

**“Revisiting the Rhetoric of Romans 7”**  
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**Introduction**

Originally, I began investigating rhetorical strategy of first person for deliberative and epideictic rhetoric, thinking strategy differences would surface. The result was not as productive as I first had imagined. Further study did suggest that an analysis of Paul’s first person rhetoric in the context of the development of authorial ἔθος and πάθος in Romans would be helpful. This constitutes the first part of the paper.

I next apply the results of Part 1 to Paul’s authorial rhetoric in Romans 7 particularly. This second analysis includes investigation into Jewish lament rhetoric as the background for the highly emotionally-charged expressions in 7:24 and 9:1–5. Lament rhetoric ties the two passages together in revealing ways.

In the third and final part, I attempt to give a running summary of what I think Paul intends to say in Romans 7 without attempting to produce a detailed exegesis. This is meant to be suggestive of Paul’s constructed audience in Romans overall, which should have implications for important sections, such as chapters 12–15, that are hard to fit into typical rhetorical schema.

**Part 1: Paul’s Authorial Rhetoric in Romans—ἔθος and Πάθος**

Paul’s identification of the sender in Rom. 1:1–6 is extraordinary for its length and content and evidences a concern to establish his authorial ἔθος.<sup>2</sup> That the later

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<sup>2</sup> Aristotle’s discussion of persuasion through character (ἔθος) is not helpful. His categories of wisdom, virtue, and goodwill are too generalized and absent rhetorical examples (*On Rhetoric* 2.1.5). On

*exordium*<sup>3</sup> reveals that he has not established this church nor ever visited Rome<sup>4</sup> is only a partial explanation of this deliberation in presenting authorial ἔθος. That is, the carefully composed *prescript* evidences rhetorical purpose. No co-senders are mentioned, leaving the authorial ἔθος personally identified with Paul alone.<sup>5</sup>

### *The Authorial ἔθος—Jewish*

The authorial ἔθος developed in the *prescript* is Jewish to the core. Paul’s apostleship is consecrated to God’s gospel (ἀφορισμένος, 1:1). God’s gospel is pre-announced in Jewish scriptures (διὰ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ ἐν γραφαῖς ἀγίαις, 1:2). God’s gospel is about His Son, Jesus, who came as a son of David on Israel’s behalf (ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα, 1:3).<sup>6</sup> God’s gospel empowers messianic Israel<sup>7</sup> toward

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the other hand, I do find his comment on πάθος through ἔθος in which hearers are “led to feel emotion by the speech” resonates with what I find in Romans (*On Rhetoric* 1.2.5). Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*. Newly translated with Introduction, Notes, and Appendixes by George A. Kennedy (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>3</sup> Generally taken to be Rom. 1:8–15. Terms of species analysis in the style of classical Roman school rhetoric, epitomized by Quintilian, are used descriptively, not analytically, for point of reference. That is, I am not attempting to plug Romans into any particular species. Some breakdown, however, into large rhetorical units I find helpful, in as much as this macrostructure view helps emphasize those needs common to all persuasive speech including epistolary speech acts.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. 1:10; cf. 15:23.

<sup>5</sup> Most of Paul’s other *prescripts* denote multiple authorship (or association). Methodologically, this would complicate the rhetorical analysis attempted here. The only exceptions to multiple authorship (or association) are Ephesians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus. Of these, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus already are distinguished as the only letters ostensibly to individuals, which would seem to impact the rhetorical constraints. In any case, Ephesians, 1 Timothy, and 2 Timothy do show an expansion of the identification of the author, but simply with a designation of apostleship by the will of God, and for 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy, this expansion does not feature prominently in the letter. With Ephesians, Paul’s apostleship features in chapter 3, but only as a pragmatic παράδειγμα for the readers in chapter 4. Thus, of those letters featuring Paul alone, only Titus shows extensive development of the identification of the author. Even here, the expansion, outside of the phrase ἐκλεκτῶν θεοῦ, lacks any distinctly Jewish ἔθος, much less any thematic development. We conclude that the thematic development of Jewish ἔθος in the *prescript* of Romans is unique among the letters of Paul.

<sup>6</sup> I disagree with Hayes’s analysis that περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ does not go with the prior εὐαγγέλιον, which launches Hayes into the errant statement: “the letter to the Romans does not carry through this implied program of christological exegesis.” Richard B. Hayes, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 85. Hayes was attempting to establish an “ecclesiocentric hermeneutics” in Paul. Much more on target seems to me to be Wright’s argument that Χρῖστος in Paul has not leveled out to a title (e.g., form) but still retains the Jewish sense of “Messiah” (e.g., function = incorporative). N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), p. 41.

her eschatological destiny by the power of God’s Spirit (τοῦ ὀρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν, 1:4). God’s gospel inaugurates messianic Israel’s eschatological destiny to bring about the obedience of faith among gentiles (εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, 1:5), which includes gentiles in Rome (ἐν οἷς ἐστε καὶ ὑμεῖς κλητοὶ, 1:6).<sup>8</sup> Paul in his apostleship, then, is identified with Israel’s prophets, Israel’s scriptures, Israel’s messiah, and Israel’s destiny. This identification becomes explicit in Rom. 11:1. In that passage, Paul asked, Λέγω οὖν, μὴ ἀπόσατο ὁ θεὸς τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ; “I ask, therefore, has God cast off his people?” Paul emotionally responded, μὴ γένοιτο· καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ Ἰσραηλίτης εἰμί, ἐκ σπέρματος Ἀβραάμ, φυλῆς Βενιαμίν. “By no means! For even I am an Israelite, of the Abraham’s lineage, the tribe of Benjamin.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, while Paul’s letter is addressed inclusively to *all* “who are in Rome beloved of God, called as saints” (πᾶσιν τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Ῥώμῃ ἀγαπητοῖς θεοῦ, κλητοῖς ἀγίοις, 1:7), he has established a strong Jewish ἔθος as author.

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<sup>7</sup> Descriptive terminology to capture the theologically loaded emphasis in the creedal σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα of 1:2 when combined with the confessional focus of κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ in 1:7. As the creedal tradition of Rom. 1:3–4 makes clear, resurrection doctrine invests the category of Israel with eschatological nuance, hence, “messianic Israel.” In Romans, messianic Israel has as its logical counterpoint what could be labeled descriptively as Mosaic Israel, whose linguistic reference point by *synecdoche* is ἐργῶν νόμου and its variations. This sounds similar to Donaldson: “Paul’s Christ-Torah antithesis is rooted in a perception that Christ and Torah represent mutually exclusive boundary markers, rival ways of determining the community of salvation.” Terence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle’s Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), p. 172. However, I am not persuaded fully that these categories actually are configured by Paul as “mutually exclusive.” On the other hand, I understand how that exclusivity is foundational to Donaldson’s remapping.

<sup>8</sup> Nanos pointed to Rom. 1:6, 1:13, 11:13, and 15:15 as “quite clear” that Paul “was writing specifically to Christian gentiles in Rome,” but the presence of “Christian Jews and Jewish themes” have so monopolized attention that this “has led most if not all scholars to stop short of allowing this observation its full impact on the interpretation of Paul’s message.” Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul’s Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), pp. 78, 79. Even, however, in the first text Nanos cited, Rom. 1:6, the immediate context in the very next verse (πᾶσιν τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Ῥώμῃ, “to all who are in Rome”), indicates the situation rhetorically is much more nuanced than Nanos has noted.

<sup>9</sup> Of Rom. 11:1, Anderson acknowledged that here “Paul is able to use himself as an example of God’s selection of a remnant who are saved.” R. Dean Anderson Jr., *Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Paul: Revised Edition*, in *Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology*, 18, ed. Tj. Baarda, A. van der Kooij, and A. S. van der Woude (Leuven: Peeters Press, 1998), p. 237.

*The Authorial Έθος—Fluid and Corporate*

The *prescript* reveals an even more significant rhetorical observation beyond the nature of the authorial Έθος. The moment Paul’s apostleship touches on messianic Israel’s eschatological destiny to bring about the obedience of faith among the gentiles, *Paul’s authorial persona moves to first person plural: δι’ οὗ ἐλάβομεν χάριν καὶ ἀποστολὴν εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως ἐν πάσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν*. This shift in number from singular to plural we descriptively can refer to as the pluralizing function of the authorial Έθος. From this shift we infer two points.

First, we point out that Paul already has signaled as early as the *prescript* that he can move fluidly from singular to plural when he functions within the authorial Έθος of Romans. At first, this observation seems rather obvious and trite. Public discourse easily could default to a plural on the part of the speaker to draw in the audience. The second point, however, establishes the significance of the first.

Second, we point out that in this *prescript* Paul explicitly contextualizes this pluralizing function of the authorial Έθος and his apostleship in messianic-eschatological corporate terms. This connection is generated from Paul’s foundational sense of call. This call takes Paul’s “we” usage far beyond the superficialities of conventional public address. When Paul moves to first person plural within the authorial Έθος of the *prescript*, he demonstrates his thought functions within a corporate dimension of his call as apostle and his sense of identity with messianic Israel in her eschatological destiny among the gentiles.<sup>10</sup>

Further, the corporate identity of this *prescript* pluralizing function whenever the authorial voice is speaking does not shift throughout the argumentation in Romans 1–7. Paul’s “we,” that is, can be read consistently as Paul speaking as a (Jewish) apostle on

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<sup>10</sup> Paul’s “we” also tacitly recognizes that he is not the only one laboring in this work, and that his work among the gentiles must show concord in message and strategy with others contributing to this effort. Cf. Rom. 15:20–21.

behalf of messianic Israel moving toward her eschatological destiny to bring the obedience of faith among the gentiles.<sup>11</sup> A sample list of first person plural indicative verbs illustrates:<sup>12</sup>

- (1) 3:9—“are we any better off?”: ἐπερώτησις for messianic Israel vs. Mosaic Israel (3:1)
- (2) 3:19—“we know that whatever the Law says”: κεκριμένον of messianic Israel in the form of a παρομολογία (non-damaging concession)
- (3) 3:28—“we hold that a person is justified by faith”: κεκριμένον of messianic Israel
- (4) 3:31—“we uphold the Law”: ἀντίθεσις on behalf of messianic Israel
- (5) 4:1—“What are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh?”: παράδειγμα proleptic of messianic Israel prior to Mosaic Israel
- (6) 4:9—“We say, ‘Faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness.’”: αἰτιολογία series answered on behalf of messianic Israel.

This corporate function makes consistent sense of the pluralized authorial voice. This consistency is maintained all the way into chapter 7.

This authorial “we” is matched by a corresponding pluralized “you.” The second person plural in pronouns and verbs begins in Rom. 1:6 of the *prescript* and is used without shifting to the singular throughout the *exordium* into 1:15. From that point, the pluralized “you” form disappears until 6:3, from which point on a heavy and exclusive use begins again into 7:4. The singular form does not occur at all until 2:1, directly

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<sup>11</sup> Paul’s “we” also speaks on behalf of gentiles, *in as much as* gentiles are incorporated into messianic Israel. On this point (but not others), I find myself in agreement with Donaldson, p. 119.

<sup>12</sup> Robinson indicated that Paul’s “we” in Romans 1–8 “reflects Paul’s Jewishness,” but as a normalization of the individual believer’s experience. In contrast, we are arguing that the “we” function is more corporately confessional than individually paradigmatic. D. W. B. Robinson, “The Priesthood of Paul in the Gospel of Hope,” in *Reconciliation and Hope: New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology presented to L. L. Morris on His 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday*, Robert Banks, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 236.

related to a rhetorical *figure*: ὁ ἄνθρωπε πᾶς ὁ κρίνων. This dialogue partner accounts for many of the instances of the second person singular in chapters 2–3. After 4:18, second singular disappears completely until the quote from the Decalogue in 7:7, again a rhetorical *figure*. In conclusion, in Romans 1–7, the pluralized “you” consistently tracks parallel to the authorial “we.” That is, the author discloses the addressee in consistently corporate terms, and singular forms are clearly marked rhetorically as part of the argumentative method.

Only two instances interrupt the flow of this pluralizing rhetoric of the authorial voice from 5:1 to 7:6. Each interruption has clear rhetorical function. The first interruption is the first person *singular* in 6:19. Here Paul clarifies his own rhetoric (ἄνθρωπινον λέγω, “I am speaking in human terms”). The second interruption is an explicit rhetorical marker at 7:1: γινώσκουσιν γὰρ νόμον λαλῶ, “I am speaking to those who know the Law.” One could assume from Paul’s prior rhetoric that the personalizing address of “brothers” in 7:1 would be the same as the last reference in the *exordium* at 1:13; in other words, “brothers” in 7:1, without any qualification, would be heard as a generalized reference to corporate messianic Israel. This impression would be confirmed further by the consistent rhetorical context of the authorial first person plural in 5:1–6:23. Paul in 7:1, however, explicitly establishes a *Jewish* marker for the rhetoric to follow. He does this because his second analogy (7:1–6) is meant to be particularly applicable to the *Jewish* experience of messianic Israel.<sup>13</sup>

### *The Authorial Πάθος—Thematic*

In what functions as the *exordium* to Romans (1:8–15), Paul continues developing his ἔθος by appropriate means of πάθος. Using common religious and social markers,

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<sup>13</sup> We also should note that this distinctive Jewish marker at 7:1 does not change throughout the rest of the chapter. In fact, such an *explicit* marker does not occur again in the authorial voice until 11:13, Ὑμῖν δὲ λέγω τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, “I am speaking to you gentiles.”

Paul also includes standard *figure*, such as the personalizing address for the reader/hearers in the ἀδελφοί in 1:13.<sup>14</sup> In this development, one obvious linguistic marker of authorial ἔθος is the dominance of first person singular in 1:8–15. Of course, this is to be expected.

What is not expected, however, is how Paul smoothly *continues* this first person singular as he shifts out of the *exordium* into the *transitio* in 1:16–17, which functions as the theme statement. While the great majority of commentators find in 1:16–17 Paul’s theme statement for the letter, the atypical rhetoric of Paul’s theme statement often is overlooked. Two observations are pertinent. One involves content, the other context.

First, in terms of content, Paul’s theme statement shows two rhetorical features that are particularly striking. One feature is the continued use of first person singular into the *transitio*, which inevitably draws with it the authorial ἔθος and πάθος as an *integral part of the theme statement*. Put simply, the theme statement is couched in first person. This is the author’s deliberate decision, reflects the conscious insertion of authorial ἔθος and πάθος into the very character of the theme statement, and hints that the authorial persona is key to reading the functional development of the theme throughout Romans.<sup>15</sup>

A second rhetorical feature of the theme statement is the unexpected negative frame: Οὐ γὰρ ἐπαισχύνομαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον. The first observation is that this is not intended to be a feigned εἰρωνείαν.<sup>16</sup> The problem is real. Why is this?<sup>17</sup> Paul clearly has set up a positive ἔθος to be associated with the gospel through a typical method in the

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<sup>14</sup> Significantly, this very personal tone will not be heard again until the ἀδελφοί in 7:1.

<sup>15</sup> Kennedy hints at some rhetorical significance to this use of first person within the proposition of the letter as a whole (“it sounds a note which is echoed in the use of the first person singular throughout the letter”), but never develops the idea; George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism*, Studies in Religion, Charles H. Long, ed. (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press: 1984), p. 153.

<sup>16</sup> That is, in the *figure* of a *confessio* used as εἰρωνείαν; cf. Quintilian *Inst.* 9.2.44, 51.

<sup>17</sup> Aristotle’s words though simple seem pertinent and worth repeating: “necessarily a person feels shame toward those whose opinion he takes account of.” *On Rhetoric* 2.6.14.

*exordium* of assuming honor through honorable associations.<sup>18</sup> Paul already has styled the gospel as God’s gospel.<sup>19</sup> To this characterization Paul adds that the gospel is about God’s Son (τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ).<sup>20</sup> In terms of the requisite ἔθος development in the *exordium*, if this gospel already in verse one of the epistle is associated with the ἔθος of God and in verse nine the ἔθος of God’s Son, what possible reason could Paul have for shame when associating his own ἔθος with this gospel just a few verses later? If we frame this question of shame in the theme statement of 1:16–17 as a question of rhetoric, the answer should *not* be based upon arbitrary historical speculations about Paul’s mission preaching, but rather from rhetorical disclosure within the letter itself.<sup>21</sup>

A first hint at the personal nature of the problem in the theme statement to be resolved surfaces at 2:16. Here, a voice shift to first person slips in as Paul adds a tertiary ἔθος to the characterization of the gospel: κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου. This distinctive shift in characterization is the surfacing of the authorial persona right at the point of the next mention of the gospel in the letter after the theme statement.<sup>22</sup> Since Paul connects his own ἔθος to the gospel, as revealed in 2:16, then the question of shame in 1:16 is inferred as his own association with the gospel. Thus, Paul’s association with the gospel is what generates a question of shame in the theme statement for the character of God, or Jesus, or both. Paul rejects this shame as a false association, so will be under obligation to show

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Quintilian *Inst.* 3.8.12–13; 6.2.18.

<sup>19</sup> 1:1, εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ, genitive of origin, as the following verses make clear.

<sup>20</sup> In 1:9; here, an objective genitive, “concerning His Son”; yet, so soon on the heels of the previous characterization and semantically repetitive, even Dunn acknowledged, “the fact that both phrases are of precisely the same form and are inevitably ambiguous should not be ignored.” James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8 in Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 38A, David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, gen. eds. (Dallas: Word books, Publishers, 1988), p. 29. Rhetorically, the ἔθος of the Son is associated with the gospel.

<sup>21</sup> To this observation of ἔθος associations with the gospel in the opening of the epistle, one could add that the letter conclusion reintroduces the same two characterizations in a macrostructure *inclusio*: τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ in 15:16 followed by τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ in 15:19.

<sup>22</sup> Further, εὐαγγέλιον will not come up again until the unit on Israel in 9–11 (in 10:16).

how his gospel does not shame God. While the introduction to the epistle has a level of πάθος appropriate for establishing the good will of the readers toward the author—the typical function of any *exordium*—the theme statement injects an abrupt and unexpectedly higher level of authorial πάθος associated with issues of shame and the gospel of God.<sup>23</sup> Shame, then, is close to a *topos* for Paul in Romans related to the theme statement, negatively nuanced, resolved by Christian hope (καυχώμεθα ἐπ’ ἐλπίδι τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ . . . ἡ δὲ ἐλπίς οὐ κατασχύνει, 5:2, 5).

To these two rhetorical features involving the content of the theme statement we may add a contextual observation. This heightened level of authorial πάθος is situated in a context in which a Jewish ἔθος is prominent. In 1:16, closely following Οὐ γὰρ ἐπαισχύνομαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, is the amplification: Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον. Since this is not a traditional Jewish κεκριμένον (accepted opinion), this apparently is a distinctive Pauline formulation that will require some rhetorical development for the reader/hearers’ understanding.<sup>24</sup> Regardless the background of the statement, the encoded Jewish ἔθος and priority is clear and resonates with the Jewish character of the authorial ἔθος established in the *prescript*.

More importantly, we observe that Paul associates by close proximity this shame *topos* with the Jewish ἔθος in the theme statement about faith. Paul continues this close connection between shame and Jewish ἔθος in his chapters bringing the argument to a climax in chapters 9–11. Two of Paul’s Old Testament proof texts involve this feature of shame in the context of faith:

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<sup>23</sup> Abrupt because the negative formulation comes at precisely the point a positive formulation is expected; this is an element of παράδοξον, which gives an unexpected turn that is most effective for drawing in the listener. Cf. Quintilian *Inst.* 9.2.22–24.

<sup>24</sup> Which Paul soon accomplishes in chapter 2 through ἐπιμονή (rhetorical development of a thought through repetition) in 2:9 and 2:10. Paul’s artful echo of a notable element in the theme statement now clarifies that this Pauline formulation is intended as εἰρῶνεία: “to the Jew first” means not only first in salvation but first in judgment as well.

The first text is Rom. 9:33, which has reference to Isa. 8:14: Ἴδου τίθημι ἐν Σιών λίθον προσκόμματος καὶ πέτραν σκανδάλου, καὶ ὁ πιστεύων ἐπ’ αὐτῷ οὐ κατασχυθήσεται. In the Old Testament context, Isaiah proclaimed several prophecies to Ahaz of Judah urging fidelity to Yahweh as the only alliance worth trusting during a time when Assyria was on the move through Tiglath-Pileser III. Israel under Pekah already had aligned with Rezin in Syria and was attempting to compel Judah into the confederacy. The Emmanuel Child was promised (7:14), whose life would be a marker of God’s sovereign judgment on the two kings of Syria and Israel that Ahab dreaded. Further, Isaiah urged that God would become a stone of stumbling that many would fall over because of misplaced trust in human political strategies in Isa. 8:14. In 732 BC Syria fell, then Israel fell in 722. Judah later fell to the Babylonians in 586 BC. This misplaced trust brought shame to God’s people that ended in the catastrophic judgment of exile.

The other text is Rom. 10:11, which has reference to Isa. 28:16: Πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων ἐπ’ αὐτῷ οὐ κατασχυθήσεται. Isaiah’s context is the prediction of Ephraim’s captivity and a warning to Judah and the resultant cornerstone laid in Zion becoming a stone of stumbling. Both of these texts indicate that Paul derives his shame *topos* directly from the prophetic speech of the Old Testament.

#### *The Authorial Πάθος—Patterned*

The unit 3:1–8 usually has been identified as a digression in Paul’s argument. In as much as this unit functions as πρόληψις, such a characterization is not off track rhetorically. That is, the unit, even as παράβασις (brief digression), still contributes to the argument.<sup>25</sup> Significantly for our purposes, this unit shows similar features of rhetoric and content to the theme statement in 1:16–17.

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<sup>25</sup> In agreement with Anderson’s analysis, p. 216.

First, in terms of rhetoric, in 2:17–20 Paul has been using ἀποστροφή (accusatory rhetorical questions; a special form of ἐπερώτησις) specifically directed to the Jew (2:17). This shifts in 3:1–8 to the use of αἰτιολογία (short questions the speaker answers).<sup>26</sup> Notice that the use of αἰτιολογία involves a voice change from second and third person to first person (cf. ἡμῶν, ἐροῦμεν, v. 5; ἐμῶ, v. 7). Voice change (μεταβολή) triggers an expectation for διαφωνία (difference in characterization). This allows the persona of the author directly back into the dialogue but does not change the addressee, the Jew.<sup>27</sup> A change in voice is a change in ἔθος. Correspondingly, along with change in ἔθος is a potential change in the degree of πάθος. Here in 3:1–8, the element of πάθος increases as in the theme statement. Especially is higher πάθος signaled in Paul’s highly stylistic negation, μὴ γένοιτο, used twice (vv. 3:4, 6). Further, Paul labors against a particularly onerous distortion of his message: μὴ καθὼς βλασφημούμεθα καὶ καθὼς φασὶν τινες ἡμᾶς λέγειν ὅτι Ποιήσωμεν τὰ κακὰ, ἵνα ἔλθῃ τὰ ἀγαθὰ; One could assume this would be in relation to Paul’s gospel recently referred to in the previous context (2:16).

Second, in terms of similarities to 1:16–17, the context for this higher level of authorial πάθος also involves a question of Jewish ἔθος: Τί οὖν τὸ περισσὸν τοῦ Ἰουδαίου; (3:1). This issue of advantage for the Jew in 3:1 ties directly back to the theme assertion, Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον. Thus, in both highly *pathetic* contexts, Paul labors with Jewish ἔθος specifically in terms of Jewish identity. This issue of Jewish identity already has asserted itself as part of the theme of Romans. One implicit rhetorical indicator that

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<sup>26</sup> Stowers has analyzed 3:1–9 as a diatribal dialogue and given the μὴ γένοιτο negation to an interlocutor, Stanley Kent Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 165. Anderson, p. 217, n. 59, however, is correct to point out that the speaker markers in this text are much too ambiguous to allow for Stowers’ discrete analysis; more compatible with the text features is a simple conversational style using αἰτιολογία.

<sup>27</sup> Anderson, p. 209, also argued that the use of first person plural in 3:5–9 indicates the πρόληψις still is directed to the Jew. This we would also argue for Rom. 7:1–6, which rhetorically marks 7:7–25.

this part of the Romans theme is being touched upon in the argument in Romans is this element of heightened authorial πάθος.

We can suggest, then, that early on in the letter of Romans a rhetorical pattern already has established itself. The closer Paul’s discussion moves to issues of Jewish identity, the higher the levels of authorial πάθος in the rhetoric. This increased πάθος is related directly to the authorial voice in Romans. This voice will be heard with higher than normal levels of πάθος when the discussion touches upon the burden of the argument as revealed in the problem of the theme statement cued to the reader/hearer by its unusual rhetoric. We style this pattern Paul’s theme rhetoric and label it as Paul’s *pathetic* pattern in Romans. Thus, Paul’s *pathetic* pattern, while not necessarily formally part of Paul’s rhetorical strategy in Romans,<sup>28</sup> still reveals, we think, the rhetorical burden of the theme statement. Can Paul’s *pathetic* pattern be established elsewhere in Romans? The answer is yes.

Of several examples, elements of chapters 8 and 9 are perhaps the most obvious. For example, the highly charged emotive content of 8:31–38 often is noted. Paul is concluding the entire movement of Romans 6–8 with a lengthy πολυσύνδετον.<sup>29</sup> This deep πάθος rhetorically is connected to the theme statement through Paul’s *pathetic* pattern. The elements of this theme rhetoric surface in 8:31–38. First, Paul again reverts to a sustained first person passage with high authorial πάθος. Second, note that the context of 8:31–38 involves distinct elements of Jewish identity (cf. 8:16, ἐσμὲν τέκνα θεοῦ; 8:17, κληρονόμοι). Anderson concluded the passage 8:31–39 was “crowned with an Old Testament citation intended to show that the sufferings of God’s people are nothing new.”<sup>30</sup> He need not stop there: Rom. 8:36–37 is the explicit analogue of Rom.

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<sup>28</sup> This would require a global analysis of the text of Romans and is beyond the scope of this paper.

<sup>29</sup> In agreement with Anderson, p. 233.

<sup>30</sup> Anderson, p. 233.

7:24–25 and demonstrates the corporate nature of Paul’s expression in the earlier exclamation in Romans 7. One is spoken from the context of Mosaic Israel, the other from that of messianic Israel, but thematically, the two are close. The following bipartite juxtaposition of passages helps illustrate:

<7:24> ταλαίπωρος ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος· τίς με ρύσεται ἐκ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ θανάτου τούτου;

<8:36> καθὼς γέγραπται ὅτι  
 Ἐνεκεν σοῦ θανατούμεθα ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν,  
 ἐλογίσθημεν ὡς πρόβατα σφαγῆς.

<7:25> χάρις δὲ τῷ θεῷ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν.

<8:37> ἀλλ’ ἐν τούτοις πᾶσιν ὑπερνικῶμεν διὰ τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντος ἡμᾶς.

Another example is 9:1–5. This unit is even higher in πάθος, universally acknowledged as the most *pathetic* passage in all of Romans. The ἔθος of the authorial persona is transparent. Here the depths of that πάθος have reached the pitiable, and the rhetoricians are agreed that pity is a powerful weapon. Paul’s tone in 9:1–5 is similar to the advice given by an ancient rhetorician: “We shall stir Pity in our hearers by . . . revealing what will befall our parents, children, and other kinsmen through our disgrace, and at the same time showing that we grieve not because of our own straits but because of their anxiety and misery; . . .”<sup>31</sup> While the unit 9:1–5 is brief, in conformity with the general advice for evoking pity,<sup>32</sup> the power of the rhetoric still is overwhelming. We suggest that the extraordinary πάθος is because the latent burden of the theme statement in 1:16, Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον, now surfaces in its most potent form as revealed in chapters 9–11: characteristic Jewish rejection of Paul’s gospel, which is a source of inestimable grief to Paul, but, as well, potential shame to God. This potential shame to God brought

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<sup>31</sup> *Ad C. Herennium* 2.31.50. [Cicero] *Ad C. Herennium: De Ratione Dicendi (Rhetorica Ad Herennium)*, trans. Harry Caplan. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1954).

<sup>32</sup> “Appeals to pity should, however, always be brief, . . .” Quintilian *Inst.* 6.1.27. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, trans. H. E. Butler (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1921).

on by Paul’s preaching of the gospel and the consequent Jewish rejection of that message is the theological conundrum that Paul labors to work through in chapters 9–11.

The intense πάθος of 9:1–5, that is, is a clear rhetorical cue to the reader/hearer due to Paul’s *pathetic* pattern in Romans that the unusual negative formulation of the theme statement in the personalizing words of 1:16, Οὐ γὰρ ἐπαισχύνομαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, has reached its rhetorical climax. Paul has finally arrived at the ἐπίλογια that should run full circle back to the theme statement and resolve the rhetorical problem latent within. For this reason, I cannot agree with Anderson that the mood change at 9:1 is either sudden or unexpected.<sup>33</sup> Paul did not transition well, according to Anderson, but was able to achieve his argumentative goal: “In this way he (re)introduces the problem of the Jew’s rejection of the Gospel and its Messiah.”<sup>34</sup> This problem is not being reintroduced. Paul has been unpacking this problem ever since the theme statement.

## Part 2: Paul’s Rhetoric in Romans 7—Ἔθος and Πάθος

Can these observations about Paul’s *pathetic* pattern in Romans assist in an understanding Romans 7? We think so. Before providing our analysis, we outline the following often noted features of this notoriously difficult passage:

- (1) *Grammar*: The unit is subdivided grammatically into two distinct subunits, 7:7–13 and 7:14–25 because the tense shifts from aorist to present between these two units. Further, whereas first person plural, “we,” dominates the illustration in 7:1–6 that introduces the defense of the law in 7:7–25, first person singular, “I,” is used almost exclusively in 7:7b–25.

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<sup>33</sup> Anderson, p. 234.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

- (2) *Semantics*: The range of meaning of key concepts such as “death,” “life,” and “law” seems to drift, causing definitional confusion from verse to verse.<sup>35</sup>
- (3) *Style*: Sin, Death, and Law continued to be personified, as throughout chapters 6–8. However, if the “I” is personification, the reference is not explicit. Proper rhetorical identification, therefore, of Paul’s “I” is unclear.<sup>36</sup>
- (4) *Theology*: The category of Spirit that plays such a dominant role in the next chapter, and seems fundamental there to Paul’s definition of Christian experience (8:14), is completely absent throughout the “I” unit in chapter seven.<sup>37</sup>
- (5) *Context*: Paul has set forth his theme of the gospel as God’s righteousness by faith to all who believe in 1:16–17, provided proof in 1:18–3:20, explained its nature in 3:21–31, and by example demonstrated scriptural concord in 4:1–25. Paul expanded on the benefits of God’s righteousness by faith in 5:1–11 and demonstrated its universal significance in 5:12–21. Paul then seeks to untangle the complicated relationship of Grace, Sin, and Law, inferred in concluding 5:12–21, in chapters 6–8. Implications for Israel are addressed in 9–11.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> In other words, whether “death” and “life” are encoded with “full theological force” (read “eschatological”) or as just referential; whether “law” is Mosaic code only, or can be simply a general “principle” in some instances.

<sup>36</sup> For this reason, Paul’s “I” rhetoric exposes philosophical presuppositions of commentators that are not stated explicitly in the narrative that either psychologize the text existentially, subverting Paul’s objective language into subjective evaluation (whether Paul’s or general human consciousness), or falsely generalizes the text as if all humankind has been subjected to the Mosaic code.

<sup>37</sup> Generating confusion whether “pre-Christian” or “Christian,” with numerous subtle variations, such as “pre-Christian human realities seen through Christian reflection,” “pre-conversion Jewish experience as described through post-conversion Christian reflection,” and so forth.

<sup>38</sup> Also observed have been both the *internal* and the *external* structural logic of the unit. Internally, the unit itself seems to play out a two-part logical movement in its own immediate literary context in 7:6. In 7:6a we have the logic of being discharged from the law, which seems to be taken up more fully in 7:7–25. In 7:6b we have the logic of the new life of the Spirit, which seems taken up more fully in the next chapter. Externally, the entire unit seems to play out the two-part logical movement in the larger literary context of the *digressio* in the form of *πρόληψις* of 3:1–8. Rhetorically, this fits into a pattern of *αὔξησις* (expansion or development when proof not needed) of one of the two objections raised in the *πρόληψις* of 3:1–8. The second objection, whether God is unjust to inflict his wrath, is dealt with first in

What shall we make of this complex phenomena? We focus our energies in this paper on two topics that we hope will advance the discussion. These two topics are Paul’s use of first person as authorial and authorial ἔθοϛ credibility.

*The ἔθοϛ of Romans 7—Authorial*

The first topic is Paul’s use of first person. Who is represented in the first person in the two units? The major contenders for understanding the first person, whether they are distinguished between the two literary subunits, are Paul, Adam, Israel, or humankind.<sup>39</sup> To these traditional understandings we may add the impact of rhetorical and other studies.<sup>40</sup> My own preliminary soundings into the typical resources for

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chapters 6–8. The first objection, whether God is rendered untrustworthy by Jewish disobedience, is dealt with in chapters 9–11. This external logic represents a growing consensus agreeing with the analysis of William S. Campbell, “Romans 3 as a Key to the Structure and Thought of Romans,” in *The Romans Debate: Revised and Expanded Edition*, Karl P. Donfried, ed. (Edinburgh: T & T. Clark, 1991), pp. 251–64. Cf. Anderson, *Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Paul*, p. 229; Dodd, *Paul’s Paradigmatic ‘I’*, p. 227.

<sup>39</sup> Romans 7:7–25, of course, is a hornet’s nest of endless discussion. Cf. Dunn, pp. 378–80; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary in The Anchor Bible*, vol. 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), pp. 463–65. A recent, concise summary is given in Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* in *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, Moises Silva, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), pp. 356–94.

<sup>40</sup> Some works already have been cited. Other pertinent material would include Marty L. Reid, “Paul’s Rhetoric of Mutuality: A Rhetorical Reading of Romans” in *SBL 1995 Seminar Papers: Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting 1995*, ed. Eugene H. Lovering, Jr. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995); David E. Aune, “Romans as a Logos Protreptikos in the Context of Ancient Religious and Philosophical Propaganda” in *Paulus und das antike Judentum: Tübingen-Durham-Symposium im Gedenken an den 50. Todestag Adolf Schlatters*, ed. Martin Hengel and Ulrich Heckel (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, Paul Siebeck, 1991); Wilhelm Wuellner, “Paul’s Rhetoric of Argumentation in Romans: An Alternative to the Donfried-Karris Debate Over Romans” in *The Romans Debate: Revised and Expanded Edition*, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991); Robert Jewett, “Following the Argument of Romans” in *The Romans Debate: Revised and Expanded Edition*, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991); Neil Elliot, *The Rhetoric of Romans: Argumentative Constraint and Strategy and Paul’s Dialogue with Judaism* in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series*, no. 45, ed. David Hill (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990); Robert W. Funk, “The Apostolic Parousia: Form and Significance” in *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox*, ed. W. R. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule, and R. R. Niebuhr (Cambridge: University Press, 1967); Steve Manson, “For I Am Not Ashamed of the Gospel (Rom. 1:16): The Gospel and the First Readers of Romans” in *Gospel in Paul: Studies on Corinthians, Galatians and Romans for Richard N. Longenecker*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series*, no. 108, ed. L. Ann Jervis and Peter Richardson (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994); Stanley E. Porter, “Ancient Rhetorical Analysis and Discourse Analysis of the Pauline Corpus” in *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture: Essays from the 1995 London Conference*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Series*, no. 146, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); Robin Scroggs, “Paul as Rhetorician: Two Homilies in Romans 1–11” in *Jews, Greeks and Christians: Religious Cultures in Late Antiquity. Essays in Honor of William David Davies*, ed. Robert Hamerton-Kelly and Robin Scroggs (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976); Duane F. Watson, “The Contributions and Limitations of Greco-Roman Rhetorical Theory for Constructing the Rhetorical and Historical Situations of a Pauline Epistle,” in *The Rhetorical Interpretation of Scripture: Essays from the 1996 Malibu Conference*, Stanley E. Porter and Dennis L. Stamps, eds., in *Journal for the*

exploring classical Roman school rhetoric as background for New Testament authors such as Paul seemed to suggest that Paul’s first person rhetoric would yield to easy analysis. The most productive species seemed to be either epideictic or deliberative rhetoric. This research into the background of classical rhetoric, however, has yielded little that is even close to the particular use of first person within the parameters of Romans 7.

Admittedly, some using classical rhetoric have latched on rather hard to the *figure* of προσωποποιΐα as the correct analysis for Paul’s rhetoric in Romans 7. Stowers argued that the passage was a clear case of προσωποποιΐα (which he labeled as “speech-in-character”) for the gentile overwhelmed by the impossibility of self-mastery through the Law.<sup>41</sup> In contrast, Anderson opted for Romans 7 as a personal παράδειγμα on Paul’s part, with which Schreiner and Dodd would agree..<sup>42</sup>

However, these approaches have serious weaknesses which render them unsatisfactory. Stowers’s reading is flawed on several counts, but not the one Anderson proposed. First, Stowers’s reading was dependent upon Origen’s take on Romans 7 from several centuries *later* as indicative of the Roman readers.<sup>43</sup> Such a procedure is methodically flawed, notwithstanding Stowers own precautions.<sup>44</sup> Second, Stowers falls back on the old Bultmann proposal that Rom. 7:15, 19 contain a ubiquitous Greek saying from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* central to the self-mastery rhetoric of the Greco-Roman moral world

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Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 180, Stanley E. Porter, exec. ed. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd., 1999), pp. 125–51; Glenn S. Holland, “The Self against the Self in Romans 7.7–25,” in *The Rhetorical Interpretation of Scripture: Essays from the 1996 Malibu Conference*, Stanley E. Porter and Dennis L. Stamps, eds., in Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 180, Stanley E. Porter, exec. ed. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd., 1999), pp. 260–71; Brian Dodd, *Paul’s Paradigmatic ‘I’: Personal Example as Literary Strategy*, in Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 177 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

<sup>41</sup> Stowers, pp. 264–72, 279.

<sup>42</sup> Anderson, p. 232; Schreiner, p. 365; Dodd, p. 32.

<sup>43</sup> Stowers, p. 268.

<sup>44</sup> Stowers, p. 269. That Romans 7 strikes Origen as speech-in-character has no *inherent* connection to Paul’s usage just because Origen is a “native speaker” of Greek.

of dramatists and philosophers.<sup>45</sup> Thus, while Paul gives the topic of Romans 7 his own spin, the supposed allusion to *Media* assures us Paul’s topic is Gentile self-mastery in the style of Greco-Roman moral tradition.<sup>46</sup>

Anderson, in contrast, charged that Stower’s proposal of Romans 7 as προσωποποιΐα was “ruled out, since this requires explicit speaker identification,” which the Romans 7 context is distinctly missing.<sup>47</sup> Anderson’s critique of Stowers, however, is not on target. He is correct that the Romans 7 context is distinctly missing any explicit speaker identification. He is wrong, though, in his assertion that this lack of speaker identification automatically rules out any form of προσωποποιΐα. This is directly contradicted by Quintilian, who identifies a specific mixed *figure of impersonation* (Greek: προσωποποιΐα) that, when combined with *ellipse*, is the omission of any indication of who is speaking.<sup>48</sup> Thus, as far as Quintilian is concerned, one *can* have προσωποποιΐα without explicit identification of the speaker.

I *would* agree with Anderson, however, that Romans 7 is not προσωποποιΐα. My argument, though, would be on the basis of ἔθος development, which, above all else, must be credible, consistent, and clear. We already have argued that Romans 7 is crucial to the maintenance of credible authorial ἔθος. An additional rhetorical clue to the persona of the “I” in Romans 7 is, in fact, the concluding exclamation: ταλαίπωρος ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος· τίς με ῥύσεται ἐκ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ θανάτου τούτου; (7:24). While not all agree as to the background of this poignant exclamation,<sup>49</sup> all do agree this is undoubtedly

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<sup>45</sup> Stowers, p. 260.

<sup>46</sup> Stowers, p. 264.

<sup>47</sup> Anderson, p. 231.

<sup>48</sup> *Inst.* 9.2.36–37.

<sup>49</sup> Stowers, p. 263, for example, would want to make this, too, part of the Greek moral tradition through Ovid *Met.* 7.17–21. But that would involve Paul in an apparent hypocrisy and probable loss of credible ἔθος. A possibility from classical rhetoric might be what Quintilian indicated the Greeks called φαντασίαι (Latin, *visions*), “whereby things absent are presented to our imagination with such extreme

the highest level of πάθος to this point in the letter. To this obvious agreement we would add the straight-forward rhetorical observation: no other ἔθος in Romans to this point has been disclosed to the reader/hearer with this level of πάθος other than the author himself. I would judge 7:24 to be another instance of Paul’s *pathetic* pattern in Romans. The function has changed, but the pattern has not. First, we note that the element of Jewish identity explicitly is present in the context: γινώσκουσιν γὰρ νόμον λαλῶ (7:1). Second, the voice is an unmarked first person in 7:7–25. The *prescript* already has established that the authorial voice can move in a fluid transition in number.

We conclude, then, given the noted ambiguity of speaker identification in Romans 7, and in the context of Paul’s *pathetic* pattern in Romans, the ἔθος of the “I” in Romans 7 rhetorically must be Paul’s. In fact, suddenly to introduce an unnamed, mysterious ἔθος, particularly one so full of πάθος as 7:24 indicates, at this crucial point in the argument would do such rhetorical violence to the audience as to reduce the argument to a shambles, a most confusing and counterproductive ploy—that is, to be blunt, rhetorically incompetent.

If the “I” of Romans 7 is Paul, the more crucial question is, what is the rhetorical function of that “I”? Most who conclude the “I” is Paul immediately presume—without any rhetorical demonstration from within the text in Romans—that this “I” has an *individualizing autobiographical* function.<sup>50</sup> I would argue strenuously against this presumption, if for nothing else, because the result abuses the text with the total

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vividness that they seem actually to be before our very eyes.” *Inst.* 6.2.29. However, in *Inst.* 9.2.27 Quintilian insisted his category for such *figure* must fall under simulation; he would not so classify such speech if a genuine expression. Paul’s expression in 7:24 shows rhetorical complexity: marked as genuine by the authorial ἔθος, yet as *figure* by ἐπερώτησις (rhetorical question).

<sup>50</sup> A good example is: “[on the Antioch incident of Galatians 2] Peter’s covetous sin was to bring back discrimination on the basis of circumcision . . . Paul’s struggle with sin in Romans 7 was with the similar temptation Paul knew to covet the status of circumcision and the gift of Torah, . . .” Nanos, p. 360. The psychologizing of the exegesis is evident in Nanos’s ability to know what Roman gentiles were thinking before they became Christians (that is, they were prejudicial Romans of the Juvenal persuasion participating in derision of Jewish peculiarities, p. 100).

subjectivity of the interpreter. That the “I” involved in Romans 7 moves from “life” to “death” now must be made to correspond arbitrarily to some life experience of Paul. The usual proposals are: (1) childhood awakening, (2) preliminaries to conversion, or (3) adult powerlessness. That all this is highly subjective and speculative is conveniently ignored.

In any case, the autobiographical approach to Romans 7 is indefensible more than simply because it renders Paul’s meaning in expressions such as χωρίς νόμου and ἐλθούσης δὲ τῆς ἐντολῆς virtually incoherent logically.<sup>51</sup> The autobiographical approach is indefensible because rhetorical analysis has shown that the development of the authorial ἔθος from the *prescript* on has never wavered. Paul’s “we” speaks from within the context of a (Jewish) apostle on behalf of messianic Israel in her eschatological destiny to bring about the obedience of faith among the gentiles. That corporate Jewish ἔθος of the author does not change going into Romans 7 in the marriage analogy that continues using the first person plural. *With no rhetorical markers for a change in identification of speaker*, Paul’s authorial first person plural fluidly shifts to first person singular in 7:7, exactly in reverse mode as in the *prescript* imperceptibly moving from first person singular to first person plural in 1:5.<sup>52</sup> *Thus, our first rhetorical conclusion is that in Romans 7, Paul’s first person plural speaks for, and his first person singular identifies with, Israel in the complexity of her present historical context.*<sup>53</sup>

The foregoing analysis would suggest that the proper background for Paul’s rhetoric in Romans 7, when viewed under the contextual authorial constraints, most likely

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<sup>51</sup> As Moo already has pointed out. Douglas J. Moo, “Israel and Paul in Romans 7.7–12,” *New Testament Studies* 32 (1986): 125.

<sup>52</sup> *Contra* Stowers, p. 269. The voice does *not* change: the author already has indicated fluid shifting between first person singular and plural within the authorial ἔθος in the *prescript*. Thus, this is *not* a case of μεταβολή (change of voice) that would trigger an expectation for διαφώνια (difference in characterization from the authorial voice).

<sup>53</sup> Our approach is similar to Moo, “Israel and Paul,” p. 109 and Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, p. 197, but established on a rhetorical basis.

would be found within a *Jewish* ἔθνος, *not* gentile, as several recent rhetorical studies have attempted to argue. What context would appear most compatible with this type of rhetoric? Others already have noted that representations in first person singular on behalf of Jerusalem or Israel within Israel’s scriptural traditions seem closest in style to Romans 7.<sup>54</sup> I agree with this assessment, but I intend for the following to put the discussion on a more substantial basis and to provide more carefully nuanced connections.

Israel’s representatives corporately spoke on behalf of Israel. In the Exodus narrative, God had indicated displeasure with the condition of the Israelites and had threatened not to accompany the people into the land. Moses then asked in Ex. 33:16: καὶ πῶς γνωστὸν ἔσται ἀληθῶς ὅτι εὔρηκα χάριν παρὰ σοί ἐγώ τε καὶ ὁ λαός σου ἀλλ’ ἢ συμπορευομένου σου μεθ’ ἡμῶν καὶ ἐνδοξασθήσομαι ἐγώ τε καὶ ὁ λαός σου παρὰ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ὅσα ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐστίν, “And how will it be genuinely manifest that I have found favor before you, both I and your people, other than you go with us? And I will be glorified, both I and your people, in contrast to all the nations on the face of the earth.” The first person singular verb, ἐνδοξασθήσομαι, is invested with corporate sense, ἐγώ τε καὶ ὁ λαός σου.<sup>55</sup> Esther spoke similarly to King Ahasuerus in Esth. 7:4: ἐπράθημεν γὰρ ἐγώ τε καὶ ὁ λαός μου εἰς ἀπώλειαν καὶ διαρπαγὴν, “For we have been sold, both I and my people, unto destruction and plunder.” As David spoke a blessing over Israel’s generous freewill offerings for the temple in 1 Chron. 29:14, he confessed: καὶ τίς εἰμι ἐγώ καὶ τίς ὁ λαός μου ὅτι ἰσχύσαμεν προθυμηθῆναί σοι κατὰ ταῦτα, “But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to make this freewill offering?”

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<sup>54</sup> Texts suggested have included Jer. 10:19–22; Mic. 7:7–10; and Lam. 1:9–22; 2:20–22, among others. See Moo, p. 129, also referring to U. Luz, *Das Geschichtsverständnis des Paulus* (BEVT 49; Munich: Kaiser, 1968) 159, n. 87.

<sup>55</sup> The choice of the LXX translators is, in fact, curious. The Masoretic text actually has a *plural* verb, וַיִּבְרְכוּ, from בָּרַךְ, “to be separate.”

Communal lament psalms portray the transition back and forth from first person singular to first person plural. Psalm 44 is one such psalm in its prayer for deliverance from national enemies. The first three verses are first person plural; verse 4, however, begins shifting back and forth between singular and plural for four verses:

You are my King and my God;  
    you command victories for Jacob.  
Through you we push down our foes;  
    through your name we tread down our assailants.  
For not in my bow do I trust,  
    nor can my sword save me.  
But you have saved us from our foes,  
    and have put to confusion those who hate us. (NRSV)

One could speculate that this shift in voice could have had some liturgical function, such as an antiphonal recitation with the king or other corporate representative speaking the first person singular. Even this setting, if speculated, would suggest that such a shifting between singular and plural would have been a familiar *topos* of national lament rhetoric in which both voices in the psalm rhetorically concern the same ἔθoς: the people of God.

A similar transition also takes place between verses 14 and 15:

You have made us a byword among the nations,  
    a laughingstock among the peoples.  
[44:15] All day long my disgrace is before me,  
    and shame has covered my face  
at the words of the taunters and revilers,  
    at the sight of the enemy and the avenger.

We chose this national lament psalm as illustrative because Paul quoted verse 22 in the concluding portion of Romans 8, a section already noted for its highly elevated authorial ἔθoς (Rom. 8:36).<sup>56</sup>

Not all first person singular occurrences in national laments, though, should be construed as the voice of an *individual*. A good example is Psalm 129. The opening

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<sup>56</sup> Psalm 85 is another example of shifting between singular and plural in a national lament psalm. Paul does cite an *individual* lament psalm, Ps. 69:9 in Rom. 15:3, but this rhetorically is marked to the ἔθoς of Χρῑσtoς in the context.

statement of affliction in first person singular becomes a corporate response at the instruction of a worship leader in 129:1–3:

“Often have they attacked me from my youth”  
—let Israel now say—  
“often have they attacked me from my youth,  
yet they have not prevailed against me.  
The plowers plowed on my back;  
they made their furrows long.”

The prophets personified the nation of Israel using various rhetorical strategies. Personification could be through their own person, a characterization, or even investing another figure from Israel’s past with representative status.

Isaiah has several examples. Isaiah 38 has a liturgical song of thanksgiving for deliverance. The conclusion in 38:20 shows a shift from first person singular to first person plural, because the cause for rejoicing is common in the corporate experience of worship:

The LORD will save me,  
and we will sing to stringed instruments  
all the days of our lives,  
at the house of the LORD. (NRSV)

The Servant Songs in Isaiah provide rich context for Romans, as Paul quoted from several Servant passages and resonates with issues common to the songs as a corpus. Our point, however, mainly is to note the use of voice. The Second Servant Song in Isa. 49:1–6 is set in first person singular. Isaiah speaks as the Servant of God. In 49:4, the song contains a complaint about a sense of futility in the Servant’s ministry, yet the hope that God will vindicate the Servant’s efforts. This vindication theme is common to several Servant songs and resonates with a number of Paul’s statements in Romans.

The Third Servant Song occurs in Isa. 50:4–11. The Servant is confident he will not be put to shame in 50:7, then indicates trust in God as the judicial defender. When we observe that this Servant song is the context for Paul’s quotation in Rom. 8:33, then not only does the theme of vindication itself resonate with Romans 8, but the first person of the Servant song seems to resonate with Paul’s first person in his opening defense in

Rom. 1:16: “For I am not ashamed.” Our point, of course, is not that Paul thinks of himself as the Servant. Rather, we emphasize the paradoxical mutuality evoked within the corpus of the Servant songs of both individual and corporate dimensions to the nature of the Servant’s mission.

The Fourth Servant Song occurs in Isa. 52:13–53:12. Paul quoted Isa. 52:15 in Rom. 15:21 and Isa. 53:1 in Rom. 10:16. We observe that the nature of this song is very personalized by the use of first person plural in a confessional mode almost throughout the song. Also, the vindication theme shows up in Isa. 53:12.

Isaiah 59 functions as a corporate charge that the nation repent. The middle third of that charge is a corporate confession couched in first person plural in Isa. 59:9–15, beginning: διὰ τοῦτο ἀπέστη ἡ κρίσις ἀπ’ αὐτῶν καὶ οὐ μὴ καταλάβῃ αὐτοὺς δικαιοσύνη, “For this reason justice is far from us, and righteousness does not overtake us.” The last portion in Isa. 59:15b–21 shifts to third person. This call to repentance is concluded with the assurance that the Redeemer will come to Zion in 59:20–21, a passage that Paul used to conclude his entire ἐπίλογος of Romans 9–11 at Rom. 11:26.

An extensive psalm of intercession covering almost two chapters is preserved in Isa. 63:7–64:12. The first major section in 63:7–14 is a resume of Israel’s redemptive moment in history in the exodus from Egypt. Beginning in Isa. 63:15 is a petition that God would return Israel to her former fidelity to God. As the petition begins, a shift occurs from first person singular<sup>57</sup> to first person plural between 63:15 and 63:16:

Look down from heaven and see,  
     from your holy and glorious habitation.  
 Where are your zeal and your might?  
     The yearning of your heart and your compassion?  
     They are withheld from me.  
 [63:16] For you are our father,  
     though Abraham does not know us

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<sup>57</sup> The Masoretic text has the *singular* form: וְלֹא מָנְעָה לִי אֶת רַחֲמֶיךָ, “and your compassions, have you not restrained from me?” The LXX translators apparently thought this singular form mistaken: καὶ τῶν οἰκτιρισμῶν σου ὅτι ἀνέσχου ἡμῶν, “and your compassions that you have withheld from us?”

and Israel does not acknowledge us;  
you, O LORD, are our father;  
our Redeemer from of old is your name. (NRSV)

Thereafter the first person plural is maintained to the end of the chapter.

Isaiah 64 opens with a psalm of confession in 64:1–12. The first part, 64:1–5a, is a longing that God would show himself in the awesome power once experienced at Sinai. The next part, 64:5a–7, shifts to first person plural in a confession by the prophet on behalf of God’s people of abject ungodliness. The last part, 64:8–12, maintains the first person plural in a concluding plea that God not be angry for ever.

Jeremiah spoke of a siege that would not be lifted in Jer. 10: 17–18, then followed in 10:19–20 with a lament spoken for the character mother Zion who loses her children in exile:

Woe is me because of my hurt!  
My wound is severe.  
But I said, “Truly this is my punishment,  
and I must bear it.”  
My tent is destroyed,  
and all my cords are broken;  
my children have gone from me,  
and they are no more;  
there is no one to spread my tent again,  
and to set up my curtains. (NRSV)

Similar in style is Jeremiah’s dramatic announcement from God in Jer. 31:15:

Thus says the LORD:  
A voice is heard in Ramah,  
lamentation and bitter weeping.  
Rachel is weeping for her children;  
she refuses to be comforted for her children,  
because they are no more. (NRSV)

The mother of Joseph and Benjamin is invested with representative status for the nation and mourns the exile of the northern tribes. Joseph’s son Ephraim similarly is given representative status in the following verses (31:18–20).

Lamentations offers the most instructive example from lament rhetoric. Jerusalem is a personified maiden and cries out in Lam. 1:9: ἰδέ κύριε τὴν ταπείνωσίν μου ὅτι ἐμεγαλύνθη ἐχθρός, “Behold, Lord, my humiliation because my enemy gloats!” The

personified lament continues to the end of the chapter, interrupted only by a brief descriptive interlude in 1:17. Finally, the author himself directly participates in the lament beginning in 2:11:

My eyes are spent with weeping;  
                   my stomach churns;  
 my bile is poured out on the ground  
                   because of the destruction of my people,  
 because infants and babes faint  
                   in the streets of the city. (NRSV)

This authorial sorrow continues unabated for more than a chapter through 3:24.

A voice change to third person, though, beginning at Lam. 3:25, signals a rhetorical change in function: this shift in person facilitates mild exhortation as the readers are addressed indirectly. The readers are exhorted to remember that the Lord does not cast off for ever, but rather shows steadfast love even in affliction. That the intent of the voice shift to third person actually is to address the readers becomes clear with a second shift in person that follows close on its heels. Five verses later after the move to third person, an insertion of authorial ἔθος occurs at 3:40, with a transition to first person plural: ἐξηρευνήθη ἡ ὁδὸς ἡμῶν καὶ ἠτάσθη καὶ ἐπιστρέψομεν ἕως κυρίου, “Let us search out and test our way, and let us return to the Lord.” The exhortation no longer is a subtle third person, but direct and forceful. The first person plural confirms that the previous third person exhortation was, in fact, directed to the readers. The author now includes himself and the readers directly in the exhortation. Further, we note that the authorial πάθος also correspondingly increases in this unit. This plural authorial voice continues another seven verses through 3:47.

Suddenly, however, the number smoothly shifts from this first person *plural* in Lam. 3:47 to first person *singular* in 3:48: φόβος καὶ θυμὸς ἐγενήθη ἡμῖν ἔπαρσις καὶ συντριβή, [3:48] ἀφέσεις ὑδάτων κατάξει ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς μου ἐπὶ τὸ σύντριμμα τῆς θυγατρὸς τοῦ λαοῦ μου, “panic and tumult have hit us, lifting up and crushing, [3:48] my eye floods down tears because of the destruction of the daughter of my people.” This shift

in number *has no rhetorical markers to signal any voice other than the continuation of the authorial first person from plural to singular*. All the salient features of Romans 7 are here:

- (1) the authorial ἔθος augmented with high πάθος
- (2) *unmarked* voice change from first person *plural* to first person *singular*
- (3) lament rhetoric

I have yet to find any example from standard Greco-Roman sources that approximates even broadly these parameters. If one throws in the additional *Jewish* parameters of the text and context, the argument would be strengthened even further.<sup>58</sup>

Ezekiel experienced a vision of a valley of dry bones in which God told him the bones represented the whole house of Israel in Eze. 37:11: αὐτοὶ λέγουσιν ξηρὰ γέγονεν τὰ ὀστᾶ ἡμῶν, “They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, . . .’” Again, first person plural is used in this prophetic rhetoric regarding Israel.

Daniel prayed for his people at the beginning of chapter 9. In a confessional mode, the prayer begins in first person singular. At Dan. 9:5, however, the prayer smoothly shifts into first person plural: ἡμάρτομεν ἠδικήσαμεν ἠσεβήσαμεν καὶ ἀπέστημεν καὶ παρέβημεν τὰς ἐντολάς σου καὶ τὰ κρίματά σου, “we have sinned, acted unjustly, been ungodly, even turned from and transgressed your commandments and decrees.” This first person plural continues for a fairly extended period, Dan. 9:5–19.

Micah has an extended section in Mic. 7:8–10, generally understood to be the prophet speaking as Israel:

Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy;  
when I fall, I shall rise;  
when I sit in darkness,  
the LORD will be a light to me.

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<sup>58</sup> That the authorial ἔθος is Jewish, that part of the grief is over slanderous misrepresentations (Lam. 3:61–63; cf. Rom. 3:8), that a deep trust in God as vindicator of the unjustly maligned shines through (Lam. 3:64–66; cf. Rom. 1:16; 5:5; 9:33), that the authorial consternation is over the present cursed condition of Israel (Lam. 3:42; Rom. 9:1–3; 10:1)—to name only a few.

I must bear the indignation of the LORD,  
 because I have sinned against him,  
 until he takes my side  
 and executes judgment for me.  
 He will bring me out to the light;  
 I shall see his vindication.  
 Then my enemy will see,  
 and shame will cover her who said to me,  
 “Where is the LORD your God?”  
 My eyes will see her downfall;  
 now she will be trodden down  
 like the mire of the streets. (NRSV)

Our conclusion is that the literature of the Old Testament shows a clear rhetorical *topos* in the use of first person in contexts in which issues regarding Israel’s current crisis or threatened destiny are involved. In multiple kinds of material—narrative, confessional, intercessory prayers, lament, psalmic liturgy, prophetic, and others—this literature regularly evidences use of first person, both singular and plural, for Israel, whether as strict personification or as the author more generally functioning simply as a corporate representative of God’s people. We could suggest that this *topos* becomes even more pronounced in non-canonical Jewish writings, but that is beyond the scope of this paper.<sup>59</sup>

### *The ἔθος of Romans 7—Credibility*

Paul’s ἔθος development within the argumentative context is important. The argumentative context of 7:7–25 is 6:1–7:6, in which Paul explains that sin does not magnify grace (6:1–14), nor does grace license sin (6:15–7:6). Paul illustrates this second point by the two analogies of slavery (6:15–23) and marriage (7:1–6). The second analogy infers a changed relationship such that those who have died with Christ no longer sustain their old relationship to the Law. Inevitably, Paul’s rhetoric about the Law has become problematic through Paul’s paradoxical usage.

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<sup>59</sup> Cf. Wis. Sol. 5:7, 13; Bar. 2:12–26; 3:1–8; 1 Esdr. 8:82–90; 2 Esdr. 3:34; 4:23 (“For I did not wish to inquire about the ways above, but about those things that we daily experience: why Israel has been given over to the Gentiles in disgrace”); 7:106; 9:36 (“For we who have received the law and sinned will perish, as well as our hearts that received it”).

Paul already has responded categorically to the charge of destroying the Law: νόμον οὖν καταργοῦμεν διὰ τῆς πίστεως; μὴ γένοιτο· ἀλλὰ νόμον ἰσχύνομεν. (3:31). He insists he establishes the Law. On the other hand, other statements by Paul seem to fly in the face of this assertion. He has said enough by this point to seem to have slandered the ἔθος of the Law.<sup>60</sup> Paul’s characterization of Law has been decidedly negative in the basic units of development up to chapter 6: Law simply reveals knowledge of Sin (3:20), brings wrath (4:15), and instigates rebellion against God (5:20). Now, in this new unit beginning in chapter 6, Paul has insisted, “You are not under Law” (6:14), “you died to the Law” (7:4), “our sinful passions, aroused by the Law” (7:5), “we have been released from the Law” (7:6). The logical inference is that the Law is sinful. This inference is false, but stalks Paul’s rhetoric and will distract the reader/hearers until Paul deals with the falsehood appropriately. If Paul has slandered the Law he has blasphemed God, and the charge he leveled in 2:23 falls on his own head. The connection to preaching the gospel becomes manifest. If in order to preach his gospel Paul has to shame God’s Law, *as a Jew*, how could he have the hubris to claim his gospel is the gospel of God? How could he be anything but ashamed of such a gospel? An apology for the Law,<sup>61</sup> *from within a Jewish context*, rhetorically is imperative. Paul provides this apology in 7:7–25.

Even more importantly rhetorically, the *putative* problem of Law’s ἔθος is a *rhetorical* challenge for Paul’s own ἔθος. If the author loses credibility in a collapse of his own Jewish ἔθος established in the *prescript* and augmented in the *exordium*, his argument is lost even if his logic is flawless. That Paul attempts to reinforce his *Jewish* ἔθος in 7:7–25 is revealed in the very nature of Paul’s argumentative method. Paul inserts a traditional *Jewish* κεκριμένον in 7:14: οἶδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι ὁ νόμος πνευματικός ἐστίν.

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<sup>60</sup> Most acknowledge that Paul has personified Sin, Grace, and Law throughout chapters 6–8, such that, rhetorically, one may speak appropriately of the ἔθος of the Law. Cf. Quintilian *Inst.* 9.2.31, 58.

<sup>61</sup> Phrasing from Dunn and others, *Romans 1–8*, p. 377.

This κεκριμένον is a foundational datum of Jewish ἔθος: the Law is *God’s Law*, and that relationship fundamentally defines Law’s ἔθος. By inserting this Jewish κεκριμένον, Paul acknowledges and affirms a datum of Jewish belief. Paul then takes the next obligatory step. This first κεκριμένον has a second that travels in tandem with it, which Paul states in 7:16: σύμφημι τῷ νόμῳ ὅτι καλός.<sup>62</sup> After the first κεκριμένον, Paul is obliged to acknowledge its associated κεκριμένον, which he does unequivocally. Through this rhetorical device used within 7:7–25, Paul bolsters his authorial ἔθος *as a Jew* and continues to work out his theme rhetoric: Οὐ γὰρ ἐπαισχύνομαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον. *Our second rhetorical conclusion about Rom. 7:7–25, then, is that this passage is crucial to the maintenance of credible authorial ἔθος, and, hence, to the development of the theme of Romans.*

### **Part 3: Analyzing Romans 7—Overview**

In this last part of the paper, we intend to provide a summary of Romans 7 from Paul’s rhetorical point of view. We do not intend any detailed exegesis. This material may be suggestive of how to construe Paul’s rhetorical audience.

#### *The Immediate Setting in 7:1–6*

Paul writes Romans from within an authorial function as corporate representative of messianic Israel rhetorically marked in the *prescript* as “we.” The pluralized “you” of the addressee consistently tracks parallel to this pluralized authorial “we.” This pluralized “you” is the messianic Israel of whom Paul is the corporate representative. Rhetorical *figure* of clearly marked second singular “you” almost completely disappear beginning in chapter 6, as messianic Israel takes center stage. Romans 6–8 is not about the inner life of

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<sup>62</sup> Cf. 1 Tim. 1:8.

individual believers, but rather of the corporate life of messianic Israel. This corporate life has been inaugurated by the eschatological arrival of God’s messiah.

Prior to messiah, Mosaic Israel was cursed with death by the Law meant for life. Release from the Law is release from the Law’s curse, which the Law was ineffectual to avoid, but not release from the Law’s goal for Mosaic Israel, which Paul made clear with a climatic result clause at the end of his second analogy in 7:6: ὥστε δουλεύειν ἡμᾶς ἐν καινότητι πνεύματος καὶ οὐ παλαιότητι γράμματος, “so that we might serve in newness of Spirit and not in oldness of letter.”

This newness of Spirit in 7:6 builds on the concept of that resurrection power in the life of messiah in the creedal formula that Paul affirms in the *prescript* in 1:4: τοῦ ὀρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἀγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν, “declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by resurrection of the dead.” This newness of Spirit in 7:6 operative in the life of Israel’s messiah is that power that quickens the messianic Israel latent in Mosaic Israel.<sup>63</sup> Finally, this newness of Spirit in 7:6 is the preeminent sign of the benefits of messiah’s redemption in 5:5: ὅτι ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκκέχυται ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου τοῦ δοθέντος ἡμῖν, “because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given to us.” This love is God’s steadfast covenant love for his people, especially recognizable in God’s acts of redemption in spite of Israel’s behavior that has not been commiserate with the covenant obligations expressed in the Law. In the present time this redeeming love is God’s action in Jesus Christ. The effective operation of this love is that sphere of Israel’s life untouched by the letter of the Law: ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου, a statement which functions to continue unpacking 2:27: καὶ περιτομὴ καρδίας ἐν πνεύματι.

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<sup>63</sup> Perhaps alluded to in 2:27 in the cryptic phrase: ἀλλ’ ὁ ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ Ἰουδαίος, καὶ περιτομὴ καρδίας ἐν πνεύματι οὐ γράμματι, “but the hidden Jew, even the one circumcised of heart by the Spirit

The Law effected the covenant curse, which decreed death to Mosaic Israel. This reality has threatened Israel’s future and her destiny as God’s people even more critically now than ever in her history, now, that is, that God has sent his Son. Within the scriptural traditions of Israel, the rhetoric of confession and lament find their essence in this historical context. These corporate laments function as sincere expressions of national grief and repentance. By direct and indirect quotation and allusion, Paul draws upon the background of this lament rhetoric in Rom. 7:7–25 to express those paradoxical realities under which messianic Israel has to labor to bring to fruition her eschatological destiny from within the context of Mosaic Israel.

*The Past Tense Unit in 7:7–13*

The “I” of 7:7–13 starts where Paul starts in the associated passage of 9:1–4. Here at the beginning of chapter 9, Paul takes up the traditional ἔθος of Moses on behalf of Mosaic Israel in a powerful example of ἠθοποιΐα (subcategory of προσωποποιΐα, imitation of another person’s characteristics).<sup>64</sup> Paul’s constitution as a Jew is κατὰ σάρκα, which is fundamental to his Jewish ἔθος, and which for Paul is defined as Ἰσραηλιταί (9:4), further defined in 11:1 as ἐκ σπέρματος Ἀβραάμ. So being a Jew for Paul historically starts with that corporate existence that goes back to Abraham.<sup>65</sup> The nation has its historical roots here and its redemptive roots in Moses and the

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not by the letter.”

<sup>64</sup> Quintilian, *Inst.* 9.2.58. Anderson, p. 234, acknowledged that an allusion to Moses was probable in this passage.

<sup>65</sup> This comports with 4:1: Ἀβραάμ τὸν προπάτορα ἡμῶν κατὰ σάρκα. Paul’s parsing of the Adam unit in 5:12–21 is only by way of explaining *Sin’s presence in the world*, and with Sin, Death. Sin would not be afforded the privilege of furtively lying in wait throughout all time to inflict Death on humans indiscriminately, all the while leaving humans unaware of its life-threatening presence or remedy. Law enters in to guarantee that Sin is exposed as rebellion against God and to reveal Sin’s true nature as the antithesis of all God’s purposes in Creation. In this line of reasoning, Abraham is not a necessary *topos*, explaining why Paul jumps from Adam to Moses in Rom. 5:14. Romans 7 is not about Adam. Romans 7 is about the Law. Adam explains Sin’s presence but not the Law’s problem, which is the immediate topic in 7:7. Other Jewish traditions, however, *did* analyze Adam as a prototype of receiving God’s commandment; cf. 2 Esdr. 3:7; 7:118.

corresponding covenantal existence that maintained that redemption in the Law. Paul could wish ἀνάθεμα εἶναι αὐτὸς ἐγὼ ἀπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, “I myself to be anathema from Messiah” (9:4) because this touches on the fundamental problem of Mosaic Israel at the present time—living under the Law’s curse.

So Israel’s story comes to life with Abraham, whose lineage (ἐκ σπέρματος Ἀβραάμ) defines the essence of Mosaic Israel prior to Sinai: ἐγὼ δὲ ἔζων χωρὶς νόμου ποτέ, “Now I was alive apart from the Law formerly,” 7:9.<sup>66</sup> The commandment came, which was meant for life. However, stalking the commandment was Sin, present since Adam, but not out in the open in its brutal and savage deadliness. Sin, not recognizing God’s ultimate purpose for the Law, only saw opportunity to work Death extraordinarily through the Law’s curse. So Sin came into full force in the world within Mosaic Israel (ἐλθούσης δὲ τῆς ἐντολῆς ἡ ἁμαρτία ἀνέζησεν, “but when the commandment came, sin came alive,” 7:9), disabusing the Law of its intent for life. Sin produced all manner of rebellion against God in Israel, which was remedied neither by her kings nor her prophets. With that ultimate rebellion came the Law’s curse, threatening Israel’s very existence by exiling her away from the very land that defined her existence as a nation among the nations and gave her a chance to fulfill her destiny in God’s purposes for calling Abraham: ἐγὼ δὲ ἀπέθανον καὶ εὗρέθη μοι ἡ ἐντολὴ ἢ εἰς ζωὴν, αὕτη εἰς θάνατον, “So I died and discovered that the very commandment that intended life resulted in death,” 7:10. Mosaic Israel was deceived tragically about what would turn out as the real outcome.

So the Law is God’s Law—holy, just, and good. Clearly, then, the good intended that resulted in death was not the Law’s fault but Sin’s design. On the other hand, Sin for

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<sup>66</sup> Schreiner’s reading subjectivizes Paul’s objective language as Paul’s “own consciousness before receiving the Law,” then conflates rhetorical *topoi* with the assertion that Paul’s “I” is a “paradigmatic” Adamic experience, and finally thaws the entire discussion into utter confusion with: “All through human history the encounter with the law . . .” (as if all humans entered into the covenant at Sinai!), pp. 364, 365.

the first time since Adam had to come out from the corners of life and was exposed as exceedingly sinful.

*The Present Tense Unit in 7:14–25*

Messianic Israel currently understands that the Law is spiritual, ultimately sourced in God (because God has poured out his Spirit in our hearts). At the same time, messianic Israel, struggling to realize her destiny, now is burdened with the weight of Mosaic Israel, which, in the absence of the power released in the messiah, continues to live under the power of Sin, whose sphere of especial effectiveness continues to be corporate, that is, κατὰ σάρκα: ἐγὼ δὲ σάρκινός εἰμι πεπραμένος ὑπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν, “but I am fleshly,<sup>67</sup> having been sold over to sin,” 7:14. Thus, absent messiah’s redemptive power, Mosaic Israel desires the good the Law intends but does the evil the Law condemns. This ultimately will prevent messianic Israel from obtaining her goal in Christ.<sup>68</sup>

What really is at work in this vicious circle of good intent and bad result is Sin. Mosaic Israel corporately remains constituted through Moses only and has no effectual remedy for Sin as brought by the messiah (τοῦτ’ ἔστιν ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου, “that is, in my flesh,” 7:18), so no good ultimately can dwell within.

Mosaic Israel currently encounters the Law from a new reality: the unremedied curse (Εὐρίσκω ἄρα τὸν νόμον, “So then I discover the Law”). In as much as Mosaic Israel can appropriate by reflection (τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοός μου, “the Law my mind appropriates”) what messianic Israel already knows by experience, a meeting of the minds on the Law of God can take place. Mosaic Israel might could see, if she stood back

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<sup>67</sup> The corporate existence of Israel encoded in the doubly nuanced κατὰ σάρκα is difficult to bring across in translation when linguistically encoded as an adjective.

<sup>68</sup> In the sense of Rom. 10:4, τέλος γὰρ νόμου Χριστὸς εἰς δικαιοσύνην παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι, “For Messiah is the goal of the Law unto righteousness for everyone who believes.”

and took a sobering look at the lives of those who constitute her corporate existence κατὰ σάρκα (ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου, “in my members,” 7:23),<sup>69</sup> that the Law effectively has become other than what originally had been intended (ἕτερον νόμον, “another Law,” 7:23).<sup>70</sup> From that angle, under Sin’s control, the Law could be called “the Law of Sin” (τῷ νόμῳ τῆς ἀμαρτίας, 7:23).

Paul then concludes this apology for the Law with his deepest expression of authorial πάθος and representative identity to this point in Romans in 7:24–25. The following is a paraphrase that attempts to bring out the rhetorical essence of this climax.

Paul, in lamentation on behalf of Mosaic Israel:

“O wretched nation that I am! Who will deliver me from this cursed destiny?”

(ταλαίπωρος ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος· τίς με ῥύσεται ἐκ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ θανάτου τούτου; 7:24)

Paul, in thanksgiving on behalf of messianic Israel:

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

(χάρις δὲ τῷ θεῷ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν. 7:25)

So then, ostensibly, Mosaic Israel serves the Law of God, but in real life corporately (τῇ δὲ σαρκί, 7:25) the Law of Sin.

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<sup>69</sup> Anticipating precisely what Paul does metaphorically in exhortations to believers in 12:4–5 using the same concept of “members” (μέλη).

<sup>70</sup> Very close in sentiment is 2 Esdr. 3:20: “But you did not take away their wicked heart and enable your law to bear fruit in them . . . although your law was in your people’s hearts,”