THE RHETORIC OF RIGHTEOUSNESS: AN OVERVIEW OF PAUL’S ARGUMENT IN ROMANS 5-8

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INTRODUCTION

It has long been recognized that Rom 5-8 constitutes Paul’s vision of new life in Christ within the larger context of his argumentation in the epistle. Studies on chs. 5-8, however, often focus on quite narrowly defined exegetical and theological questions, such as the Adam-Christ parallel and its implications for the doctrines of original sin and alleged universalism in ch. 5, Paul’s sacramentalism in connection with baptism in ch. 6, Paul’s view of the Law and the identification of the “I” in ch. 7, or the cultural significance of the metaphor of adoption and Paul’s view of divine determinism in ch. 8.

The present paper will address Rom 5-8 from the broader perspective of a rhetorical overview of the section, for reasons of space avoiding the tempting and tantalizing exegetical issues of the section, in order to illustrate how Paul structures his argumentation concerning new life in Christ. Such an analysis will show that the whole section consistently argues for a view of the new life in Christ where the believer is decisively freed from the oppressive effects of both the Law and sin in order to live a life of righteousness through the empowering presence of the Spirit. Far from presenting a view that the Christian life is a tension between living righteously (chs. 6, 8) and combating the power and presence of sin (ch. 7), the whole section consists of a line of rhetorical argumentation that depicts the Christian life as one lived toward righteousness.

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SCHEMATIC OVERVIEW OF ROMANS 5-8

The following schematic presentation of Rom 5-8 will reveal Paul’s strategy of argumentation for the section.

Rom 5:1-11 New Relationship with God—Reconciliation with God Effected through God’s Love
   Rom 5:12-21: Contrast of Two Humanities—Adam and Christ
   Rom 6:1-7:6: Contrasts of Exclusive Identification—Baptism, Slavery, and Marriage
   Rom 7:7-8:27: Contrast of Spheres of Existence—Law and Spirit

The heart of the argument in this section consists of a series of contrasts between the former state of those who have come to believe in Christ and the new life they now live in Christ and the Spirit. These contrasts are bracketed by an inclusio consisting of 5:1-11, in which the new life is seen as predicated on the radically renewed relationship brought about by faith in Christ, and 8:28-39, in which the new life of the believer in Christ is secured in the immeasurable love of God as shown forth in Christ. The net effect of this inclusio is the establishment of the basis upon and framework within which this new life in Christ, as depicted in the intervening series of contrasts with the old pattern of life, is made effective in the life of the one who has faith in Christ.

The series of contrasts that makes up the bulk of the argumentation in this section (5:12-8:27) depicts the Christian life in terms that constitute a fundamental break of the new order of God’s dealings with humanity, represented by Christ and consisting of life, righteousness, and Spirit, from the old order of things, represented by Adam and consisting of death, sin, and Law. These contrasts view this break from slightly different angles, drawing on different images to illustrate how radically other is the new life in Christ from life without Christ. In 5:12-21, Paul differentiates between two humanities. The “first” humanity, characterized by sin and death—and incidentally connected with Law—is identified corporately and representatively with Adam; the “second” humanity, characterized by righteousness and life, is identified corporately and representatively with Christ, of whom Adam is a “type.” This depiction of “two humanities” sets the boundaries for the subsequent contrasts in the section. In 6:1-7:6, Paul draws on three images—baptism, slavery, and marriage—to illustrate that the two humanities described in the previous passage operate in mutually exclusive realities. The focus here contrasts the constricting power of sin and Law in the old order and the liberating power of righteousness and Christ in the new order. In 7:7-8:27, the most extended contrast of the section, Paul speaks in experiential and salvation-historical categories to differentiate between life lived in radically opposed spheres of existence—Law and Spirit.

The rest of this paper will tease out the broad contours of Paul’s argumentation as put forth in this series of contrasts. The paper will then place the argument embodied in these contrasts within the context of the aforementioned inclusio.
Romans 5:12-21: Contrast of Two Humanities

Several exegetical and theological questions arise within this rather oddly constructed passage. Protestant reflection has often focused on the manner in which so-called original sin became endemic in humanity through Adam’s disobedience, while even recently this passage is one court of appeal for renewed advocacy of inclusive or universal doctrines of salvation. While such questions are perhaps validly raised by Paul’s discussion, it is quite likely that, in the context of chs. 5-8, the discussion itself plays a different role.

At the outset Paul is comparing, in salvation-historical and corporate categories, the representative effects of Adam and Christ upon subsequent generations of human beings. Paul’s point of departure for this discussion is Adam, through whose transgression sin came into being, and through sin, death (v. 12), resulting in the condemnation of many (v. 18). Because of the sin of the one, Adam, sin and death exercise powerful dominion over all future humanity (v. 17), making all sinners (v. 19).

In contrast to the pervasive effect of sin and death injected into history through the representative figure of Adam, Paul introduces the representative figure of Christ. Whereas Adam brought sin and death, Christ brought to humanity the grace of God, and through this grace, the free gift of righteousness (v. 15), leading to eternal life for many (vv. 18, 21). But for Paul this is not simply a case of Christ being the equal and opposite reaction to Adam’s action. Rather, through the use of a series of qal wahomer, or “lesser to greater,” arguments, Paul indicates that the representative effect of Christ is “much more” effective for those who have been reconciled to God through Christ (cf. 5:1-11) than is the representative effect of Adam. “Much more” effective is the free gift of Christ than the transgression of Adam (v. 15); “much more” does the grace of God and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion than does death (v. 17); “much more” does grace abound over sin (v. 20).

In v. 20 Paul makes a somewhat surprising yet crucial connection, one that will play prominently in his developing discussion in chs. 5-8. He introduces Law into the dynamic of the Adam-Christ contrast. However, he brings Law into connection with the effect of sin on humanity. Despite the fact that sin existed from the time of Adam, before the giving of the Law to Moses (vv. 13-14), the effect of the Law, once introduced, was to multiply trespasses (v. 20). The importance of this move cannot be overstated: Law, rather than being instrumental in justifying human beings, is brought into connection with the humanity represented by Adam and is thus depicted in bold contrast with the humanity represented by Christ. This perspective is consonant with Paul’s argumentation concerning the Law in chs. 2-4 and will be elaborated upon further in ch. 7.

Paul’s argument in 5:12-21 sets the stage for his subsequent argumentation in 6:1-8:27. By way of comparison he establishes Adam and Christ analogous in terms of function—each represents of a category of humanity. But by way of contrast Paul also establishes Adam and Christ dichotomous in terms of the essence of their respective representations of humanity—Adam is characterized by sin, death, and Law, whereas Christ is characterized by righteousness, life, and grace. Paul is basically stating a form of the “there are two kinds of people in the world” argument, one represented by Adam and one represented by Christ. With ch. 6, Paul develops several images that
further elaborate the implications of what it means for his readers to be identified with the humanity represented by Christ.

**Romans 6:1-7:6: Contrasts of Exclusive Identification**

This section consists of three images that develop the notion that those identified with the new humanity of Christ must show forth lives that are consonant with their status as participants in this new humanity. The section breaks nicely into three subsections: the image of baptism (6:1-14); the image of slavery (6:15-23); and the image of marriage (7:1-6). One common thread of these images is the idea that one can only be identified with one element of the pairs of realities depicted in these images. Another common feature of these images is that they are introduced and developed in response to a question posed at the beginning of each section. Whether these questions largely continue the rhetorical use of diatribe frequently employed in chs. 1-4, are questions actually raised within the Roman churches, or are salient issues logically suggested by 5.12-21, their function is clearly evident: they set the stage for Paul to depict with vivid imagery the exclusive demands of new life in Christ in contrast to the mode of existence connected with the former life, life in Adam.

*Romans 6:1-14: The Exclusive Image of Baptism*

In 6:1, Paul raises a question that is connected to his assertion in the previous section that where sin abounds because of Adam, “much more” does grace abound because of Christ (5:20). Paul asks, “Should we persist in sin in order that grace might increase?” In response to this question, Paul appeals to the experience of baptism. The power in the employment of this image, however, does not lie in an appeal to the sacrament itself, but rather in the connection that Paul is able to make through the image: the baptism into the death and resurrection of Christ. Whatever sacramental considerations may be present in Paul’s use of the image, the rhetorical function of the image is clearly to connect, through the use of participatory language, the experience of the believer with the experience of the crucified and raised Messiah.

For Paul, the image of baptism functions as a line of demarcation between the old life, characterized repeatedly in this passage by sin, death, and Law, and the new life, largely characterized by freedom from the dominion of sin and death. Such a line of demarcation is established through the use of participatory language, the oft-observed prevalence of “with Christ” language in this section. Through baptism, the believer is connected “with” the death of Christ, which is viewed by Paul in this context as death to sin; through baptism, the believer is connected “with” the resurrection of Christ, which is viewed by Paul in this context as rising into a new mode of life (v 10). Baptism for Paul is understood to effect entrance into the new humanity of Christ through death to the old self, the “body of sin” (v. 6), the pattern of life connected with Adam. In the new humanity, the dominion of sin is broken, and participants in the new humanity are to consider themselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ (v. 11). The death signified in baptism is that which signifies that the believer is freed from sin (v. 7).

Given this state of things for those in Christ, Paul is able to put forth the parnesis of vv 12-14. The believer is not to let sin have place in the experience of new life. It
is noteworthy that Paul has yet to reveal the operative principle through which this new life is made possible; that will be made explicit in his discussion of the Spirit in 8:1–27. However, Paul’s implication is clear—it is within the scope of new life in Christ to live a life focused on righteousness free from the enslaving power of sin. Several commentators have argued that Paul’s language should be tempered in light of the obvious reality that believers live in an overlap of ages in which the ultimate expression of this freedom from sin is available only in the eschatological gift of eternal life in the last day.4 While this is certainly true in a salvation-historical sense, it misses Paul’s point in a rhetorical sense. Paul is arguing for a transference from one humanity to another. And these humanities are characterized by diametrically opposed modes of existence. Paul’s strategy of argumentation through contrast demonstrates the exclusive claims of the new life in Christ as opposed to the old life in Adam. Thus the issue is not primarily one of coping with the tension of overlapping ages, but rather of actualizing new life in Christ despite the overlap of ages. Paul’s paranesis indicates the viability of being so focused unto righteousness even in the present overlap of ages.5 As Engberg-Pedersen has stated, death to sin has become the “locus of normativity” for believers.6

Romans 6:15-23. The Exclusive Image of Slavery

With v. 15, Paul introduces a shift in imagery through a slightly varied form of the question posed in v. 1: “Should we sin because we are not under Law but under grace?” The precise form of this question is shaped by Paul’s contrast of Law and grace in v. 14. The change should not cause too much concern given that Law, like sin, is connected with the old order of life in Adam. Indeed, the issue of Law is not pursued again until ch. 7, the issue in the present passage is still a contrast between life in Adam and life in Christ, but this time pursued through the image of slavery.

The issue of exclusivity is more plainly apparent with this image than it was in the image of baptism. Paul’s basic argument is that one is a slave to the master to whom one presents oneself. In v. 16 Paul injects the contention that one can only be a slave to one master at a time, in the present context either to sin or to righteousness. This “either/or” presentation constitutes the sense of exclusivity in the image. One is either a slave of sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness, resulting in sanctification and eternal life (vv. 16, 22).

Believers are characterized as those who were formerly slaves of sin but who now, through obedience originating from the heart, have been freed from that slavery to become slaves of righteousness (vv. 17–18). Formerly they were “free” from righteousness due to their enslavement to sin (v. 20). But now the freedom gained from slavery to sin occurs only to allow believers to become enslaved to righteousness. Slavery is the reality; the only thing that remains is the identification of the master. Those in Christ have been given the advantage of sanctification, at the very least to be considered as becoming separated unto God, and they are destined for eternal life (v. 22). This destiny is contrasted with that of those who are enslaved to sin—the recompense of death (v. 23).

Paul again picks up a paranetic tone in the use of this image. Just as those now in Christ once presented themselves to sin to become enslaved to it, so now they must
present themselves as slaves to righteousness for sanctification (v. 19). While there is present in this passage an eye toward eschatological life, the thrust of the passage is aimed at living in the freedom from sin granted in Christ in the present age.

**Romans 7 1-6: The Exclusive Image of Marriage**

With 7:1 Paul enters into his third image of exclusive identification with a somewhat more convoluted question that draws upon his audience’s knowledge of the Law to argue that the Law is binding during a person’s lifetime. Paul then proceeds in vv. 2-3 to introduce the image of marriage for the purpose of showing that, according to the Law, a woman is bound to her husband only so long as he lives. If he dies, she is free according to the Law to take another husband. If, however, she takes another husband while her first husband is still alive, she commits adultery. This matter of adultery is crucial to Paul’s argument of exclusivity in this passage.

In vv. 4-6 Paul makes a somewhat surprising connection between this image of marriage and new life in Christ. Paul argues that believers have died to the Law through the body of Christ. The purpose for this is so that they may belong to another, namely Christ. Through the death of Christ, believers have in turn died to the hold of Law over them. They are no longer bound to this first “husband,” the Law, but they are now freed from that husband to take another husband, Christ, on the basis of their participation in the death of Christ. Life in the “flesh” is characterized by sin aroused by the Law working toward death, but now believers, having died to that enslaving Law, are raised up with Christ to bear fruit toward God. This notion is quite similar to the argument of the image of baptism in ch. 6. Moreover, the net effect of this line of argumentation is that life under Law and life in Christ are incompatible with each other. The image of marriage is powerful in this respect. For a believer to be raised into new life in Christ while still living under the Law, which is connected with life in Adam, is in effect an adulterous pattern of life. Lives in these two humanities are incompatible. This strengthens the sense that life lived apart from Adam and fully unto Christ is, in Paul’s view, the pattern of life required of Christians.

**Summary: The Images of Exclusive Identification**

These three images show that the newness of life in Christ is diametrically opposed to the old pattern of life in Adam. The contrast of the two humanities described in 5:12-21 is reinforced with contrasts describing exclusive participation in these humanities in 6:1-7:6. One rather extensive contrast remains in this section, the contrast between two spheres of existence described in 7:7-8:27—Law and Spirit. That Paul continues his strategy of contrasting arguments is suggested in 7:6, where Paul contrasts the enslavement of the old written code to new life in the Spirit. To this contrast we now turn our attention.

**Romans 7:7-8:27: Contrast of Spheres of Existence**

The passage that causes interpreters to question whether Paul presents a consistent picture of the Christian life as one lived unto radical newness is Rom 7 7-25.
Particularly through the influence of Luther, many in the Protestant traditions have seen this passage to suggest that, in some sense, Paul understands the Christian life as lived in a tension between the ideal of newness described in chs. 6 and 8 and the continuing influence of sin over the believer described in ch. 7. Many in Protestant traditions, following the cautions put forth in Stendahl’s seminal essay, as well as interpreters in the Roman Catholic tradition, see Paul describing not the Christian experience in 7:7-25, but rather the experience of humanity outside of Christ and under Law, whether it be of Adam, Israel, Paul himself, or some combination of these. What most treatments of this section have in common is an attempt to resolve the matter of Paul’s meaning through exegetical and theological examination of the various details in the passage. Of all the enticing questions that might capture an interpreter’s attention, only one is germane to this paper: the identification of those who live in the reality described in 7.7-25. And given that many previous exegetical and theological examinations have produced a multiplicity of interpretive conclusions, perhaps the answer to our question may be found in the pattern of argumentation adopted by Paul in this section.

It appears that Paul is shaping the discussion of 7:7-8:27 in the form of argumentation characteristic of 5:12-7:6: contrasting pictures of life in the two humanities represented by Adam and Christ. As noted above, 7:6 has set the stage for viewing 7:7-8:27 as a contrast between Law and Spirit. Clearly the thematic concerns of the passage break down nicely into discussions on the role of Law (7.7-25) and the role of Spirit (8:1-27) in God’s dealings with humanity. And 8:1 makes the transition into a new point of view by introducing the notion that those “in Christ,” or the new humanity, are not subject to the condemnation that has been described in 7.7-25. So it appears that structurally the section is developed as contrasting pictures of spheres of existence characterized by Law and Spirit. It now remains to examine briefly the substance of this contrast.

Romans 7.7-25 breaks neatly into two subsections: vv. 7-13 and vv. 14-25. In the former section Paul uses two rhetorical questions to frame a discussion concerning the place of Law in the dynamic of human sin, apparently in response to intimations concerning the connection of Law to the old order of Adam in 5 12-7:6. In the section, Paul uses these questions in order to answer emphatically that in essence, the Law is holy and just (v. 12), intended to bring life (v. 10). However, sin, which had lain dormant and unknown prior to the giving of Law (vv. 7, 8), co-opted Law in order to revive sin and make it known, thus producing death (vv. 10-11). Law in itself is thus vindicated by Paul, but nevertheless, Law is still connected with the old order of Adam through its complicity in the ravages of sin and death.

In vv. 14-25, the tone shifts to a heightened sense of emotion in an impassioned description of the internal conflict of one who recognizes the Law to be spiritual (v. 14) and a delight to the mind (v. 22) but who nevertheless sees the devastating effects of sin at work in the “flesh” (v. 18) and “members” (v. 23). Moreover, there is also a shift in verb tenses in this section, from the heavy use of aorist tenses in vv. 7-13 to the predominance of present tense verbs in vv. 14-25. This shift in tense adds vividness to the pathos of the passage as well. Paul may very well be employing a
literary topos here, the effect of which may be to heighten the emotional effect of the passage. Given the heightened emotion of the passage, the question remains, of whom is Paul speaking here? Perhaps the most vivid clue is found in v. 25a: “But thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” This statement is given in response to Paul’s question in v. 24, in which the “I” laments his predicament and seeks rescue. Jesus Christ is identified as the antidote to the life lived under the Law, which is characterized as in subjection to sin (v. 25b). The prescription of Jesus Christ, then, is picked up in 8:1 and is characterized as a sphere in which there is no condemnation. Here we see further evidence of Paul’s strategy of argumentation in contrasting modes of life. The conflict so vividly described in 7:7-25, especially in vv. 14-25, is remedied in Christ. This indicates that the conflict, precipitated by sin’s co-opting of Law leading unto futility in life and ultimately leading to death, belongs to the humanity of Adam. The humanity of Christ, which is developed in 8:1-27 in contrast to that in Adam, is characterized by Spirit, righteousness, and ultimately life.

Chapter eight robustly describes life in the new humanity of Christ as lived in the sphere of the Spirit. In the section Paul uses the term pneuma nineteen times, alternating between independent use of the term in reference to the Holy Spirit and identification of the Spirit as the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. Moreover, the Spirit is implicated in the new life in Christ in a variety of ways, such as: the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (v. 2), walk according to the Spirit (v. 4), live according to the Spirit (v. 5), mind set on the things of the Spirit (v. 5), in the Spirit (v. 9), have the Spirit of Christ (v. 9), the Spirit in you (v. 11), by the Spirit put to death the deeds of the body (v. 13), led by the Spirit (v. 14), the Spirit bearing witness with our spirits (v. 16), have the firstfruits of the Spirit (v. 23), the Spirit helps our weakness (v. 26), and the Spirit intercedes (vv. 26, 27).

The Spirit is also depicted, via a chiasm, as the present experience of eschatological life:

8:1-17: present orientation of the Spirit: present victory over sin and present sonship through the Spirit;
8:18-25: future orientation of the Spirit: the Spirit as the guarantor of the future glory of the sons of God;
8:26-27: present

That Rom 8:1-17 deals with the present experience of believers seems beyond question. In vv. 1-11 Paul describes those who participate in Christ’s redeeming work as those who “walk” after the way of the Spirit, which in turn is contrasted with “walking” according to the flesh. The language is thoroughly focused on the experience of believers whose present existence is defined by the Spirit (cf. v. 9). Nevertheless, there is a “hook” from this passage that links the present experience of believers to the promise of future glory as described in the central section of the chiasm. Those in whom the Spirit now dwells will be raised to life just as Christ himself was so raised (vv. 10-11). In vv. 12-17 the focus shifts to the present status of those in whom the Spirit dwells as the adopted sons of God. By this Spirit believers are presently enabled to cry, “Abba! Father!” (v. 15). Again, there is a “hook” from
this description of present sonship to the promise of future glory. First, our present adoption as sons anticipates the eschatological adoption described in the central section of the chiasm as “the redemption of our bodies” (v. 23). Second, the promise of future glory in v. 17 anticipates the discussion of future glory that is the focus of the central section of the chiasm. The point of the apocalyptically crafted central section of the chiasm is that those described in vv. 1-17 have the first fruits of the Spirit as the guarantee of future glory. That the focus is on the future is seen in the motif of “waiting” with “eager longing for the revelation of the sons of God” (v. 19), for “adoption, the redemption of our bodies” (v. 23), with patience (v. 25). Moreover, there is a “hook” from this central section to the third section of the chiasm, which focuses again on the present experience of the Spirit, this time in the context of prayer. In our “groaning” as we await future glory (vv. 22, 23), the Spirit helps us to pray as we should (vv. 26-27). The net result of this tightly interconnected chiastic structure is perhaps best summarized in Wright’s words: “what God did decisively in Jesus the Messiah is now to be implemented through the Spirit.” The blessings of life in the eschaton have a defining effect on the present experience of believers.

It is also in 8:1-27 that Paul brings about closure to his conception of the Law in this contrasting framework. God effectively dealt with the problem of sin, especially the inability of the Law to produce the results it requires, through the sacrifice of Christ and the powerful direction of the indwelling Spirit (vv. 2-8). The contrast with 7:7-25 could not be more stark. Those of the old humanity of Adam, who dwell in the sphere of Law, cannot fulfill the requirements of the life demanded in the Law. Those of the new humanity of Christ, who dwell in the sphere of Spirit, have been given the power to fulfill the righteous requirements of the Law and thus to fulfill God’s purpose in giving the Law.

Rhetorical, structural, and substantial clues all seem to indicate that 7:7-8:27 continues in the contrastive strategy of Paul’s argumentation begun with 5:12. Whatever the precise identification of the “I” of 7:7-25, it is clear that conceptually the “I” belongs to the old humanity of Adam, bound with sin, death, and Law. This is dramatically contrasted with Paul’s characterization of the new life in Christ, in the Spirit, as described in 8:1-27. Thus the whole of 5:12-8:27 constitutes a series of contrasts that decisively differentiate between life apart from Christ and the new life in Christ.


The series of contrasts of 5:12-8:27 occurs within the framework of an inclusio consisting of 5:1-11 and 8:28-39. The common theme of these passages is the establishment of a radical expression of faith in total directedness to God. In the former passage, reconciliation with God is emphasized through the development of a progression in the life of those “justified by faith” (suffering, endurance, character, and hope, vv. 3-4) within the context of the love of God poured into the hearts of believers through the Spirit (v. 5). The matter of the love of God is again highlighted in vv. 6-11 through the effects wrought by Christ dying for us. Two “much more” arguments are developed that illustrate the more abounding results of Christ’s sacrifice over against the former state of believers (vv. 9, 10). In 8:28-39, the radical new
relationship with God is emphasized in the security of believers achieved through God’s plan for them (vv. 28-30), but more especially through the love of God (vv. 31-39). In exulting terms of praise Paul describes the love that God has for those who love God as that which secures believers in their relationship with God.

The effect of the inclusions for Paul’s depiction of new life in Christ is seen in the tone it sets for the intervening argumentation. If believers have a radical new relationship with God because they have been “justified by faith,” then it stands to reason that the resulting new life should bear the marks of this relationship. Paul emphasizes the radical nature of this new life by contrasting it with the state of their former lives. If the standard of new life appears much higher, that is only because the nature of the new relationship brings with it the resources to accomplish this. Paul can encourage his readers to pursue this new life actively because he is confident that it is attainable through the Holy Spirit given to believers.

CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to fulfill a modest aim: to demonstrate that the strategy of Paul’s argumentation in Rom 5-8 develops the idea that new life in Christ is characterized by a radical new relationship with God, saturated in divine love, that issues forth in a qualitatively new life that is characterized by victory over sin and directedness toward righteousness. Exegetical and theological discussions were largely absent from this discussion. The contention here is that a rhetorical overview helps to resolve some of the specific interpretive issues by appeal to the structure of Paul’s argument in the section. That there are formal and content parallels between Paul’s discussion of new life in Christ and John Wesley’s doctrine of Christian perfection is obvious. However, many treatments of Wesleyan perfection are often colored by the confessional and theological evolutions of the various strands of Wesleyan traditions. Perhaps this study has shown in some small way that a return to the biblical sources behind this teaching may help clarify what Wesley’s spiritual children mean when they speak of new life in Christ.6

NOTES

1. Wright sees the section as a distinct unit in the larger context of Paul’s development of the Exodus theme in chs. 3-8. Longenecker sees chs. 5-8 as the “spiritual gift” mentioned in 1:11, the unique substance of Paul’s gospel in comparison to the commonly shared beliefs of chs. 1-4. See N. T. Wright, “New Exodus, New Inheritance: The Narrative Structure of Romans 3-8,” in Romans and the People of God, eds. S. K. Soderlund and N. T. Wright (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 26-33; and R. Longenecker, “The Focus of Romans: The Central Role of 5:1-8:39 in the Argument of the Letter,” in Romans and the People of God, 49-69.

2. This discussion follows in the spirit of Wright’s approach to this section of the epistle in his commentary on Romans in the New Interpreter’s Bible, where he defends a broader examination of the section by urging readers to “try looking through the telescope the right way round,” or to “try looking at the forest, not just the trees.” See Wright, Inclusio (NIB 10; Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 510.

3. Wright (Romans, 510) and B. Byrne (Romans ISP; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1996l, 163) correctly see the role of God’s love in 5:1-11 (esp. vv. 6-10) and 8:31-39 in
framing the argument of the section. T. Engberg-Pedersen (*Paul and the Stoics* [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2000], 219-23) sees the concept of radical directedness toward God through reconciliation and sonship in 5:1-11 and 8:14-39, respectively, as framing the discussion of chs. 5-8. While Engberg-Pedersen has correctly recognized the effect that the *inclusio* has on the shape of the discussion in chs. 5-8, his delineation of the closing passage of the *inclusio* as consisting of 8:14-39 overlooks a chiastic construction concerning the role of the Spirit that proves vital in the argumentative structure of chs. 5-8. The function of this chiasm will be discussed below.


5. Engberg-Pedersen (*Paul and the Stoics*, 225-39) addresses the issue of the so-called “indicative and imperative” in Paul by noting that the indicative states the internal principle of Christian faith with the paraenesis aimed at achieving the consistency between internal disposition and external behavior, an approach that accords with ancient ethical traditions. Paul’s approach, according to Engberg-Pedersen, is to describe the state of Christian faith (indicative), to remind readers of the life of faith if the actual situation deviates from it, and then to command (imperative) in extreme situations (235-36).


7. Byrne (*Romans*, 213) sees 7:5-6 as setting up a contrast between 7:7-25 and 8:1-13. 7:5 describes life under the law, as depicted in 7:7-25, and 7:6 describes life in the Spirit, as depicted in 8:1-13. 7:7-25 and 8:1-13 function like a diptych, illumining each other through contrast. Our discussion agrees with Byrne’s analysis except that we see the discussion of life in the Spirit extended through 8:27.


11. Moo (Romans, 424) sees 7:7-25 as an excursus that breaks up a natural flow of thought between v. 6b and 8:1. The advantage of our approach is that it allows for 7:7-25 to be seen as an integral component of Paul’s argumentation without resort to relegating the passage to a parenthetical interjection into an otherwise coherent argument.


13. Dunn notes the prevalence of what he calls “Spirit speech” in 8:12-27. He differentiates
the speech described here from that described in 1 Cor. 12 and 14. In Rom 8:12-27, the focus is on Spirit enablement that permits believers to speak to or before God as epitomized in the cry, “Abba! Father!” See Dunn, “Spirit Speech: Reflections on Romans 8:12-27,” in Romans and the People of God, 82-91.

14. Wright, Romans, 510. Wright’s words were actually directed at the entirety of chs. 5-8, though they seem especially pertinent to 8:1-27.
