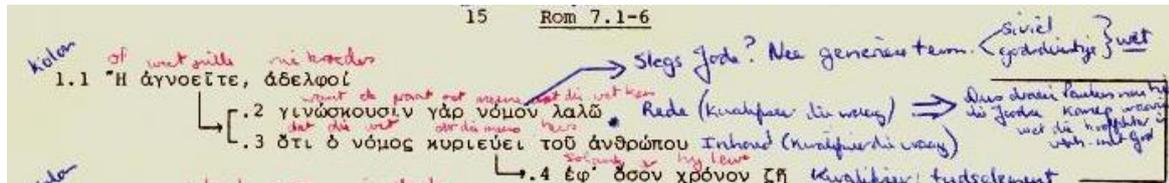


Guide to the understanding of Romans 7

Koot van Wyk



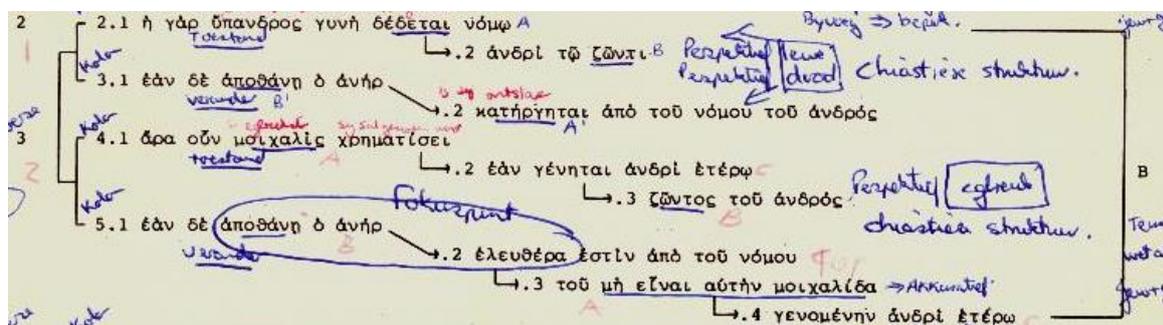
(From J. P. Louw, *Semantiese Strukturalisme van Romeine* Vol. I [Department of Greek, University of Pretoria, 1978], page 13)

The first verse in Romans 7 is important for this specific semantic reason: it reveals the audience of this chapter as a group lawyers, trained in the laws of Judaism of that time. They can be like Paul, Christian Pharisees but they can also be Christian Latin Lawyers of Rome who had a Jewish background. It would not be correct to say that Paul is saying that he is talking to people who know the Ten Commandments. There are people who want to read Ten Commandments in chapter 7 every time they see it but that is not going to pay off. The rule of thumb is that when there is surrounding hints that it is the Ten Commandments, it is safe to assume that it is the Moral Law. There are scholars who are trying to minimize or sidestep the concept from a Book of Hebrews perspective that there must have been two kinds of laws in the Jewish religious system, the moral law that cannot ever be abrogated and ceremonial laws that served the type until the antitype [Christ] was to come. Paul speaks to them as “brothers”. “I speak to those who know the law”.

The law rules man. In modern society just as in ancient society the law ruled people but skeptics in the society always pointed out that law is made by someone and if the mood of those making the law is changed, then the law also changes. The moral law is unchangeable. God does not change His mood from one extreme to another. So God’s law cannot be changed ad hoc by human intervention or consensus or opinion polls on morality. What is wrong 6000 years ago is wrong today as well. Cultures change but God’s law never changes. Consensus can change human laws related to acceptable behavioral practices in society by if that conflicts with the Word of God as Torah or God’s moral law, it is unacceptable. Period. Modern Jurisprudence and their equity philosophy embracing Satan and his cronies holus bolus, is not acceptable to God and His moral law. God and His religion cannot be adjusted to fit modern whims. The LGBTQH sympathizers are trying to tell their audience that God has more room for adjustment to our sinful habits than we are prepared to allow Him to. But that is fake and a wrong perception of the Bible. The time element this law rules man is “upon the whole period he lives” (literally). All societies are controlled by customs and rules even if they are not from western origin. A book on such is H. W. Warner, *A Digest of South African Native Civil Case Law 1894-*

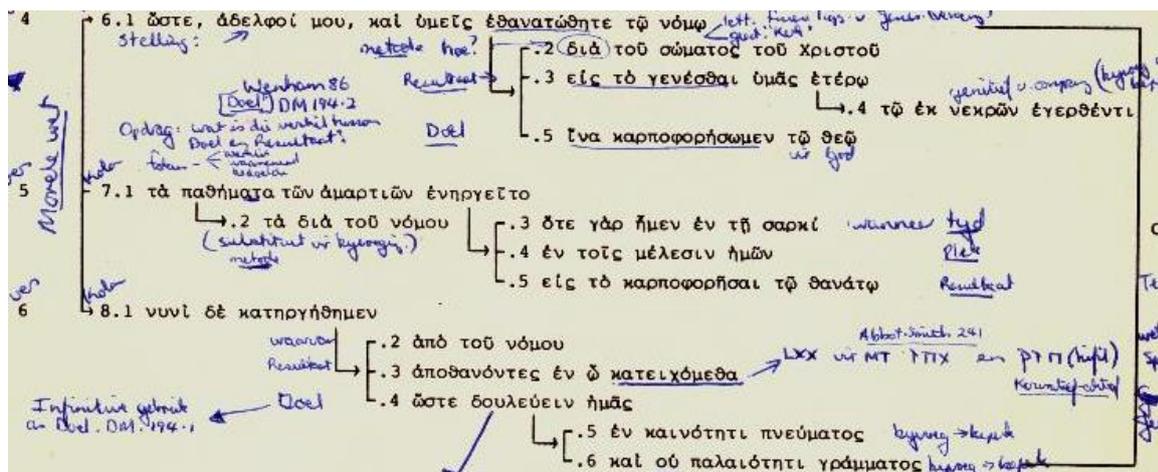
1957 (Capetown: Juta & Company, Ltd, 1961).

In the 2017 Book of Romans Quarterly, it is said by Don Neufeld in 1980: 65, “Again, given all else that Paul and the Bible say about obedience to the Ten Commandments, it doesn’t make sense to assert here that Paul was telling these Jewish believers that the Ten Commandments were no longer binding. Those who use these texts to try to make that point—that the moral law was done away with—really don’t want to make that point anyway; what they really want to say is that only the seventh-day Sabbath is gone—not the rest of the law. To interpret Romans 7:4, 5 as teaching that the fourth commandment has been abolished or superseded or replaced with Sunday is to give them a meaning that the words were never intended to have.”



(From J. P. Louw, *Semantische Strukturalisme van Romeine* Vol. I [Department of Greek, University of Pretoria, 1978], page 13)

Talking about Woman Ordination, the headship philosophy is in civil law on marriage in Paul’s day and the “married woman” is called in Greek literally: “the under-man woman”. “The under-man woman is bound in law to the man while living”. But the situation changes when he dies: she is free/absolved from the law of the man (verse 2). Paul had a beautiful window or chance here to change or discuss the role of woman ordination or reverse situation in society but used this word ὑπανδρὸς γυνή = “the under-man woman” nevertheless. “Therefore then, she will bear the name of adulteress if she become to another man, while the man is living”. This is the literal reading.



(From J. P. Louw, *Semantiese Strukturalisme van Romeine* Vol. I [Department of Greek, University of Pretoria, 1978], page 13)

Wherefore, my bretheren, also you were made dead to the law through the body of Christ in order to become to another, to Him Who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit to God.

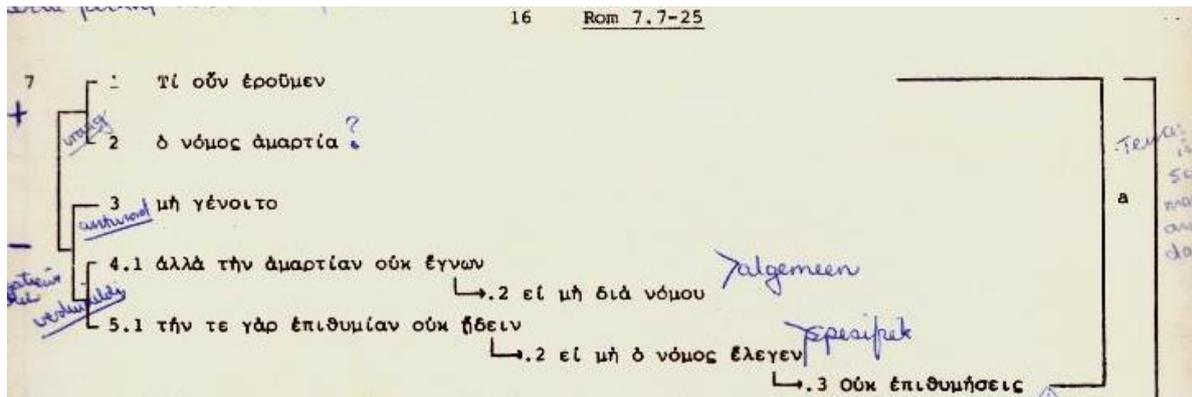
In verse 5 he says “the passions of sins, those through the law, were stirred-up, because when we were in the flesh, in our members in order to bear fruit unto death”.

Death is personified here and stand in the same position as one can see in the Greek where fruit is to God. Fruit to the Trinity stands in opposition to the father of death, Satan. It is thus Satan that is personified here. Fruit to God (verse 4 last part) is in opposition to fruit unto death (verse 5 last part). He is the one who is utilizing the members of the body of a person and memory of experience to stir-up the passions of sins, those through the law (habit, regular behavior, customary responses). Passions are not through the Ten Commandments. The word law is used in Romans in many different ways. The laws of Satan are habitual evil behavior. They are regulations for destruction of self or others together.

There are passions of sins but also passions of missionwork or passions for evangelism or other good passions. They are behavioral dedication and consecration to the glory of God and not to self-enhancement. But not so are the passions of sins (verse 5).

In verse 6 Paul continues his point: “but now we have been freed from the law, having died to that in which we were held, so that we can serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the antiquity of the letter”.

Our habits held us captive for Satan as death-designer worked in us the R&D for sinful passions that led to law-breaking behavior and constantly the ancient letter of the law was precluded to us by our critics since we were in the wrong, but when we converted, the newness of the Spirit broke those habits and set us free from death, from the habits, from Satan the father of death and sin. Habits are a prison to the soul of the person giving reign to his/her passions as guided by Satan (the death worker and sin inspirer).



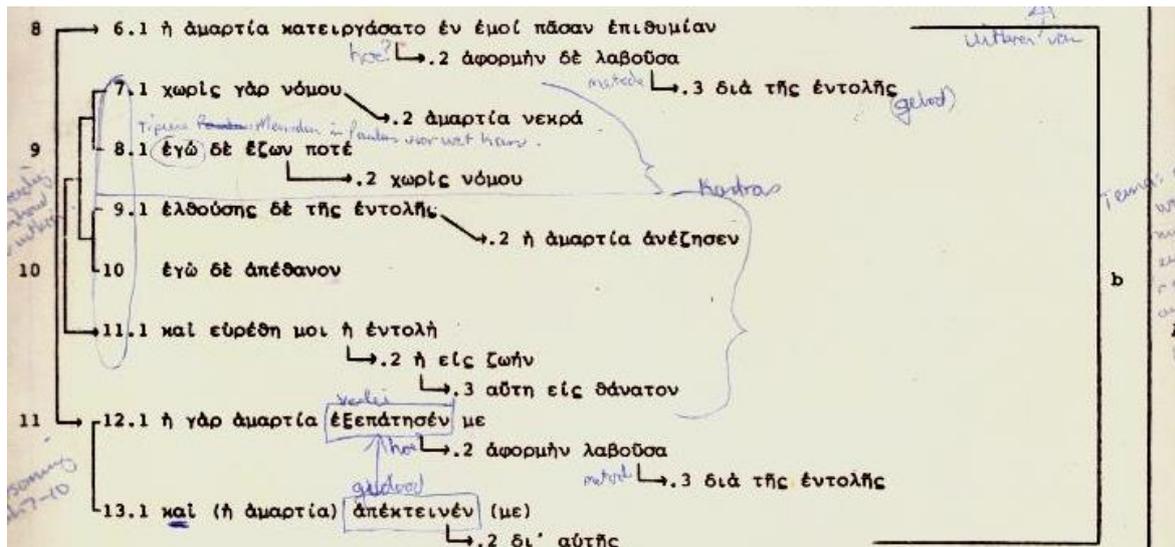
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“What shall we then say: Is the law sin?” (verse 7). The law Paul is speaking of here is not the same that which produced the passions. Habits and memory of habits stirred up by Satan produced the passions for sin and they came through habits = laws of sin. In contrast to Satan’s law of sin is the Law of God or Ten Commandments that are not sinful. God forbid if anyone says they are sin.

Paul wants these educated converted Pharisees in the Roman world, familiar with Greek and Latin philosophy, to get a proper picture of what true ontology is. The self needs to be analyzed through all this. The Great Controversy between Satan and Christ need to be kept in mind through all this. All the polarities and dichotomies can then be better put into proper place. “Is the law Sin [personified = Satan]” thus “Is the law satanic?” No definitely not.

But, I would not have known “the sin” [personified with definite article, thus Satan and his behaviors] if not through the law, for also the desire [personified = Satan with the definite article] I would not have known, if the law did not say: “you shall not desire”.

This is the ontology of Paul, that a Christian need to know that there is Satan, the Great Desire that through memories stir up passions and desires in a person, leading to behavioral responses that ends in the breaking of the Ten Commandments. Unless the person take strongly note of the Ten Commandments instructing the person not to act this way, the person will fall in temptation and adhere to the behavior expected by Satan/Desire. The agonizing role of Satan will become clearer as Paul unfolds the chapter. This is not about original sin in the DNA or born skewness or infirmities uncontrolled and fatally in the very chromosomes. This is Satan and the definite article will appear with the personified sin in the next verse to outline his Great Controversy role.



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The life of Paul is plagued by Satan who is the personified sin with a definite article here. “[Satan = the sin] worked in myself all desires” (verse 8). “But taking a starting point through the commandment.” The Ten Commandments is cast in a form that perceives the evil and tries to outline what should not be done. There are a couple of positive commands but they are not without indicating the problem aspect. In fact, the Ten Commandments is not written without keeping in mind the presence of Satan around. There are shadows to be avoided in each command. It is these shadows mentioned in the Ten Commandments that Satan makes his agenda of and then approach the individual like Paul to work all desires up. Instead of positively love your neighbor and love God, people follow the shadows and covet another’s possessions or the same. There are people who say, ‘don’t blame Satan for everything’. Yes, he should be blamed sins he and his agents are constantly involved before an act, during an act and after an act.

“For without the law sin is dead” (verse 8). Satan does not exist if there is not a Ten Commandments that outlines the love of God and love for each other with the specifics spelling out the opposite side of the coin, the shadows of non-compliance. It is possible that the Ten Commandments were originally in the shortened form as Jesus gave it before the Rebellion in Heaven of Satan but after that the identification of the fingerprints of sin had to be made. Without this Ten Commandments there are no fingerprints.

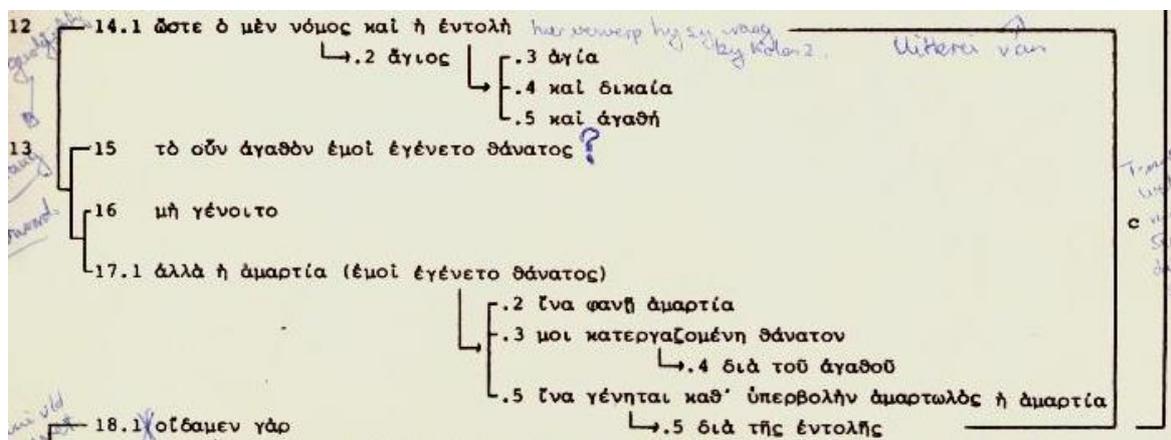
“For once I lived without the law” (verse 9). There was a time when Paul was living without the law a sinful life. It was not that the law did not exist. It was that his mental capacity had no room for acknowledgement for the law. Law-blind he was.

Conversion is when people realize their utter degeneration and this can only happen when their eyes are opened by the Spirit of God and they see the Ten Commandments spelling out the fingerprints of Satan and recognize that Satan is alive in them. “But when the law came, sin became alive”. Again it is the personified

sin with the definite article here. Satan became alive in him. In fact, Satan was working and alive in him all the time, he just lost his blindness and now could see clearly. What is alive is the switching on of the spotlights on Satan by way of the proper evaluation of the Ten Commandments. In the darkness of his life he could not see Satan working all the time in him but now Satan is all visible for him “sin [Satan] became alive”. “But I died” (verse 10). He had to die in conversion to become a new creature through the operation in an instant by the Holy Spirit. I was blind and now I see. To break ties with Satan the old man in us have to die with the links to Satan as well. If there is no conversion, this spiritual death is eternal death in the absolute. Destiny failed.

At that transformational point in his life, ontologically, Paul said: “And I found in myself: ‘The Commandment that is unto life, this is unto death’” (verse 10). Death is also the personified death, namely the father of death, the R&D of death, Satan. The shadows in the law became his life-cycle and agenda of living. His lifestyle. He was deceived. He could see the end thereof just as Korag saw in Psalm 73 the end of the wicked and came to his senses. What a sober moment.

“For the sin deceived me, taking a starting point through the commandment, and killed through it”. “Killed through it” is literal and may have reference to Saul killing the Christians which he saw as against Judaism and its laws. But he was deceived by Satan and that is his point here.



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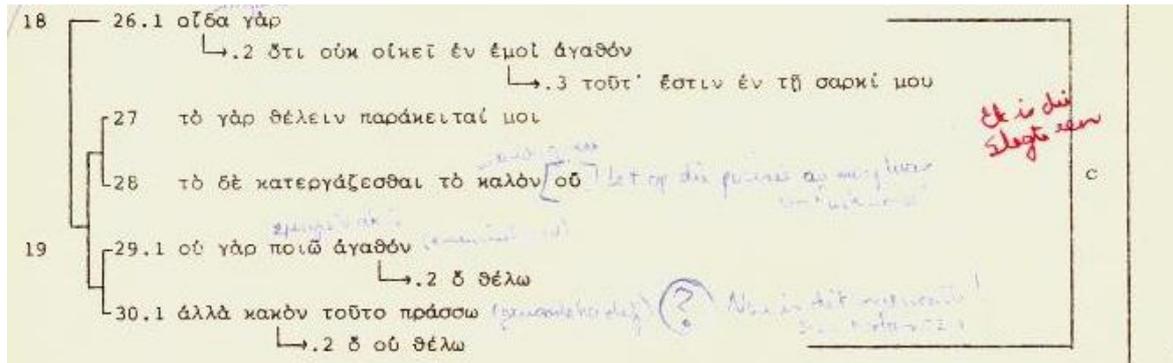
“So that the law is holy and the commandment is holy, and righteous and good” (verse 12). Is Paul contradicting himself here? Not at all. Without the law Satan cannot be identified and sin does not exist.

“The good in me then, did it become death?” Did God’s work in me become death to me? “God forbid.” (verse 13). Keep in mind that Luther has the view that we are good and bad 100% at the same time until the Second Coming. LaRondelle seemed to also hold this view in his book *Perfection*.

“But the sin [Satan = personified sin with definite article] in order to appear sin for

reflecting on his past and is in a narrative continuum then the now is processional within this continuum in the past when he was Saul and killing left right and center Christians.

At that point in time, that “now” it is no longer himself that id doing “but the sin [Satan as personified sin with a definite article] that is dwelling in him”. Satan in him was Saul’s problem with a full knowledge of the Law in his mind, as informed Pharisee. Filled with skew Judaism of his time yet killer.

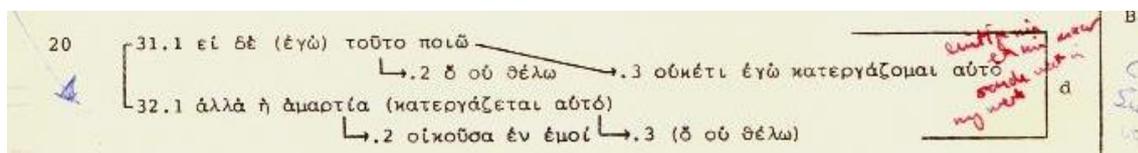


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“For I know that in myself dwells not good [Christ personified through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit] that is in my flesh” (verse 18). Again the question is: when is this present tense applicable? In the past narrative continuum processional step by step towards the solution in his life when he became Paul instead of Saul?

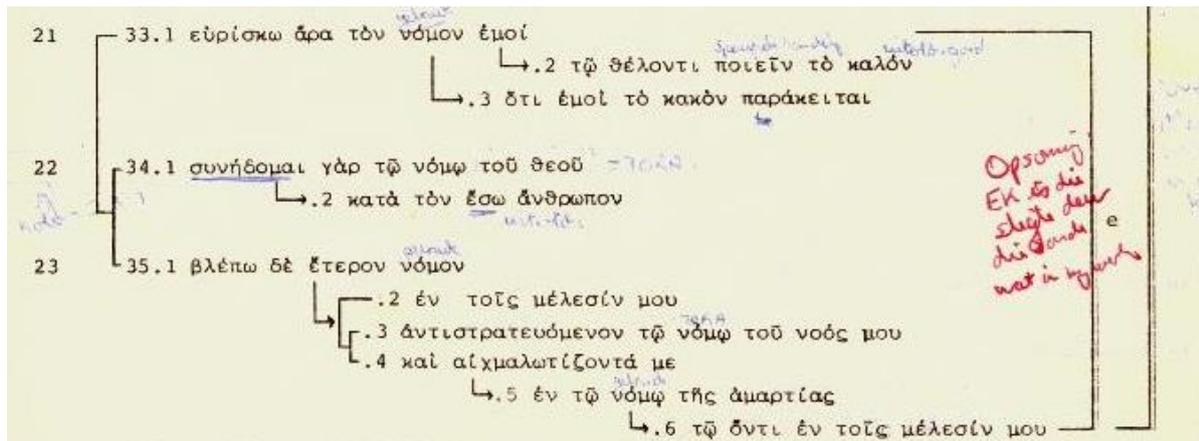
“For the willing is present with me but doing that which is good, not” (verse 18). As Saul in Judaism with the task of eradicating the Christians he had a good willingness but the actions itself was despicable.

“For not do I the good that I want but the bad that I do I do not want” (verse 19). This was a time in Saul’s life that he never want again over. One cannot live with this kind of dichotomy in life. This ontology of division within oneself having a dragging conscience all the time can breed psychopathy. It is unhealthy and Saul was heading for that until Christ came into his life.



(From J. P. Louw, *Semantiese Strukturalisme van Romeine* Vol. I [Department of Greek, University of Pretoria, 1978], page 13)

“But if I do this that I do not want it is no longer I, I myself, who did it for the sin [Satan the personified sin with the definite article] that dwells in me”.



(From J. P. Louw, *Semantiese Strukturalisme van Romeine* Vol. I [Department of Greek, University of Pretoria, 1978], page 13)

“Therefore I find [present tense within the narrative continuum of the past experience as a gnomic present, something regularly expected as a rule of life or habit, principle] the rule/paradigm in myself: to the will to do the good [the good of God’s leadings] that the evil [personified evil = Satan] is adjacent” (verse 21).

James Boise (1896: 71) in his Notes on the New Testament said that many scholars in his past accepted that it is not the Mosaic Law that is in mind here but a kind of “principle”.

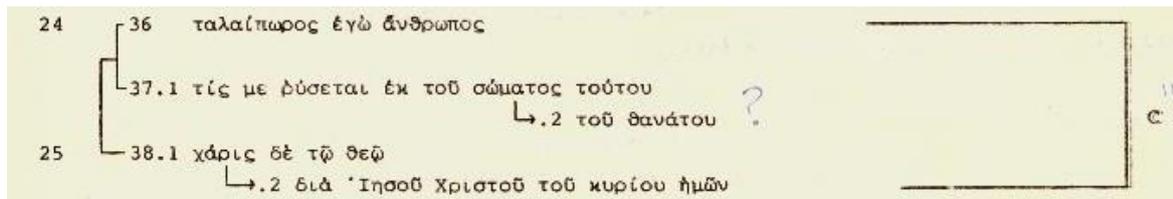
“For I delight to the law of God according to the inner man”. When he was in Judaism Saul delighted to the law of God according to his innermost feelings (verse 22).

“But I see another law/principle/rule/paradigm in my member [body] that is fighting against the law of my mind” (verse 23). The Great Controversy may help understand the sentences better. The Spirit pleading with the conscience not to do evil has a contestant or “another law” in his members, the flesh, that operates through the feelings and passions and memory of those experiences.

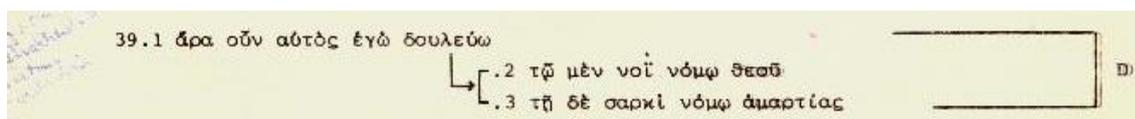
“And bringing me into captivity in the law of sin [Satan = personified sin with the definite article] which is in my members”.

Satan seeks all opportunities to work through our members of our body with memory and feelings and passions mixed to spell out another agenda for sin. For those who sin, letters of the law counts a lot, but for those who keep those letters and are not condemned by it, the spirit makes the law a joy to keep.

As Saul, he was misled and deceived by Satan in his eagerness to work for God with the mind and his knowledge of His law with his mind but he noticed that Satan was living in him to blind him of his own wrongs and with his body he carried out many wrong things that he hated, admittedly, but still carried on. When the conversion occurred, his eyes could see properly his own miserable condition and of course all these situations changed drastically for him.



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“I o wretched man” [of course Saul when before Damascus road experience]. “Who can save me out of this body of death”. Body of sin? No body of death since mortality is the issue here. Even if he has been saved from sin and Satan, he will still die because of the death-decree in the days of Adam. Who can save him from this mortality?

“But I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord”. When Christ came into his life at conversion, it made a heap of difference for him. Now he lives in the hope of resurrection but with his body he still serves the law of sin [Satan and his mortality involvement permitted by God’s death decree because of Adam’s sin to prevent sin existing into eternity].

“This therefore then I serve, on the one hand the law of God with the mind but on the other hand with my flesh sin” (verse 25).

In the 2017 Sabbath School Quarterly on Romans page 70 is this citation from Luther: “In 7:25 the Apostle writes: ‘With the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.’ This is the clearest passage of all, and from it we learn that one and the same (*believing*) person serves at the same time the Law of God and the Law of sin. *He is at the same time justified and yet a sinner (simul iustus est et peccat)*; for he does not say: ‘My mind serves the Law of God’; nor does he say: ‘My flesh serves the Law of sin’; but he says: ‘I myself.’ That is, the whole man, one and the same person, is in this twofold servitude. For this reason he thanks God that he serves the Law of God and he pleads for mercy for serving the Law of sin. But no one can say of a carnal (*unconverted*) person that he serves the Law of God. The Apostle means to say: You see, it is just so as I said before: The saints (*believers*) are at the same time sinners while they are righteous. They are righteous, because they believe in Christ, whose righteousness covers them and is imputed to them. But they are sinners, inasmuch as they do not fulfill the Law, and still have sinful lusts. They are like sick people who are being treated by a physician. They are really sick, but hope and are beginning to get, or be made, well. They are about to regain their health. Such patients would suffer the greatest harm by arrogantly claiming to be well, for they would suffer a relapse that is worse (*than their first illness*).” —Martin Luther,

Commentary on Romans, pp. 114, 115.

Ellen White is also cited on the same page:

“There is no safety nor repose nor justification in transgression of the law. Man cannot hope to stand innocent before God, and at peace with Him through the merits of Christ, while he continues in sin.” — Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 213. Ellen White did not agree with Luther in this statement.

Luther’s conclusion is based on a wrong analysis of this verse. The semantics of “law of sin” is wrapped-up with the last part of the previous verse 24: “body of death”. It is the mortality agony that Paul is referring to, not peccatum originale or original sin or sinful nature or sins in the faithful believer.

A better analysis is: simul iustus et mortalia. Or simul iustus et transformation. The same time sinner and saint is for Paul unthinkable.

The “law of sin” is for Nicolas de Lyra in the 13th century: “sequedo carnis inclinationem” = “following carnal inclinations” (column 100).

“It is Augustine who gave us the Reformation.’ So wrote B. B. Warfield in his assessment of the influence of Augustine on church history. It is not only that Luther was an Augustinian monk, or that Calvin quoted Augustine more than any other theologian that provoked Warfield's remark. Rather, it was that the Reformation witnessed the ultimate triumph of Augustine's doctrine of grace over the legacy of the Pelagian view of man.” (R. C. Sproul, “Augustine and Pelagius” Online accessed on 25th of November 2017 at <https://www.monergism.com/augustine-and-pelagius>).

One of the most insightful paragraphs of LaRondelle is in his book *Perfection* at page 320 at footnote 430 citing from R. Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, ET, 1953, page 39: “The Augustinian and scholastic teaching of justification which Luther opposes in the writing against Latomus permits grace to be a new nature in man, so that man is gradually changed to a new man or lifted up from the natural level to the supernatural. Righteousness in this manner becomes a ‘formal justice’. Perhaps it can be stated crudely that in the scholastic teaching grace results in a gradual improvement of the old man until the insensibly has become a new manMan thus gradually becomes more and more righteous. Grace gradually substitutes the new nature more and more for the old sinful self.” Then LaRondelle commented by himself saying: “Luther fundamentally rejected this ontological-anthropological concept of Scholastic justification by his religious-theological statement of *simul iustus et peccator* which over against the traditional partly righteous-partly sinful idea placed the concept of the Christian as being simultaneously fully righteous and fully sinful. This implied the radical idea of *semper iustificandus*: the Christian needs to be justified daily anew. This means a continual total justification. Sinful nature itself, to Luther, never enters on a process of healing or improvement. The old man remains sinful. Luther’s teaching is characterized by a deepening sin-consciousness and a radical self-condemnation which destroys all thoughts about a gradual transition to holiness or a slow process of becoming perfect. To Luther, as well as Calvin, man does not gradually become more and more righteous inherently. Progress in

sanctification rather meant progress in true repentance and deeper trust in Christ's righteousness. In this light Heick's evaluation becomes understandable: 'Wesleyanism may be called a Protestant version of Franciscan-Jesuit theology.'

Luther would be correct if he interpreted Romans 7:25 correctly but he did not since it is not talking about sins or sinful nature but mortality as the last part of verse 24 indicates. Thus, although man do need daily a consecration to God to keep the relationship continual, it is not correct to lament about sins if there is no knowledge of any known behavior, acts or habits contrary to the Ten Commandments. When people say "but your personality may hurt other people" what about the role of the Holy Spirit to make straight what is skew for the onlooker or listener? Leave these matters in the hands of the Guide into the full truth. The originator of a good Christian life is only one element in the Holy Spirit involvement but He is also involved with the receptors taking note of this life. Any imperfection the Holy Spirit can perfected. That is what the Holy Spirit is doing with our prayers as Paul is explaining in Romans 8.

It is also perhaps not correct for Luther to hold the doctrine of *semper iustificandus* or the Christian need to daily be justified. What is needed daily is consecration. "Consecrate yourself daily to the Lord" said Ellen White in one of her writings. Thus, what is needed daily is rather *semper consecrandus*.