

A Spiritual Portrait of a Believer

A Spiritual Portrait of a Believer:
A Comparison Between the Emphatic
“T” of Romans 7, Wesley and the Mystics

By

Chet Cataldo

**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

A Spiritual Portrait of a Believer:
A Comparison Between the Emphatic “I” of Romans 7, Wesley and the Mystics,
by Chet Cataldo

This book first published 2010

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2010 by Chet Cataldo

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-4438-1969-7, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-1969-5

CONTENTS

FOREWORD.....	ix
ABBREVIATIONS.....	xi
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	
1. Reasons for this study	
2. Contribution	
3. Methodology	
4. Parameters	
5. Justification for the chosen methodology	
6. Terminology	
6.1. Spiritual Marriage	
6.2. Perfection	
6.3. Experience	
6.4. Mature	
6.5. Tradition	
6.6. Scripture	
6.7. Regeneration	
7. Brief Survey of the Problem	
7.1. Unregenerate Person	
7.2. Regenerate Person	
7.3 Barth's View	
8. Concluding Statement	
CHAPTER TWO	37
THE CONTEXT OF ROM 7	
1. Outline of Rom 1-8	
2. Rom 1-4	
3. Rom 5	
4. Rom 6	
5. Rom 7	
6. Rom 8	
7. Concluding Statement	

CHAPTER THREE	71
A DETAILED EXAMINATION OF ROM 7	
1. An Examination of Justification and Sanctification	
2. A Definition of Sin	
3. Sold Under Sin	
4. The Desire of the Emphatic “I”	
5. The Wretched Man	
6. A Discussion of Paul’s Jewish Experience	
7. Analysis of Verb Tenses used in Rom 7	
8. The Law in Rom 7	
9. Concluding Statement	
CHAPTER FOUR	113
THE NEW LIFE IN CHRIST IN THE PAULINE CORPUS	
1. New birth	
2. Justification and Sanctification	
3. Conformity to Christ	
4. Flesh	
5. The Imperfect Christian	
6. Concluding Statement	
CHAPTER FIVE.....	147
WESLEY’S DOCTRINE OF PERFECTION	
1. Salvation: An Introduction	
2. Beginning of Salvation	
2.1. Justification	
2.2. New Birth	
2.3. Comparison of the New Birth and Justification	
3. Sanctification	
3.1. Instantaneous Aspect of Sanctification	
3.2. Gradual Aspect of Sanctification	
3.3. Impartation and Imputation of Righteousness	
4. Perfection	
4.1. What Perfection Is Not	
4.2. What Perfection Is	
4.3. Aspects of Perfection	
5. Conclusion to the section on Wesley’s doctrine of Perfection	
6. Comparison of Wesley’s Perfection and the Experience of the emphatic “I” of Rom 7	
7. Concluding Statement	

CHAPTER SIX.....	179
THE TEACHING OF THREE MYSTICS	
1. Introduction	
2. Spiritual Marriage and Teresa of Avila	
2.1. Comparison of Teresa of Avila and the emphatic “I” of Rom 7	
3. The Cloud of Unknowing	
3.1. Comparison of the Cloud of Unknowing and the emphatic “I” of Rom 7	
4. Julian of Norwich	
4.1. Comparison of Julian of Norwich and the emphatic “I” of Rom 7	
5. Concluding Statement	
CHAPTER SEVEN	209
CONCLUSION	
1. Characteristics of the emphatic “I”	
2. Wesley and the Emphatic “I”	
3. The Mystics and the Emphatic “I”	
3.1. St. Teresa of Avila	
3.2. Cloud of Unknowing	
3.3. Julian of Norwich	
4. New Life in Christ and the Emphatic “I”	
5. Rom 7 and the Emphatic “I”	
6. Concluding Statement	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	239

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 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.

I would like to thank my son Tobin and his wife Marta: Tobin for his willingness and strength for moving to and living in Poland by himself for two years; Marta for her willingness and love of Tobin that enabled her to leave Poland and family and move to the USA to live with Tobin; for their support and love of me during some difficult days.

I would like to thank my daughter Natalya for her love of me; for her joy of life; for her willingness to move cross-cultures; for her view of life that keeps mine from becoming “too fixed”.

I want to thank my wife, Jodi for her decision in 1975 to marry me; for her support of me since that day; for both her support during this project and her strength when I was tired and didn’t know if I could continue.

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.

ABBREVIATIONS

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

CHAPTER ONE

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 "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 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 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 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.

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 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

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 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 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, 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 empathic “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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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’ “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 “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 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.

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 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 interdisciplinary 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 Wesley was an example of the intertwining 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 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 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, 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

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.

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.