for seeking a righteousness based on the law (Rom 9. 20–10. 4), it is not clear that he regarded attempts to fulfill the law as in themselves wrong (see U. Wilcken, 'Was heißt bei Paulus: "Ausz Werken des Gesetzes wird kein Mensch gerecht?"? Rechtferigung als Freiheit: Paulustudien [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1974]). In any case, this 'nomistic' concept is probably not present in Romans 7. The phrase ἑλκυσθαὶ ἐν ὑπάρχοντι ἑλκύσεως (v. 5) can only with difficulty be understood as sinful 'strivings' and the terms ἑλκυσθαί, ἑλκυσθέναι (v. 7, 8) clearly designate in Paul behaviour which is contrary to the law. Moreover, clear differences in vocabulary and conception exist between Romans 7 and texts said to speak of the 'nomistic' sin. (For these points and others, see especially: H. Räisänen, 'Zum Gebrauch von ΕΠΙΤΟΜΗ und ΕΠΙΤΟΜΕΙΝ bei Paulus', ST 33 (1979) 85-99; Becker, Paul the Apostle, 238-40; Riederberries, Paul, 146; Wright, 'Messiah and People of God', 147-8).


[52] The use of ἐκκαθαρία in v. 1 is generally seen as the most obvious linguistic allusion to Genesis 3, since Paul uses this verb with reference to the Paradise narrative in 2 Cor 9. 3 and 1 Tim 2. 14. But Paul also uses the verb three times with no reference to Genesis (Rom 16. 18; 1 Cor 3. 18; 2 Thess 3. 3), so the allusion is not certain (Kümmel, Römmer 7, 54).

[53] Philo, Som. 1.176; Rom 3. 5 (first person plural); 3. 7; 1 Cor 9. 31-32; 3. 1-3; 13. 11; Gal 2. 18.

[54] Dem., Kata Philippou 3. 9, 17; Ps. Xen., Re Publica Atheniensium 1.11 and 2.11 (with explicit hypothetical constructions also); 1 Cor 6. 15; 10. 29-30; 13. 15.

[55] 1 Cor 6. 12 (probably a 'slogan' of the libertine party).

[56] Kümmel admits this for the three rabbinic texts (m. Ber. 1.3; b. Ber. 3a; m. 'Abot vi 9). The first and third are (possibly) fictitious narratives used for purposes of illustration; the second occurs in the recounting of a vision. Kümmel appears to assume, incorrectly, that the use of a narrative to make a point constitutes evidence against an autobiographical understanding.


[60] For this idea, see Stauffer, 'Κρατίον', 361-2 (and also Strelau, 'Background of Romans 7:7', 24-5). The combination of autobiographical and salvation-historical references in the κρατίον of Romans vii is suggested also by A. Vergote ('Apport des données psychanalytiques à l'exégèse: voi, loi et clavage du moi dans l'Épitre aux Romains 7', *Exégèse et Herméneutique* [ed. R. Bartlies, et al.; Paris: Seuill, 1971] 120-8), although from a very different perspective and with differences of emphasis.


[62] By including Paul in the scope of κρατίον, we are able to give a natural interpretation of the personal struggle depicted in 7. 15-20. The failure of the redemptive-historical view at this point has been a chief criticism of the view.

[63] Against Lysenerc, Lambrecht ('Romans 7', 28) correctly stresses that Paul's salvation-historical scheme focuses on the era of the law as a separate entity.