

**The relation between the “I” in Romans 7:14-25
and Christian spirituality as a lived experience: A
socio-rhetorical perspective**

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Abstract

In this dissertation, the relation between the “I” in Romans 7:14-25 and a lived experience within Christian Spirituality is explored. The study intends to explore the different interpretations of the pericope by reviewing some key literature that is available. The meaning of “spirituality”, “lived experience” and “Christian spirituality” is specifically researched. This may create its own theological problems as Paul’s “I” could relate to Christian spirituality. The main question is how our understanding of the “I” in Romans 7:14-25 relates to the Christian lived experience. This question moves into the realm of hermeneutics. The method proposed for the dissertation is socio-rhetorical criticism, which is deemed to be the best method to solve the intriguing hermeneutical problems. The socio-cultural texture, ideological texture and especially the sacred texture of the text is examined in the study.

Opsomming

In hierdie verhandeling word die verhouding tussen die “ek” in Romeine 7:14-25 en die geleefde ervaring binne Christelike Spiritualiteit verken. Die studie poog om die onderskeie interpretasies van die perikoop te verken deur sleutel-literatuur wat beskikbaar is onder oë te neem. Die betekenis van “spiritualiteit”, ’n “geleefde ervaring” en “Christelike spiritualiteit” word spesifiek nagevors. Dit kan sy eie teologiese probleme skep omdat Paulus se “ek” met Christelike spiritualiteit in verband gebring kan word. Die hoof-vraag is hoe ons verstaan van die “ek” in Romeine 7:14-25 verband hou met die Christelike geleefde ervaring. Met hierdie vraag word die gebied van hermeneutiek betree. Die metode wat vir hierdie dissertasie voorgestel word is sosio-retoriese kritiek, wat geag word as die beste metode om die belangwekkende hermeneutiese probleme op te los. Die sosio-kulturele tekstuur, ideologiese tekstuur en veral die sakrale tekstuur van die van die teks word in hierdie studie bestudeer.

Proposed keywords

- "I", law, will, mind.
- Paul and the inner tension as lived experience, spiritual, hermeneutics.
- Christian Spirituality.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

1. Background of the study

After consulting books, articles and commentaries, the proposed title was chosen for two reasons. Firstly, Romans 7:14-25 is one of the most difficult passages written by Paul. van Zyl (2015:1) writes: “Often, more than one valid reading of the text is possible. This results in preachers often having to choose between exegetical options. Romans 7:14-25 is a case in the point. It is widely recognized as a *crux interpretum*”. The options vary on the identity of “I” in the pericope. In reading the pericope it was found that there is not much consensus regarding the interpretation of the passage as we will soon see. What sparked interest in this specific passage was the fact that when reading the passage at face value, just reading it, confronted a reality that could be shared with the “I” in the pericope. That is, the tension Paul is referring to between doing what the law requires and not being able to. But then one has to question to whom “I” refers to? Is Paul (the author of Romans) speaking to himself, based on the first person present tense we find it written in? Schreiner gives a summary of the theories of what the meaning of “I” is within the text:

The identity of the “I” in verses 7-25 has generated intense controversy. Three main theories have been propounded, although variations and combinations of these views have also been suggested: (1) The “I” refers to Adam’s experience with God’s commandment in the Garden of Eden; (2) it designates Israel’s experience of receiving the law at Mount Sinai; (3) “I” is autobiographical, denoting the experience of the apostle Paul. I would argue that the last view is closest to the truth, though the first two views contain truth since Paul replicates the history of Adam and Israel (Schreiner 1998:361).

Bruce (1985:156) adds that Paul could not have been writing autobiographical, but showing “I” to be used more dramatically. Bruce thus states that “I” is not autobiographical. According to Longenecker (2016:652), Kümmel “argued that there is evidence that ancient Judaism and Paul did not always use the first-person singular pronoun in a strictly biographical sense, but at times employed ‘I’ as a rhetorical and literary *Stilform* in the presentations of their respective teachings”.

The debates surrounding our text mainly revolves around whether Paul, the author, is describing believers or unbelievers and whether it is autobiographical or biographical. In the literature there are very good arguments for both views and we will explore the main points of the debate.

The first stance is the author describing believers. The argument is normally based on the following aspects:

- (1) there is a sudden shift to the present tense from v14-25 within the Greek text,
- (2) unbelievers do not delight nor desire to keep God's law,
- (3) the distinction between 'I' and the "flesh",
- (4) deliverance from the sinful body is future,
- (5) the tension between good and evil in the conclusion of conduct,
- (6) the fact that Christians are already righteous in Christ but are not yet perfected until the day of redemption.

Those who hold the first position usually view this passage as Paul's own experience and the experience of Christians in general. For example, Schreiner argues that "Although Christians are free from the condemnation of the law, sin nonetheless continues to dwell within, and all genuine Christians (along with Paul) should be profoundly aware of how far they fall short of God's absolute standard of righteousness" (Schreiner 2008:2169). Note that this view was also held by the early church father Augustine of Hippo.

The second position is that the author is describing unbelievers, which is based on the following arguments:

- (1) the structure of the passage does not match the life of a believer whereas Romans 8:1-17 fits with the life of a believer,
- (2) the Holy Spirit is not mentioned here, but is referred to in the next section a number of times,
- (3) to say that Christians are still "sold as a slave to sin" and "captive to the law of sin",

(4) that the present tense does not denote the present time but the spiritual state of Paul when unconverted,

(5) the yearning to keep God's law reflects the mind of the Jews' moral life.

In the very recent work done by du Toit (2019:192-193), he writes "Although both positions are well accounted for, it is more likely that 'I' represents the person before or outside of Christ. More specifically, the 'I' can be understood as a rhetorical device that arguably points to Israel under the law from the perspective of a believer in Christ". Scholars and writers such as Stott (1994), van Zyl (2015), Harrison (1976), and Schreiner (1998) contend that Paul is "I" (though writing in the present tense), was thinking of his past experience as a Pharisee showing his readers the fate of those under the law as an example. This then, in some sense, is also autobiographical as Paul is drawing from his own past experience, but not as a Christ-follower. Others such as Dunn (1998), Barth (1910), Deenick (2010) and Keller (2014) in various ways argue that "I" in fact is Paul, and is writing to his audience as someone who is experiencing this inner tension presently as a Christian. Then scholars such as Wright (2013), Ridderbos (1975), Witherington III (2004) and Käsemann (1980) are interpreting "I" either as Adam or Israel, which has to do with a much larger salvation-historical view in which case Paul is not speaking autobiographical at all.

It would seem that most scholars contend that "I" is a person or persons outside of Christ and not a believer. Keener (2016b:56) also agrees by writing: "I will agree with the strong majority of scholars that this passage depicts life under the law. I will further argue that this is only life under the law without life in Christ; with the majority of current scholars, I deny that 7:7-25 depicts Paul's current experience as a Christian".

Timothy Keller made a statement in a sermon on Romans 7:14-25: "When you become a Christian you don't move from war to peace (inner-conflict). You move from a battle you could not win to a new battle you cannot lose" (Keller: 2016 podcast). This statement further resonated as it speaks to a human experience of an inner tension. But this statement of course comes from his view that "I" is Paul and that Paul does in fact have

this inner-tension as a follower of Christ and thus as a follower of Christ we will also experience it. Fee (1996:128) again argues that “[n]owhere does Paul describe Christian life, life in the Spirit, as one of constant struggle”, thus saying that Paul cannot be referring to the Christian life. Fee (1996:127) continues: “People accept this unfortunate reading of Paul at face value, because the text in Romans vividly describes something they know all too well”. In other words, the reading of the text at face value does evoke some kind of an experience. Fee continues with an explanation to why this might be, arguing that this could be the direct result of the “intense individualism of Western culture”, the focus in both psychology and Christian teaching is much on the “inner self”, and as a result of “individualistic faith turns sourly narcissistic”. He continues by writing that this is “incompatible with life ‘according to the Spirit’ (Rom 8:5-8)” (1996:128).

The second reason for the proposed title is a growing interest in the field of Christian spirituality, which is also a lived experience. More specifically, it is a question what the relation between Christian Spirituality and the “I” in Romans 7 is, if there is any relation at all. In his recently published article, Lombaard (2019:3) writes: “Central to spirituality remains, namely, experience – this in both classic and current writings on the human phenomenon of spirituality (e.g. James (2002 [1902]) and Pretorius (2008:147–165), respectively, are only two examples amongst many on this, as it is difficult to describe the human quality of ‘experience’). There is no spirituality that is not experiential”. Spirituality equals experience, more accurately a lived experience. Moreover, the discipline called “spirituality” is more extensive than the Christian sense of the word. Sheldrake (2016:3) writes that the discipline of “spirituality”, academically has now begun to appear way beyond the boundaries of theology, with studies such as philosophy, psychology, and the social sciences and even wider than that. “This means that even a specialist field such as theology must take note of many disciplines, methodologies, and domains of practice”. Feldmeier (2015:10) adds that there are many other factors in contemporary scholarship within spirituality: “There are Buddhist spiritualities, Hindu spiritualities, and so on. Because a number of spiritualities can exist even without religious tradition, scholars increasingly see spirituality in a less dogmatic or universally prescriptive way. There is no

‘one-size-fits-all’ spirituality that guarantees holiness or can claim to be the only way to become holy”.

This study focuses on Christian spirituality in relation to the specific pericope, but again it is noted that the discipline of Christian spirituality is “the experience-expression-dynamics of the Christian faith; and the wider discipline of spirituality, how this experience-expression-dynamic relates to other religious and non-religious orientations of faith. It does not have as a main focus the third person of the Holy Trinity” (Lombaard 2019:6). Waaijman (2016:1) also writes by referring to Cousins: “The study of spirituality also uses keywords to point to its field of interest and to indicate its approach. First of all, the word ‘spirituality’ itself indicates its field of interest: the ‘spirit’ as ‘the inner dimension’ of human reality, where human beings are ‘open to the transcendent and ultimate dimension’ (Cousins 1986:XII)”.

It appears then at face value that the text may evoke some kind of an experience within “the inner dimension” of the reader, a relatedness to the written experience of the text. Van der Merwe (2015:5) writes: “Introspectively, the dialectic discourse (a dialog between two or more persons holding different viewpoint trying to establish truth through an argument or reason) in the text and some choices made by the readers create tension and sometimes even guilt within the readers, as well as a longing to do the right thing. This is reminiscent of what Paul says in Romans 7:15 (also v. 19): ‘For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate’”. According to Thurston (n.d:228) “It is not adequate to proceed from a ‘text as text’ approach to the New Testament. Scholarship must take into account the experiences that gave rise to it. The New Testament is not just a text like any other document from antiquity. It is a record of human beings’ experience of communication between themselves and God in and through the person of Jesus Christ”. Paul might have written this out of some kind of experience with the “spiritual law” (v.14) whether pre or post conversion – and as mentioned by Fee (1996:127), many readers may read themselves into the text as there might be something of the “will” - to do what is right as it also relates to the text (7:15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21). Could this dialogue be the relation between the “I” and Christian spirituality? We take note that Thurston writes: “In

the first volume of his multi-volume *History of Christian Spirituality* Bouyer (n.d:229) defined his subject as the 'experiential counterpart of dogma.' Christian spirituality, he noted, 'is distinguished from dogma by the fact that, instead of studying or describing the objects of belief as it were in the abstract, it studies the reactions which these objects arouse in the religious consciousness.' The study of Christian spirituality concentrates on experiences 'in which the reference to God is not only explicit but immediate'.

McGrath (1999:2) additionally clarifies the difference between "spirituality" and "Christian spirituality" by these two basic definitions, which is helpful. He writes that spirituality in a broader context "concerns the quest for a fulfilled and authentic religious life, involving the bringing together of the ideas distinctive of that religion and the whole experience of living on the basis of and within the scope of that religion". Christian spirituality in turn "concerns the quest for a fulfilled and authentic Christian existence, involving the bringing together of the fundamental ideas of Christianity and the whole experience of living on the basis of and within the scope of the Christian faith" (McGrath 1999:2).

If McGrath's definition is correct here, then our problem is not whether "I" is Christian or not, but rather, how does the lived experience cohere with the fundamental ideas of Christianity according to the specific pericope? Continuing to explore more on Christian spirituality, Waaijman (2002:1) states that Christian spirituality "as we have defined it touches the core of our human existence: our relation to the Absolute". He goes on to say that spirituality is "the divine-human relational process as transformation" (2002:312). Holder (2005:5) offers a working definition that none of the contributors in the *Companion to Christian Spirituality* has rejected: Christian spirituality is "the lived experience of Christian faith and discipleship".

Ganss (1991:61) defined spirituality as "a lived experience, the effort to apply relevant elements in the deposit of Christian faith to the guidance of men and women toward their spiritual growth, the progressive development of their persons which flowers into a proportionately increased insight and joy". "Spirituality has to do with our experiencing of God and with the transformation of our consciousness and our lives as outcomes of that

experience” (McBrien 1994:1058). Saliers (1992:460) writes that “Spirituality refers to a lived experience and a disciplined life of prayer and action, but it cannot be conceived apart from specific theological beliefs that are ingredients in the forms of life that manifest authentic Christian faith”. All these definitions highlight two aspects that relate to Christian spirituality in general: First, it has to do with a lived experience between God and humans. Second, it has to do with change, transformation, the progression of growth, discipleship of the human, or the process of redemption of the person who experienced or experiences that relationship with God.

It would seem that after exploring some of our pericope’s interpretations, spirituality, lived experience and some definitions of Christian Spirituality we may now move into the realm of hermeneutics as the discussion revolve around the relation between “I” and the lived experience. According to Thomas (2002:49), when it comes to hermeneutics (and this might be an oversimplification) – it basically comes down to the old and new approaches to hermeneutics.

The new approach tends to abandon the authority and historical interpretation – in a sense that our preunderstanding of text is at the head of exegetical process and not the type of interpretation that prevails under authoritarian grammatical-historical guidelines. In other words, we start with our own experience or philosophical idea rather than with text – and seek to bring that out of the text.

Thomas continues: “This is another way of saying that they have magnified the human element in inspiration above the divine”. Fee (1991:27) argues that the important task of interpretation is the issue of relevance. Fee writes: “How do these ancient texts have meaning for us today, or do they? At this point nearly everything depends on the presupposition of the interpreter... What the text *means* – that is, *how* it is a word for *us* – that is the crucial hermeneutical question”.

According to Keener (2016a:821), in his book *Spirit Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture in the Light of Pentecost*, the presupposition of the interpreter should from the outset be a

“Spirit filled” reading of the text. “Although most Christian scholars, whatever their tradition, would be impatient with any approach that plays down disciplined study, most also value the Spirit’s work in helping believers to understand and obey Scripture”. Grey (2017:172), in a review of Keener’s book writes that “the WARC-Pentecostal Report notes¹, ‘For Pentecostals the Bible is a story; they read their lives into that story and that story into their lives.’ This approach is similarly identified as a feature of Keener’s hermeneutic as he draws from the depths of his Pentecostal heritage”. Grey (2017:174) continues: “Keener proposes a two-step process to the task of Spirit hermeneutics.

The first step is the exploration of the original intention and context of the biblical writer (as much as possible)... To honor the original community and context to which God spoke, as recorded in Scripture, is to recognize that God spoke and continues to speak today... While the Spirit is involved in both steps, it is the second step that Keener suggests most vitally requires the guidance of the Spirit”. Keener promotes a respectable hermeneutical process.

In the light of a lived experience as mentioned, the struggle mentioned in Romans 7:14-25 may seem to be a narrative that one may find within contemporary readers as they relate to the “I”. It is a question what the exact relationship is between believers’ lived experience and the “I” in Romans 7, especially if the “I” may point to a pre-Christian experience. Stated differently, it could also be asked how the process of hermeneutics is completed in the lives of contemporary readers of Romans 7.

2. Which void in the current pool of knowledge will this study help to fill?

In view of a preliminary reading of Romans 7, the void that could be filled with this study is the relation between the reader and the pericope. There are masses of work done on this specific pericope, especially on the interpretation of the text. However, a contribution can be made in respect of spirituality and the lived experience of the believer in relation to the text, since not much on the topic was found. This focus on the relation between the

¹ The Final Report of the International Dialogue between Representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders 1996-2000. See note 27.

lived experience and the meaning of the text constitutes a specific angle to the text that may contribute to scholarly body of knowledge.

3. Research problem, aim and objectives

The primary question to answer in this study is: how is the fundamental idea of Paul's "I" in Romans 7:14-25 related to the Christian spiritual experience? This is an especially important question, since the "I's" identity needs to be established in relation to the lived experience. Is there a pertinent relationship between the "I" and the Christian experience, and if so, how can that relationship be described? This leads to the secondary questions: What is the disposition of the reader in relation to the "I"? To clarify, the disposition is questions and assumptions or the ideology with which the reader approaches the pericope. Furthermore, if the lived experience as a Christian does relate to the central message of the text somehow, does it have the aptitude to transform us spiritually? The effect that the text has on the reader or the reader's positioning in relation to the text is at heart a hermeneutical problem. By implementing the chosen textures of the socio-rhetorical method, this hermeneutical problem can be addressed. Since the last facet of the socio-rhetorical method entails the sacred texture, the spiritual dimension and thus the believer's relation to the text can be attended to.

4. Central theoretical argument

As mentioned, spirituality has to do with the human experience of the divine. The hypothesis is that the divine interacts through the text so that transformation and redemption may take place within the realm of spiritual hermeneutics. Waaijman (2002:7) clarifies spiritual hermeneutics by writing that "[h]ermeneutic research, aimed at the interpretation of the texts of spirituality: in a joined process of interpretation the preunderstanding, textual constitution, textual execution, and content analysis are oriented the orative and mystical dimension of the text and its spiritual appropriation". By implementing the socio-rhetorical method we can study both the text and the lived experience, which moves into the realm of "spiritual hermeneutics". By utilising this method, the central argument of the pericope can be related to the lived experience. This

will not be an easy task since the nature of the pericope needs to interact with the spiritual experience of the contemporary Christian reader. The hypothesis then is that since the “spiritual law” (v. 14) is God-inspired and speaks, the reader reads or interprets and experiences a tension that relates with the “I”, whether Christian or not. This then creates a problem, for if the “I” in the pericope is pre-Christian for example why does it relate to a believer? Or if “I” is in fact Christian, why then this tension? This could be part of Christian spirituality since there is no spirituality without the lived experience.

5. Research design/Methodology

The socio-rhetorical method of interpretation (Robbins 1996) could help identify the relation between the “I” in Romans 7:14-25 and Christian spirituality. Why this method? Because, as Gowler (2010:192-194) writes the;

[s]ocio-rhetorical analysis fosters a dialogic relationship with scholars of various approaches and disciplines, and its connection with reception history in particular is multifaceted, beginning with its foundational assumptions about the nature of texts and discourse... Rhetorical approaches include a concern for the social nature of reality, the interrelationship between language and human actions, and how language attempts to create effects on an audience.

Gowler (2010:192) continues by quoting Kloppenborg:

In a discipline as seemingly conservative as the study of the New Testament, to witness the rapid emergence of a methodological approach with such wide-ranging and revolutionary implications as socio-rhetorical criticism is a rare event. Rarer still is the fact that this approach was effectively brought from its infancy to a degree of maturity by the efforts of a single scholar. It is not that Vernon Robbins created *ex nihilo*; of course, he drew on a variety of studies that arose from the ferment of the 1970s and 1980s—studies that focused on semiotics, on narrative criticism, on rhetorical features of biblical texts, on intertextuality, on the social world of biblical texts, and on the role of ideology in the production and use of literary texts. But Robbins had the clarity of mind to see how to integrate these diverse methods and approaches to the texts of antiquity into a multi-dimensional method which identifies various registers or 'textures' in an effort to understand how a text works on the intellect, emotions, and sensibilities of its readers and hearers and how the worlds of the readers or hearers variously affect the appropriation of the text.

In approaching the study of spirituality in Romans 7:14-25 as a lived experience the main method that is proposed is socio-rhetorical criticism, which involves anthropological and sociological approaches. Socio-rhetorical criticism in which this study is proposed to commence is an “approach to literature that focuses on values, convictions, and beliefs both in the text we read and in the world in which we live” (Robbins 1996:1). This approach could focus in detail on the text itself, then moves to the world of the people who wrote it, and then into our world of today.

Serfontein and Wessels (2013:179) agree and writes “First, ‘socio’ looks at the wealth of information that social scientific approaches offer. Lately the study of social class, social systems and people within these structures has enriched the process of Scripture interpretation”. Second, “rhetorical” is the way in which the language in the text communicates to the reader. According to Robbins (1992:2), “[a] major challenge of socio-rhetorical criticism, then, is to bring practices of interpretation together that often are separated from one another”. The task of the socio-rhetorical is to use the intricacies of the text and to integrate it with the skills people use in ordinary life.

Not all the layers of the socio-rhetorical criticism will be utilised, for not all of the layers can be used exhaustively within one interpretation. However, we might infringe into the inner and inter-textual methods to get a holistic understanding of the “I”. That is why this method is suggested for this particular study. More specifically, three layers of interpretation are suggested:

5.1 The Social and cultural texture – This texture involves exploration of the text in respect of its original intent and context. The social and cultural topics will deepen our understanding of customary practices, values and modes of relationships before the exegetical study is conducted. According to Robbins (1996:3): “the priority certain people give to the right, lawful, expedient, honorable, pleasant, easy, feasible, necessary, holy and so on, produces a particular social and cultural location for them”. The latter aids the exploration of Paul’s world. Gowler (2010:197) states that, “[e]lements of social and cultural texture illuminate our understandings of the contexts in which people respond to

texts, especially when such contexts are also informed by intertextual analysis and a close reading of inner textual details”, which refer to the layers that the reader discovers.

This texture concerns itself with “the capacities of the text to support social reform, withdrawal, or opposition and to evoke cultural perceptions of dominance, difference or exclusion” (Robbins 1996:3). This has to do with the social class and location of the audience and the reader also needs to be taken into account. For us to understand Paul within the context of Romans 7:14-25 we need to explore the world of Paul. For example, Dussel and Ciccariello-Maher (2009:117-118) comment on the distinction in anthropology between the Greco-Roman view and the Semitic view. According to Dussel for example, Paul and the Semites understood the human as being “flesh”, an intersubjective anthropology. In Greco-Roman culture, body (*soma*) was evil and soul (*psykhé*) was immortal, which again could be the gnostic dualism of a person.

Exploring the historical-context of Romans, the audience, the setting in Rome, the church, customs, the law etc. will help to discover the first century-world. In the first century, perhaps community was higher in priority than the role of the individual. It was much like the African-Proverb, “We are therefore I am”. Magesa (2010:71) sheds light on African Spirituality in which morality and spirituality relate to behaviour within the context of community. This could also impact the way the text is understood.

5.2 The Ideological-texture - This texture goes beyond the social and cultural location into specific “ways in which people advance their own interests and well-being through actions, emotions and thought” (Robbins 1996:4). Because there exist different ways in which people and reality are viewed, the text may evoke different viewpoints. Here my viewpoint and other viewpoints of reality will be explored in relation with the “I” in Romans 7:14-25. The ideological texture refers to the “way the text itself and interpreters of the text position themselves in relation to other individual groups” (Robbins 1996:3). It is about the philosophies used to put forth the author’s interests and viewpoints.

Ideology becomes our way of looking at reality. Robbins (1996:95) points out that “in ideological analysis, an interpreter is analysing either himself or herself as a writer and reader and one or more other writers and readers. A special characteristic of ideological analysis is its focus on relation of individual people to groups”. A good example of this is found in Kreitzer’s (1992) paper on R.L Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and Romans 7:14-25, which shows that the “dualism” written about in the book could have come from a struggle-experience to Stevenson, since he was a white Scottish Calvinist who was militant in his faith. For Robbins (1996:101), “[a] historic tradition is one to which a person exhibits special alliance when interpreting the Bible and the world. Examples are the Catholic-tradition, the Protestant tradition, or a specific tradition within Protestantism”.

5.3 The Sacred-texture – This texture will require the most attention, because it has to do with the human relation to the divine. Robbins (1996:4) explains that the “analysis of sacred-texture is a way of systematically probing dynamics across a spectrum of relationships between the human and the divine”. According to Serfontein and Wessels 2015:180 “[i]t deals with reference to and communication with or about the divine creatures”. This texture includes characters such as the deity, holy persons, spirit-being and aspects such as divine history, human redemption, religious community and ethics (Gowler 2010:195). Robbins (1996:120) writes: “People who read the New Testament regularly are interested in finding insights into the nature of the relation between human life and the divine... these readers are interested in locating the ways the text speaks about God or gods, or talk about realms of religious life”. This texture is “locating ways the text speaks” to the reader. No text speaks on its own; it has to be read and interpreted.

This interpretation moves to the realm of hermeneutics and specifically a spiritual hermeneutic. Waaijman (2002:690) helps by explaining the spiritual hermeneutic and writes: “A spiritual hermeneutic which situates itself in the scientific tradition of phenomenology—(denoting or relating to an approach that concentrates on the study of consciousness and the object of direct or personal experience) must thoroughly immerse itself in the prescientific reading practice of lived spirituality”. The approach to “spiritual

hermeneutic” as it is called by Waaijman, starts with the reading of the text. However, before starting with the reading, the *initial attitude* is first to be noted, which involves the surroundings of where Scripture should be read. The attitude should be one of reverence and respect. Secondly, the *performance of the text* engages the world of forms, sounds and character. It involves the senses and imagination of images within the text. Thirdly, we move to *the internal dimension* in which a “spiritual reading does not stop after a first reading but continues to ask questions” (Waaijman 2002:704). Here the method wants to penetrate to the core, the deeper meaning of the text. It is to meditate on and seek out the deeper interior of the text. Guigo (in Waaijman 2002:704) writes that “meditation does not remain on the outside, is not detained by unimportant things, climbs higher (up the Ladder, KW), goes to the heart of the matter, and examines each point thoroughly”. Fourthly, a spiritual hermeneutic involves *God-relatedness* in which prayer is ignited by meditation. Guigo, referred to by Waaijman (2002:705), argues that “meditation ‘leads’ to prayer, which is ‘ignited’ by meditation. How could she have pressed her petition, had she not first been fired by meditation?” The fifth aspect is *the mystical dimension*, which refers to God’s Self-communication. Waaijman (2002:707) writes: “Scripture is divine self-revelation”.

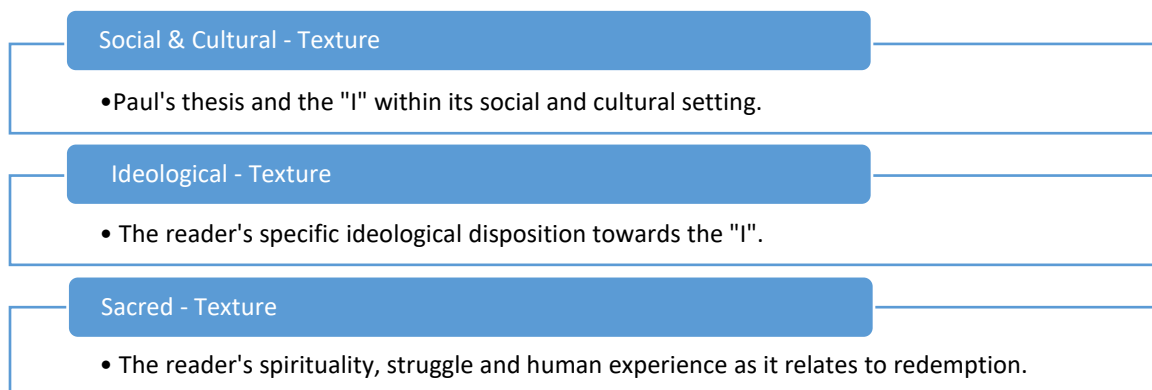
The last aspect of the sacred texture is *the continuing impact* in which a spiritual reading aims to the transformation of “the cognitive and the affective level but, beyond that, also of the level of being. The layer of our existence that will be touched by the reading of the text is unpredictable. Certain only is that not a single level is excluded. It touches us wherever it touches us” (Waaijman 2002:708). The following explanation given by Waaijman (2002:709) is helpful:

Jerome compares the reading of Scripture to “the hoisting of our sails for the Holy Spirit without knowing at which shore we will land...” There is first of all the hoisting of the sails. Every skipper knows all the planning that needed to rig up a ship, certainly when it concerns a seaworthy vessel. Then there is the blowing of the Spirit: one can hoist all the sails one wishes, but when there is no wind, the ship will not move forward. The reading must allow itself to be inwardly moved by the Spirit: the speech of the Inexpressible. And finally there is the place of arrival: the reading of Scripture touches the shoreline as a ship reaches the seashore.

Observing Waaijman's spiritual hermeneutic can be beneficial if we aim to find how our pericope speaks spiritually as a lived experience.

If Romans 7:14-25 is written to the pre-Christian, which most scholars depicts as life under the law, it has to be asked: why does the believer reading and meditating on that text experience a struggle in relating to it? And how is that struggle spiritual for the reader? Could it be that our answer lies in Paul's renewal of the mind (νοός)? Perhaps Waaijman's spiritual hermeneutic can help us determine the process of renewal. By quoting (Fee 1994:559), du Toit (2019:205) writes: "As 'Spirit people' believers have to learn not to heed to old habits but to rely on the empowering Spirit. By 'the Spirits help they are to become what they are'". And what we are, is children of God (Romans 8:14 and 17). This is the process of the renewal of the mind. Keener (2016b:106) writes: "In Paul the body, guided by a renewed mind (Rom 12:2-3), could be used for good (12:1; cf. 6:13); but under other circumstances the body could also be used for sin (1:24; 6:12-13; 7:5) and even be closely associated with it (6:6; 8:10, 13; cf. 7:24)". McGrath also writes (1999:95): "This theme of fighting sins within oneself is found throughout the entire spectrum of Christian spirituality, and is of major importance".

The following diagram summarizes how I will use the socio-rhetorical method, which includes the lived experience.



6. Research steps

The steps that will be followed in this research are as follows: The first step of the research is the social-cultural structure, which researches the social and cultural setting, which should help to determine who the “I” in Romans 7:14-25 is referring to. This will be done by means of exegesis. Here, “exegesis” refers to the historical-grammatical interpretation of the biblical text where we seek to discover the intended meaning within its historical and literary context. Romans is a letter that was apparently written to a mature community of Christians that was already established in Rome as their faith was “reported all over the world” (1:8). Fee (2002:1) writes: “The presupposition lying behind this task (of exegesis) is that the biblical books had ‘authors’ and ‘readers,’ and the authors intended their readers to understand what they wrote. Exegesis therefore answers the question, what did the biblical author mean?” The exegesis will be done to determine who the “I” within our pericope is referring to. The historical, cultural location and the literary context will also be explored to determine whether “I” is individualistic in its reference or communal. Part of doing exegesis will also involve looking at the structure of the text in the form of a structural analysis.

The second step of the research is the ideological-texture, which is almost in a sense the research of the researcher deposition to the “I” within the pericope. Here we determine the researcher individual location by analysing the individuals’ presupposition, dispositions and values. A series of questions proposed by Robbins (1996:99) could help determine the researchers’ location: “What is the nature of your social and cultural location? Have you been mostly a participant in one culture during your lifetime? What is the nature of this culture? Are there multiple cultures and social locations that are still part of your life? If so, what are they, and how do you combine them in your interpretation of the text?”

The final step is to engage the sacred-texture and here the reader's spirituality, struggle and human experience as it relates to redemption is at stake. To determine whether the “I” speaks to spirituality, I will seek to determine how it does. The hermeneutical process starts with an exegesis of the text by exploring the historical and literature context. In step

one the unravelling of the hermeneutical problem begins. The second step should take us closer to what the hermeneutical problem actually is, as we explore the reader's disposition to the text. This culminates with the last step that focuses on the spiritual hermeneutic and will complete the hermeneutical process.

7. Ethical statement.

This research has been done in submission with the ethical policies of the North-West University and the Faculty of Theology. Scholarly literature will be handled with the utmost respect. Plagiarism will be evaded in submission with the rules for the proper formatting of sources according to the Harvard reference system as provided in the North-West University's Reference Guide. Since this research is a literary study no interactions or interviews with actual people will be conducted, the above guidelines is reflected as sufficient for this research, thus the research will hold a very low ethical risk.

8. Provisional classification of chapters

List of tables

Definition of key terms:

1. Introduction
2. Social-Cultural-Texture - Paul's thesis and the 'I' within its social and cultural setting.
3. Ideological-Texture - The reader's specific ideological disposition towards the "I".
4. Sacred-Texture - The reader's spirituality, struggle and human experience as it relates to redemption.
5. Discussion of the findings and conclusion.

Bibliography.

9. Schematic presentation

Research question	Aim and objectives	Research method
Who is the “I” Paul is referring to within Romans 7:14-25?	The identity of the “I” found within the text is to be established in relation to the lived experience.	The theological study is done from the perspective of socio-rhetorical criticism. Not all the layers of this method will be utilised. The Social-Cultural Texture will be used to explore the text. Here the author’s original intent will be researched, as well as the context of the pericope. The social and cultural topics will expand our understanding of customary practices, values and modes of relationships and then followed by an exegesis. Relevant scholarship of the pericope’ interpretation will be consulted.
What is the disposition of the reader in relation to the “I”?	The aim is to establish the reader’s location. The disposition is questions and assumptions or ideology with which the reader approaches the pericope. To evaluate and demonstrate that the reader approaches the text with a specific ideological disposition.	To help establish the reader’s disposition the second texture within the socio-rhetorical criticism will be used. There exist different ways in which people and reality are viewed – the text may evoke different viewpoints. Here the reader’s viewpoint and other viewpoints of reality will be explored in relation with the “I” in Romans 7:14-25. This texture is about the philosophies used to put forth the reader’s interests and viewpoints. Ideology becomes our way of looking at reality.

Research question	Aim and objectives	Research method
How do the fundamental idea of Paul's "I" in Romans 7:14-25 relate to the Christian spiritual experience?	The aim is to find what the relation is (if there is any) between the fundamental idea of the pericope and a Christian spiritual lived experience. The bringing together of the fundamental idea of the pericope and Christian spirituality.	The final texture is the sacred texture and will require the most attention, because it has to do the human relation to the divine. The investigation of this texture is to probe the complex dynamics between the human and the divine. This moves into the realm of hermeneutics and special attention will be given to Kees Waaijman method of the "spiritual hermeneutic".
If the lived experience as a Christian does relate to the central message of the text somehow, does it have the aptitude to transform us spiritually?	To establish whether the pericope in relation to the lived experience have the ability to transform us spiritually.	In order to determine this, a reflection of the findings will be done and also synthesized with the studies existing scholarship.

In chapter 2, to follow, the aspect of the Socio-Cultural Texture of Romans 7:14-25 will be discussed as a first important step in engaging the chosen passage.

CHAPTER 2: Socio-Cultural Texture

Paul's thesis and the “I” within its social and cultural setting.

Introduction

The first stage of the hermeneutical process is to determine to whom the “I” (ἐγώ) is referring to in Romans 7:14-25. The task starts by utilising the historical-grammatical interpretation, which involves examining the literary context. In other words, in this chapter exegesis of the text will help determine who Paul is referring to, and what the one thing is that he was communicating in the pericope.

Furthermore, by utilising the social and cultural criticism referred to by Robbins in determining the location of the pericope is of vital importance. Robbins (1996:75) writes: “Everyone living in an area knows common social and cultural topics either consciously or instinctively. Becoming an adult in that environment means acquiring knowledge, consciously or unconsciously, of these social and cultural values, patterns and codes. Common social and cultural topics are the overall environment of the specific social topics in the text.” Robbins continues (1996:76) by writing that one of the goals of the social-scientific critics of the last two decades was to show that in the Western-world (North-America and Europe), interpretations of the Bible are based on individualist, guilt-oriented values rather than group-oriented honour-shame values which is a characteristic of the Mediterranean society.

The exegesis of the pericope may be outlined as follow:

1. The question of the *context* of the pericope.

1.1 The Genre of Romans

1.2 The Historical context of Romans

1.2.1 The general context

1.2.2 The specific context

1.3 The Literary context of the pericope

2. The question of the *content* within the pericope.

2.1 The Original text & Analytical outline

2.2 A note on the use of the Inner Texture

3. Demonstrating and exploration and outline, working with the text itself.

1. The question of the context of the pericope.

The question of context has three parts to it and desires to answer the “why” questions of the pericope. These questions are the following: What is the genre of Romans 7:14-25? What is the historical context in general and specifically? What is the literary context of the pericope? Answering these questions will help answer why Paul wrote what he wrote in Romans 7:14-25.

1.1 The Genre of Romans.

Romans is a letter. The message was written for a particular audience for a certain situation. Letters were a popular method of communication and according to Carson & Moo (2005:332) a typical Greco-Roman letter was composed of an address and greeting, a body, and a conclusion. What kind of a letter is Romans? “There were many types of letters in the ancient world, ranging from brief requests for money from children away from home to long essays intended to reach a wide audience. Paul’s letter generally falls somewhere between these extremes, but Romans is farther toward the latter end of the spectrum than any other of his letters” (Carson & Moo 2005:402). So, did Paul write the letter for a more general reason or a more specific reason? He addresses his audience with terms such as “brothers and sisters” (7:4; 8:12; 10:1; 11:25), those who “know the law” (7:1); and the “gentiles” (11:13) and as Carson & Moo (2005:402) comments, “[n]ot even chapters 14-15 need have a specific situation at Rome in mind”. Why write a letter at all? There may be several reasons for the letter.

Firstly, Paul feels obligated to visit the Christians in Rome because he will strengthen their faith and they will strengthen his faith (1:11-12), which involves to “preach the gospel

to you who are in Rome” (1:15). Secondly, “[h]e also has in mind as he writes this letter the continuation of his mission to the western half of the Mediterranean world, namely, Spain (15:24). From the language he uses, we may infer, as his readers would have, that he hoped to find support for that mission from the Roman church” (Achte-meier et al. 2001:300). Another question to consider is, who was the Roman Christian audience? Witherington III (2004:8) writes that according to chapters 1-4 and 9-11, “there were in the audience some Jewish Christians and some Gentile Christians who had been among the God-fearers, that is, the Gentiles who had attended synagogue services but had not fully converted to Judaism”. Bruce (1977:383) agrees and writes that “Paul makes it plain that Gentiles as well as Jewish believers are included in ‘all God’s beloved ones in Rome, saints by calling’, to whom the letter is addressed (Romans 1:7)”. This is important to keep in mind in moving forward since the author assumes much between himself and his readers.

1.2 The Historical Context of Romans

1.2.1 The general context.

Since the Letter to the Romans is addressed to both Jews and gentiles within a community, it will be a great benefit to explore the general setting of the church in Rome. In respect of the general context an exploration of the Greco-Roman world is necessary, since it would make a difference in the understanding of the letter.

Christianity’s expansion can also be credited to the Roman Empire of the first century. A fusion between Greece, Rome and Palestine formed the background and climate for the subsequent Christendom (Douglas & Tenney 2011:1247). According to Hatina (2013:557), “Rome’s infrastructure, political and social policies, and military created the ideal conditions for early Christian missions. In turn, the Roman Empire (and the inherited Hellenistic traditions) gave expression to the formation of Christianity”. Because of the broad use of Greek in the east and Latin in the west their faith was widely communicated.

According to Hatina (2013:557), “[t]he philosophical traditions, rhetorical methods, literary genres, and artistry, as well as the political, legal, and ethical structures, and social relations (such as slaves/masters/husbands/wives/children, classes), among other aspects – all influenced how Christianity took shape”. Roman society can be divided into the elite and the non-elites. There was almost no middle-class, thus the division between the classes was quite significant. Birth determined the status of a person and there was little opportunity for financial development. The inhabitants of the empire were categorised into citizens (Paul was a citizen according to Acts 22), free people of the provinces and slaves (Hatina 2013:565). Moreover, the first-century world emphasised the role of community over the role of the individual. Achtemeier (2001:47) explains that “[w]hereas today someone introducing himself or herself might refer to individual accomplishments, persons in the world of Jesus and Paul might refer instead to their genealogy, their village, and their community of reference. Their identities were embedded in their communities, their kin-group”. This is very interesting when considering ἐγώ (“I”) in the pericope since the cultural thinking might have been in terms of group-orientation rather than individualism.

Throughout the Bible the concept of guilt, especially in the OT, had a strong sense of corporate responsibility (Ex 20:5-6). The individual may bring guilt upon an entire group (Lev 4:3). However, as time went by the prophets presented a different kind of understanding of guilt. According to Ryken et al. (1998:355), “[i]n them [the prophets] the idea of personal responsibility clearly emerges with an emphasis on motive and inner spirit (Is 1; 57:15; 58:1-12; Mic 6:8). The notion of individual guilt and sin is heightened among the prophets (Ezek 33:12-20; Jer 31:29-30)”. Paul’s understanding of guilt is much more universal, and internalizes the debt to God even further because of sin (Ryken et al. 1998:355). For Paul, all are guilty before God (Rom 1:18-3:20). Ryken et al. (1998:356) indicate that “[b]ecause of the importance of community in the Bible, guilt is seen as both collective (Ex 20:5-6; Is 65:7) and individual (Deut 24:16; Ezek 18:2-4)”. Robbins (1996:76) considers the shame-honour culture of the Mediterranean as different from the guilt-value culture of the west. It is thus worth mentioning how shame is to be understood. “Shame is seen objectively as that moral state which exhibits the reprehensible and

degrading nature of sin, and subjectively as a psychological or emotional consequence that flows from guilt and sin” (Ryken et al. 1998:780). Ryken et al. (1998:780) also describe a further dimension of shame by writing that “it is not simply something that person brings upon himself or herself. It can also be imposed on others, and in such a case it invites retribution”. The example Ryken et al. use to illustrate this principle is Tamar’s rape by Amnon found in 2 Samuel.

By presenting the difference between individualism and group-orientation, Esler (2017:17) makes a few important points for the group-orientation of the ancient Greco-Roman cities:

Perhaps the greatest difference between modern Northern European and North American cultures, or “North Atlantic cultures hereafter”, and those of contemporary Mediterranean societies is the prevalence of individualism in the former and a strong sense of group-orientation in the latter. By “individualism” I am referring to the notion that to a large extent persons find fulfilment in life through their own individual efforts – by thinking for themselves, by striking out on their own, for example by leaving their parents’ home at an early stage to build a career in another city, and so on. Mediterranean context of early Christianity “Individualism” fosters virtues such as self-reliance, innovativeness and a capacity for introspection. “Individualism” is not the same as “individuality”, which simply refers to the phenomenon of each person having the capacity to present himself or herself as a distinctive individual in relation to other persons, most notably by being pre-eminent in some way, and which characterises all societies, whether they are individualistic or not, or ancient or modern. Most of the world is not individualistic in the sense just set out, although many people socialised in North Atlantic cultures often fail to see this. The more common pattern is of group-orientation, where individuals achieve fulfilment in relation to significant groups. The family is by far the most important group in such settings, although other groups such as one’s village, town or city, tribe, people, or ethnic group also play a major role, as do voluntary associations in towns and cities

It is important to note that Esler makes a distinction between “individualism” and “individuality”. On the basis of this distinction, Keener (2016b:90) notes that “ancient autobiography avoided the sort of introspection that appears in Romans 7:7-25. This observation does not mean, however, that introspection did not occur. Stoics did ‘look inward and interrogate themselves’. Nor was it likely unfamiliar in Jewish piety”. Even though the culture was group-orientated, it does not mean that there was no individuality.

Esler also notes the importance of “voluntary associations” of these cities, which further indicates why Paul’s letter to Rome was addressed to the group.

1.2.2 The specific context

The specific context of the letter has to do with the occasion of the letter, but more specifically the relationship between Paul and the community or congregation. The question asked in this section is: What was the purpose in sending such an extensive theological letter to the Christians in Rome? By saying extensive, it does not mean the letter can be classified as a summary of Paul’s theology, because many of Paul’s central teachings, such as the Lord Supper are not included (Schreiner 1998:16). However, it needs to be noted that this letter stands apart from all the other letters that Paul wrote, because it is the only one (except maybe Colossians) that Paul wrote in which he was not the founder of the community or was closely related to it (Carson & Moo 2005:407; Schreiner 1998:10-11). Could this be why he wrote this intense letter? Opinions and debates on Paul’s reason for writing this letter tend to move into two directions: “Paul’s own circumstance and needs as the occasion for the letter, and those that stress the circumstances of the Christian community in Rome as its immediate occasion. Few solutions ignore one or the other of these factors entirely; the difference come in the importance accorded to each one” (Carson & Moo 2005:404). Similarly, Longenecker (2016:10) argues that in asking “whether Paul’s purpose in writing Romans was motivated principally (1) by factors that arose from within his own ministry (2) by conditions that were existing within the Christian congregation at Rome, scholars seem to have come to something watershed in their sorting out of the issues, determining of priorities, and proposing of solutions”. According to Longenecker (2016:10), out of this watershed can be claimed “the character, form and content of Paul’s letter to the believers in Jesus at Rome”.

First, looking briefly at Paul’s circumstances and needs for the occasion of the letter as a concern, his mission to Spain is to plant new churches there (Rom 15:24-29). He would stop in Rome for some support of the church for this campaign (Rom 15:24). One of Paul’s purposes for writing the letter, may be to introduce himself to the Roman Christians

to prepare them for his visit and also to request sponsorship (Carson & Moo 2005:404; Harrison 1976:5; Bruce 1985:20). As noted, this cannot be the only reason why Paul wrote this letter. A letter such as Romans must have a greater purpose than just to introduce himself to this church.

A second possibility might be the Jewish issues in Romans. After reflecting on the struggles with Judaizers that opposed him in Galatia and Corinth, harmony between the Jews and gentiles in the congregation could be the reason for the letter. According to Carson and Moo (2005:405), “Paul’s purpose in writing to the Romans is to set forth his mature views on these issues (law, circumcision, and Judaism) as they have emerged from rough-and-tumble of theological polemics”. This same purpose could be applied to the anticipated speech Paul was to give in Jerusalem when he arrives with the collection. Since his motive was his underlying concern as he looked ahead to Jerusalem, this understanding of the purpose also explains Paul’s preoccupation with issues that refer to the relationship between Jews and Gentiles. Carson & Moo (2005:406) write: “But in addition to its failure to explain the Roman destination of the letter, this view shares with the previous one the problem of leaving the purpose of the letter separate from Paul’s desire to visit Rome”.

Another particular text that has been focused on is Romans 14:1-15:13 as the purpose of the letter. These texts reproof two groups: the “weak in faith” and the “strong in faith” for their intolerance with one another. The chapters that precede these chapters provide the necessary theological groundwork for this reproach. Carson & Moo (2005:406) clarify by saying that “the rebuke, as the letter as a whole, focuses on the Gentile Christians, who are becoming arrogant toward the shrinking minority of Jewish Christians. To be sure, this interpretation has been rejected on the grounds that 14:1-15:13 is general parenesis, ethical guidance that has no basis in a specific circumstance. But this is not convincing: the section is more naturally interpreted as arising from known divisions in the community in Rome. One of Paul’s purposes was to heal this division in the Christian community in Rome. But we doubt whether this was the primary purpose”. Schreiner (1998:22-23) adds by asking: “Why did Paul want the church in Rome to be unified? Was

unity the ultimate goal? Romans 15:7-13 indicates... that Paul wanted the church to be unified so that they would praise God harmoniously together. Thus Seifrid (1992:182–210) is correct in saying that the manifold purposes of the letter are subsumed under Paul's desire to unite the church under his gospel".

Since this study involves a social aspect it is important to take note of Esler's (2003) criticism on the "narrow" theological approach to Roman's purpose. He focuses on the social identity and ethnicity of the letter as its purpose. Esler's thesis of Paul's letter to the Romans is artfully engaging in identity reconfiguration for the churches in Rome. Reasoner (2006:455) reviews Esler's thesis and argues that "Esler uses the social identity work of Tajfel² and the self-categorization work of Turner³ to show Paul shaping the identity of the Roman churches: Paul categorizes himself as Judean and respects the permanent identities of Judean and Gentile groups, all the while calling them to live by a shared identity in Christ". Esler's study is deeply dependent on the social science and stands and falls by it. Reasoner (2006:455) writes:

His [Esler's] use of such concepts is most convincing when he applies it to first-century Mediterranean views of time. Here, this approach to Romans works very well, for it reminds us of the distance between ourselves and the text. Esler helpfully discards the "already–not yet" template and offers instead Paul's mind-set of living in the "forthcoming" world. But Esler's use of critical social theory has the opposite effect for the book's main thesis. Here, social scientific criticism bridges the distance between our world and the text. It makes the text applicable, but I am not convinced that we can identify this social function as Roman's primary purpose.

Almost all scholars would agree that one cannot separate the letter's theology from its social analysis (Reasoner 2006:455). It would not have been Paul's intention for a social reform as the primary purpose for the letter. In the chapter "Common Ingroup Identity on Romans 1:1–3:20", Esler (2003:154) states that "[t]he way he mounts his argument

²"Henri Tajfel's greatest contribution to psychology was social identity theory. Social identity is a person's sense of who they are based on their group membership(s). Tajfel (1979) proposed that the groups (e.g. social class, family, football team etc.) which people belonged to were an important source of pride and self-esteem" (McLeod 2019).

³"Self-categorization theory is a theory in social psychology that describes the circumstances under which a person will perceive collections of people (including themselves) as a group, as well as the consequences of perceiving people in group terms. It was developed by John Turner and colleagues, and along with social identity theory it is a constituent part of the social identity approach" Reasoner (2006:455). See, e.g., Turner (1999).

indicates that Paul has realized that to inculcate his Roman addressees in the reality and status of their glorious new shared identity, he must persuade them of the inevitable sinfulness to which they are subject without it, yet do so in a way that is adapted to their entirely different social origins, no Judean/Greek sinners not subject to the law of Moses and Judean sinners subject to that law.” Reasoner (2006:455) rightly writes that “[a]lthough this is possible, does not even this more modest approach allow social science to eclipse theology in a way that ignores how in sections such as Rom. 9:1–3 and 11:25–32 a theological gravity field seems to be pulling Paul as powerfully as the audience’s issues of conflict and identity? Esler has not proven that Paul’s strategy in dealing with the divided house churches is predominantly driven by social utility”.

It has to be clear that Paul’s purpose for the letter cannot be restricted to any of these specific suggestions mentioned. It might be better to conclude that Paul had several purposes for the letter. “Several intersecting factors come together to form what we might call Paul’s missionary situation, and it is out of that situation that he writes to the Romans... these circumstances led Paul to write a letter in which he carefully set forth his understanding of the gospel, particularly as it related to salvation – historical question of Jew and Gentile, law and gospel, continuity and discontinuity between the old and the new” (Carson & Moo 2005:407). Under the purpose of sharing the gospel – we can include the nature of social reform. Therefore, it could be a by-product of the gospel unity in diversity under Christ (Rom 10:12).

1.3 The Literary context of the pericope

Keeping the genre and context of the letter in mind, the enquiry naturally moves to the literary context of the pericope. Keeping the text within its context, why did Paul write this specific pericope and why write it in such a way? Fee (1996:20) writes that “[t]he question of literary context is singular and crucial: What’s the point? Not only do we want to know what is said, but we want to know why”.

Many commentators agree that chapters 5:1- 8:39 are a major section of the letter and that Romans 7:14-25 is part of this major section. But some may disagree on where this

major section starts, but almost all agree that the section ends in Romans 8:39⁴. Du Toit (2019:185) rightly writes that “[i]t can be argued that Romans 7 and 8 form the latter part of the second major section of the letter that starts in Romans 5. The main reasons for this view are that many themes reoccur in Romans 5 through 8 and correspond especially in 5:1–11 and 8:18–39, together with the fact that much of the subject matter in Romans 5 differs from 1 to 4.” To know why Paul wrote the pericope it requires to be placed into this context. The context of the pericope then is placed between chapters 5 and 8 and must therefore be part of a larger argument or theology. After Paul in the previous section shown that sinful human beings can be declared right before God by faith (chapter 1-4), in this section according to Carson & Moo (2005:392), the letter draws out the significance of this act of faith for future judgement and for earthly life presently.

In chapter 5:1-11, Paul displays the result of rectification. Because of faith in God they have “peace with God” and that gives hope in suffering. In chapter 5:12-21, the reason for hope is their relationship with Christ, who is undoing the effect of Adam’s universal sin and has won eternal life for those who belong to him. According to chapter 6:1-14, Christ has set free those who belong to him from the tyranny of sin, and sin no longer dictate terms to them. In chapter 6:15-23, believers have a new master now, God, and their lives must be a reflection of that. According to chapter 7:1-25, because of sin, the law made the situation worse instead of better for believers, but in Christ this no longer holds mastery over them. According to chapter 8:1-13, by the Spirit of God believers are assured final victory over death and the power of the flesh. In chapter 8:14-17, those that are led by the Spirit are called children of God. According to chapter 8:18-39, the justified will be glorified as the God who begun the work in them will be brought to a victorious conclusion.

⁴ Carson and Moo (2005:409): “The gospel as the power of God for salvation”: (5:1-8:39). Moo (1996:290-293): “The hope of salvation” (5:1-8:39). Schreiner (1998:26): “Hope as a result of righteousness” (5:1-8:39). Wright (2013:105): “if the creator god has acted in the death of Jesus on behalf of people who were sinners, he will certainly act again at the last to deliver them, now that they are already his people (5-8)”. Stott (1994:107): “The grace of God in the gospel” (3:21-8:39). Harrison (1976:12): “Sanctification: The Impartation of Righteousness” (6:1-8:39).

If Paul is understood correctly, then it is Christ through faith that gives them hope in their suffering (Chapter 5:1-11). It is in Christ in whom they are made righteous from Adam through which sin entered (Chapter 5:12-21). It is Christ their new master who gives eternal life in which sin's death reigns (Chapter 6:1-14). It is Christ that sets believers free from sin that enslaves (6:15-23), and it is Christ that gives liberty where the law cannot (Chapter 7:1-25). And this is all done by Christ through the Spirit (Chapter 8:1-39).

On the basis of the divisions as set out above, it would seem that the context of Romans 7:14-25 is that of Paul presenting Christ's supremacy over suffering, Adam, death, sin, and even the law. This already gives a trace of suspicion to who "I" (ἐγώ) could be in the pericope – for if Christ is supreme over sin and the law, "I" is perhaps not a believer, but a person still "in sin" and "under the law". Furthermore, they who are in Christ live by the law of the Spirit that gives life and has set them free from the law of sin and death. According to Du Toit (2019:192), "[o]ne of the most important questions in understanding 7:14–25, is the identity of the 'I'. Does it refer to someone before or outside of Christ, or does it refer to a general struggle of a believer in Christ? Although both positions are well accounted for, it is more likely that the 'I' represents the person before or outside of Christ". There are good arguments for both views of the pericope as mentioned by Du Toit and I already discussed it in the introductory first chapter. However, it would seem that the context would help give an accurate interpretation of the pericope.

In Romans 6:14 Paul writes: "For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace" (NIV). In verses 14-16 of Romans 7, Paul argues that "we know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good" (NIV). If the law is spiritual (7:14), good (7:16) and from God (7:22, 25), how then can it facilitate sin?

Paul already presented how the law increases the transgression of sin (5:20). Sin is more explicitly revealed by the law for what it is (5:13). "Do you not know, brothers and sisters—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law has authority over someone

only as long as that person lives?” (Rom 7:1, NIV). Keener (2016b:75) comments: “Paul revisits what it means to be ‘under the law’. The law ‘rules over a person’ and thus has jurisdiction over a person, and the right to condemn, as long as the person lives. Those who have died with Christ to sin, however (6:2-11), have also died to the rule of law (7:4, 6)”. But what about the gentiles in the congregation? Do they not have sin because they do not have the law?

Both Jews and gentiles have sinned, but because the Jews have the law, their sin is more knowingly and therefore they face harsher judgement (2:12, 23; 3:20; 4:15; 5:13; 20; 7:5-9) (Keener 2016b:75). Keener (2016b:75) also makes a very important statement by writing: “The law can inform but not transform – by itself it cannot keep one from sinning”. This is what the Jewish teachers taught – they taught that the Torah should enlighten reason to overcome passions – where for Paul the value of the law is to identify sin and because of the law, sins become more transgressive if identified (Keener 2016b:29).

According to Keener (2016b:75): “In 7:6 Paul notes that those who are freed from the law no longer serve in the oldness of the letter; this deliverance refers back to the old life in Adam being crucified, freeing from slavery to sin those united with Christ (6:6). Further, those freed from the law serve in the newness of the Spirit (7:6), a description that refers back to the beginning of new life in Christ (6:4) and forward to the renewing of the mind (12:2), as well as to the discussion of the liberating Spirit in 8:2-16, 23, 26-27”. Thus the suspicion is confirmed that “I” is clearly still under the law and in the flesh (σάρξ).

Longenecker (2016:659) adds that Romans 7:14-25 is “[t]he subject of the tragic plight of people who attempt to live their lives apart from God, that is, by means of their own resources and abilities”. It is evident from the context that “I” is outside of Christ and not a believer in Christ. The structure of Romans 7:7-25 matches the life of the unregenerate previewed in v.5, whereas Romans 8:1-17 matches with the life of believers in v.6. Within the pericope there is no mention of the Holy Spirit, but in Romans 8:13-25 the Holy Spirit is mentioned nineteen times (Schreiner 2008:2169). To say that Christians are “sold under sin” (7:14) or “captive to the law of sin” (7:23) is in contradiction with Romans 6

and 8, which put forth the freedom of believers from the slavery of sin. Romans 7:13 explains how the law brought death to Paul as unbeliever. Stott (1994:198) writes: “In Romans 7 he [Paul] now argues that law does not create sin and death; on the contrary, it is our fallen human nature which is to blame for them”.

But then who is “I”? Paul uses “I” rhetorically (Bruce 1985:155, Du Toit 2019:193, Jewett & Kontansky 2007:445, Longnecker 2016:68, Witherington III 2004:180) in different ways according to scholars. Interpreters like Bruce and Jewett suggest that the “I” denotes Paul’s appeal to his past as a Pharisee under the law, which might explain why the sudden change from past to present tense. This then flows naturally to Paul using himself as an example that “I” is speaking generically of humanity. Another majority argues that “I” refers to Adam since Paul argues that sin came through the one man Adam (Rom 5:12-21). For various reasons the persona of Adam is not strong.

According to Moo (1996:429), the most significant objection against the Adam persona is that “the Adamic view suffers from what we think is an even more serious objection: the theologically incongruous attribution to Adam of responsibility for the Mosaic Law”. Also according to Schreiner (1998:361), Paul specifically cites the tenth commandment from the Decalogue in verse 7. Since Paul argues in 5:13-14 that the era of the law is to be distinguished from the time of Adam, Adam can hardly be said to have received a commandment from the Decalogue. The more likely persona that Paul evokes is Israel. Paul identifies Israel specifically as people under the law (Rom 3:19-20; 2:12, 20, 23, 25; 7:1-6; 9:4, 31).

Most commentators agree that Romans 7:7-25 depicts a life under the law and earlier in Romans 5:14, 20 the law has made people conscious of sin and even intensified it (Keener 2016b:72). Another supporting argument is that sometimes Israel is spoken of as a character in the OT (Ps 129:1-2; Jer 4:31; Lam 1:11-22; 3:59-66), and as mentioned earlier, sometimes an entire tribe (“we”) could be referred to as “I”, as is seen in Jugd 1:3 in Hebrew (Keener 2016b:73). Du Toit (2019:192-193) adds that “‘I’ can be understood as a rhetorical device that arguably points to Israel under the law from the perspective of

a believer in Christ. The reference to sin (vv. 8–9) evokes 5:12–14, which explained sin as ‘coming’ into the world between Adam and Moses (the Mosaic law; cf. Gal 3:17). Paul probably rhetorically identified himself with Israel as the prophets did by using ‘I’ in denoting Israel collectively (Jer 10:19–20; cf. Mic 7:7–10).’

This pericope is part of a much larger Pauline theology. Because the study seeks to find the relation between “I” and Christian Spirituality, and the way in which Paul’s fundamental idea relates to the Christian experience, it is worth it to briefly explore some of these theologies.

What is the centre of Paul’s theology, especially in the letter of Romans? For many years it has been said that Paul had written about one thing above everything else. That is how to be saved, how to be “justified by faith” and how to be assured that one has been rescued from the consequences of one’s own sin (Wright: 2015:27). According to Wright (2015:30), “in many passages – not, perhaps, as many as some might suppose – Paul is indeed talking about salvation. The letter to the Romans, in particular, announces that as a main theme”. Ridderbos (1975:39) writes that more and more scholars are finding a holistic departure point for Pauline theology in “the redemptive-historical, eschatological character of Paul’s proclamation.” As mentioned by Wright (2015:27), this is the main theme found in Romans.

It is within this larger redemptive/salvation theme of Romans that Ridderbos (1975:129-130) argues that Paul is not referring to a biographical description of his experience but rather, “Romans 7 and 8 are much too concerned with redemptive-historical contrast and categories and not with individual experiences for that to be the case...the redemptive-historical contrast is the real starting point of the drama sketched out in Romans.” As mentioned by Wright (2015:27) the reformers singled out “justification by faith”, which is prominent in the first four chapters of Romans. According to Carson and Moo (2005:408), Albert Schweitzer argued that justification by faith was just a “battle” doctrine Paul used to fight Judaism and that the main theme is found in Romans 6-8 about union with Christ and the work of the Spirit, which is the direct context of the pericope in focus. Later

Romans 9-11 took the stage of debate and Stendahl (1963:199-215) argued that the central theology of Romans is the history of salvation of two peoples, Jews and Gentiles, within this history according (Carson & Moo 2005:409). According to Carson and Moo (2005:409) “[a] large number of scholars think that Romans is about the role of Israel in salvation history”. The emphases on the “people” in recent scholarship and what the gospel means to Jews and Gentiles in salvation history and the church, the deduction made is that “I” in the pericope is or could be Israel, however, “Romans 1-8 makes it clear that Paul’s gospel is still basically targeted to the individual human being, locked up under sin and in need of the redemption available only in Jesus Christ” (Carson & Moo 2005:410).

In conclusion, the reason why Paul wrote Romans 7:14-25 is to portray someone/people under the law and outside of Christ that are not able to obey the law because of sin and the fleshly nature. As Fee (1996:129) writes, “[n]owhere does Paul describe Christian life, life in the Spirit, as of constant struggle with the flesh”. The “I” Paul used rhetorically, is people (most likely Israel) still under the law.

2. The question of the *content* within the pericope.

2.1 The Original text & Analytical structure

It has been established why the pericope is in its specific context. But, what is Paul’s point? What exactly is he arguing in the pericope itself?

The following structural analysis is an attempt to find the linguistic forms and constituents (Linguistic relations) and the semantic relationships that exist between the meanings of words, phrases and sentences (Semantic relations). This is what constitute the analytical outline of the pericope.

2.2 A note on the use of the Inner Texture

The structural analysis and exegesis that follows is on the level of the inner texture of Robbins (1996) Socio-Rhetorical method. It is necessary for the study but not the main focus. The reason it is necessary is because the sacred texture that follows deals with

the spiritual experience of reading the text for example the performance of the text, repetitions of words, and the structure of the text etc.

ROMANS 7:14-25

Main statement

(14) οἶδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι ὁ νόμος πνευματικός ἐστίν,

ἐγὼ δὲ σάρκινός εἰμι πεπρωμένος ὑπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν.

Contrast

Explanation (parallel statements)

(15) ὁ γὰρ κατεργάζομαι οὐ γινώσκω·

οὐ γὰρ ὁ θέλω τοῦτο πράσσω,

ἀλλ' ὁ μισῶ τοῦτο ποιῶ.

Contrast

(16) εἰ δὲ ὁ οὐ θέλω τοῦτο ποιῶ, σύμφημι τῷ νόμῳ ὅτι καλός.

(17) νυνὶ δὲ οὐκέτι ἐγὼ κατεργάζομαι αὐτὸ

Result

ἀλλὰ ἡ οἰκουσα ἐν ἐμοὶ ἁμαρτία.

Contrast

(18) οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι οὐκ οἶκεῖ ἐν ἐμοί, τοῦτ' ἐστίν ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου,

ἀγαθόν· τὸ γὰρ θέλειν παράκειται μοι,

τὸ δὲ κατεργάζεσθαι τὸ καλὸν οὐ·

Contrast

(19) οὐ γὰρ ὁ θέλω ποιῶ ἀγαθόν,

ἀλλὰ ὁ οὐ θέλω κακὸν τοῦτο πράσσω.

Contrast

(20) εἰ δὲ ὁ οὐ θέλω [ἐγὼ] τοῦτο ποιῶ, οὐκέτι ἐγὼ κατεργάζομαι αὐτὸ

ἀλλὰ ἡ οἰκουσα ἐν ἐμοὶ ἁμαρτία.

Contrast

Result

(21) Εὕρισκω ἄρα τὸν νόμον, τῷ θέλοντι ἐμοὶ ποιεῖν τὸ καλόν, ὅτι ἐμοὶ τὸ κακὸν παράκειται·

(22) συνήδομαι γὰρ τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ θεοῦ κατὰ τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον,

Explanation

(23) βλέπω δὲ ἕτερον νόμον ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου ἀντιστρατευόμενον
τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοός μου καὶ αἰχμαλωτίζοντά με ἐν τῷ νόμῳ
τῆς ἁμαρτίας τῷ ὄντι ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου.

Contrast

Final result, asking for the solution

(24) ταλαίπωρος ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος· τίς με ῥύσεται ἐκ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ θανάτου τούτου;

(25) χάρις δὲ τῷ θεῷ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν.

Final solution

Summary statement of the existence in the flesh

ἄρα οὖν αὐτὸς ἐγὼ τῷ μὲν νοῖ δουλεύω νόμῳ θεοῦ τῇ δὲ σαρκὶ νόμῳ ἁμαρτίας.

3. Demonstrating and exploration and outline, working with the text itself.

Proposed structural outline:

The contrast between law and flesh (v14)

Explanation of the contrast (v15-20)

The result of the contrast (v21-23)

Solution and final result (v24-25)

Summary statement of the existence in the flesh (v25)

It is important to know exactly what Paul is saying in this pericope, because what is written is relating to an experience found within the reader. With this proposed analytical outline an exploration of Paul's argument follows:

Paul starts the chapter in Romans 7:1 with a question; “Do you not know, brothers and sisters – for I am speaking to those who know the law – that the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives” (NIV). This person knows the law, and that the law has “power” or “authority” over him/her, as long as he/she lives. However, those who have died with Christ to sin (6:2-11), have also died to the rule of law (7:4, 6). Keener (2016b:75) writes: “This comparison occasions for Paul’s imaginary interlocutor the question as to whether, in linking law and sin, Paul is identifying two (7:7). Paul will respond, in the graphic monologue of 7:7-25, by showing how the law increased transgression”. There is an inner tension of incompatibility between the spiritual law and the flesh that is experienced in Roman 7:14-25 and Paul seeks to address it. For Bruce (1985:153) “[t]here is an inward tension here which was absent from the preceding section”.

The contrast between the law and flesh (v14)

The passage starts with a conjunction γάρ, and because of this connecting clause it can be understood that something was written before the author started writing this passage as is concluded in the previous section. This shows that Paul, writer of Romans, is not starting a new subject but continuing the subject, however, the sudden change in tense states that it is definitely a new pericope.

According to Paul, these truths “we know” (οἶδαμεν), because he has already made a case to why the law is spiritual (νόμος πνευματικός) (vv. 7-13). The spiritual law is contrasted with the flesh (σάρκινός) because “I” (ἐγώ) is flesh and it is sold (πεπραμένος) to sin (ἁμαρτίαν). But why is this a contrast? Paul writes: “What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law... (v7) So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good (v12)” (NIV). Schreiner (1998:373) comments: “Inability to keep the law cannot be assigned to the unspirituality of the law, for the law is God’s holy and good will. Paul thereby defends the view that the law is spiritual, that is, that it has its origin from the Holy Spirit”. But if the law is spiritual then, why is the flesh (σάρκινός) in contrast to it? Is the flesh not also good and made by God? Dunn answers (1998:67): “[P]aul makes it clear in Romans 7-8 that the real culprit is neither the law nor ‘I’ but sin. The problem with flesh is not that it is sinful per se but that it is vulnerable to the enticements of sin – flesh, we might say, as ‘the desiring I’ (7:7-12)”. The law is good and spiritual and cannot be sold to sin, but in contrast the flesh is sold to sin according to Paul’s thesis. How is it known that there is a contrast or tension between the spiritual law and the sinful flesh?

Explanation of the contrast (v15-20)

Paul seeks to ground verse 14 with verse 15-20 by explaining the contrast between the law and the sinful flesh and the actions of the “I”. Schreiner argues (1998:373): “The inability of human beings to keep God’s law is not unknown in Judaism, and thus one should not argue that Paul’s thoughts would be rejected out of hand by his fellow Jews”. Schreiner reasons that it is not that the person under the law does not “know” (γινώσκω), but rather that “I” do not understand, perceive or comprehend his/her actions.⁵ Moo (1996:457) argues that “γινώσκω could retain its purely cognitive meaning, in the sense that Paul does not “perceive” the real nature of what he is doing (Chrysostom). But it is more likely that the word means (as in e.g., Matt 7:23; 25:12) ‘acknowledge, approve’”. Moo continues (1996:457) by saying that “Paul explains in what sense he does not ‘approve,’ what he is doing: ‘For it is not what I will, this I am practicing, but what I am

⁵ According to Vine (1997:627) γινώσκω “signifies to be taking in knowledge, to come to knowledge, recognize, understand, or understand completely.”

hating, this I am doing.” Paul’s confession is similar to others found in the ancient world, the most famous being that in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* 7.21: “I see and approve the better course, but I follow the worse”. Schreiner (1998:373) disagrees with Moo here, arguing that one cannot comprehend the depth of the sin in oneself. This way of seeing the word γινώσκω could be supported by the second part of the verse: “For I do not do what I θέλω; but, practice (πράσσω) what I hate.” Nevertheless, all interpretations agree that it is not as if “I” had no idea, no knowledge, totally oblivious of what it is doing. Again, the contrast in the second part of verse 15 is clearly portrayed by Paul. The contrast is between the “will”, “intend” or “wish” (θέλω) and the “action” (πράσσω). Is “willing” or “intending” not the starting point for the “action”? Witherington (2004:199) answers: “[I]f one is a deeply conflicted person or in the thrall of strong passions to do something else, then that is another matter”.

Keener (2016b:95-96) points to the anthropology of Hellenistic intellectuals, Stoics, and Middle Platonic of the day and explores various aspects of the “will”:

Many observe that Paul was not writing as a Stoic here. The speaker has reason and cognitive knowledge; yet his passions prevail. Nor was Paul like Philo or the author of 4 Maccabees; the speaker know the law, yet neither philosophy nor the law delivers this person from conflict and defeat... It is not mere information the speaker needs; but this speaker does need a different form of what some might call knowledge: divine truth understood by faith (Rom 6:11).

The reason for the contrast and tension is not the lack of knowledge, for, as Paul argues, “I agree with the law, that it is good” – yet even with the desire to obey the law, “I” sin. According to Bruce (1985:156), Epictetus (*Dissertation*) is echoing exactly what Paul writes: “Paul has within him an independent witness, the voice of conscience, which, by condemning his failure to keep the law, bears testimony to the perfection of the law”. Now, if “I” do what “I” do not want, then “I” has to acknowledge that the law is good (νόμος ὅτι καλός).

The result is νυνὶ δὲ οὐκέτι ἐγὼ κατεργάζομαι αὐτὸ – and at face value if it is not “I” who is who is doing it. Who is it then? In contrast ἀλλὰ ἡ οἰκούσα ἐν ἐμοὶ ἁμαρτία – what “I”

hate to do, does not derive from “I”, but from sin (ἁμαρτία). Is “I” not responsible for doing the opposite of the good law? Dunn (1998:113) gives insight:

Paul does not devote any attention to the question of sin’s origin: where did this power come from?... But all that concerned Paul was the reality of human experience – as the poignant testimony of the “I”... so clearly attests. “Sin” simply “entered the world” (Rom 5:12); it “came to life” (Rom 7:9). That was all Paul felt he need say. The issue of personal responsibility he tried to resolve by depicting “sin” as a power which fully masters the fleshly “I” (7:14), without really denying the “I’s” part in the evil it does or exculpating its failure to do the good (7:14-23).

Paul does not deny “I’s” part in doing what “I” hates. “I” is very much part of the experience.

According to verse 18 “I” know that nothing good (ἀγαθόν) dwells in the “I”, a conclusion the follows on the previous verse 17. In this verse, one can note the tension between the “law that is good” over “I” and the fact “that nothing good dwells in me” and to qualify, that is true of the flesh. Schreiner (1998:375) notes at this point that “[t]his statement should probably not be used to defend the idea that there is another dimension of the “I” that is spiritual, for verse 14 has already relayed to the reader that the ἐγώ is fleshly and sold under the power of sin”. Verse 18b-20 is parallel statements of 15b-17, with the exception that the “good” that is “willed” is more explicitly the “evil” (κακόν) that is done.

The result of the contrast (v21-23)

Ἄρα (“so” or “then”) points to the result of the previous explanation. Within these three verses νόμος is mentioned five times. (1) τὸν νόμον – “the law” or “this law”. (2) τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ θεοῦ - “in the law of God”. (3) ἕτερον νόμον – “another law”. (4) τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοός – “law of my mind”. (5) ἐν τῷ νόμῳ τῆς ἁμαρτίας – “law of sin”.

Paul concludes that when “I” wants to do “good” or “right” (καλός), evil (κακός) is near by – doing right as seen in the previous verses, is doing “the law of God”. There is a contrast in “I’s” members (μέλεσίν), another law – waging war (ἀντιστρατευόμενον) against the “law of my mind”. Dunn (1998:158) explains this verse as follows: “There is ‘the law of God’ cherished by the ‘I’ (7:22), approved by the mind (7:23, 25), even when sin conspires with human weakness to prevent compliance. And there is the law of sin (described in

7:7-13) to bind 'I' ever more tightly to death". In elaborating on the "law of sin", Bruce (1977:197) comments: "Perhaps it is the domination or dictate of sin, which in the previous chapters (as we have seen) is personified as a slave-master; this is rendered the more probable by the language in which Paul sums up the contents of Romans 7:14. There the law of sin and the law of God are in sharp contrast".

Keener (2016b:97) also argues that "Paul depicts here a divided person. Biblical law informs this figure's mind or inner person, revealing God's righteous standard, but the law operating in the person's (physical) members pulls the person in a different direction, preventing the mind from exercising complete control". There are essentially two very powerful arguments on what the "law" actually is. The first argument is that the "law of God" and the "law of my mind" is the Mosaic law as seen in the context of Romans 7. In this argument, Paul is actually referring to Israel in whom "another law" is not a different law or expression, but the law that becomes "another law" because it brings sin and death (Schreiner 1998:376). However, this poses the question: But is the law evil? No, in the pericope Paul states that the "law is spiritual" and "the law is good" – because the law is so good, it accentuates "I's" evil doings. Du Toit (2019:192) argues as follows:

The bondage that the law caused might create the impression that the law is inherently evil or against God, a line of reasoning that was indeed followed by Marcion.⁶ But in Romans 7:7–25 Paul defends the divine origin of the law (God's law, v.22) by stating that it is inherently good (vv. 12,17), just (v.12) and "spiritual" (v.14). Additionally, Paul seeks to explain how the law, although inherently good, could have such a deleterious effect. Romans 7:7–25 can be divided into two sections, verses 7 to 12 and verses 14 to 25, where verse 13 forms a bridge in between. In verses 7 to 12, Paul shows in the past tense how sin has utilized the law to bring death. Verses 14 to 25 describe in the present tense the constant battle between the will that agrees with God's law, and the flesh, which succumbs to the law of sin.

The second argument is that "this law" and "another law" refer to a "principle," "order," "rule," or "norm". According to Schreiner (1998:377), "[i]n the clause εὐρίσκω τὸν νόμον

⁶ According to Douglas & Tenny (2011:893) Marcion was "[s]trongly anti-Jewish, he distinguished the merely just God of the OT from the loving God and Father of Jesus revealed in the NT, and accordingly rejected the OT altogether. He believed that only Paul had truly grasped the contrast of law and gospel, so the Pauline letter (purged of what he considered Jewish accretions) formed the basis of his canon".

the word νόμος cannot sensibly refer to the Mosaic law if it is the direct object of the verb, and understanding νόμος as the direct object seems to be the most natural way of understanding the use of the accusative here. In verse 23 the phrase ἕτερον νόμον is contrasted with the ‘law of my mind,’ which I argue refers to the Mosaic law”. The “law of sin” is used metaphorically to refer to sin as the power that wages war in the lives of people.

Both these views are well supported and both views are saying that God’s law is good – and whether the good law of God emphasises “another law” or “another law” as a “principle” or “rule”, the point conflict is caused within “I” – between a person’s will and mind, body and action.

Solution and final result (v24-25)

Du Toit (2019:192) writes that “[t]he net result is that the law of God is impotent to break the power of sin, but is necessary to drive people to Christ.” Ridderbos adds (1975:199) that “[t]he ineffectiveness of the law was due to the inadequacy of the ‘flesh’ – weak human nature – to keep it”. It is evident that the law cannot deliver (ρύσεται) “I” from the body (σώματος) of death, and because “I” is a “slave to sin” – the right response is ταλαίπωρος ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος! This cry of despair is necessary. It demonstrates how hopeless the ἐγὼ is to reach the standard of the Mosaic law in the flesh. For Harrison (1976:83), the law “through sin, is no longer a comfort but an accusation. Man needs not a law but deliverance”. In noting what Moo (1996:465) argues, though Paul writes to the pre-Christian Jew still under the law, a Christian who is sensitive to meet God’s expectation experience a sense of frustration and misery at that failure (8:23), but Paul’s language is stronger here than a Christians mere failures.

The final solution is God who delivers “I” through Jesus from this state. It would seem that the “spiritual law”, “the flesh” and the recognition that “I” is a “slave to sin” was necessary to point “I” to Christ as the solution. Would “I” have recognised this intense struggle without the law? Would “I” have realised its state without the law? Elsewhere Paul writes most likely to the gentiles in the audience: “even though they do not have

the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts accusing, now even defending them” (Rom 2:14b-15, NIV). And to the Jew: “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life [as opposed to the body of death] has set you free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering” (Rom 8:1-3, NIV). Christ is the solution for all. Agamben (2005:98) in additions says:

The Pauline affirmations which state that, on the one hand, the Messiah “will render all rule, authority and power in operative” (1Cor 15:24), and on the other, that the Messiah constitutes “the *telos of the law*” (Rom 10:4), can only be fully understood in this light. The question has been raised – with little accompanying thought – as to whether or not *telos* means “end” or “fulfilment.” Only to the extent that the Messiah renders the *nomos* inoperative, that he makes *nomos* no-longer-at-work and thus restores it to the state of potentiality, only in this way may he represent its *telos* as both end and fulfilment. The law can be brought to fulfilment only if it is first restored to the inoperativity of power.

Summary statement of the existence in the flesh (v25)

This is Paul’s conclusion and summary of his whole argument. In the mind (νοῦς) of “I” the law of God is served, but his flesh (σάρξ) serves the law that accentuate sin – making “I” a slave (δουλεύω) to sin (ἁμαρτίας), thus “I” is captive to the flesh rather than the Spirit of God (Rom 8:5-8). Keener (2016b:101) writes: “Whereas among Gentiles who lack sufficient revelation the mind ends up party to ‘fleshly’ desires (Rom. 1:25-28; cf. Eph. 2:3; 4:17-19), the law-trained mind can refuse to assent to such desires and yet find itself unable to extirpate them (Rom. 7:22-25). Rational religion falls short of transformation in Christ”.

Dunn (1998:66-67) makes two things clear regarding the “flesh” – first the sinning “I” cannot distance itself from the flesh. The problem caused by the law’s failure is not that the law itself fails, but the fact that “I” (myself) am fleshly. The flesh cannot be separated from a person any more than the mind or body can. He does not say “I have flesh”, rather

he says “I am flesh” – it is part of “I” and cannot be disposed of. The second is that the problem is not the flesh per se but that it is vulnerable to the enticements of the flesh as mentioned earlier above.

As Keener (2016b:106) explains;

In Paul the body, guided by a renewed mind (Rom. 12:2-3), could be used for good (12:1 cf. 6:13); but under other circumstances the body could also be used for sin (1:24; 6:12-13; 7:5) and even be closely associated with it (6:6; 8:10; 13: cf. 7:24)... the “fleshly mind,” bodily passions could war against the mind (7:23). Though the mind might disagree with bodily passion (7:23; 25), it could find itself subject to it and corrupted by it (1:28). Thus, the frame of mind shaped by the flesh, by human frailty susceptible to temptation, cannot please God (8:8). In this context only new life in the Spirit could free a person (8:2).

Conclusion

To conclude this chapter the question was posed - who is the “I” Paul is referring to within Romans 7:14-25? By exploring the question of context, the conclusion made is that “I” is in fact a person outside of Christ, and a person probably under the law (Torah), and most probably referring to Israel. “I” is used as a rhetorical device to show the experience of an individual still under the law. To establish the identity of “I” and the relation to the lived experience, what Paul wrote in the pericope needed to be explored, which pertains to the question of *content*. The experience of “I” is a Jew still under the law, wanting to do what the law requires, but finds him- or herself not able to do it because of the flesh sold under sin. Since I (the reader) is far removed from the Jewishness of two thousand years ago – the experience Paul is referring to is very different from what I (the reader) experience when I read the text - or is it? Why do so many people relate to what Paul is writing whether Christian or not? Is it possible that although a Christian is technically not under the law, they still struggle to do what is right in God’s eyes? The answer at face value is yes, Christians could still experience the struggle with sin (Gal 5:17; 1 John 1:8-9), and might relate to the experience found in the pericope. Schreiner (1998:390) concur after an intense investigation of the pericope and writes:

I would suggest that the arguments [whether “I” is a believer or unbeliever] are so finely balanced because Paul does not intend to distinguish believers from unbelievers in this text. Paul reflects on whether the law has the ability to transform human beings, concluding that it does not. The law puts to death unbelievers who desires to keep it, since they lack the power to keep it... On

the other hand, believers are not absolutely excluded from the text either. It would be a mistake to read the whole of Christian experience from this account, for, as chapter 8 shows, believers by the power of the Spirit are enabled to keep God's law. And yet since believers have not yet experienced consummation of their redemption, they are keenly aware of their inherent inability to keep God's law. When believers contemplate their capacities, it is clear that they do not have the resources to do what God demands.

Paul in various places (Rom 12:2; Eph 4:23-24; Col 3:9-10) writes about the renewal of the *voûς*. Ridderbos (1975:228) writes the following:

Therefore the argument does not hold that what is said in Romans 7 in favor of the inward man and of the *nous* must apply to the new man. For in Romans 7 the inward man and the *nous* are spoken of insofar as these are willing to be led by the law, and precisely the renewing operation of the Spirit that is not taken into consideration. And it is this renewal alone in the believer that gives the power of divine love, which is necessary not only to enable him to understand the requirements of the law in all its depth, but even more to carry that into effect "in the body".

Knowing and focusing on the law is not what transforms, it is the Spirit that transforms. Du Toit (2019:199) comes to the same conclusion: "someone in Christ would be (or ought to be) *outside* of seeking transformation or deliverance through the law". But how does this happen? If I (the reader) is a professing Christian relating to the pericope – Can the reading of the passage renew the mind? How does one come to this renewal?

Another important step in the determining of questions such as these, is to address the Ideological-Texture as part of the argumentation. Chapter 3 will be dedicated to this aspect of the methodology

CHAPTER 3: The Ideological-texture

The reader's disposition and assumptions in approaching the text.

Introduction

There are three terms that seem to overlap or are being used in close proximity with each other in biblical scholarship. They are exegesis, criticism, and hermeneutics. What was done in chapter 2 was exegesis of the text. There the question was asked: "what does the text say and why, in a plain sense?". However, knowing what the text says in its plain sense, does not establish what the text means. "In short, exegesis cannot establish the meaning of texts, but it is almost always a necessary ingredient in construing the (or a) meaning of ancient texts" (Schneiders 1999:124).

Criticism is a wider term than exegesis. "Under the influence of speech-act theory⁷, criticism of texts in general and biblical criticism in particular is often divided into three types corresponding to the three moments in the speech act. Every speech act involves a speaker (or sender), a message (that which is sent), and a receiver (the one to whom the message is sent)... Criticism can bear primarily on any one of the three" (Schneiders 1999:124). Therefore, the focus of this chapter is on the "reader" or "receiver", and the objective is transformation that lies beyond just informational interpretation. Here the reader's viewpoint of reality will be explored in relation with the "I" in Romans 7:14-25. Gay (1996:89) writes: "While text-centred questions are obviously important to the task of interpretation, a sociological perspective asks us to turn our attention away from the text per se to ask some embarrassing and potentially invidious questions of those who do the interpreting".

This texture is about the philosophies used to put forth the reader's interests and viewpoints. Ideology becomes our way of looking at reality, and an existential way of looking at the text. Schneiders (1999:16) writes: "The existential meaning of the text is

⁷ According to Longman III and Strauss (2018:180), "[s]peech-act theory is a theory of communication developed by John L. Austin and John R. Searle that views language as performative, not just saying things but doing them. Speech acts have a variety of functions, such as requesting, commanding, inviting, warning, promising, greeting, and congratulating".

dialectically engaged with the world of the reader". The task of this chapter is to analyse the "reader" with taxonomies of two sections according to Robbins (1996:96), namely "Specific Social Topics" and "Final Cultural Categories". Schneiders (1999:118) writes: "One is primarily concerned with analysis of the social situation of the reader and its effect on interpretation. The reader, according to this theory, is not a literate monad confronting and objective text but is part of a cohort or reading public whose approach to texts in general and to this particular text influences the individual's reading".

The first step is to determine the social location of the reader. Robbins (1996:72) does this by observing the research of Richard Niebuhr's (1951) work, *Christ and Culture*, a classic typology with its five options for understanding culture, as well as Bryan Wilson's (1963) typology of sects. Based on a cross-cultural range of religious groups (a broadly based approach), and organising the data from a wide variety of religious groups, the classifications of seven different religious responses to the world has been established. The seven responses are: Conversionist, Revolutionist, Introversionist, Gnostic-Manipulationist, Thaumaturgical, Reformist, and Utopian.

The second step is to determine the cultural location of the reader. Robbins (1996:86) writes: "Cultural location, in contrast to social location, concerns the manner in which people present their propositions, reasons, and arguments both to themselves and to other people". Carson (2008:3) argues that when it comes to the believer or Christianity, "[a]ny discussion between Christ (and thus Christianity) and culture is incoherent, since all forms of Christianity are inherently and unavoidably embedded in cultural expression". The cultural topics are: Dominant culture, Subculture, Counterculture, Contra culture, and liminal culture.

The third step is to determine how this pericope relates to the "reader". The "reader" in relation to the text will be explored. Based on his social and cultural experiences, what interests the "reader" in this specific pericope and why does he in a real sense read himself into the text? Carson (1984:128-129) writes: "[i]f we sometimes read our own theology into the text, the solution is not to retreat to an attempted neutrality, to try to

make one's mind a tabula rasa so we may listen to the text without bias. It cannot be done, and it is a fallacy to think it can be. We must rather discern what our prejudices are and make allowances for them; and meanwhile we should learn all the historical theology we can".

1. Specific Social Topics

First, by looking at these responses, I, the "reader", will explore some topics that dominate the discourse. The first question is to ask what dominated the "reader's" orientation as a young person.

When I was in High-School my orientation to the world I would say was Thaumaturgical.

The thaumaturgical response focuses on the individual's concern for relief from present and specific ills by special dispensations. The request for supernatural help is personal and local, and operation is magical. Salvation is immediate but has no general application beyond the given case and others like it. Salvation takes the form of healing, assuagement of grief, restoration after loss, reassurance, the foresight and avoidance of calamity, and the guarantee of eternal (or at least continuing) life after death (Robbins 1996:73).

Growing up in a household where we did not go to church, and religion was mostly taught at school, I was sometimes very superstitious and believed that if I was not the worst person God would accept me – even in eternity. So I always tried to weigh my "good" deeds with my "bad" and thought God would measure it and find that I am a good person. My parents were "Pentecostal" and naturally Christianity for me came from that perspective. My father was very anti-church. He got offended in a local Dutch Reformed church and later got hurt in a Pentecostal church. However, he saw himself and his house as Christian. We would sometimes do Bible study in which Christianity was mostly talked about in a supernatural way and the fact that God is the miracle worker. Experiencing God and the gifts of the Spirit was frequently talked about. I experienced high-school and my household as a cage that I needed to break through in order to find "freedom".

The second question is: what dominated the "reader's" orientation as he got older?

When I was done with high-school I had an experience where I believe I met the Lord for the first time. Fee (1991:86) writes; "Pentecostals tend to exegete his/her experience". This happened in an AFM (Apostolic Faith Mission) Pentecostal Church in Pretoria. I got

curious after this experience in which I believe God really was, and had a lot of questions. Fee (1991:87) states: “Pentecostals did not look to the text for origination of a theology, but for biblical/theological verification of their experience”. Almost a year later I joined a Bible-school. This was a Charismatic Bible school. At this stage I still analysed myself as thaumaturgical.

After two years in Bible school my questions grew and the next year I felt a call to study a theological degree. I applied at the Baptist Theological Collage and completed a BTH Honours degree. Here my primary orientation and experience changed drastically. The Baptist College is not Pentecostal nor Charismatic, but Evangelical. They are biblically based. Here I started to view the world and myself as corrupt and if Jesus Christ can save me, He can save anyone. Thus, Jesus is the answer to the world’s problems. According to Robbins:

The conversionist response is categorized by a view that the world is corrupt because people are corrupt. If people can be changed, the world will be changed. Salvation is considered to be available not through objective agencies but only by a profound and supernaturally created transformation of the self. The world itself will not change, but the presence of a new subjective orientation to it will itself be salvation (Robbins 1996:73).

Robbins (1996:96) asks; “Has your primary orientation become different than it was when your parents or guardians were a dominant presence in your life?” The answer in my case as clearly seen is yes. But how much did this change? After studying it became apparent that the Bible now became the external authority in my life. The nature of God and the reality of the fall was now at the forefront of my life – and obedience to this external authority became very important and still is. When I grew up, I challenged the authority figures in my life and “freedom” from that authority was the goal of life. This changed in a sense that obedience to the authority of the Bible was now the goal of my life. Fee (1991:29) writes of the Evangelical Christian: “Because ultimately we know the Person, or hear the gospel, through the book, we take the book to be our primary penultimate authority. That is, we believe that this is the way God chose to reveal and to communicate. The other forms of authority (tradition, reason, experience) in various way

authenticate, verify, or support, but all must themselves finally be authenticated by Scripture”.

After my student years I found myself back in a Pentecostal church working there as a youth worker. For ten years I have been working as a full time Pastor within the AFM. Although the Bible and theology are still very much at the centre of my outlook, I cannot ignore experience.

If I was asked today, (and this is the third question) what my special way of viewing or experiencing life is, what would I say?

Thus, there is a third response that are interrelated with my other responses - gnostic-manipulationist. This response sounds very negative and even non-Christian. Longman III & Strauss (2018: 86) writes; “Gnostics taught that a person gained salvation through secret ‘knowledge’ (*gnōsis*) of their true spiritual identity and heavenly origin”. According to Robbins:

The gnostic-manipulationist response seeks only a transformed set of relationships – a transformed method of coping with evil. Whereas the foregoing orientations reject the goals of society as well as the institutionalized means of attaining them and the existing facilities by which people might be saved, the gnostic-manipulationist reject only the means and facilities. Salvation is possible in the world, and evil may be overcome if people learn the right means, improved techniques, to deal with their problems. (Robbins 1996:97).

In a sense this response implies that the divine has revealed something of the world that explains the innermost nature of our own beings, being in the world and the meaning of life and death in the world. It has been my experience that God can save us instantly in a miraculous way (thaumaturgical), but also through a process of learning “the right means or techniques” to deal with problems.

2. Final Cultural Categories

Secondly, it is important to determine me “the reader’s” cultural location because as seen above, culture has a major influence on how one approaches Scripture. Robbins

(1996:87) writes: “Again, as an interpreter approaches New Testament literature, cultural topics appear in the form of different kinds of cultural rhetoric”.

I was raised in a suburb in Pretoria. The area was mostly middleclass Afrikaners (Census 2011) and the suburb is known as Waverley. Before 1994 (Apartheid), Afrikaners was the dominant culture, however, post 1994 (the end Apartheid), the dominant culture started to change. Robbins argues (1996:86) that “[t]he dominant culture rhetoric is about a system of attitudes, values, dispositions, and norms that the speaker either presupposes or asserts are supported by social structures bestowed with power to impose goals on people in a significantly large territorial area”. But because Waverley was mostly white Afrikaners (and still is), a very strong subculture rhetoric remained there. According to Robbins (1996:86-87):

Ethnic subculture rhetoric is a particular kind of subculture rhetoric. It has origins in a language different from the languages in the dominant culture, and attempts to preserve and perpetuate an “old system” in a dominant cultural system in which it now exists, either because a significant number of people from this ethnic culture have moved into a new cultural environment or because a new cultural system is now imposing itself on it. A particular strategy of ethnic rhetoric appears to be a focused attack on only a few elements of the larger society, rather than on that society as a whole. This helps the ethnic subculture establish and maintain boundaries by which it may be identified”

I grew up in an environment that was very separated from the dominant culture – people speaking of “us” and “them”. According to Holland (2019:485): “Afrikaners had viewed themselves not as colonists, but as chosen people brought into a promised land. Just as the Israelites had wrested Canaan from the native heathen, so had the Afrikaners defied the fury of ‘the stark naked black hordes’ to carve out a homeland of their own”. The people in Waverley knew each other and really looked after each other. It was like a town on its own in Pretoria. It had a plaza, and almost every shop you needed. I rode my bicycle everywhere in the suburb because it felt safe and familiar. I rarely went beyond the Moot area (Waverley included) in my high school years. This subculture was part of my life for a very long time.

After high school I moved to Johannesburg to study at that Bible school mentioned above and my location changed completely. Johannesburg and the Bible school was diverse. The vernacular was no longer Afrikaans, but English. For a few years my environment was multicultural, English, Charismatic and later Evangelical. After the Bible school my environment did not change much when I went to the Baptist Theological College. The college was in Randburg CBD and was very diverse. I would say here I moved into what is called Counterculture or alternative culture rhetoric. This rhetoric rejects explicit and changeable characteristics of the dominant and subculture's rhetoric to which it responds (Robbins 1996:87). Robbins (1996:87) quotes (Roberts 1978:114): Counterculture rhetoric implies "[a]lternative minicultures which make provisions for both sexes and a wide range of age groups, which are capable of influencing people over their entire life span, and which develop appropriate institutions to sustain the group in relative self-sufficiency". It suggests that one should live out one's own life and let the dominant culture continue with its "insanity". Still, the underlining theme for hope is to create a better society, "but not by legislative reform or by violent opposition to the dominant culture." They hope the dominant culture would "see the light" and adopt a more "humanistic way of life". One would expect that counterculture rhetoric in its fullest express a constructive image of an alternative, a better way of life. As Robbins states, "[i]t provides a relatively self-sufficient system of action by grounding its views in a well-developed, supporting ideology".

At this stage of my life I went through difficult times. I had to pay my own way through college in the big city of Johannesburg. While I was studying I found an au pair job in Randburg - Sonneglans. The post required me to move into the house of the boy I au paired and his mother. They were British, and the boy was also Jewish. He had no father figure in his life and his mother thought it would be good for the boy to have a male au pair. I worked there for two of my four years in college. Again, the culture was very different from where I grew up. During these two years I presented Christ to the boy and I taught him to play cricket and rugby.

After five years in Johannesburg I moved back to Pretoria, but not back to Waverley. I moved to the East of Pretoria. I started working at an Afrikaans Pentecostal church in Waterkloof as mentioned. The people living here was upper middleclass to very wealthy. The environment was Afrikaans and people where educated. Here I was challenged to better myself and my world. This environment was definitely just another subculture. I was in that environment for almost ten years.

By evaluating my locations I answered the questions presented by Robbins (1996:99) such as; what is the nature of my social and cultural environment? Have I been part of only one culture during my life up to this point? Are there multiple cultures and social locations that are part of one's life? The question now is; how do I combine these locations in the interpretation of the text?

3. The Reader and the Text.

By evaluating the "reader's" specific social profile and final cultural categories, the meaning of the text becomes clearer. Carson (1996:128), writing about presuppositional fallacies on "new hermeneutics", heeds a caution here:

Rejecting "modern" epistemology with its insistence on foundations and proper method, postmodernists, sometimes on highly sophisticated grounds, argue that there are no secure foundations, and all methods are themselves theory-laden. The result is that there is no univocal, authoritative "meaning" of the text in the text itself. If one must use the word "meaning" of a text, one should speak of "meanings" of the text – that is, the different meanings that the individuals of different interpretive communities will find there. Indeed, properly speaking the meanings are not really in the text itself but in the interpreters of the text, as they interact with it.

To be clear about this comment by Carson it is important to know that the starting point was to explore what and why the text says what it says. It is to understand what Paul meant and why he wrote the pericope. According to Fee and Stuart (2014:34), "[a] text cannot mean what it could never have meant for its original readers/hearers". Criticism of the "reader" is to point out potential bias (as will soon be seen), but also why the

“reader” at face value may read him- or herself into the text. According to Schneiders (1999:16),

[t]he primary concern of the scripture reader whose objective is transformation lies through and beyond this informational interpretation. A second dialectic is inaugurated in which the meaning arrived at by informational interpretation becomes the sense (what is said) but the referent (what it is about) is the world of the reader or the reader-in-the-world. Meaning now means existential significance, not truth in the abstract that one remains free to engage or ignore, but truth in the concrete that by the very fact of being grasped seizes its subject.

Ideological criticism is to evaluate why the “reader” relate to the text and why it has meaning and “speaks” to him or her as it were. However, the text says what it says, and according to Carson (1996:127), “[i]f it is true that the new hermeneutic can teach us to be careful and self-conscious about our limitations and prejudices when we approach the Word of God, we will profit greatly; but it will harm us if it serves as a ground for relativizing of all opinion about what Scripture is saying”.

In respect of his social profile, the “reader” identified himself within three specific topics: Thaumaturgical, Conversionist, and Gnostic-Manipulationist. All of these different topics have something to do with “I” (ἐγώ) and the “law” (νόμος). Reading the “I” in the pericope, the “reader’s” initial response to what Paul is writing, that is, what is said, is directed at me (the reader), as an individual Christian. In respect of the final cultural categories and the text, the “reader” basically found himself in two different subculture locations and one counterculture location. These locations played a major part in the way the “reader” responded in the various stages of his life.

In the Thaumaturgical stage of the “readers” life, there was a strong sense with the “reader” that the “good” outweighs the “bad”. Thus, the tension experienced in the “inner person” was to do “good”, but rarely succeeding. However, that was in a sense acceptable as long as the “good” outweighs the “bad”. In the mind of the “reader” the “good” always outweighs the “bad”. The subculture location here was Afrikaans and Christian, and that came with certain assumptions. The “reader” assumes that he was a Christian. The reason was that most Afrikaners would identify as Christian in that

environment, and the “reader’s” own household identified as Pentecostal Christians. At this stage of the “reader’s” life, he would not relate to the pericope at all, because the “law” and “authority” was not something to obey, but something to break free from. Unfortunately, at this stage Jesus Christ was not experienced as the solution as found in the pericope in which “I” clearly acknowledges Christ as the solution (Rom. 7:25a).

Eventually the “reader” met Christ in an AFM church, and believed that an authentic conversion took place. A new found “freedom” and “purpose” was found in Christ by the Spirit. As the Bible and sin was not yet properly understood at this stage, I (the reader) took centre stage by wanting to experience God all the time. The “reader” would read Scripture only to confirm certain experiences. The location at this stage was the start of a countercultural environment.

Then, moving forward to the “reader’s” main characteristic - the Conversionist. This is a very important characteristic to the “reader”. It is also around this time that the specific pericope captured the “reader’s” attention. While still being within a countercultural environment, something unexpected happened to the “reader”. Freedom was at the centre of the “reader’s” life – with “freedom” I (the reader) mean freedom from authority (household, high school etc.). But here at this stage the Bible became the primary authority in the “reader’s” life. The problem again is the “I”. It became very important to “me” to obey the Word as the highest authority in “my” life, which now almost became a “law”.

According to Schneiders (1999:55), “[a]uthority is a very slippery concept because it is applied in so many different ways to very different entities. We speak of authoritative people, statements, and positions; of the authority of the law, public opinion, or evidence. But however the term is used, it always refers to a claim addressed to someone who, in some sense of the word, ‘must’ respond”. In other words, authority almost impose some kind of obligation to respond. It is quite possible to attempt and obey God’s Word as just another authoritative law that requires a response. If the “reader” does not respond correctly, the experience feels very much as Paul describes when he wrote: “When I want

to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind..." (Rom. 7:21-22, BSB; NIV) There is a sharp contrast between God's law and the "another law" that wages war in the law of the "I's" mind. There is the law of God valued by "I" (7:22), accepted by the mind (7:23, 25), and the law of sin combined with human weakness that prevents obedience. Reading that "the law is spiritual, but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin" (Rom. 7:14) – is a very relatable experience. In the post-conversion argument of the pericope it may feel more persuasive, and according to Dunn (1998:476-77), the post-conversion approach better fits human experience. Since Paul is depicting life under the law, however, Paul might view any correspondence with Christian experience as part of the problem rather than the answer. Still, Paul himself would not have denied that fleshly existence offers continuing challenges for believers (Rom. 6:12-13; 8:12-13; Phil 3:12); new identity in Christ does not demolish susceptibility to sin. The problem with the "reader" relating to the text, is that the text or pericope is not about a Christian, but a Jew under the law (Torah). A Christian who is sensitive to meet God's expectation may experience a sense of frustration and wretchedness at their failure (8:23), but Paul's language in the pericope is much severer than a mere Christian failure (Moo 1996:465).

Finally, as pointed out above, the interrelated characteristic of the "reader" is that of the Gnostic-Manipulationist. The characteristic here is that through the right techniques and methods the "reader" can overcome and grow. The reader's location at this stage was another kind of subculture. In the East of Pretoria, people were educated as mentioned, and knowledge was important. By applying the "right" method one can be very successful in one's life and career. Convinced by this subculture the "reader" is of the opinion that by applying the "right method" he can overcome certain sins and struggles. Carson (2008:16), commenting on Niebuhr's second position, Christ of Culture, writes: "They are Christians not only in the sense that they count themselves believers in the Lord but also in the sense that they seek to maintain community with all believers. Yet they seem equally at home in the community of culture". According to Niebuhr (1951:104), "[t]he cultural Christians tend to the cultured among the despisers of religion; they use the

language of the more sophisticated circles, of those who are acquainted with the science, the philosophy, and the political and economic movements of their time”.

People in this environment (including the reader) often said things like “God helps people who help themselves”, but then reading what Paul says; “What a wretched man I am! Who will deliver me from this body of that is subject to death?” (Rom. 7:24). It does not sound like someone who is successful in helping him- or herself with the “right” method or technique. According to Keener (2016b:90) “[a] modern psychologist might reasonably diagnose the figure here as struggling with something like anxiety disorder linked with an obsessive-compulsive disorder and rooted in a religious fixation”. Relaying or obsessing over the “right” methods and techniques could also be understood as a type of “law”: do good, get good; do bad, get bad; use the method right, get the right result; do it wrong, get a bad result. These scenarios point to a form of retribution theology⁸ that was believed by a Jewish person under the law in ancient times, and could have been the motivation for why a Jew under the law wanted to do good: “For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do” (Rom. 7:15b).

According to Keener (2016b:77), “[l]ike most Gentiles philosophers (a major emphasis in ancient philosophy was how to overcome passion), these Jewish thinkers contented that the key to overcoming passions was reason. For Jewish thinkers, the epitome of this reason that overcomes passion was found in the Torah”. The Jews would use the Torah as a “how to” to overcome. Similarly, the philosophers such as the Peripatetics (Aristotle’s followers), “how to” overcome, was merely to moderate passions, but others such as the Stoics wanted to eradicate them. Their “how to” or “method” was based on reason, and if reason was not strong enough, passion could challenge and overcome it (Keener: 2016b:21). Can it be that the “reader” is attempting to combat the flesh by the means of the flesh, in other words combatting sin and the flesh by mere human effort – by applying self-help methods and techniques as the figure in Rom 7:14-25 attempts to do under the law? Keener (2016b:258-259) writes:

Against some other human-dependent scripts, we should thus view this battle neither as a matter of active fleshly effort without faith nor as a matter of

⁸ According to Longman III and Strauss (2018:167), it refers to “[t]he idea that God punishes the ungodly wicked and rewards the godly righteous”.

passive resignation that God will do whatever God wills without our choice to obey... Paul does not deny the value of effort, self-control (as a fruit of the Spirit), and obedience, but for Paul, the obedience that comes from faith (Rom 1:5) differs from the sort of self-focused obedience undertaken in order to achieve greater righteousness.

Conclusion

It is evident from the pericope and exegesis done that the “law” is not able to deliver the “I” from doing the things he or she does not want to do. In the same way, no search for “freedom”, written authority (for the “the letter kills” 2 Cor 3:6) or methods can transform the “reader”. This is the very reason why the “reader” can relate to the “I” in the pericope and find meaning in the text. To relate to Romans 7:14-25 means to identify with, or feel sympathetic towards the “I”, because of familiar experiences found within the “reader”. The “reader’s” social and cultural experiences in his life, cause him to resonate deeply with Paul’s “I”. Fee (1996:127) argues that

[p]eople take some comfort in believing that Paul was their companion in this struggle. If Paul, the great apostle of the faith could write “what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do” (7:15), then what hope is there for us? So they simply resign themselves to the struggle... People accept this unfortunate reading of Paul at face value, because the text describes something they know only too well. Sadly, for the vast majority of those who adopt such a view, the flesh usually wins.

So, instead of wanting to relate to “I”, one should admit that just by relating to the text does not transform or change the “reader”. Timothy Keller (2016 podcast) made the following statement in a sermon on Romans 7:14-25: “When you become a Christian you don’t move from war to peace [inner-conflict]. You move from a battle you could not win to a new battle you cannot lose”. This statement resonated with me (the reader) because he preached about a very familiar experience. Maybe there is a truth to Keller’s statement theologically, even if his interpretation of the text is post-conversion. And as is clearly seen from the text and the context, Paul is not writing about a Christian experience. Just because the experience of a believer agrees or relates with what the text says, does not necessarily mean that Paul had that kind of struggle in mind when he wrote Romans 7:14-25. Knowing what Paul intended in Romans 7:14-25 is rather in contrast with the “reader’s” “lived experience”. However, is it possible for the text to speak into the “reader”

life? And if so, how does the text speak into the “reader” situation? Can the text transform or effect the “reader” even if it does not speak about a believer at all?

In chapter 4, the Sacred-Texture will be discussed in the quest to determine if the text can in fact transform the “reader” and how. This will also be the final stage of the hermeneutical process.

CHAPTER 4: The Sacred-Texture

The reader's spirituality, struggle and human experience as it relates to redemption.

Introduction

The last stage of the hermeneutical process is the relation between the human life and the divine. Robbins (1996:121) writes

God, or divine being, may exist either in the background or in a direct position of action and speech in a text. This is the realm of theology par excellence – the nature of God and God's action and revelation... Describing the nature of God can be the first step toward analysing and interpreting the sacred texture.

Romans 7:14-25 has much to say about human experience on different levels as is seen in the previous chapters. But what does the text say about God? Is there any action God took to resolve the struggle and tension in the pericope? Is there an action or step that the “reader” needs to take? Does the text reveal anything about the nature of God? Is there anything that is concerned with spirituality as a lived experience in the pericope? According to Waaijman (2002:455), “[t]hroughout the centuries spiritual authors have used this semantic field to bring out the inner logic of the spiritual way. For them this semantic field - and within it especially the term ‘transformation’ – refers to the most significant transition in the divine-human relational process”. Schneiders (1998) writes that “[s]pirituality as an academic discipline studies the transformative Christian experience as such”. Is it possible for this particular text to transform the “reader” and speak to a “lived experience”? These are some of the questions to be explored in this final hermeneutical stage.

1. Spirituality and Theology

Spirituality is a term that is widely used and very difficult to define. According to Sheldrake (1998:33) the reason why spirituality is difficult to define is because “[s]pirituality appears to want to cross disciplinary boundaries that were previously considered as ‘hard’. It seems to lay claim to almost unlimited resources (for example, historical, theological, philosophical, psychological and anthropological).

Spirituality has been accused of not defining its own methods very precisely". Schneiders (2005:15) agrees and writes: "The reader should bear in mind that spirituality is studied in a variety of academic contexts and the objectives pursued in these diverse settings significantly influence what is studied and how it is studied. In this respect, spirituality is analogous to some other humanistic fields of study, such as psychology". As mentioned, the definition of Christian spirituality in this study has to do with a lived experience between the triune God, humans and their transformation, redemption, sanctification and or discipleship.

According Sheldrake (1998:84), "[t]here are broadly speaking two major schools of thought (concerning theology and spirituality). The first seeks to defend spirituality as an autonomous discipline (Sandra Schneiders falls into this school of thought) that is distinct from theology while related to it. The second wants to avoid the development of a separate discipline and prefers to treat spirituality as a subdivision of theology". However, it seems possible to argue that there could be a central relationship between spirituality and theology without suggesting that spirituality is not seen as a distinct discipline.

According to Sheldrake (1998:3), "[a]ttempts to speak about our understanding of God (theology) and our efforts to live in the light of that understanding (spirituality) cannot be separated. We cannot do theology without risking faith commitment and we cannot be committed to Christian practices without attending to the fundamental beliefs that underpin the Christian story". Schneiders (2005:17) provides a summary definition of what Christian Spirituality is. According to her:

Christian spirituality as Christian specifies the horizon of ultimate value as the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ to whom Scripture normatively witnesses and whose life is communicated to the believer by the Holy Spirit making her or him a child of God. This new life, which Paul calls "life in the Spirit" (cf. Rom. 7:6; 8: 2, 6, 10–11; Gal. 6:8) is celebrated sacramentally within the believing community of the church and lived in the world as mission in and to the coming reign of God. This life of faith and discipleship constitutes the existential phenomenon that Christian spirituality as a discipline studies.

2. Spiritual hermeneutics

It is evident from the exegesis of Romans 7:14-25 that there is an immense contrast in the “I”: what the “I” knows does not align with what the “I” is experiencing. Paul uses the image of the “I” as part of a rhetoric device to awaken a certain spiritual reality (or lived experience) found within the “readers” of the time. Therein lies the hermeneutic, for it has been established that the “reader”, “me”, though not in the same way at all, also has a discrepancy between what he knows and what he experiences. According to Keener (2009:93), “[f]or Paul, anyone struggling to be made righteous by following God’s standard, rather than relying on God’s transforming gift of righteousness, might experience the sort of tension between knowing right and being right described here”. It was already established that the standard of the law is unable to make “I” righteous, hence the struggle. But was the text meant to leave “I” and the “reader” in this state? Fee and Stuart (2014:33) writes: “Although the word ‘hermeneutics’ ordinarily covers the whole field of interpretation, including exegesis, it is also used in the narrower sense of seeking the contemporary relevance of ancient texts.” Green (2010:6) writes: “Every reading of every New Testament text today is an exercise in intercultural communication and understanding”. This statement by Green is interesting because perhaps transformation lies in the communication between what Paul wrote and what the “reader” read while keeping in mind that the “reader”, “me” and Paul are in totally different cultures, settings, and in totally different millennia. How does Paul speak to the “readers” both then and now and what “lived experience” did Paul want to awake within the “readers”? The question answered in the previous chapter came to the conclusion that even if the “reader” relates to what Paul wrote, it does not necessarily mean that the “struggle” Paul had in mind is the same.

However, what about the final hermeneutical question? Does the text have the ability to transform or affect the “reader” and if so, how? Does the pericope present a solution to “I” and the “reader” of the original context and readers today?

It all begins by the reading of the text. According to Van der Merwe (2015:3) “The reading of a written text comprises a continuous dialogical negotiation for meaning between the

text and the reader. Such a negotiation evokes different ‘lived experiences’”. By reading, relating and understanding the written text, it is possible to incorporate meaning into the “reader’s” life and allowing the text to modify and transform us, and from this encounter neither the text nor the “reader” will be unchanged, thus evoking a “lived experience”. How does this negotiation take place? According to Waaijman (2002:702), a spiritual reading has a few visible characteristics. First, the reader chooses an appropriate time and location. Secondly, “[o]ne realizes the text as one reads, searches for meaning and longs to be related to God who bestows himself in this longing”. Thirdly, the reading continues to impact and transform the reader. Packer (1996:71) writes: “Spirituality. Otherwise known as moral, devotional, or ascetic theology, spirituality explores the life of communion with God.” Communion with God by reading His Word has the potential to transform and impact the “reader”.

According to Schneiders (1999:117), “[l]iterary methods are concerned with the way the text works, both within itself and in relationship to the reader, in order to evoke and structure the event of meaning”. Paul used “I” as a rhetorical device to persuade and instruct the “reader” and with this in mind Waaijman suggests a basic structure for spiritual reading praxis of lived experience:

2.1. Initial attitude

2.2. The performance of the text

2.3. The internal dimension

2.4. God-relatedness

2.5. The mystical dimension

2.6. The continuing impact

This structure will be integrated with the hermeneutic design that follows (Waaijman 2002:702-755).

2.1. The initial attitude

According to Waaijman (2002:710), “[i]n all spiritual reading practices there exists a certain inner stance or disposition the reader has to adopt”. As mentioned, Paul used the “I” rhetorically to awaken a certain spiritual reality with in the original readers of Paul’s letter. How did the original audience receive this letter and pericope? The disposition of the original readers of the letter would receive this rhetoric very differently from “me” — the “reader” today. But does that mean that Paul’s argument is not valid? Does it mean that the result Paul was looking to evoke is different then and now?

2.1.1 The original reader’s disposition to the law

Romans is a letter. One characteristic of letters is that the author wants it to be understood, whether he communicated adequately, or whether the letter is adequately understood by the reader (Keener 2009:2). The letter is written in Greek, and Paul also assumes certain shared cultural assumptions regarding his language and concepts without giving details about them. According to Keener (2009:2), “[b]etter understanding the local situation in Rome does not mean that Paul would expect the principles he articulates there to be applicable there only; he does, after all, apply many of the same principles to other situation in other congregations. But noting these situations will help us better understand his argument and better identify the principles he is applying”.

In Romans 7:14, Paul writes that “we know that the law is spiritual”. In the letter to the Galatians, Paul uses the law as combative hyperbolic rhetoric, however, the law in Romans is more a device of persuasion than rebuking (Keener 2009:16). According to Waaijman (2002:711), “[t]he core collection (Jewish Scripture) is constituted by the Torah (the law) which enjoys immense authority. It is the guideline for life”. Very interestingly, Comfort and Elwell (2001:1230) write: “The reading of the Law was of central significance in synagogue worship.” The Mishnah⁹ shows a pattern of a synagogue service: first, there

⁹ Although the Mishnah originated in later times it is possible that similar practices were underway in earlier times. According to Longman III and Strauss (2018:164), “Rabbinic debates on legal matters, some of which go back to the first century and even earlier, were passed down by word of mouth from one generation to the next. These

was confession of faith, the Shema (Deut 6 & 11/Numbers 15); secondly, prayer; thirdly, Scripture reading (reading was the basic law –Acts 15:21, and was read in three-year cycles; Prophets were also read but at random; and fourth, interpretation (Comfort & Elwell 2001:1230). “I” in Romans 7 delights in the Torah (v. 22), as Jewish sources suggest that Jewish people usually did (Keener 2016b:97).

The law was central to first century Judaism, and they would approach it with great awe and reverence, and it was seen as life giving. According to Waaijman (2002:713), the instruction (Torah) “brings to the fore an essential aspect of Scripture: the word in which God communicates himself to humankind to point out to it the way to life”. However, Paul argues rhetorically that the law highlights death and is unable to give life and to reflect God’s righteousness because of sin. For Keener (2009:16), “[i]n Romans, Paul argues that Jews cannot boast that their law keeping and election makes them superior to Gentile believers; God produces true righteousness not by ethnic identity or human observance of regulations, but by the transformation of life of a new humanity empowered directly by him”.

Sanders (1977), one of the forerunners to the New Perspective on Paul, argues that the way in which the initial attitude towards the law in first century Judaism was portrayed by the Reformation as a legalistic religion, was wrong. Carson and Moo (2005:376) write: “After a study of Jewish sources likely to give us evidence about first-century Jewish beliefs, Sanders concluded that these sources unanimously portray a view of soteriology that he dubs ‘covenantal nomism’”. According to Sanders, God chose Israel and His gracious choice and this was the basis for their salvation. Jews did not have the law to be saved (as the Reformers suggested – Justification by Faith), according to him they were already saved and justified. Carson and Moo (2005:379) admit that many Jews did indeed view obedience to the law within a covenant context and according to Sanders they obey the law to keep or maintain their covenant status. They obeyed the law to “stay in” not to “get in” (Carson & Moo 2005:376). So according to Sanders and the New

are the ‘traditions of the elders’ (Mark 7:3). Originally oral, the Mishnah was eventually put into writing around AD 200 under the direction of Rabbi Judah the Prince”.

Perspective view, for “I” to “stay in” obedience to the law is emphasized. What Sanders highlights is the importance of the covenant as the basis and for Jewish life and thought, however, it is evident that certain Jewish groups in Paul’s day thought of themselves as being “in” while other groups were “out”, “[t]hus the effect of national election had been replaced by a form individual election... For such groups, ‘getting in’ is not simply a matter of God’s grace revealed in the covenant. More is involved, and at least some of that ‘more’ appears to involve human works” (Carson & Moo 2005:382). This statement by Carson and Moo already goes against Sanders in his generalisation of the Jewish soteriology. For Carson and Moo (2005:382), “[a]ny faith that emphasizes obedience, as Judaism undoubtedly did, is likely to produce some adherents who, perhaps through misunderstanding or lack of education, turn their obedience into a meritorious service which they think God must reward”.

Paul argues to the “reader” the impossibility of obeying the law perfectly and the inability to do “good” (18b). Because the notion that if grace “gets you in” your “perfect” obedience must “keep you in”, is exactly the notion that Paul argues is an impossibility. This would have undoubtedly awaken a “lived experience” in the first century Jewish and Gentile reader. Carson and Moo 2005:385 writes that “Paul takes the language from the Old Testament, but he moves it in a different direction by universalizing the human condition. Jews themselves, in the light of God’s revelation in Christ, can no longer claim to be ‘right’ with God; they are ‘out’ and need to ‘get in’, just as much as gentiles (Rom 1:16-17; Rom 3:22-24)”. Because the principles are universal (in that - we all fall short – Rom 3:22-24 & the inability to reflect God’s righteousness – Rom 7:7-8; 13-14;8:2-4), the aim is to arouse a “lived experience” in all readers at all times. However, one has to keep in mind that “[P]aul does believe that all people have sinned, but his supporting arguments use the rhetoric that was effective in his setting” (Keener 2014:423). Keener continues (2014:423): “Paul thus challenges not Jewish people or Jewish views as a whole but some Jewish attitudes and practices... For Jewish people, observance of the law was a matter of culture regardless of views about salvation”.

Much has been said on how the Jews viewed the law. The Jews were probably in the minority within the Roman church (Rom 1:13; 16:4). But what about the gentile “readers”? What was their disposition to the law and Paul’s letter? The church in Rome most probably stemmed from Jewish believers (Acts 2:10), but also reached beyond the Jews, calling those “among all the gentles” (Rom 1:5). Because of the different cultural orientations in congregations in Rome it should be no surprise that misunderstandings arouse between the groups that mainly had a Jewish ethos (Keener 2009:12). There was obviously some issues between the Jews and the gentiles and Paul addresses these in the letter (Rom 1:6; 2:9-10; 3:9; 9:24; 10:12). Jews believed they were chosen people in Abraham. For Keener (2009:13), “Paul shows that God’s sovereignty means that chosenness for salvation need not rest on ethnicity (ch.9, especially vv. 6-13)”. But Paul quickly challenges the gentiles leaning toward viewing themselves as superior and he shows that God has not abandoned his plan for the Jewish people, but also include the gentile converts as part of that plan; and they must not look down on those who follow the law and not Jesus (Rom 11). Believers are to serve one another, which is “the heart of the law” (Rom 13:8-10). The Gentiles in the congregation must stop looking down on those believers who are attached to the kosher laws (Rom 14:1-15:7).

According to Keener (2009:14), “[i]n practical terms (highlighted in ch.14), such unity would require a common understanding of the law that provided obedience to its spirit without constraining Gentiles to adopt its Israelite-specific details (2:14, 29; 3:27, 31; 8:2-4; 13:8-10)”. This common understanding of the law is what allows Paul to use Scripture throughout the body of the letter for Jews and Gentiles – “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom 15:4). Being part of this Christian community - gentiles that are converted to Christianity, and Jesus himself being of Jewish descend, a common understanding of Scripture was required. The language Paul uses assumes that these Christians (Jew and gentile) do have a common understanding.

For Keener (2016b:2) “Paul first establishes what was probably not actually in dispute among believers in Jesus: that the Gentile world (i.e., unconverted non-Jews) did not

know God (cf. Gal 4:8; 1 Thess. 4:5). This premise will prepare for Paul's argument that possession of the Torah, a revelation far superior to what Gentiles possessed, does not guarantee that Paul's own Jewish people know God adequately either (cf. Rom 2:1-29)".

2.1.2 How the original reader's received Paul's letter.

The initial attitude or disposition of the original readers has been established, but what is the reader's attitude in receiving a letter from Paul who wants to persuade the first reader that although the law is good and from God, it is not able to "save", nor has it the power to keep you "saved", because of the readers inclination to sin.

Paul was convinced he was an apostle like the other apostles (1 Cor 9:1). And the Lord himself called Paul to this position (Gal 1:1). Paul claimed an authority that was equal to Peter, James and John, and the rest of the apostles – of whom some demanded to be "super-apostles" (2 Cor 11:5). He claimed that what he wrote was "the Lord's command" (1 Cor 14:37). According to Carson and Moo (2005:370), "[w]hile not perhaps conscious of writing inspired Scripture, Paul's apostolic stance enables him to interpret the Old Testament Scriptures with sovereign freedom and to make demands on his people that he considered to as binding as anything in Scripture". It seems that when a letter arrived from Paul, it was taken seriously. Literacy in the Roman world was around ten percent (higher for elite urban males). Many people in the congregation would be unable to read. Reading was done aloud even in private. Churches receiving Paul's letters would read them publicly in the congregation's service, most likely by those who most often read Scripture in the meetings (for those who had Scripture scrolls). Keener (2014:420) points out that "[r]eaders might try to help communicate the thought with appropriate intonation and gestures". Many epistles in the New Testament simply assumed that the entire local church or congregation or all the congregations of the city or the region would hear the text read out loud (Col 4:12; 1 Thess 5:27; Rev 1:3) (Dudrey 2003:235).

Keener (2009:9) writes:

His [Paul] rhetoric, no less than his use of the Greek language, is constructed to appeal specifically within a particular setting. Such polemical rhetoric was

expected and necessary for successful debate in Paul's day. Indeed, Paul fashions his polemic in such a way that even his detractors would have been forced to condemn the figure he caricatures. Today we can learn from Paul's message while aesthetically appreciating his plethora of figure of speech and rhetorical devices that displayed his brilliance while holding the original audience's attention.

2.1.3 The reader's disposition to the law today

Reading the same passage today I, the "reader", in a very clear way, approach the passage very differently than that of the first readers of the pericope. According to Waaijman (2002:712), who writes about the way in which the first century Christians viewed the Old Testament,

People spoke succinctly of 'Scripture', a usage taken over by Christians. (Joh 2:22; Acts 8:32; 2 Tim 3:16; Mark 12:24; 1 Cor 15:34 – obviously referring to the Old Testament). In a literal sense of the word Scripture is prescription: written beforehand; recorded as example, imposed with the view to compliance or observance; prescribed as binding. Although the prescription arose from experience and aims at making this experience accessible, it has its own status: it institutes a spiritual architecture. The prescription precedes the experience.

Today this is how the reader would view the New Testament, it was experienced in the past, written down and became Scripture for Christians by God's providence. Waaijman (2002:712) writes, "[o]n account of this priority and authority that attaches to those prescriptions, these texts are surrounded with special reverence and respect. They are called 'holy Scripture'". In many other Christian communities (including my own) they often talk about the "Word of God" (Schneiders 1999:40). The "law" or *nomos* is essentially prescriptions, and according to Waaijman (2002:713), "This designation brings to the fore an essential aspect of Scripture: the word in which God communicates himself to humankind to point out to it the way of life. Jews, and later Christians, expressed this reality with the word 'testament'. Scripture was understood as a covenant, that is, as God's self- obligation in relation to his people." Paul, in alignment with the new covenant of Jesus Christ, points to Jesus as the way of life and not the law (v25). Waaijman (2002:713) continues: "Toward this the spiritual mode of reading advocated by Jews and Christians is directed: step-by-step the reader is led into Scripture so that God can fully express himself".

2.1.4 How the reader today receives Paul's letter.

Why is the initial attitude of the “reader” important? According to Schneiders (1999:39) the “Word of God” is metaphorically God’s self-gift of revelation, and like the sacraments (Baptism and the Eucharist) the sacred Scripture have to be received like these sacraments, which is sacred and full of metaphorical meaning. Because Scripture according to her is God’s self-disclosure, God invites us into his interior. Schneiders (1999:34-43) writes: “But unless the other accepts the invitation and reciprocates, revelation does not achieve itself... the biblical text as meaningful is the sacrament of the word of God, that is, of the mystery of divine revelation. It is sacrament in the fully actualized sense of the word only when it is being read, when it is coming to event as meaning through interpretation”. The point here is not whether there is an agreement on her way of viewing Scripture or not, the point is the initial attitude. For the Roman congregation, receiving a letter from Paul would have been taken very seriously because of his apostolic authority. The way the “reader” today views Scripture will have an impact on how it is received. As Schneiders (1999:43) points out, “[t]he danger of magic (viewing Scripture as some kind of talisman) and idolatry (idolising the Bible as an object) is not to be underestimated, but neither should it lead to irrelevant casualness in our approach to this text that represents the permanent possibility of the event of revelation in our midst”.

There are many ways the Scriptures are approached today and throughout history. Some Christians view the Scriptures as something magical where the emphasis is on the power of the Bible, it is viewed as a direct “supernatural” message from God. Portions of Scripture are hang around the neck very superstitiously, or the Bible should be placed in the living room because it provides “protection”. Their attitude towards the Scriptures is superstitious. Others approach Scripture very naively – they pick up the Scriptures and read it and apply any verse directly to their lives without asking questions of its original intent.

There are also allegorical readings which assume the Bible has many levels of symbolic meaning, approaching it in a more spiritual sense. People and things in the real world are

often to be interpreted in a spiritually symbolic way. The way in which I, the “reader” is attempting to approach this text, which is also my initial attitude towards the Scriptures, is that the historical and literary methods (which is scientific) must be followed. Paul wrote in a specific language in a specific time, to a specific audience and culture. However, I am also very aware that the message of the Scriptures has eternal relevance and speaks to all humans in all times thus creating a “lived experience” in all readers – and, as Fee and Stuart write (2014:25), “[b]ecause it is the word of God, we must listen – and obey”. Thus I agree with Schneiders that the text is not to be elevated to “god status” and be idolized, but neither should it be approached just my means of a casual reading and application, nor is the text just a historical and literary document. The attitude by which the text is approached determines the way in which it is going to be received.

2.2. The performance of the text

The performance of the text engages the world of forms, sounds and character. It involves the senses and imagination of images within the text. For Waaijman (2002:730), “[t]he text cry out to be performed”. The text evokes a reading of participating — a performance that is understood somatically (Waaijman 2002:713). The “I” used by Paul is not biographical, even though it is a first-person pronoun. Longenecker (2016:653) writes: “[K]ümmel’s view of Paul’s gnomic use of ‘I’ in 7:7-25 has been supported by such scholars as Günther Bornkamm, Ernst Fuchs, Karl Kertelge, Jan Lambercht, Ernst Käsemann, and Otto Kuss.” The “I” is a rhetorical Stilliform. Longenecker (2016:653) points out, the “I”, “[w]as not always intended to portray the situation of the teacher himself who was giving the teaching, but was often meant to be understood in gnomic or general sense as including all people”.

With this in mind I am aware that some scholars have carried the rhetorical analysis too far. But, here Paul is creating a rhetorical imaginative image of struggle. Iser writes (1978:108): “The combined efforts of author and reader bring into being the concrete and imaginary object which is the work of the mind. Art exists only for and through other people”. According to Van der Merwe (2015:6), “[t]he physical images, material objects, attitudes or events described in the text are imaginatively experienced. The reading

process then facilitates the passive fusion between meaning of a text and the experience of the text in the mind of the readers". Similarly, Iser (1978:150) writes that "[t]he reader is involved in composing images out of the multifarious aspects of the text by unfolding them into a sequence of ideation and by integrating the results products along the time axis of reading.

Thus the text and reader are linked together, the one permeating the other". In other words, as the text is read, the readers' imagination creates images of what the text presents, and this is created subjectively and selectively. Iser (1978:150) continues: "Thus the meaning of the text can only be fulfilled in the reading subject and does not exist independently of him; just as important, though, is that the reader himself, in constituting the meaning, is also constituted". Van der Merwe (2015:6) concurs: "The successive images again progressively constitute a certain configuration to generate both a field of meaning and experience. Such a configuration is then understood, interpreted and applied in the lives of readers". Within the reading process, while the text is being performed, meaning and experience is found. It could be that while reading, the "reader's" imagination creates images because he/she relates or recognises the experience being read. In the process the reader then seeks to understand what this text is saying, interpret what the text actually intends and then meaning is applied to the text and to the reader.

The fact is that the "I" character of the written discourse was constructed rhetorically to have a particular effect on a reader. Paul intended to engage the reader – there is a noetic component to the literature. In this vein, Schneiders (1999:148) writes that "[t]he iconic text intends to open before the reader a world of possibility, a way of being, that the reader must assess and either accept or reject".

Paul's argument starts with something the original readers would be very familiar with – that is that "the law is spiritual" (Rom 7:14a). This is a very positive statement, but is contrasted immediately with a negative – "but I am of the flesh, sold under sin" (14b). Iser (1978:110) writes: "What is known as the 'eye-voice span', when applied to the literary text will designate that span of the text which can be encompassed during each phrase

of reading and from which we anticipate the next phrase:... decoding proceeds in 'chunks' rather than in units of single words, and... these 'chunks' correspond to syntactic units of a sentence". The eye-voice span is the distance that the eye is ahead of the voice when one is reading out loud. What Iser is saying, is that while reading these "chunks" out loud, anticipation and interpretation is already identifying meaning even before the words are read out loud.

According to the structural analysis done in chapter 2, specific units are clearly identified: it starts with the main statement in verse 14, followed by two parallel statements of explanation (vv. 15-20). These statements are contrasted by undesirable outcomes, "[b]ecause each sentence can achieve its end only by aiming at something beyond itself... all the sentences in a literary text, the correlates constantly intersect, giving rise ultimately to semantic fulfilment at which they had aimed. The fulfilment, however, takes place not in the text, but in the reader" (Iser 1978:110). Paul wants the fully virtuous reader to experience and imagine ultimate hopelessness in that "I" knows the law, but is unable to practice it, no matter what (v. 24). According to Keener (2009:93), "[e]ssentially Paul already outlined this contrast before depicting it: the past life 'in the [sphere of] the flesh,' when the law stirred the body for death (7:5), differs from current freedom from the law in living by the Spirit (7:6)".

Though Paul already outlined the contrast earlier in chapter 7, it is only here that he is depicting the hopelessness through a vivid image of struggle and inability to do what is good. Iser (1978:110) writes: "In brief, the sentences set in motion a process which will lead to the formation of the aesthetic object as correlative in the mind of the reader". The statements and assertions Paul makes in his argument serve to point the way towards what is to come, which is then experienced or imagined by the reader as he/she is reading.

The text fashions a world with its own dynamics, and the reader or interpreter is drawn into that world and discover an identity in a reality that challenges or replaces the reality

of the reader's world. If the reader is successfully drawn into that world the text, the text is performing, doing what the author intended it to do.

2.3. The internal dimension

The internal dimension is that dimension in which a “spiritual reading does not stop after a first reading but continues to ask questions” (Waaijman 2002:704). Here the method wants to penetrate to the core, the deeper meaning of the text. It is to meditate on and seek out the deeper interior of the text. Waaijman (2002:750) suggests three formal intertextual strategies: “participation which seeks to keep texts alive by repetition or imitation; detachment which seeks to suppress, fend off, or destroy earlier texts; transformation which plays with and uses unfamiliar texts”.

2.3.1. Participation: This is created by repetition (“I”, law, law of [God, my mind, sin] flesh, dwells in me, sin, etc.) and imitation – Paul, by using “I” as a “device” is imitating the readers’ experience. Witherington III (2004:194) writes, “G. Bray reminds us ‘Most of the Fathers believed that here Paul was adopting the persona of an unregenerate man, not describing his own struggles as a Christian’”. By using these devices, Paul wants to keep the text and the spiritualities of the text alive. According to Iser (1978:107),

Textual structures and structured acts of comprehension are therefore the two poles in the act of communication, whose success will depend on the degree in which the text establishes itself as a correlative in the reader's consciousness. This “transfer” of the text to reader is often regarded as being brought about solely by the text. Any successful transfer however – though initiated by the text – depends on the extent to which this text can activate the individual reader's faculties of perceiving and processing. Although the text may well incorporate the social norms and values of its possible readers, its function is not merely to present such data, but, in fact, to use them in order to secure its uptake.

In other words, Paul shows by the argument what is to be produced, and therefore the argument is not a product itself. As Iser (1978:107) points out, “that which is given has to be received, and the way it is received depends as much on the reader as on the text. Reading is not a direct ‘internalization’, because it is not a one-way process, and our

concern will be to find means of describing the reading process as a dynamic interaction (participation) between text and reader”.

The reader is challenged when he himself or she herself becomes productive, when the text wants him or her to bring his or her own faculties into play. However, there are limits to the reader’s willingness to participate, and if the text is too clear or too obscure, the reader is likely to opt out. In the case of Romans 7:14-25, the argument Paul makes as one reads it, the experience of “I” is clear. But there is also an obscurity when for instance reading about the “law”, for the question might arise: which law is Paul writing about? When the reader is bored by the familiar or overstrained by obscurity, the participation is over.

2.3.2. Detachment: It is evident that Paul through his rhetoric is subverting an established system. By borrowing from Keener (2009:92) the following diagram is helpful:

Person under the law is attached to:	Believers detached from:
law, sin, and death (Rom 7:7-13)	the law (7:4, 6; 8:2), sin (6:18, 20, 21) and death (5:21; 6:23; 8:2)
I am fleshly (7:14)	the flesh(8:9); no longer in the flesh (7:5)
slave to sin (7:14; 7:23)	enslavement of sin (6:18, 20, 22); they are “redeemed” (3:24)
knowing right (in the law) without the ability to do right (7:15-23)	external law, the power to live righteously (8:3-4)
sin dwells in (and rules) me (7:17,20)	indwelling sin, the Spirit that dwells in me (8:9,11)
nothing good dwells in me (me as the flesh) (7:18)	evil, the Spirit dwells in me (8:9,11)
the law of sin that dominates his bodily members (7:23)	law of sin (8:2)
sin wins the war and captures “me” as a prisoner (7:23)	captivity – win the spiritual war (2 Cor 10:3-5)

body destined for death (7:24)	body of death – do not live for their own bodily desires (8:10-13) and are freed from death (8:2)
a slavery to the law of sin in the flesh vs. mind (7:25)	slavery to the law of sin (8:2; 6:18, 20, 22); the mental perspective either belongs to the Spirit or to the flesh (8:5-9).

Paul's strategy is to transcend previous adverse practices and systems and be detached from them. This is seen in another letter Paul wrote where the idea of "putting off the old" and "putting on the new" (Eph 4:22-24) is to detach from and attach to. As in Romans 5:12-6:14 and especially Romans 6:6, the "old self" is not just an earlier life but a life marked by Adam, which is enslaved to sin (v. 14), emphasised by the law (Rom 7:7). Putting off the old self and putting on the new is more than just changed behaviour or "to do the good 'I' want to do" (v19). The new means to belong to a new age instated by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (last Adam). Being united or attached to Christ by faith and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we put on the new.

2.3.3 Transformation: This involves a change in practice and conduct, participation in a new identity and the simultaneous detachment from the old identity and practices, which is necessary to lead to transformation of the reader's identity and character. "Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom 7:25), "because through Christ the law of the Spirit of life has set you free from the law of sin and death." (8:2). Paul shows the "I" to what it is attached to, and to what the "I" needs to detach from. However, transformation starts with the detachment of the old (law, sin and death) and attachment to Jesus Christ and all that it entails. Van der Merwe (2015:4) writes: "The identification with the Father and Son and the readers' connectedness with them through faith brings about a continuous transformation and a 'lived experience' of the text (and God and Jesus) in the reader".

According to Iser (1978:132),

[r]eading has the same structure as experience, to the extent that our entanglement [with the text] has the effect of pushing our various criteria of orientation back into the past, thus pending their validity for the new present. This does not mean, however, that these criteria or our previous experiences disappear altogether. On the contrary, our past still remains our experience, but what happens now is that it begins to interact with the as yet unfamiliar presence of the text. This remains unfamiliar so long as our previous experiences are precisely as they had been before we began our reading.

In reading the text the reader may relate to what is written, but experience do not come only by recognising the familiar. For instance, the experience of struggle within the text is familiar to me, the reader, though the struggle may not be the same as the original reader would have known it. Experience only really arises when what is familiar is transcended or is undermined. Experience of transformation grows out of the alterations and falsification of that which was already ours. Shaw (1964:316) writes: “You have learnt something. That always feels at first as if you had lost something.”

2.4. God-relatedness

According to Waaijman (2002:705), “[a]s the deeper layers of the text open up, one’s spontaneous involvement in the divine core increases until it predominates and gains actual control over the reading. That is why meditation ‘leads’ to prayer, which is ‘ignited’ by meditation”. Waaijman is referring to *lectio divina* here, a practice that involves four “moments” or steps: *lectio* (reading), *meditatio* (meditation), *oratio* (prayer), and *contemplatio* (reflection or contemplation). Douglas and Tenney (2011:917) writes that “[m]editation seems to have been more a Hebrew than Christian practice. It is a most rewarding act of worship, of spiritual renewal, of mental refreshing, and of divine communion (Job 15:4; Ps 77:3, 6; Ps 19:14)”. Meditating on the law “day and night” for example, was a command Joshua gave at some point (Josh 1:8) and this practice is also seen in Psalm 1:2 and Psalm 119:97. “I” knows in his or her inner person and in his or her mind what is right, knowing God’s written law, perhaps meditating on it “day and night” (7:16; 22-23). “I” is securely *oriented* in finding his or her delight in the law. John Calvin (1509-1564) in his Institutes of Christian Religion writes:

It is evident that man never attains to true self-knowledge until he previously contemplated the face of God, and come down after such contemplation to

look into himself. For (such is innate pride) we always seem to ourselves just, and upright, and wise, and holy, until we are convinced, by clear evidence, of our injustice, vileness, folly, and impurity. Convinced, however, we are not, if we look to ourselves only, and not to the Lord also – he being the standard by application of which this conviction can be produced (Beveridge 2008:5).

When the “I” looks to him- or herself (we know the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin, v. 14) in the light of the law (which is God’s standard), “I” begins to feel painfully *disoriented* to the point of lament (prayer of despair) (v. 24), because of “sin living in me” (v. 17). Keener (2009:95) writes: “Like one enslaved by sin in Rom 6:16-20, the mind here is defeated in battle (contrast 6:13; 13:12) and made a prisoner of war. Prisoners of war were normally enslaved if they were not ransomed. The anguished persona in the text cries out, ‘Wretched person that I am!’ needing deliverance from the ‘body of death’ (a body under the sentence of and destined for death, 7:25; 8:10)”. The reader is in despair, a new reality of chaos and disorder is experienced. Waaijman (2002:706) writes: “Prayer is sustained by longing, indeed, prayer is longing. This longing is spontaneous, being on fire, with love, sighs, tears, beseeching, thirsting, painful lacking... Longing sustains the searching and asking orativity: Prayer asks for what we long for”. The answer which is just as exclamatory (v.25), “I” is being surprisingly *reoriented* by a new way in God through Christ. The new orientation is unlike the old status quo, it does not turn to the old ways of thinking or return to the “normal”. Rather, in meeting Christ “he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Cor 5:17). When it happens, writes (Brueggemann 2007:11), it is always a surprise, a gift of graciousness, and always an experience that evokes thankfulness. For Bruce (1977:189),

[t]he words are Paul’s, and he spoke from experience. Yet at the time he wrote he had embraced another way. No longer did he rely upon the law and boast of his relationship to God as one who had been born a Jew; no longer did he make his aim the attainment of that righteousness before God which was based on keeping the law. He had found a new way of righteousness, based on faith in Christ. Allegiance to a person has displaced devotion to a code – which was indeed, not merely a code but more a way of life.

Being oriented is to delight in the law. It is to be in a place of stability. However, when “I” looks to him- or herself after contemplating the face of God (standard of the law) he or she finds another law within that leaves “I” disoriented and in despair, which leads to a cry of lament. But “I” is reoriented when he or she discovers the solution, a sobering experience of no longer aiming to attain righteousness based on trying to keep the law. Thus, as Van der Merwe (2015:7) states, “each new action or acceptance of new truths becomes new experiences”.

2.5. The mystical dimension

The mystical dimension, refers to God’s Self-communication. Waaijman (2002:707) writes that “Scripture is divine self-revelation”. According to Romans 7, in the midst of “I’s” lament (v. 24), comes a sudden answer of thanksgiving (v. 25). The text reveals the trinity directly and indirectly: God (θεός) (v. 22; 25), Jesus Christ (Ἰησοῦς Χριστός) (v. 25) and the one that is not mentioned directly but indirectly the Spirit - the spiritual law (νόμος πνευματικός) (v. 14). According to Fee (2000:5),

[w]hen Paul says that “the law is spiritual,” he means that the law belongs to the sphere of the Spirit (inspired of the Spirit as it is), not to the sphere of the flesh. And this, despite how the flesh has taken advantage of the Law, since, even though the Law came through the Spirit, it was not accompanied by the gift of the Spirit so as to make it work in the hearts of God’s people.

The doctrine of the trinity is not plainly taught in the New Testament nor in Pauline theology. According to McGrath (1999:47), “[t]he basic theme of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is that of the richness of God, and the inability of human language or imagery to capture fully the wonder of God. Even this very simple statement of the role of the Trinity will indicate its importance for Christian Spirituality”. There might be two passages in the New Testament that are open to a plain trinitarian interpretation: Matthew 28:19 and 2 Corinthians 13:14, but the doctrine is built on the inescapable pattern of divine activity found in the New Testament. As McGrath (1999:47) points out, “the Father is revealed in Christ through the Spirit. There is the closest of connections between the Father, Son and Spirit in New Testament writings”. The doctrine of the Trinity is not easy to comprehend, but as McGrath (1999:47) writes, “Augustine of Hippo once pointed out,

'if you can comprehend it, it is not God.' The doctrine can thus be seen as a safeguard against simplistic or reductionist approaches to God". The Trinity in its essence is very hard to grasp, and because of this, it safeguards the "reader" from just applying another "method" or "technique". According to Sheldrake (1998:99) who did a case study on Julian of Norwich (who lived roughly between 1342-1416 and whose starting point of experience is God the trinity), writes:

The great classical texts are not concerned primarily with ideas about doctrine but about the practice of Christian life. By practice, I do not mean merely specific practices. For example, the writings of Julian of Norwich have remarkably little, if anything, to say about techniques of prayer or devotional practices and ascetical disciplines... the "visions" with which Julian begins her two texts are to be understood as imaginative experiences arising from her contemplative prayer.

Sometimes the Trinity in systematic theology artificially separates the persons within the Trinity in terms of outward movements and action (such as the Father – the creator, the Son – the redeemer, the Holy Spirit – the sanctifier) (Sheldrake 1998:110), there is very little or no imaginativeness in these doctrines sometimes. "Rather than the Father being the creator, the Son the redeemer and the Spirit the sanctifier, all persons of the Trinity manifest creative, redemptive, and sanctifying qualities" (Sheldrake 1998:110).

Fee (1996:42) writes: "By the presence of the Spirit, God's love, played out to the full in Christ, is an experienced reality in the heart of the believer". Why does Paul say "Thanks be to God" (Rom 7:25)? What did God do? Romans 5:8a answers: "God demonstrates his own love for us" in this: God loves us, his creation, and because of His love God took action. Paul writes "Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 7:25). What did God do through Jesus Christ? Again Romans 5:8b-9 answers: "While we were still sinners Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood..." Christ would not have died for us if he did not also love us as the Father loves us. Christ will only do what the Father wills (John 14:10). And "through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set you free from the law of sin and death" (Rom 8:2) The Spirit also redeems, justifies and sets us free. In a very mysterious way the trinity works in the heart of the "reader":

God-three-in-One and One-in-three is part of redemption, justification, and sanctification. Paul portrays a struggle and contrast within “I”, and in verse 24 “I” cries: “What a wretched man I am!” The law is impotent to deliver “I” from sin, but the struggle is necessary to point “I” to the answer by grace – “Thanks (χάρις) be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!” According to Fee (1994:893), “at the heart of Pauline theology is his gospel, and his gospel is essentially soteriology — God’s saving a people for his name through the redemptive work of Christ and the appropriating work of the Spirit. It is his encounter with God soteriological, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that accounts for the transformation of Paul’s theological language and of his understanding of God”. Fee (1994:839) continues and writes: “Paul’s understanding of God was functionally Trinitarian and that the distinctions between Father, Son, and Spirit were presuppositional for him”. For Paul the trinity is an experienced reality of the Christian life and also the starting point of transformation.

Still, when Paul writes, “Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 7:25), God (trinitarian) offers the gift of salvation and redemption, however, to be thankful for the gift it has to be received and accepted. In a case study, Sheldrake (1998:163) wrote concerning two historical figures, Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556 Catholic) and George Herbert (1593-1633 Protestant), that nothing is imposed but granted. “The final submission in the poem ‘Love’ (by Herbert) – ‘you must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat: / so I did sit and eat’ – is neither hopeless resignation nor the act of someone who obeys an order. It is the acceptance of an invitation. In that acceptance is freedom”. Sheldrake continues (1998:163):

Both Ignatius Loyola in the Spiritual Exercises and George Herbert in The Temple begin with human unworthiness. Although they approach matters from different angles, and sometimes use different language, both of them map out a pilgrimage of the human spirit. This journey involves the realization that human beings do not cease to be unworthy but are actually loved by God as sinners. Any true response, any authentic following of Christ starts from that realization and acceptance. Interestingly, both spiritual teachers bring the movement to a climax with contemplation of God’s love and with the realization and acceptance that it is God who gives all and achieves all. In that is truth and freedom.

Paul's aim is to use "I" to show the "reader" that he or she is not good enough in comparison to the standards of God. Paul wants the "reader" to feel it and experience the hopelessness. What will deliver the "reader" is the love of God (triune). The realisation of our shortfall is vital in pointing us to the One that loves us, to the One who has acted in our place. The "reader" realises that God has given it all and also achieved what we could not. The "reader" is invited to "sit down and taste His meat" (reference to Christ body broken for us) – this is not a command, nor is it a hopeless resignation but something that must be accepted by faith – a dependence on the mercy of God. When the realisation happens and the "reader" becomes aware of what God has done it must turn the "reader" from despair to thankfulness.

2.6. The continuing impact

Jerome¹⁰ compares the reading of Scripture to "the hoisting of our sails for the Holy Spirit without knowing at which shore we will land..." There is first of all the hoisting of the sails. Every skipper knows all the planning that needed to rig up a ship, certainly when it concerns a seaworthy vessel. Then there is the blowing of the Spirit: one can hoist all the sails one wishes, but when there is no wind, the ship will not move forward (Waaijman 2002:709).

What impact should this pericope have on the original reader and "me" the reader today? Is there any relation? According to Thiselton (1980:11), "[h]istorical conditioning is two sided: the modern interpreter, no less than the text, stands in a given historical context and tradition". He continues: "[t]he biblical text comes alive as 'speech-act... when some kind of correspondence or inter-relation occurs between the situation addressed by the biblical writer and the situation of the modern reader or hearer" (Thiselton 1980:436). The text impacts both the original and contemporary readers by showing us that trying "our best" cannot transform us.

According to Keener (2016a:10) "Scripture already holds authority and is true, but it is experienced as authoritative, for example on matters of forgiveness, when one personally embraces its truth". When reading the pericope something happens to the reader's

¹⁰ Jerome (347-420) is an "[e]arly church father and translator of the Vulgate, the Latin version of the Bible that became the church's standard for a thousand years" (Longman III & Strauss 2018:111).

personal collection of experience. It cannot remain unaffected, as Iser (1978:132) states, “[b]ecause our presence in the text does not come about merely through recognition of what we already know. Of course, the text does contain a good deal of familiar material, but this usually serves not as conformation, but as a basis out of which new experience is to be forged”. In other words, transformation and renewed thinking already starts with just the reading of Paul’s rhetoric.

According to Iser (1978:132), “[w]hat actually happens during this process can again only be experienced when past feelings, views, and values have been evoked and then made to merge with new experiences. The old conditions form of the new, and the new selectively restructures the old. The reader’s reception of the text is not based on identifying two different experiences (old versus new), but on the interaction between the two”. In Romans 7:23 Paul refers to a depraved mind, an old way of thinking, a mind under the flesh (v.25). Just a few chapters later Paul refers to a renewed mind (Rom 12:2) which involves recognizing and affirming the “newness” initiated in Christ (7:6), which is contrasted by the old way of thinking. This does not mean that old experiences are totally erased and replaced, they are in fact evoked, but as the mind is renewed it conforms to the image of Christ (8:29) (internally transformed), a new way of thinking that is very hopeful. According to Van der Merwe (2015:8):

[t]he familiar experiences are only momentary; their significance changes during the course of reading. The higher the frequency of these moments, the clearer will be the interaction between the present text and past experience. New experiences then emerge when the experiences that have been stored are reconstructed. Such reconstruction is what provides to new experiences their forms.

This makes reading the text a ‘lived experience’, but we can only embrace Paul’s message when we recognise (this is Paul’s aim) our need for the agency of God, the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:1-17). Keener (2016:259b) writes, “[m]ost of us thus find ourselves in a predicament similar to that of the ancient philosophers, trying (at best) to transform ourselves by new beliefs without acknowledging dependence on God’s Spirit... Contrary to what all of our training leads us to expect, this experience comes not through wrestling

with the idea of Spirit intellectually but simply by entrusting (faith – accepting God’s truth) ourselves to the one who gives the Spirit”.

Waaajman (2002:709) in addition writes: “The reading must allow itself to be inwardly moved by the Spirit: the speech of the Inexpressible. And finally there is the place of arrival: reading Scripture touches the shoreline of life just as a ship reaches the seashore. The ongoing effect of reading in ordinary life belongs essentially to the reading of Scripture. The Word of God is not pondered with phrases but fulfilling it after having grasped it”.

Meaning is fulfilled because Paul’s argument in its context makes sense. It makes sense because it reaches into the reality of truth. When an argument makes sense and the truth claims within the pericope is true, then there is meaning. When Paul’s argument is grasped it brings the appropriate meaning into life in the world of the “reader”. Meaning that is properly understood, impacts because it embraces the truth of God’s gift of righteousness, rather than struggle to achieve it. This is the process of the renewal of the mind (Rom 12:2). The new approach can actually fulfil God’s will because the Spirit knows it, motivates it, and empowers the believer.

Conclusion

The basic structure for a spiritual reading praxis that creates a “lived experience” is interchangeably between the text, the reader and God. Transformation cannot be achieved without one or the other. Three stages can be identified:

First, the text: Paul’s argument and the way he used “I” as a rhetorical devise is really a piece of literature that draws the reader in, no matter what time period. His argument, on so many levels, is relatable and experienced even with just an initial reading. However, when analysing the text and when one is really coming to terms with it, it becomes very clear that the struggle that Paul writes about is not the same as my (the reader) or many other reader’s struggles. Still, this does not prevent the text from impacting the reader, no matter what kind of struggle.

Second, the reader: Without the reader the writer will never achieve his goal. The attitude by which the text is approached will have an impact on how it is received. The attitude by which the text is received will also determine the internal dimension by which the reader will participate, detach and allow the text to transform. In a sense, the reader needs to internalise the truths of the text, but that is hugely determined by the reader's approach to the text.

Third, God: Without the miraculous work of the triune God as pointed out, transformation is impossible. This is what makes the text different from just a historical reading. The text is made alive by the Spirit and moves the reader forward, without Him nothing would change. It is like the wind, deeply mysterious, for we do not know where it comes from or where it is going, but believe it is there to move us. All this happens when the text is read.

The final chapter will reflect and discuss the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 5: Final conclusion and discussion

1. Is there any relation between the “I” in Romans 7:14-25 and a “lived experience”?

The main question of this dissertation was if there is any relation between the “I” in Romans 7:14-25 and a “lived experience”? The method proposed was the socio-rhetorical method as advanced by Robbins (1996). I chose to work on three “textures” as appropriate for the research at hand:

First, the socio-cultural texture, that consist of exegesis of the text and the broader context of the pericope. The reason for this chapter was to determine who the “I” is that Paul is referring to by looking at the context and the content of the text itself. It was established that “I” is a device that Paul used to argue with a Jew that is still under the law. In other words, “I” is a Jew under the law. It was also determined here which “law” Paul is referring to and its meaning. The “I”, the “law”, the “flesh” and the “mind” are central to the argument in determining the meaning in its context. Seeking to understand the context and the text is the starting point.

The second “texture” that was focused on was the ideological texture. This “texture” is necessary to determine the “reader’s” bias and way of looking at the text. Here I questioned why the text relates to me, the “reader”. Why was I relating to the text to such an extent in just an initial reading? It turned out that I was relating to “I” because I too was imprisoned in a “system” of belief, though that “system” is not at all the same as the system Paul’s “I” is referring to. What was noteworthy about this chapter is that I placed my own experience of the text under criticism with the help of the approaches of Vernon Robbins and Richard Niebuhr, and discovered why I related to Paul’s “I”.

This is important for the third and final movement, the sacred texture. Keeping the original context and content of the pericope in mind and also the “reader’s” bias, it was asked whether the text is able to transform the reader. This question holds the key to the relation between “I” and a “lived-experience”. McGrath (1999:2) wrote that “Christian spirituality concerns the quest for a fulfilled and authentic Christian existence, involving the bringing

together of the fundamental ideas of Christianity and the whole experience of living on the basis of and within the scope of the Christian faith". Reading, negotiating and participating with the text is a way of bringing together Paul's fundamental idea of the text into the world of the reader, and by the act of reading a "lived experience" is discovered that is able to transform. The quest starts by reading the text, and not just reading at face value, but an intentional reading of the text that involves the attitude of the reader, the performance of the text, and the reality of the inner dimension of the "reader", and most vital, God in the text. Without God the text is neither sacred nor is the "lived experience" "spiritual". God is central within the pericope, being the hope in despair. The act of reading then becomes a "lived experience". As the "reader" actively thinks and contemplates the text, something happens within the "reader". The writer captures and holds the attention of the reader. This attention is not held by just relating to the text somehow, but by recognising the experience and by challenging or undermining certain beliefs. In this moment, the "old way" of thinking in the act of reading becomes intertwined with a "new way" of thinking or with the renewal of the mind. Is there a relation between the "I" of Romans 7:14-25 and a "lived experience"? I think there is, because the experience is created by the reading of the text.

2. Suggested future research.

The findings of the research were very satisfactory, however I am aware of the limitations of the study. There is a sea of research done on Paul and specifically this particular text. This study's focus was primarily on me as the "reader" of the text, my bias, my experience etc. This limits the reach of the study in respect of spirituality to only me and my experience, even though this was argued to be the intention of this New Testament study of Paul's "I".

For future studies it would be very interesting to gather a group of readers and have them read the text and perhaps ask the question who they think "I" is, and conduct a study on their experience of the text. This could be done by a reader-response criticism which looks at the author's intent of the text and then moves to the locus of meaning in the audience. Meaning creates a lived experience.

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