

WAYNE COPPINS

The Interpretation
of Freedom
in the Letters of Paul

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

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Mohr Siebeck

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Wayne Coppins

The Interpretation of Freedom in the Letters of Paul

With Special Reference to the 'German' Tradition

Mohr Siebeck

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For Ingie

Preface

This manuscript represents a lightly revised version of my doctoral thesis, which was completed at the University of Cambridge in July 2007. Though there are many ways in which a research project is a solitary task, it nevertheless holds true that I would not have been able to begin or complete mine without the encouragement and support of my family, friends and teachers.

I am deeply thankful to my parents Wayne Douglas Coppins and Marjorie Jane Coppins. From soccer tournaments and Latin conventions to Goethe Institute courses and Cambridge fees, they have always done everything in their power to further my dreams and share in my joys and sufferings. And they have loved me with a generous love that has never depended upon my success or failure.

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The best part of coming to Cambridge is that it was there that I met my beautiful wife Ingie Hovland. More than anyone else she helped me to find the strength to bring my monograph to completion. More importantly, she has brought great joy and happiness into my life and filled me with hope for all that is to come. It is to her that I dedicate this monograph with much love and admiration.

To my Lord and my God I am also thankful. If we are faithless, he remains faithful. A bruised reed he will not break. For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever.

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Citations and Abbreviations

1. The full details for the works cited in this thesis are listed in the bibliography. In the notes I normally cite works by the last name of the author and the date of publication, e.g., Jones 1987; Vollenweider 1989. For translations and works that appear in multiple editions or locations, I generally include the original date of publication in brackets, e.g., Schlier 1964 [1935]; Bultmann 1984 [1948–1953]. For published English translations of German works, I have used the abbreviation ET, e.g., Käsemann 1972 [1968] (ET = Käsemann 1969 [1968]).

2. When citing primary texts from antiquity, I depart from my normal method of citation and provide the author's name and abbreviated title of the work in the notes, e.g., Philo, *Prob.* 1–160; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 4.1.

3. The abbreviations NA²⁷, NA²⁶ and NA²⁵ refer to the 27th, 26th and 25th editions of *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Nestle-Aland). The abbreviation GNT⁴ refers to the 4th edition of *The Greek New Testament* (United Bible Societies). Full details for these works can be found under Aland and Nestle (NA²⁵) in the bibliography.

4. When citing the German and English versions of Walter Bauer's *Lexicon*, I have used the standard abbreviations Bauer/Aland and BDAG. Full details for these works can be found under Bauer in the bibliography.

5. When referring to the various editions and translations of Martin Luther's writings in the notes, I have made use of the following abbreviations. Full details can also be found under Luther in the bibliography:

- | | |
|-----|--|
| WA | Luther, Martin. <i>D. Martin Luthers Werke: kritische Gesamtausgabe</i> . Weimar: Böhlau, 1883ff., e.g. WA 7, 49, 26 = <i>Weimarer Ausgabe</i> ; vol. 7; page 49, line 26. |
| StA | Luther, Martin, and Hans-Ulrich Delius. <i>Studienausgabe</i> . 1–6 vols. Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1979–1999, e.g. StA 2, 264, 19 = <i>Studienausgabe</i> ; vol. 2; page 264; line 19. |
| LW | Luther, Martin et al. <i>Luther's Works</i> . American ed. 56 vols. St. Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 1955ff., e.g. LW 31, 343 = <i>Luther's Works</i> ; vol. 31; page 343. |

- RWML Luther, Martin, and B.L. Woolf. *Reformation Writings of Martin Luther*. Translated by B.L. Woolf. Vol. 1–2. London: Lutterworth Press, 1952, e.g. RWML 1, 356 = *Reformation Writings of Martin Luther*; vol. 1; page 356.
- LDS Luther, Martin et al. *Martin Luther. Lateinisch–Deutsche Studienausgabe*. 3 vols. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2006, e.g. LDS 2, 101 = *Lateinisch–Deutsche Studienausgabe*; vol. 2; page 101.
- DrG Luther, Martin, and Horst Beintker. *Die reformatorischen Grundschriften. Neu übertragene und kommentierte Ausgabe von Horst Beintker*. Vol. 1–4. Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1983, e.g. DrG 4, 9 = *Die reformatorischen Grundschriften*; vol. 4; page 9.

Part I: Approaching the Topic

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Topic and Purpose

Freedom is an empty word; it is a slippery concept; it is a vague cipher for this and for that. While such extreme skepticism is perhaps unwarranted, it is hard to deny that in contemporary speech the precise content or meaning of ‘freedom’ is often difficult to determine.¹ Sometimes it can be discerned from the historical or literary context in which the word comes to expression. At other times, however, it proves elusive. In my view, a similar difficulty arises in the interpretation of freedom in Paul. There too the context sometimes provides the key. And yet there too the precise content of the freedom in question can prove elusive.

This problem notwithstanding, the primary aim of this monograph is to make a contribution to the interpretation of freedom in Paul.² In particular, I hope to shed light on three key issues, namely 1) the importance of freedom in Paul’s letters and theology, 2) the centrality and meaning of ‘freedom from the law’, and 3) the relationship between freedom and service. While these three issues clearly overlap in content, I have made a distinction between them in order to bring each issue into sharper focus.

¹ One thinks, for example, of President George W. Bush’s frequent use of the term. For ancient examples of the use of freedom in political rhetoric, see Raaflaub 1998, 650–652, esp. 651 (English translation [ET] = Raaflaub 2004 [1998], 546–548, esp. 547).

² For a good introduction to the topic, see the articles of F. Stanley Jones and Samuel Vollenweider in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* and the *Theologisches Begriffslexikon zum Neuen Testament* together with Gerhard Dautzenberg’s discussion of their views in the *Theologische Quartalschrift*. See Jones 1992; Vollenweider 1997; Dautzenberg 1996. See also Cremer 1911 [1867], 424–428 (ET = Cremer 1883 [1867], 249–252), Bauer/Aland, 505–506 (ET = BDAG, 316–317); Schlier 1935 (ET = Schlier 1964 [1935]); Fuchs 1958; Pfizenmaier 1973 [1959]; Bläser 1960; Esking 1962; Blunck 1967 (ET = Blunck 1975 [1967]); Kosnetter 1967 (ET = Kosnetter 1970 [1967]); Berger 1968; Fraine 1968; Nestle 1972; Niederwimmer 1980 (ET = Niederwimmer 1990); Bartsch 1983; Jones 1991; Pratcher 1994; Vollenweider 2000; and Liddell/Scott 1996 [1843], 532; Banks 1900; Orr 1909; Marsh 1962; Packer 1996 [1962]; Cherbonnier 1963; Bruce 1986; Louw/Nida 1988, 487–489, 741–742; Cosgrove 1990; Chamblin 1993; Harrill 1996; Silva 1996; Ciampa 2000.

In the first instance, I aim to examine these three issues by focusing on the importance of the ἐλευθερ- word group, the centrality and meaning of the expressions ‘(set) free from the law’ and ‘freedom from the law’, and the relationship between the ἐλευθερ- and δουλ- word groups in Paul. Then again, I will also comment on the importance of the concept(s) of freedom, the centrality and meaning of the concept of ‘freedom from the law’, and the relationship between the concepts of freedom and service in Paul. In short, I aim to proceed in a manner that remains sensitive to the need to distinguish between the word and concept of freedom.³ While acknowledging the limitations of my approach, I will (initially) focus upon those passages in the undisputed letters of Paul in which the ἐλευθερ- word group appears.

In view of the many existing studies on freedom in Paul, some justification is required for adding another. Two reasons may be put forth. First, there is no monograph in English that provides a thorough examination of the passages in Paul that contain the ἐλευθερ- word group.⁴ Secondly, since the topic of freedom has been pursued with unrivaled vigor in the ‘German’ tradition, there is need for an English work on the topic that gives particular attention to this rich tradition of interpretation.⁵

In view of the predominance of ‘German’ works on freedom, a second aim of this monograph is to further critical and constructive engagement with ‘German’ scholarship in general and ‘German’ scholarship on freedom in particular.⁶ In my judgment the importance of this aim is magnified by several developments in contemporary Biblical studies. Whereas the ‘German’ tradition played a/the decisive role in setting the pace and direction of New Testament scholarship at many points in the past, in recent years it has arguably ceased to exercise this function in the same measure. While there are undoubtedly positive benefits associated with this shift in influence, it brings with it the potential danger that the ‘German’

³ For further reflection on this point, see chapters 3 and 7.

⁴ For reasons of scope or detail, Longenecker 1964, Drane 1975, Richardson 1979, Barrett 1985, Dunn 1993a and Galloway 2004 do not constitute exceptions to this point.

⁵ See esp. Weiß 1902; Schlier 1935 (ET = Schlier 1964 [1935]); Bultmann 1984a [1948–1953], 331–353 (ET = Bultmann 2007 [1948–1953], 330–352); Niederwimmer 1966; Schürmann 1990a [1971]; Nestle 1972; Jones 1987; Vollenweider 1989; Dautzenberg 1990; Dautzenberg 2001; Söding 2003. See also notes 2 and 15.

⁶ The need for a critical *and* constructive approach follows from the fact that traditions and horizons of interpretation can both enable and distort our understanding of the Biblical texts. Since traditions can enable understanding, it is necessary to approach the ‘German’ tradition with receptiveness, hoping and expecting to learn from it. Since traditions can also distort understanding, however, it is at the same time necessary to approach the ‘German’ tradition in a critical manner.

tradition will be increasingly marginalized.⁷ For this reason, proactive measures are needed to further genuine engagement with this important tradition of interpretation. These measures are all the more necessary since the discipline of New Testament studies has begun to show increasing signs of “linguistic atrophy” in recent years.⁸

The designation ‘the “German” tradition’ is intentionally broad. It refers in the first instance to German scholarship in the strict sense (e.g. Rudolf Bultmann), in the second instance to scholarship in other German-speaking countries such as Austria (e.g., Kurt Niederwimmer) and Switzerland (e.g. Samuel Vollenweider; Hans Weder), in the third instance to scholarship written in German by scholars whose first language is not German (e.g. F. Stanley Jones, American; Heikki Räisänen, Finnish), and in the fourth instance to scholarship written in a language other than German by a native German speaker (e.g. Hans Dieter Betz). In speaking of the ‘German’ tradition in the singular, I do not wish to imply that it is monolithic in character. Nor do I wish to deny that there are important differences between the various groups mentioned above. Instead, I merely wish to suggest that the aforementioned groups of scholars share a common discourse, which is generally shared to a lesser extent by others.⁹ Throughout this monograph phrases such as the ‘German’ tradition, ‘German’ New Testament scholarship and ‘German’ scholarship should be understood in this broad sense.

This monograph consists of eight chapters of unequal length. In the remainder of the introduction I will comment further on the particular interest in the topic of freedom in the ‘German’ tradition. I will then highlight three influential emphases in Martin Luther’s 1520 tractate *The Freedom of a Christian*, which was written at a turning point of the Reformation.¹⁰ Chapter 2 will then trace how Luther’s emphases have been taken up, modified and contested in twentieth-century ‘German’ New Testament scholarship on freedom. After providing a more precise account of my methodology in chapter 3, chapters 4, 5 and 6 will consist of an

⁷ While some may question the reality or acuteness of this danger, the fact that references to ‘German’ scholarship in Anglophone works often appear to have been added to arguments that were initially constructed and developed without any reference to it suggests that the danger is all too real.

⁸ See Bockmuehl 2006, 35–36. My point is not that I have entirely escaped this “linguistic atrophy”, but rather that I hope to limit the deleterious effects of this phenomenon by engaging at length with scholarship written in the foreign research language in which I am most competent.

⁹ Here, as elsewhere, the exception proves the rule. See e.g., Hengel 1995, xix: “I dedicate this volume in deep gratitude to Charles Kingsley Barrett, who has been a bridge-builder between British and German scholarship in the New Testament”.

¹⁰ For the historical context of the tractate, see below pages 11–12.

exegetical study of those passages in Paul in which the ἐλευθερ- word group appears. More specifically, chapter 4 will discuss 1–2 Corinthians, chapter 5 Galatians, and chapter 6 Romans. Chapter 7 will then spell out the significance of the exegetical chapters for our understanding of the issues raised in the first two chapters, namely the importance of freedom in Paul's letters and theology, the centrality and meaning of freedom from the law, and the relationship between freedom and service. Finally, chapter 8 will provide a retrospective account of the promise and pitfalls of 'German' scholarship on freedom.

1.2 Freedom and the 'German' Tradition

While the topic of freedom has not been neglected in twentieth-century Anglophone scholarship¹¹ or elsewhere,¹² it has arguably received greater attention in 'German' New Testament studies.¹³ Although the reasons for this increased attention are undoubtedly complex, there can be little doubt that Luther's elevation of the topic's importance is at least partially responsible for this phenomenon.¹⁴ An extraordinary number of 'German' works are devoted to the topic of freedom or give particular attention to it.¹⁵ The most substantial monographs on the topic have been written in

¹¹ See e.g., Macgregor 1931 [1914]; Wedell 1950; Diétrich 1952; Easton 1953; Arndt 1956; Longenecker 1964; Clifford 1967; Krenz 1969; Stagg 1972; Cranfield 1974; Keck 1974; Cooper 1975; Drane 1975; Stanley 1975; Jones 1976; Bruce 1977; Chilton 1977–1978; Bruce 1978; Epp 1978; Horsley 1978; Richardson 1979; Osiek 1980; Brunt 1981; Murphy-O'Connor 1981; Barrett 1982; Shaw 1983 [1982]; Deidun 1983; Bruce 1984; Barrett 1985; France 1986; Gerhardson 1987; Bauckham 2002 [1990]; Dawes 1990; Buckel 1992; Buckel 1993; Dunn 1993a; Loubser 1994; Malherbe 1994; Winger 1997; Galloway 2004; Loubser 2005. See also the works of Hans Dieter Betz and F. Stanley Jones listed in note 15 and the last group of authors cited in note 2.

¹² See e.g. Cambier 1964; Grossouw 1969; Pastor Ramos 1977.

¹³ See note 15.

¹⁴ This supposition is confirmed by the fact that many 'German' New Testament works on freedom make (repeated) reference to Luther. See esp. Weiß 1902, 5–7, 18, 27, 29, 33. See also note 39. For the broader reception history of Luther's concept of freedom, see Brecht 1995; Edwards 1995; Lienhard 1995; Altmann 1995; Schwarz 2001. See also Loewenich 1959; Ebeling 1971 [1968], 309–313; Bornkamm 1970; Mokrosch 1975; Ebeling 1979, 180–183; Mühlen 1985; Lindbeck 1985, 7–11; Maron 1993a [1983], 43–44; 54–57; Blickle 1998; Beintker 1998, 54–57; Hütter 2004, 111–167, esp. 116–124. See also Mullett 2004, 1: "In this book we shall be considering the Protestant reformation launched by Martin Luther from 1517 onwards as a major event in world history, and especially within the great saga of the history of human freedom".

¹⁵ See Cremer 1911 [1867], 424–428 (ET = Cremer 1883 [1867], 249–252); Bauer/Aland, 506–506 (ET = BDAG, 316–317); Weiß 1902; Lütgert 1908, 1–40; Weiß 1917, 192–207, 434–435 (ET = Weiß 1959, 1:258–276; 2:557–559); Bismarck 1921;

German,¹⁶ namely Kurt Niederwimmer's *Der Begriff der Freiheit im Neuen Testament* (1966),¹⁷ F. Stanley Jones's "*Freiheit*" in *den Briefen des Apostels Paulus* (1987)¹⁸ and Samuel Vollenweider's *Freiheit als neue*

Schmitz 1923; Müller 1926; Bultmann 1961a [1930], 144–146; Brandt 1932; Schlier 1935 (ET = Schlier 1964 [1935]); Gulin 1941; Bornkamm 1966 [1947/1949]; Bultmann 1952a [1948] (ET = Bultmann 1955a [1948]); Bultmann 1984a [1948–1953], 331–353 (ET = Bultmann 2007 [1948–1953], 330–352); Bultmann 1961b [1949]; Fuchs 1949; Schlier 1966 [1949]; Bultmann 1952b (ET = Bultmann 1955b [1952]); Körner 1953; Neuenschwander 1954; Reicke 1955; Gräßer 1955; Pohlenz 1955, 178–187 (ET = Pohlenz 1966 [1955], 169–179); Maurer 1956; Fuchs 1958; Bultmann 1984b [1959]; Pfizenmaier 1973 [1959]; Bläser 1960; Hengel 1961 (ET = Hengel 1989 [1961]); Esking 1962; Diezinger 1962; Häring 1963; Anderson 1964; Käsemann 1972a [1964] (ET = Käsemann 1971 [1964]); Niederwimmer 1966; Baumbach 1967a; Baumbach 1967b; Blunck 1967 (ET = Blunck 1975 [1967]); Kosnetter 1967 (ET = Kosnetter 1970 [1967]); Berger 1968; Fraine 1968; Käsemann 1972b [1968] (ET = Käsemann 1969 [1968]); Oyen 1968; Schnackenburg 1968; Bouwman 1969; Niederwimmer 1970; Schlier 1970; Schwank 1970; Eid 1971; Schürmann 1990a [1971]; Kümmel 1974b [1972], 186–193; Nestle 1972; Schnackenburg 1973; Bartsch 1974; Betz 1994a [1974] (English Version = Betz 1974); Grundmann 1974; Bornkamm 1975; Schelcke 1975; Mußner 1976; Ratschow 1987 [1976]; Betz 1994b [1977]; Schlier 1977a; Friedrich 1978; Osten-Sacken 1987 [1978]; Lohse 1979; Schottroff 1979; Niederwimmer 1980 (ET = Niederwimmer 1990 [1980]); Galitis 1981; Weder 1982; Bartsch 1983; Bindemann 1983; Kertelge 1991 [1984]; Baumbach 1985; Jones 1987; Mußner 1989 [1987]; Gleixner 1988; Blank 1992 [1989]; Kertelge 1989; Theobald 2001 [1989]; Vollenweider 1989; Dautzenberg 1990; Schottroff 1993 [1990]; Jones 1991; Jones 1992; Räisänen 1992d; Pratcher 1994; Dautzenberg 1996; Vollenweider 1997; Weder 1998; Landmesser 2000; Rehmann 2000; Vollenweider 2000; Dautzenberg 2001; Theißen 2002; Söding 2003; Schnelle 2003, 618–627, 223–230, 273, 322–324, 367–378 (ET = Schnelle 2005, 538–545, 211–217, 254, 295–296, 333–342); Schäfer 2004, 185–190. See also Barth 1953 (ET = Barth 1961 [1953]); Ebeling 1979, 171–180; Schütte 1996; Greshake 2004; Stolle 2005, 42–46. Given the importance of the topic of freedom for the Lutheran tradition, it is noteworthy that many of these scholars are Roman Catholic, e.g., Schlier, Häring, Bouwman, Schnackenburg, Schürmann, Ratschow, Mußner, Kertelge, Gleixner, Blank, Theobald, Dautzenberg, Söding, Schütte, and Greshake. Heinrich Schlier, of course, (in)famously converted from Lutheranism to Roman Catholicism in 1952. Prior to his conversion he studied under Rudolf Bultmann, taught at the Wuppertal Predigtseminar, was pastor of the Lutheran confessing church in Wuppertal and was Professor in Bonn.

¹⁶ In view of their limited scope, I do not regard Pastor Ramos 1971, Barrett 1985 or Galloway 2004 as exceptions to this point. Though the scope of their work is broader, Longenecker 1964, Drane 1975, Richardson 1979, and Dunn 1993a do not comment in detail on many of the texts in which the ἐλευθερ- word group appears.

¹⁷ Niederwimmer 1966. The Austrian scholar Kurt Niederwimmer submitted this work as his *Habilitationsschrift* to the Protestant Faculty of Theology in Vienna. Amongst others, Niederwimmer thanks his teacher Gottfried Fitzer in his foreword.

¹⁸ The American scholar F. Stanley Jones submitted an earlier version of this work as a doctoral thesis at the University of Göttingen under the supervision of Georg Strecker. Amongst others, Jones thanks Georg Strecker, Hans Dieter Betz, Dieter Nestle, and Gerd Lüdemann in his foreword. See Jones 1987, 5.

Schöpfung (1989)¹⁹ – a point whose force is not lessened by the fact that the authors are Austrian, American and Swiss rather than German.²⁰ There have also been a significant number of recent contributions to the study of freedom in Paul from the ‘German’ tradition,²¹ and many of the Anglo-phone scholars who have written on the topic of freedom are known for their exemplary engagement with ‘German’ scholarship.²²

With respect to Luther’s influence it is important to stress that for many scholars in the ‘German’ tradition, Luther remains a guiding light.²³ In the estimation of Martin Hengel, for example, “Augustine and Luther remain the greatest and rightfully the most influential interpreters of Paul in the history of the church”.²⁴ Similarly, Ferdinand Hahn concludes that “the fundamental lines of his [Luther’s] interpretation are confirmed by contemporary exegesis”.²⁵ In the same vein, Hans Dieter Betz states that

¹⁹ The Swiss scholar Samuel Vollenweider’s monograph was accepted as a *Habilitationsschrift* by the Faculty of Theology of the University of Zürich in 1987. Amongst others, Vollenweider thanks Hans Weder, Siegfried Schulz and F. Stanley Jones in his foreword. See Vollenweider 1989, 5–6.

²⁰ It may be conceded, however, that Jones’s relationship to the ‘German’ tradition is especially complex. On the one hand, since Jones is an American, there is a sense in which Jones approaches the ‘German’ tradition as an outsider. On the other hand, since his monograph originated as a doctoral thesis at the University of Göttingen, there is another sense in which his work took form from within the ‘German’ tradition. See Jones 1987, 5–6. Since I completed the first two years of my theological studies in Tübingen, my situation is in some respects comparable to that of Jones.

²¹ See e.g., Weder 1998; Dautzenberg 2001; Theißen 2002; Söding 2003.

²² This is true, for example, of Richard Longenecker, F.F. Bruce, C.K. Barrett and James D.G. Dunn. See Longenecker 1964; Bruce 1977; Bruce 1978; Bruce 1984; Bruce 1986; Barrett 1982; Barrett 1985; Dunn 1993a; Dunn 1998, 742 (Index: Liberty). See also Jones 1987. While I suspect that this is also true in other foreign-language traditions, I am not in a position to make this judgment.

²³ This is also true, of course, for many scholars in other traditions. See esp. Westerholm 2004a; Westerholm 2004b, 1–38, esp. 38: “On numerous points of detail, Luther may be the last to illumine. For those, however, who would see forest as well as trees, I am still inclined to propose a trip to the dustbins of recent Pauline scholarship – to retrieve and try out, on a reading of the epistles, the discarded spectacles of the Reformer” (Westerholm clearly alludes here to Dunn 1983, 99, 119 / Dunn 2005a, 92, 108). See also e.g., Volf 2005, 236: “It’s fitting for an invitation to Christian faith based on an interpretation of the apostle Paul to also be offered as a reading of the great reformer. Luther, I think, got the substance of the Christian faith roughly right – or rather, the Luther who discovered the Christian faith afresh did, not the Luther concerned with preserving reformation by earthly powers. And Luther, in my judgment, also got the apostle Paul basically right. This view is not popular today, but popularity isn’t an index of truthfulness”.

²⁴ Hengel 2002, 440. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from German are my own.

²⁵ Hahn 1985, 135.

“there is at least one commentary [on Galatians] which in this commentator’s opinion expresses an extraordinary and profound understanding of what Paul intended to say: Luther’s commentary of 1535”.²⁶ Moreover, he goes on to suggest that “Luther speaks as Paul would have spoken had he lived at the time when Luther gave his lectures”.²⁷

It is equally crucial, however, to stress that criticism of Luther’s interpretation of Paul, and of traditional Lutheran perspectives, did not begin with Krister Stendahl, E.P. Sanders and James D.G. Dunn.²⁸ On the contrary, numerous scholars within the ‘German’ tradition have criticized Luther’s interpretation of Paul at key points. One thinks, for example, of William Wrede, Adolf Schlatter, Paul Althaus, Ernst Käsemann, Peter Stuhlmacher, Albrecht Peters and Karl Barth.²⁹ Moreover, Christof Landmesser’s hard-hitting review of Volker Stolle’s recent monograph *Luther und Paulus* (2002) shows that the relationship between Luther and Paul remains a topic of heated controversy in the present.³⁰ Finally, it goes without saying that the many Roman Catholic scholars within the ‘German’ tradition have not taken up Luther’s views uncritically. For these reasons and others, one should not fall into the trap of assuming that ‘German’ New Testament scholarship (on freedom in Paul) is uniformly or

²⁶ Betz 1979, xv. Cf. Ebeling 1981, VII–VIII (ET = Ebeling 1985c [1981], ix).

²⁷ Betz 1979, xv. Cf. Barrett 1985, 2.

²⁸ See esp. Stendahl 1977 [1963/1960]; Sanders 1977; Dunn 1983 (= Dunn 2005a, 89–110). In the substantial introductory essay to his most recent collection of essays, Dunn provides a more conciliatory assessment of the contributions and limitations of Luther and Lutheran emphases. See Dunn 2005a, 1–88, esp. 17–22, 87–88. In contrast to Dunn, Sanders’s trenchant criticism of Luther and his heirs has not softened over time. See Sanders 2001 [1991], 57–58, esp. 58: “Luther’s problems were not Paul’s, and we misunderstand him if we see him through Luther’s eyes”. See also Räisänen 1987 [1983], 231: “Paul was no Luther before Luther”.

²⁹ For a concise account of the specific criticisms advanced by these and other ‘German’ critics of Luther and Lutheranism (on Paul), see Lohse 1968, 20–26. My point, of course, is not that these scholars anticipated all the points raised by Stendahl, Sanders, Dunn and others. Instead, I merely wish to emphasize that criticism of Luther and Lutheranism on Paul is not as such a new development.

³⁰ In response to Stolle’s thesis, namely that Paul was misunderstood by Luther, Landmesser argues that Stolle fails to provide an exegetically grounded interpretation of Paul’s theology. See Stolle 2002; Landmesser 2006a. For additional responses to Stolle’s work, see Laato 2003; Siegert 2003; Haacker 2003; Haacker 2004; Klaiber 2004. For further discussion of the relationship between Luther and Paul, see e.g., Joest 1955; Joest 1961; Hahn 1985; Stuhlmacher 1985; Hengel 2002, 440–448; Härle 2006a (Abbreviated ET = Härle 2006b) and the essays addressing Lutheran and New Perspectives on Paul in Bachmann 2005. See also Barrett 2003 [1995]; Sanders 2001 [1991], 57–58; Westerholm 2004a; Westerholm 2004b; Dunn 2005a, 1–88, esp. 17–22, 87–88; Chester 2006 and the many relevant essays in Carson 2004.

uncritically ‘Lutheran’ in its outlook. Moreover, one should take care to differentiate between Luther and his Lutheran heirs.

1.3 Martin Luther and *The Freedom of a Christian*

On 24 July 1520 a bull threatening Martin Luther’s excommunication was proclaimed by being posted at St. Peter’s Basilica and at the papal chancellery on Campo de Fiori.³¹ While Luther’s adversary John Eck was seeking to proclaim this bull in Germany, Karl Miltitz, a papal diplomat, was making a last-ditch effort to reconcile Luther with Rome.³² In this heated context, Luther penned his influential tractate *The Freedom of a Christian*,³³ in which he formulated his two propositions³⁴ on the freedom and bondage of the spirit:

Christianus homo omnium dominus est liberrimus, nulli subiectus.
Christianus homo omnium servus est officiosissimus, omnibus subiectus.³⁵

A Christian person is a most free lord of all (things), subject to none,
A Christian person is a most dutiful servant of all (things), subject to all.³⁶

Eyn Christen mensch ist eyn freyer herr uober alle ding und niemandt unterthan
Eyn Christen mensch ist eyn dienstpar knecht aller ding und yderman unterthan.³⁷

³¹ See Brecht 1985 [1981], 390. The bull was dated 15 June.

³² For a detailed account of the historical context, see Brecht 1985 [1981], 389–432.

³³ See WA 7, 39–73, esp. 49–73 (Latin version); WA 7, 1–38, esp. 12–38 (German version); StA 2, 260–309 (Latin version and German version in parallel columns); LW 31, 327–377, esp. 343–377 (English translation of the Latin version); RWML 1, 331–379, esp. 356–379 (English translation of the German version); LDS 2, 101–185, esp. 120–185 (Latin version and modern German translation of the Latin version in parallel columns); DrG 4, 9–47 and 101–105 (modern German translation of the Latin version). For an explanation of these abbreviations, see above, p. XIII.

³⁴ In my view, the ‘German’ custom of referring to these statements as Luther’s “double thesis” is somewhat misleading, since Luther himself always speaks of his “two propositions”. It may, however, be defended insofar as Luther is concerned with how they might be found to “come together”. See WA 7, 49, 26 (= StA 2, 264, 19; LDS 2, 120, 20). Cf. Korsch 1998, 154: “Aus den zwei Thesen ist eine These geworden”.

³⁵ WA 7, 49, 22–25 (= StA 2, 264, 17–18; LDS 2, 120, 16–19).

³⁶ Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Latin (and from German) are my own. In view of the use of the neuter plural *ding* in the German version and Luther’s statements elsewhere in the tractate, the word *omnium* in the Latin version should probably be interpreted as neuter rather than masculine. See e.g., WA 7, 57, 2–3 (= StA 2, 280, 7–8; LDS 2, 140, 15–16): “Primum, quod ad regnum pertinet, quilibet Christianus per fidem sic magnificatur super omnia”.

³⁷ WA 7, 21, 1–4 (= StA 2, 265, 6–9).

A Christian person is a free lord over all things and subject to none,
 A Christian person is a dutiful servant of all things and subject to everyone.

Rather than offering a comprehensive study of Luther's understanding of freedom or providing a close reading of *The Freedom of a Christian* as a whole,³⁸ I will pursue the more modest task of highlighting three emphases in Luther's 1520 tractate that are likely to have influenced twentieth-century 'German' New Testament scholarship on freedom in Paul,³⁹ namely 1) his elevation of the importance of freedom, 2) his interpretation of freedom from the law, and 3) his focus upon the relationship between freedom and service. Before turning to these points, however, it is necessary to comment further on the context, character, and text of the tractate.

The Context, Character and Text of Luther's Freedom Tractate

I begin with Luther's own description of the context in which he wrote *An Open Letter to Pope Leo X* and with it *The Freedom of a Christian*:

³⁸ The literature on Luther's understanding of freedom in general and *The Freedom of a Christian* in particular is massive. In addition to the works mentioned in note 14, see e.g., Maurer 1949; Schmidt 1967 [1953]; Iwand 1980 [1953]; Schempp 1960 [1958]; Joest 1961; Marty 1967; Ebeling 1971 [1968]; Stolt 1969; Mühlhaupt 1982 [1978]; Jüngel 2000 [1978]; Ebeling 1979, 170–190; Ebeling 1985a [1983], 157–180; Ebeling 1985b [1983], 366–394; Harrisville 1983; Hamm 1983; Joest 1983; Pesch 1985; Sauter 1985; Bluhm 1987; Penzoldt 1988; Bayer 1990; Mau 1992; Maron 1993b; Bielfeldt 1995; Forde 1995; Kjeldgaard-Pedersen 1995; Mannermaa 1995; Mühlen 1995; Jacobi 1997; Kjeldgaard-Pedersen 1997; Holm 1998; Korsch 1998; Liedke 1998; Lobenstein-Reichmann 1998; Ringleben 1998; Ritter 1998; Saarinen 1998; Wurzer 2000; Stolle 2005. See also Ebeling 1964, 239–258 (ET = Ebeling 1970 [1964], 210–225); Brecht 1981, 382–390 (ET = Brecht 1985 [1981], 400–409); Ebeling 1983, 75–77; Schwarz 1998 [1986], 107–112, 113–121; Marius 1999, 265–274; Bayer 2004, 267–280; Mullett 2004, 115–120.

³⁹ The supposition that Luther's treatment of freedom in *The Freedom of a Christian* has influenced twentieth-century 'German' New Testament scholarship on freedom in Paul is confirmed by the fact that many 'German' New Testament works on freedom refer or allude to Luther and/or (his two propositions in) *The Freedom of a Christian*. See e.g., Weiß 1902, 5–7, 18, 27, 29, 33; Schmitz 1923, 49, 69; Niederwimmer 1966, 144; Blunck 1967, 366; Ratschow 1987 [1976], 247, 267, 270; Friedrich 1978, 171; Osten-Sacken 1987 [1978], 200, 207–208; Lohse 1979; Kertelge 1991 [1984], 184; Jones 1987, 11; Vollenweider 1989, 12, 397; Blank 1992 [1989], 234; Räisänen 1992d, 55–56; Schütte 1996; Theobald 2001 [1989], 456–457; Söding 2003, 114; Stolle 2005. See also Schürmann 1990a [1971], 230, 233–234, 235, 238–240, who is concerned to address the concerns of the reformation. Notably, references to Luther (or the reformation) are especially frequent in works by Catholic scholars, e.g., Schürmann, Ratschow, Mußner, Kertelge, Blank, Theobald and Söding. It is unclear whether it is significant that Schlier, who (as mentioned above) converted from Lutheranism to Roman Catholicism, makes no reference to Luther in his four articles on freedom.

Since we gained nothing from this debate except greater confusion to the Roman cause, Karl Miltitz, in a third attempt to bring about peace, came to the fathers of the Augustinian Order assembled in their chapter and sought their advice in settling the controversy which had now grown most disturbing and dangerous. Because, by God's favor, they had no hope of proceeding against me by violent means, some of their most famous men were sent to me. These men asked me at least to show honor to the person of Your Blessedness and in a humble letter to plead as my excuse your innocence and mine in the matter.⁴⁰

In the passage cited above, Luther refers to Karl Miltitz's third attempt to bring about peace.⁴¹ This attempt to reconcile Luther with the Pope overlapped with the formulation and proclamation of the bull that threatened Luther's excommunication. More specifically, it took place alongside John Eck's (somewhat unsuccessful) attempts to proclaim this bull in Germany.⁴² As noted above, the bull was proclaimed in Rome on 24 July, 1520.⁴³ According to Martin Brecht, Luther definitely knew of the bull by 1 October.⁴⁴

On 28 August, Miltitz attended the chapter of the reform congregation in Eisleben.⁴⁵ There it was agreed that Staupitz and Wenceslaus Link should visit Luther and "get him to write a letter to the pope, stating that he had never undertaken anything personally against the pope".⁴⁶ According to Brecht, despite skepticism, Luther initially agreed to this proposal, but no longer wished to carry it out after learning of Eck's publication of the bull.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, at the recommendation of Fabian von Feilitzsch, the meeting took place in Lichtenberg on 12 October, i.e., two days after the arrival of the bull in Wittenberg. There it was agreed that Luther should write a letter to the Pope assuring him that he had never attacked him personally, that he should publish this letter together with a short non-polemical writing dedicated to the Pope, and that the publication should be backdated to 6 September.⁴⁸ According to Reinhard Schwarz, there were two reasons for backdating the publication. First, Luther had then expressed to Staupitz and Wenceslaus Link that he was prepared to write

⁴⁰ LW 31, 340–341. This citation comes from *An Open Letter to Pope Leo X*. See WA 7, 42–49; WA 7, 3–11; LW 31, 334–343; RWML 1, 336–347; LDS 2, 102–119.

⁴¹ For the first two attempts, see LW 31, 339–340. See also Schwarz 1998 [1986], 76–79; Brecht 1985 [1981], 265–273.

⁴² See Schwarz 1998 [1986], 113–121; Brecht 1985 [1981], 400–414.

⁴³ See Brecht 1985 [1981], 391.

⁴⁴ See Brecht 1985 [1981], 402.

⁴⁵ See Brecht 1985 [1981], 404.

⁴⁶ Brecht 1985 [1981], 404.

⁴⁷ See Brecht 1985 [1981], 404–405.

⁴⁸ See Schwarz 1998 [1986], 118; Brecht 1985 [1981], 404–405.

such a letter. Secondly, in this way, it would appear to predate the proclamation of the bull in Germany.⁴⁹

If *The Freedom of a Christian* is compared to Luther's more polemical writings, there can be no question that it is, in one sense, a constructive, non-polemical work.⁵⁰ To this extent, it substantiates Luther's claim that it differs from those of his works that were incited by the Pope's "godless flatterers".⁵¹ This fact notwithstanding, it is hardly "a warmhearted testimony to evangelical piety, completely free of polemic".⁵² This is already evident from explicitly polemical statements, such as: "But now by the doctrines of men we are taught to seek nothing but merits, rewards and things that are ours, and of Christ we have made nothing but a taskmaster far harsher than Moses".⁵³ More importantly, the claim that it is "completely free of polemic" cannot be sustained in view of the *implicit* polemic that pervades the entire tractate.⁵⁴ As Risto Saarinen argues, Luther's positive emphasis upon the Christian's power, dominion and freedom brings with it an implicit critique of the power, dominion and freedom that other churchmen ascribed to the Pope.⁵⁵

The tractate was published in both Latin and German, and there is some debate over the precise relationship between the two versions.⁵⁶ Two points, however, remain clear: first, the Latin version is more thorough and precise; second, the German version nevertheless exercised (and perhaps still exercises) the greater influence.⁵⁷ Given its greater precision, I shall

⁴⁹ See Schwarz 1998 [1986], 118. See also Brecht 1985 [1981], 404–405.

⁵⁰ Cf. Mullett 2004, 116: "This great work is not without its aggressiveness, though this is, by Luther's normal standards, toned down".

⁵¹ See LW 31, 343.

⁵² Contra Loewenich 1986 [1982], 185.

⁵³ WA 7, 66, 36–8 (= StA 2, 300, 3–5). Cf. WA 7, 58, 12–22 (= StA 2, 282, 17–27).

⁵⁴ See Stolle 2005, 26: "Der Traktat stellt eine rhetorisch höchst durchdachte Streitschrift dar. Mit der positiven Darstellung, was ein Christenmensch ist, verbindet Luther implizit eine scharfe Polemik gegen den Papst, dem diese Schrift zugehört ist".

⁵⁵ See Saarinen 1998, 171–181, esp. 177: "My basic claim is that the argumentative role of such Latin expressions as *libertas*, *imperium spirituale* and *potentia spiritualis* can be better understood when the above-mentioned counterpoint is presupposed. ... I do think that Luther consciously uses the 'counterpoint' and that he does it not only for rhetorical reasons but because he holds that some contemporary churchmen propagate an understanding of freedom which is problematic in that *libertas* is there conceived as a control of externals".

⁵⁶ According to Maurer 1949, 78, the tractate was originally composed in German. Stolt 1969, 114, however, has convinced most scholars that "a Latin conception lay behind the German text". While accepting Stolt's basic thesis, Schwarz 1998, 108, suggests that the Latin version we possess was probably not completed until after the German version.

⁵⁷ See Woolf 1952, 351.

give priority to the Latin version.⁵⁸ Due to my interest in the reception of Luther's work, however, I will also give considerable attention to the German version.

The Importance of Freedom

Luther chose to entitle his tractate *The Freedom of a Christian*. The significance of this point is magnified when one considers that according to his description of this tractate in *An Open Letter to Pope Leo X*, this small book “contains the whole of Christian life in a brief form, provided you grasp its meaning”.⁵⁹ If these words can be taken at face value, then it follows that for Luther “the whole of Christian life” can be brought under the rubric of “the freedom of a Christian”.⁶⁰

Since Luther purports to speak of the freedom “of which St. Paul often writes”,⁶¹ it is striking that he does not discuss most of the passages in which Paul uses the ἐλευθερ- word group. In fact, in *The Freedom of a Christian* he comments only on 1 Cor 9.19⁶² and Paul's refusal to circumcise Titus in Gal 2.3–5.⁶³ There are no explicit references to the remaining ἐλευθερ- texts in the Pauline writings, i.e., Rom 6.18, 20, 22; 7.3; 8.2, 21; 1 Cor 7.21–22; 7.39; 9.1; 10.29; 12.13; 2 Cor 3.17; Gal 3.28; 4.22, 23, 26, 30, 31; 5.1, 13; Eph 6.8; Col 3.11. In his explication of the freedom of a Christian, however, Luther does make frequent references to many verses and passages in the Pauline corpus that do not contain the ἐλευθερ- word group, e.g., Rom 1.17; 8.28; 10.4; 10.10; 13.8; 14.1, 3; 1 Cor 3.21; Gal 2.20; 4.4; 5.6; 5.17, 24; Phil 2.5–8; 1 Tim 1.9. This observation suggests that rather than primarily or exclusively developing his understanding of the freedom of a Christian from Paul's use of the ἐλευθερ- word group, Luther drew upon his overall understanding of Paul's thought to explicate the meaning of the freedom of a Christian.

Freedom from the Law

The sense in which Luther understands the Christian to be free from the law emerges with particular clarity in the following passage:⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Cf. Saarinen 1998, 172: “I will use the Latin text since it is generally considered to be more precise in theological matters”.

⁵⁹ LW 31, 343. Cf. WA 7, 48, 35; 49, 1; WA 7, 11, 8–10.

⁶⁰ See e.g., Mühlen 1985, 253; Ringleben 1998, 157. See also Bayer 1990, 125: “Martin Luther stressed one thing, and one thing only: You are called to freedom”.

⁶¹ WA 7, 20, 27.

⁶² See WA 7, 49, 27–28 (= StA 2, 264, 20–21); WA, 7 21, 5–6 (= StA 2, 265, 10–11).

⁶³ See WA 7, 67, 9–11 (= StA 2, 300, 17–18); WA 7, 70, 36–37 (= StA 2, 306, 31).

⁶⁴ WA 7, 53, 28–31 (= StA 2, 272, 25–28). Cf. WA 7, 24, 35–37; 25, 1 (= StA 2, 273, 24–8).

So it is clear that
 for a Christian his faith is sufficient for all things
 and he has no need of works to be justified.
 But if he has no need of works, he has no need of the law.
 And if he has no need of the law, surely he is free from the law.
 And it is true 'the law is not laid down for the just' [1 Tim 1.9].

In this passage, Luther explains that since justification is by faith rather than by works, the Christian does not need the law and is therefore free from the law. In short, freedom from the law is the necessary corollary of justification by faith.

Luther's comments on Paul's circumcision of Timothy and his refusal to circumcise Titus also shed light on his understanding of the sense in which the Christian is free from the law. On the one hand, he explains that Paul circumcised Timothy "not because circumcision was necessary for his righteousness, but in order not to offend or despise the Jews that were weak in faith, who were not yet able to grasp the freedom of faith".⁶⁵ On the other hand, he notes that "when they despised the freedom of faith and insisted that circumcision was necessary for righteousness, he resisted and did not permit Titus to be circumcised (Gal 2)".⁶⁶ These two examples show that for Luther the decisive point is that circumcision is not necessary for righteousness since the Christian is justified by faith rather than works. For him, to recognize this point is to grasp the freedom of faith.

The Relationship between Freedom and Service

In view of the force of Luther's two propositions it is evident that the relationship between freedom and service lies at the heart of the tractate:

A Christian person is a most free lord of all (things), subject to none,
 A Christian person is a most dutiful servant of all (things), subject to all.⁶⁷

This, however, does not mean that Luther provides a straightforward account of this relationship. Instead, his treatment of the topic appears to contain several different emphases.

Luther often expresses the relationship between freedom and service with the concessive construction "although free, (nevertheless) a slave": "Although (*cum*) I was (and am) free, I made myself a slave of all";⁶⁸ "so also Christ, although (*quanquam*) he was (and is) Lord of all, was nevertheless (*tamen*) born of a woman, born under the law, at the same time a free person and a slave, at the same time in the form of God and in

⁶⁵ WA 7, 67, 7–9 (= StA 2, 300, 14–16).

⁶⁶ WA 7, 67, 9–11 (= StA 2, 300, 17–18). Cf. WA 7, 70, 36–37 (= StA 2, 306, 31–32).

⁶⁷ WA 7, 49, 22–25 (= StA 2, 264, 17–18; LDS 2, 120, 16–19).

⁶⁸ WA 7, 49, 28 (= StA 2, 264, 21).

the form of a slave”;⁶⁹ “although (*cum*) he was in the form of God ... he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave ...”;⁷⁰ “although (*quanquam*) the Christian is thus free from all works, s/he ought nevertheless (*tamen*) ... to take the form of a slave ... and to serve...”.⁷¹ According to the logic of this construction, being free might be expected to rule out taking the form of a slave, but it does not.

Luther also highlights the fact that the Christian serves “freely”, “in freedom”, or “as a free person”. In 26 (46),⁷² he speaks of “work of most free service” (*opus servitutis liberrimae*).⁷³ In 27 (48), he states that the Christian ought to empty him/herself “in this liberty” (*hac in libertate*).⁷⁴ According to 28 (50), “we ought to do all things freely (*libere*) and joyously for the sake of others”.⁷⁵ In 28 (53), the Latin version states that Christians serve others and the authorities “in the freedom of the Spirit” (*in libertate spiritus*).⁷⁶ Similarly, the German indicates that they “freely” (*frei*) serve them, doing their will out of love and freedom.⁷⁷ Finally, this same section explains how “a free Christian” speaks.⁷⁸ These passages suggest that Luther considers freedom to be the Christian’s *modus operandi*: it is as a free person that the Christian serves others; s/he serves them freely, in the freedom of the Spirit.

Luther less frequently identifies freedom as the ground, cause or impetus of service. As noted above, in 28 (53), the German version states that Christians do the will of the authorities “out of love and freedom” (*auf lieb und freyheit*).⁷⁹ Similarly, in 23 (39), both versions state that the Christian does everything “out of pure freedom” (*ex mera libertate / aus lauterer freyheit*).⁸⁰ In *The Freedom of a Christian*, however, Luther does not develop this point in detail. He never states, for example, that service is a form of freedom, that freedom exercises or realizes itself in service, or that “the freedom which a Christian has through faith is freedom to render

⁶⁹ WA 7, 50, 2–4 (= StA 2, 264, 23–25).

⁷⁰ WA 7, 65, 11–13 (= StA 2, 296, 19–21).

⁷¹ WA 7, 65, 32–34 (= StA 2, 298, 1–3).

⁷² The first number refers to the numeration provided by Luther in the German version; the second number refers to the numeration provided in the *Studienausgabe* (= StA 2).

⁷³ WA 7, 64, 36 (= StA 2, 296, 5).

⁷⁴ WA 7, 64, 33. StA 2, 298, 2, reads “*hac libertate*” rather than “*hac in libertate*”.

⁷⁵ WA 7, 67, 5 (= StA 2, 300, 12–13).

⁷⁶ WA 7, 67, 31 (= StA 2, 300, 39).

⁷⁷ WA 7, 37, 4 (= StA 2, 301, 28–29).

⁷⁸ WA 7, 67, 7 (= StA 2, 302, 13); WA 7, 37, 9–10 (= StA 2, 303, 4).

⁷⁹ WA 7, 37, 4 (= StA 2, 301, 28–29).

⁸⁰ WA 7, 62, 12 (= StA 2, 290, 19); WA 7, 32, 31 (= StA 2, 291, 17).

the service of love”.⁸¹ Nor does he translate 1 Cor 9.19 in a causal manner, i.e., “because I am free (from all), I made myself a slave of all”.⁸²

On the one hand, with a view to the overall argument and inner logic of the tractate, a case can be made for interpreting the relationship between freedom and service in this way, especially in view of the passages that speak of Christians acting out of freedom.⁸³ On the other hand, it is important to note that Luther himself does not actually make such developed statements in *The Freedom of a Christian*,⁸⁴ especially in view of his frequent use of the concessive construction ‘although free, (nevertheless) a slave’. Moreover, it should be noted that in contrast to many of his interpreters, Luther never makes freedom the subject of an action in *The Freedom of a Christian*.⁸⁵

* * *

In addition to introducing the topic, purpose and scope of my work, this chapter has unpacked three emphases in Luther’s 1520 tractate that have probably influenced subsequent scholarship on freedom. In the next chapter I will show how ‘German’ New Testament scholars have taken up, modified and challenged these emphases. I will then prepare the groundwork for Part II and Part III of the monograph by briefly setting forth my specific task and methodology in chapter 3.

⁸¹ Ebeling, 1970 [1964], 212. Cf. Jüngel 2000 [1978], 147.

⁸² Contra Ebeling, 1970 [1964], 212.

⁸³ For a penetrating discussion of this point, see Ebeling 1971 [1968], 319; Ebeling, 1970 [1964], 212; Penzoldt 1988, 232, 236–237; Bayer 2003, 39; Bayer 2004, 263.

⁸⁴ I am not prepared to make the stronger claim that he does not do so elsewhere.

⁸⁵ Cf. Saarinen 1998, 171–172: “In Ringleben’s case the concept of freedom is elegantly argued to contain the core of the whole dialectical metaphysics of Luther. At the same time, however, ‘freedom’ becomes an almost personified subject which has a ‘true nature’ and of which a variety of activities can be predicated. These characterizations which Ringleben labels as freedom reality (*Freiheitsrealität*) or freedom motion (*Freiheitsbewegung*) ascribe to freedom such metaphysical aspects which are hard to find in Luther’s text. Moreover, treating freedom as a grammatical subject may elevate the concept to the extent that it becomes a kind of unified collective hypostasis which is capable of autonomous acting” (171); “In addition to *haben*, *sein* and *werden* at least the following verbs are predicated of freedom in Ringleben’s article: *Freiheit realisiert sich*, *verkehrt sich*, *empfängt sich*, *vollzieht*, *schaut sich selber an*, *gibt sich hin*, *bewahrt*, *setzt sich selber voraus*, *hebt in sich hinein*, *läßt an sich teilhaben*, *gestaltet sich selber*, *kommt aus sich heraus*” (172 n. 5). Saarinen refers here to Ringleben 1998, 157–170.

Chapter 2

Twentieth-Century ‘German’ Scholarship on Freedom in Paul

This chapter traces the reception of Luther’s three emphases in twentieth-century ‘German’ New Testament scholarship on freedom in Paul. Here, my purpose is not so much to show the direct or indirect influence of Luther upon subsequent interpreters (though this is often evident) as to indicate how his concerns have been taken up, modified and contested in subsequent ‘German’ New Testament scholarship on freedom. Throughout the chapter I will therefore maintain a focus on key ‘German’ interpreters and their respective positions.¹

2.1 The Importance of Freedom in Paul

As noted in chapter 1, Luther elevated the importance of freedom by placing the whole of Christian life under this rubric. In this section, I will provide a sketch of key contributions to the debate concerning the importance of freedom in Paul’s letters and theology. Since the different positions adopted follow, in part, from the way in which the interpreters approach the topic, I will also comment on their methodology.

In his 1901 lecture *Die Christliche Freiheit nach der Verkündigung des Apostels Paulus*,² Johannes Weiß explicitly affirms Luther’s treatment of freedom in *The Freedom of a Christian*.³ He notes in his introduction that:

¹ For a more general overview of previous scholarship, see Jones 1987, 11–19.

² See Weiß 1902. According to Jones 1987, 11, Weiß’s 1901 lecture is arguably “the first scientific treatment of the topic”. But see also Jones 1987, 147, where he suggests that the 1830 biblical-theological work of Johann Karl Erler constitutes a possible exception to this point. See Erler 1830. Macgregor 1931 [1914], 41, refers to Weiß’s work as “a tract of singular interest”.

³ See Weiß 1902, 5–7, 18, 27, 29, 33. Here, the influence of Albrecht Ritschl upon Weiß should also be noted. In his discussion of Luther’s contribution Weiß observes that the question of freedom is of special interest in his own day, on the grounds that Albrecht Ritschl had once again placed ‘freedom’ in this Lutheran sense in the center of the religious viewpoint. More specifically, he claims that Ritschl consciously took up the thread of Luther’s tractate, finding there the classic expression for the nature of Christian piety (which Ritschl himself designated as the “Christian perfection”), and finding in this

when he positively presented the sum of the Christian life in that glorious manifesto from the year 1520, Luther knew no more appropriate expression under which he could sum up the whole salvation and eternal bliss of the Christian, as that of the ‘freedom of a Christian person’.⁴

And, Weiß adds, “one feels nothing of a depressed and fearful mood here”, but rather “from there the confession sweeps forth in proud joyfulness: A Christian person is lord of all things”.⁵ He goes on to observe that Luther has explicitly taken this formulation from the writings of the Apostle Paul, notably from 1 Cor 9.19, 1 Cor 3.22, and Rom 8.28, and adds that these Pauline verses are repeatedly referred to in Luther’s tractate.⁶

As for the validity of Luther’s interpretation, Weiß openly praises him, stating that Luther here shows his “truly congenial understanding” of Paul.⁷ In view of the fact that the idea of freedom does not actually occur very often in Paul’s letters, Weiß explains that “a deeper and more penetrating understanding is already required to recognize that the main streams of thought of the Apostle can be summarized in this idea”.⁸ As F.S. Jones notes,

With this ambiguous ‘can’ is neither stated that Paul himself summarized or would have summarized his main thoughts in the idea of ‘freedom’ nor conceded unambiguously that such a summary is a useful hermeneutic principle *introduced* by Luther or modern interpreters.⁹

Nevertheless it is clear from Weiß’s subsequent claims that he believes a number of Pauline motifs do come to expression in the idea of freedom, so

work “the most appropriate interpretation and application of the life-ideal, which the writers of the New Testament put forward” (Weiß 1902, 6).

⁴ Weiß 1902, 5.

⁵ Weiß 1902, 5.

⁶ Weiß 1902, 6.

⁷ Weiß 1902, 6.

⁸ Weiß 1902, 6. See also Macgregor 1931 [1914], 268. According to Jones, with this statement, Weiß implicitly raises the question of the position and importance of freedom in Paul’s thought. See Jones 1987, 11; Dautzenberg 1990, 265. For similar statements to that of Weiß, see notes 43-44 below. In view of Weiß’s 1902 description of Luther’s 1520 achievement, Epp’s assessment of what is “fresh” about his own contribution on this topic is somewhat surprising. See Epp 1978, 100: “What is intended to be fresh [in my contribution] is, first, the overall formulation in which several truly diverse or distinct imageries in Paul are found to be utilized by him in making his one paramount point that God, through Christ, has brought freedom to humankind, and, secondly, the highlighting of certain implications that flow from this unity amid diversity”. In Epp’s defense, it may be noted that there is arguably something fresh about his emphasis upon the diverse or distinct character of the imageries and the implications he draws from the unity in diversity that he identifies. For two attempts to discuss the theme of freedom in the Bible as a whole, see Diétrich 1952; Bauckham 2002 [1990].

⁹ Jones 1987, 12 (original emphasis).

that in Weiß's judgment Paul clearly *could have* summarized his main thoughts in this idea. Therefore, while remaining somewhat ambiguous with regard to what Paul himself did, Weiß unambiguously affirms the material correctness of Luther's interpretation.¹⁰ In fact, he boldly claims at the conclusion of his article that the idea of freedom will only be viable in the future if it is understood in the sense of Paul and Luther.¹¹

In his own analysis of freedom in Paul, Weiß draws attention to the lack of unity in Paul's use of the idea: "it has something equivocal [about it]; depending on the context it is turned here and there, used one minute with this meaning, the next with that one".¹² Nevertheless he distinguishes three basic ways in which the concept (*Begriff*) is used by Paul, namely 1) 'freedom from the law', 2) 'freedom from sin' and 3) 'freedom from the world and its joys and sufferings'.¹³ Weiß's discussion of these three uses does not consist primarily or exclusively in an exposition of Paul's ἐλευθερ- texts, i.e. passages or verses in which the ἐλευθερ- word group appears. Instead, he only appeals to such passages to support his more general discussion. Notably, he makes no mention of a number of the Pauline ἐλευθερ- texts, namely Rom 7.3; 1 Cor 7.39; 12.13; Gal 2.4; 3.28; 4.21–31; Eph 6.8; Col 3.11. He does, however, frequently appeal to texts that do not contain the ἐλευθερ- word group, e.g., Rom 8.28; 10.4; Gal 2.20; 3.22f; 4.1ff; 6.14; 1 Cor 3.21; 6.12; 7.29; 7.32–35; 2 Cor 8.9; Phil 2.6ff; Col 2.20. Several of these texts, of course, were also key texts for Luther, e.g., Rom 8.28; 1 Cor 3.21; Gal 2.20; Phil 2.6ff. In sum, while Weiß gives somewhat greater attention to the Pauline ἐλευθερ- texts than Luther, his interpretation of Paul's idea of freedom, like Luther's interpretation, is not primarily or exclusively informed by these passages. Instead, like Luther, he attempts to summarize the main streams of Paul's thought in the idea of freedom.¹⁴

¹⁰ This is also implicit in Weiß's praise of Luther's understanding of the Apostle, as well as in his subsequent claim that Luther's drawing out of the paradoxical nature of the idea *also* interprets Paul correctly. Accordingly, while Jones's statement that Weiß's praise of Luther "betrays" his agreement with him is not inaccurate, it is clearly understated.

¹¹ Weiß 1902, 19.

¹² Weiß 1902, 11.

¹³ Weiß 1902, 11.

¹⁴ Cf. also Epp 1978, 100: "the thesis of this essay is a simple one, that Paul has a single, unitary, and overriding theme in his understanding of what God has done in the Christ-event – God has set his people free, has moved them from bondage into freedom; in making this one, central point, however, Paul's restless and richly faceted mind moves rapidly and easily from one thought-world to another, from one imagery to another, driving home his point in a variety of ways."

In his 1959 article “Der Gedanke der Freiheit nach antikem und christlichem Verständnis”, Weiß’s student Rudolf Bultmann expressly states that the concept of freedom plays a decisive role in Paul.¹⁵ He had already implicitly developed this argument in his *Theology of the New Testament*, where he places the topic of freedom at the end of his discussion of “Man under Faith” and thus at the conclusion of his presentation of “The Theology of Paul”.¹⁶ Its great importance for Bultmann is indicated by the fact that it stands as a chapter heading – “Freedom” – alongside “The Righteousness of God”, “Grace”, and “Faith”.¹⁷

In his 1930 article “Paul” in *RGG² (Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart)*, Bultmann had previously explicated “the ‘freedom’ of the faithful” in four categories, namely 1) ‘freedom from sin’, 2) ‘freedom from the law’, 3) ‘freedom from men [human beings] and their standards’, and 4) ‘freedom from death’.¹⁸ In his subsequent *Theology of the New Testament*, however, he makes use of only three headings, namely 1) ‘Freedom from sin and walking in the Spirit’, 2) ‘Freedom from the law and the Christian’s attitude toward men [human beings]’, and 3) ‘Freedom from death’.¹⁹ This latter division is very similar to the division found in Bultmann’s student Heinrich Schlier’s 1935 article on ἐλευθερος κτλ. in the *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, which speaks of 1) ‘freedom from sin’, 2) ‘freedom from the law’, and 3) ‘freedom from death’.²⁰ While Jones rightly points out that this well-known tri-partite

¹⁵ Bultmann 1984b [1959], 44. For Bultmann’s relationship to Weiß, see esp. *Evang* 1988, 22–23 and 364 (Index). See also Bultmann 1961c [1956], 284; Weiß 1910, III n. 1; Jones 1987, 13, 148.

¹⁶ Bultmann 2007 [1948–1953], 330–351. For Bultmann’s understanding of freedom, see also Körner 1953; Kappes 1978, 46–48. For a good discussion of Bultmann’s *Theology of the New Testament*, see Robert Morgan’s introduction to the 2007 English edition, which is a reprint of Kendrick Grobel’s 1951–1955 translation. See also Dahl 1991 [1954].

¹⁷ Bultmann 2007 [1948–1953], viii–ix. For this point, see also Jones 1987, 13. Here, it is worth noting that whereas the headings of the English version are “Man under Faith”, “The Righteousness of God”, “Grace”, “Faith”, and “Freedom”, the German version reads “Der Mensch unter der πίστις”, “Die δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ”, “Die χάρις”, “Die πίστις”, and “Die ἐλευθερία”. See Bultmann 1984a [1948–1953], XVI–XVII, 331–353.

¹⁸ Bultmann 1961a [1930], 144.

¹⁹ Bultmann 2007 [1948–1953], ix, 330–352; cf. Bultmann 1984a [1948–1953], XVII, 331–353.

²⁰ See Schlier 1935, 492 (ET = Schlier 1964 [1935], 496). The precise relationship between the threefold division of Weiß, the fourfold and threefold divisions of Bultmann, and the threefold division of Schlier remains uncertain. On the one hand, it seems likely that Weiß’s threefold division influenced both Bultmann and Schlier. Cf. Jones 1987, 13, 148. On the other hand, it is unclear whether Bultmann influenced Schlier or Schlier Bultmann. In my view, it is likely that the influence was multi-directional: Bultmann’s fourfold division (of 1930) may have influenced Schlier’s threefold division (of 1935),

division of Schlier and Bultmann has had a significant influence upon subsequent scholarship,²¹ it is important to note that not all the works on freedom prior to Jones allowed their discussion to be dictated by this threefold division.²²

There is also another noteworthy difference between Bultmann's 1930 article and his subsequent *Theology of the New Testament*. In the former work, he comments on freedom in a section that begins with a discussion of the Spirit.²³ In his *Theology of the New Testament*, by contrast, his discussion of the Spirit is placed under the heading of freedom. This observation is closely related to another, namely that in his *Theology of the New Testament* Bultmann discusses a broad range of topics under the rubric of freedom.

In view of the preceding observation, it is not surprising that Bultmann's explication of freedom does not consist primarily or exclusively in an exposition of passages in which the ἐλευθερ- word group appears. Although he refers to most of these passages, he rarely comments on them in detail. Moreover, he makes no mention of several ἐλευθερ- texts, namely Rom 6.20, 1 Cor 7.39, Eph 6.8 and Col 3.11. Finally, like Luther and Weiß, Bultmann also assigns considerable weight to passages that lack the ἐλευθερ- word group. For example, he states that "the mightiest expression of freedom is 1 Cor 3.21–23".²⁴ Notably, this was also an important passage for Luther and Weiß.²⁵

As mentioned above, Bultmann's student Heinrich Schlier²⁶ wrote the influential 1935 article on ἐλεύθερος κτλ. in the *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*.²⁷ In addition to this article, he took up the topic of

and Schlier's threefold division probably shaped Bultmann's threefold division (of 1948–53). Then again, since Müller 1926, 183, also speaks of freedom from law, sin and death, it is possible that Bultmann and Schlier are heirs of a common tradition, which may also predate Müller's work.

²¹ Jones 1987, 13, 148.

²² See e.g., Nestle 1972; Ratschow 1987 [1976], 243–248.

²³ Bultmann 1961a [1930], 143.

²⁴ Bultmann 2007 [1948–1953], 331. Cf. also Bultmann 1961a [1930], 145.

²⁵ See WA 7, 57, 7–8 (= StA 2, 280, 11–13); WA 7, 27, 26–28 (= StA 2, 281, 11–13); Weiß 1902, 6. On this passage see also esp. Bultmann 2007 [1948–1953], 331; Longenecker 1964, 174; Friedrich 1978, 181; Schrage 1991, 314; as well as Lütgert 1908, 33; Weiß 1977 [1910], 89; Niederwimmer 1966, 197–201; Barrett 1971 [1968], 96–97; Krenz 1969, 363; Bornkamm 1975, 15–16; Fee 1987, 154; Gerhardson 1987, 14; Vollenweider 1989, 20; Wolff 2000 [1996], 77; Thiselton 2000, 327–329. In my view, the frequency with which this passage is placed under the rubric of freedom is probably due to the (direct or indirect) influence of Luther's appeal to it in *The Freedom of a Christian*.

²⁶ For Schlier's conversion from Lutheranism to Roman Catholicism, see page 7 n. 15.

²⁷ Schlier 1935 (ET = Schlier 1964 [1935]).

freedom in three subsequent articles, namely “Über das vollkommene Gesetz der Freiheit” (1949), “Zur Freiheit gerufen: Das paulinische Freiheitsverständnis” (1970), and “Über die christliche Freiheit” (1977).²⁸ Furthermore, his commentaries *Der Brief an die Galater* (1949) and *Der Römerbrief* (1977) also develop his interpretation of Pauline freedom.²⁹ In view of his lifelong interest in the topic, it is surprising that Schlier does not explicitly discuss the relative importance of freedom in Paul’s letters and theology, in the sense that he does not discuss whether it is more (or less) central than other ideas in Paul. He does, however, make the bold claim that “in the Pauline concept of freedom ... the breakthrough to the nature of freedom is undoubtedly given”.³⁰

In his 1935 exposition of the concept of freedom in the New Testament, Schlier explicitly states that “so far as possible we shall restrict ourselves to the context of the ἐλευθερία passages”.³¹ Like Bultmann, however, Schlier does not discuss all the verses in which the ἐλευθερ- word group appears. He omits discussion of 1 Cor 12.13, Gal 3.28, Col 3.11 and Eph 6.8, presumably on the grounds that they are concerned exclusively with the social distinction between free persons and slaves. Similarly, he passes over 1 Cor 7.39, probably regarding it as a non-theological or profane use of the term. While he comments on the remaining ἐλευθερ- texts in Paul’s letters,³² his programmatic claim that “the NT uses ἐλευθερία for freedom from sin (R. 6:18–23; Jn. 8:31–36), from the Law (R. 7:3f.; 8:2; Gl. 2:4; 4:21–31; 5:1, 13), and from death (R. 6:21f.; 8:21)”³³ suggests that he is primarily concerned with Paul’s statements on freedom in Romans and Galatians. While the 1935 article provides no justification for this approach, it is possible to deduce from his 1977 article that this focus probably follows from his stated intention to bring only the main perspectives of what freedom is to expression.³⁴ Although Schlier stands apart from Luther, Weiß and Bultmann in his aim, at least in the 1935 article, of taking as his starting point those passages in which the ἐλευθερ- word group appears, the content of his articles suggests that he too uses the idea of freedom to explicate his broader understanding of Paul’s thought.

Unlike Schlier, Kurt Niederwimmer explicitly comments on the *position* of freedom in Paul’s letters. In his 1966 monograph *Der Begriff der*

²⁸ Schlier 1966 [1949]; Schlier 1970; Schlier 1977a. It should be noted here that Schlier’s 1970 and 1977 articles are almost identical in content.

²⁹ Schlier 1962 [1949]; Schlier 1977b.

³⁰ Schlier 1970, 421–422.

³¹ Schlier 1964 [1935], 496. See also Schlier 1935, 492.

³² For Schlier’s discussion of 2 Cor 3.17–18, 1 Cor 9.1, 19, and 1 Cor 7.20–23, see Schlier 1964 [1935], 499, 501.

³³ Schlier 1964 [1935], 496.

³⁴ See Schlier 1977a, 178.

*Freiheit im Neuen Testament*³⁵ he claims that Paul's statements on Christian freedom assume "central position" in Romans, 1 Corinthians and Galatians.³⁶ Moreover, he draws attention to the importance of freedom in 2 Cor 3.4–18.³⁷ Noting that the concept of freedom in the New Testament is especially shaped by Paul, he reasons that it should be drawn out in the first instance from Pauline theology.³⁸ Indeed, this leads him to state that we can basically view freedom as "a 'Pauline' concept",³⁹ and in his section on Paul, he refers to "Paul's doctrine of freedom" or "Paul's teaching on freedom" (*die Freiheitslehre des Paulus*).⁴⁰ Like Luther, Weiß and Bultmann, Niederwimmer does not take his orientation primarily or exclusively from passages in which the ἐλευθερ- word group appears.

Another interpreter who has placed considerable emphasis upon the importance of freedom is the Roman Catholic New Testament scholar Heinz Schürmann. In critical dialogue with Ernst Käsemann's argument in *Der Ruf der Freiheit*,⁴¹ Schürmann's 1971 article "Die Freiheitsbotschaft des Paulus – Mitte des Evangeliums?" inquires into and affirms the possibility of adequately expressing what is meant by the proclamation of the justification of the sinner by faith under the formal aspect of freedom.⁴² In his view, "the problem of freedom determines his [Paul's] whole theology, although the word ἐλευθερία and its derivatives only occur occasionally".⁴³ In this succinct statement he sums up much of the intention of the scholars discussed above, as well as others who preceded him.⁴⁴ In view of this

³⁵ Niederwimmer 1966. See also page 7 n. 17.

³⁶ Niederwimmer 1966, 69. See also his subsequent article in the *Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, where he states that "the [ἐλευθερ-] word group appears esp. frequently in the Pauline *Hauptbriefe* (Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians), where the question of Christian freedom is considered thematically" (Niederwimmer 1990 [1980], 432; cf. Niederwimmer 1980, 1053).

³⁷ Niederwimmer 1966, 69.

³⁸ Niederwimmer 1966, 69. For a similar statement, see Gleixner 1988, 414. Cf. also the stronger statement by Gerhardson 1987, 19: "Elements from the *eleutheria*-theme are to be found at scattered places in the New Testament but the theme appears fully developed only in one group of writings, the Pauline corpus. Here we meet a grandiose picture of true freedom: 'the freedom we have in Christ'".

³⁹ Niederwimmer 1966, 69.

⁴⁰ Niederwimmer 1966, 168.

⁴¹ Käsemann 1972b [1968] (ET = Käsemann 1969 [1968]).

⁴² Schürmann 1990a [1971], 197–245, esp. 200, 203, 240. Cf. also Schnackenburg 1973, 51–68, esp. 58–64; Grundmann 1974, 304–333, esp. 310–312.

⁴³ Schürmann 1990a [1971], 203 n. 20: "Das Freiheitsproblem bestimmt seine Gesamttheologie, obwohl die Vokabel ἐλευθερία und ihre Derivate nur gelegentlich begegnen".

⁴⁴ See e.g., Gulin 1941, 460: "Obgleich Paulus den Hauptinhalt seines christlichen Erlösungserlebnisses nicht durch das Wort 'Freiheit', sondern durch die Worte 'Glauben' und 'Gerechtigkeit' ausdrückt ... gibt jedoch auch das ins Griechentum zurückführende

statement, it is not surprising that in attempting to construct the “stately building” of the Pauline doctrine of freedom (*Freiheitslehre*) “from the scattered fragments lying about”, Schürmann does not focus primarily or exclusively upon passages that contain the ἐλευθερ- word group.⁴⁵ Instead, like Luther, Weiß, Bultmann and Niederwimmer, he draws upon Paul’s whole theology.

Not all scholars have agreed with the great importance ascribed to freedom. A direct challenge to the prevailing view was made by Dieter Nestle in his 1972 article “Freiheit” in the *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*.⁴⁶ There Nestle states that “Paul, so far as we can see, never made freedom into a central concept (*Zentralbegriff*) of his theology”.⁴⁷ For examples of such central concepts, Nestle refers the reader to Rom 14.17: “for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit”. Nestle then reasons that “there is therefore also no Pauline doctrine of freedom (*Freiheitslehre*)” and adds that it is at least misleading “when whole chapters of Pauline theology are treated under this theme (*Thema*)”.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, due to the ambiguity of the word *Begriff*, which can mean either concept/idea or term/expression, it is not entirely clear whether *Zentralbegriff* should be translated “central concept” or “central term”, though Nestle’s subsequent use of the word *Thema* suggests that the former is perhaps more likely. Then again, it is also possible that he does not always make a clear distinction between the two.

Wort ‘Freiheit’ einen Begriff wieder, der in seinem Kern den Inhalt des religiösen Lebens des Paulus trifft”; Gräber 1955, 335: “Paulus redet gelegentlich von der ἐλευθερία ... ohne daß der Begriff selbst zum Inhalt seiner Verkündigung wird. Und dennoch läßt sich diese als ein einziges Zeugnis von der Freiheit verstehen”; Bouwmann 1969, 87: “Deutlicher noch als diese trockenen Zahlen spricht die Atmosphäre seiner Briefe. Wo immer man Paulusbrieve aufschlägt, stets fesseln sie durch die Begegnung mit einem Manne, der sich befreit weiß von allem, was hinter ihm liegt ... Niemand, der sich auch nur halbwegs mit der paulinischen Literatur beschäftigt, kann sich diesem Eindruck entziehen”. See also Chamblin 1993, 313; Landmesser 2000, 39.

⁴⁵ Schürmann 1990a [1971], 241.

⁴⁶ Nestle 1972. As Jones 1987, 150 n. 33, notes, Nestle’s 1972 article stands in place of his original plan to write a monograph on freedom in the New Testament. See the subtitle of Nestle 1967: *Teil I: Die Griechen*.

⁴⁷ Nestle 1972, 281. To some extent, Nestle’s challenge to the prevailing view was anticipated by Otto Schmitz who suggests that the word ‘freedom’ did not play a decisive role in Paul’s missionary proclamation (see Schmitz 1923, 31, 35). Cf. also Brandt 1932, 19; Gräber 1955, 335, 337 n. 23; Jones 1987, 15. In marked contrast to Nestle, Landmesser 2000, 39, claims that “Wahrheit und Freiheit gehören in sachlicher Perspektive nachgerade zu den Zentralbegriffen der paulinischen Theologie.”

⁴⁸ Nestle 1972, 281. This statement is specifically directed against Bultmann.

Nestle's challenge to the importance of freedom is connected with a shift in methodology. His approach contains three notable features. First, as a heuristic criterion, he takes his orientation from the word groups ἐλευθερία and *libertas*.⁴⁹ Second, he advocates that each of the relevant Pauline passages should be interpreted in its own right.⁵⁰ Third, he discusses the relevant passages on a letter by letter basis, i.e., Galatians, 1 Corinthians, Romans, 2 Corinthians. I shall return to the strengths and limitations of these exegetical strategies – which also characterize the work of Jones, Dautzenberg, and to some extent Vollenweider (see below) – when I discuss my own methodological approach, in chapter 3.

Nestle's bold argument was soon challenged – in fact, it was challenged by one of Bultmann's most influential students, Ernst Käsemann.⁵¹ In his landmark 1973 commentary on Romans, Käsemann describes Nestle's thesis that “freedom is not a basic theme (*Thema*) in Pauline theology” as “hard to fathom”, and claims that “this part of the epistle proves the opposite”.⁵² Moreover, he asserts that “freedom is the anthropological result of the doctrine of justification”, and explains that “it has to be so if justification means the Creator's reconciliation with the rebellious creature and the inauguration of the new creation”.⁵³ Käsemann's response to Nestle is consistent with his earlier work *Der Ruf der Freiheit* where he identified the freedom of the children of God as “the true signature of the gospel and the decisive criterion for everything that calls itself Christian”.⁵⁴

Käsemann's response to Nestle is notable in two respects. First, while Nestle states that Paul “never made freedom into a central concept (*Zentralbegriff*) of his theology”,⁵⁵ Käsemann has him claim that “freedom is not a fundamental theme (*ein grundlegendes Thema*) of Pauline theology”.⁵⁶ In this way, Käsemann (rightly?) interprets Nestle's thesis as a challenge to the centrality of “the theme” of freedom and not merely “the

⁴⁹ See Nestle 1972, 270: “Abgrenzung. Für F. in diesem Sinne stehen im wesentlichen die Wortgruppen ἐλευθερία u. *libertas*. Sie dienen im Folgenden als heuristisches Kriterium. F. steht also immer für ἐλευθερία/*libertas*”. It should be noted here that Schlier had already made a similar statement, as discussed above. See Schlier 1964 [1935], 496; Schlier 1935, 492.

⁵⁰ Nestle 1972, 281, “Die einschlägigen Stellen sind vielmehr je für sich auszulegen”.

⁵¹ For a recent study of Käsemann's interpretation of Paul, see Way 1991.

⁵² Käsemann 1980a [1973], 170 (ET = Käsemann 1980b [1973], 178). While Käsemann does not spell out what he means by “this part of the epistle”, he is presumably referring to Rom 5.1–8.39 or Rom 6–8.

⁵³ Käsemann 1980a [1973], 178.

⁵⁴ Käsemann 1972b [1968], 54; cf. Käsemann 1969 [1968], 41.

⁵⁵ Nestle 1972, 281.

⁵⁶ Käsemann 1980b [1973], 178; Käsemann 1980a [1973], 170.

term” as the polysemous term *Begriff* could (wrongly?) be taken to suggest.⁵⁷ Secondly, like Luther, Käsemann allows his understanding of freedom to be primarily determined by the logic of his understanding of justification.⁵⁸

The next major contribution to the debate was made when F. Stanley Jones published his 1987 monograph “*Freiheit*” in den Briefen des Apostels Paulus: Eine historische, exegetische und religionsgeschichtliche Studie.⁵⁹ In this work he argues that “the idea of freedom plays neither a central or decisive role (contra e.g. R. Bultmann), nor a completely unimportant role (contra D. Nestle) in Paul”.⁶⁰ Though Jones grants that freedom is an important concept (*Begriff*) in 1 Corinthians,⁶¹ he suggests that this is apparently the case only because certain Corinthians placed so much weight upon the word (*Wort*).⁶² Similarly, while acknowledging that Paul nearly makes ἐλευθερία the motto of his argument in Galatians, he suggests that Paul (only) did so for polemical and rhetorical reasons.⁶³ Jones then suggests that in Romans, esp. Rom 6.18–22, it seems that Paul wishes to downplay the word freedom rather than make it a defining designation for salvation,⁶⁴ while conceding that Paul continues to show interest in the word when he emphasizes that the free Christian fulfills the law (Rom 8.2–4) or when he transfers the freedom of Christians into the future (Rom 8.21).⁶⁵ Finally, with reference to 1 Thessalonians Jones argues that it cannot be denied that “Paul also could have managed without this word”.⁶⁶ At the same time, he reasons that it did give Paul’s message “a greater force of attraction”, which, as noted above, Paul may have

⁵⁷ In view of the ambiguity of the word *Begriff*, I think a case can be made for entreating (and perhaps even exhorting) ‘German’ authors to avoid using this word and its cognates entirely or at least to use it only when they mean ‘concept’ rather than ‘term’. Cf. Barr 1961, 210.

⁵⁸ Cf. Gräßer 1955, 355: “Die Rechtfertigungslehre als Mitte der paulinischen Botschaft erweist sich als der tragende Grund seines Freiheitszeugnisses”. Cf. also Schürmann 1990a [1971], 197–245, esp. 200, 203, 240.

⁵⁹ Jones 1987. See also pages 7–8 n. 18 and 20.

⁶⁰ Jones 1987, 141: “Was die Bedeutung des Freiheitsbegriffes innerhalb der paulinischen Theologie anbelangt, so ist festzustellen, daß der Freiheitsgedanke weder eine zentrale oder entscheidende (gegen z.B. R. Bultmann) noch eine ganz unwesentliche (gegen D. Nestle) Rolle bei Paulus spielt”.

⁶¹ Jones 1987, 141.

⁶² Jones 1987, 141.

⁶³ Jones 1987, 141. Cf. Jones 1991, 700.

⁶⁴ Jones 1987, 141.

⁶⁵ Jones 1987, 141.

⁶⁶ Jones 1987, 141.

deemed necessary in his relation to some of the Corinthians and above all to the Galatians.⁶⁷

In his subsequent 1991 article "Freiheit" in the *Neues Bibel-Lexikon*, Jones grants that freedom did play an important role in the elaboration and modification of Paul's *Kampfeslehre*, while noting that freedom "was already familiar to him [Paul] previously in various meanings that were by no means all anchored in a wrongly postulated freedom from the law".⁶⁸ Notably, this statement is absent from his otherwise similar 1992 article "Freedom" in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*.⁶⁹

After this brief discussion of Jones's work, it comes as no surprise that in his view, presenting the topic of freedom in Paul's letters under the tripartite division 1) 'freedom from sin', 2) 'freedom from the law', and 3) 'freedom from death' does not do justice to the disparity of the Pauline freedom statements.⁷⁰ In view of the lack of unity of Paul's usage, he concludes that "in Paul we do not so much find a well-formed doctrine of freedom (*Freiheitslehre*) as a fragment of the history of Paul's thinking and of his correspondence and conflicts with his churches".⁷¹

Building on the work of Nestle, Jones argues at length for the need to take one's initial orientation from Paul's use of the ἐλευθερ- word group.⁷² His argument proceeds as follows:⁷³ First, he argues that decisive weight should be assigned to the occurrences of freedom in Paul's letters rather than to preparatory studies of issues such as the use of freedom in antiquity, the question of Paul's education, or the nature and development of his understanding of the law. Here, his point is not that the study of such issues is inconsequential to the interpretation of freedom, but rather that it is only from the occurrences of freedom that we can determine where and how such broader studies are relevant. Secondly, claiming that a criterion is needed for the determination of what counts as an occurrence of freedom, Jones uses as a heuristic principle the occurrence of a word from the ἐλευθερ- word group. Thirdly, without denying the value of an approach that first defines what is meant by freedom and then seeks this *Sache* in the ancient world, Jones claims that if one is concerned to determine what *Paul* understood by ἐλευθερία, it is necessary to orient

⁶⁷ Jones 1987, 141.

⁶⁸ Jones 1991, 701: "Bei Paulus spielt also die F. eine bedeutende Rolle bei der Ausarbeitung und späteren Modifizierung seiner Kampfeslehre (W. Wrede), war ihm aber schon zuvor in verschiedenen Bedeutungen, die keinesfalls alle in einer zu Unrecht postulierten F. von Gesetz verankert waren, geläufig".

⁶⁹ See Jones 1992, 856–859.

⁷⁰ See Jones 1987, 138–141.

⁷¹ Jones 1987, 141. Cf. Stolle 2005, 42.

⁷² Jones 1987, 20–21.

⁷³ Jones 1987, 20–21.

oneself primarily upon Pauline passages in which the word ‘freedom’ occurs. Fourthly, he adds that if one then wishes to pursue the *Sache* of freedom in Paul’s letters, then it is necessary (in view of differences between the ancient and modern associations of freedom) to proceed from indications in the texts rather than associations in the mind of the interpreter. Moreover, he maintains that this pursuit should be guided by observations concerning the semantic field of freedom words. Fifthly, he stresses the need to refrain from mixing the two fundamentally different methods, i.e., 1) beginning with a definition of freedom and then seeking this *Sache* in the ancient texts and 2) taking one’s orientation from the occurrences of freedom terminology in the texts and only then inquiring further into the *Sache* of freedom. Finally, he explicitly warns against too quickly identifying Paul’s teaching on freedom with his teaching on redemption.

Like Nestle, Jones proceeds on a letter by letter basis. Unlike Nestle, however, he places greater emphasis upon the need for a chronological approach, which in turn requires a preliminary investigation of the chronology of Paul’s letters.⁷⁴ On the basis of a concise examination of this question,⁷⁵ his analysis of the relevant letters proceeds in the following order: 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans. Jones also provides methodological justification for his decision to focus on Paul’s use of ‘freedom’ as a description for Christian salvation.⁷⁶

Only two years after Jones’s 1987 monograph, his views were addressed and responded to in another monograph that has also become a landmark study in the debate, namely Samuel Vollenweider’s *Freiheit als neue Schöpfung* (1989).⁷⁷ Vollenweider observes that while the watchword ‘freedom’ is not particularly frequent in Paul, it appears at key positions (1 Cor 9.19; 2 Cor 3.6 + 17; Gal 5.1, 13; Rom 8.2, 21).⁷⁸ For this reason, he claims with reference to Richard Longenecker that Paul is rightly designated the “apostle of liberty”.⁷⁹ Moreover, against Jones, he reasserts “the traditional view, according to which the Pauline understanding of freedom has its focus in freedom from the law”.⁸⁰

In his later discussion of ἐλευθερία in the 1997 article “Freiheit/Abhängigkeit” in the *Theologisches Begriffslexikon zum Neuen Test-*

⁷⁴ Jones 1987, 22.

⁷⁵ Jones 1987, 25–26. This section is primarily concerned to show that 1 Corinthians predates Galatians. Jones does not offer a definitive judgment concerning the relative chronology of (the various parts of) 2 Corinthians and Galatians.

⁷⁶ Jones 1987, 21–22.

⁷⁷ Vollenweider 1989. See also page 8 n. 19.

⁷⁸ Vollenweider 1989, 20.

⁷⁹ See Vollenweider 1989, 20; Longenecker 1964. See also Bouwman 1969, 87.

⁸⁰ Vollenweider 1989, 21.

ament,⁸¹ Vollenweider more eirenicly states that “it is worth discussing to what extent it [freedom] is only articulated in specific situations from very different contexts (Jones) or whether it alternatively expresses a reasonably coherent context, for example that of freedom from the law [Vollenweider]”.⁸² The different tone of this statement probably reflects the influence of the change in genre, since the writer of a lexicon article is under greater pressure to alert his or her readers to various interpretative possibilities in an even-handed manner. Here, Vollenweider also leaves open whether the proclamation of freedom belongs at the center or the edges of Paul’s theology, while reiterating that the characterization of Paul as the “apostle of liberty” is undoubtedly valid.⁸³ In his contribution to the 2000 article “Freiheit” in *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, however, Vollenweider more clearly states his own view that it was Paul who first “placed freedom at the center (*in den Mittelpunkt*) of his proclamation”.⁸⁴

Like Jones, Vollenweider orients his monograph primarily around passages in which Paul explicitly uses ἐλευθερία vocabulary as a circumscription for the reality of salvation.⁸⁵ He observes that this focus on explicit terms (*Begriffe*) leaves out many passages where Paul touches on the subject matter (*Sache*) of freedom (e.g. 1 Cor 3.21–23; Rom 14f), but he argues that this is not problematic on the grounds that Paul’s overall thought movement tends to be mirrored in the individual units of his writing.⁸⁶ He also explains that he will examine ἐλευθερία words in their respective contexts and that he will delineate their semantic fields (and, he carefully notes, these semantic fields should be seen against the backdrop of their historical development, for instance: ἐλευθερία and δουλεία, ἐλευθερία and νόμος). Finally, he also indicates that he will pay attention to the relationship between tradition and innovation.⁸⁷ With Jones, Vollenweider proceeds on a letter by letter basis. Also like Jones, he purports to discuss the relevant letters in their probable chronological order, namely, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans.⁸⁸

⁸¹ Vollenweider 1997, 499–505.

⁸² Vollenweider 1997, 502.

⁸³ Vollenweider 1997, 502: “Paulus wird zu Recht als Apostel der F. charakterisiert (z.B. Longenecker). Zu fragen bleibt allerdings, ob die in der Wirkungsgeschichte zentrale Freiheitsverkündigung in die Mitte seiner Theologie zu rücken ist (z.B. Bultmann, Bornkamm, Niederwimmer) oder eher in deren Randzone (Nestle, RAC VIII, 201)”.

⁸⁴ Vollenweider 2000, 307.

⁸⁵ Vollenweider 1989, 19–20.

⁸⁶ Vollenweider 1989, 20.

⁸⁷ Vollenweider 1989, 19–20.

⁸⁸ Vollenweider 1989, 20 n. 20. Vollenweider is content to defend this decision by referring to Borse 1972, 175–181.

In 1990, Jones's and Vollenweider's monographs were both reviewed in an article by the Roman Catholic scholar Gerhard Dautzenberg. In this review article, entitled "Streit um Freiheit und Gesetz: Zu zwei neuen Arbeiten über die ἐλευθερία in den Paulusbriefen", Dautzenberg generally sides with Jones against Vollenweider.⁸⁹ Here, he indicates that in his judgment Jones has successfully contested the widespread scholarly opinion that Paul's conception of freedom is intimately linked to the question of freedom from the Torah and can be summed up as 'freedom from sin', 'freedom from the law' and 'freedom from death'.⁹⁰ Furthermore he suggests that Vollenweider's attempt to reassert the traditional position highlights the difficulties of demonstration (*Beweisschwierigkeiten*) that have come to light through Jones's work.⁹¹ In his subsequent 2001 article "Freiheit im hellenistischen Kontext", he reasons that "the evidence of Romans probably must be interpreted to mean that freedom, despite its strong emphasis in Galatians, did not become a central theological conception for Paul".⁹²

With Nestle, Jones and Vollenweider, Dautzenberg's 2001 article consists of a letter by letter discussion of Paul's use of the ἐλευθερ- word group. With Jones and Vollenweider he likewise purports to discuss the relevant letters in their probable chronological order, namely 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans.⁹³ In his 1996 article he claims that passages which are not (potentially) concerned with a specific Christian understanding of freedom do not need to be considered.⁹⁴ In his 2001 article, however, he maintains that all the uses of the ἐλευθερ- word group that occur must initially be taken into consideration, since we are dealing here with a specific Greek category that cannot *a priori* be defined in relation to other (or our own) categories.⁹⁵ At best, he argues, the "important" versus "unimportant" uses of the word group in Paul's writings can only be determined at the study's conclusion.⁹⁶

Dautzenberg's work brings us almost up to the present moment. Before summing up this section on the debate over the past century regarding the importance of freedom in Paul, however, let me first discuss the recent contribution of another Roman Catholic scholar, namely Thomas Söding. Söding's 2003 article "Die Freiheit des Glaubens" again places consider-

⁸⁹ Dautzenberg 1990. Cf. Dautzenberg 1996, 66: "Ich habe mich bereits einmal für die größere Plausibilität des Vorgehens und der Ergebnisse von Jones ausgesprochen."

⁹⁰ Dautzenberg 1990, 276.

⁹¹ Dautzenberg 1990, 276.

⁹² Dautzenberg 2001, 81.

⁹³ Dautzenberg 2001, 58–59. See also Dautzenberg 1996, 66.

⁹⁴ Dautzenberg 1996, 66. Cf. Vollenweider 1989, 19–20; Jones 1987, 21–22.

⁹⁵ Dautzenberg 2001, 59.

⁹⁶ Dautzenberg 2001, 59.

able emphasis upon the importance of freedom. In view of the absence of the word from many of Paul's letters, Söding acknowledges that "while Paul loved *eleutheria*, he did not always place it at the center of his proclamation".⁹⁷ In response to Jones, however, he insists that freedom is much more than a "slogan word" that Paul uses rhetorically against his opponents.⁹⁸ Söding instead makes the positive claim that through Paul's writings freedom emerges as a "primary word" (*Grundwort*) of the gospel, and he adds that it is "a promise that places the church under obligation without it ever being able to honor this obligation by its own power".⁹⁹ Thus while Söding concedes that Paul did not always assign a central role to freedom, he nevertheless posits that through Paul we see its position as a primary word of the gospel, and furthermore that this realization has direct implications for the church.

Although Söding gives particular attention to passages in which the ἐλευθερ- word group appears,¹⁰⁰ he also draws upon passages in which this word group is not used.¹⁰¹ In this context, he explicitly highlights the need to keep the semantic field in view.¹⁰² Moreover, he argues that Paul's emphasis upon freedom is informed by his soteriological reception of the Exodus-Motif.¹⁰³ Then again, he also postulates that Paul was familiar with an early Christian tradition in which faith and baptism were thought of as experiences of "liberation", and he identifies *the key words* of this tradition as ἐξαγοράζειν (Gal 3.13f; 4.5f), ἐξαιρεῖν (Gal 1.4), ἀπολύτρωσις (1 Cor 1.30; Rom 3.24; 8.23), καταλλαγή (2 Cor 5.17ff) and probably also ἐλευθερία.¹⁰⁴ Finally, Söding does not focus exclusively upon Paul's use of the ἐλευθερ- word group in his explication of the position and structure of the freedom theology of Galatians.

Now, at the end of this section, let me briefly sum up the past century's scholarly debate on the importance of freedom in Paul. With Luther and with most scholars,¹⁰⁵ Weiß, Bultmann, Niederwimmer and Schürmann all assign considerable importance to the role of freedom in Paul's letters and thought. Moreover, in explicating the meaning of freedom, they all draw

⁹⁷ Söding 2003, 123. See also note 123 below.

⁹⁸ Söding 2003, 133. Contra Jones 1991, 700. Contrary to the impression left by Söding, Jones's statement here only refers to Paul's use of freedom in Galatians.

⁹⁹ Söding 2003, 133.

¹⁰⁰ See esp. Söding 2003, 115–116.

¹⁰¹ See esp. Söding 2003, 116–118.

¹⁰² Söding 2003, 119.

¹⁰³ Söding 2003, 119–122. Cf. e.g., Ciampa 2000, 505.

¹⁰⁴ Söding 2003, 127.

¹⁰⁵ See e.g., Gulin 1941, 459; Gräßer 1955, 335; Schottroff 1993 [1990], 28; Landmesser 2000, 39. See also Macgregor 1931 [1914], 41–44, 268; Wedell 1950, 205; Epp 1978, 100; Gerhardson 1987, 19; Chamblin 1993, 313; Dunn 1998, 328.

upon the whole of Paul's thought. In sharp contrast to this emphasis, Nestle maintains that freedom is not a central concept for Paul, and reasons that there is therefore no Pauline doctrine of freedom. Focusing more narrowly on Paul's use of the ἐλευθερ- word group, he emphasizes the need to interpret each 'freedom text' in its own right. Käsemann, by contrast, forcefully reasserts the central importance of freedom, which he interprets from the standpoint of Paul's doctrine of justification.

Building upon the work of Nestle, Jones also takes his initial orientation from Paul's use of ἐλευθερ- vocabulary. In view of the disparity of Paul's statements on freedom, he argues that Paul's witness to freedom cannot be subsumed under the tri-partite division that had been developed by Schlier and Bultmann (under the influence of Weiß), namely 'freedom from sin', 'freedom from the law', and 'freedom from death'. Moreover, he claims that freedom plays neither a central or decisive, nor a completely unimportant role in Paul. While Vollenweider, like Jones, orients his work around Paul's use of ἐλευθερ- vocabulary to describe the reality of salvation, he reaches very different conclusions from Jones and Nestle. In addition to claiming that Paul placed freedom at the center of his proclamation, Vollenweider argues that 'freedom from the law' lies at the heart of Paul's understanding of freedom. For the most part, Dautzenberg affirms the position of Jones over against Vollenweider. With a view to the evidence of Romans, he reasons that "freedom ... did not become a central theological conception for Paul".¹⁰⁶ In contrast to Jones and Vollenweider, however, Dautzenberg does not restrict his attention to passages in which Paul uses the ἐλευθερ- word group as a circumscription for the reality of salvation, but chooses instead to consider all the passages in which the ἐλευθερ- word group occurs. Finally, with Vollenweider and against Jones, Söding argues that through Paul freedom became a primary word of the gospel. While giving particular attention to the ἐλευθερ- word group, he also stresses the need to keep the wider semantic field in view.

I shall return to this topic of the importance of freedom in Paul throughout the exegetical chapters below (chapters 4–6), and then in an assessment in the concluding chapters (chapters 7–8). In particular, I will engage with the scholars presented above on the issue of whether or not Paul is working with a unified concept of freedom. I shall also in particular take note of the methodological developments that have taken place, paying attention to the advantages (and limitations) of taking one's (initial) orientation from passages in which the ἐλευθερ- word group appears.

¹⁰⁶ Dautzenberg 2001, 81.

2.2 'Freedom from the Law' in Paul

As outlined in chapter 1, 'freedom from the law' is one of the three key emphases that comes to expression in Luther's tractate *The Freedom of a Christian*. For Luther, 'freedom from the law' is the corollary of justification by faith. Not surprisingly, this interpretation of 'freedom from the law' has left its mark on subsequent scholarship. In this section I will provide a sketch of several noteworthy contributions to the interpretation of 'freedom from the law' in Paul. In addition to commenting on some of the scholars who have already been presented in the section above, namely Bultmann, Schürmann, Jones, Vollenweider and Söding, I will also discuss the work of Heikki Räisänen.

In his *Theology of the New Testament*, Bultmann claims that "freedom from the law ... has a dialectic or paradoxical character: freedom from its demand and obligation to it nonetheless – depending upon the sense in which the formula is understood".¹⁰⁷ On the one hand, Bultmann reasons that Christ is the end of the law insofar as the law is understood as a path to salvation, or as the means to establish one's own righteousness. On the other hand, he maintains that the law retains its validity insofar as it contains God's demand.¹⁰⁸

Bultmann elaborates on this paradox by interpreting Paul's stance in Galatians as follows: When Paul struggled to show the Galatians that the law was not a means to salvation, he was at the same time taking a stance against the ritual and cultic rules, in particular against circumcision and the observance of Jewish festivals (cf. Gal 4.10).¹⁰⁹ After claiming that Paul's positive statements concerning the law refer solely to its ethical commandments, Bultmann explains that 'freedom from the law' in this instance shows itself to be the freedom to distinguish between different elements of the law on the basis of their content; 'freedom from the law', therefore, can realize itself in the freedom to differentiate between the valid and the non-valid within the law.¹¹⁰

The Roman Catholic scholar Schürmann takes up the topic of 'freedom from the law' with an eye to the concerns of the Reformation.¹¹¹ At the end of his 1971 article he states that "freedom from the law means (a) liberation from the Torah as *lex iustificatrix et condemnatrix* and yet in a certain sense also (b) from the *lex implenda*".¹¹² With reference to Rom

¹⁰⁷ Bultmann 2007 [1948–1953], 341.

¹⁰⁸ Bultmann 2007 [1948–1953], 341. Cf. e.g., Kertelge 1989, 328, 333–334.

¹⁰⁹ Bultmann 2007 [1948–1953], 341.

¹¹⁰ Bultmann 2007 [1948–1953], 341. Cf. e.g., Kertelge 1989, 335; Dunn 1988, 419.

¹¹¹ See Schürmann 1990a [1971], 237–240 and 220–229, 233–234.

¹¹² Schürmann 1990a [1971], 238.

10.4 and its context, he states that Christ is “the end of the *lex iustificatrix* and thereby the attempt to establish one’s ‘own righteousness’ (10.3), to find one’s life in the law through ‘doing’ (10.5f.)”.¹¹³ Similarly, with reference to Rom 8.1, he indicates that this also puts an end to the Torah as *lex accusans et condemnatrix*.¹¹⁴ Here, his interpretation is comparable to that of Luther and to some extent to that of Bultmann.

In his subsequent discussion, however, Schürmann appears to develop his thinking in a different direction to that of Luther and Bultmann. For Schürmann, the statement that Christ is the end of the law (Rom 10.4) means that “the law is done away with in Christ also insofar as it places the conscience under obligation – that is as *lex implenda*”.¹¹⁵ This, he states, is not to be misunderstood in a libertine manner. It is also, however, not to be misunderstood as freedom from the *mandatum implendum* that the justified are still under, namely the ‘law of Christ’ (Gal 6.2).¹¹⁶ In his view, being liberated from the law means “freedom *vis-à-vis* the Torah insofar as this as (written) law (as *gramma*) *only* ... comes from outside and thus enslaves (Rom 7.6)”.¹¹⁷ It does not, however, mean freedom from the will of God, freedom from every specified norm or freedom from every ‘commandment’. Nor does it mean freedom from the bond to the ‘law of Christ’ as this presents itself and can be seen by the justified in the teaching tradition of the church. On the contrary, “the demand of God also still encounters the justified as a ‘you should’”.¹¹⁸

Having presented these two scholars’ expositions of the meaning of ‘freedom from the law’ in Paul, let me now briefly turn to the very different arguments of Jones. As noted above, Jones’s 1987 monograph calls into question the central importance of ‘freedom from the law’ in Paul.¹¹⁹ In particular, he argues that there is scant evidence for a unified Pauline ‘doctrine of freedom’, and moreover that the freedom statements that do exist are too diverse to warrant the conventional tri-partite division into ‘freedom from sin’, ‘freedom from the law’, and ‘freedom from death’. On the specific matter of ‘freedom from the law’, Jones argues that neither 1–2 Corinthians nor Galatians contains evidence for “a sharply defined concept of freedom as ‘freedom from the (Jewish) law’”.¹²⁰

¹¹³ Schürmann 1990a [1971], 238.

¹¹⁴ Schürmann 1990a [1971], 239.

¹¹⁵ Schürmann 1990a [1971], 239.

¹¹⁶ Schürmann 1990a [1971], 239. Cf. also Schürmann 1990a [1971], 226–228.

¹¹⁷ Schürmann 1990a [1971], 239 (original emphasis).

¹¹⁸ Schürmann 1990a [1971], 228. For Schürmann’s interpretation of the ‘law of Christ’ as “die Forderung der vom Verhalten und Wort Jesu her charakterisierten Nächstenliebe”, see Schürmann 1990b [1974], 53–77: 62.

¹¹⁹ See Jones 1987, 138. See also Jones 1992, 857.

¹²⁰ Jones 1992, 856–857. Cf. Jones 1987, 140–141.

Moreover, he attempts to make plausible the provocative thesis that Paul first formulated the expression ἐλευθέρᾳ ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου in Rom 7.3.¹²¹

In explicit opposition to Jones, Vollenweider reasserts “the traditional view,” according to which Paul’s understanding of freedom has its focus in ‘freedom from the law’.¹²² On the basis of his exegesis of the relevant freedom texts, he concludes that “freedom *vis-à-vis* the law represents the center of the Pauline understanding of eleutheria (Gal 4f; Rom 6–8; also 1 Cor 9f; 2 Cor 3) – after all, it is through the law that flesh, sin and death first obtain their baneful power over human beings”.¹²³ Then again, in sharp contrast to Jones’s suggestion that the expression ‘free from the law’ first emerged in Romans 7.3, he argues that it is probable that Christians before and alongside Paul already appealed to ἐλευθερία in support of their gradual distancing from the temple and Torah.¹²⁴

Many of the concerns of the scholars presented so far have been picked up in the work of the Finnish scholar Heikki Räisänen.¹²⁵ Räisänen begins his 1992 article “Freiheit vom Gesetz im Urchristentum” by contrasting the positive presentation of the law in Deuteronomy and the Psalms with the negative depiction of the law in Luther.¹²⁶ After noting that Paul stands between the two, he explains that according to the traditional understanding, Paul (and also Jesus) primarily fought against ‘Jewish legalism’, ‘lexism’,¹²⁷ or ‘achievement ideology’.¹²⁸ Moreover, he notes that Bult-

¹²¹ See Jones 1987, 121–122, 136, 140; Jones 1992, 857.

¹²² Vollenweider 1989, 21. Cf. also e.g., Lütgert 1908, 11; Lührmann 1992 [1978], 95; Bruce 1984, 61: “Had he [Paul] been asked from what he had been liberated, he probably would have said, ‘From law.’ He might have added ‘From sin, and death’ – but liberation from sin and death was a corollary of liberation from law”; Dunn 1998: 435 n. 117: “Jones’s attempt to argue against the dominant view that freedom from the (Jewish) law was at the heart of Paul’s concept of freedom (*Freiheit*) is thoroughly tendentious”.

¹²³ Vollenweider 1989, 402. For reasons of precision, I have retained Vollenweider’s use of the transliteration *eleutheria* rather than writing ἐλευθερία or freedom. For similar reasons I also consider it important to note that Vollenweider often chooses to use the expression “freedom *vis-à-vis* the law” (*Freiheit gegenüber das Gesetz*) rather than the alternative expression “freedom from the law”.

¹²⁴ See esp. Vollenweider 1989, 21, 399.

¹²⁵ Although Räisänen is Finnish, he has written and published many of his works in German. For this reason, I have included him in my discussion of the ‘German’ tradition. See above, page 4. Many of Räisänen’s German articles can be found in Räisänen 1986. Fortunately, these same articles have been translated into English by David E. Orton in Räisänen 1992c.

¹²⁶ Räisänen 1992d, 55–56. As is well known, Räisänen’s work has focused in large part upon the problem of the law in early Christianity. In addition to Räisänen 1987 [1983], see the many relevant articles in Räisänen 1986 and Räisänen 1992c.

¹²⁷ I have rendered ‘*Gesetzlichkeit*’ as ‘lexism’ in order to distinguish between the use of the related German words *Legalismus* (legalism) / *legalistisch* (legalistic), *Gesetzlichkeit* (lexism) / *gesetzlich* (lexistic), and *Nomismus* (nomism) / *nomistisch* (nomistic).

mann, in the tradition of Luther, understood law piety as a manifestation of "the fundamental sin of humanity", namely the general need for recognition.¹²⁹ More specifically, he explains that, in Bultmann's view, in Judaism this need comes to expression in "the will to be something before God", and the law functions as the means to achieve this.¹³⁰

In criticism of Bultmann and his successors, Räisänen endorses E.P. Sanders's thesis that "the law was not a means for obtaining the right relation to God but an aid through which one could remain in the sphere of the covenant relationship".¹³¹ Moreover, he explains that it is more appropriate to compare the position of the law in Judaism to the apostolic parenthesis than to the position of Christ in Christianity.¹³² It is therefore akin to sanctification rather than justification.¹³³

In a section entitled "Freedom from 'Ritual'-Law in the Gentile Mission", Räisänen next postulates that it was initially Christ-believing Gentiles who were to be 'liberated' or rather preserved from the observance of the Torah, while noting that in the conflict over this issue some Jewish Christians also adopted a 'pagan' perspective towards the Torah, especially with a view to its specific Jewish aspects (e.g., circumcision, food regulations).¹³⁴ Moreover, he claims that this praxis came first,¹³⁵ i.e., it preceded rather than followed attempts to ground or legitimize this praxis with theological argumentation. Against this background, Räisänen treats the meaning of 'freedom from the law' in Paul under the heading "The legitimization of the free praxis in view of opposition: Paul".¹³⁶ Here,

The fact that the precise meanings and nuances of these words often differ from author to author does not remove the need to indicate which term is being used.

¹²⁸ Räisänen 1992d, 56.

¹²⁹ Räisänen 1992d, 56.

¹³⁰ Räisänen 1992d, 56.

¹³¹ Räisänen 1992d, 57. Cf. Sanders 1977, 422. But cf. also Moule 1987, 48: "If, then, by contrast, Paul (while agreeing that the initial offer of salvation is purely by the grace of God) holds that both its acceptance and its maintenance are by faith rather than by adherence to any law-code, and that conduct such as, he believes, in fact fulfils the Law (in its spirit, if not in its letter) is an *effect* of this faith-union but in no way its *cause*, then he is not only setting up a sharp contrast between faith and Torah religion (which Dr Sanders agrees he is doing), but is, by implication, contrasting the maintenance of the covenantal relation for Christians by faith with the maintenance of it in Judaism by 'works'; and this latter does seem to me not far off from the 'legalism' (convenient though unbiblical term!) which Dr Sanders holds that Paul is not attacking" (original emphasis); and Carson 2001, 544–545, who makes a similar point.

¹³² Räisänen 1992d, 57.

¹³³ Räisänen 1992d, 57.

¹³⁴ Räisänen 1992d, 57–58.

¹³⁵ Räisänen 1992d, 58: "Im Anfang stand die Praxis".

¹³⁶ Räisänen 1992d, 59.

Räisänen states that in Galatians Paul was concerned to legitimize freedom from circumcision and other scriptural observances due to the threat posed by conservative Jewish Christians. Moreover, he explains that while Paul primarily addressed the specifically Jewish side of the law in Galatians, he generalized his statements in his later letters so that the moral law was also affected.¹³⁷

In opposition to Luther and others, Räisänen claims that Paul's critical statements concerning the law do not reflect his negative personal experiences with the law.¹³⁸ Instead, he explains that Paul takes his start from his overwhelming experience of Christ: "since Christ is axiomatically the only ground of salvation, the old covenant with its law cannot be a way to life".¹³⁹ With this statement, Räisänen appears to indicate that Paul understands 'freedom from the law' as freedom from the old covenant with its law as a way to life or as the ground of salvation.

Räisänen also suggests that it is from this same axiom that Paul comes to a negative judgment concerning the "works of the law".¹⁴⁰ On the one hand, he states that Paul would have originally meant specifically Jewish practices required by the law that hindered the acceptance of Gentile Christians into the community or posed a problem for their common life with Jewish Christians (circumcision, purity laws).¹⁴¹ On the other hand, he states that "Paul drives a wedge between the grace of God and the work of human beings, which tears apart what according to 'normal' Jewish thinking had always belonged together".¹⁴²

According to Räisänen, Paul grounds or legitimizes 'freedom from the law' in two different ways. On the one hand, he makes a salvation historical distinction. He sharply distinguishes between the old and new ages. Moreover, he defames the law as weak and places it in relation to sin and death. According to this legitimization strategy, "the law (as a whole!) is viewed as done away with".¹⁴³ On the other hand, Paul suggests that nothing has actually happened to the law in his churches when he states that it is the liberal Christians who first live according to (the 'actual

¹³⁷ Räisänen 1992d, 60.

¹³⁸ Räisänen 1992d, 60. For a paradigm example of the position that Räisänen is attacking, see Weiß 1902, 13.

¹³⁹ Räisänen 1992d, 60. Cf. also e.g., Bruce 1984, 61–62: "It is well known that pious Jews in general did not consider the law to be a burden" (61). "So long as Paul lived under the law, those sentiments were his. It was in the light of his Damascus-road experience that he made the negative assessment of the law which finds repeated expression in his writings" (62).

¹⁴⁰ Räisänen 1992d, 61.

¹⁴¹ Räisänen 1992d, 61.

¹⁴² Räisänen 1992d, 61.

¹⁴³ Räisänen 1992d, 60: "Das Gesetz (als ganzes!) gilt als beseitigt".

intention' of) the law. According to this legitimization strategy, "the law (as a whole!) is viewed as fulfilled".¹⁴⁴

Before summing up this scholarly conversation on 'freedom from the law' in Paul, let me return to one of the interpreters presented in section 2.1, namely to the Roman Catholic scholar Thomas Söding. Söding explicitly takes up the question of the meaning of freedom (from the law) with a view to Jewish-Christian dialogue.¹⁴⁵ He sets the stage for his own work as follows. First, he explains that Bultmann saw the existential relevance of Paul's theology of freedom primarily in being liberated from the "performance pressure" of having to seek one's own righteousness and to justify oneself (the paradigm example for which, in Bultmann's view, is Jewish 'lexism').¹⁴⁶ Söding then asks whether there is historical and theological justification for describing Judaism as a religion of lexistic non-freedom and whether Paul gives this impression.¹⁴⁷ Finally, he poses the thought provoking question: "if the critique of 'works' is not aimed at the attempt to make oneself sure of one's salvation before God with the help of pious obedience to the law – what then does freedom consist in?"¹⁴⁸

In his discussion of 2 Cor 3.17, Söding interprets the freedom in question to mean "liberation from the gramma that kills (3.6), that is, from the law *as far as* it condemns".¹⁴⁹ According to Söding, under the presupposition of 'freedom from sin', Paul can also deal with 'freedom from the law' (Rom 8.2; cf. Rom 7.3) "so far as the *nomos* under the superior strength of sin increases sin (cf. 5.19f) and awards death (cf. 7.24)".¹⁵⁰ In his view, the 'freedom from the law' spoken of in Rom 7.3 "stands in context, as 7.1 shows, *pars pro toto* for the freedom from the *nomos*, as far as it does not liberate (people) from the slavery of sin".¹⁵¹

From this perspective, Söding claims that Paul does not identify Jewish law piety as non-freedom because the law is characterized by pettiness, ritualism, performance orientation or 'Pelagianism', but because it is not able to liberate human beings from sin and overcome the destructive power of sin.¹⁵² Then again, he subsequently notes that freedom cannot be 'freedom from the law' in the same way as it is 'freedom from sin' and 'free-

¹⁴⁴ Räisänen 1992d, 60: "Das Gesetz (als ganzes!) gilt als erfüllt".

¹⁴⁵ See Söding 2003, 113.

¹⁴⁶ Söding 2003, 114. For my use of the word 'lexism', see note 127 above.

¹⁴⁷ Söding 2003, 115.

¹⁴⁸ Söding 2003, 115.

¹⁴⁹ Söding 2003, 125 (original emphasis).

¹⁵⁰ Söding 2003, 128.

¹⁵¹ Söding 2003, 126 n. 44.

¹⁵² Söding 2003, 128–129.

dom from death' because "the law itself summons to that love, which by the power of the Spirit is fulfilled in Christ".¹⁵³

In sum, from the preceding discussion it is evident that in the history of New Testament research the interpretation of 'freedom from the law' has been closely linked to the question of the relationship between Paul's positive and negative statements concerning the law. Moreover, it has also been related to the relationship between the law and Paul's exhortations to his churches. Bultmann appealed to the dialectic that seemed to him to be inherent in Paul's understanding of 'freedom from the law', namely the paradoxical freedom from the demand of the law but obligation to it nonetheless. Schürmann interpreted 'freedom from the law' as liberation from the Torah as a way to justification and from the Torah as accuser and condemner. Moreover, he suggested that in a certain sense it also meant liberation from the law insofar as it placed the conscience under obligation. However, he then insisted that this should not be misunderstood as freedom from every specified norm or freedom from the 'law of Christ' (Gal 6.2) as this presents itself in the teaching tradition of the church.

The question of the position or centrality of 'freedom from the law' received particular attention in the work of Jones and Vollenweider, with Jones setting up a bold challenge to the prevailing view and Vollenweider reasserting it. Finally, the contributions of Räsänen and Söding highlight the degree to which changing views of early Judaism have influenced the interpretation of 'freedom from the law'. Notably, both of these scholars consciously move away from describing Judaism as a religion characterized by 'legalism', 'nomism' or 'lexism'.

I shall return to the issues raised by these scholars in my exegesis of the relevant passages, esp. Rom 7.1–6; Rom 8.1–4; 1 Cor 9.19–23, and the ἐλευθερ- texts of Galatians. In my view it will be especially pertinent to bear in mind the differing interpretations of the relationship between Paul and early Gentile Christians, and Paul and early Jewish Christians, and how the practices and discussions that went on within these relationships could have affected Paul's writings on freedom in relation to the law. In my exegesis I will also inquire into the way(s) in which Paul employs the word νόμος, giving particular attention to the question of whether or not Paul plays with this word in Romans 7–8. Finally, I shall return to the general debate on the meaning of 'freedom from the law' in Paul in my conclusion.

¹⁵³ Söding 2003, 132.

2.3 The Relationship between Freedom and Service in Paul

The third and final strand of debate to be considered is the debate over the relationship between freedom and service in Paul. As noted in chapter 1, this issue was of central concern to Luther in his interpretation of “the freedom of a Christian”, and in his 1520 tractate he expressed this relationship in several different ways.¹⁵⁴ In this section, I will return to the work of Weiß, where the issue is dealt with in relation to Luther, and I will then more briefly present the views of Schlier, Bultmann, Jones and Vollenweider, before finally introducing the position of Hans Weder.

With reference to 2 Cor 8.9 and Phil 2.6–11, Weiß appeals to the importance of the self-humbling of the Son of God for Paul’s personal piety.¹⁵⁵ He claims that freedom in Paul attains its distinctive character from Paul’s understanding and confession of faith, which he describes vividly as follows: “the movement of the divine mercy” from above meets the movement upwards, i.e. “the ideal of the liberation of humanity from the bands of slavery”, and “turns it in another direction”.¹⁵⁶ He then illustrates this point with an analogy: “as the sailing ship is forced through the power of the rudder to hold a middle line between wind and water pressure, so two opposing powers have an effect upon the individual in Christianity”, before expressing it as a proposition: “the liberation of the personality finds its limits in the obligation of serving love”.¹⁵⁷

With reference to 1 Cor 9.19–23 and Gal 5.13, Weiß observes that Paul repeatedly expresses this idea “in sharp, paradoxical, antagonistic form”, which he compares to Luther’s paradoxical proposition in *The Freedom of a Christian*: A Christian is lord of all things and yet subject to everyone.¹⁵⁸ He observes that Paul especially applied this principle to the use of freedom in knowledge. At the same time, however, he stresses that this is only one example of “the necessary limitation of freedom by (*durch*) love”, noting that “the principle has an infinitely greater range”.¹⁵⁹

In my view, it is not clear whether Weiß thinks that *freedom itself* is relinquished or limited for the sake of love. While the fact that he speaks of “the necessary limitation of freedom by (*durch*) love” would appear to support this conclusion,¹⁶⁰ two observations arguably militate against it. First, Weiß translates 1 Cor 9.19a “although I am free” rather than

¹⁵⁴ See above, pages 15–17.

¹⁵⁵ Weiß 1902, 17. Weiß also cites Mark 10.45 here.

¹⁵⁶ Weiß 1902, 18.

¹⁵⁷ Weiß 1902, 18.

¹⁵⁸ Weiß 1902, 18.

¹⁵⁹ Weiß 1902, 18.

¹⁶⁰ Weiß 1902, 18.

“although I was free”, thus suggesting that ‘freedom’ has not been abandoned. Secondly, he speaks of “the use of freedom in knowledge”.¹⁶¹ In view of these observations, his understanding of the verse may be concessive in the following sense: “although I am free from all, I have made myself a slave to all, that is, I have limited *the use of my freedom* for the sake of love, in order that I may win the many”. If so, then Weiß’s understanding of Paul’s limitation of the use of his freedom runs parallel to Paul’s renunciation of the use of his right to financial support in 1 Cor 9.12: “if others share this right over you, do we not still more? But we did not make use of this right, but we endure all things, in order that we may not give any hindrance to the gospel of Christ”.

This brings us back to the work of Schlier. In his 1935 article in the *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Schlier explains that materially the line of thinking in 1 Cor 9 illustrates how the freedom of a Christian realizes itself in service for others.¹⁶² In his 1977 article “Über die christliche Freiheit”, however, he makes the more complex claim that “true freedom shows itself also in the renunciation of freedom out of love (cf. 1 Cor 10.23)”, and he suggests that Paul set the example for this in 1 Cor 9.¹⁶³ Moreover, he explains that “true freedom permits itself to be limited out of the love that is freedom”.¹⁶⁴

This theme of renunciation can also be found in Bultmann’s work. With characteristic precision and density of expression, Bultmann explains in his *Theology of the New Testament* that:

the basic freedom can at any moment take on the form of *renunciation* – seemingly the renunciation of freedom itself, but in reality a paradoxical exercise of freedom itself, as it says in the declaration ἐλεύθερος γὰρ ὢν ἐκ πάντων πᾶσιν ἑμαυτὸν ἐδούλωσα (1 Cor 9.19).¹⁶⁵

Moreover, Bultmann reiterates with reference to both 1 Cor 9.19 and Gal 5.13 that service is the exercise (*Betätigung*) rather than the surrender (*Preisgabe*) of freedom.¹⁶⁶

Jones, taking a somewhat different line, does not necessarily agree that the link between freedom and service is as close as others have suggested.

¹⁶¹ Weiß 1902, 18.

¹⁶² Schlier 1964 [1935], 501.

¹⁶³ Schlier 1977a, 192.

¹⁶⁴ Schlier 1977a, 192.

¹⁶⁵ Bultmann 1984a [1948–1953], 343 (original emphasis): “es bedeutet, daß die grundsätzliche Freiheit in jedem Augenblick die Gestalt des *Verzichtes* annehmen kann – des *Verzichtes* scheinbar auf die Freiheit selbst, der aber vielmehr eine paradoxe *Betätigung* der Freiheit selbst ist, wie sie in dem ἐλεύθερος γὰρ ὢν ἐκ πάντων πᾶσιν ἑμαυτὸν ἐδούλωσα spricht (1. Kr 9,19)”. Cf. Bultmann 2007 [1948–1953], 342.

¹⁶⁶ Bultmann 1984a [1948–1953], 344–345; Bultmann 2007 [1948–1953], 343.

In his comments on 1 Cor 7.22, he states that Paul never equates δουλεία θεοῦ and ἐλευθερία in his letters.¹⁶⁷ Similarly, in his interpretation of Rom 6.18, 20, 22, he insists that Paul never equates slavery under righteousness with true freedom.¹⁶⁸ In his discussion of 1 Cor 9.19, however, he suggests that “freedom makes itself concrete here for Paul in the service to others”.¹⁶⁹ Then again, noting that the text of Gal 5.13 does *not* say “freedom is not an opportunity for the flesh, but service to one another through love”, he argues that rather than offering a *definition* of freedom, v. 13bc merely provides instructions concerning its use.¹⁷⁰

Vollenweider, by contrast, returns to the view that Paul presents a precise account of the relationship between freedom and service. With Bultmann and against Weiß he states that rather than being “limited” by love, freedom “becomes incarnate in it and appears in the form of slavery (Gal 5.13; 1 Cor 9.19; 7.22)”.¹⁷¹ Moreover, he explains that “*eleutheria* can actually manifest itself as the *suspension of exousia*” (1 Cor 8–10).¹⁷² Here, he also draws out the link between this freedom and what is συμφέρον, and observes that freedom for Paul is oriented towards building up the community as the body of Christ.¹⁷³ In explicit opposition to Jones, he insists that Gal 5.13 is concerned to correct a *misunderstanding* rather than a *misuse* of freedom.¹⁷⁴

Finally, let me briefly mention the work of the Swiss New Testament scholar Hans Weder. In his 1998 article “Die Normativität der Freiheit: Eine Überlegung zu Gal 5, 1.13–25” Weder is concerned with the normativity of freedom, that is, with determining what freedom as freedom demands of the free person.¹⁷⁵ Like several scholars before him (including, as mentioned above, Weiß, Schlier and Vollenweider), Weder turns to the concept of love to interpret Paul’s meaning. According to Weder, there is “an inner material connection” between freedom and love.¹⁷⁶ Rejecting the view that this freedom consists in being able to make a ‘free’ choice between love and hate, he claims instead that “‘free’ in the true sense of the word is only the choice of love”.¹⁷⁷ Moreover, like Vollenweider he

¹⁶⁷ Jones 1987, 33, 159 n. 7.

¹⁶⁸ Jones 1987, 114.

¹⁶⁹ Jones 1987, 48.

¹⁷⁰ Jones 1987, 104–105.

¹⁷¹ Vollenweider 1989, 403.

¹⁷² Vollenweider 1989, 403 (original emphasis).

¹⁷³ Vollenweider 1989, 403.

¹⁷⁴ Vollenweider 1989, 314–315.

¹⁷⁵ Weder 1998, 129.

¹⁷⁶ Weder 1998, 137.

¹⁷⁷ Weder 1998, 137. Cf. Barth 1953, 9 (ET = Barth 1961 [1953], 76–77).

explains that we should not understand love as a limitation of freedom, but rather as “its logical execution (*Vollzug*)”.¹⁷⁸

In sum, then, the century-long conversation on Pauline freedom, service, renunciation and love, has probably been the most poetic of the three strands presented in this chapter, but also perhaps the most intangible. To a certain extent it is rooted in concrete examples of Paul's interaction with his churches (1 Cor 9.19; 1 Cor 10.29; Gal 5.13), but at the same time the subject matter evokes a more philosophical type of reflection on whether and under what circumstances freedom can be 'limited' (and indeed, whether the term 'limited' should be used at all). Weiß speaks of “the necessary limitation of freedom by (*durch*) love”, by which he either means the limitation of freedom itself or the limitation of the use of freedom. Schlier's basic position appears to be that freedom is realized in service. While he speaks of the limitation or renunciation of freedom, he seems to view this renunciation as an expression of freedom. This complex emphasis upon freedom being limited or conditioned by love and yet also expressed in love also appears in the works of other notable scholars and thus represents an influential contribution to the debate.¹⁷⁹

In opposition to Weiß and with greater clarity than Schlier (and others), Bultmann states that freedom can take the form of renunciation and that renunciation and service are a/the paradoxical exercise of freedom rather than a/the renunciation or surrender of freedom. In the same vein, Vollenweider claims that freedom becomes incarnate in love and appears in the form of slavery, and Weder insists that love is the execution (*Vollzug*) rather than the limitation of freedom. This interpretation of the relationship between freedom and service, namely that service or renunciation is a/the (paradoxical) exercise, realization, expression or incarnation

¹⁷⁸ Weder 1998, 137.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. e.g. F.F. Bruce, whose interpretation is comparable to that of Schlier. On the one hand, Bruce repeatedly states that freedom is limited by love. See e.g., Bruce 1978, 89–90; Bruce 1986, 121. On the other hand, he also states that “to practice the law of love is the outward and visible sign of the indwelling Spirit; it is the very expression of Christian liberty” (Bruce 1984, 69). Cf. also e.g., Niederwimmer 1966, 205; Blank 1992, 240–241. Longenecker 1964, 174, states that “the very fact that Paul appeals to his readers to manifest their liberty in love and speaks of voluntarily confining aspects of his liberty for [the] sake of his purpose indicates that he viewed social liberty as part of the indicative of the Gospel”. Longenecker 1964, 181–208, also speaks of “love as the conditioning factor in the exercise of Christian liberty” (202). Dunn 1998, 660–661, states that “the exercise of liberty must always be conditioned by love” (660) and speaks of “liberty exercised in love of neighbor” (661). Elsewhere, however, Dunn explains that “Christian liberty expresses itself as much in self-denial as in freedom from outmoded constraint” (Dunn 1998, 689). Finally, he also states that “Christian liberty is to be affirmed, but also to be constrained in its consequences on others” (Dunn 1998, 705).

of freedom rather than a/the surrender or limitation of freedom is particularly widespread and influential in ‘German’ scholarship on Paul.¹⁸⁰

Finally Jones repeatedly emphasizes that Paul never claims that service is true freedom. While he suggests that freedom makes itself concrete in service to others in 1 Cor 9.19, he denies that Gal 5.13bc offers a definition of freedom – a point which is explicitly rejected by Vollenweider.

While I do not at this point wish to start elaborating on my own conclusions regarding these diverse positions, the differences between them clearly throw up many interesting questions. With respect to the meaning of freedom and service in Paul, it may already be noted here that – in contrast to many of his interpreters – Paul never makes freedom the subject of an action. While he speaks of faith working through love (Gal 5.6), he never explicitly speaks of freedom realizing itself in service or the like. His interpreters over the past century, however, have often taken this interpretive step quite readily, and, as noted above, a similar development can be seen in the different ways in which Luther and his interpreters speak about freedom.¹⁸¹ I will allow this point to be further unpacked through the exegetical chapters that follow (chapters 4–6), and will then return to the question of the relationship between freedom and service (or slavery) in my concluding chapters (chapters 7–8).

¹⁸⁰ See e.g., Schmitz 1923, 43–44; Bultmann 1984a [1948–1953], 343–345 (ET = Bultmann 2007 [1948–1953], 342–343); Gräßer 1955, 338; Niederwimmer 1966, 205, 207, 212; Ebeling 1971 [1968], 319; Schlier 1977a, 192; Friedrich 1978, 188; Lührmann 1992 [1978], 102–103; Lohse 1979, 122; Ebeling 1981, 337 (ET = Ebeling 1985c [1981], 252); Vollenweider 1989, 403; Schrage 1995, 338; Weder 1998, 137; Schnelle 2003, 227–228, 322, 620–621, 626 (ET = Schnelle 2006 [2003], 214–215, 295, 540, 545).

¹⁸¹ See above, pages 15–17, esp. notes 84–85. As noted there, this claim is restricted to Luther’s statements on freedom and service in *The Freedom of a Christian*.

Chapter 3

Task and Methodology

In this chapter I will pursue three interrelated goals. First, I will spell out the approach that I will adopt in chapters 4–6. Secondly, I will outline and address the methodological scope and limits of my approach. Thirdly, I will briefly comment on the relationship between the first two chapters and the subsequent chapters of my work.

3.1 Method of Approach

In the exegetical chapters that follow I will focus on those passages in the undisputed letters of Paul in which the ἐλευθερ- word group appears.¹ In this respect, my approach is comparable to that of Nestle, Jones, Vollenweider and Dautzenberg.² My reason for adopting this approach is related to the difficulty of specifying what is meant by ‘freedom’. More specifically, it rests upon the conviction that due to the differences between the associations of ancient and modern concepts of freedom, methodological care is needed in defining the (contours of the) concept(s) of freedom in question.³ While the restriction of my focus to passages containing the ἐλευθερ- word group is not without its problems and limitations, this approach is advantageous insofar as it provides a useful criterion for defining the (initial) contours of the concept(s) of freedom in question. Moreover, it provides a standpoint from which it is possible to identify semantically related terms and passages that contain the concept(s) of freedom in question without making use of the ἐλευθερ- word group.⁴ Rather than attempting to differentiate between important and unimportant passages at the outset and restricting my attention to the former, I will

¹ The decision to focus on the undisputed letters of Paul is made easier by the fact that apart from in Col 3.11 and Eph 6.8 the ἐλευθερ- word group does not occur in the letters in the Pauline corpus whose authorship is disputed.

² See above, section 2.1.

³ Cf. Jones 1987, 20; Vollenweider 1989, 19–20; Berger 1968, 349.

⁴ While I do not pursue this task in detail in the exegetical chapters, I do provide some pointers concerning how it may be undertaken in my conclusion.

comment on all of the ἐλευθερ- texts.⁵ In this way I hope to avoid the danger of presenting an imbalanced picture of the unity of Paul's usage by limiting my discussion to (a unified group of) selected passages.

In order to do justice to the integrity of the respective letters, I will proceed on a letter by letter basis.⁶ With Jones, Vollenweider and Dautzenberg, I will discuss the relevant letters in the order 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans. For Jones, Vollenweider and Dautzenberg, this order is preferable on the grounds that it (probably) reflects the relative chronology of the four letters.⁷ While I agree that Romans is almost certainly the latest of the four letters and that (the material that makes up) 2 Corinthians⁸ was probably written after 1 Corinthians, I do not think it possible to determine the relative chronology of Galatians and 1 Corinthians with a sufficiently high degree of certainty.⁹ For this reason, I will leave the question of the

⁵ Cf. Dautzenberg 2001, 59.

⁶ Cf. Jones 1987, 22; Vollenweider 1989, 20; Dautzenberg 2001, 58–59.

⁷ See Jones 1987, 25–26; Vollenweider 1989, 20 n. 40; Dautzenberg 2001, 58–59. This statement is admittedly an oversimplification since Jones leaves the question of the relative chronology of 2 Corinthians and Galatians open. The important point, however, is that Jones, Vollenweider and Dautzenberg all think that 1 Corinthians predates Galatians. On the one hand, this view has the support of a substantial number of scholars, especially in Germany. See e.g., Lightfoot 1896 [1865], 40–56; Borse 1972, 9–17, 32–57, 144, 175–181; Mußner 1974, 9–11; Lührmann 1992 [1978], 3; Hengel/Schwemer 1998, 316 n. 1310 (ET = Hengel/Schwemer 1997, 442 n. 1082); Schnelle 2003, 292–294 (ET = Schnelle 2006 [2003], 269–271). On the other hand, many others have defended the opposite thesis, namely that Galatians predates 1 Corinthians. See e.g., Dunn 1993b, 7–8, 12–19, esp. 19; Mitchell 1993, 5; Riesner 1994, 258–259, 350–352; Martyn 1997, 19–20.

⁸ For my purposes, it is not necessary to resolve the much discussed question of the unity of 2 Corinthians.

⁹ The main problem concerns the lack of conclusive arguments for establishing the date of Galatians. Cf. e.g., Klijn 1967, 95: “There are no really conclusive arguments ... to support any particular date for this letter”; Stanton 2001, 1153: “a decision cannot be made with any degree of confidence”; Hays 2000, 193: “In view of the paucity of hard evidence, the best we can do is to say that Galatians was written sometime in the period of 50–56 CE”. With respect to this question, it is crucial to emphasize with Moisés Silva that “the dating of the epistle is not totally dependent on whether the Galatian churches were in the northern or southern region of the Roman province of Galatia” (Silva 2001 [1996], 129). See also Hays 2000, 193. The significance of this observation is evident from the fact that while Martyn advocates a pre- 1 Corinthians date with a North Galatian location, Hengel and Schwemer support a post- 1 Corinthians date with a South Galatian location. See Martyn 1997, 19–20; Hengel/Schwemer 1998, 316 n. 1310 and 401–403 (ET = Hengel/Schwemer 1997, 442 n. 1082 and 265–267). With Silva I am inclined to think that the balance of evidence supports a South Galatian *location* on the one hand and a late *date* on the other hand, i.e. a date subsequent to the Jerusalem convocation, which is probably described in both Acts 15 and Gal 2.1–10. See Silva 2001 [1996], 129–139. For the latter point, see also Hays 2000, 194; Stanton 2001, 1153: “If, as seems likely, Paul's account of his visit to Jerusalem in 2:1–10 is his equivalent of Luke's account of

relative chronology of 1 Corinthians and Galatians open. In my view, this is methodologically defensible since it is reasonable to refrain from taking a position on a question that has not (yet) been resolved with sufficient clarity. In my case, the decision to discuss Galatians after 1–2 Corinthians is dictated solely by the fact that in view of the similarity between Paul’s arguments in Galatians and Romans it is preferable to discuss these letters in succession.

Finally, a brief note should be provided here on the frequency and distribution of the ἐλευθερ- word group in the New Testament and in Paul. The word group occurs much more frequently in Paul than elsewhere in the New Testament. Paul is responsible for 7 of the 11 instances of the substantive ἐλευθερία, 14 (15 or 16) of the 23 occurrences of the adjective ἐλεύθερος,¹⁰ 5 of the 7 appearances of the verb ἐλευθερόω and the only instance of ἀπελευθερός.¹¹ This observation, however, should not blind one to the fact that the word group does not actually occur very often in the Corpus Paulinum.¹² It is completely absent from Philippians, 1–2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. Moreover, while the adjective ἐλεύθερος occurs in Col 3.11 and Eph 6.8, it refers there exclusively to free persons in the socio-political sense. Paul’s use of ἐλευθερία in 2 Cor 3.17 is the only instance of the word group in 2 Corinthians. Finally, while the word group is more prevalent in 1 Corinthians, Galatians and Romans, it is far from omnipresent, being restricted to 1 Cor 7.21, 22 (x2); 7.39; 9.1, 19; 10.29; 12.13; Gal 2.4; 3.28; 4.22–31; 5.1 (x2); 5.13 (x2); Rom 6.18, 20, 22; 7.3; 8.2; 8.21.

the Jerusalem council in Acts 15, then Galatians was written at some point after that event which is usually dated to between 49 and 51 CE”. Unfortunately, this judgment does not yet enable one to establish the precise date of Galatians and/or the relative chronology of Galatians and 1 Corinthians. For a recent defense of the South Galatian theory, see esp. Breytenbach 1996. See also Ramsay 1900; Bruce 1982, 3–18; Mitchell 1993, 3–5; Riesner 1994, 250–259, 350–352. But note the more agnostic judgment of Hays 2000, 191: “Because Paul nowhere in the letter mentions any particular towns or cities, it is impossible to be sure whether ‘the churches of Galatia’ (1:2) were located in the traditional territory of ethnic Galatians (‘North Galatia’) or in the places mentioned in Acts 14, in Roman provincial Galatia (‘South Galatia’) ... The debate remains inconclusive and almost entirely irrelevant for interpreting Paul’s letter”.

¹⁰ Fourteen if Paul did not write Ephesians and Colossians, 15 if he wrote Colossians (or Ephesians) only, 16 if he wrote Colossians and Ephesians.

¹¹ ἐλευθερία: Rom 8.21; 1 Cor 10.29; 2 Cor 3.17; Gal 2.4; 5.1; 5.13 (x2); Jas 1.25; 2.12; 1 Pet 2.16; 2 Pet 2.19; ἐλεύθερος: Rom 6.20; 7.3; 1 Cor 7.21, 22; 7.39; 9.1, 19; 12.13; Gal 3.28; 4.22, 23, 26, 30, 31; Col 3.11; Eph 6.8; Matt 17.26; John 8.33, 36; 1 Pet 2.16; Rev 6.15; 13.16; 19.18; ἐλευθερόω: Rom 6.18, 22; Rom 8.2; Rom 8.21; Gal 5.1; John 8.32, 36; ἀπελευθερός: 1 Cor 7.22.

¹² See Weiß 1902, 6; Jones 1987, 11; Vollenweider 1989, 20.

3.2 Outline of Methodological Scope and Limits

Any work proposing to contribute to the understanding of a particular word or concept must take account of the methodological revolution inaugurated by James Barr's groundbreaking study *The Semantics of Biblical Language*.¹³ In particular, it must heed his trenchant criticism of Kittel's *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*.¹⁴ For my purposes, Barr's polemic against the habit of "saying 'concept' (*Begriff*) for the linguistic entity usually called a word" is particularly relevant.¹⁵ Moisés Silva illustrates what is at stake by noting that "if the word we are interested in is ἁμαρτία, it must be clear in our minds whether we want to know all that the Bible teaches concerning the doctrine of sin (the 'concept') or the range of meanings covered by the specific word ἁμαρτία".¹⁶ Moreover, he explains that "if we are interested in *ideas* (the real concern of Cremer and Kittel), it is not reasonable to base our study primarily on words".¹⁷ In relation to the latter point, Barr and Silva rightly stress that concepts generally come to expression in the word-combination or sentence rather than in the word individually.¹⁸

With a view to the issues raised by Barr and his heirs, several points should be made. In the first place, it is important to stress that inquiring into the range of meanings covered by a specific word or word group is not without value (though it is, of course, necessary to clarify that one is inquiring into the range of meanings of a word rather than a concept). On the contrary, it is important to consider the specific contribution that a word group such as the ἐλευθερ- word group makes in the contexts in which it appears. Moreover, it is worthwhile to ask whether Paul attached particular importance to a certain word group.

In terms of the methodological scope of my approach, it is also necessary to note that in addition to inquiring into the range of meanings of the ἐλευθερ- word group, I am interested in asking whether it is possible to

¹³ Barr 1961.

¹⁴ See Barr 1961, 207–262, esp. 207–219. See also Silva 1994 [1983], 17–32; Cotterell/Turner 1989, 106–128, esp. 115–125; Nida/Louw 1992, 120.

¹⁵ Barr 1961, 210. See also Silva 1994 [1983], 27; Cotterell/Turner 1989, 119.

¹⁶ Silva 1994 [1983], 27. See also Cotterell/Turner 1989, 119.

¹⁷ Silva 1994 [1983], 27 (original emphasis). See also Cotterell/Turner 1989, 118–119. Silva refers here, of course, to Hermann Cremer and Gerhard Kittel. Cremer's *Biblich-theologisches Wörterbuch der neutestamentlichen Gräcität* was a forerunner of the *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, which Gerhard Kittel originally edited. See Cremer 1911 [1867] (ET = Cremer 1883 [1867]); Kittel/Friedrich 1933–1973 (ET = Kittel/Friedrich 1964–1976 [1933–1973]).

¹⁸ See Barr 1961, 212–213; Silva 1994 [1983], 28. See also Cotterell/Turner 1989, 118, 120; Nida/Louw 1992, 2.

define the (initial) contours of *a single concept* or *multiple concepts* of freedom in Paul on the basis of the word-combinations, sentences and units of thought in which the ἐλευθερ- word group appears. Moreover, I am concerned with the contribution that the study of these passages makes to the question of whether it is possible to speak of “Paul’s concept of freedom” or “Paul’s doctrine of freedom”.

In terms of the methodological limits that I have had to set within this monograph, I have not discussed passages in which the concept of freedom is present without the use of the ἐλευθερ- word group. Likewise, I have only been able to give limited attention to semantically related terms.¹⁹ Here I have found that it is necessary to strike a balance between acknowledging the limits of my approach and defending its scope and validity. On the one hand, I recognize that it is possible for a/the concept of freedom to be present in a given passage where the ἐλευθερ- word group does not appear.²⁰ Moreover, I acknowledge that by not giving detailed attention to such passages I run the risk of unduly limiting the scope of my study.²¹ Similarly, I concede that greater attention to semantically related terms could broaden and sharpen my grasp of the concept(s) of freedom in question. Finally, in view of these considerations, I grant that subsequent work on such terms and passages could shed further light on the interpretation of freedom in Paul.

On the other hand, I think that a detailed examination of those passages in which the ἐλευθερ- word group appears represents the best first step in the larger task of defining, explicating and interpreting the concept(s) of freedom that come to expression in Paul’s letters, since it provides a necessary criterion for identifying related terms and finding the relevant concept(s) in passages that lack this word group. Moreover, I think that the study of these passages already enables one to shed some light on the issues raised in chapters 1 and 2.

¹⁹ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida include the following words in the semantic domain “Control, Rule” within the subdomain “Release, Set Free”: λύω; ἀπολύω; ἀπαλλάσσω (37.127); λυτρόομαι; λύτροσις; ἀπολύτρωσις (37.128); λυτρωτής; (37.129); λύτρον; ἀντίλυτρον (37.130); ἀγοράζω; ἐξαγοράζω (37.131); ἄφεισις (37.132); ἐλευθερία (37.131); ἐλεύθερος (37.134); ἐλευθερόω (37.135); καταργέομαι (37.136); ἄνεσις (37.137); δικαιοῶ (37.138). In the semantic domain “Status” within the subdomain “Slave, Free”, they place the words δοῦλος (87.76); παῖς (87.77); σῶμα (87.78); δουλεύω (87.79); εἶμι ὑπὸ ζυγόν (87.80); σύνδουλος (87.81); δουλόω (87.82); δούλη; παιδίσκη (87.83); ἐλεύθερος (87.84); ἀπελεύθερος (87.85); Λιβερτῖνος (87.86). See Louw/Nida 1988, 487–489, 741–742. See also France 1986, 9–12; Söding 2003, 127.

²⁰ See Silva 1994 [1983], 27; Cotterell/Turner 1989, 119.

²¹ See Silva 1992, 27; Cotterell/Turner 1989, 119. See also e.g., Macgregor 1931 [1914], 268; Müller 1926, 177; Epp 1978, 114; Bauckham 2002 [1990], 8.

3.3 The Relationship between the Respective Chapters

In the first two chapters I highlighted three issues that have received considerable attention in previous works on freedom, namely 1) the importance of freedom, 2) the centrality and meaning of ‘freedom from the law’, and 3) the relationship between freedom and service. Moreover, I attempted to show the diversity of opinion that characterizes scholarship on all three of these issues. As noted above, chapters 4–6 will consist of an exegetical study of those passages in the undisputed letters of Paul in which the ἐλευθερ- word group appears. While these chapters will begin to spell out the significance of the exegesis for the interpretation of the issues raised in the first two chapters, I will take care to allow the exegesis to follow the dynamics of Paul’s argument rather than narrowly focusing on these three issues. Then, in chapter 7, I will unpack the relevance of the exegetical chapters for the interpretation of the aforementioned issues in a more synthetic or systematic manner. Finally, chapter 8 will present a retrospective account of the promise and pitfalls of the ‘German’ tradition.

Part II: Exegesis

Chapter 4

The ἐλευθερ- Texts of 1–2 Corinthians

4.1 Introduction

Words from the ἐλευθερ- word group appear eight times in 1 Corinthians and once in 2 Corinthians, i.e., 1 Cor 7.21, 22 (x2); 7.39; 9.1, 19; 10.29; 12.13; 2 Cor 3.17. The word breakdown is as follows: ἐλεύθερος (1 Cor 7.21, 22; 7.39; 9.1, 19; 12.13); ἀπελεύθερος (1 Cor 7.22); ἐλευθερία (1 Cor 10.29; 2 Cor 3.17). I will discuss these verses in the order in which they appear.

4.2 1 Cor 7.21–22

Within the larger argument of 1 Cor 7, vv. 17–24 function as a *digressio* in the technical sense of an apparent shift to another topic that actually illustrates, explains or supports the main theme itself.¹ Following the qualification in vv. 15–16, vv. 17–24 both confirm the basic point of the preceding verses (10–11; 12–14), namely that one should remain married, i.e., should walk or remain in the calling in which one was called (vv. 17, 20, 24), and anticipates the subsequent argument of vv. 26–27, namely that one should not alter one’s present marital status. Moreover, it is possible that the slave–free application of this rule, and particularly v. 21b, corresponds to and supports Paul’s advocacy of celibacy as the better option for those who are able to take advantage of this opportunity (cf. vv. 7–8, 25–35, 36–38, 40).²

After addressing the situation of Jewish and Gentile believers in 1 Cor 7.18–19, Paul turns to that of the slave in 7.21. The central point of the verse is clear: if you were a slave in the socio-political sense when you became a believer, do not be concerned as if this were what really matters (21a), a thesis that is then grounded in v. 22. Unfortunately, the function of

¹ See Dawes 1990, 681–684.

² Dawes 1990, 681–684, puts forth a strong case for this interpretation.

21b is less clear.³ Many scholars argue that it serves to sharpen the point of 21a and thus adopt (some variation of) the following translation: “but even if you are able to become free use rather (the situation of your slavery)”.⁴ Others, however, interpret 21b as an exception or qualification of 21a and thus translate: “were you called as a slave? Do not let it be a care to you. But if indeed you are able to become free, then use rather (the opportunity to become free)”.⁵ Then again, finding fault with both of these readings, others have advanced alternative interpretations.⁶ Finally, some argue that it is impossible to determine the meaning of v. 21 with any degree of certainty.⁷

In my view, v. 21b should probably be taken as an exception or qualification of v. 21a (cf. 7.15) and thus be translated: “were you called as a slave? Do not let it be a care to you. But if indeed you are able to become free, then use rather (the opportunity to become free)”. Here I find myself in agreement with John Barclay: “Since the chapter does contain other exceptions to the rule of ‘stay as you are’, and since v. 23 suggests that Paul considered freedom a better condition than slavery, the second, more positive, reading is to be preferred”.⁸

However, while the differences between the many competing interpretations of v. 21b should not be trivialized, it is crucial to note that the numerous readings do not differ in their assessment of the central point of v. 21:⁹ just as the one called while circumcised need not remove his

³ The literature devoted to this question is massive. For a recent overview of the debate, see Thiselton 2000, 553–559.

⁴ See e.g., Weiß 1902, 16–17; Wedell 1950, 212; Niederwimmer 1966, 204 n. 83; Conzelmann 1975 [1969], 127; Ratschow 1987 [1976], 246; Lohse 1979, 124; Gerhardson 1987, 18. Cf. also Collins 1999, 281–282, 285–286.

⁵ See e.g., Vollenweider 1989, 234–236; Dawes 1990, 689–694; Winter 1994, 152–154; Horsley 1998, 102–103; Barclay 2001, 1120; Garland 2003, 308–314; Schnabel 2006, 392–393.

⁶ See e.g., Bartchy 1973, 173–183, esp. 178–179, who argues that Paul exhorts the slave who might be manumitted “to live (as a freedman) according to God’s calling” (178–179; cf. 183); and Stuhlmacher 1975, 44–45, who maintains that rather than supplying an object, it is necessary to recognize that an absolute use of the verb *χρησθαί* is present, which should thus be translated “make the most of it” or “avail yourself of the opportunity” (namely, in the service of Christ).

⁷ See e.g., Richardson 1979, 53.

⁸ Barclay 2001, 1120. See also Harrill 1995, 123–126. For a concise presentation of additional arguments for this view, see Schnabel 2006, 392–393. For a more cynical assessment of Paul’s motives, see Wire 1994, 171: “In speaking of slavery not changing, Paul can only maintain his credibility by making an exception if the opportunity for freedom arises”.

⁹ Cf. Jones 1987, 27: “Die Aussageintention dieses Verses läßt sich feststellen, ohne zu entscheiden, ob V 21b empfiehlt, die Freiheit zu ergreifen oder lieber im Sklavenzustand auszuharren”. Even if we adopt Dawes’s interpretation, according to which the

circumcision¹⁰ and the one called while uncircumcised need not be circumcised (v. 18), so the slave need not become free in the socio-political sense: s/he is to remain in the calling in which s/he was called (v. 20); s/he need not be concerned with his or her position or status (v. 21).¹¹

V. 22 grounds (γάρ) the central point of v. 21. The basic argument is clear: belonging to Christ *relativizes* the free/slave distinction. This is expressed in paradoxical form: the slave is the Lord's freedperson, whereas the free person is Christ's slave.¹² For some, the alternation between freedperson (ἀπελεύθερος) and free person (ἐλεύθερος) is significant on the grounds that freedperson is meant to convey continuing obligation to one's patron (while a free person, on the other hand, has no such obligation).¹³ Here, however, it is more likely that Paul has employed the word freedperson because there is a real sense in which the Christian slave is *free*.¹⁴ Likewise, his subsequent use of the word slave indicates that there is a real sense in which the Christian free person is bound or enslaved. Accordingly, while it is possible that the term ἀπελεύθερος *also* conveys as a secondary nuance the freed slave's new obligation,¹⁵ Paul's change in terminology is more likely to be dictated solely by the need to choose the right word for describing *a slave who becomes free*.¹⁶ Alternatively, it may be nothing more than a stylistic variation parallel to that between Lord and Christ.

preference for freedom expressed in v. 21b corresponds to Paul's preference for celibacy, *the central point* remains that the slave need not be concerned about his or her status insofar as it is relativized by his or her belonging to Christ.

¹⁰ For my purposes, it may be left open whether Paul is concerned with epispasm operations or more broadly with the abandonment of a Jewish lifestyle. For the former interpretation, see e.g., Winter 1994, 146–152, 162. For the latter understanding, see e.g., Rudolph 2006, 73–84, esp. 79 n. 70. See also Rudolph 2009.

¹¹ Cf. Briggs 2000, 113.

¹² Contrary to the impression given by Collins 1999, 280, the contrast is between the slave and the free person rather than the slave and the freed person.

¹³ See e.g. Bartsch 1973, 179–180; Collins 1999, 281; Barclay 2001, 1119–1120; Briggs 2003, 114; Schnabel 2006, 394. See also the related view of Martin 1990, 64, who claims that Paul used the phrase ἀπελεύθερος κυρίου in order to make a statement about status rather than to refer to the “obligations of clientage”. Martin's interpretation attempts to exploit the fact that “the social prestige of a freedman depended on his patron” (Heinrichs 2004 [1998], 544).

¹⁴ See esp. Conzelmann 1975 [1969], 128 n. 29: “Does ἀπελεύθερος κυρίου, ‘the Lord's freedman,’ emphasize the freedom (Lietzmann) or the duty of service (Kümmel)? In the contrast between v 22a and b, plainly his freedom is emphasized”. See also Vollenweider 1989, 237; Schrage 1995, 141.

¹⁵ See e.g., Jones 1987, 36; Artz-Grabner 2006, 284.

¹⁶ Cf. Galloway 2004, 20: “Paul is forced to remain faithful to social convention. A slave becomes a freedperson (ἀπελεύθερος) not a free person (ἐλεύθερος) on his or her manumission”.

For Paul, the decisive point is expressed with κυρίου and Χριστοῦ. Just as it is not circumcision or uncircumcision but the keeping of God's commandments that matters (v. 19), so it is not being a slave or free person in the socio-political sense that counts, but belonging to the Lord/Christ (v. 22). It is he (or God through him) who bought them (and 1 Cor 6.12–20 leaves no doubt that this includes their bodies) with a price, i.e., with his death (v. 23a), so that they now belong to him.¹⁷ Because of this definitive belonging, the slave and also the free person may remain without concern in the calling in which they were called (vv. 20, 24). For this reason, they are not to become slaves of human beings in an absolute sense (v. 23b).

While ἐλεύθερος in v. 21b and ὁ ἐλεύθερος in v. 22b are concerned with socio-political freedom, in v. 22a ἀπελεύθερος κυρίου brings a freedom to expression that is distinct from and unaffected by socio-political freedom: the slave need not be concerned with the fact that s/he is a slave and thus enslaved in the socio-political sense because s/he is the Lord's freedperson and thus *free in another sense*.¹⁸ Since Paul does not explain what such freedom entails, it is not surprising that there is no consensus amongst scholars concerning the meaning or content of the freedom in question. It could potentially be 1) 'freedom from the law', 2) 'freedom from sin', 3) 'freedom from human beings and their judgments', or 4) 'freedom from the previous condition of slavery'. Let me explore each of these in turn.

I only mention the first interpretation because of the great importance attached to 'freedom from the law' in the interpretation of Paul's understanding of freedom. Notably, however, I have not come across any commentator who narrowly identifies the freedom in question as 'freedom from the law'.¹⁹ This is probably due to the fact that there is no explicit reference to the law in the immediate context.

In support of the 'freedom from sin' interpretation Thomas Söding refers to 1 Cor 6.20.²⁰ Moreover, he claims that the 'freedom from human

¹⁷ It is not clear whether v. 23 grounds vv. 18–22 or only vv. 21–22. In my view, the former is perhaps more likely. See Vollenweider 1989, 238: "V 23 scheint nicht nur v. 21, sondern v. 18–22 insgesamt zu begründen".

¹⁸ See Dautzenberg 2001, 61. For a critique of Paul's argument, see Wire 1994, 171.

¹⁹ Jones 1987, 28, is also unaware of any commentator who takes this view. Here, however, it should be noted that Niederwimmer 1966, 176, does appear to suggest that 'freedom from the law' is implied, without explicitly saying so. Similarly, the interpretation of Schrage 1995, 141, is probably broad enough to include 'freedom from the law' within the more comprehensive freedom that is in view. It is less clear whether the same can be said of the interpretation of Vollenweider. See Vollenweider 1989, 232–246, esp. 246. Finally, it should be noted that while Ebeling 1979, 176, does not understand the freedom in question as 'freedom from the law', he does claim that one can only argue in this way from the generative standpoint of 'freedom *vis-à-vis* the law'.

²⁰ Söding 2003, 123. See also e.g., Robertson/Plummer 1929 [1911], 22; Conzelmann 1969, 153 (ET = Conzelmann 1975 [1969], 128); Fee 1987, 319.

beings' interpretation does not do justice to the soteriological point of the Pauline word play.²¹ Finally, he argues that 1 Cor 7 must be interpreted with a view to 1 Cor 1–4, and claims that “the motif of ‘calling’ in 1 Cor 7.17 is a clear context-signal” that sets the individual ethical regulations mentioned here within the larger context of Paul’s theology of grace.²² In this way ‘freedom from sin’ is (implicitly) in view throughout.

Jones, however, argues that the ‘freedom from sin’ interpretation is rendered unlikely by the fact that there is no explicit mention of sin in the context. Instead, he suggests that the only contextual clue to the meaning of the slave’s freedom comes in v. 23b, which warns against becoming slaves of human beings (δοῦλοι ἀνθρώπων). He therefore argues that it seems likely that v. 22 refers to freedom from slavery under human beings, which should be understood as freedom from slavery under human judgments.²³ Moreover, he claims that the Pauline statement thus stands under the influence of Hellenistic traditions concerning inner freedom.²⁴

Let me move now to the fourth possible interpretation, namely ‘freedom from the previous condition of slavery’. With Hans Conzelmann, Wolfgang Schrage suggests that the Christian slave is ἀπελεύθερος “not in relation to the Lord but to his former state of slavery (*Sklavenstand*)”.²⁵ From this standpoint, Conzelmann himself reasons that the former state of slavery should be understood to mean the condition of slavery under sin.²⁶ Schrage, however, suggests that the ‘freedom from sin’ interpretation is too narrow and explains that the former state of slavery should not be defined by sin alone, implying that other enslaving forces must be taken into account.²⁷ His resulting interpretation of ‘freedom from the previous condition of slavery’ is arguably broad enough to encompass all other interpretive possibilities as well, namely ‘freedom from the law’, ‘freedom from sin’ and ‘freedom from human beings and their judgments’, though Schrage himself does not mention this possibility.

My view on this matter is that, first, Söding’s defense of the ‘freedom from sin’ interpretation should not be dismissed too hastily. The statement “you were bought with a price” probably does contain an implicit reference to the fact that Christ died for our sins (cf. Gal 1.4). Moreover, the motif of calling probably does suggest that the individual regulations presuppose

²¹ Söding 2003, 123.

²² Söding 2003, 123.

²³ Jones 1987, 29, 37, 53, 138–139. See also Lütgert 1908, 27; Macgregor 1931 [1914], 268.

²⁴ Jones 1987, 37.

²⁵ Conzelmann 1969, 153 (ET = Conzelmann 1975 [1969], 128); Schrage 1995, 141. For the importance and influence of Schrage’s commentary, see below, note 55.

²⁶ Conzelmann 1969, 153 (ET = Conzelmann 1975 [1969], 128).

²⁷ Schrage 1995, 141.

Paul's theology of grace. Similarly, in view of the comprehensive nature of God's call, there is much to be said for Schrage's broad interpretation of the freedom in question. Despite these considerations, however, my overall assessment is to favor the interpretation advanced by Jones, since the immediate context (cf. 7.23) suggests that Paul is specifically concerned to affirm that the Christian slave is free from human beings and their judgments.

Furthermore it seems likely, as Jones, Vollenweider and others have noted, that Paul's claim that one can be a slave in the socio-political sense and yet free in another sense reflects the influence of Greek philosophical traditions.²⁸ In my view, it is not improbable that Paul came into contact with such thought. How he encountered it, however, is less clear: was he familiar with it from his schooling? Did he enter into concrete debate with Greek philosophers (cf. Acts 17.18) or otherwise encounter them in his ministry (cf. 1 Cor 1.20)? Was he exposed to popular forms of such thought in his dealings with (educated) Gentile believers or unbelievers? Was his knowledge or appropriation of such traditions (solely or primarily) mediated through Hellenistic Judaism? Whatever contact Paul may have had with such thought, it is evident that it has not wholly determined his thinking, for there are clearly differences between the (types of) freedom that Paul speaks of in his letters and the (various types of) freedom advocated in Greek philosophical traditions.²⁹ By way of comparison, it is obvious that Paul has not been influenced by such traditions to the same extent as Philo in his tractate *Quod omnis probus liber sit*.³⁰ Here, it should also be noted that Paul does not explicitly speak of 'inner freedom'.

In conclusion to this section, let me return to the question of the importance of freedom in Paul. In my view, it is difficult to assess the relevance of 1 Cor 7.17–24 for the question of the importance of freedom

²⁸ See Jones 1987, 37; Vollenweider 1989, 241; Dautzenberg 2001, 61–62; Briggs 2003, 113.

²⁹ In the history of scholarship considerable attention has been given to the historical and conceptual relationship between Pauline and Hellenistic ideas of freedom. See e.g., Weiß 1902, 7–11, 17, 25, 33; Bonhöffer 1911, 165, 334, 354–357; Bonhöffer 1912, 285–288; Bultmann 1912, 182–191; Macgregor 1931 [1914], 41–43; Bismarck 1921, XIII–XVI, 150; Schmitz 1923, 50–69, esp. 50, 54, 56–57, 67–69; Müller 1926, 179, 188–189; Schlier 1964 [1935], 496; Schlier 1966 [1949], 195; Pohlenz 1955, 178–187 (ET = Pohlenz 1966 [1955], 169–179); Bultmann 1984b [1959], 43, 44, 47, 51; Niederwimmer 1966, 75–76; Jones 1987, 18–19, 23, 143–145; Vollenweider 1989, 17–19, 397–406; Dautzenberg 1990, 265; Dautzenberg 1996, 74–76. In my view, the likelihood that (popular) Hellenistic (philosophical) traditions had some influence upon Paul's talk of freedom is not called into question by the fact that Paul differs from such traditions in important respects, since this only demonstrates that his thinking was not wholly determined by them. Contra Niederwimmer 1966, 70, 75–76.

³⁰ Philo, *Prob.* 1–160.

in Paul's thought more broadly. On the one hand, the exhortation not to become slaves of human beings in v. 23 suggests that Paul does assign considerable importance to *the idea* of freedom from human beings and their standards and judgments. On the other hand, the word-play of v. 22 is probably an *ad hoc* formulation that Paul coined in order to comfort the Christian slave.³¹ Accordingly, it would be misleading to view the passage as a discussion of the meaning of "Christian freedom" as such. Unlike some of his interpreters,³² Paul does not place the whole passage or chapter under the rubric of 'freedom'. Paul's use of the ἐλευθερ- word group in 1 Cor 7.17–24 also appears to support Jones's contention that Paul's statements on freedom cannot be subsumed under the conventional tri-partite schema 1) 'freedom from sin', 2) 'freedom from the law' and 3) 'freedom from death'.³³

Paul's use of ἀπελευθερός in 1 Cor 7.22 is also relevant for assessing the second question introduced in chapter 2, namely the question of the importance of 'freedom from the law' in Paul's witness to freedom. This passage appears to militate against Vollenweider's thesis that "the Pauline understanding of freedom has its focus in freedom from the law",³⁴ unless one assumes that "the Pauline understanding of freedom" should be narrowly defined to encompass only certain concepts of freedom.

Finally, in relation to the third question, 1 Cor 7.17–24 does seem to shed some light on the relationship between freedom and service. Since v. 22 is concerned to comfort the slave, the slave is said to be the freedperson of Christ and the free person the slave of Christ. It is almost certainly implied, however, that the Christian slave is likewise the slave of Christ and the Christian free person the freedperson of the Lord. Thus the Christian, whether slave or free, is a slave in relation to the Lord and free in relation to human beings and their standards or judgments. However, while v. 22 indicates that the slave need not worry about being a slave in the socio-political sense because s/he is free from human beings in another sense, there is no indication here that Paul has worked out a developed concept of "freedom as slave-service to God and humans".³⁵

³¹ See Jones 1987, 28; Söding 2003, 124.

³² See Conzelmann 1969, 150 (ET = Conzelmann 1975 [1969], 125). See also Vollenweider 1989, 233.

³³ See above, pages 21–22, 28, 31.

³⁴ Vollenweider 1989, 21.

³⁵ Contra Vollenweider 1989, 245: "Unter diesem Zeichen kann Freiheit als Slavendienst an Gott und den Menschen identifiziert werden". If Vollenweider's point is that the interpreter may reach this conclusion by developing Paul's line of thought further, then it may prove possible to affirm his contention. If, however, he wishes to claim that Paul himself has already made this move, then it is necessary to object that the passage in question does not appear to reflect such a developed idea of freedom.

4.3 1 Cor 7.39

The next use of the *ἐλευθερ-* word group occurs in 1 Cor 7.39. In this verse and the next, Paul makes four points. First, he states that “a woman is bound for as long as her husband lives”, that is, she is bound to her husband during his lifetime (cf. 1 Cor 7.27). Second, he explains that if her husband dies, “she is free to be married to whomever she wishes”. Third, he qualifies this statement with the words “only in the Lord”. Fourth, he notes that she is more blessed, in his judgment, if she remains single, and adds that he thinks he also has the Spirit of God.

Quite briefly it may be said that 1 Cor 7.39 shows that Paul does not always use the *ἐλευθερ-* word group in a theologically rich manner. Here, it merely indicates that a widow is free to get married again if her husband has died. In this verse, “free” stands in contrast to “bound”. The emphasis, however, is not that the woman is *free from* being bound to her husband but that she is *free to* be married to whomever she wishes. Notably, in stating that the widow is free to be married to whomever she wishes, Paul adapts a classical definition of freedom, namely that the person is free who lives as s/he wishes.³⁶ Then again, it is noteworthy that being free to be married to whomever she wishes is not presented as an ultimate value. On the contrary, it is qualified by the phrase “only in the Lord”.

Moreover, since Paul encourages the widow to remain single, it is clear that he does not think that she necessarily needs to respond to the fact that she is free to be married to whomever she wishes by getting married. Here, being “free to be married” appears to mean that she has the possibility, ability, permission or right to get married. Notably, Paul does not indicate that remaining single is also an exercise of this freedom. Then again, he also does not suggest that staying single involves the renunciation of (the use of) this freedom. In my view, this observation is potentially relevant for interpreting the relationship between freedom and service (or slavery) in 1 Cor 9.19 and the relationship between freedom and renunciation in 10.29, both of which I shall discuss below.

4.4 1 Cor 9.1, 19

Since Luther based his two propositions in *The Freedom of a Christian* primarily on 1 Cor 9.19, I will give particular attention to the interpretation

³⁶ See e.g. Dautzenberg 2001, 63.

of this verse and its context.³⁷ Within the larger argument of 1 Cor 8–10, 1 Cor 9.1–27 functions as a *digressio* (i.e., as mentioned above, in the technical sense of an apparent shift to another topic that actually illustrates, explains or supports the main theme itself).³⁸ It is therefore comparable to the function of 1 Cor 7.17–24 within the argument of chapter 7.³⁹ In 1 Cor 9.1–27, Paul shows how he deals with being free (ἐλεύθερος: 9.1, 19) and having certain rights (ἐξουσία: 9.4, 6, 12, 18) in order to provide an example for how the Corinthians should deal with their rights (ἐξουσία: 8.9; cf. ζῆσιν: 10.23) and freedom (ἐλευθερία: 10.29). In 11.1, he indicates that he himself is following the example of Christ.

1 Cor 9.1 begins with a series of rhetorical questions that may be reformulated as four statements:⁴⁰

- 1) I am free;
- 2) I am an Apostle;
- 3) I have seen our Lord;
- 4) You are my work in the Lord.

The initial question is how these statements are to be related to one another. Presumably, the final two statements function as grounds for the second, i.e., I am an Apostle, for I have seen our Lord (cf. 1 Cor 15.8); you yourselves are witnesses to my apostleship, for you are my work in the Lord (cf. 4.15). V. 2 underpins this point further: “If to others I am not an apostle, to you at least I am, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord”. While it is more difficult to decide whether the fact that Paul is free follows from the fact that he is an apostle or whether these are two relatively independent claims, the first option is perhaps more likely, since

³⁷ See WA 7, 21, 5–6 (= StA 2, 265, 10–11): “These two propositions are clearly Saint Paul’s, 1 Cor 9.19: ‘I am free in all things and have made myself a slave of everyone’”; WA 7 49, 27–28 (= StA 2, 264, 20): “For both are from Paul himself, who says, 1 Cor 9:19: ‘Though I was (and am) free, I made myself a slave of all’”. Luther also finds (support for) his two propositions in Rom 13.8, Gal 4.4 and Phil 2.6–7. The Latin version appears to place 1 Cor 9.19 and Rom 13.8 on equal footing, while Gal 4.4 and Phil 2.6–7 function as additional support. The primacy of 1 Cor 9.19 is more apparent in the German version, where the introduction of the word “again” suggests that Rom 13.8 and Gal 4.4 function as additional support.

³⁸ Dawes 1990, 681–684. See also Barton 1996, 273: “In other words, rather than being an unrelated digression, 1 Cor. 9 is integral to Paul’s argument, which is carefully structured”.

³⁹ Cf. Dawes 1990, 681–684. As Barton 1996, 273, notes, 1 Cor 13 also functions in a similar way in relation to chapters 12 and 14.

⁴⁰ This does not, of course, mean that the rhetorical form is inconsequential.

when Paul makes use of multiple rhetorical questions in succession, they are often used to make the same point.⁴¹

While some scholars take v. 3 with vv. 1–2, word order suggests that his “apology” is contained in the subsequent rhetorical questions. These too may be reformulated as statements: we have authority 1) to eat and drink, 2) to take along a believing wife and 3) not to work (for our keep). The qualification of the second point, “as the remaining Apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas”, suggests that these statements are related to his implicit claim to be an apostle (v. 1). Moreover, it implies Paul’s equality with them (cf. 1 Cor 15.5–11), possibly countering or anticipating the contrary assertion of those who examine him (cf. 9.3). After supporting his claim to these rights with a variety of arguments in vv. 7–10, Paul reformulates what is evidently the “right” at issue in v. 11 and v. 12a. These verses may be paraphrased and reformulated into statements as follows: since we brought you the gospel, you ought to support us financially; since you grant that others have this claim upon you, it ought to be even more obvious in our case.

Having made it abundantly clear that he has the right to be supported by them, Paul makes an abrupt shift in direction in v. 12b: “*but* we did not use this right, *but* we endure all things [cf. 1 Cor 13.7] in order not to give a hindrance to the Gospel of Christ”. Then, shifting back again, he further underpins his right to support with another analogy in v. 13 before hammering the point home in v. 14: “Thus also the Lord directed those who proclaim the Gospel to live from the Gospel”.

After reaffirming his right to financial support in vv. 13–14, Paul refers back to the whole of his previous argument in v. 15: “But I did not make use of any of these things.”⁴² Moreover, he adds that he does not write in order that things might change: “for I would rather die than – no one will make my boast empty”. Here, Paul implies that his renunciation of rights is (a condition of) his boast (cf. 2 Cor 11.10).⁴³ In v. 16 he emphasizes that there is *no* boast for him in preaching the Gospel since ἀνάγκη is upon him and adds “woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel”.

⁴¹ Winger 1997, 219 n. 5. Winger identifies a similar use of multiple rhetorical questions in Rom 3.1; 8.35; 9.20–21, 21–22; 1 Cor 1.13; 9.11–12; 10.16; 14.7–8; 2 Cor 1.17; 11.29; Gal 1.10; 3.2–3; 4.9. See also Gräber 1955, 338; Richardson 1979, 98; Malherbe 1994, 239: “The first three questions are bound up together – Paul’s freedom is a corollary to his apostleship, which derives from his having seen the Lord (cf. Gal 1.12–27; 1 Cor 15.8”; Landmesser 2000, 40.

⁴² Paul’s use of the plural τούτων here looks back to 9.4–6.

⁴³ See the nuanced treatment of this point by Winger 1997, 223 n. 16: “This need not mean that the renunciation of support is itself Paul’s boast, however; it may rather be (in some way) a condition of the boast, yet not the sole condition”.

Unfortunately, the flow of thought in vv. 17–18 is far from clear. It is possible that v. 17a and v. 17b present two alternative possibilities: if I do this, i.e., proclaim the gospel, of my own accord (ἐκῶν), I have a reward, but if (I do this) not of my own accord (ἄκων), then I am entrusted with a stewardship. If so, then v. 18a would seem to indicate that Paul does it of his own accord since it assumes that he has a reward.⁴⁴ Alternatively, v. 17a and v. 17b–18 may stand in contrast: for if I do this, i.e., proclaim the gospel, of my own accord, then I have a reward; but if I am entrusted with a stewardship not of my own accord, what then is my reward? According to this reading, Paul asks what reward he receives if he is entrusted with a stewardship not of his own accord.⁴⁵

In my view, two observations suggest that the latter is perhaps more likely to be the case.⁴⁶ First, Paul has just stated that ἀνάγκη is upon him. Secondly, he referred to himself earlier as a steward (cf. 4.1). If this interpretation is correct, then Paul indicates that as one who is entrusted with a stewardship not of his own accord, he has a different kind of reward than if he preached the gospel of his own accord, namely his reward (paradoxically) consists in the fact that he may preach the gospel without charge (v. 18b).⁴⁷ Alternatively, it is possible that his reward is that by preaching the gospel without charge he gains the many (1 Cor 9.19–23).⁴⁸

Here it should also be noted that several textual indications suggest that Paul's argument is (at least partially) formulated as a response to his critics.⁴⁹ We read in v. 2 about "others" for whom he is not an apostle; Paul identifies the subsequent argument as his "apology" in v. 3; he also refers there to "those who examine me"; v. 5 introduces a comparison with the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas; and v. 12 alludes to "others" who have the right to support from the Corinthians.

⁴⁴ If so, then vv. 17–18a may be filled out and punctuated as follows:

εἰ γὰρ ἐκῶν τοῦτο πράσσω, μισθὸν ἔχω·
εἰ δὲ ἄκων (τοῦτο πράσσω), οἰκονομίαν πεπίστευμαι·
τίς οὖν μοῦ ἐστὶν ὁ μισθός;

⁴⁵ If so, then vv. 17–18a may be filled out and punctuated as follows:

εἰ γὰρ ἐκῶν τοῦτο πράσσω, μισθὸν ἔχω·
εἰ δὲ ἄκων οἰκονομίαν πεπίστευμαι, τίς οὖν μοῦ ἐστὶν ὁ μισθός;

⁴⁶ See Jones 1987, 171–172, who argues that v. 18a should be taken together with v. 17b so that the parallelism (conditional sentence with ἐκῶν or ἄκων plus finite verb and then main sentence with the word μισθός) of v. 17a and 17b–18 is not lost. See also Vollenweider 1989, 206 n. 36; Schrage 1995, 326; Winger 1997, 225 n. 24.

⁴⁷ See Maurer 1956, 637. Cf. also Käsemann 1965 [1959], 228 (ET = Käsemann 1969 [1959]), 223; Dautzenberg 1969, 227; Horsley 1998, 130.

⁴⁸ See Winger 1997, 226–227.

⁴⁹ The designation "critics" is intentionally vague so as to leave open whether Paul is concerned with 1) critical members within the church, 2) "opponents" that have come from elsewhere or 3) some combination of the two. See 1 Cor 3.10–15, 16–17; 14.37–38.

In view of these indications, I consider it likely that Paul is responding to criticism concerning the validity of his ministry. More specifically, it seems likely that his critics were calling his apostleship (and ‘freedom’?) into question on the basis of his practice of not receiving financial support. Their argument may have proceeded along the following lines:

- 1) An apostle is to be supported financially;
- 2) Paul does not receive support;
- 3) Paul is therefore not a full-fledged apostle.

This line of argument, however, remains uncertain, given the difficulty of reconstructing his critics’ reasoning, which may not have been identical with Paul’s perception of it. Whatever *they* thought, Paul argues that:

- 1) He has certain rights in common with the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas (v. 5).
- 2) He has not made and is not making use of his right to financial support in order not to hinder the Gospel (v. 12).
- 3) He has not and will not make use of his rights, insofar as his renunciation of them is his boast (v. 15) and his reward (v. 18).

The goal of Paul’s argument is to show that his apostleship (and ‘freedom’?) is not called into question by his not making use of the rights that he most certainly has. On the contrary, such renunciation is his boast (v. 15) and his reward (v. 18b).

Taking up the first rhetorical question of v. 1, Paul places Ἐλεύθερος in the emphatic first position in v. 19. In order to illustrate the subsequent argument, vv. 19–23 may be set forth as follows:

- 19a Ἐλεύθερος γὰρ ὢν ἐκ πάντων
 19b πᾶσιν ἑμαυτὸν ἐδοῦλωσα,
 19c ἵνα τοὺς πλείονας κερδήσω·
 20a καὶ ἐγενόμην τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις ὡς Ἰουδαῖος,
 20b ἵνα Ἰουδαίους κερδήσω·
 20c τοῖς ὑπὸ νόμον ὡς ὑπὸ νόμον,
 20d μὴ ὢν αὐτὸς ὑπὸ νόμον,
 20e ἵνα τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον κερδήσω·
 21a τοῖς ἀνόμοις ὡς ἄνομος,
 21b μὴ ὢν ἄνομος θεοῦ,
 21c ἀλλ’ ἔνομος Χριστοῦ,
 21d ἵνα κερδάνω τοὺς ἀνόμους·
 22a ἐγενόμην τοῖς ἀσθενέσιν ἀσθενής,
 22b ἵνα τοὺς ἀσθενεῖς κερδήσω·
 22c τοῖς πᾶσιν γέγονα πάντα,
 22d ἵνα πάντως τινὰς σώσω.
 23a πάντα δὲ ποιῶ
 23b διὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον,
 23c ἵνα συγκοινωνῶς αὐτοῦ γένωμαι.

While the force of the γάρ in v. 19a should not be pressed too far, there are good reasons to favor a relatively strong connection to the preceding argument in vv. 1–18. First, ἐλεύθερος clearly takes up the initial rhetorical question of v. 1. Secondly, Paul’s making himself a slave to all (19b) probably includes his renunciation of financial support. Thirdly, the ἵνα clauses of vv. 19–22 and the claim to do all things for the sake of the gospel in v. 23 picks up the argument of v. 12d. Fourthly, Paul’s use of κερδήσω resonates with the preceding discussion of his reward.⁵⁰ Finally, the fundamental argument of vv. 19 and 23 together with the examples of vv. 20–22 function to underpin the rationale of Paul’s apostolic ministry and thus to ground further the argument of vv. 4–18.

Having looked at the conjunction γάρ, let me now move to the more hotly debated question of the interpretation of the participle ὡν that immediately follows it. Many scholars in the ‘German’ tradition place considerable emphasis upon the translation and interpretation of ὡν in this verse.⁵¹ Vollenweider, for example, claims that “with a view to the whole of the Pauline theology it is absolutely necessary to translate the participial expression in v. 19a not as concessive but at least as modal if not as causal: ‘because or in that I am free...’”.⁵² Andreas Lindemann similarly argues that the terms ἐλεύθερος ὡν and ἑμαυτὸν ἐδούλωσα should not be read as contradictory statements, since only a free person can willingly become a slave. Translating v. 19a with the words “Als allen (oder: allem) gegenüber Freier”, he explains that “the participle is not strictly causal and certainly not to be understood as concessive”.⁵³ Dautzenberg, by contrast, claims that “only a concessive understanding of the participial construction corresponds to the opposition of freedom and enslavement”.⁵⁴

In order to highlight further the importance that is often attached to this question, I will begin by focusing on the detailed treatment given to it in Wolfgang Schrage’s influential commentary on 1 Corinthians.⁵⁵ Schrage

⁵⁰ See Vollenweider 1989, 208.

⁵¹ See e.g., Vollenweider 1989, 209–210; Schrage 1995, 338; Lindemann 2000, 211; Dautzenberg 2001, 65. See also Ebeling, 1970, 212; Ebeling 1971 [1968], 319; Ebeling 1979, 190; Penzoldt 1988, 232, 236–237; Bayer 2003, 39; Bayer 2004, 263.

⁵² Vollenweider 1989, 209 n. 53. See also e.g., Niederwimmer 1966, 207; Ebeling 1971 [1968], 319; Schrage 1995, 338; Wolff 2000 [1996], 197, 201; Bayer 2003, 39.

⁵³ Lindemann 2000, 211. For other scholars who appear to advocate a modal rather than causal or concessive interpretation of the participle ὡν, see e.g., Eichholz 1991 [1972], 51; Bornkamm 1975, 15.

⁵⁴ Dautzenberg 2001, 65.

⁵⁵ The importance and influence of Schrage’s four-volume commentary on 1 Corinthians (Schrage 1991; Schrage 1995; Schrage 1999; Schrage 2001) is already evident from the fact that it is the only commentary that Thiselton 2000, xxviii, marks with two stars (**). With respect to the issue at hand, two examples are sufficient to show that Schrage’s treatment of this question has already had an influence upon both

explicitly rejects the concessive translation of 1 Cor 9.19a, championing instead the causal rendering: “because (*weil*) I am free”.⁵⁶ In explicating and defending this translation, he appeals to the particular character of the Pauline dialectic, which differs, he notes, from the dialectic in 1 Cor 7.21–22.⁵⁷ His highly compact and characteristically nuanced reasoning proceeds as follows. First, he observes that ἐλευθερος ὧν forms “the incontrovertible presupposition”, the basis from which everything must proceed.⁵⁸ Secondly, he stresses with Vollenweider that the dialectic is characterized by “an irreversible slope (*Gefälle*)”, in which “servitude arises from freedom, but freedom does not arise from servitude”.⁵⁹ Thirdly, noting that the present participle ὧν expresses simultaneous time, he ascribes to it “a linear function”. What is meant by “linear function” is then explicated in what follows: “freedom evidently builds the continuum, and it is precisely in and out of ἐλευθερία that Paul makes himself ever

‘German’ and Anglophone scholarship. First, Schrage’s advocacy of a causal translation and interpretation of 1 Cor 9.19 is almost certainly responsible, or at least partly responsible, for altering Christian Wolff’s treatment of this question. In his 1982 commentary on 1 Cor 8–16 and his 1988 article on humbleness and renunciation, Wolff *translates* 1 Cor 9.19a in a concessive manner, i.e., “obwohl ich frei von allen bin”. See Wolff 1982, 27; Wolff 1988, 188. In his more recent commentary on 1 Corinthians, however, Wolff adopts a causal translation of 1 Cor 9.19. See Wolff 2000 [1996], 197: “Denn (gerade) weil ich frei bin von allen” (197). Two observations suggest that Schrage’s treatment of this issue was at least partly responsible for this change: 1) Schrage 1995, 338 n. 342, had criticized Wolff’s 1982 commentary for its concessive rendering of ὧν; 2) Wolff 2001 [1996], 201 n. 232, refers to Schrage 1995, 338, and Vollenweider 1989, 209 n. 53, in support of his causal interpretation of 1 Cor 9.19a. Secondly, Schrage’s influence upon Anglophone scholarship is evident from Victor Furnish’s appeal to Schrage’s causal interpretation of ὧν in his review of David Horrell’s monograph *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul’s Ethics*. See Furnish 2007, 5–6: “Arguably, the participle in 1 Cor 9:19 (ὧν) is best read, not as concessive (NRSV: ‘For though I am free with respect to all...’), but causal: ‘Because I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them’ (see W. Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* [1995], 2:338–339). Similarly, one may say that the strong are not directed to *compromise* or *restrict* their freedom but to *employ* it in order to build up the weak”. In contrast to Furnish (and Schrage), Horrell 2005, 192, states that “the imperative of other-regard requires that even legitimate freedom be given up, to a considerable extent, though not entirely (the freedom to eat everything sold in the market seems to be unassailable; see above)”. Moreover, he explains that Paul “has enslaved himself ... by accommodating his conduct and compromising his freedom in different ways for the sake of various groups, especially the weak (9.19–23)”. As will become evident, my position differs in important respects from both of these traditions of interpretation.

⁵⁶ Schrage 1995, 336, 338.

⁵⁷ Schrage 1995, 338.

⁵⁸ Schrage 1995, 338.

⁵⁹ Schrage 1995, 338; Vollenweider 1989, 211.

anew into a δούλος”.⁶⁰ In this context, Schrage also stresses that the sense is not “because I *was* free” but rather “because I *am* free”, since v. 19a (also) expresses meaning for the present rather than (solely) for the past. Going one step further, he then introduces a series of statements concerning “freedom itself”:

Freedom itself is ever again also the freedom for servitude, freedom for love and thereby freedom from oneself [...] [Freedom itself is] the load-bearing ground and point of departure of servitude [...] Freedom itself can and will ever again also take the form of δούλειά.⁶¹

Having articulated the meaning of “freedom itself”, Schrage claims that this is what constitutes Paul’s radical freedom, and he notes that this is not equivalent to libertinism. Moreover, he adds that “the free person remains free only as long as he remains free also from his freedom, and only as long as his freedom implies the renunciation of the exercise of his own ἐξουσία”.⁶² He explains that the concessive translation of ὡν is to be rejected, for if freedom itself is the ground and point of departure for servitude, then it is not “although” but “because” Paul is free that he makes himself a slave to all.⁶³ Since Schrage explicitly rejects the concessive interpretation of ὡν, it is noteworthy – and perhaps telling – that he does not completely remove concessive or quasi-concessive emphases from his argument. He speaks, for example, of “paradoxical freedom”,⁶⁴ and refers to the ordering of servitude to freedom as an “oxymoron”.⁶⁵ Drawing attention to the “dialectical understanding of the Pauline understanding of freedom”, he notes that “in v. 19 freedom and servitude stand hard alongside each other”.⁶⁶ Moreover, he holds that “it is this dialectical tension that is distinctively Pauline”.⁶⁷

In speaking of paradox, oxymoron, and dialectical tension, Schrage acknowledges that Paul’s joining of freedom and servitude presents a

⁶⁰ Schrage 1995, 338.

⁶¹ Schrage 1995, 338.

⁶² Schrage 1995, 338. See also Schrage 1995, 337: “Seine Freiheit war eben auch in den vorhergehenden Versen schon Thema, die Freiheit zum Rechtsverzicht. Nur die ἐλευθερία ermöglicht auch das Freisein von Praktizierung und Durchsetzung der ἐξουσία”; and Schrage 1995, 334: “Denn nur die Freiheit ermöglicht den Verzicht auf die ἐξουσία und das Freisein von der Durchsetzung der Freiheit”.

⁶³ Schrage 1995, 338.

⁶⁴ Schrage 1995, 334. While Ebeling 1971 [1968], 119, shows greater consistency in challenging the tendency to speak of a paradox, he too speaks of the presence of an inner tension. See also notes 68 and 71 below.

⁶⁵ Schrage 1995, 336.

⁶⁶ Schrage 1995, 337.

⁶⁷ Schrage 1995, 337.

moment of (apparent) tension.⁶⁸ In his view, however, it is not the presence of dialectic or tension as such, but rather the specific nature of Paul's dialectic that is decisive.⁶⁹ Schrage describes the tension of 9.19 as "the tension of independence and devotion, of freedom and agape".⁷⁰ Having spoken of tension, however, he immediately re-affirms the unity of the subject matter, adding: "both, however, belong together".⁷¹ Moreover, he sets forth the logic of this unity, "one who belongs to the lord will be sent to others", and explains that "δουλοῦν ἑαυτόν is therefore also not put forth as an absolute value, but stands in the service of love and mission: ἵνα τοὺς πλείονας κερδήσω".⁷² Since Schrage stresses that it is "in and out of ἐλευθερία that Paul makes himself ever anew into a δοῦλος", his position may be more precisely described as causal-modal rather than merely causal.⁷³

In view of the great emphasis placed upon the translation and interpretation of ὤν in v. 19a, it is surprising that attention is only rarely given to the potential relevance of the repetition of ὤν in vv. 20 and 21. Certainly, the proximity of these verses alone invites further reflection. Here it is best to begin with the function of each verse: vv. 20ab, 20c, 21ad and 22ab exemplify or specify the all-encompassing statements of vv. 19bc and 22cd, while v. 20d and v. 21bc introduce qualifications that are presumably intended to ward off potential misunderstandings. V. 21bc provides the most thorough qualification, being comprised of a negative and a positive claim: "though not being x, but (being) y", while v. 20d contains the negative qualification "though not being myself x". If we apply the full form of 21bc to Paul's statements in 20a, 20c, 21a and 22a (introducing *myself* from 20d), then the following qualifications may be constructed for the sake of argument:

⁶⁸ Schrage 1995, 337–338. Cf. also Ebeling 1971 [1968], 119: "Und endlich ist auch die christliche Freiheit von einer inneren Spannung bestimmt".

⁶⁹ Schrage 1995, 337–338: "Gerade diese dialektische Spannung ist das eigentlich Paulinische, wobei jedoch alles auf die Art dieser Dialektik ankommt (eine andere Form der Dialektik in 7,21f.)".

⁷⁰ Schrage 1995, 337.

⁷¹ Schrage 1995, 337. Cf. also Ebeling 1971 [1968], 119: "Denn hier geht es nicht um Einschränkung der christlichen Freiheit, sondern gerade um deren Vollzug in der Zusammengehörigkeit von Freiheit und Dienst. Darum sollte man auch nicht gleich von 'Paradoxie' reden. Es ist kein widersprüchlicher, sondern ein völlig zusammenstimmender Sachverhalt, nicht Mißklang, sondern Einklang, daß Freiheit dies beides miteinander ist, und daß nur in dem Miteinander von beidem Freiheit ist". See also Ebeling 1979, 190.

⁷² Schrage 1995, 338–339.

⁷³ Schrage 1995, 338 (my emphasis). Cf. Vollenweider 1989, 209.

- To 20a: [though not being myself a Jew]
 [but (being) a member of the church of God]⁷⁴
 [but (being) a member of the body of Christ]⁷⁵
 [but (being) a new creation]⁷⁶
- To 20c: though not being myself under the law
 [but (being) under grace]⁷⁷
- To 21a: though not being [myself] ἄνομος θεοῦ
 but (being) ἕννομος Χριστοῦ
- To 22a: [though not being myself weak]
 [but (being) one who has knowledge]⁷⁸
 [but (being) one who is strong]⁷⁹

Such speculation is only put forth for the sake of argument, and it must immediately be qualified by the fact that Paul did *not* fill out his argument in this way. Moreover, it may be questioned whether he *would have* done so. In particular, it is by no means clear that he would have thus qualified vv. 20a or 22a. To pursue this question further, however, would be a monograph in itself, and my point is merely that Paul's statements here invite further reflection, though without offering clear guidance in each case for the direction such reflection should take. In v. 20d, however, Paul does offer such guidance, clarifying that he is not himself under the law. Moreover, the proposed positive qualification "but (being) under grace" arguably carries more weight in view of its explicit articulation in Rom 6.14, 15. Whatever one makes of this positive qualification, v. 20d clearly suggests Paul's awareness that v. 20c is capable of being interpreted in a manner contrary to his intention. Similarly, given the provocative nature of v. 21a, it is not surprising that Paul follows it with a double qualification. Here, certain misunderstandings had to be countered from the start!

What then is the purpose of such speculation? Beyond suggesting the interpretative potential of 1 Cor 9.19–23 as a fruitful locus for further reflection on Paul's life and thought,⁸⁰ it also shows the potential relevance of v. 20d and v. 21bc for the interpretation of v. 19a. More specifically, it highlights the fact that Paul qualifies vv. 20c and 21a in order to guard against potential misunderstanding. Here, it is notable that scholars are agreed in assigning concessive force to the participle ὧν.⁸¹

⁷⁴ See 1 Cor 10.32.

⁷⁵ See 1 Cor 12.13; Gal 3.28.

⁷⁶ See Gal 6.15–16; 2 Cor 5.17.

⁷⁷ See Rom 6.14–15.

⁷⁸ See 1 Cor 8.1.

⁷⁹ See Rom 15.1.

⁸⁰ For a recent attempt to unpack the relevance of these verses for our understanding of Paul's life and thought, see Rudolph 2006; Rudolph 2009. See also the extensive bibliography provided there.

⁸¹ See e.g., Schrage 1995, 336: "eine konzessive Partizipialbestimmung".

How is this relevant for the interpretation of v. 19a? In my view, the function of 19a is comparable to that of 20d and 21bc. V. 19bc corresponds to 20ce and 21ad. While 19a precedes 19b, however, 20c and 21b follow 20b and 21a. Moreover, 20c and 21b contain the negation μή, while 19a is formulated positively. This positive formulation, however, finds a parallel in 21c, which is therefore of particular significance for the interpretation of 19a. In 21a–c, the sense is *not* “though I *was* ἔννομος Χριστοῦ, I renounced this reality and became ὡς ἄνομος for the sake of gaining τοὺς ἀνόμους”, the point being rather that becoming ὡς ἄνομος τοῖς ἀνόμοις did not call into question the fact that Paul remained ἔννομος Χριστοῦ. Similarly, the sense of v. 19 is probably *not* “though I was free, I relinquished or renounced this freedom by making myself a slave to all”: Paul does not take back the formulation of v. 1: “Am I not free?” i.e., “I am free”.⁸² In making himself a slave to all, Paul remained “free from all”. In view of this fact, it is probably misleading to speak of Paul foregoing,⁸³ giving up,⁸⁴ sacrificing,⁸⁵ or limiting⁸⁶ his freedom.

At the same time, the sense of 21a–c is also not, “because I am ἔννομος Χριστοῦ, I became ὡς ἄνομος”. This is not necessarily to say that Paul could not or would not have reasoned in this way, but simply that this is not his emphasis here. Instead, the participial phrase μὴ ὦν ἄνομος θεοῦ ἀλλ’ ἔννομος Χριστοῦ qualifies the former statement τοῖς ἀνόμοις ὡς ἄνομος so as to safeguard it from misunderstanding. It indicates that in becoming ὡς ἄνομος Paul did not become ἄνομος θεοῦ but remained ἔννομος Χριστοῦ. Similarly, Ἐλεύθερος ... ὦν ἐκ πάντων most likely safeguards the fact that Paul was and remained “free from all” rather than indicating that he made himself a slave to all “because he was free from all”.

What then should we make of the causal interpretation of ὧν in v. 19a? Should it be regarded as a distortion of Paul’s thought? To answer this question, one would have to inquire more fully into the degree to which it reflects or constructively develops the overall direction of Paul’s thinking

⁸² See Vollenweider 1989, 210: “Unbestritten ist, dass v. 19a gegenüber 19b nicht einen vergangenen Zustand meint”. Contra e.g., Martin 1990, 133–134.

⁸³ Contra e.g., Barton 1996, 278: “Paul’s freedom is such that he can forego it by enslaving himself to others”. Notably, Barton suggests only a few lines earlier that, “For Paul, true freedom shows itself in what brings benefit to the greatest number”. For a similar juxtaposition of statements, see Horsely 1978, 587.

⁸⁴ Contra e.g., Horrell 2005, 192.

⁸⁵ Contra e.g., Drane 1975, 68.

⁸⁶ Contra e.g., Weiß 1902, 18; Wedell 1950, 209.

on freedom.⁸⁷ For my more limited purposes, it is sufficient to note that Paul does not appear to make this emphasis here.⁸⁸ On the contrary, the fact that he juxtaposes “being free from all” and “making himself a slave to all” suggests that the force of the participle ὡν is more likely to be concessive.⁸⁹ His point in v. 19 is therefore that although he was and remained (not a slave of human beings but) free from all (people) (and thus could not be expected, required or compelled to subject himself to the wishes of others), he (nevertheless) made himself a slave of all (people) in order that he may gain the many.

A final question concerns the precise meaning of “free” in vv. 1 and 19. Since v. 19 looks back to v. 1, the meaning of ἐλεύθερος is almost certainly the same in both verses.⁹⁰ The qualification “from all people” in v. 19a suggests that the sense is “independent”, i.e., “not a slave” or “not subject to the wishes of other people”. This interpretation is confirmed by v. 19b where Paul juxtaposes being “free from all” (people) and making himself “a slave to all” (people). Since Paul does not mean that he literally sold himself into slavery, it is highly likely that he is not merely concerned to assert that he is (a) free (person) in the socio-political sense.⁹¹ Instead, his more fundamental point is that he is not subject to the wishes or control of other people or groups of people.⁹² He is not a slave of human beings (cf. 1 Cor 7.23). He is not a servile people-pleaser (cf. Gal 1.10). Although he is not subject to the wishes of others, he nevertheless makes himself a slave to all people, that is, he seeks to please all people in everything (cf. 1 Cor 10.32).

In view of v. 1b, the fact that Paul is free (from all people) may well be based in his apostolic calling.⁹³ Alternatively, it may be based more generally in his belonging to Christ. In whatever way it is grounded, it is necessary to note that in 1 Cor 11.1 Paul exhorts the Corinthians to be imitators of him as he is of Christ. Jones’s suggestion that the freedom in

⁸⁷ This same question may be raised with regard to the causal interpretation (and translation) of Luther’s (concessive) translation of 1 Cor 9.19. See above on pages 16–17, esp. note 83.

⁸⁸ Contra the authors cited in note 52 above.

⁸⁹ See Dautzenberg 2001, 65: “Dem Gegensatz von Freiheit und Versklavung entspricht allein ein konzessives Verständnis der Partizipialkonstruktion”. See also Lockwood 2000, 309: “The participle, which recurs in 9:20–21, is concessive, hence ‘*although I am*’”.

⁹⁰ Contra Jones 1987, 56.

⁹¹ Contra Dautzenberg 2001, 65, who appears to take this position.

⁹² Cf. Beet 1882, 153: “Free; takes up v. 1, and thus marks a transition from Paul’s specific refusal of maintenance to his conduct generally. Free from all: from any one who can compel him to do this or that”. Cf. also Schmitz 1923, 33; Ratschow 1987 [1976], 245; Hays 1997, 153.

⁹³ See above on page 64, esp. n.41.

question is grounded in and preserved by Paul's financial independence⁹⁴ is rendered unlikely by the fact that Paul's practice of not taking remuneration was probably viewed with suspicion by (some of) the Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor 9.3) whereas Paul expected them to affirm his claim to be free (from all). Similarly, while it is possible that his being free was based solely upon his status as a free person,⁹⁵ the fact that he is concerned with his independence *vis-à-vis* Jews, those under the law, those without the law, and the weak suggests instead that it is more likely to be based in his apostleship or his belonging to Christ.

1 Corinthians 9 is a key chapter for assessing the central questions of this work, namely the importance of freedom in Paul, the interpretation of 'freedom from the law', and the relationship between freedom and service. Let me start with the question of the importance of freedom. In this passage Paul places considerable emphasis upon the fact that he is free. The chapter opens with the rhetorical question "Am I not free?" and v. 19 acts as a heading for 9.19–23. Moreover, the word ἐλεύθερος is placed in the emphatic position. In my view, it does not follow from this point, however, that the chapter in general or vv. 19–23 in particular should be regarded as an *explication* of (Christian) freedom or what it means to be free. While Paul is concerned to emphasize that he has certain rights and is free, his main point is that he does not use his rights in order not to hinder the gospel and that although he is free from all, he nevertheless made himself a slave to all in order that he may gain the many. He discusses the fact that he is free and has certain rights in order to show the Corinthians how they should deal with their freedom and rights. The impetus of his argument, however, rests in his understanding of the gospel (cf. 9.12, 23) rather than in a robust understanding of the nature of Christian freedom.

Next we come to the question concerning 'freedom from the law'. The relevance of 1 Cor 9.19–23 for the interpretation of 'freedom from the law' in Paul is hotly debated. Jones supports his claim that 1 Cor 9.19 is not concerned with 'freedom from the (curse of the) law' with four points.⁹⁶ First, he notes that Paul describes himself as ἐλεύθερος ἐκ πάντων rather than as ἐλευθερωθεὶς ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου. Secondly, he explains that the examples in vv. 20–21 only represent the categories with which Paul otherwise divides humanity. Thirdly, he argues that the statements μὴ ὦν αὐτὸς ὑπὸ νόμον (v. 20) and μὴ ὦν ἄνομος θεοῦ (v. 21) are only intended to show that Paul remains inwardly free in his relations to the various

⁹⁴ Jones 1987, 46. See also Fee 1987, 426.

⁹⁵ See Dautzenberg 2001, 65.

⁹⁶ Jones 1987, 52–53.

human groups (ἐκ πάντων). Fourthly, he states that like Epictetus and Diogenes, Paul understood himself to be bound only to God and his law.⁹⁷

In response to Jones, Vollenweider argues that vv. 19bc–23 refer to specific problems encountered in the historical period of early Christianity, and claims that “*Eleutheria* is now taken up in its *relation to the law (Nomos)*”.⁹⁸ In opposition to Jones’s argument that vv. 20–21 only formulate the categories with which Paul divides humanity, he objects that Rom 2.9ff indicates that the topic of the law can be relevant here and states that this is doubtless the case for 1 Cor 9.19ff. In his judgment, the freedom of v. 19a returns in μὴ ὦν αὐτὸς ὑπὸ νόμον and ὡς ἄνομος or ὡς ἔννομος Χριστοῦ,⁹⁹ whereas the enslavement is mirrored in ἐγενόμην (ὡς).¹⁰⁰ From this perspective, Vollenweider then claims that Paul’s description of himself as “not under the law” (v. 20) indicates that “his *identity is no longer constituted by the law*”.¹⁰¹ Moreover, he interprets v. 21 to mean that Paul, standing in ‘the law of Christ’, is now in a position that has transcended the antagonistic pair of law and lawlessness (law and sin), and the hidden interdependence between these two categories.¹⁰²

It seems to me that while Vollenweider rightly observes that the phrases μὴ ὦν αὐτὸς ὑπὸ νόμον, ὡς ἄνομος and μὴ ὦν ἄνομος θεοῦ ἀλλ’ ἔννομος Χριστοῦ are relevant for the interpretation of Paul’s relation to the law, Jones is correct to question whether these phrases actually show that the ‘freedom’ of v. 19 is ‘freedom from the law’. With a view to the interpretation of ‘freedom from the law’ in Paul, two conclusions may therefore be drawn. First, *the idea or concept* of ‘freedom from the law’ may well come to expression in the phrases μὴ ὦν αὐτὸς ὑπὸ νόμον (v. 20) and τοῖς ἀνόμοις ὡς ἄνομος (v. 21). Secondly, there is, however, no reason for including this idea in the sense of ἐλεύθερος in v. 19, which is solely concerned with Paul’s independence from (groups of) people.¹⁰³

Finally we come to the question of the relationship between freedom and service. Since Luther viewed his two propositions as an explication of 1 Cor 9.19, it is not surprising that interpreters have placed considerable weight upon this verse in their attempts to explicate the relationship be-

⁹⁷ In support of this point, Jones 1987, 52, refers to Epictetus, *Diatr.* 4.1.89–90, and the description of Diogenes in Maximus of Tyre, *Orations* 36.5–6.

⁹⁸ Vollenweider 1989, 213 (original emphasis): “*Eleutheria* wird nun im *Verhältnis zum Nomos* thematisiert”.

⁹⁹ In contrast to Vollenweider, Paul himself writes ἔννομος Χριστοῦ rather than ὡς ἔννομος Χριστοῦ. While this discrepancy may reflect an error in understanding, it is probably nothing more than a typographical error.

¹⁰⁰ Vollenweider 1989, 213.

¹⁰¹ Vollenweider 1989, 213–214 (original emphasis).

¹⁰² Vollenweider 1989, 214.

¹⁰³ Contra Vollenweider 1989, 213.

tween freedom and service in Paul. Unfortunately, the passage itself arguably sheds less light upon this question than has often been claimed. On the one hand, Paul never suggests that in making himself a slave to all he ceased to be free from all. On the other hand, in my view he also does not suggest that it was *because* he was free from all that he made himself a slave to all.¹⁰⁴ Nor does he indicate that his self-enslavement to others was a/the (paradoxical) exercise, realization, demonstration or incarnation of his ‘freedom’.¹⁰⁵ Likewise, he does not suggest that “self-enslavement is a kind of freedom”,¹⁰⁶ that “freedom is an opportunity for slavery”,¹⁰⁷ or that the freedom in question is “the freedom to renounce his right”.¹⁰⁸ Neither does he explain that “his freedom consists in making himself a slave to all”,¹⁰⁹ nor that “making himself a slave to all, frees him from all”.¹¹⁰ Finally, there is no indication that 1 Cor 9.19 bears witness to “a new definition of freedom”.¹¹¹

Instead of making any of these statements, Paul appears to remain content with the paradoxical claim that although he was and remained (not a slave of human beings but) free from all (people) (and thus could not be expected, required or compelled to subject himself to the wishes of others), he (nevertheless) made himself a slave of all (people) in order that he may gain the many.¹¹² In contrast to many of his interpreters, Paul does not appear to pursue further the (important) question of whether this self-imposed slavery should, in fact, be understood as a/the manifestation of ‘freedom’ or rather as the renunciation or limitation of the use of ‘freedom’.

¹⁰⁴ Contra the authors cited in note 52 above.

¹⁰⁵ Contra the synthesis advanced by Bultmann 1984a [1948–1953], 343–345 (ET = Bultmann 2007 [1948–1953], 342–343); Vollenweider 1989, 403; Schrage 1995, 334, 337, 338; Weder 1998, 137; and the other ‘German’ authors cited on page 45 n. 180. Contra also e.g., Malherbe 1994, 254: “Paul goes beyond even these Cynics when he claims the paradox that his freedom was expressed in his voluntarily enslaving of himself for the benefit of others”.

¹⁰⁶ Contra Winger 1997, 228.

¹⁰⁷ Contra Byron 2003, 194.

¹⁰⁸ Contra Schnabel 2006, 477.

¹⁰⁹ Contra Ebeling 1979, 179.

¹¹⁰ Contra Garland 2003, 428.

¹¹¹ Contra Paige 1992, 191: “Paul overturns this self-centered perspective by his very life, which in its imitatio Christi makes a new definition of freedom: Ἐλεύθερος γὰρ ὢν ἐκ πάντων πᾶσιν ἑμαυτὸν ἐδούλωσα, ἵνα τοὺς πλείονας κερδήσω (9.19).”

¹¹² For a partial parallel to this idea, see Philo, *Prob.* 79: δοῦλός τε παρ’ αὐτοῖς οὐδὲ εἷς ἐστίν, ἀλλ’ ἐλεύθεροι πάντες ἀνθυπουργοῦντες ἀλλήλοις. Cf. Theissen 2002, 362. Since the service is mutual, however, Philo’s statement is more similar to Paul’s argument in Gal 5.13. See also my comments on Gal 5.13.

Since Paul does not take up this question, his interpreters should accordingly make a more careful distinction between the conclusions that Paul himself actually draws (in this passage) and their own constructive attempts to pursue the subject matter with which he was wrestling.¹¹³ In my view, this criticism is particularly applicable to the influential work of Vollenweider, Schrage and Ebeling,¹¹⁴ (but as the footnotes to the preceding paragraphs indicate it is also applicable to numerous scholars in the Anglophone tradition¹¹⁵). However, it is also crucial to emphasize that this critique concerns the failure to distinguish between Paul and subsequent (theological) reflection rather than the value of such reflection, which is arguably indispensable for the broader theological task of thinking through and working out the concerns and issues that come to expression in Paul's letters.

4.5 1 Cor 10.29

In 1 Cor 10.25–26, Paul instructs the Corinthians to eat whatever is sold in the meat market on the grounds that “the earth is the Lord's and everything in it” (relying on Ps 24.1). He also notes, however, that they are not to make inquiries for conscience's sake. Here, the reference to conscience is vague and no clue is given as to whether it concerns that of the buyer, the seller, another person or some combination of these.

A second situation is then introduced in v. 27, namely an invitation to eat with an unbeliever. Here, the initial qualification “if you wish to go” makes clear that the avoidance of the situation is a valid option. For those who accept, however, Paul sets forth a variation of his previous instructions, “eat everything set before you, inquiring about nothing for the sake of conscience”, presumably with the same rationale.

With v. 28 the situation changes and with it Paul's instructions: “but if someone says to you, ‘this is sacrificed to a god’, do not eat (it) for the sake of the one who made (this) known (to you) and for conscience's sake”. Whereas the initial appeal remains vague, perhaps intentionally, Paul clarifies in v. 29 that he does not mean the conscience of the one invited, but that of “the other”, a point which he then grounds with two rhetorical questions: “For why should my freedom be judged (or

¹¹³ Cf. Dautzenberg 1990, 266, 276; Stolle 2005, 42 n. 132.

¹¹⁴ See Vollenweider 1989, 209–210; Schrage 1995, 338; Ebeling 1970 [1964], 212; Ebeling 1971 [1968], 319; Ebeling 1979, 190.

¹¹⁵ For a particularly penetrating attempt to think through the relationship between freedom and slavery within the Anglophone tradition, see Winger 1997, 226–228.

condemned) by another's conscience? If I partake with thanksgiving, why am I reviled on behalf of that for which I give thanks?"¹¹⁶

Reformulating the rhetorical questions of vv. 29b–30 yields the following statements: My freedom should not be judged by another's conscience. I should not be reviled on behalf of that for which I give thanks. Together they function to reinforce the point of v. 29a: it is not for the sake of one's own conscience but for the sake of the other's that one should not eat. From the perspective of one's own conscience, one may indeed partake of everything for which one gives thanks (v. 30). This freedom is apparently based on the knowledge that "the earth is the Lord's and all that is within it" (v. 25), which is linked to the knowledge that "there is no idol in the world" and that "there is no God but one" (8.4).

Here, the context suggests that "my freedom" probably means "my freedom to eat consecrated meat", i.e., "the freedom that I have according to my own conscience to eat consecrated meat".¹¹⁷ Alternatively, it may mean "my freedom to eat everything for which I give thanks" (cf. 10.30; Rom 14.6).¹¹⁸ Then again, it is also conceivable that it should be understood more broadly as "the freedom to think, decide and act without being determined by another".¹¹⁹

While the aforementioned alternatives are all conceivable, the first option – i.e. "the freedom that I have according to my own conscience to eat consecrated meat" – is probably preferable in view of the immediate context. Since it is the eating of consecrated meat that is judged or condemned, it is clear that the freedom in question comes to expression in such eating. Since, however, Paul does not suggest that this freedom is lost if one does not eat, the freedom in question cannot be equated with such eating. Instead, it appears to consist already in the fact that one is free or permitted to eat such meat, whether or not one actually does so.¹²⁰ Paul does not, however, draw the further conclusion that refraining from eating consecrated meat is also an expression of such freedom.¹²¹ Then again, he

¹¹⁶ In my view, there is no need to postulate that 1 Cor 10.29b–30 represents an objection to Paul's view by a Corinthian pneumatic rather than an expression of the logic of Paul's own view. Contra e.g., Niederwimmer 1966, 205; Friedrich 1978, 177; Malherbe 1994, 240. Similarly, there is no need to explain these verses as a marginal gloss that has found its way into the text. Contra Weiß 1910, 265–266.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Jones 1987, 55.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Barton 2003, 1336: "But Paul insists that such an abstention is the exception that proves the rule: it does not undermine the believer's basic freedom to eat anything with a thankful heart to the One who is Lord of all (vv. 29b–30; cf. v. 26)."

¹¹⁹ Arzt-Grabner 2006, 377.

¹²⁰ Cf. Jones 1987, 55; Dautzenberg 2001, 66.

¹²¹ Contra Vollenweider 1989, 225: "Lässt sich die Eleutheria in 1Kor 10,29b als seine Freiheit verdeutlichen, die sich sowohl in der Emanzipation von den jüdischen

also does not suggest that this renunciation should be understood as a/the limitation of the use of their freedom.

The question of whether or not 1 Cor 10.29 is concerned with ‘freedom *vis-à-vis* the law’ is vigorously debated. Jones observes that the freedom in question was evidently grounded in knowledge (γνῶσις). Moreover, he indicates that the content of this knowledge is expressed in 8.4b (οὐδὲν εἶδωλον ἐν κόσμῳ), and he highlights its connection to the monotheistic confession of the Corinthians: “they were free when they ate consecrated meat because they knew that no idol (*Götze*) existed and that there is no God but one”.¹²² Noting that 8.10 shows that some Corinthians executed their freedom ἐν εἰδωλείῳ, he observes that “freedom is here a contrasting term to the inhibition of ‘the weak’ and thus obtains its meaning through this contrast”.¹²³ From this perspective, he then claims with reference to 8.7 that the weak are those who out of habit eat consecrated meat as meat sacrificed to idols, and reasons that since this can only refer to Gentile Christians, the freedom in question seems to denote freedom from pagan habits.¹²⁴ He states that the Corinthians in question considered this freedom from pagan or ‘superstitious’ beliefs to be based on their monotheistic knowledge.¹²⁵

It follows that, in Jones’s view, it is not valid to see this freedom as a derivation of “freedom from the Jewish law” (or also from ‘freedom from sin’ or ‘freedom from death’).¹²⁶ Instead he suggests that this interpretation of freedom as freedom from pagan habits corresponds to the other occurrences of freedom in 1 Corinthians insofar as they are all concerned with freedom from human judgments.¹²⁷ Finally, he explains that it is likely that Cynic ideas had an influence upon this idea of freedom, since both speak of freedom in relation to uninhibited eating and both ground this understanding of freedom in a monotheistic confession.¹²⁸

Speisegeboten wie im Verzicht zugunsten des anderen realisiert, so entspricht sie sehr genau der apostolischen Freiheit von 9,19”; also contra Lindemann 2000, 234.

¹²² Jones 1987, 58.

¹²³ Jones 1987, 58.

¹²⁴ Jones 1987, 58: “Diese ‘Schwachen’ sind diejenige Christen, die aus Gewohnheit geweihtes Fleisch als Götzenopferfleisch essen (8,7). Da diese wohl nur Heidenchristen sein können, ergibt sich, daß diese Freiheit (zumindest soweit wir sehen können) als Freiheit gegenüber *heidnischen* Gewohnheiten verstanden wurde”.

¹²⁵ Jones 1987, 60–61: “In dieser Weise haben auch einige korinthische Christen ... ihre ‘monotheistische’ Erkenntnis als Grundlage für ihre Freiheit vom ‘Aberglauben’ an die Götter verstanden”. Cf. also Jones 1987, 77: “1 Cor 9.1 und 10.29 meinen offensichtlich ‘Freiheit von heidnischem “Aberglauben” bezüglich der Götter’ und im besonderen ‘Freiheit, geheiligtes Fleisch essen zu dürfen’”.

¹²⁶ Jones 1987, 58.

¹²⁷ Jones 1987, 58.

¹²⁸ Jones 1987, 59–61, esp. 61.

It is already clear from his section heading, “1 Cor 10.29: Freedom and Food Law”, that Vollenweider interprets 1 Cor 10.29 in relation to the law. Whereas Jones denies that the freedom in question is ‘freedom from the (Jewish) law’, Vollenweider interprets it in the first instance as “freedom from ritual commandments”.¹²⁹ With Jones, he argues that the Corinthians are likely to have been influenced by Cynic tradition.¹³⁰ In his view, however, Jones’s good observations must be made more precise.¹³¹ On the one hand, he appears to affirm Jones’s emphasis on “the *Cynic* correlation of Monotheism (cf. 1 Cor 8.4), freedom from human judgments (esp. *vis-à-vis* gods and cults) and a tendency ‘to eat everything’”.¹³² On the other hand, he thinks it necessary to add that the prohibition against sacrificial meat is specific to Judaism; while the adherents to the Hellenistic cult in fact ate sacrificial meat both inside and outside the Temple area, it was the Torah that specifically forbade such eating and thus rendered it an issue for Paul.¹³³ In short, he objects to Jones’s interpretation of the freedom in question as freedom from pagan habits on the grounds that “the problem of sacrificial meat is specifically Jewish”.¹³⁴

In my view, it is difficult to determine whether or not 1 Cor 10.29 is (negatively) concerned with ‘freedom from the law’.¹³⁵ On the one hand, Paul does not appear to base the freedom to eat consecrated meat in the knowledge that the Jewish (food) law is not binding upon believers. On the other hand, the reason that some believers held that the eating of such meat was problematic could well lie in the fact that the Jewish (food) law prohibited the eating of such meat. In view of the latter consideration, it is possible that 10.29 is concerned with freedom from the Jewish (food) law. Nevertheless, since Paul bases the freedom in question in the knowledge that “the earth is the Lord’s and all that is within it” (10.25), which is linked to the knowledge that “there is no idol in the world” and that “there is no God but one” (8.4), it is perhaps more likely that the freedom in question is (negatively) freedom from inhibitions arising from the pagan habit of eating consecrated meat as meat sacrificed to an idol (8.7) rather

¹²⁹ Vollenweider 1989, 227.

¹³⁰ Vollenweider 1989, 227–229.

¹³¹ Vollenweider 1989, 228 n. 155.

¹³² Vollenweider 1989, 228 n. 155 (original emphasis). Cf. Jones 1987, 60, 185–186.

¹³³ Vollenweider 1989, 228 n. 155.

¹³⁴ Vollenweider 1989, 227 n. 144: “Gegen Jones 58; 77, wonach die Freiheit hier wie dort gegenüber *heidnischen* Gewohnheiten, nicht gegenüber dem ‘jüdischen Gesetz’ bestehe. Die Problematik des Opferfleisches ist aber spezifisch jüdisch”.

¹³⁵ Notably, Dautzenberg does not appear to take a consistent position on this question. He initially appears to acknowledge the (partial) validity of the ‘freedom from the law’ interpretation. See Dautzenberg 2001, 67. Later, however, he explicitly rejects it. See Dautzenberg 2001, 75. See also page 90 n. 22 below.

than as meat belonging to the one true God (10.25).¹³⁶ If so, then ‘freedom from the law’ is not necessarily in view, for there is no reason to assume that the aversion of Gentile believers to idolatry was primarily or exclusively based on the prohibition of idolatry in the Jewish law.

4.6 1 Cor 12.13

In 1 Cor 12.13 ἐλεύθεροι refers to free persons in the socio-political sense.¹³⁷ The preceding section 12.4–11 is concerned to relate the diversity of gifts to their common source (vv. 4–6, 8, 11) and purpose (v. 7). V. 12 then introduces a comparison (καθάρπερ) between the physical body with its many members and Christ, a line of argument that is worked out in v. 13 and vv. 14–26, 27–31.

V. 13 and vv. 14–31 are both concerned with the unity and diversity of the church. Nevertheless, while vv. 14–31 focus on the affirmation of diversity within unity, v. 13 places the accent on the establishment of unity from diversity through the one Spirit: “in/by/with one Spirit we all were baptized into one body” and “we all were made to drink of one Spirit”. As in vv. 4 and 11, the twofold repetition of “one Spirit” indicates the source and power that constitutes this unity, whereas “one body” designates the unity formed. The nature of the diversity is expressed in v. 13b: “whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free persons”. As elsewhere (e.g. 1 Cor 3.22; 10.31; Rom 14.8), the formulation “whether X or Y” functions to *relativize* the named distinctions without necessarily indicating that they are henceforth meaningless or obsolete. A similar point is made in Eph 6.8 where the author states that each will receive whatever good s/he has done from the Lord, whether slave or free (cf. also Rom 2.9–11).

Paul relativizes the distinction between free persons and slaves in 1 Cor 12.13 without thereby calling into question the continued existence of the institution of slavery. Unlike 1 Cor 7.22, Paul does not speak here of another sense in which the slave is a freedperson and the free person a slave. While one could conceivably argue that the idea or concept of freedom from human beings and their judgments comes to expression in this verse, since it relativizes the distinctions between Jews and Gentiles and

¹³⁶ See Jones 1987, 58–61. This probably does not mean, however, that the freedom in question is “freedom from the power of idols” rather than “freedom to eat consecrated meat”. Contra Schnabel 2006, 575.

¹³⁷ In view of this fact, it is problematic when Söding 2003, 123, appeals to this verse to support his claim that Christians in the church are free persons rather than slaves. The same criticism applies to Niederwimmer’s discussion of 1 Cor 12.13, Gal 3.28, Eph 6.8 and Col 3.11. See Niederwimmer 1966, 70, 204.

slaves and free persons, it is crucial to note that Paul does not use an ἐλευθερ- word here to express this idea. On the contrary, ἐλεύθεροι refers solely to free persons in the socio-political sense.

4.7 2 Cor 3.17

2 Cor 3 and its surrounding context are concerned with Paul's ministry and his sufficiency for the task. The chapter is particularly notable for its frequent use of contrasts, e.g., ink vs. Spirit (v. 3), stone tablets vs. fleshly-heart tablets (v. 3), from God vs. from ourselves (v. 4; cf. 2.17), the letter that kills vs. the Spirit that gives life (v. 6), new covenant vs. old covenant (vv. 6, 14), passing away vs. remaining (v. 11; cf. 3.7–8), ministry of death vs. ministry of the Spirit (vv. 7–8), ministry of condemnation vs. ministry of righteousness (v. 9); veiled vs. unveiled (vv. 14–18; cf. 4.3–4).

Paul first uses a word from the ἐλευθερ- word group in v. 17: "Now the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord (is), (there is) freedom". Since the content or meaning of the freedom in question is not immediately clear from this verse alone, Paul's interpreters have not surprisingly attempted to discern its meaning from the context. Despite this shared emphasis upon the decisive importance of the context, however, no consensus has emerged with respect to the interpretation of the freedom in question. On the contrary, a bewildering number of competing interpretations have arisen.¹³⁸

With reference to v. 6c, many interpreters claim that 'freedom from the law' is in view in v. 17.¹³⁹ Otfried Hofius, for example, claims that the freedom in question is similar to that referred to in Rom 8.1f and in Galatians, and that it concerns the condition of being liberated (*das Befreitsein*) "from the accusation and death sentence of the Torah".¹⁴⁰ Similarly Vollenweider identifies both v. 17b and 6c to be sayings that contrast the freedom of Christians with the Jewish enslavement to the gramma, i.e. to a certain modality of the law.¹⁴¹ Söding, in turn, interprets the freedom in question as "liberation from the gramma that kills (3.6)", i.e. as freedom from the condemning function of the law.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ For a helpful survey of the many competing views, see Belleville 1991, 269–270. See also Hafemann 1995, 401–407.

¹³⁹ See e.g., Berger 1968, 350–351; Hofius 1989, 120; Vollenweider 1989, 251, 269; MacDonald 2001, 1138; Söding 2003, 125; Bertone 2005, 151–152. Cf. also Windisch 1924, 126.

¹⁴⁰ Hofius 1989, 120.

¹⁴¹ Vollenweider 1989, 251, 269.

¹⁴² Söding 2003, 125.

With reference to v. 12, other scholars argue that ἐλευθερία in v. 17b should be understood as a synonym or intensification of παρρησία in v. 12.¹⁴³ Jones suggests that ἐλευθερία in v. 17 should be given the same meaning as παρρησία in v. 12.¹⁴⁴ Similarly, Dautzenberg concludes that “the content of ἐλευθερία permits itself to be deposited primarily in the field of the inwardly independent and unhindered, that is, of the free communication of truth”.¹⁴⁵

With reference to the immediate context of vv. 12–18, other scholars have championed alternative interpretations. For Linda Belleville, parallelism between v. 17 and v. 16b indicates that the meaning of freedom is “the removal of the veil over the heart of the Jew”, and parallelism with v. 14a indicates that the meaning of the removal of the veil is “a removal of barriers to spiritual understanding”.¹⁴⁶ The freedom in question is therefore “freedom from a lack of understanding”.¹⁴⁷ Scott J. Hafemann also draws attention to the veil, noting how it is used as a metonymy for the hard heart of Israel in vv. 14–15 and how it is then removed in vv. 16–17a. From this perspective he then reasons that “far from being a ‘freedom from the law,’ the freedom of v. 17b is ... a freedom from the veil in order to create a freedom ‘for the law!’”¹⁴⁸ Taking a different tack, Volker Stolle suggests that in v. 17 Paul uses freedom “in the physical sense”. He explains that by this he means an unobstructed view, i.e., the Christian has an unobstructed view, or “free sight”, of the revelation of God in Christ.¹⁴⁹ He claims that ἐλευθερία is an exegetical remark, the opposite of which is κάλυμμα, and explains that in v. 17 Paul first defines the term κύριος from the adapted citation in v. 16 and then allows the actual application of the citation to follow in v. 18.¹⁵⁰ For him, the freedom in question “consists in the possibility of looking upon the glory of the lord in this sense without a veil”.¹⁵¹ Finally, according to Roy Ciampa the freedom in question

¹⁴³ See esp. Jones 1987, 61–67; Dautzenberg 2001, 69–72. See also Unnik 1973 [1963], 206–207. Furnish 1984, 237, suggests that the freedom of v. 17 should be associated in the first instance with the boldness he has just mentioned, while adding that “this does not mean that it is to be disassociated from Paul’s conviction that believers are freed from the law”.

¹⁴⁴ Jones 1987, 65.

¹⁴⁵ Dautzenberg 2001, 72.

¹⁴⁶ Belleville 1991, 270. Cf. Belleville 1996, 111.

¹⁴⁷ Belleville 1991, 270 n. 2.

¹⁴⁸ Hafemann 1995, 405.

¹⁴⁹ Stolle, 2005, 45.

¹⁵⁰ Stolle 2005, 45 n. 148.

¹⁵¹ Stolle 2005, 45 n. 148: “Die Freiheit besteht in der Möglichkeit, die Herrlichkeit des Herrn in diesem Sinne unverhüllt anzuschauen.”

evidently refers to “the freedom to see Christ in the Scriptures and be transformed by that vision”.¹⁵²

The number and variety of interpretations, which are not limited to the aforementioned proposals, testify to the fact that it is by no means easy to determine the meaning of *ἐλευθερία* in v. 17. In my view, it is arguably the most opaque instance of the *ἐλευθερ-* word group in Paul’s letters. In fact, it is hard to avoid the impression that its interpretation requires a considerable amount of guess-work. The task remains, however, to make this guess-work as educated as possible.

It seems to me, then, that in contrast to v. 12, vv. 17–18 are not merely concerned with Paul’s *modus operandi*. Accordingly, it is highly unlikely that *ἐλευθερία* should be understood as a synonym or intensification of *παρρησία* in v. 12.¹⁵³ Then again, while the fact that Paul connects the freedom in question with the Spirit rather than with the letter, the law or the old covenant should not be overlooked, it does not follow from this observation that ‘freedom from the letter’, ‘freedom from the law’, or ‘freedom from the old covenant’ is in view.

Rather than focusing on the relationship between v. 12 and v. 17, or v. 6 and v. 17, it seems more fruitful to me to interpret v. 17 primarily in relation to v. 16 and v. 18. Since v. 16 speaks of the removing of the veil, and v. 17 serves to explicate v. 16, it seems likely that the freedom in question is ‘freedom from the veil’. This interpretation is supported by the fact that v. 14 also speaks of the removing of the veil. In view of vv. 14 and 15, this should probably be understood to mean freedom from “barriers that would impede spiritual understanding” or freedom from spiritual blindness or hardheartedness.¹⁵⁴ This interpretation receives further support from the fact that v. 18 speaks of beholding the glory of the Lord with unveiled face and 4.4 of the blinding of the minds of unbelievers. Then again, in light of v. 18, it is conceivable that a positive freedom is (also) in view, namely “the freedom to behold the glory of God”. While this freedom is evidently connected to the transformation spoken of in v. 18, Hafemann’s suggestion that a “freedom *for* the law” is in view appears to confuse a (contested) reading of the passage as a whole with the more narrow contribution of the word ‘freedom’.¹⁵⁵

To recognize the difficulty of specifying the content of the freedom in question is not to nullify the power of the memorable expression “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom”. It is, however, to claim that this verse does not provide a firm foundation for the thesis that Paul’s under-

¹⁵² Ciampa 2000, 505.

¹⁵³ Contra e.g., Jones 1987, 61–67; Dautzenberg 2001, 69–72.

¹⁵⁴ See Belleville 1996, 111. Cf. Belleville 1991, 270.

¹⁵⁵ Contra Hafemann 1995, 205.

standing of freedom has its focus in ‘freedom from the law’. Instead, the immediate context suggests that the freedom in view is more likely to be ‘freedom from spiritual blindness or hardheartedness’.

4.8 Conclusion

Let me now briefly sum up. In 1 Cor 7.22 Paul’s point is probably that the slave called in the Lord is free in relation to human beings and their standards or judgments (cf. 1 Cor 7.23).¹⁵⁶ In 1 Cor 9.1, 19 he is most likely concerned to assert that (as an apostle) he is free from all others, that is, free from being subject to the wishes or control of other people or groups of people. In 1 Cor 10.29 the freedom in question appears to be the freedom to eat consecrated meat. While it is tempting to attempt to subsume these three texts under a common rubric, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that they reflect a developed Pauline teaching on the topic of ‘freedom from the world’ or ‘freedom from human judgments’. Moreover, it is even less likely that the types of freedom of which they speak are grounded in an understanding of freedom as ‘freedom from the law’.

While *the idea* of ‘freedom from the law’ may well come to expression in the phrases *μη ὦν αὐτὸς ὑπὸ νόμον* (1 Cor 9.20) and *τοῖς ἀνόμοις ὡς ἄνομος* (9.21), there is no reason for including this idea in the sense of *ἐλεύθερος* in 9.19. Similarly, while it is possible that ‘freedom *vis-à-vis* the law’ is in view in 10.29, it is perhaps more likely that the freedom in question is freedom from inhibitions arising from the pagan habit of eating consecrated meat as meat sacrificed to an idol (8.7) rather than as meat belonging to the one true God (10.25). Finally, though it is undoubtedly significant that the freedom spoken of in 2 Cor 3.17 is connected with the Spirit rather than with the law or the letter (cf. 3.6), it does not follow that ‘freedom from the law’ is necessarily in view. On the contrary, in view of the reference to the removing of the veil in v. 16, it seems more likely that ‘freedom from the veil’ is in view, i.e., ‘freedom from spiritual blindness or hardheartedness’. Here, however, it is necessary to acknowledge that the content of the freedom in question is especially difficult to determine.

To some extent Paul’s use of the *ἐλευθερ-* word group in 1 Cor 7.39 and 12.13 confirms this calling into question of the assumed unity of the types of freedom that come to expression in the Corinthian correspondence, and in particular the assumed connection between the Corinthian *ἐλευθερ-* texts and Paul’s teaching on ‘freedom from the law’ elsewhere. 1 Cor 7.39

¹⁵⁶ See esp. Jones 1987, 29, 37, 53, 138–139.

shows that Paul does not always use the ἐλευθερ- word group in a theologically rich manner. Here, it merely indicates that a widow is free to get married again if her husband has died. Similarly, in 12.13 the word group is solely concerned with the socio-political distinction between slaves and free persons.

1 Cor 7.22; 7.39; 9.1, 19; 10.29 and 12.13 are all relevant for assessing the relationship between freedom and service (or slavery) in Paul. 1 Cor 12.13 and 7.21–22 show that Paul relativized the distinction between free persons and slaves in the socio-political sense. In 7.22 Paul indicates that the slave need not be concerned with the fact that s/he is a slave in the socio-political sense because s/he is ‘free’ in another sense. He does not, however, suggest that the slave’s service to his or her master should be understood as an expression or realization of this ‘freedom’. Similarly, while Paul states in 7.39 that a woman whose husband has died is “free to be married to whomever she wishes”, he neither suggests that remaining single is also an exercise of this ‘freedom’ nor that remaining single involves the renunciation of (the use of) this ‘freedom’.

In attempting to specify the relationship between freedom and service (or slavery) in Paul, scholars have understandably assigned particular importance to 1 Cor 9.19 and 10.29. While many (‘German’) scholars have assumed or concluded that these texts express or reflect a developed understanding of the relationship between freedom and other-directed service (or slavery), I have argued that Paul does not appear to have pursued this question to the same extent as many of his interpreters. In particular, I have attempted to demonstrate that while Paul is concerned to show that the ‘freedom’ in question is not forfeited or lost, he does not pursue further the question of whether the ‘slavery’ or ‘renunciation’ in question should be understood as an/the expression of ‘freedom’ or rather as a/the limitation of the use of ‘freedom’. Moreover, I have highlighted the need for his interpreters to make a clearer distinction between the steps that Paul himself took and their own constructive attempts to shed light upon the subject matter with which he was wrestling.

Chapter 5

The ἐλευθερ- Texts of Galatians

5.1 Introduction

It is no coincidence that many of the scholars who have placed particular emphasis upon freedom have also written influential commentaries on Galatians,¹ for it is above all in this letter that Paul shows particular interest in the ἐλευθερ- word group.² It is not uncommon for words such as ‘freedom’, ‘free’ or ‘liberty’ to appear in the titles of (popular) commentaries on Galatians.³ Moreover, the letter is sometimes referred to as ‘the magna carta of Christian freedom (or liberty)’.⁴ Sir William Mitchell Ramsay suggests that “the most remarkable feature in the whole Epistle is the prominence given to the idea of Freedom”⁵ and Hans Dieter Betz goes so far as to claim that ἐλευθερία “is the basic concept underlying

¹ One thinks, for example, of Martin Luther, Heinrich Schlier, Franz Mußner, Hans Dieter Betz, F.F. Bruce and Gerhard Ebeling. See LW 26–27; Schlier 1962 [1949]; Mußner 1974; Betz 1979; Bruce 1982; Ebeling 1981 (ET = Ebeling 1985c [1981]).

² See e.g., Blank 1992 [1989], 232: “Am ausgiebigsten und ausdrücklichsten erscheint das Thema Freiheit bei Paulus im Galaterbrief”; Schnackenburg 1968, 34: “Unter den neutestamentlichen Theologen ist er [Paulus] wie kein anderer der Kündler christlicher Freiheit, und unter seinem Breifen ragt der an die Galater als ‘Dokument der Freiheit’ heraus”.

³ See e.g., Quesnell 1969: *The Gospel of Christian Freedom*; Vos 1971: *Galatians: A Call to Christian Liberty*; McDonald 1973: *Freedom in Faith: A Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*; Williams 1975: *Celebrate Your Freedom: An Inductive Bible Study on Galatians*; Wiersbe 1975: *Be Free: An Expository Study of Galatians*; Hubbard 1977: *Galatians: Gospel of Freedom*; Gromacki 1979: *Stand Fast in Liberty: An Exposition of Galatians*; Simmons 1979: *Galatians: The Magna Carta of Christian Liberty*; Schroeder 1979: *Freedom through Christ: A Study of Galatians*; Tenny 1989: *Galatians: The Charter of Christian Liberty*; Barrett 1985: *Freedom and Obligation: A Study of the Epistle to the Galatians*; Buckel 1993: *Free to Love: Paul's Defense of Christian Liberty in Galatians*; Morris 1996: *Galatians: Paul's charter of Christian freedom*.

⁴ See Vollenweider 1989, 285: “Der Galaterbrief gilt zu Recht als Magna Charta christlicher Freiheit”. See also e.g., Macgregor 1931 [1914], 10, 30; Simmons 1979; Tenny 1989; Kertelge 1989, 326; Morris 1996; Loubser 2005, 315.

⁵ Ramsay 1900, 441.

Paul's argument throughout the letter".⁶ Finally, even Jones acknowledges that "in Galatians Paul nearly made *ἐλευθερία* the motto of his argumentation".⁷

Words from the *ἐλευθερ*- word group appear eleven times in Galatians, i.e., Gal 2.4; 3.28; 4.22, 23, 26, 30, 31; 5.1 (x2); 5.13 (x2). The word breakdown is as follows: *ἐλεύθερος* (3.28; 4.22, 23, 26, 30, 31); *ἐλευθερία* (Gal 5.1; 5.13); *ἐλευθερώ* (Gal 5.1). As with the Corinthian correspondence, my exegesis of these verses will proceed in the order in which they appear. I will precede my exegesis, however, with a preliminary discussion where I will comment on the recent debate in the 'German' tradition concerning the extent to which Paul uses the *ἐλευθερ*- word group in Galatians to speak of 'freedom from the law'. More specifically, I will discuss the (representative) positions adopted by Schlier, Jones, Vollenweider and Dautzenberg. I will then outline my own approach to the interpretation of the *ἐλευθερ*- texts of Galatians.

5.2 Preliminary Discussion

With the exception of Gal 3.28, Schlier consistently interprets Paul's freedom statements in Galatians as statements concerned with 'freedom from the law'. This viewpoint is already well established in his 1935 article:

The freedom 'to which Christ has made us free' (Gal 5.1), to which 'you are called' (Gal 5.13), which we 'have in Christ Jesus' (Gal 2.4) is concretely the freedom from the necessity of circumcision for justification before God. And – as we learn from the unity of the Law in Gal 5.13 – is only an example of freedom from the Law in general as the way to God.⁸

Schlier develops this understanding in his Galatians commentary, especially in his comments on Gal 2.4, 5.1 and 5.13.⁹ Moreover, in his discussion of Gal 4.21–31 he explicates the statement "the 'upper Jerusalem' is free" in Gal 4.26 with the words, "that is, not subjected to the law".¹⁰

In stark opposition to the position represented by Schlier, Jones argues that "Galatians contains no evidence for a sharply defined concept of freedom as 'freedom from the (Jewish) law'".¹¹ He supports this claim

⁶ Betz 1979, 255. Cf. Tenny 1989, 26; Ebeling 1985c [1981], 233.

⁷ Jones 1987, 141.

⁸ Schlier 1964 [1935], 497. Cf. also Kertelge 1989, 329; Blank 1992 [1989], 233.

⁹ See Schlier 1962 [1949], 71–72, 229, 243.

¹⁰ Schlier 1962 [1949], 221.

¹¹ Jones 1992, 858. Cf. Jones 1987, 105, 107.

with a number of observations. He points out that in Gal 2.4, 4.21–31, 5.1 and 5.13 the content of the freedom in question is not immediately clear.¹² Moreover, in his exegesis of these texts he both contests the plausibility of the ‘freedom from the law’ interpretation and puts forward alternative interpretations of Paul’s use of the ἐλευθερ- word group in each passage. He also observes that since, in his view, the Corinthian correspondence does not reflect an understanding of ἐλευθερία as ‘freedom from the law’, we cannot presuppose that Paul had used this concept when he initially preached to the Galatians (or, as Jones notes, to any of his other congregations).¹³ This observation is further supported by the fact that the phrase ‘freedom from the law’ does not occur even in the letter to the Galatians.¹⁴

Vollenweider reasserts the (traditional) interpretation called into question by Jones, claiming that it is above all in Galatians that “freedom crystallizes ... in relation to the law”.¹⁵ He differs from Jones in three important respects. First, he maintains that Paul does in fact speak of ‘freedom *vis-à-vis* the law’ in 1 Cor 9.19 and 2 Cor 3.17.¹⁶ Secondly, he thinks it plausible that for the early Christian communities in Syria and Cilicia, their relationship to the Mosaic ritual law was a pressing issue, and that for them the phrase ‘freedom in Christ Jesus’ meant emancipation from its dominant elements.¹⁷ Moreover, he suggests that ‘freedom in Christ’ was “probably a programmatic watchword” in Antioch.¹⁸ These conclusions reflect and support his larger thesis that Christians before and alongside Paul probably already appealed to ‘freedom’ in relation to their gradual distancing from the Temple and Torah.¹⁹ Thirdly, in his exegesis he puts forth contextual and philological arguments for interpreting the freedom in question as ‘freedom *vis-à-vis* the law’ in Gal 2.4, 4.21–31, 5.1 and 5.13.

Dautzenberg charts something of a middle path between these two

¹² Jones 1987, 70.

¹³ Jones 1992, 857. Cf. Jones 1987, 77.

¹⁴ Jones 1992, 858.

¹⁵ Vollenweider 1989, 309: “Freiheit kristallisiert sich im Galaterbrief wie nirgends sonst bei Paulus im Verhältnis zum Gesetz heraus”. Cf. e.g., Dunn 1998, 388: “One other feature should be mentioned, since it is expressed with such intensity of feeling in Galatians. It is that justification by faith means *liberty*, and, most important of all, liberty from the law”.

¹⁶ See Vollenweider 1989, 299: “1Kor und 2Kor kennen die Freiheit gegenüber dem Gesetz, s.o. zu 1Kor 9,19ff; 2Kor 3,17 (bes S. 213–15; 269f)”. Since Vollenweider also claims that Paul speaks of ‘freedom *vis-à-vis* the law’ in 1 Cor 10.29, it is surprising that he does not refer to this verse in this quotation. See Vollenweider 1989, 225, 227, 227 n. 144.

¹⁷ Vollenweider 1989, 300.

¹⁸ Vollenweider 1989, 300.

¹⁹ See esp. Vollenweider 1989, 399–400.

positions. With respect to his approach, he indicates in his 2001 article that one's interpretation of Gal 2.4 and the remaining freedom statements in Paul's letters will necessarily be influenced by one's understanding of the history of the Hellenistic Jewish-Christian mission.²⁰ In his 1990 review of Jones's and Vollenweider's monographs, he cautiously states that it may still be discussed whether or not Vollenweider is correct in arguing that the freedom statements of Galatians point back to discussions and decisions that had been made at Antioch regarding the law, and that Paul used such statements knowing that they would be understood as direct references to the relationship of the early Christians to the Torah.²¹ In his 2001 article, however, he claims it is highly unlikely that there was a confrontation with the universal claim of the Torah at the outset of the mission to the Gentiles. Moreover, he argues with Jones that *ἐλευθερία* is not understood as "freedom from elements of the Mosaic law" in 1 Cor 8–10 or 10.29.²² In view of these considerations, he reasons that rather than taking up an emancipation from the Torah connected with the beginnings of the Gentile mission, the freedom statements of Galatians should be explained from the epistolary situation of Galatians, that is, "from the confrontation over the subjection of the Gentile Christian Galatian communities under the yoke of the Torah (cf. Gal 5.1)".²³

With a view to the positions noted above, three preliminary observations may be made. First, Jones's challenge to the 'freedom from the law' interpretation may not be sidestepped or ignored. In particular, the force of his observation that "the phrase 'freedom from the law' is not witnessed even in this letter" must be taken seriously.²⁴

Secondly, however, contra Jones, it seems to me that there are good reasons to refrain from placing too much weight upon the question of whether or not 'freedom *vis-à-vis* the law' comes to expression in the Corinthian correspondence. It is far from certain that the Corinthian correspondence predates Galatians. Moreover, if it did, and even if there is no

²⁰ See Dautzenberg 1990, 268: "Die Differenzen zwischen Vollenweider und Jones gehen zu einem guten Teil auf diese kompakten traditionsgeschichtlichen Festlegungen zurück".

²¹ Dautzenberg 1990, 269.

²² Dautzenberg 2001, 75. This statement arguably stands in some tension with his previous claim in this same article that "the right to eat meat sacrificed to idols is perhaps originally derived from the nothingness (*Nichtigkeit*) of the idols (1 Cor 8.1, 4) and was asserted over against the commandments of the Torah" (Dautzenberg 2001, 67). See also page 80 n. 135. Since Dautzenberg also claims that 2 Cor 3.17 is not concerned with 'freedom from the law', it is noteworthy that he does not mention this point here. See Dautzenberg 2001, 69–72, esp. 69–70.

²³ Dautzenberg 2001, 75.

²⁴ Jones 1992, 858.

evidence of a developed understanding of ἐλευθερία as ‘freedom from the law’ in the Corinthian correspondence (as I also have argued), then this may reflect nothing more than the different situations addressed in Galatians and in the Corinthian letters. While previous interpreters were prone to assimilate the ‘freedom’ statements of 1–2 Corinthians to those of Galatians (and Romans), Jones arguably runs the risk of committing the opposite error.

Thirdly, Dautzenberg rightly notes that one’s interpretation of the Pauline ἐλευθερ- texts is influenced by one’s understanding of the history of the Hellenistic Jewish-Christian mission. Unfortunately, our knowledge of this history is fragmentary at best, and it is difficult to reach tentative conclusions let alone definitive judgments. For this reason, rather than making a bold attempt to sketch the basic contours of this history, I will restrict myself to a few observations of particular relevance for the interpretation of Paul’s ‘freedom’ statements in Galatians.

It is clear that there was already some debate concerning the question of circumcision (and the observance of the Torah by Gentiles) prior to the writing of Galatians. Galatians indicates that this question had already been raised in Jerusalem (Gal 2.1–10; cf. Acts 15.2ff). Moreover, according to Acts, the issue had previously come to the fore in Antioch (Acts 15.1). Galatians also suggests that prior to the writing of Galatians there had also been some reflection upon the relation of Jewish believers to *the Torah* (Gal 2.16; cf. Acts 15.10–11). Furthermore, even if we remain skeptical of the possibility of providing a detailed sketch of the theology of “the Hellenists”, Acts 6–7 does suggest that questions concerning the relation of Christ-believers to the law and temple arose at a very early stage.

While there is good reason to conclude that there was considerable debate concerning the relation of Jews and Gentiles to the Torah prior to the writing of Galatians, it is much less clear when the ἐλευθερ- word group first played a role in this discussion. In particular, there does not appear to be sufficient evidence to conclude with Vollenweider that ‘freedom in Christ’ was “probably a programmatic slogan” in Antioch.²⁵ For this reason, while it should not be ruled out as a possibility that Christians before and alongside Paul may already have developed an understanding of freedom as ‘freedom from the law’, this thesis should not be treated as a premise or point of departure that has been firmly established.

In approaching Paul’s freedom statements in Galatians, I will pursue several interrelated goals. First, I will resist the temptation to sidestep points of detail such as textual or grammatical problems that arise.

²⁵ Vollenweider 1989, 300.

Secondly, I will give particular attention to the exchange between Jones and Vollenweider concerning the validity of the ‘freedom from the law’ interpretation, since Galatians in many ways serves as a focal point for the issues raised in this debate. Thirdly, I will interpret Paul’s statements on freedom in relation to the argument of the letter as a whole. In pursuing this final goal, I will allow my exegesis of Paul’s *ἐλευθερ*- texts to be informed – not predetermined – by texts in which the *ἐλευθερ*- word group does not appear. Since this last point plays an important role in my exegesis, I will round off this preliminary discussion by briefly reflecting on three key texts where the *ἐλευθερ*- word group does not appear, namely Gal 1.4, 6.14, and 4.1–11.

In Gal 1.4 Paul indicates that Christ gave himself for our sins “in order to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and father”, and in 6.14 that he (Paul) will “only boast in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world is crucified to me and I to the world”. These two statements at the beginning and end of the letter bear witness to the breadth of Paul’s vision in Galatians. Gal 1.4 identifies the purpose of Christ’s death for our sins as our deliverance from “the present evil age” and 6.14 indicates that through the cross (or through Christ) “the world” is crucified to Paul and Paul to “the world”. In the latter verse he also adds “for neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything but new creation is everything” (6.15). This verse is comparable to Gal 3.28 where Paul states that “there is neither Jew nor Greek ... for you are all one in Christ Jesus”. Moreover, it resonates with 2 Cor 5.17, where Paul claims that “if anyone is in Christ, s/he is a new creation”.²⁶ Notably, the latter verse establishes a link between being “in Christ” and being “a new creation”.

In 4.3 Paul states that “when we were minors we were enslaved under the elements of the world”. In 4.4–5 he then continues “but when the fullness of time came, God sent forth his son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those under the law, in order that we might receive adoption as sons”. Here, it appears that Paul views being ‘under the law’ as a subset or instantiation of being ‘under the elements of the world’ (*τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου*). Similarly, Paul’s line of thought in Gal 4.8–11 should probably be understood to mean that by observing the Jewish calendar the Galatians were inexplicably turning again to the weak and poor elements which they had served when they did not know God. If so, then Paul here equates observing the law with serving the *στοιχεῖα*. For my purposes, the key point to note is that servitude to the elements of the

²⁶ In my view, the translation “there is new creation” (or the like) is probably not justified. Contra e.g., Hays 1996, 20.

world, rather than servitude to the law, appears to provide the overarching category. Having drawn attention to the breadth of Paul's vision in Galatians, let us now turn to the exegesis of those passages in which the ἐλευθερ- word group appears.

5.3 Gal 2.4

While many textual variants do not substantially alter the meaning of the verse or passage in question, this is not the case for Gal 2.4–5. On the contrary, the reading that one adopts has massive implications for the interpretation of the larger argument. For this reason, it is necessary to tackle this textual problem before commenting on the freedom in question.

In v. 4, F and G alone read μή after ἵνα so that the meaning is “in order that they might not enslave us”. While this reading is unlikely to be original in view of its relatively weak attestation, it does underscore the problems that scribes had with vv. 4–5. The textual problems of v. 5 are far more difficult. The uncertainty concerns the presence or absence of the words οἷς and οὐδε at the beginning of the verse.

Here, there are four readings of note:

- 1) one reading contains the words οἷς οὐδε at the beginning of v. 5;
- 2) a second reading lacks the words οἷς οὐδε;
- 3) a third reading lacks οἷς but contains οὐδε;
- 4) a fourth reading lacks οὐδε but contains οἷς.

With most scholars, I will refer to reading 1) as ‘the longer reading’ and reading 2) as ‘the shorter reading’. I will simply refer to readings 3) and 4) as ‘the third reading’ and ‘the fourth reading’.

According to the apparatus of the fourth edition of the United Bible Societies’ *Greek New Testament*,²⁷ the respective readings are supported by the following manuscripts:

- 1) P⁴⁶ Ⳁ A B C D¹ F G Ψ 075 0150 6 33 81 104 256 263 365 424 436 459 1175 1241 1319 1573 1739 1852 1881 1912 1962 2127 2200 2464 Byz [K L P] *Lect* it^{str}, f, g, o vg syr^{h, pal} cop^{sa, bo} arm (eth) geo slav Basil (Ps-Ignatius) Epiphanius Chrysostom Theodore^{lat}, Jerome Augustine
- 2) D* it^{b, d} Irenaeus^{lat}; (Tertullian) Greek and Latin mss^{acc. to Victorinus-Rome} Victorinus-Rome Ambrosiaster Pelagius
- 3) Marcion^{acc. to Tertullian}, Latin mss^{acc. to Victorinus-Rome} Greek mss^{acc. to Ambrosiaster} Ambrose
- 4) D² Greek and Latin mss^{acc. to Jerome}

The fourth reading appears to suggest that Paul yielded in submission to the false brethren. Since the external evidence for this reading is relatively

²⁷ GNT⁴, 641. This list of witnesses is more comprehensive than in NA²⁷.

weak, it is unlikely to be the original reading. Accordingly, I will not discuss it further.

The third reading should probably be taken to mean that because of the false brothers, Paul did not circumcise Titus, i.e., he did not yield in submission. In view of the early attestation of Marcion, it cannot be judged to be secondary on external evidence alone. In my judgment, however, it is unlikely to be the original reading since it can be explained as an improvement of either the longer reading or the shorter reading: the οἷς of the longer reading could have been omitted to remove the anacoluthon or the οὐδε could have been added by a scribe who understood the shorter reading to mean that Titus was, in fact, circumcised. By contrast, it is difficult to see how the shorter and longer readings could have arisen from the third reading.

Deciding between the shorter and longer readings is much more difficult. In my view, whether or not the external evidence for the shorter and longer readings is as evenly balanced as Jones suggests,²⁸ it is arguably too close to be decisive.²⁹ For this reason, it is probably better to place more weight on contextual and material considerations.

The shorter reading can be interpreted in two different ways: With Weiß, it may be interpreted to mean that because of the false brothers Paul circumcised Titus.³⁰ Or, with Jones, it may be interpreted to mean that because of the false brothers Paul yielded in going to Jerusalem to present his gospel for examination by others, which entails that Titus was not, in fact, circumcised.³¹

In my view, there are strong arguments against the plausibility of both interpretations of the shorter reading, which probably originated as an attempt to remove the anacoluthon of the longer reading. Three observations make the interpretation adopted by Weiß highly unlikely. 1) As T. Zahn notes, “Not the person of Titus but the denial that compulsion was used on him would need to be emphasized, and not his trait as non-Jew but the fact that he was circumcised would need to be called to mind”, e.g., “ὁ μὲν οὖν Τίτος ... περιετμήθη, ἀλλ’ οὐ κατ’ ἀνάγκην ἀλλὰ κατὰ

²⁸ See Jones 1987, 72: “Textkritisch ist die Regel zu bedenken, daß Zeugen abgewogen und nicht einfach gezählt werden sollen. In diesem Fall folgt aus der genannten Regel eine Gegenüberstellung von einer verbreiteten, gut bezeugten und sehr frühen westlichen Tradition und der östlichen Tradition. Beide sind letzten Endes gleichgewichtig”.

²⁹ For a different assessment of the strength of the external evidence, see Metzger 1994 [1971], 522–523, who claims that the external evidence favors the longer reading.

³⁰ See Weiß 1959, 271–272.

³¹ See Jones 1987, 71–74, esp. 72. Cf. also Klostermann 1883, 36–91, esp. 45, 58, 61, 66, 77–80.

ἐκούσιον”.³² 2) As Jones notes, it is doubtful that Paul would have given the Galatians an example of flexibility in the very point in which he later required absolute inflexibility (cf. Gal 5.2–4).³³ 3) If the point of v. 3 is that “Titus was not compelled to be circumcised, but underwent it of his own free will”,³⁴ then it is highly unlikely that Paul would then describe Titus’s circumcision in the main clause with words belonging to the language of *compulsion*, namely, “we yielded in submission”.³⁵

Similarly, there are three strong arguments against the interpretation of the shorter reading advocated by Jones. 1) Since Paul attributes his visit to “revelation” in v. 2, it is unlikely that he would go on to say “because of the false brothers ... I went up to Jerusalem and presented my gospel to others for examination”.³⁶ 2) Since vv. 4–5 follow verse 3, it is more likely to be concerned with the question of Titus’s circumcision than with the reason for Paul’s visit to Jerusalem.³⁷ 3) In v. 2 Paul states that he privately placed his gospel before those of repute (κατ’ ἰδίαν δὲ τοῖς δοκοῦσιν). The intrusion language of v. 4 (ψευδαδέλφους, παρεισάκτους, παρεισήλθον, κατασκοπήσαι) is most easily explained if it describes what Paul felt was an inappropriate entry into this meeting.³⁸

While there are strong arguments against the plausibility of both interpretations of the shorter reading, it is possible to put forth a plausible interpretation of the longer reading. For these reasons, it seems to me that the longer reading is to be preferred. Rather than providing a survey of the many attempts to make sense of the anacoluthon in v. 4,³⁹ I will simply put forth my interpretation of the longer reading.

The first point to note is that vv. 4–5 follow the statement in v. 3 that Titus was not compelled to be circumcised. For this reason, these verses are probably concerned with the fact that Titus was not compelled to be circumcised. Two observations support this conclusion. First, the intrusion language of v. 4 should probably be interpreted in relation to the private meeting mentioned in v. 2. It is into this meeting that they slipped.

³² Zahn 1922 [1905], 86. Cited also by Jones 1987, 72.

³³ Jones 1987, 72. See also Howard 1979, 88.

³⁴ Weiß 1959, 272.

³⁵ I owe this point to Peter Head (personal communication).

³⁶ Cf. Vollenweider 1989, 299: “Es ist nach Ausweis von Gal 2,2 (“Offenbarung”) unwahrscheinlich, dass der Apostel seine zweite Jerusalemreise als Befehlsausführung bzw. Konzession an die Jerusalemer unternommen hat”.

³⁷ Cf. e.g., Dalmer 1897, “Nachdem Paulus in v. 3 gesagt hat, daß Titus nicht zur Beschneidung gezwungen ist, kann er in v. 5 nicht mehr von einer Nachgiebigkeit in Bezug auf die Reise nach Jerusalem sprechen, sondern nur in Bezug auf die Verhandlung über die Beschneidung des Titus”.

³⁸ Cf. e.g., Witherington 1998, 135–136. Contra e.g., Klostermann 1883, 67–68.

³⁹ For a helpful survey of various solutions, see Jones 1987, 72–74.

Secondly, since v. 3 describes the outcome of the meeting mentioned in v. 2 and vv. 6–10 describe the conduct of the reputed ones at this meeting, it is likely that vv. 4–5 are also concerned with what took place there.

The manner in which Paul introduces “the false brothers” in v. 4 and “those reputed to be something”⁴⁰ in v. 6 suggests that he is concerned to set forth their contrary responses to the same event, namely Paul’s presentation of the gospel that he preached among the Gentiles: διὰ δὲ τοὺς παρεισάκτους ψευδαδέλφους (v. 4) / ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν δοκούντων εἶναί τι (v. 6). Vv. 6–10 indicate that those of repute did not (attempt to) compel Titus to be circumcised. On the contrary, Paul did not receive anything from them (v. 6a), i.e., they added or imparted nothing to him (v. 6c) – only that he remember the poor (v. 10). Moreover, they recognized that Paul had been entrusted with the εὐαγγέλιον τῆς ἀκροβυστίας (v. 7) and they gave him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship that they might go to the Gentiles (v. 9). In view of the negative language with which Paul describes the people mentioned in vv. 4–5, these verses should probably be understood to express the opposite, namely that the false brothers attempted to compel Titus to be circumcised. In the words of Richard Longenecker, they “were in some way directly responsible for the agitation against Titus in Jerusalem”.⁴¹ Accordingly, the sense is not so much that Paul might have circumcised Titus if it were not for the false brothers, but that the false brothers insisted on the circumcision of Titus (vv. 4–5) whereas those reputed to be something did not (vv. 6–10).⁴²

According to my resolution of the textual and syntactical problems of vv. 4–5, the sense of vv. 3–5 may be filled out as follows:

But not even Titus was compelled to be circumcised. But (there was pressure to circumcise him) because of the smuggled in false brothers who slipped in (to our private meeting) to spy out our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus so that they might enslave us, to whom we did not yield in submission for a moment in order that the truth of the gospel may remain with you.

This interpretation is confirmed by the fact that for Paul “the false brothers” (Gal 2.4–5) who opposed him in Jerusalem and “the agitators” in Galatia (5.12; cf. 1.7; 5.10) were clearly cut from the same cloth. According to Gal 6.12, “the agitators” were trying to compel the Galatians to be circumcised (cf. Gal 5.2–3, 6, 12). Likewise, Gal 2.4–5 should probably be interpreted to mean that the “false brothers” tried to compel Titus to be circumcised. Having established the probable text and basic

⁴⁰ With Polaski 1999, 85, it should be noted that “Paul does not speak of ‘Jerusalem’, ‘the Jerusalem apostles’, ‘the Jerusalem leaders,’ and so forth as most scholars do”.

⁴¹ Longenecker 1990, 50. Cf. also Hill 1992, 114–115.

⁴² See e.g., Ebeling 1981, 124–125 (ET = Ebeling 1985c [1981], 91); Gathercole 2005, 313–314. Contra e.g., Dalmer 1897, 55; Dunn 2005b, 418.

line of thought in Gal 2.4–5, I will now turn to the interpretation of the freedom in question.

As Jones notes,⁴³ many scholars interpret “our freedom which we have in Christ” (v. 4) as ‘freedom from (the bondage to) the (Jewish) law’.⁴⁴ Jones contests the validity of this interpretation by challenging the premises or presuppositions upon which it (allegedly) depends.⁴⁵ While Vollenweider appears to concede that the ‘freedom from the law’ interpretation rests on the three presuppositions named by Jones, he contests the validity of Jones’s objections.⁴⁶ Their exchange may be set forth as follows.⁴⁷

First premise: Paul had an established understanding of ἐλευθερία as freedom from the Jewish law at this time and could therefore simply write ἐλευθερία and leave it to his hearers/readers to supply ‘from the Jewish law’.⁴⁸ This premise has already been presented in my preliminary discussion above, so I will only briefly repeat the arguments here. Jones objects, as mentioned above, that since there is no reference to ‘freedom from the law’ in the Corinthian correspondence, it cannot be presumed that Paul spoke of ‘freedom from the law’ in his initial proclamation to the Galatians.⁴⁹ On the contrary, in view of the common understanding of freedom as ‘freedom from human judgments’ in the Corinthian correspondence, one should instead ask whether this understanding of freedom is also present in Gal 2.4.⁵⁰ To this argument Vollenweider responds, as mentioned above, that ‘freedom *vis-à-vis* the law’ comes to expression in 1 Cor 9.19ff and 2 Cor 3.17,⁵¹ and also that it is probable that Christians before and alongside Paul had already developed an understanding of freedom as eschatological ‘freedom from the law’ of Moses and especially from its ritual-cultic commands, and that Paul drew upon this tradition.⁵²

Second premise: καταδουλώσουσιν means enslavement under (or with)

⁴³ Jones 1987, 76, 200.

⁴⁴ See e.g., Meyer 1884, 81; Burton 1921, 82; Bultmann 2007 [1948–1953], 240; Schlier 1962 [1949], 71–72; Schürmann 1990a [1971], 238; Mußner 1974, 108; Vollenweider 1989, 299; Tolmie 2005, 72. See also Pastor Ramos 1977, 61–67, 74; Lührmann 1992 [1978], 39; Dunn 1993b, 100; Dautzenberg 2001, 75; Söding 2003, 116 n. 9, 127–128.

⁴⁵ See Jones 1987, 76–80 and especially the summary on page 80.

⁴⁶ See Vollenweider 1989, 299.

⁴⁷ See also Dautzenberg 2001, 74.

⁴⁸ Jones 1987, 77, polemically writes “and leave it to his commentators to supply ‘from the Jewish law’ in parentheses”.

⁴⁹ Jones 1987, 77. Cf. Jones 1992, 857–858.

⁵⁰ Jones 1987, 77.

⁵¹ Vollenweider 1989, 299.

⁵² See esp. Vollenweider 1989, 184, 299–301, 399–400.

the law.⁵³ To this Jones objects that there are a number of reasons why it is more likely that καταδουλώσουσιν here means enslavement to people, namely to the false brothers themselves:⁵⁴

- 1) As with the interpretation of ἐλευθερία, it is not immediately clear from the context what is concretely meant by καταδουλώσουσιν.
- 2) If one reads καταδουλώσονται with the majority text, then it is clear that the false brothers wish to make the Christians *their* slaves. Moreover, this understanding is possible, if not absolutely necessary, for the text of the older witnesses.
- 3) Paul's use of καταδουλοῦν in 2 Cor 11.20 is best understood to mean enslavement to a person.
- 4) The longer text of v. 5 speaks of not being subject to human beings (οἷς), and the shorter text, in Jones's view, also relates ὑποταγή to being subject to the judgments of human beings, namely to the leaders of the church in Jerusalem.
- 5) Jones claims that for historians at the time, καταδουλοῦν regularly means subjection under foreign rule, which is particularly significant in view of Paul's use of a military analogy.
- 6) Even if this subjection had something to do with the law (as is likely), then it may be assumed from Paul's negative description of his opponents that he views their talk about the law as a mere cover for selfishness (cf. Gal 4.17; 6.12–13).

In response to these arguments Vollenweider objects that Paul's concern in Galatians is never with his opponents' unpleasant behavior but with their destructive message.⁵⁵ Moreover, he claims that "Gal 3–5 unmistakably speaks of the enslavement that comes about through the law"⁵⁶ and explains that the enslavement in question is metaphorical.⁵⁷

Third premise: Paul's use of ἐλευθερία does not follow solely from the political image he has adopted. More specifically, while παρεισήλθον, κατασκοπήσαι, καταδουλώσουσιν, παρεισάκτους and εἴξαμεν are taken from the political sphere, ἐλευθερία is said to come from Paul's normal preaching concerning 'freedom from the law'.⁵⁸ To this Jones objects that there is good reason to assume that the political-military imagery is more likely to have evoked Paul's use of ἐλευθερία. Since Herodotus, he claims, ἐλευθερία had been a standard image in the description of wars. And if ἐλευθερία is understood as propaganda terminology, then its content should be specified in a correspondingly broad sense: "ἐλευθερία means a certain politeia, which Paul describes more precisely through ἦν ἔχομεν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ".⁵⁹ Jones adds that it may be conceded that the word

⁵³ See Jones 1987, 77.

⁵⁴ Jones 1987, 77–78. See also Theissen 2002, 366–367.

⁵⁵ Vollenweider 1989, 299.

⁵⁶ Vollenweider 1989, 299.

⁵⁷ Vollenweider 1989, 299.

⁵⁸ Jones 1987, 78.

⁵⁹ Jones 1987, 79.

ἐλευθερία fits well in Paul's situation, namely in the dispute concerning the Jewish law and its sphere of influence (Gal 2.3, 6ff) "because there were regularly overtones of the idea of lawlessness in it".⁶⁰ In response to this argument, Vollenweider asserts that in his judgment the opposite is more likely to be the case, namely that the ἐλευθερία that the early church was grappling with, and that Paul refers to, evokes the political-military images, rather than vice versa.⁶¹

After having challenged the validity of the 'freedom from the law' interpretation in this way, Jones sets forth a positive account of the meaning of ἐλευθερία in Gal 2.4. With reference to Nestle's claim that in Gal 2.4 "the old polis sense of the word is felt anew",⁶² he explains that "the heart of the freedom of a state consisted in making its own decisions without influence from outside".⁶³ He then indicates that the idea of the free individual arose within the free state and claims that the following general Hellenistic-Roman definition of freedom emerged: ἐλεύθερός ἐστιν ὁ ζῶν ὡς βούλεται, ὃν οὔτ' ἀναγκάσαι ἔστιν οὔτε κωλύσαι οὔτε βιάσασθαι (Epictetus, *Diatr.* 4.1.1).⁶⁴ Moreover, he explains that the first part of the definition was especially widespread.

From this standpoint, Jones then suggests that this definition also appears in Gal 2.4: "Spies that came from outside wish to subject the Christians and thereby rob them of the freedom to act as they consider right in Christ".⁶⁵ In support of this reading, he marshals the arguments that have already been presented above:⁶⁶ it corresponds to Paul's political-military image, since the freedom of a state consisted in making the decisions it wished; and it fits with the meaning of καταδουλώσουσιν, which is to be interpreted as enslavement under human beings or human judgments. In addition, it coheres with the larger context: just as Gal 1.11ff shows that the Pauline Gospel is neither κατὰ ἄνθρωπον (1.11) nor παρὰ ἀνθρώπου (1.12), so Gal 2.4 shows that Christian freedom is not subject to human judgments.⁶⁷ Finally, it forms a bridge to the Corinthian correspondence, which is also concerned with freedom from human opinions.⁶⁸

With respect to his last point, Jones concedes that there is a difference between the two understandings of 'human judgments' or 'human opinions' in Galatians and 1 Corinthians: the human opinions of Gal 2 are

⁶⁰ Jones 1987, 79.

⁶¹ Vollenweider 1989, 299.

⁶² Nestle 1972, 281; Jones 1987, 80.

⁶³ Jones 1987, 80.

⁶⁴ Jones 1987, 80.

⁶⁵ Jones 1987, 81.

⁶⁶ Jones 1987, 81.

⁶⁷ Jones 1987, 81.

⁶⁸ Jones 1987, 81.

concerned with the sphere of influence of the Jewish law and not with the gods as in 1 Cor 9.1 and 10.29. In his view, however, this difference is not grave, since (as he later argues) Paul places the Jewish law and the pagan gods on the same level,⁶⁹ and since Paul uses *ἐλευθερία* in a more comprehensive sense in Gal 2.4. Whereas *ἐλευθερία* is defined by its relation to human judgments regarding consecrated meat in 1 Cor 9.1 and 10.29, in Gal 2.4 it means “general freedom to do that which one wishes”.⁷⁰ Accordingly, Jones argues, while such freedom undoubtedly includes freedom from the requirements of the false brothers and of the Jewish law (circumcision command), it is not defined by it.⁷¹ Instead, these requirements are only two of many possible dangers for a more comprehensively understood freedom.

Due to the prominence of the ‘freedom from the law’ interpretation with regards to Gal 2.4, I have given particular attention to the exchange between Jones and Vollenweider concerning its validity. Before setting forth my own position, however, it is also necessary to highlight three additional proposals for how to interpret the freedom in question. The first is that of Dieter Nestle. Noting that the political-military image of a state endangered by spies in its existence, i.e., in its freedom, is still visible in Gal 2.4, Nestle reasons that “freedom thus designates the being (*Sein*) of believers in Christ”.⁷² In his view, the concern is with the being or non-being of believers, i.e., with the baptized as such, rather than with “a special freedom from”.⁷³

Hans Dieter Betz’s interpretation contains two emphases. On the one hand, he claims that Paul’s statement in Gal 2.4 is meant positively as a definition of the “indicative of salvation” for Gentile Christians.⁷⁴ On the other hand, he adds that those opposed to Paul must have seen this as lawlessness which would lead to condemnation.⁷⁵ While those in opposition therefore intended to ensure the salvation of the Gentile Christians by exhorting them to be circumcised, so that they would become included in the Torah covenant, Paul held that such a move would instead enslave them under ‘the elements of the world’ (*τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου*) – the condition of their pre-Christian existence.⁷⁶

For a number of scholars, the freedom in question is concerned with the freedom of Jewish and Gentile Christians to associate with each other.

⁶⁹ Jones 1987, 81, 100–101.

⁷⁰ Jones 1987, 81.

⁷¹ Jones 1987, 81.

⁷² Nestle 1972, 282.

⁷³ Nestle 1972, 282.

⁷⁴ Betz 1979, 91.

⁷⁵ Betz 1979, 91.

⁷⁶ Betz 1979, 91.

Ruth Schäfer, for example, argues that “*our* freedom” refers to the freedom of Titus and Paul and of Jewish and Gentile disciples in general, rather than to freedom from circumcision on the side of Gentile Christians alone. Moreover, she suggests that the freedom in view is not in the first instance freedom *from* certain law regulations, but rather freedom *to* associate with each other beyond the boundary between Judaism and Heathenism (*Heidentum*).⁷⁷ Similarly, Richard Hays claims that freedom refers here “to the unqualified association of Jewish and Gentile Christians”, while enslavement refers to “the attempted imposition of circumcision on Gentile believers”.⁷⁸

Similarly, according to Volker Stolle, the freedom in Gal 2.4 is “the openness to come together, despite different ways of life, in an integrative community in which the barriers erected by the Torah are transcended and social responsibility in a love that is available for others sets the tone (Gal 5.13)”.⁷⁹ Commenting on ‘the truth of the gospel’ in the following verse (Gal 2.5), Philip Esler argues that this phrase refers to the practice in Paul’s congregations of Jews and Gentiles sharing table-fellowship, without requiring the Gentiles to be circumcised (and, by implication, to take on the requirements of the Mosaic law). This, he adds, is the sense of the freedom referred to in the previous verse (Gal 2.4).⁸⁰

The exchange between Jones and Vollenweider concerning their radically different views on this passage, and the cogency of the other proposals mentioned, each with its own viewpoint, highlights the extreme difficulty of determining the content of the freedom spoken of in Gal 2.4. The problem lies in the fact that Paul does not qualify the freedom and enslavement in question. He does not write “our ‘freedom from the law’ which we have in Christ” or “in order that they might enslave us under/with the law”. Nor, however, does he write “our freedom to act as we consider right in Christ”, “our freedom, that is, our being or existence”, “our freedom, that is, our indicative of salvation”, or “our freedom to associate with each other”. For this reason, whether or not one agrees with his positive proposals, Jones should be credited for rightly highlighting the fact that in 2.4, 5.1 and 5.13 freedom is used “in an absolute manner without it being immediately clear from the wording of the sentences what the content of this freedom actually is”.⁸¹ In my view, it is imperative that subsequent scholarship acknowledge the difficulty of specifying the freedom in question, which is a necessary presupposition for putting forward a

⁷⁷ Schäfer 2004, 185–186.

⁷⁸ Hays 2000, 225.

⁷⁹ Stolle 2005, 43–44.

⁸⁰ Esler 1998, 131–132.

⁸¹ Jones 1987, 70. See also Jones 1987, 193.

responsible interpretation. Having said that, let me now sketch the outlines of what seems to me a plausible interpretation.

There is general agreement that Paul makes use of a military-political image in Gal 2.4–5.⁸² While it is possible that the word *ἐλευθερία* may follow solely from this image, the fact that the *ἐλευθερ*-word group occurs without this image elsewhere in the letter suggests that it is more likely that the image was evoked by the word, rather than vice versa. This does not, however, necessarily show that Paul was working with an established understanding of *ἐλευθερία* as ‘freedom from the law’. Instead, in my view it merely demonstrates that Paul was concerned in Galatians to identify his cause with ‘freedom’ and that of his opponents or rivals with ‘slavery’. In doing this, he did not hesitate to draw on the many images of freedom and enslavement known to his hearers/readers.

While Vollenweider attempts to use circumstantial evidence in support of his thesis that Christians before and alongside Paul had developed an understanding of *ἐλευθερία* as freedom from the (ritual) law, the fact that he is not able to provide a smoking gun is perhaps telling. In my view, this hypothesis is too uncertain to be assigned a decisive role in the interpretation of Gal 2.4. Accordingly, greater weight must be assigned to the question of whether or not the ‘freedom from the law’ interpretation makes the best sense within the context of Paul’s argument.

It seems to me that v. 6 provides the key to the interpretation of the freedom and slavery in question. There Paul indicates that those of repute did not add or impart anything to him. This response stands in contrast to the false brothers who presumably wished to add circumcision (and law observance) to Paul’s gospel (cf. Acts 15.5). Accordingly, the basic point of Gal 2.1–10 is that whereas the false brothers attempted to add something to the gospel that Paul preached among the Gentiles, those reputed to be something did not. In view of this fact, it is likely that “in order that they might enslave us” is a polemical description of the false brothers’ attempt to impose circumcision and law observance upon Paul and his communities, which for Paul presumably meant enslavement to the elements of the world (cf. 4.3, 9). Conversely, “our freedom which we have in Christ” is probably a positive description of the fact that Paul and his communities had been delivered from this present evil age (cf. 1.4) and thus possessed freedom from the elements of the world, which apparently included the Mosaic Law (cf. 4.3, 9).

While it is possible that “our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus” means “our freedom *from the Mosaic law* which we have in Christ Jesus”, it seems more likely that the freedom in question is more comprehensive, i.e., our freedom from this present evil age (cf. 1.4) or our freedom from

⁸² See e.g., Jones 1987, 75–76, 80–81; Vollenweider 1989, 299.

(the elements of) the world (cf. 4.3, 9; 6.14).⁸³ It is, however, conceivable that a positive freedom is also in view, namely the freedom to act without being determined by the (elements of the) world. If so, then Jones may be correct to discern the influence of the general Hellenistic-Roman definition of freedom as the freedom to do what one wishes without compulsion.⁸⁴

5.4 Gal 3.28

While it is possible to argue that *the concept* of freedom from the powers or standards of the world (or the like) comes to expression in Gal 3.28, it is important to note that in this verse *the word* ἐλεύθερος refers solely to free persons in the socio-political sense.⁸⁵ The verse does not provide a new definition of freedom.⁸⁶ Nor does it suggest that members of the church are free persons rather than slaves. Accordingly, Paul's use of ἐλεύθερος in Gal 3.28 is only indirectly relevant for the interpretation of the other freedom statements in Galatians.⁸⁷

Within the larger argument, Gal 3.26–29 functions to underpin Paul's repeated claim that justification is from faith and not from (works of) the law (cf. e.g. 2.16, 3.21–22, 3.23–26), here with reference to their baptism (v. 27). The statement that follows in v. 28 is very similar to the one in 1 Cor 12.13 (discussed in the previous chapter). However, the formulation of Gal 3.28 differs from 1 Cor 12.13 in several ways. First, there is no explicit reference to the Spirit. Instead, the Christological determination of the unity is emphasized (cf. Col 3.11). Secondly, Gal 3.28 includes a male/female pair that is absent in 1 Cor 12.13. Thirdly, the seemingly obsolete-making formulation “there is neither x nor y”⁸⁸ of Gal 3.28 appears, at least initially, to be more radical than the relativizing “whether x or y” of 1 Cor 12.13.⁸⁹ Finally, the claim that “you are all one in Christ Jesus” is sharper than “we were all baptized into one body”.

Assessing the significance of these differences is admittedly speculative, and due caution is required. Methodologically, it is important to recognize the integrity of each letter and the function of the passages

⁸³ Cf. Lull 1980, 110.

⁸⁴ Jones 1987, 80.

⁸⁵ See also my exegesis of 1 Cor 12.13 on page 81, esp. n. 137.

⁸⁶ See Jones 1987, 70.

⁸⁷ See Jones 1987, 21–22.

⁸⁸ The variation “there is not male and female” in v. 28c is probably an allusion to Gen 1.27. Cf. e.g., Bruce 1978, 99, n. 10: “Paul changes the construction in the third clause, possibly echoing Genesis 1:27, ‘male and female he created them’”.

⁸⁹ See also Col 3.11.

within their respective contexts. This task, however, is by no means incompatible with that of constructively relating the passages to one another for the sake of their mutual interpretation. Then again, the probability that Paul is drawing upon existing (baptismal) formulations must be taken into account. It is possible that the strong language in Gal 3.28 reflects nothing more than the influence of a traditional formulation. Even if this is the case, however, Paul's choice of *this* formulation may be related to its function, for it drives home the point that it is belonging to Christ through faith and not any other distinction that is decisive.

In view of the wording of Gal 3.28, the claim that Paul considers the named distinctions to be henceforth obsolete or irrelevant is understandable, if ultimately misleading. For Paul, they are indeed obsolete and irrelevant *in comparison to* belonging to Christ through faith. The language of 1 Cor 12.13, however, suggests that Paul is probably concerned to relativize rather than completely abolish such distinctions.⁹⁰ Similarly, while the affirmation that they are all “one” in Christ Jesus pointedly highlights the unity formed, it does not necessitate a flat homogeneity but rather a unity of belonging that places all other distinctions in proper perspective (cf. Col 3.11; 1 Cor 3.5–9).

5.5 Gal 4.21-31

Paul makes repeated use of words from the *ἐλευθερ*- word group in Gal 4.21–31. The first occurrence of the word in v. 22 is meant in a strictly socio-political sense, as it points out that Sarah was a “free woman” while Hagar was a slave. However, Paul then rapidly moves into his analogy where he plays with the terms ‘free’ and ‘slave’ in order to make a statement about the two covenants. He links Hagar, the slave woman whose children are slaves, to the present Jerusalem. He then contrasts this with the Jerusalem “above”, which is free, and her children.

In his exegesis of this passage, Jones explicates and refutes the common interpretation of the freedom of the upper Jerusalem and that of its children as ‘freedom from the law’. He claims that the ‘freedom from the law’ interpretation rests on the assumptions that *δουλεύει* in v. 25 and *δουλεία* in v. 24 mean ‘slavery under the law’, and that it may be inferred from this contrast word that Paul is also concerned with ‘freedom from the law’ elsewhere in the section.⁹¹

Jones raises three objections to this interpretation: First, as in Gal 2.4, Paul does not actually qualify *δουλεύει*, *δουλεία* (or *ἐλευθέρα*) in this

⁹⁰ Cf. e.g., Gundry Volf 2003, 20.

⁹¹ See Jones 1987, 87.

manner, i.e., he does not include the words “under the law” (or “from the law”).⁹² Second, since Paul assumes (rather than seeks to show) that one covenant is with the law and the other is without the law, the ‘freedom from the law’ interpretation results in the following tautology: “The sharers in the covenant with the law from Sinai are subject to the law; the sharers in the covenant that was established 430 years before the giving of the law and therefore does not involve the law are not subject to the law”.⁹³ Finally, Paul himself does not formulate a tautology. Instead, he appeals to the story of Sarah and Hagar to support the statement of v. 24 that “the one covenant with the law is slavery and – by implication – that the other covenant without the law is freedom”.⁹⁴ His initial argument is that the covenant from Sinai (i.e., the covenant with the law) corresponds to Hagar and accordingly gives birth into slavery.⁹⁵ The logic is therefore as follows: a) the slave Hagar gives birth into slavery; b) the covenant with the law corresponds to Hagar; c) therefore, the covenant with the law gives birth into slavery.

Jones’s conclusions concerning the slavery and freedom in question are that the terms ‘slavery’ and ‘freedom’ (implicit) are not explicitly defined in the allegorical interpretation, and that they therefore remain vague. In their transferred use they nevertheless retain the value of something absolutely bad (slavery) or absolutely good (freedom), which they received from the discussion of socio-political freedom and slavery in v. 22–23. In short, Jones argues that Paul identifies the covenant with the law with Hagar to show that it is slavery (i.e., something absolutely bad), and – implicitly – the covenant without the law with Sarah to show that it is freedom (i.e., something absolutely good).⁹⁶

Jones then moves on to argue that vv. 25–26 are specifically concerned with slavery under and freedom from perishability (*Vergänglichkeit*).⁹⁷ He states that Paul appears to work with a more precise definition of slavery and freedom in vv. 25–26, since “the situation of ‘slavery’ is the point that binds the present Jerusalem with Hagar (γάρ)” in v. 25, and the determination “free” is the point of connection between the upper Jerusalem and Sarah in v. 26.⁹⁸ Against the ‘freedom from the law’ interpretation, he objects that it is unlikely that Paul would have ascribed either ‘freedom

⁹² I have filled out the meaning of Jones’s statement here. Cf. Jones 1987, 87: “Doch ist hier wieder auffällig, daß Paulus δουλεύει bzw. δουλεία (wie auch ἐλευθέρω) nicht dementsprechend qualifiziert”.

⁹³ Jones 1987, 87.

⁹⁴ Jones 1987, 87–88.

⁹⁵ Jones 1987, 88.

⁹⁶ Jones 1987, 87–88. Cf. Bentley/Dowd 2002, 686, 692.

⁹⁷ Jones 1987, 90, 96, 108.

⁹⁸ Jones 1987, 88–89.

from the law' or 'slavery under the law' to a city.⁹⁹ Moreover, he claims that if Paul presupposes the determination free for the upper Jerusalem and enslaved for the earthly Jerusalem, then the content of the freedom and slavery is more likely to be found in the contrast between the two.¹⁰⁰

Jones then explicates Theodor Zahn's view that it is the heavenly origin of the upper Jerusalem that secures and defines the freedom in question, so that free means "independent from this world, its materials and the orders that are in effect within it".¹⁰¹ He argues that this contextual interpretation is strengthened by the fact that Paul speaks of such eschatological or apocalyptic freedom elsewhere, namely in Rom 8.21.¹⁰² Moreover, he explains that Rom 8.21 corresponds exactly to Gal 4.25–26 in both its concept of freedom and its understanding of δουλεία: "the present Jerusalem is a slave, because it belongs to the *present* world and is accordingly enslaved; the upper Jerusalem is free, because it belongs to the heavenly world and is accordingly imperishable".¹⁰³ According to Jones, this background explains why Hagar corresponds to the present Jerusalem (both are characterized by slavery) and why Paul can write ἡ δὲ ἄνω Ἱερουσαλήμ ἐλευθέρᾳ ἐστίν without further argument (the characteristic ἄνω ensures that this Jerusalem is free).¹⁰⁴

After defining the slavery and freedom of vv. 25–26 as slavery under and freedom from perishability, Jones returns to the meaning of Paul's freedom terminology in vv. 24, 30, 31. On the one hand, he states that the freedom ascribed to Christians consists in sharing in the imperishable upper Jerusalem and indicates that it evidently rules out being subject to the law.¹⁰⁵ On the other hand, he explains that rather than being exhaustively defined by its relation to the law, it "remains a vague determination for the Christian order of salvation", since the term ἐλευθέρᾳ is not explicitly elaborated or interpreted, but instead is carried over from the socio-political image of the free woman and slave woman in the beginning.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁹ Jones 1987, 89.

¹⁰⁰ Jones 1987, 89.

¹⁰¹ Zahn 1922 [1905], 241; Jones 1987, 90, 206.

¹⁰² Jones 1987, 90.

¹⁰³ Jones 1987, 90 (original emphasis).

¹⁰⁴ Jones 1987, 90.

¹⁰⁵ Jones 1987, 90.

¹⁰⁶ Jones 1987, 91: "Wir können zwar sagen, daß die den Christen zugesprochene Freiheit Anteil an dem unvergänglichen oberen Jerusalem involviere und daß sie offensichtlich mit dem Gesetz nichts zu tun hat, aber diese Freiheit wird dadurch nicht erschöpfend definiert, sondern bleibt eine vage Bestimmung für die christliche Heilsordnung, weil eine explizite Auswertung des aus dem anfangs benutzten sozialpolitischen Bild gewonnenen Begriffs ἐλευθέρᾳ nicht stattfindet".

Vollenweider does not provide a point by point refutation of Jones's arguments against the 'freedom from the law' interpretation in Gal 4.21–31. In his view, the fact that 4.21–31 functions to unite the complex 'Abraham and the promise' (3.6–4.7) and the complex 'Jerusalem' and the freedom that was fought for then (2.4) undermines Jones's explanation of why 'freedom from the law' cannot be in view.¹⁰⁷ In addition he notes that Gal 4.21–31 also functions as a transition to chapter 5 with its *leitmotif* of ἐλευθερία (5.1, 13). Finally, he suggests that Paul's argument in Gal 4.21–31 reflects the influence of an older exegetical 'school tradition' that evidently spoke of ἐλευθερία and thus points back to "an already law-critical Jewish Christianity before and alongside Paul that may permit itself to be located in Antioch".¹⁰⁸

Let me now draw up the outlines of my own interpretation of Paul's argument in this section. Paul makes repeated use of freedom terminology in Gal 4.21–31. His particular interest in this terminology is evident from the fact that this terminology is absent from the story of Sarah and Hagar in Genesis.¹⁰⁹ It is clear from v. 21 that Paul is concerned to dissuade his hearers/readers from coming under the law. To do this he explicates the allegorical meaning of the story of Hagar, Sarah and their sons in Genesis. In vv. 22–23 he indicates that Abraham had two sons, one from the slave woman and one from the free woman. In v. 23 he explains that the son from the slave woman was born according to the flesh and the son from the free woman through the promise. Here, slave woman and free woman refer solely to socio-political slavery and freedom (as in Gal 3.28).

In v. 24 Paul states that these things have an allegorical meaning and explains that the two women are two covenants. The covenant from Mount Sinai gives birth into slavery and (implicitly) the other covenant gives birth into freedom. Notably, Paul does not spell out this second point. The

¹⁰⁷ Vollenweider 1989, 286.

¹⁰⁸ Vollenweider 1989, 293.

¹⁰⁹ See esp. Esler 1998, 211. See also Ebeling 1981, 317 (ET = Ebeling 1985c [1981], 234); Jones 1987, 84. While granting that the contrasting word ἐλευθέρα "may have been introduced by Paul", Martyn claims that "it is equally possible that the Teachers are responsible for it" (Martyn 1997, 434 n. 118). This suggestion is related to Barrett's thesis that Paul is concerned to respond to his opponents' use of scripture in Gal 4.21–31. See Barrett 1982; Esler 1998, 209. Although it is not implausible, this thesis remains difficult to prove, and I am reluctant to build upon it. Even if it could be maintained with a reasonably high degree of certainty, the question of whether Paul or "the Teachers" first introduced the ἐλευθερ- word group would not be decided. In my view, it is perhaps more likely that Paul is responsible for its introduction, since he was particularly concerned to establish an antithesis. For a critical assessment of Barrett's thesis, see e.g., Jones 1987, 82–83; Vollenweider 1989, 291, 292. For further reflection on the perilous task of "mirror reading" and identifying "opponents" in general, see esp. Berger 1980; Barclay 1987; Sumney 2005.

reason for this is unclear. Presumably it is either because he is primarily concerned to emphasize that the covenant from Mount Sinai gives birth into slavery (cf. 4.21)¹¹⁰ or because he does not want to use the substantive *ἐλευθερία* before 5.1.¹¹¹

In my view, Jones has convincingly argued that the slavery in question in 4.24 does not mean “slavery under the law”, i.e., that ‘slavery’ is not short for ‘slavery under the law’. Instead, Paul’s aim is to show that being under the law is ‘slavery’, i.e. something absolutely bad, and implicitly that being born through the promise is ‘freedom’, i.e., something absolutely good. Rather than having a specific content, ‘slavery’ and ‘freedom’ retain the value of something absolutely bad (slavery) or absolutely good (freedom), which they received from the discussion of socio-political freedom and slavery in vv. 22–23.¹¹²

Jones’s interpretation of Paul’s freedom language in vv. 25–26, however, is less convincing. Here, rather than meaning slavery under and freedom from perishability, it is more likely that Paul continues to use enslavement language to designate something absolutely bad and freedom language to designate something absolutely good. His goal is likewise to equate being under the law with slavery so that his hearers/readers will not wish to be under the law. This same approach characterizes his use of freedom and slavery terminology in vv. 30–31.

In conclusion, then, while it may be said that Paul through his use of the allegory of Sarah and Hagar launches a strong exhortation to the Galatians not to (wish to) subject themselves to the law, it does not follow from this observation that ‘slavery’ and ‘freedom’ mean ‘slavery under the law’ and ‘freedom from the law’ in this passage. Instead, Paul seems to turn to the socio-political image of the slave woman and the free woman because of the richness of meaning that can be drawn from the radical contrast between slave and free. It is this contrast that he puts to powerful rhetorical use in his descriptions of the earthly and upper Jerusalem, indicating that one is in an (absolutely) bad condition while the other is in an (absolutely) good condition, and thereby appealing to his hearers/readers to choose one over the other.

5.6 Gal 5.1

Together with Gal 2.4, Gal 5.1 could form the basis of an advanced class in textual criticism. As Ernest Dewitt Burton notes, “the variations of the

¹¹⁰ See Cosgrove 1987, 226, 234.

¹¹¹ See Ebeling 1981, 316 (ET = Ebeling 1985c [1981], 233).

¹¹² See Jones 1987, 88.

textual evidence are so complex as to make clear exposition of them difficult”.¹¹³ In fact, without Burton’s helpful presentation of the chief variations,¹¹⁴ one might despair at the outset of making sense of the matter. Burton himself argues that “the weight of external evidence ... strongly favours τῆ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἡμᾶς Χριστὸς ἠλευθέρωσεν· στήκετε οὖν, and the originality of this reading is confirmed by the fact that it accounts for the rest”.¹¹⁵ Developing Burton’s second point, Betz states that it is likely that “part of the textual tradition has tried to smooth over the transition from 4:31 to 5:1, but these attempts are secondary”.¹¹⁶ Similarly, Graham N. Stanton concludes that “although the Greek of v. 1a is so awkward that early scribes made several attempts to tidy it up, there is now general agreement that the NRSV and similar translations are appropriate”.¹¹⁷

While the text of Gal 5.1 cannot be established with certainty, the reading defended by Burton, Betz, Stanton and others probably has the best claim to being original.¹¹⁸ This conclusion rests on the following observations. First, the external evidence appears to favor this reading.¹¹⁹ Secondly, the syntactical difficulty of τῆ ἐλευθερίᾳ and the absence of a

¹¹³ Burton 1921, 270.

¹¹⁴ Burton 1921, 270–271. See also Lightfoot 1896 [1865], 200–203.

¹¹⁵ Burton 1921, 271. See also Longenecker 1990, 223.

¹¹⁶ Betz 1979, 255.

¹¹⁷ Stanton 2001, 1162. See also Metzger 1994 [1971], 528: “Amid the variety of readings, that adopted for the text seems to account best for the origin of the others. The apostle’s abrupt introduction of exhortations was softened by inserting the relative ἣ before or after ἐλευθερίᾳ, or by transferring οὖν to the preceding clause.”

¹¹⁸ Not all scholars, of course, have been content with this solution. While accepting the placement of οὖν after στήκετε and ἡμᾶς before Χριστὸς, Lightfoot 1896 [1865], 201–202 reads τῆ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἣ rather than τῆ ἐλευθερίᾳ alone. Although he grants that the external evidence favors the latter reading, he puts forward two arguments in support of the former. First, he suggests that the latter reading is “so difficult as to be almost unintelligible”, and that it is difficult to interpret it without rendering the phrase either meaningless or ungrammatical. With respect to the canons of textual criticism, he notes that “at a certain point Bengel’s rule, ‘proclivi scriptioni praestat ardua,’ attains its maximum value; beyond this point it ceases to apply”. Secondly, in view of its position before ἡμᾶς, he suggests that ἣ may easily have been dropped by a careless transcriber. Moreover, he adds that “the transposition Χριστὸς ἡμᾶς for ἡμᾶς Χριστὸς was probably made for the sake of euphony to avoid the juxtaposition of ἣ ἡμᾶς which came together in the original text”. Taking 5.1 with 4.31, Lightfoot punctuates 4.31–5.1 as follows: τῆς ἐλευθέρως τῆ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἣ ἡμᾶς Χριστὸς ἠλευθέρωσεν. Στήκετε οὖν κ.τ.λ. In contrast to both Burton and Lightfoot, Zahn 1922 [1905], 246–247, adopts the reading ἣ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἡμᾶς Χριστὸς ἠλευθέρωσεν. He raises two objections against the reading adopted by Burton. First, it is probably dependent upon a false understanding of v. 31 as the conclusion of 4.21–31. Secondly, the witnesses of this reading are not united with respect to the transition between 4.31 and 5.1.

¹¹⁹ Notably, Lightfoot 1896 [1865], 202, concedes this point.

connective particle to mark the relation of 5.1 to 4.31 provide a plausible explanation for the rise of other readings.¹²⁰ Thirdly, v. 31 forms a fitting conclusion to 4.21–31. Fourthly, the opposition between freedom and slavery in 5.1a–b suggests that 5.1a and 5.1b belong together (cf. 2.4). Accordingly, the verse segments should not be separated by linking 5.1a with 4.31.¹²¹ This conclusion is also supported by the repetition of Christ in 5.1a, 2, 4, 6.¹²² Moreover, the mention of freedom in 5.13 clearly looks back to 5.1. In my view, the fact that 5.1a probably belongs more closely with what follows than with what precedes is a strong argument against the alternative readings and punctuation defended by Lightfoot and Zahn.¹²³ I will therefore take the reading τῆ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἡμᾶς Χριστοῦς ἠλευθέρωσεν· στήκετε οὖν as my starting point.

Now, establishing the force of the dative τῆ ἐλευθερίᾳ in Gal 5.1 is far from straightforward. In fact, it may be granted that this is indeed a weighty argument against the reading that I have defended above.¹²⁴ Since it is not strong enough to overturn the arguments in its favor, however, one must attempt to make sense of the difficult dative. In my view, the following three interpretations are rather unlikely. First, it is probably not a dative of interest on the grounds that the resulting meaning is too difficult.¹²⁵ Secondly, in view of the presence of the article (τῆ) and the distance between τῆ ἐλευθερίᾳ and ἠλευθέρωσεν, it is unlikely to be a cognate dative.¹²⁶ Thirdly, since it does not meet Smyth's qualifications, J. Louis Martyn's proposal that it is a dative 'of place whither' as described by Smyth should be rejected,¹²⁷ i.e., since it neither occurs in poetry¹²⁸ nor designates the "limit of motion".¹²⁹

Whether τῆ ἐλευθερίᾳ is best interpreted as a dative of instrument, destination or reference is more difficult to say. Burton and Bruce defend the first option. According to Burton, the verse therefore means "by (bestowing) the freedom (spoken of above) Christ made us free".¹³⁰

¹²⁰ See e.g., Longenecker 1990, 223.

¹²¹ Contra Lightfoot 1896 [1865], 201–202; Zahn 1922 [1905], 246–247.

¹²² See e.g., Beet 1885, 138; Jones 1987, 96.

¹²³ Contra Lightfoot 1896 [1865], 201–202; Zahn 1922 [1905], 246–247.

¹²⁴ See Lightfoot 1896 [1865], 201. See also note 118.

¹²⁵ See Jones 1987, 210; Vollenweider 1989, 289. Contra Blass 1979 [1896], § 188.1.

¹²⁶ Contra Moule 1959 [1953], 44, 178; Turner 1963, 241–242.

¹²⁷ Contra Martyn 1998, 447, who refers to Smyth 1968 [1920], 351 (§ 1531). Also contra Hays 2000, 306 n. 236.

¹²⁸ See Smyth 1968 [1920], 351 (§ 1531): "In poetry the dative without a preposition is used to denote place".

¹²⁹ See Smyth 1968 [1920], 351 (§ 1531): "b. Place whither (limit of motion): πεδίῳ πέσο fell on the ground E 82, κολεῶ ἄορ θέο put thy sword into its sheath k 333."

¹³⁰ Burton 1921, 271.

Similarly, noting that the article specifies a particular liberty, namely the liberty held out in the gospel, Bruce states that “it is with this liberty that Christ has liberated his people”.¹³¹ The problem with this view is that it is difficult to see how freedom can be understood as the instrument with which Christ set us free.

With a view to Gal 5.13 (and Rom 8.21), many scholars have instead argued that τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ is best taken as a dative of destination or goal (cf. also Rom 8.20, 24).¹³² The difficulty with this interpretation is twofold. First, it is by no means clear that ἐλευθερώω constitutes a verb of motion.¹³³ Secondly, it is far from certain that such a dative is present elsewhere, e.g., in Rom 8.24 or Acts 22.25.¹³⁴ After raising objections to interpreting τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ as a dative of destination, Jones argues that τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ is more plausibly taken as a dative of reference.¹³⁵ In support of this view, he appeals to Epictetus, *Diatr.* 4.1.113–114,¹³⁶ *The Greek Anthology* 7.553,¹³⁷ and Romans 6.20.¹³⁸ The potential problem with this interpretation is that it is unclear whether the assumed dative of reference in Gal 5.1 may be interpreted positively to mean “for freedom” as Jones suggests.¹³⁹ Moreover, it should be noted with Vollenweider that in contrast to the Epictetus

¹³¹ Bruce 1982, 226.

¹³² See e.g., Schlier 1962 [1949], 229; Mußner 1974, 342; Betz 1979, 255, 256 n. 25; Vollenweider 1989, 289.

¹³³ See Jones 1987, 98. Cf. Wallace 1996, 147: “Basically, remember that this broad ‘to’ idea is in relation to intransitive verbs (i.e., verbs that do not take a direct object). The dative with ἔρχομαι accounts for most examples.”

¹³⁴ See Bruce 1982, 226; Jones 1987, 98.

¹³⁵ Jones 1987, 97–99, esp. 99.

¹³⁶ Jones 1987, 98: “Die nächste Parallele zu Gal 5,1 ist wohl Epiktet 4, 1, 113–114. Epiktet beschreibt zunächst wahre Freiheit und schreibt dann: τοῦτο γὰρ ἐστὶν ἡ ταῖς ἀληθείαις ἐλευθερία. ταύτην ἠλευθερώθη Διογένης παρ’ Ἀντισθέενους καὶ οὐκέτι ἔφη καταδουλωθῆναι δύνασθαι ὑπ’ οὐδενός. ‘Denn dies ist die wahre Freiheit. Zu dieser Freiheit wurde Diogenes von Antisthenes befreit, und er sagte, daß er fortan von überhaupt niemandem mehr versklavt werden könne.’ ταύτην ist hier als Akkusativ der Beziehung zu verstehen. ... Im Neuen Testament ist der Dativ der Beziehung dem Akkusativ der Beziehung ‘weit überlegen’. Es ist also möglich, daß Paulus einen Dativ der Beziehung einsetzt, wo Epiktet den Akkusativ der Beziehung verwendet.” For the embedded quotation “weit überlegen”, see Blass 1979 [1896], § 197.1.

¹³⁷ Jones 1987, 210: “Vgl. *Anthologia Graeca* (Palatina) 7,553: Ζωσίμη, ἡ πρὶν ἐοῦσα μόνῳ τῷ σώματι δούλη, καὶ τῷ σώματι νῦν εἶπεν ἐλευθερίην, ‘Zosime, die früher lediglich im Hinblick auf den Körper Sklavin war, hat nun Freiheit auch im Hinblick auf den Körper gefunden’”.

¹³⁸ Jones 1987, 99: “Röm 6,20 liefert ohne Zweifel einen Beleg für ἐλεύθερος plus Dativ der Beziehung. Man wird im Lichte dieses Befundes aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach dasselbe auch für Gal 5,1 annehmen müssen”.

¹³⁹ Jones 1987, 99: “Rom 6,20 ist die Beziehung negativ (frei von dem Anspruch der Gerechtigkeit), Gal 5.1 dagegen positiv gemeint (befreit zur Freiheit)”.

text, Gal 5.1 does not contain a demonstrative pronoun that refers back to what precedes.¹⁴⁰

In my view, the precise force of τῆ ἐλευθερίᾳ remains unclear. In particular, it is difficult to decide whether it is better taken as a dative of destination with most scholars or as a dative of reference with Jones. On balance, however, it is perhaps best to interpret Gal 5.1 in relation to Gal 5.13 and Rom 8.21. If so, then in Gal 5.1 τῆ ἐλευθερίᾳ may well indicate the goal or purpose for which Christ set us free. Consequently, the verse should probably be translated “for freedom Christ set us free”.

As with the preceding freedom texts in Galatians, many scholars have argued or assumed that ‘freedom from the law’ is in view in Gal 5.1.¹⁴¹ For some interpreters, this reading is clearly indicated by the immediate context. Karl Kertelge, for example, claims that “it is clear from the context ... that ‘freedom’ is here fundamentally freedom from the law”.¹⁴² Similarly, William N. Wilder argues that since Gal 5.1 occurs between Paul’s allegory for those who wish to be under the law (4.21) and his warning to those who by receiving circumcision are obligated to obey the entire law (5.2–3), the freedom in question must be “that particular freedom from the law which they possess in Christ”.¹⁴³

While Jones acknowledges that “Paul specifically argues against the adoption of the requirements of the Jewish law here”,¹⁴⁴ he maintains that the δουλεία in question is more comprehensive than slavery under the law. In support of this reading he appeals to the formulation ζυγῶ δουλείας. More specifically, he claims that since there is no article with ζυγῶ and δουλείας is not further qualified, Gal 5.1b should be understood as a warning against every kind of slavery rather than slavery under the law alone.¹⁴⁵ In further support of this claim, he notes that rather than designating the yoke of the law alone, ζυγός had long been a technical term in Greek for social, political or spiritual slavery.¹⁴⁶ Secondly, he argues that the word πάλιν also indicates that a general warning is in view, since it looks back to the πάλιν in Gal 4.9, which speaks of slavery under the elements.¹⁴⁷ He also suggests that this general concept of δουλεία finds a parallel in Gal 4.24: “there too δουλεία was not equivalent to slavery under the law but a more comprehensive concept that was determined by the

¹⁴⁰ Vollenweider 1989, 289 n. 20.

¹⁴¹ See e.g., Burton 1921, 270; Longenecker 1964, 175; Schürmann 1990a [1971], 238; Deidun 1983, 20; Kertelge 1991 [1984], 185; Kruse 2006, 109.

¹⁴² Kertelge 1991 [1984], 185.

¹⁴³ Wilder 2001, 177.

¹⁴⁴ Jones 1987, 100.

¹⁴⁵ Jones 1987, 100. See also Dautzenberg 2001, 77.

¹⁴⁶ Jones 1987, 100.

¹⁴⁷ Jones 1987, 100.

socio-political analogy”.¹⁴⁸ From this standpoint, he reasons that if δουλεία functions as a foil to ἐλευθερία in Gal 5.1, then the latter should also be viewed as a more comprehensive concept that negatively corresponds to the δουλεία in question and not as ‘freedom from the law’ alone.¹⁴⁹

Vollenweider does not offer a detailed response to Jones’s arguments against the ‘freedom from the law’ interpretation of Gal 5.1. In contrast to Jones, he renders ζυγῶ δουλείας as “the yoke of slavery” (*das Sklavensjoch*), interpreting it to be a yoke that separates from Christ, and claiming that the power of this yoke comes to the fore in v. 2 where it is implicit in the requirement to be circumcised.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, he explains that Paul is clearly irritated with the turning of the Galatians to the law in 5.7–12 and 4.8–20, and implies that his freedom language in 5.1 should be seen in relation to these sections.¹⁵¹ In addition to these observations, he asserts that:

the deep dimensions of Pauline reflection are only then plumbed when the law comes into view as a universal, anthropological – and possibly even cosmological – entity and not only as a Jewish distinctive, which the Apostle in addition fundamentally misunderstood.¹⁵²

This quote demonstrates how complex it can be to pin down the exact meaning of ‘the law’ for Vollenweider (and other scholars) who defend the ‘freedom from the law’ interpretation of the ἐλευθερ- texts of Galatians. Vollenweider goes on to explain that “the Sinai Law” can be seen as a paradigm of enslavement to the “world powers”,¹⁵³ which presumably encompasses the powers that not only Jews but also Gentiles are subject to. In support of his statement, he clarifies that he has Gal 3.13, 22–25, in mind, where he interprets Paul to mean that Jewish and Gentile Christians have a common past, and 4.8–10, where he interprets Paul to mean that subjection under the law is equivalent to a relapse under the elements.¹⁵⁴

Vollenweider also provides further nuance to the meaning of ‘the law’ when he discusses the reference to circumcision. He asserts that there is a difference between viewing circumcision as a sign of the covenant in which human obedience corresponds to the commandment, and the Pauline

¹⁴⁸ Jones 1987, 100.

¹⁴⁹ Jones 1987, 100: “Fungiert nun δουλεία in 5,1 als Folie für den Begriff ἐλευθερία in selben Verse, so ist auch ἐλευθερία als umfassender Begriff anzusehen, der nicht nur ‘Freiheit vom Gesetz’ bezeichnet, sondern dem umfassenden Begriff δουλεία negativ entspricht”. See also Dautzenberg 2001, 77.

¹⁵⁰ Vollenweider 1989, 289.

¹⁵¹ Vollenweider 1989, 289.

¹⁵² Vollenweider 1989, 309.

¹⁵³ Vollenweider 1989, 309.

¹⁵⁴ Vollenweider 1989, 309.

perspective on circumcision in which it appears as an ‘entry requirement’ that will grant a share in God’s promises and thereby as a work that brings about one’s own justification.¹⁵⁵ His interpretation of ‘freedom from the law’, therefore seems to include or at different times be synonymous with ‘freedom from world powers’, and ‘freedom from the work of circumcision as a means to justification’.

Other scholars have struck intermediate positions. With a view to the differences between the past situations of Jews and Gentiles, some have implied that it is necessary to interpret the freedom in question more broadly than ‘freedom from the (Jewish) law’.¹⁵⁶ According to Niederwimmer, the Galatian nomism involves a) obedience to the world powers (4.8–11) and b) the requirement of circumcision (2.3ff; 5.2ff; 6.12ff).¹⁵⁷ His understanding of the freedom in question thus appears to be more comprehensive than ‘freedom from the Jewish law’; it is freedom from ‘lexism’ or nomism.¹⁵⁸ Taking a similar approach, Franz Mußner concludes from Paul’s use of the word *πάλι* that:

with the ‘yoke of slavery’ Paul thinks not only of the ‘lexistic’ life but also of the pagan *στοιχεῖα*-service, to which the Galatians, if also in a new form bound up with the law-life, wish to return (cf. again 4.9).¹⁵⁹

Let me use this quote as a transition to my own interpretation of Gal 5.1, since one of the most vexing questions in the interpretation of Paul’s letters in general and Galatians in particular is whether or not Paul considered the Gentiles to be under the (curse of the) law prior to the coming of Christ. With Vollenweider and others, it is possible to interpret Gal 3.13, 22–25 and 4.3–5 to mean that both Gentiles and Jews were under the (curse of the) law prior to the coming of faith.¹⁶⁰ Since, however, Paul uses the first person plural with reference to Jewish Christians alone in Gal 2.15–17, the aforementioned passages can also be interpreted to mean that Jews alone were under the (curse of the) law prior to the coming of faith.¹⁶¹

While strong arguments can be marshaled for both interpretations, the fact that Paul refers to the idolatry of the Gentiles rather than their previous subjection to the law in 4.8 makes the second position perhaps more likely. In support of this conclusion, it may be noted that while Paul

¹⁵⁵ Vollenweider 1989, 310.

¹⁵⁶ See e.g., Mußner 1974, 344; Longenecker 1990, 225.

¹⁵⁷ Niederwimmer 1966, 211. Cf. Grossouw 1969, 283.

¹⁵⁸ For my use of the word ‘lexism’, see page 36 n. 127.

¹⁵⁹ Mußner 1974, 344. Cf. also Longenecker 1990, 225.

¹⁶⁰ See e.g., Vollenweider 1989, 309; Jones 1987, 211; Martyn 1997, 334–336.

¹⁶¹ See e.g. Hays 2002 [1983], 95–117, esp. 106–107; Donaldson 1986; Donaldson 1997, 180–182; Longenecker 1998, 91–95; Bachmann 1999 [1998], 146 n. 52.

uses the word *again* in Gal 4.9 and 5.1, this word is conspicuously absent in 4.21. He does not say, “Tell me you who wish to be under the law *again*, do you not listen to the law?” In my judgment, the absence of the word *again* here probably reflects the fact that whereas the Galatians were formerly enslaved ‘to the elements’ and subject to ‘a yoke of slavery’, they were not previously ‘under the (Jewish) law’.

If Gentile Christians were not subject to the law prior to the coming of faith, then Gal 5.1 cannot mean “for freedom *from the (Jewish) law* Christ set us free *from the (Jewish) law*; stand fast therefore and do not be subject again to the yoke of slavery, that is, to *the (Jewish) law or the yoke of the (Jewish) law*”, since “us” almost certainly includes both Jews and Gentiles. Since, however, both Jews and Gentiles were enslaved under the elements (of the world) (cf. Gal 4.3, 9), it may mean “for freedom from slavery under the elements of the world Christ set us free from slavery under the elements of the world; stand fast therefore and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery, that is, to any form of enslavement”. According to this interpretation, Paul uses στοιχεῖα (cf. 4.3, 9) and ζυγῶ δουλείας (5.1) as catch-all terms that are applicable to the past and present situations of both Jews and Gentiles. In my view, therefore, it seems most likely that the freedom in view is ‘freedom from the elements of the world’, of which ‘the (Jewish) law’ is a subset or instantiation, rather than ‘freedom from the law’ alone. Then again, since Paul speaks of being set free *for freedom*, it is conceivable that a positive freedom is also in view, namely the freedom to act without being determined by these elements.

5.7 Gal 5.13

In Gal 5.13 Paul follows his initial statement, “for you were called to freedom brothers (and sisters)” (5.13a) with the words “only not freedom (τὴν ἐλευθερίαν) for/into/as (εἰς) an occasion for the flesh” (5.13b) “but through love serve (or be enslaved to) one another” (5.13c).¹⁶² The striking

¹⁶² For my purposes, it is not necessary to provide an extended discussion of the much disputed question of the relevance of this section for drawing conclusions concerning the situation that Paul was addressing in Galatians. In my view, the nature of Paul’s argument in this section of the letter does not justify the conclusion that Paul was fighting on two fronts, i.e., against legalists and libertines. Contra e.g., Lütgert 1919; Ropes 1929; Stamm 1953, 429–430, 443. To suggest, however, that Gal 5.13 is concerned with the same danger as Gal 5.1–12, namely submitting to circumcision (and law observance), is most likely to err in the opposite direction. Contra Howard 1979, 14; Russell 1997, 143–150; Schewe 2005, 82–101, esp. 95–96: “Mit Gal 5,13b appelliert der Verfasser an seine Adressaten, dieser Gefahr nicht zu erliegen, der σάρξ nicht nachzugeben, was konkret heißt: sich nicht beschneiden zu lassen und dem Gesetz nicht gehorsam zu

nature of this statement lies in the fact that whereas Paul associates believers with ‘freedom’ and disassociates them from ‘slavery’ in Gal 2.4–5, 4.21–31 and 5.1, here he speaks of serving (or being enslaved to) one another through love! Before addressing the relationship between freedom and mutual service (or enslavement), however, it is first necessary to ask whether ‘freedom from the law’ is in view.

Jones challenges ‘the freedom from the law’ interpretation of Gal 5.13 in three steps. First, he claims that it is based on the (alleged) witness of the letter thus far rather than on the verse itself.¹⁶³ Secondly, he argues that since the *ἐλευθερ*- word group does not mean ‘freedom from the law’ elsewhere in the letter, this meaning may not be assumed here.¹⁶⁴ Thirdly, with reference to the negation of the general Hellenistic-Roman definition of freedom in v. 17, he argues that the freedom to do what one wishes is in view.¹⁶⁵

Vollenweider states that in Gal 5.13 Paul reminds the Galatians of “the sphere of freedom into which the believers are ‘called’”.¹⁶⁶ In explicit opposition to Jones, he claims that Paul denies that the freedom of indifference, i.e., the freedom to do “as I will”, is true freedom and degrades it as slavery under the flesh. While Vollenweider appears to hold the ‘freedom from the law’ interpretation,¹⁶⁷ he does not articulate it clearly or support it with concrete arguments.

Contrary to the impression left by Jones (and Vollenweider), it is possible to marshal several arguments in support of the ‘freedom from the law’ interpretation of Gal 5.13. First, since Gal 5.13 grounds Paul’s sharp rejection of circumcision in 5.7–12, it is conceivable that Gal 5.13 is specifically concerned with freedom from circumcision (and law observance). Secondly, the fact that Paul speaks of the fulfillment of the law in 5.14 could also be taken as evidence that ‘freedom from the law’ is in view in 5.13. Thirdly, the similarity between Gal 5.13 and Rom 6.15

werden”. Against this view, it is necessary to object that Gal 5.13 is probably concerned with the danger of yielding to the influence of the flesh and its passions and desires (cf. Gal 6.24), which are associated with the diverse works of the flesh described in 5.19–21. While this point is relatively certain, the extent to which Paul is concerned to address or anticipate concrete problems in Galatia remains unclear. In the end, Mußner is probably correct to suggest that Paul is fighting against two dangers rather than against two fronts, though it is questionable whether it is appropriate to describe them as the nomistic and the libertinistic dangers. See Mußner 1974, 367 n. 10. For two recent attempts to shed light upon the function and meaning of Gal 5–6, see Barclay 1988 and Schewe 2005. See also Tolmie 2005; Wilson 2007.

¹⁶³ Jones 1987, 104.

¹⁶⁴ Jones 1987, 105.

¹⁶⁵ Jones 1987, 106. See also Dautzenberg 2001, 78.

¹⁶⁶ Vollenweider 1989, 290.

¹⁶⁷ See Vollenweider 1989, 290; Vollenweider 1997, 504.

arguably supports the ‘freedom from the law’ interpretation. In view of these considerations, the ‘freedom from the law’ interpretation cannot be dismissed out of hand.

But, despite the attractiveness of the ‘freedom from the law’ interpretation, I think it more likely that the freedom in question should once again be understood as ‘freedom from the elements of the world’. While the “law” represents the immediate threat to freedom, the freedom in question is probably more broadly conceived. Here it seems especially likely that a positive freedom is also in view, namely the freedom to act (as one wishes) without being determined by the elements of the world. If so, then Jones may be correct to discern the influence of the general Hellenistic–Roman definition of freedom as the freedom to do what one wishes without compulsion.¹⁶⁸

How then does this relate to Paul’s exhortation to mutual service (or enslavement)? Interpreting the relationship between freedom and service (or enslavement) in this verse is rendered difficult by the terseness of Paul’s language in 13b. Here, the key question is not whether or not to supply a verb or which verb is to be supplied, but rather whether or not it is possible to specify the basic force or function of 13bc. Due to the contested nature of this question, I will provide a concise survey of representative interpretations before setting forth my own view.

While granting that it is unclear “what verb is to be supplied, whether ἔχετε, ποιεῖτε, τρέπετε ..., στρέφετε or μεταστρέφετε (Rev 11:6; Acts 2:19, 20)”, Burton argues that “the thought is probably not ‘use not this freedom for, in the interest of,’ but ‘convert not this freedom into’”.¹⁶⁹ In support of this point, he refers to the use of εἰς in John 16.20 and Acts 2.19–20 (cf. also Rev 11.6).¹⁷⁰ Similarly, Martyn argues that “given his [Paul’s] use of the preposition ‘into’ (*eis*), we can surmise that he thinks of the terrible development in which a community allows freedom to be turned *into* something other than freedom”.¹⁷¹

In explicit opposition to this tradition of interpretation, Jones maintains that v. 13b is concerned with a possible use of freedom.¹⁷² In defense of this view, he argues that “the possession of freedom is presupposed and everything that happens with it must be classed as a use (in this case as a misuse) of this freedom”.¹⁷³ Moreover, he insists that rather than providing

¹⁶⁸ Jones 1987, 80.

¹⁶⁹ Burton 1921, 292.

¹⁷⁰ Burton 1921, 292.

¹⁷¹ Martyn 1998, 485.

¹⁷² Jones 1987, 104–105; 212 n. 35.

¹⁷³ Jones 1987, 212 n. 235.

a definition of freedom v. 13bc only provides instructions concerning its use.¹⁷⁴

John Barclay states with reference to 13c that “the Galatians are to use their freedom *in slavery* to one another through love”.¹⁷⁵ He explains that for Paul, this *δουλεία* is not conceived as a direct opposition to freedom, but rather as its “necessary outworking”,¹⁷⁶ and suggests that Paul’s choice of phrases here shows that the ‘freedom’ he promotes has moral obligations built into it, namely the obligation of love.¹⁷⁷ Moreover, he states that “love, expressed in mutual service, is an essential practical consequence of freedom”.¹⁷⁸ Finally, he suggests that 13b refers to a potential misuse of freedom.¹⁷⁹

Vollenweider disagrees with this last point. After stating that Paul reminds the Galatians of the sphere of freedom into which they were called in v. 13a, Vollenweider insists that “v. 13b is not therefore a warning against a *misuse* of freedom but rather against a *misunderstanding* of freedom”.¹⁸⁰ With a view to v. 17 he claims that Paul denies that the freedom to do “as I wish” is true freedom and explains that Paul unmasks it as slavery under the flesh.¹⁸¹ Moreover, he argues that to speak of the *misuse* of freedom wrongly implies that there is a neutral platform upon which the Spirit and the flesh can display their activity.¹⁸²

Philip Esler observes that in Gal 5.13 Paul delivers “the paradoxical message that freedom actually involves a form of slavery”.¹⁸³ He then explains, however, that whereas Paul had previously spoken of freedom when he was concerned to distinguish his congregations from “the Israelite alternative”, we now learn that “there are two types of freedom, typically stereotyped as absolutely good and absolutely bad”.¹⁸⁴ Esler also speaks of the potential abuse of this freedom.¹⁸⁵ Moreover, he notes that it is remarkable that Paul describes the desirable sort of freedom as mutual slavery through love.¹⁸⁶

¹⁷⁴ Jones 1987, 105.

¹⁷⁵ Barclay 1988, 109 (original emphasis).

¹⁷⁶ Barclay 1988, 109.

¹⁷⁷ Barclay 1988, 109.

¹⁷⁸ Barclay 1988, 109.

¹⁷⁹ Barclay 1988, 109.

¹⁸⁰ Vollenweider 1989, 290 (original emphasis).

¹⁸¹ Vollenweider 1989, 314.

¹⁸² Vollenweider 1989, 314. Cf. Barth 1953, 9–10 (ET = Barth 1961 [1953], 76–77).

¹⁸³ Esler 1998, 223.

¹⁸⁴ Esler 1998, 223. In this respect, Esler comes close to Luther, who makes a distinction between the freedom of the spirit and the freedom of the flesh. See LW 27, 48.

¹⁸⁵ Esler 1998, 223.

¹⁸⁶ Esler 1998, 223.

Taking a different tack, Beverly Gaventa asserts that “in Paul’s letters, freedom is never absolute; one is always free from certain things yet enslaved to certain things (see, e.g., Rom 6:15–23)”.¹⁸⁷ From this standpoint, she then explains that Paul’s exhortation to ‘become slaves to one another’ marks out the limitation of Christian freedom, while noting that the slavery in question is radically unconventional insofar as it is mutual rather than hierarchical.¹⁸⁸

As noted above, the interpretation of the relationship between freedom and service (or enslavement) to others is made difficult by the terseness of Paul’s language in 13b. Since Paul does not provide a verb in this sentence it is difficult to specify its force with any certainty. Despite claims to the contrary,¹⁸⁹ it is almost certainly necessary to supply a verb.¹⁹⁰ Since τὴν ἐλευθερίαν is in the accusative, a transitive verb is evidently required. And since Paul makes use of μή (rather than οὐ) in 13b and since δουλεύετε in 13c should (therefore) be understood as an imperative rather than an indicative, it is necessary to supply a present imperative verb (or possibly an aorist subjunctive). Finally, since Paul addresses the Galatians in the second person plural in 13a and 13c, it is clear that this is also the case in 13b.

Unfortunately, it is not clear *which verb* should be supplied.¹⁹¹ While Burton and Martyn are correct to note that Paul’s use of the preposition εἰς here *may* have the force of “into”, which would suggest that a verb such as τρέπετε, στρέφετε (cf. Rev 11.6) or μεταστρέφετε (cf. Acts 2.20) should be supplied, it is perhaps equally likely that in this context εἰς means “as”, since εἰς, like ὡς (cf. Gal 4.14), is able to bear this meaning in an object-complement construction (cf. e.g., Rom 2.26; Matt 21.46; Acts 7.21, 53; Acts 13.22, 47).¹⁹² If so, then the sense of 13b could be, “do not have (or use) freedom *as* an occasion for the flesh”, in which case a verb such as ἔχετε (cf. 1 Peter 2.16) should be supplied. Alternatively, the sense could also be “do not regard freedom *as* an occasion for the flesh”, which would require a verb such as ἔχετε (cf. Matt 21.46) or ἡγήσθε (cf. 2 Thess 3.15).

¹⁸⁷ Gaventa 2003, 1382.

¹⁸⁸ Gaventa 2003, 1382.

¹⁸⁹ See e.g., Schlier 1962 [1949], 242 n. 2; Mußner 1974, 368; Vollenweider 1989, 290 n. 26. Schlier misleadingly implies that Burton also holds this position, which is not the case since Burton 1921, 292, suggests that it is necessary to supply a verb.

¹⁹⁰ See Jones 1987, 212, n. 234. As Jones notes, “the fact that this sort of ellipsis was conventional does not mean that it ceases to be an ellipsis”.

¹⁹¹ See Burton 1921, 292.

¹⁹² See Wallace 1996, 184. See also Robertson 1919 [1914], 480–482; Turner 1963, 246–247; Wallace 1985, 95. For a list of verbs used in object-complement constructions, see Wallace 1996, 184 n. 24 and Wallace 1985, 96 n. 23.

It should be clear from the preceding discussion that it is not possible to determine the precise force of 13b with a high degree of certainty. On balance, however, it is perhaps most likely that the thought is “only do not have or use this/your freedom as an occasion for the flesh but through love serve (or be enslaved to) one another”. If so, then the exhortation to serve (or be enslaved to) one another through love probably indicates the way in which Paul wishes the Galatians to have (or use) the freedom to which they were called. This fact notwithstanding, it is important to note that Paul does not actually write “but have (or use) this/your freedom to serve (or be enslaved to) one another through love”. Instead, he appears content to juxtapose the assertion “you were called to freedom” and the exhortation “through love serve one another”,¹⁹³ while indicating that yielding to the influence of the flesh is not the way forward. Accordingly, it is necessary for his interpreters to acknowledge that he does not provide a precise account of the relationship between freedom and mutual service in this text.

5.8 Conclusion

There can be no question that Paul assigns great importance to the *ἐλευθερ*-word group and the positive connotations of the word ‘freedom’ in Galatians. In Gal 2.4–5 Paul presents “our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus” as the point of conflict between him and his opponents. Moreover, he indicates that the purpose of the false brothers is to enslave us. In Gal 4.21–31 he likewise makes a sharp distinction between the free woman and her children and the slave woman and her children in order to dissuade the Galatians from wishing to be under the law. In Galatians 5.1 Paul elevates the word freedom to new heights with the pleonastic statement “for freedom Christ set us free”. Moreover, he continues “stand fast therefore and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery”. Finally, in Gal 5.13 Paul reiterates that the Galatians were called to freedom, while adding “only (do) not (have) freedom as an occasion for the flesh but through love serve (or be enslaved to) one another”.

In my preliminary discussion I explained that while there was evidently considerable debate concerning the relation of Jews and Gentiles to the Torah prior to the writing of Galatians, the thesis that Christians before or alongside Paul had already developed an understanding of freedom as ‘freedom from the law’ remains too uncertain to be treated as a premise or point of departure in the exegesis of the freedom texts of Galatians. Moreover, with reference to Gal 1.4, 6.14 and 4.1–11 I suggested that

¹⁹³ For a partial parallel to this idea, see Philo, *Prob.* 79: δοῦλός τε παρ’ αὐτοῖς οὐδὲ εἰς ἐστὶν ἄλλ’ ἐλευθεροὶ πάντες ἀνθυπουργοῦντες ἀλλήλοις. See also Theissen 2002, 362.

enslavement to the (elements of the) world rather than enslavement to the law appears to provide the overarching category in Galatians.

In my exegesis of Gal 2.4–5 I began by presenting an extended defense of the longer text, which I interpreted to mean that while the false brethren attempted to compel Titus to be circumcised (vv. 4–5), the reputed ones in Jerusalem did not (vv. 6–10). After setting forth Jones’s refutation and Vollenweider’s defense of the ‘freedom from the law’ interpretation along with several alternative interpretations of the freedom in question, I stressed that the content of the freedom in question is by no means easy to specify. Then, with reference to Gal 1.4; 4.3, 9; 6.14 I suggested that the freedom in question is probably our freedom from this present evil age (cf. 1.4) or our freedom from (the elements of) the world (cf. 4.3, 9; 6.14), while noting that a positive freedom may also be in view, namely the freedom to act without being determined by (the elements of) the world.

In my exegesis of Gal 4.21–31 I argued with Jones that rather than speaking of ‘slavery under the law’ and being ‘free from the law’, Paul attempts to dissuade the Galatians from wishing to be under the law by linking the covenant with the law and its children with slavery or being enslaved, which is something bad or undesirable, and the covenant without the law with being free, which is something good or desirable.

While recognizing that Paul is concerned to dissuade the Galatians from being circumcised in 5.2–12, I argued that the freedom in question in Gal 5.1 is probably ‘freedom from the (elements of) the world’ rather than ‘freedom from the law’ alone, since both Jews and Gentiles were previously enslaved to the elements of the world (Gal 4.3), whereas only the Jews were under the (curse of the) law. Likewise, I suggested that Gal 5.13 is probably also concerned with ‘freedom from (the elements of) the world’, while noting that a positive freedom may also be in view here, namely the freedom to act without being determined by (the elements of) the world.

In contrast to the sharp disjunction between ‘freedom’ and ‘slavery’ in Gal 2.4–5, Gal 4.21–31 and Gal 5.1, Gal 5.13 follows the assertion “you were called to freedom” (13b) with the words “only not freedom as an occasion for the flesh (13b) but through love serve (or be enslaved to) one another” (13c). After setting forth a range of views, I claimed that it is perhaps most likely that the force of 13b is “only do not have (or use) this/your freedom as an occasion for the flesh” and consequently that the exhortation to serve (or be enslaved to) one another through love probably indicates the way in which the Galatians are to have (or use) their freedom. At the same time, I emphasized that rather than providing a precise account of the relationship between freedom and mutual service (or enslavement), Paul is basically content to juxtapose an affirmation of freedom and an exhortation to mutual service (or enslavement).

Chapter 6

The ἐλευθερ- Texts of Romans

6.1 Introduction

Paul's use of the ἐλευθερ- word group in Romans is limited to chapters 6–8, appearing in Rom 6.18, 20, 22; 7.3; 8.2 and 8.21. The word breakdown is as follows: ἐλεύθερος (6.20; 7.3); ἐλευθερία (8.21); ἐλευθερώω (6.18, 22; 8.2). While some scholars view chapters 5–8 as a unit, others take 5.1–21 or 5.1–11 with chapters 1–4.¹ For my purposes, it is sufficient to note that chapters 6–8 look back to 5.12–21 and especially 5.18–21, irrespective of whether or not they belong to the same structural unit. As with previous chapters, I will discuss the relevant passages in the order in which they appear.

6.2 Rom 6.18, 20, 22

The argument of Romans 6 is divided by the rhetorical questions in v. 1 and v. 15 into two parts, namely 6.1–14 and 6.15–23.² Both questions are formulated against the backdrop of Rom 5.20: “But the law came in alongside in order that sin (τὸ παράπτωμα) may increase. But where sin (ἡ ἁμαρτία) increased, grace increased all the more.” In 6.1–2 Paul rejects the conclusion that since “where sin increased, grace increased all the more” (5.20), it follows that we should sin in order that grace may increase. Similarly, in 6.15 he rejects the conclusion that we should sin because we are not under law but under grace. Accordingly, the argument as a whole is concerned with the implications of Paul's teaching on grace, sin and the law.

The degree to which Paul's rhetorical questions respond to or anticipate actual objections from his critics is difficult to determine with certainty. On the one hand, there can be little doubt that he has adopted the style of

¹ For a concise discussion of this question, see Vollenweider 1989, 323 n. 186.

² Contra Käsemann 1980b [1973], 163, who argues that vv. 12–14 introduce the new section and consequently divides the chapter into the units 6.1–11 and 6.12–23.

the diatribe in order to develop the logic of his argument.³ On the other hand, Rom 3.8 most likely indicates that he was also concerned to defend himself against people who could potentially distort or were already distorting his teaching.⁴ In my view, the two perspectives need not be played off against each other. Paul *is* unpacking the logic of his message by means of the diatribe style, and yet in doing so he is *also* concerned to refute or anticipate actual or potential objections to his teaching on grace, sin and the law (cf. v. 1, 15).

By way of contrast, there is insufficient evidence for Jones's hypothesis that Paul is concerned to respond to or to anticipate objections or rumors concerning *his teaching on freedom*.⁵ Paul's use of the ἐλευθερ- word group to counter the objection of v. 15 in no way shows that his teaching on freedom was at issue nor does it indicate that he was concerned to speak of 'freedom' in a more guarded fashion than in Galatians.⁶ On the contrary, it merely shows that he has chosen to make use of freedom and slavery terminology to clarify his contested teaching on grace, sin and the law (cf. 5.20).⁷

There are three occurrences of the ἐλευθερ- word group in Rom 6.18–22, namely the aorist passive participle ἐλευθερωθέντες in vv. 18 and 22 and the predicate adjective ἐλεύθεροι in v. 20. In v. 18, Paul describes the movement from sin to righteousness in a twofold manner: 1) you were set free from sin, and 2) you were enslaved to righteousness. While the negative release from sin and the positive relation to righteousness are both attributed to (the sovereign and gracious action of) God,⁸ Paul does not place both movements under the common rubric of 'freedom'. Instead, his freedom terminology refers solely to the first movement, whereas the second movement is spoken of as (a form of) enslavement rather than (a/the form of) freedom. Paul does not explain here that service to God is, in fact, freedom. Nor does he indicate that the 'freedom' in question is "primarily a freedom 'for something'".⁹

In v. 20, Paul states that when you were slaves of sin, you were "free with respect to righteousness". Here, 'being free with respect to X' means 'not being under the power or jurisdiction of X'. His point is that when you were slaves of sin, you were not subject to (the power or jurisdiction of) righteousness. Accordingly, in this verse "free" does not yet indicate a

³ See e.g., Bornkamm 1971, 125.

⁴ See e.g., Jones 1987, 111.

⁵ Contra Jones 1987, 117.

⁶ See Vollenweider 1989, 336. Contra Jones 1987, 117.

⁷ See Vollenweider 1989, 336.

⁸ This is indicated by the thanksgiving of v. 17a and the passive form of ἐλευθερωθέντες and ἐδουλώθητε.

⁹ Contra Hafemann 1995, 403.

positive determination or content, but merely that one is not under the rule or jurisdiction of a particular power. There is nothing to suggest that Paul's use of freedom here is "ironic" or "contrary to sense".¹⁰ Similarly, Paul himself does not state that "there can be no 'freedom' to sin, since sin itself is slavery" or explain that "such 'freedom' is illusory".¹¹

V. 20 serves to draw out the force of v. 22: "having been freed from sin and enslaved to God you have your fruit for sanctification and the end is eternal life". This verse shows that being enslaved to righteousness (v. 18) means or entails being enslaved to God himself. Pushing the logic of v. 20 further, Paul might also have said that having been freed from sin and enslaved to God we are now 'free with respect to sin' or 'free from sin'.

While it is possible that Paul puts forward v. 19a ("I speak in human terms on account of the weakness of your flesh") as a qualified apology¹² for the parallel use of the slavery metaphor with reference to sin and righteousness,¹³ it is far from clear that this verse expresses or implies that the believers' relation to righteousness is, in fact, freedom rather than slavery.¹⁴ Instead, his formal use of freedom terminology in vv. 18, 20 and

¹⁰ Contra e.g., Schlier 1977b, 212: "Fast klingt das *ἐλεύθεροι* ἥτε τῆ δικαιοσύνη ironisch. Denn 'frei' in bezug auf die Gerechtigkeit sein ist keine Freiheit, sondern Sklaverei"; Kuss 1963, 392: "das 'frei' bekommt hier einen ironischen Klang"; Wilckens 1980, 39: "wie 'frei' in V20, so ist auch 'Frucht' in V21 widersinnig gebraucht". In my view, the comparison with Paul's talk of bearing fruit undermines rather than underscores Wilckens's argument: while Paul does reserve the language of bearing fruit for believers in some texts (cf. e.g., Gal 5.22; Phil 1.11), his use of *καρπός* in Rom 6.21–22 and *καρποφορέω* in Rom 7.4–5 shows that he can *also* use this terminology in a neutral or formal sense to mean 'that which is yielded or produced'. Similarly, while Paul may reserve the *ἐλευθερ-* word group for the believer elsewhere (see e.g., Gal 4.21–31), his usage here is not "*widersinnig*". On the contrary, v. 20 suggests that Paul is able to use freedom terminology with the formal or neutral meaning 'not under the rule or jurisdiction of a particular power'. Cf. e.g., Müller 1926, 183; Käsemann 1980b [1973], 185: "The apostle can speak of freedom so formally because in content the concept primarily denotes deliverance from the compulsion of the powers".

¹¹ Contra Hill 2001, 1095. Contra also e.g., Schürmann 1990a [1971], 226.

¹² It is 'qualified' insofar as Paul attributes his manner of speaking to "the weakness of your flesh" rather than to his own inadequacy.

¹³ See e.g., Cranfield 1985 [1975], 325; Schlier 1977b, 210; Vollenweider 1989, 326. For a critique of Paul's use of the slavery metaphor with regard to the life of the believer, see Castelli 1994, 294–295.

¹⁴ Contra Niederwimmer 1966, 186: "Denn der Wechsel von einer Knechtschaft zur anderen ist ja nun doch nicht einfach der Wechsel von einer Knechtschaft zur anderen (so daß es für die Frage nach der Freiheit gleich bliebe, wessen Knecht man gerade ist), sondern der Wechsel von einer Knechtschaft (der Knechtschaft der Sünde) zur anderen (der Knechtschaft der Gerechtigkeit) ist zugleich der Wechsel von der Knechtschaft zur Freiheit"; contra also e.g., Cranfield 1985 [1975], 325; Schlier 1977b, 210; Aletti 1998, 1580.

22 suggests that Paul is not operating with such a rich or robust understanding of freedom in this context.

With reference to vv. 19–20, Nestle claims that “here it becomes evident that Paul himself is not at all concerned to claim the predicate ἐλεύθερος for believers”.¹⁵ Similarly, giving qualified approval to the position of Nestle, Jones argues that it is possible to draw the lesser conclusion that Paul was not interested to do so *here*.¹⁶ On the one hand, Nestle and Jones rightly stress that Paul does not exclusively reserve the ἐλευθερ- word group for believers in Rom 6. On the other hand, as Vollenweider notes, they arguably fail to emphasize with sufficient clarity that v. 20 primarily serves to bring out the full force of Paul’s central emphasis upon *the believers’ liberation and enslavement* in vv. 18 and 22.¹⁷

Somewhat in agreement with Nestle and Jones, however, Vollenweider grants that the freedom and slavery language of the passage does not constitute the central theme. Instead he suggests that it is being used to illustrate the idea that believers participate in one of two spheres: the sphere of Adam or the sphere of Christ.¹⁸ In this context, he recognizes that the terms describe the belonging to one of these spheres or the transition from one to the other and notes that they are qualified solely through this relation.¹⁹ Furthermore, he acknowledges that “the freedom terms in vv. 18, 20, 22 function for the moment only as contrast terms to those of slavery”.²⁰

Taking a different tack, however, he then introduces a substantial interpretive shift.²¹ He argues that:

¹⁵ See Nestle 1972, 282: “Hier wird deutlich, daß Paulus selbst nichts daran liegt, das Prädikat ἐλεύθερος für den Glaubenden in Anspruch zu nehmen (6.19f.)”. Cf. also Berger 1968, 351: “In contrast, for instance, to Epictetus, freedom is not an ideal to be pursued for its own sake. It is only ‘the converse of a new service’... Rom 6.18–22 in particular identifies this freedom from sin, lawlessness and death as serving as a slave under the new righteousness. Thus unlike John, Paul is not concerned to emphasize ‘true’ freedom but simply makes use of the concept to speak of a radical transition from one sphere to another – from one slavery to another”.

¹⁶ See Jones 1987, 115 (original emphasis): “Dieser in der Forschung mit Empörung aufgenommene Schluß hat mindestens in bezug auf Röm 6,18–22 einen wahren Kern, denn *hier* liegt Paulus in der Tat nichts daran, das Attribut ἐλεύθερος dem Glaubenden allein vorzubehalten: Auch der Ungläubige ist ἐλεύθερος, nämlich ἐλεύθερος τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ”.

¹⁷ Vollenweider 1989, 336.

¹⁸ Vollenweider 1989, 334.

¹⁹ Vollenweider 1989, 334.

²⁰ Vollenweider 1989, 334.

²¹ Dautzenberg 1996, 71, also draws attention to this abrupt shift in Vollenweider’s argument.

despite this helping function, the interpretation stimulated by the fundamental interest in freedom of the modern age rightly discerned the theme of ‘freedom from sin’ (v. 18a. 22a) and placed this with ‘freedom from death’ (Rom 5), ‘from the law’ (7) and ‘freedom in the Spirit’ (8) in a larger context.²²

In support of this statement, he explains that:

the right to do this is first granted by a retrospective interpretation of chapter 8, where the *eleutheria*, which is now unambiguously qualified, names the nature of the new being of believers in two *key positions* (8.2, 21).²³

From this overarching interpretive standpoint, Vollenweider then suggests that it was necessary to move through the experience of “the ambivalence of the law” in Rom 7 in order to reach the possibility of speaking of freedom in “the specifically Christian” way that Paul does in Rom 8, when he speaks of freedom given in the Spirit.²⁴ While granting that Rom 6 and Rom 7.1–6 are primarily concerned with the new enslavement, Vollenweider explains that Paul thereby follows the Jewish language convention (*Sprachregelung*).²⁵ Finally, from this standpoint, he then claims that Paul’s *genuine Christian experience* first comes to expression with chapters 7 and 8, and he suggests that Paul felt compelled to draw upon Hellenistic thinking to reflect upon this new experience.²⁶

In my judgment Vollenweider’s interpretation represents what I shall call a constructive attempt to reflect upon the meaning of ‘freedom’ in Rom 6 and Rom 7.1–6 from the perspective of Paul’s use of the *ἐλευθερ*-word group in Rom 8.²⁷ When responding to such an attempt, two points must be stressed. First, the approach itself should not be dismissed as invalid. On the contrary, such attempts are arguably indispensable if one is concerned to do justice to the subject matter that Paul addresses in his letters. Secondly, it is necessary to stress, however, that if one wishes to make such an attempt, then it is crucial to make a clear distinction between the steps taken by Paul and one’s own constructive attempts to do justice to the subject matter with which Paul was wrestling.

²² Vollenweider 1989, 335.

²³ Vollenweider 1989, 335 (original emphasis).

²⁴ Vollenweider 1989, 335.

²⁵ Vollenweider 1989, 334–335.

²⁶ Vollenweider 1989, 336. Cf. Ebeling 1979, 175–176: “Darüber hinaus aber ist zu erwägen, ob nicht ein der alttestamentlich-jüdischen Tradition fremdartiger Sachverhalt geradezu nötigte, auch ihre Sprachmöglichkeiten zu überschreiten und aus der Auseinandersetzung mit der Tradition des griechischen Freiheitsdenkens einen Sprachgewinn für den christlichen Glauben zu erzielen”.

²⁷ For a comparable attempt to think through the logic of Paul’s talk of freedom and slavery, see Ebeling 1979, 176–180, esp. 179–180. In view of their similar concerns and emphases, I think that Vollenweider has probably been influenced by Ebeling’s discussion of freedom and slavery.

With respect to this second point, it must be emphasized that *Paul himself* does not appear to prioritize the word or concept of freedom to the same extent or with the same systematic rigor as Vollenweider. Rather, it seems to me that Paul's freedom terminology plays a subordinate role in Rom 6. In 6.18, 22 (and 7.1–6) it indicates the negative release from the power of sin (and the law), whereas the believers' relationship to righteousness or God is expressed with slavery terminology (cf. 6.18, 22; 7.6). There is no suggestion here that Paul is concerned to explicate the nature of "true freedom" in this chapter.²⁸ Nor does he state or imply that enslavement to righteousness is, in fact, freedom²⁹ or that freedom is paradoxically enslavement to righteousness. Likewise, this passage does not show that in addition to standing in sharp opposition to slavery, freedom is also for Paul a synonym for a certain form of slavery.³⁰ Here the emphasis lies not on the fact that believers are now "free", but that they have changed from one lordship to another. Moreover, in Rom 6.20 the term 'free' is used in a formal sense to indicate that the non-believer was previously not under the power of righteousness.

In my view, the fact that Paul could use freedom terminology in this way indicates that his understanding of 'freedom' was less developed than Vollenweider appears to suggest. Similarly, Paul does not appear to have developed his thinking on the validity of the slavery metaphor in the same way as Vollenweider. Unlike Vollenweider, he does not identify his positive use of this metaphor as a sub-Christian reflex arising from his dependence upon Jewish language convention.³¹ Nor does he suggest that his genuine Christian experience first comes to expression in chapters 7 and 8.

On the contrary, it is already in chapter 6 that he speaks of walking in newness of life (6.4), and his diatribe style in this section serves to underline the importance that he attaches to the logic that he is putting forth regarding this "new life". He is concerned here to illustrate and explain the movement towards righteousness, which he sees as a twofold movement (from sin, to righteousness), and he turns to freedom and slavery terminology in order to strengthen the illustration. The freedom and slavery language make it clear that the illustration concerns the

²⁸ See Jones 1987, 114.

²⁹ Contra the scholars cited in note 14 above.

³⁰ Contra the synthesis presented by Ebeling 1979, 176.

³¹ Cf. Stuhlmacher 1992, 379: "Die Stichworte ὑπακοή, ὑπακούειν, δουλεία und δουλεύειν sind aus der Gemeindeermahnung des Apostels nicht wegzudenken, und noch weniger ist es der durch sie bezeichnete Sachverhalt (vgl. Gal 5,13–14; 1Kor 3,21–23 und Röm 6,15–23)". See also e.g., 1 Cor 9.19; Rom 14.17–18; Phil 2.7. With Ebeling 1979, 179, however, it should be noted that contra Stuhlmacher the noun δουλεία is exclusively used in a negative sense (cf. Rom 8.15, 21; Gal 4.24; 5.1).

condition of being subjected to the power or jurisdiction of a certain sphere, and then being subjected to the power or jurisdiction of a different sphere. In this way Paul's use of freedom and slavery terminology serves to clarify the implications for believers of his contested teaching on grace, sin and the law, and to show them something of what he means when he speaks of walking in newness of life.

6.3 Rom 7.3

The ἐλευθερ- word group appears only once in Rom 7, namely in v. 3b, where Paul writes "if her husband dies, then she [the woman who was married to him] is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress if she becomes another man's". This occurrence is of the utmost significance since it is the only time that the phrase "free from the law" appears in Paul's writings.

Rom 7.3 is part of the unit 7.1–6. The words "Or do you not know, brothers (and sisters)" in 7.1 show that Paul is introducing a new line of thought that nevertheless supports and advances the preceding argument. In particular, it takes up Paul's references to the law in 5.13, 20 and 6.14. In Rom 7.1–6, four related lines of thought can be discerned. In the form of a rhetorical question, v. 1 sets forth an initial thesis which Paul implies his readers should agree with: the law rules over a person for as long as s/he lives. Vv. 2–3 then ground (γάρ) and develop this proposition with reference to the situation of a married woman *vis-à-vis* the law, her husband and another man. V. 4 then draws a conclusion (ὥστε) from v. 1 and vv. 2–3: Paul's ἀδελφοί in Rome have been put to death to the law through the body of Christ in order that they may belong to another. Finally, in addition to grounding (γάρ) the conclusion of v. 4, vv. 5–6 serve to introduce the argument of 7.7–8.17. More specifically, v. 5 serves as a transition to 7.7–25 and v. 6 as a transition to 8.1–17.³²

As mentioned above, Rom 7.3 is the only Pauline verse in which the phrase "free from the law" actually appears.³³ But what is it referring to

³² Cf. e.g., Stuhlmacher 1998 [1989], 107; Stuhlmacher 1994 [1989], 116: "Just as 7:5 provided the heading for 7:7–25a, the epitome of 8:(1)2–17 is to be seen in 7.6"; Aletti 1998, 1582; Gieniusz 1999, 43; Hill 2001, 1097; Hofius 2002, 109; Bertone 2005, 119; Kruse 2006, 117, 119. But cf. also the insightful critique of Romanello 2003, 512. While Romanello is right to point out that the argument of 7.7–25 develops beyond 7.5 and that 7.7 (rather than 7.5) arguably represents the propositio for 7.7–25, this does not alter the fact that 7.5 is developed further in 7.7–25 and 7.6 in 8.1–17. With Romanello, however, it is probably better to describe 7.5–6 as a transition rather than a heading.

³³ Notably, other phrases such as "freedom from the law" and "law-free gospel" never appear in Paul's letters. This observation, however, does not settle the question of

here? In v. 2 Paul states that “a married woman is bound by the law to her husband while he lives, but if the husband dies she is released from the law of the husband”.³⁴ Thus the woman is bound not to the law but to her husband. The context suggests that “the law of the husband” means “the law by which a woman is bound to her husband while he lives”. The fact that she is released from “the law of the husband” rather than “from her husband”, however, shows that Paul is primarily concerned with the law’s jurisdiction or sphere of power rather than that of the husband. She is not released from the law as such, however, but merely from the law of the husband. Finally, it is the husband’s death rather than the death of the woman herself that brings about her release from the law by which she was bound to him.

In v. 3, Paul pursues this line of thought further: “Accordingly, if she becomes another man’s while her husband is alive, then she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, then she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress if she becomes another man’s”. This argument may be glossed as follows: since a woman is bound to her husband by the law while he lives, she will be called an adulteress if she becomes another man’s during her husband’s lifetime because the law that binds her to her husband while he lives will identify her as such. If her husband dies, however, then becoming another’s does not make her an adulteress, because she is no longer under the jurisdiction of the law by which she was bound to her husband, since it only bound her to him while he lived.

Paul’s use of ἐλευθερ- terminology here is comparable to that of Rom 6.20. There, “free with respect to righteousness” meant “not under the power or jurisdiction of righteousness”. Similarly, in this context, “free from the law” means “not under the power or jurisdiction of the law”. It conveys that the woman is not subject to the law’s binding power and identifying judgment because its jurisdiction over her came to an end with her husband’s death. Let me reiterate that from the context it is clear that the woman is free from “the law of the husband” rather than the (Jewish) law as such.³⁵ Since the law in question is clearly “the law of the husband”, the formulations “free from the law” (v. 3) and “is released from the law of the husband” (v. 2) are basically synonymous.³⁶ Nevertheless, the omission of the qualification “of the husband” in v. 3, where Paul simply says “free from the law”, probably anticipates and points forward to

whether the employment of these and other phrases clarifies or distorts Paul’s thought. For further reflection on this point, see chapter 7 below.

³⁴ For a critique of Paul’s use of this metaphor, see Castelli 1994, 283–284.

³⁵ For this reason, it is not surprising that several witnesses (33. 629 pc m vg^{ww}) add the words του ανδρος.

³⁶ See Vollenweider 1989, 345 n. 289.

the ultimate goal of his argument, namely to show that believers are released from the (Jewish) law as such, i.e. are no longer under its power or jurisdiction.³⁷ In view of this fact, something is arguably lost when ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου is translated “from that law” (as in e.g. the NIV, NRSV and NKJ translations) rather than “from the law”.

In v. 3, Paul argues that if a married woman’s husband dies, then she is “free from the law” so that she may *become another’s* without being an adulteress. Similarly, v. 4 claims that believers were put to death to the law so as to *become another’s* in order to bear fruit for God. Finally, v. 6 states that we serve in newness of the Spirit. It is clear that Paul’s argument is driving towards a new relationship or mode of life here. But, notably, none of these verses employ *ἐλευθερ-* terminology to speak of the new relationship or mode of life. Instead, the ‘freedom’ word of v. 3 is related solely to the negative release from the jurisdiction of a given power. (Of course, in view of 1 Cor 7.39 and the emphasis upon becoming another’s, it is conceivable that Paul is also implying that the woman is “free to belong to another”. However, this point is far from certain, and even if it were the case, the emphasis of the passage clearly lies on the fact that she is “free *from* the law”.)

In order to discern the full significance of this ‘free from the law’ in v. 3, it is necessary to relate vv. 2–3 to the larger argument of vv. 1–6. This may be summarized as follows:

- a) The (Jewish) law rules over a person for as long as s/he lives.
- b) This statement implies that a person is released from the law if s/he dies.
- c) If a person is released from the law through death s/he may become another’s.
- d) We were put to death to the law through the body of Christ, i.e., through our participation in his death.
- e) This took place so that we may become the resurrected one’s and bear fruit for God.
- f) When we were in the flesh the passions of sins, which were aroused through the law that ruled over us, were operative in our members so as to bear fruit for death.
- g) Having died to the law in/by which we were held we have now been released from the law so that we walk in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

With his account of the married woman’s release from the law of the husband in vv. 2–3, Paul makes (b) explicit and introduces (c).³⁸ As has often been noted,³⁹ the analogy appears to be imperfect or flawed in cer-

³⁷ See Bertone 2005, 127.

³⁸ Jones 1987, 118–122, rightly argues that vv. 2–3 are particularly concerned to introduce the new element found in (c). See also Little 1984, 89; Bertone 2005, 128; Kruse 2006, 118.

³⁹ See e.g., Vollenweider 1989, 343; Castelli 1994, 283; Hill 2001, 1095; Kruse 2006, 117–118. See also the helpful discussion of this point by Little 1984, 82–90, esp. 88–90, and Bertone 2005, 121–122, 128–130.

tain respects, for in one case it is the death of the husband (rather than the woman herself) and in the other the death of the person him/herself that brings about release so that it is possible or permitted to belong to another.⁴⁰ With (d) and (e) Paul applies this rationale to his own situation and to that of his hearers (v. 4). Finally, with (f) and (g) he describes the past and present situations of his hearers (vv. 5–6). In addition to summarizing his present argument, these verses also introduce what follows.

With (f) I have restated the complex line of thought in v. 5: “when we were in the flesh, the passions of sins that are through the law were operative in our members so that we bore fruit for death”. On the one hand, the main thrust of this verse is that the passions of sins are the problem, since they were operative in our members when we were in the flesh. On the other hand, the phrase “that are through the law” (τὰ διὰ τοῦ νόμου) most likely indicates that it is *through the law* that such passions are produced or aroused,⁴¹ and thus that the law is also part of the problem.

If v. 5 reveals that the law was part of the problem, v. 6 claims that our release from the law is part of the solution: “but now we have been released from the law, having died to that in/by which we were held so that we walk in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter”. In light of v. 4, there can be little doubt that “that in/by which we were held” means “the (Jewish) law in/by which we were held”.⁴² Moreover, it is implied that we served in oldness of the letter when we were held in/by the law. Accordingly, the logic of v. 6 is as follows:

- 1) When we were held in/by the law we served in oldness of the letter.
- 2) We have been released from the law through our death to the law.
- 3) Now that we have been released from the law we serve in newness of the Spirit.

For my purposes, the claim that “we have been released from the law” (κατηργήθημεν ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου) is of particular importance in view of the

⁴⁰ Wright 2002, 559, attempts to resolve this difficulty by suggesting that “‘you’ in the first half of 7:4 is ‘the former husband’; ‘you’ in the second half is the wife”. Moreover, he explains that ‘you’ in the first half is the person in Adam from 6.6 and that “‘you’ in the second half, at least when the ‘re-marriage’ has occurred, is the person ‘in Christ’”. The difficulty with this interpretation, which Wright appears to recognize, is that the person “in Christ” does not exist until the re-marriage has occurred, whereas the ‘you’ in the second half of the verse exists prior to the “re-marriage”. For this reason, unless Wright can explain the identity of the ‘you’ in the second half of the verse more convincingly, his provocative interpretation should probably be rejected.

⁴¹ See esp. Romanello 2003, 515: “The διὰ τῆς ἐντολῆς statement in v. 8a recalls the διὰ τοῦ νόμου statement in v. 5, but this kind of affirmation is a causative one, that is to say it restates the instrumentality of the Law in increasing sin itself.” See also Käsemann 1980b, 189; Gemünden 2006, 70 n. 89; Vlachos 2006, 144, 313–334; Vlachos 2009. Contra e.g., Bergmeier 2000b, 68–69; Wilckens 2005, 203.

⁴² See e.g., Käsemann 1980b, 189. Contra e.g., Bergmeier 2000b, 67.

synonymous use of “she is released from the law of the husband” (κατήργηται ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου τοῦ ἀνδρός) and “she is free from the law” (ἐλευθέρα ἐστὶν ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου) in vv. 2–3. This fact suggests that “we have been released from the law” in v. 6 is basically synonymous with “we are free from the law” (ἐλεύθεροι ἐσμὲν ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου). Furthermore, here Paul is clearly concerned with the (Jewish) law as such rather than merely “the law of the husband”.

In what sense, then, have we been released (or are we free) from the (Jewish) law? In the first place, the contrast in v. 3 between the woman who is called an adulteress because she becomes another’s during her husband’s lifetime, and the woman who is not an adulteress because she is free from the law, suggests that we are released from the law’s judgment or condemnation. Then again, Paul’s choice of verbs and metaphors suggests that he is not solely concerned with our release from the law’s condemnation.⁴³ V. 1 states that the law “rules over” (κυριεύει) a person, v. 2 that a married woman “is bound” (δέδεταί) to her husband by the law (of the husband), and v. 6 that “we were held” (κατειχόμεθα) in/by the law. These three verbs and the metaphors to which they contribute strongly suggest that the law no longer condemns us because it no longer rules over us, that is, because we are no longer bound by or held in/by it. In short, it does not condemn us because we have been released from its sphere of power or jurisdiction.

Therefore, with a view to Paul’s parallel use of “she is released” and “she is free” in vv. 2–3, it seems likely to me that Rom 7.1–6 claims we have been released (and thus are free) from the law’s power or jurisdiction and with this from its condemnation.⁴⁴ While v. 5 indicates that we are released from the law, *through which* sinful passions are aroused, there is no suggestion that we are released from the law (*only*) *insofar* as it does not liberate us from the slavery of sin.⁴⁵ Nor does Paul speak more narrowly of “liberation from the negative effects of the law” or “freedom from the inadequacies of the law/Torah”.⁴⁶ Instead, I would argue that his point is that we are released from the jurisdiction of the law as such.⁴⁷

Not surprisingly, Rom 7.1–6 has played an important role in recent discussion concerning the meaning and importance of ‘freedom from the law’ in Paul. As mentioned earlier, Jones puts forth the provocative thesis that Paul first formulates the expression “free from the law” in Rom 7.3:

⁴³ Contra e.g., Cranfield 1985 [1975], 338.

⁴⁴ Cf. e.g., Vollenweider 1989, 344; Moo 1996, 415–416, 421 n. 63; Bertone 2005, 142–143; Vlachos 2006, 328–329. Cf. also Lütgert 1908, 13.

⁴⁵ This appears to be the position of Söding. See Söding 2003, 125–129, esp. 126.

⁴⁶ Contra Schnelle 2006, 543.

⁴⁷ Contra e.g., Cranfield 1964, 56; Cranfield 1985 [1975], 338.

Rom 7.2–3 finally presents the phrase ‘free from the law,’ but the context strongly emphasizes the new bond of the Christian. A comparison of these verses with the marriage regulation of 1 Cor 7.39–40 discloses the actual evolution of the phrase ‘free from the law’ in Paul’s writings and thus again provides concrete evidence that this term was not a central concept in Paul’s earlier thought.⁴⁸

In support of this hypothesis, Jones marshals a number of arguments. First, he suggests that the incongruence of Paul’s marriage analogy supports the thesis that Paul formulates these thoughts concerning “the freedom of Christians from the law” for the first time.⁴⁹ He then develops a subtle argument based upon a comparison between 1 Cor 7.39 and Rom 7.3. 1 Cor 7.39 is judged to preserve the original context of the ἐλευθερ- word, namely freedom to an action chosen by the subject. In Rom 7.3 Paul allegedly removes the ἐλευθερ- word from its original context and gives it a new meaning to fit the new context, namely “freedom from the (marriage) law”. Since one part of this expression, namely the ἐλευθερ- word, comes from another context, namely that reflected in 1 Cor 7.39, and the other element comes from the present context, Jones argues that there is reason to suppose that this passage permits us to view the coming into being of the expression “free from the law”.⁵⁰

Jones goes on to draw a negative and a positive conclusion from the fact that Paul never expressly speaks of ‘freedom from the Jewish law’ in the passage. On the one hand, he claims (negatively) that one would have expected Paul to have repeated the ἐλευθερ- word from v. 3 in v. 6 if ‘freedom from the law’ was a fixed expression that he often employed. On the other hand, he suggests (positively) that Paul’s use of the verb καταργεῖν rather than an ἐλευθερ- word fits well with the supposition that Paul first formulated the expression ἐλευθέρα ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου here.⁵¹ For Jones, this conclusion retrospectively confirms and is confirmed by his conclusions regarding the absence of a developed concept of ‘freedom from the law’ in 1–2 Corinthians and Galatians.⁵²

In response to Jones’s arguments Vollenweider asserts that while it is noteworthy that Paul only uses the term “free” in the marriage image and

⁴⁸ Jones 1992, 857; cf. Jones 1987, 121–122; Harrill 1996, 554–555. The claim to have discovered a text that discloses the actual evolution of Paul’s thinking is reminiscent of James D.G. Dunn’s (in)famous interpretation of Gal 2.16. See Dunn 1983, 113 (= Dunn 2005a, 103): “In other words, in v. 16 Paul pushes what began as a qualification on covenantal nomism into an outright antithesis. ... Perhaps, then, for the first time, in this verse faith in Jesus Messiah begins to emerge not simply as a narrower definition of the elect of God, but as an alternative definition of the elect of God”.

⁴⁹ Jones 1987, 121.

⁵⁰ Jones 1987, 121–122.

⁵¹ Jones 1987, 122.

⁵² Jones 1987, 122.

not in the material presentation of vv. 4–6, there is no reason to conclude from this that Paul first formulated the expression “free from the law” here. Instead he puts forth the opposite thesis that Paul sought to illustrate the long recognized joining of freedom (from the law) and death by drawing on a legal relationship that was near at hand, even if this illustration was also only partially fitting, as Vollenweider concedes.⁵³

Noting that Räisänen similarly argues on the basis of the incongruence of Paul’s analogy from marriage that Paul’s theology of the law was a late development, Vollenweider asserts that it is in fact possible to argue the opposite, namely that “the apostle pushes so far into new mental territory that he does indeed find it difficult to illustrate his revolutionary insights with simple analogies”.⁵⁴ Moreover, he adds that: “Besides, whether it is two decades more or less is not what matters!”⁵⁵ With this latter statement, Vollenweider suggests that establishing *when* Paul’s (formulation of his) teaching on ‘freedom from the law’ first arose is not the most important point.

In assessing the arguments of Jones and Vollenweider two points should be made at the outset. First, Jones’s arguments are highly speculative in nature. Secondly, Vollenweider is basically content to assert the opposite thesis to that of Jones. If one is to advance beyond these general points, it is necessary to discuss the arguments of the two interpreters on a point by point basis.

In my view, the debate concerning the significance of the incongruence in Paul’s argument is inconclusive. While the imperfect nature of Paul’s analogy could indicate that Paul was still in the process of developing his theology of the law in general or his teaching on ‘freedom from the law’ in particular, it could also reflect nothing more than the difficulty of illustrating a long held view. Moreover, since there is no reason to think that Paul himself was troubled by the imperfect nature of the analogy, it is even conceivable that he had used this same analogy previously.⁵⁶ In my view, therefore, the apparent incongruence does not necessarily tell us whether Paul is developing a new idea in this passage.

Jones’s argument relating to 1 Cor 7.39 is more difficult to assess. Jones perceptively notes that whereas 1 Cor 7.39 implies that a woman is bound *to her husband* so long as her husband lives (cf. 1 Cor 7.27), Rom 7.3

⁵³ Vollenweider 1989, 345.

⁵⁴ Vollenweider 1989, 345 n. 290.

⁵⁵ Vollenweider 1989, 345 n. 290: “Auf zwei Jahrzehnte Mehr oder weniger kommt es dabei nicht an!”

⁵⁶ It is worth noting here that Paul seldom shows an awareness of the (apparent) tensions in his thought that have troubled most of his subsequent interpreters (though exceptions to this general rule may perhaps be found in a few places, such as Rom 6.19a, which suggests that Paul may, in fact, have been aware of at least some of them).

indicates that she is bound to her husband *by (the) law*. Similarly, he keenly observes that while 1 Cor 7.39 states that when her husband falls asleep (i.e., dies), she is free *to be married to another*, Rom 7.3 specifies that she is free *from the law*. In short, he persuasively shows that while the word ἐλευθέρω is present in both texts, the emphasis upon being bound by and free from the law is only found in Rom 7.1–6.

From these excellent observations Jones then plausibly reasons that since 1 Cor 7.39 probably preserves the original context of the freedom word and since the context of Rom 7.1–6 is clearly responsible for the emphasis upon the law, then it is likely that Rom 7.1–6 represents the first formulation of the expression “free from the law”. In my view, this argument cannot be dismissed out of hand, for it does make good sense of the textual evidence. At the same time, it is perhaps equally likely that Paul was able to shift the force of the freedom word in the marriage analogy precisely because he had already begun to speak of being “free from the law”. Accordingly, Jones’s second argument is also inconclusive.

Finally, while Jones’s observation that the ἐλευθέρω- word from v. 3 is not repeated in v. 6 arguably adds plausibility to his thesis, it certainly does not settle the issue. It does, however, suggest that Paul may have placed less emphasis upon *the word combination* ‘free from the law’ than many of his interpreters (or upon the word combination ‘freedom from the law’, which does not occur at all in his letters). Moreover, the fact that Paul can alternate between the formulations “free from the law” and “released from the law” shows that he was wrestling with material where he seems equally happy to turn to an expression containing an ἐλευθέρω- word or to an expression that lacks the ἐλευθέρω- word group. More specifically, it shows that he could and did express the concept or theme in question with an expression that contained an ἐλευθέρω- word and with an expression that lacked a word from this word group. The similarity between Rom 7.1–6 and 6.14 should also be noted, for there too Paul indicates that sin will not gain the upper hand in the life of believers precisely because they are not under the jurisdiction or power of the law. In 6.14, however, Paul makes this point by noting that they are not “under the law” (ὑπὸ νόμου) rather than by explaining that they are “free from the law” or “released from the law”.

With respect to the question of the importance of freedom, it is important to note that ‘freedom’ itself does not appear to be Paul’s central concern in this passage. Rather, he is concerned with both the believers’ release from the law and the believers’ new relationship and mode of life. This should be borne in mind when interpreting his freedom language in this passage, since it arguably serves a secondary purpose for him, and therefore should not be expected to be a fully developed theory in itself.

With a view to the relationship between freedom and service, it should be noted that as a result of being released from the law the believer is said to serve in newness of the Spirit.

6.4 Rom 8.2

I stated in my exegesis of Rom 7.1–6 that vv. 5–6 can be seen to function as a transitional introduction to what follows in 7.7–25 and 8.1–17, for 7.5 is developed in 7.7–25 and 7.6 is taken up in 8.1–17.⁵⁷ The formulation of 7.5, “when we were in the flesh”, corresponds to “but I am fleshly” (7.14). Similarly, “the passions of sins that are through the law were operative in my members to bear fruit for death” (7.5) is explicated and clarified by “but sin taking opportunity through the commandment worked in me all covetousness, for apart from the law sin is dead” (7.8) and “for sin taking opportunity through the commandment deceived me and through it killed me” (7.11). The term *νυνὶ δέ* in 7.6 corresponds to *ἄρα νῦν* in 8.1. Finally, the many references to the Spirit in 8.1–17 take up the reference to the Spirit in 7.6.

Hence I will examine the meaning of *ἠλευθέρωσεν* in 8.2 in the context of 7.1–6, 7.7–25 and 8.1–4. Rom 8.1 begins with the programmatic statement “there is therefore now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus”. With *ἄρα* Paul indicates that this statement follows from the preceding argument. It most likely looks back in the first instance to 7.5–6 and 7.25 and yet perhaps also to the larger argument thus far, and especially to his discussion of condemnation and justification in 5.12–21. Then again, in addition to looking back to the preceding argument, v. 1 is also grounded (*γάρ*) by v. 2, which is grounded (*γάρ*), in turn, by vv. 3–4.

Let me start with a few formal observations. In Rom 8.2 Paul uses the aorist active indicative *ἠλευθέρωσεν* to state that ‘X set you⁵⁸ free from Y’. Here, Paul’s *ἐλευθερ-* terminology is (primarily) concerned with the negative release from Y that is brought about by X. Notably Paul speaks of the positive condition as sonship in vv. 12–17 rather than as enslavement

⁵⁷ See note 32 above.

⁵⁸ There are three reasons for preferring the reading *σε* over *με* or *ἡμας*. First, the external evidence appears to favor this reading. Secondly, *σε* is arguably the most difficult reading. Thirdly, *με* and *ἡμας* can be explained as assimilations to the first person singular used in 7.7–25 and the first person plural used in 8.4 (cf. also 8.1). While it is also possible that there was originally no object expressed, it is probably more likely that *σε* represents the original reading in view of its early attestation. Cf. Cranfield 1985 [1975], 376–377. While the reading *σε* has the greatest claim to originality, it is admittedly conceivable that the reading *ἠλευθέρωσέ σε* arose “from repeating by mistake the last syllable of *ἠλευθέρωσε*” (Philippi 1878, 387).

(cf. 6.18–22) or freedom (cf. 8.21). Then again, since the formulation ὃ οὐ θέλω τοῦτο ποιῶ in chapter 7 (cf. 7.15, 16, 19, 20) can be seen to be a negation of the (philosophical) definition of freedom as the power to do what one wishes,⁵⁹ it is conceivable that Rom 8.2 is also concerned to affirm that the believer is now free to do what s/he wishes, since we now walk according to the Spirit rather than according to the flesh (cf. 8.4).⁶⁰ This point, however, is far from certain. Moreover, whether or not this is the case, the emphasis clearly lies on the negative release from Y.

If one is to advance beyond these formal observations, it is necessary to take a position on several difficult questions. The first concerns the relation of ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ to the rest of the sentence. While this remains uncertain, it probably belongs with the entire phrase ὁ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς⁶¹ rather than with the verb ἠλευθέρωσεν⁶² or merely with τῆς ζωῆς.⁶³ In my view, it most likely indicates the sphere of power or belonging in which “the law of the Spirit of life” is operative, just as ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ in v. 1 indicates the sphere of power or belonging in which there is no condemnation.

The next and more difficult question concerns the meaning of the expressions ὁ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς and τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἀμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου. Here, the key point of contention is whether or not the Jewish law is in view in one or both of these expressions. While Paul appears to consistently use νόμος to mean ‘the Torah’ in Rom 7.7–16, many interpreters have argued that this is not the case in 7.21–8.4.⁶⁴ In recent years, however, an increasing number of scholars have claimed that the νόμος phrases contain a reference to ‘the Torah’ throughout these verses.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ See Jones 123–124, 80, 201–202; Vollenweider 1989, 351–352, 360.

⁶⁰ See Jones 125. Contra Vollenweider 1989, 369–370.

⁶¹ See e.g. Schlier 1977b, 239; Vollenweider 1989, 346 n. 298.

⁶² Contra e.g., Cranfield 1985 [1975], 374–375; Dunn 1988, 418; Moo 1996, 473 n. 21; Bertone 2005, 180.

⁶³ Contra Michel 1978 [1955], 249.

⁶⁴ See e.g. Käsemann 1980b [1973], 205, 215; Cranfield 1985 [1975], 364; Räisänen 1992a [1979–1980], 63–68; Räisänen 1992b [1983], 69–94, esp. 88–94; Bergmeier 2000a [1985], 109–112; Bergmeier 2000b, 69–76; Vollenweider 1989, 347–349, 358–359, 366–367; Winger 1992, 183–196; Lambrecht 1992, 53–54; Byrne 1996, 242; Moo 1996, 460–467, 473–477; Aletti 1998, 1584, 1587; Hofius 2002, 141–149, esp. 142; Lichtenberger 2003, 147–148; Romanello 2003, 520–521, 526–527; Kruse 2006, 124; Landmesser 2006b, 135.

⁶⁵ See e.g., Wilckens 1980, 88–130, esp. 88–90, 122–123; Dunn 1988, 392–399, 416–419; Snodgrass 1988, 104–107; Martin 1989, 27–32; Meyer 2004 [1990], 75–77; Schreiner 1998, 377, 400; Middendorf 1997, 111, 122; Wright 2002, 569–581; Martyn 2003, 575–587, esp. 581–585; Das 2003, 155–165, esp. 161–165. While conceding that Paul plays rhetorically with the term ‘law’ in vv. 21–23, Wilckens 2005, 206–209, claims

Owing to the difficulty of answering this question, it is not surprising that several works on freedom have chosen to sidestep this issue.⁶⁶ Dautzenberg, for example, states that “the theological problem that the compressed formulation of Rom 8.2 raises for the Pauline understanding of the law cannot be discussed here”.⁶⁷ Similarly, Jones – after making the more limited claim that “the law of the Spirit of life must ... at least stand in a relationship with the Torah, since it leads to its fulfillment” – suggests that “we do not need to establish more than this point here”.⁶⁸ The validity of this judgment, however, is by no means evident, for if one wishes to investigate the extent to which Paul uses the *ἐλευθερ-* word group to speak of ‘freedom from the (Jewish) law’, then it is crucial to determine whether or not Paul does so in this verse. Accordingly, with Vollenweider⁶⁹ it is necessary to take a position on this extremely vexing question.⁷⁰

While recognizing that strong arguments can be made for both positions,⁷¹ I am inclined to think that the Torah is probably *not* consistently in view for the following reasons. First, there is no compelling reason to conclude that Paul could not be playing with the multiple senses of the word νόμος here. As Räisänen has convincingly demonstrated, νόμος was used with a number of meanings in the classical and Hellenistic periods.⁷² Moreover, Paul clearly “plays with words” elsewhere (e.g., 1

that νόμος consistently refers to ‘the Torah’ in 7.22–8.4. Cf. Osten-Sacken 1975, 209–212, 226–227; Lohse 2003, 222–225, 229–230.

⁶⁶ See e.g., Jones 1987; Dautzenberg 2001.

⁶⁷ Dautzenberg 2001, 80. He adds, however, that it appears to him that “the freedom statement of Rom 8.2 was first possible after the freedom statements of chapters 6 and 7 or was prepared through them”.

⁶⁸ Jones 1987, 220.

⁶⁹ Vollenweider 1989, 347–349, 357–359, 366–370.

⁷⁰ The fact that C.F.D. Moule changed his mind on this contested question testifies to the difficulty of taking a position on it. See Moule 1974, 177–187, esp. 180–184; Moule 1987, 48. A shift is also discernable in Cranfield’s position. See Cranfield 1964, 56–57, 65; Cranfield 1985 [1975], 375–376.

⁷¹ See the sober assessment of Schreiner 1998, 377: “It is extremely difficult to choose between these two options; good arguments are adduced for both”. Schreiner himself inclines to the view that “the Mosaic law is intended”. See also Schreiner 1998, 400.

⁷² Räisänen 1992b [1983], 69–94. See also Moule 1987, 48; Vollenweider 1989, 358–359; Burton 2001, 52–53. Since Ulrich Wilckens argues in his Romans commentary that νόμος does not appear with the meaning “*Gesetzmäßigkeit, Regel*” in the classical and Hellenistic literature, it is especially noteworthy that he appears to recognize the validity of Räisänen’s examination of the relevant literature in his more recent *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*. See Wilckens 1980, 89, 122; Wilckens 2005, 206. The significance of this point is magnified when one considers that Meyer 2004 [1990], 76 n. 49, confidently stated in 1990 that “the decisive lexical arguments are noted by Wilckens, *Römer* 2.89 and n. 371”. See also Snodgrass 1988, 105.

Cor 6.12, 8.10, Gal 5.6) and Gal 4.21 shows that he is not incapable of playing with the word νόμος. Finally, it does not follow that Paul could not play with the term νόμος at the climax of an argument about the Torah.⁷³ On the contrary, if he were going to play with the word, then where might he be more likely to do so than at the climax of an extended argument about ‘the law’?

Secondly, there is good reason to conclude that in 7.21 τὸν νόμον probably means “the rule”,⁷⁴ rather than “the Torah”⁷⁵ or “the other law” of v. 23.⁷⁶ According to this reading, τὸν νόμον is the direct object of εὐρίσκω, whereas ὅτι introduces the content of the rule: “I find ‘the rule’ ... that evil lies close by me”.⁷⁷ The dative phrase τῷ θέλοντι ἐμοὶ ποιεῖν τὸ καλόν, in turn, should probably be understood as a dative of disadvantage or perhaps as a dative of reference.⁷⁸

This reading is preferable on the grounds that – in contrast to attempts to understand τὸν νόμον as a reference to the Torah – it creates no grammatical or syntactical difficulties.⁷⁹ Moreover, it is supported by the fact that the addition of the qualifier “of God” in 7.22 could reflect the fact that Paul has just used νόμος in a different sense in v. 21.⁸⁰ Finally, despite claims to the contrary, there are no convincing objections to this reading. Paul’s use of the definite article is not a problem since Paul is speaking of a specific rule, namely the rule whose content is introduced by ὅτι.⁸¹ In the same way, it does not follow from the fact that Paul uses νόμος to mean

⁷³ Cf. Romanello 2003, 520. Contra Wright 2002, 569: “our presupposition, if we are reading Romans with an eye to its overall drift and the careful integrity of its long argument, must be that when Paul says *nomos*, *here of all places at the climax of an argument about Torah*, he means what he has meant throughout” (my emphasis).

⁷⁴ See e.g., Räisänen 1992a [1979–1980], 63; Moo 1996, 460; Käsemann 1980b [1973], 205.

⁷⁵ Contra e.g., Dunn 1988, 392–393; Wright 2002, 569–570.

⁷⁶ Contra e.g., Cranfield 1985 [1975], 362; Wilckens 1980, 89.

⁷⁷ See Moo 1996, 460; Bergmeier 2000b, 71. See also Winger 1992, 81 n. 74, 183.

⁷⁸ Concerning the background of Paul’s formulation, the pairing of “doing good” and “evil lying at hand” may echo the words of God to Cain in Gen 4.7: “If you do well will there not be a lifting (of your countenance)? But if you do not do well, sin lies at the door and its desire is against you, but you must rule over it”. If so, then Paul may wish to highlight the fact that like Cain, the ‘I’ of Rom 7.21, does not, in fact, ‘rule over sin’.

⁷⁹ Cf. Räisänen 1992b [1983], 88: “There is nothing in Rom 7.21 that would counter the assumption of a ‘figurative’ use of νόμος, especially as the ‘strict’ interpretation seems very forced in this case”; Cranfield 1985 [1975], 361–362: “Many interpreters, both ancient and modern, have insisted that the reference must be to the OT law, but the various explanations of the verse which have been offered on this assumption are so forced as to be incredible”.

⁸⁰ See Cranfield 1985 [1975], 362; Moo 1996, 460.

⁸¹ Contra e.g., Dunn 1988, 393.

“the Torah” in 7.1–16 (and elsewhere)⁸² that Paul’s first-century hearers and readers “would be bound”⁸³ to read τὸν νόμον as a reference to the Torah “without a clearer indication to the contrary”.⁸⁴ On the contrary, it belongs to the very logic of a word play to draw upon the various senses of a word in a subtle manner, and the construction εὐρίσκω ... τὸν νόμον ... ὅτι signals the shift in meaning with sufficient clarity. Just as the modern reader is able to make sense of the construction “I find the law ... that”, so the ancient reader would have been able to understand Paul’s usage here.⁸⁵

Thirdly, there are strong objections to interpreting all four uses of νόμος in 7.22–23 as references to the Torah, since “another law” (v. 23) is most easily taken to mean *a different law* than “the law of God” mentioned in v. 22,⁸⁶ and since in addition it is very difficult to see how the Torah can be said to be “in my members” (cf. v. 23).⁸⁷ Whether Paul has two,⁸⁸ three⁸⁹ or four⁹⁰ “laws” in mind is admittedly more difficult to determine. In my judgment, four different “laws” are probably in view:

- 1) “the law of God” refers to “the Torah” or perhaps to the will of God that comes to expression in the Torah (cf. 2.27);
- 2) “another law in my members” refers to the evil impulse or orientation in my members or flesh, which does not submit to the law of God (cf. 7.5, 8, 18, 25; 8.7);
- 3) “the law of my mind” refers to the good impulse or orientation of my mind,⁹¹ which affirms the law of God (cf. 7.22; 7.25);
- 4) “the law of sin in my members” refers to the rule or indwelling power of sin in my members (cf. 7.17; 7.25).⁹²

⁸² According to Dunn, Paul has consistently used νόμος with this sense until this point. In my view, Paul probably also plays with the term in Rom 3.27. Contra Dunn 1988, 185–186.

⁸³ Contra Wright 2002, 570.

⁸⁴ Contra Dunn 1988, 393.

⁸⁵ This is not to suggest, of course, that the various meanings of νόμος in Greek usage and ‘law’ in English usage are identical.

⁸⁶ See e.g., Moo 1996, 463.

⁸⁷ See Deidun 1981, 194–195, 200; Vollenweider 1989, 367 n. 409.

⁸⁸ See e.g., Cranfield 1985 [1975], 364; Deidun 1981, 200; Vollenweider 1989, 348; Moo 1996, 464.

⁸⁹ See e.g., Kümmel 1974a [1929], 62–63; Aletti 1998, 1584.

⁹⁰ See e.g., Dülmen 1968, 116–118; Räisänen 1992a [1979–1980], 63–64; Lambrecht 1992, 54; Winger 1992, 186; Hofius 2002, 143.

⁹¹ Cf. Winger 1992, 188: “νόος μου probably states source; the phrase can mean something like ‘the rule of my mind,’ that is, ‘where my mind wills’ – as described in 7:15, 16, 19, 20, 21”.

⁹² V. 25 should probably not be regarded as a gloss. See e.g., Cranfield 1985 [1975], 368; Winger 1992, 191 n. 65; Stuhlmacher 1998 [1989], 104–105 (ET = Stuhlmacher 1994 [1989], 112–114); Dunn 1988, 398–399; Byrne 1996, 233. Contra e.g., Bultmann 1967 [1947], 278–279; Käsemann 1980b [1973], 211–212; Wilckens 1980, 96–97;

For my purposes, the key point to note is that “the law of sin” most likely refers to “the rule or compulsion of sin” rather than to “the Torah in the hands of sin” (or the like).⁹³

On the basis of the three arguments noted above, I think there is good reason to conclude that Paul does, in fact, play with the word νόμος in Rom 7.21–25. It remains necessary, however, to inquire into his use of νόμος in Rom 8.2. More specifically, I must explicate the meaning of the difficult phrases “the law of the Spirit of life” and “the law of sin and death”.⁹⁴ Here too, the main point of dispute concerns the question of whether or not these phrases are concerned to say something about the Torah.

In my judgment, the interpretation of “the law of sin” in Rom 7.23, 25 is decisive for the interpretation of Rom 8.2. In view of the similarity between the expressions “the law of sin” (7.23, 25) and “the law of sin and death” (8.2) – which are even more similar when one takes into account the reference to “this body of death” in 7.24 – interpretations that do not view the two expressions as roughly synonymous should almost certainly be rejected,⁹⁵ especially since the “liberation” of 8.2 is clearly put forth as an answer to the “imprisonment” of 7.23.⁹⁶ If the two expressions are roughly synonymous and I am correct in my interpretation of “the law of sin” in Rom 7.23, then “the law of sin and death” in Rom 8.2 probably

Hofius 2002 151–152; Lichtenberger 2004, 150–160; Schnelle 2005, 374. In my view, the fact that many interpreters do not appear to have allowed v. 25b to inform their interpretation of Paul’s use of νόμος in vv. 21–23 is probably due to the doubts that have been raised concerning its authenticity.

⁹³ For interpreters who maintain that the Torah is *not* in view here, see the authors listed in note 64 above. See also e.g., Schottroff 1979, 499; Morgan 1997 [1995], 46; Rehmann 2000, 92–93. For scholars who hold that the Torah is indeed in view, see the authors listed in note 65 above.

⁹⁴ Dunn 1988, 417, rightly notes that “The contrast does not lie in the νόμος itself but in the full phrase: ‘law of *Spirit of life*,’ ‘law of *sin and death*’” (original emphasis). See also Martin 1989, 30–31.

⁹⁵ Cf. Winger 1992, 195: “there is no reason to doubt that ὁ νόμος τῆς ἁμαρτίας, with or without τοῦ θανάτου, refers to ὁ νόμος τῆς ἁμαρτίας of 7:23 and νόμος ἁμαρτίας of 7:25.” Contra e.g., Lloyd-Jones 1973, 285: “So for these four reasons, without seeking any further, we must reject completely that interpretation of the phrase, ‘the law of sin and death’, which regards it as being synonymous with what he has said in chapter 7.23 and the other parallel statements in that section. ... The Law that brings in condemnation is not ‘the law of sin that is in my members’ (chapter 7.23) but God’s holy law (chapter 3:31)”. This criticism also applies to Joseph A. Fitzmyer, who puts forward the opposite thesis, namely that the Torah is in view in 7.23 but (probably) not in 8.2! See Fitzmyer 1993, 476, 483. It may also be applicable to the position of John A. Bertone. See Bertone 2005, 172–181, esp. 179.

⁹⁶ See Moo 1996, 476.

means “the rule or compulsion of sin and death” rather than “the Torah in the hands of sin and death” or the like.⁹⁷

While it is possible that the meaning of νόμος and the force of the genitive constructions that modify it change between 8.2a and 8.2b, it is far more likely that the meaning of νόμος and the force of the genitive constructions remain the same in both cases.⁹⁸ If so, then “the law of the Spirit of life” means “the rule or compulsion of the Spirit of life” rather than “the Torah in the hands of the Spirit of life” or the like.⁹⁹ In view of 5.12; 6.23; 7.5, 10–11, 13; 8.6, 11, 13, death and life most likely specify the product, result or goal of “the rule of sin” and “the rule of the Spirit”.¹⁰⁰ If so, then the precise sense of v. 2 is “for the rule or compulsion of the Spirit that leads to life, which is operative in Christ Jesus, set you free from the rule or compulsion of sin that leads to death”.

Having taken a position on the interpretation of Rom 8.2, it remains necessary to relate this verse to what follows in Rom 8.3–4. V. 3 begins with a reference to “what the law could not do (or what was impossible for the law) because it was weak through the flesh”. Vv. 3b–4 then indicate that “God, having sent his son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as a sin offering (or perhaps: and concerning sin) condemned sin in the flesh in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit”.

We see here that vv. 3b–4 *together* rather than 3b alone provide a counterpoint to 3a. This is shown by the fact that μὴ κατὰ σάρκα ... ἀλλὰ

⁹⁷ For interpreters who maintain that the Torah is *not* in view here, see the authors listed in note 64 above. For scholars who hold that the Torah is indeed in view, see the authors listed in note 65 above. See also Niederwimmer 1966, 138, 172, 192, who holds that the Torah is in view in 8.2b but not in 8.2a. For a mediating position, see Morgan 1997 [1995], 46–47. See also Bertone 2005, 172–181, 216–225, 259–260. On the one hand, Bertone rightly notes that Paul’s rhetorical strategy is undermined if one *translates* νόμος as “rule” rather than “law”. On the other hand, I think that this rendering is appropriate for the task of *explicating* the meaning or force of the two phrases in question, which refer to “the rule of the Spirit of life” and “the rule of sin and death”.

⁹⁸ For this reason, interpretations that suggest that the Torah is in view in only one of the two expressions (e.g. Niederwimmer 1966, 173–174) should almost certainly be rejected. See Dunn 1988, 417. The difficulty is deciding whether the Torah is in view in both expressions or in neither expression. As indicated above, I think the latter position is more likely. Contra Dunn 1988, 417.

⁹⁹ For interpreters who maintain that the Torah is *not* in view here, see the authors listed in note 64. See also Niederwimmer 1966, 173, 178. For scholars who hold that the Torah is indeed in view, see the authors listed in note 65 above.

¹⁰⁰ See e.g., Schnelle 2005, 375. Alternatively, it is also possible that death is conceived as a power that rules together with sin. See Dunn 1988, 418. Likewise, it is conceivable that Paul is concerned with the rule of the Spirit and of life, which are both understood as powers.

κατὰ πνεῦμα in v. 4 provides a counterpoint to ἐν ᾧ ἡσθένει διὰ τῆς σαρκός in v. 3a. Because it was weak through the flesh (v. 3a), the law could not condemn sin in the flesh in order to bring about the fulfillment of the just requirement of the law in us (v. 3b–4). Then again, in view of the reference to life in v. 2 and life and peace in v. 6, it is clear that what the law ultimately could not do is lead to life and bring about peace with God (cf. also 7.10; 8.7–8, 10, 11, 12–13; Gal 3.21).

We see also that vv. 3–4 *together* rather than v. 3b alone ground vv. 1–2. This is shown by the fact that whereas the great antagonist sin is already spoken of in v. 3b, the Spirit is not mentioned until v. 4. On the one hand, it initially appears problematic that while it is the rule of the Spirit that brings about liberation from the rule of sin and death in v. 2, it is God through Christ who condemns sin in v. 3. On the other hand, since v. 2 indicates that the rule of the Spirit is operative *in Christ Jesus* and v. 4 highlights the fact that we walk not according to the flesh but *according to the Spirit*, this problem is probably not insurmountable. Paul's basic point appears to be that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus because in Christ Jesus it is the Spirit that leads to life rather than sin that leads to death that has the upper hand.

With a view to Paul's larger argument, the following points should be made. First, Paul has already made clear in Rom 7.1–6 that believers are 'free from the law' (see my discussion of Rom 7.3 above). Secondly, the basic point of Rom 7.1–6 (and 7.7–25) is confirmed by Rom 8.3a, which highlights the impotence of the (Jewish) law.¹⁰¹ Thirdly, Rom 8.1–4 stresses that it is the rule of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (v. 2) rather than the law (v. 3a) that set the believer free from the rule of sin that leads to death. Fourthly, Rom 8.3b–4 shows that through Christ God condemned sin in the flesh and indicates that the just requirement of the law is fulfilled in us who walk according to the Spirit.

At this point, it is necessary to concede that the overall direction of Paul's argument is difficult to trace. In particular, it is unclear whether there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus because the just requirement of the law is fulfilled in us who walk according to the Spirit, or whether this fulfillment of the just requirement of the law is the consequence of our deliverance from condemnation. For my purposes, it is sufficient to conclude that in Rom 8.2 Paul is concerned to assert that the rule of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus rather than the (Jewish) law has set the believer free from the rule of sin that leads to death.

On the one hand, Paul's use of ἐλευθερ- terminology in Rom 8.2 is concerned with 'freedom from sin' rather than 'freedom from the law'. On the other hand, by highlighting the impotence of the Torah (8.3a), Paul

¹⁰¹ See esp. Romanello 2003, 526.

appears to assume and validate the importance of being ‘free from the law’ (cf. Rom 7.1–6). With a view to this second point, Rom 8.4 should probably not be understood to mean that the believer is, in fact, under the power or jurisdiction of the (Jewish) law. This fact, however, should not prevent one from recognizing that this verse does indicate that the just requirement of the (Jewish) law is fulfilled in those who walk according to the Spirit. In conclusion, while it is possible to argue that the concept of “freedom from the law” (and perhaps even the concept of “freedom for [the fulfillment of] the law”) is present in Rom 8.1–4, it is in my judgment crucial to recognize that Paul’s use of the ἐλευθερ- word group in v. 2 is probably exclusively concerned with the believer’s liberation from the rule or compulsion of sin.

6.5 Rom 8.21

In Rom 8.21, Paul uses the future passive indicative ἐλευθερωθήσεται to state that X (creation) will also be set free from Y (the slavery of corruption). In this way, Paul again uses ἐλευθερ- terminology to express the negative release of X from a given state or power Y (as in 8.2). Here, however, he not only affirms that the creation will be set free *from* Y, but also that it will be set free *into* Z.¹⁰² Moreover, in specifying the content of Z, he also uses ἐλευθερ- terminology: the creation also will be set free “into the freedom of the glory of the children of God”.

Rom 8.18–25 is concerned with “the revelation of the sons of God” (v. 19), which is later specified as the sonship for which we wait, that is, the redemption of our body (v. 23). In making this point Paul appeals to the condition of creation,¹⁰³ stating that it was subjected (ὑπετάγη) to frustration (ματαιότητι). It was not subjected by its own choice (οὐχ ἑκοῦσα), but because of the one who subjected it (διὰ τὸν ὑποτάξαντα),

¹⁰² Due to the close relationship between ἀπό and εἰς, Andrzej Gieniusz’s claim that εἰς should be translated “in view of” rather than “into” should almost certainly be rejected. Contra Gieniusz 1999, 170–176, esp. 173.

¹⁰³ In my view, κτίσις probably refers here exclusively to non-human creation. While it is conceivable that (non-believing) humankind is included in this reference, the claim that κτίσις refers primarily or exclusively to human beings is almost certainly incorrect. Contra e.g., Schlatter 1995 [1935], 184–187. Cf. Niederwimmer 1966, 139: “Mit ‘κτίσις’ ist kaum die Menschenwelt, sondern wohl die Schöpfung überhaupt gemeint. Strittig kann lediglich sein, ob die Menschheit miteingeschlossen ist oder nicht”. Cf. also Hahne 2006, 176–181, who concludes that “κτίσις in Rom 8.19–22 means the subhuman material creation, roughly equivalent to the modern term ‘nature’” (180).

which is most likely a reference to God.¹⁰⁴ He adds, however, that this took place “in hope” (v. 20).

The interpretation of Paul’s argument at this point is rendered problematic by the difficulty of deciding whether to read ὅτι or διότι in v. 21.¹⁰⁵ It is possible that the latter reading is original. If so, then v. 21 is probably concerned to explain *why* it may be said that the creation was subjected “in hope”.¹⁰⁶ Since vv. 23–24 indicates that “the redemption of our bodies” is the content of the believers’ hope, however, it is perhaps more likely that Paul is likewise concerned here to introduce the content of the hope of v. 20 with ὅτι.¹⁰⁷ The content of the hope is *that* “even the creation itself will be set free from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God”. Here, the inclusion of the word ‘even’ reveals that what is said here of creation applies in the first instance to those to whom the coming glory is to be revealed (v. 18), that is, to “the sons of God” (v. 21).

In order to interpret the freedom in question in v. 21 one must attempt to specify the force of the genitive constructions “the slavery of corruption” (τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς) and “the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (τὴν ἐλευθερίαν τῆς δόξης τῶν τέκνων τοῦ θεοῦ). Unfortunately, it is extremely difficult to determine what sort of genitives are in view. Since this question has a bearing upon the interpretation of the freedom in question, it is necessary to address it in some detail.

C.F.D. Moule and Daniel B. Wallace interpret τῆς δόξης as an attributive genitive or genitive of quality, so that the entire construction means “the glorious freedom of the children of God” (cf. Matt 19.28; 25.31; Acts 7.2).¹⁰⁸ For Moule, however, “it would be misplaced subtlety to translate Rom. viii. 21, τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς, as *corrupting bondage* [i.e., as an attributive genitive], when it evidently means *bondage to corruption* (or mortality) [i.e., when it is evidently an objective genitive]”.¹⁰⁹ With Moule, Douglas Moo interprets τῆς φθορᾶς as an objective genitive, which

¹⁰⁴ For the inner logic of this dense statement, see esp. Dunn 1988, 470–471; Moo 1996, 515–516; Hahne 2006, 187–188.

¹⁰⁵ The fact that this is an example of an instance in which the editors of the Nestle-Aland text changed their minds from NA²⁵ (διότι) to NA²⁶/NA²⁷ (ὅτι) testifies to the difficulty of this question.

¹⁰⁶ See Cranfield 1985 [1975], 414–415. Then again, with Hahne 2006, 193, it is necessary to emphasize that both διότι and ὅτι can mean either “that” or “because”.

¹⁰⁷ See also Metzger 1994 [1971], 456: “The oldest and best witnesses read ὅτι (P46 A B C 33 81 614 1739 al). Apparently διότι arose accidentally by dittography, ΕΛΠΙΔΙΟΤΙ becoming ΕΛΠΙΔΙΔΙΟΤΙ.”

¹⁰⁸ See e.g., Moule 1959 [1953], 175; Wallace 1996, 86–88.

¹⁰⁹ Moule 1959 [1953], 175.

he considers probable “in light of the meaning of the words”.¹¹⁰ In contrast to Moule, however, he suggests that τῆς δόξης “is probably loosely possessive – ‘the freedom that belongs to, is associated with, the state of glory’”.¹¹¹ Moreover, he compares the force of this genitive with τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως/τῆς δόξης in Phil 3.21, which he interprets to mean “the body that belongs to the state of humiliation/state of glory”.¹¹² While the comparison that Moo makes between Rom 8.21 and Phil 3.21 is noteworthy, it is unclear whether it brings us further, since it is similarly difficult to specify the force of the genitives there. Then again, it is worth noting that in contrast to his interpretation of Rom 8.21 Moo assigns the same force to both genitives in Phil 3.21.

While broadly endorsing Moo’s interpretation of *the meaning* of τῆς φθορᾶς and τῆς δόξης,¹¹³ Harry Alan Hahne suggests that τῆς δόξης should be classified as a genitive of content rather than a genitive of possession.¹¹⁴ Explicating his view further, he then explains that regardless of its classification, the sense is a combination of two views: “The freedom is both an aspect of the eschatological glory (content) and the freedom will result from the glorification of believers (source)”.¹¹⁵ In criticism of Hahne one should note that if τῆς δόξης were a genitive of content, then it would follow that glory is an aspect of freedom rather than that freedom is an aspect of glory, as he claims. More specifically, the construction would then indicate that glory is the content of freedom.¹¹⁶ Accordingly, if one adopts Moo’s interpretation of the meaning or force of the genitive, then the genitive in question is probably better classified with Moo as a possessive genitive.

In contrast to the aforementioned scholars, a number of interpreters argue that it is more likely that the two genitives should be interpreted in the same way.¹¹⁷ John Murray, for example, suggests that each of the genitives should be understood as a genitive of apposition so that the constructions mean “the bondage which consists in corruption” and “the liberty that consists in the glory of God’s children”.¹¹⁸ Without attempting

¹¹⁰ Moo 1996, 517 n. 47.

¹¹¹ Moo 1996, 517 n. 48.

¹¹² Moo 1996, 517 n. 48.

¹¹³ Hahne 2006, 194, 198.

¹¹⁴ Hahne 2006, 198.

¹¹⁵ Hahne 2006, 198.

¹¹⁶ See Wallace 1996, 92–94.

¹¹⁷ See e.g., Murray 1959, 304; Cranfield 1985 [1975], 415–416; Vollenweider 1989, 385 n. 494.

¹¹⁸ Murray 1959, 304. See also e.g., Philippi 1878/1879, 2:14; Meyer 1879, 2:77–78; Wilckens 1980, 155 n. 676.

to classify the genitives in question,¹¹⁹ C.E.B. Cranfield explains that the δουλεία τῆς φθορᾶς is “a bondage which corruption may be said to impose, so that the ἐλευθερία τῆς δόξης, κ.τ.λ. is a liberty which results from, is the necessary accompaniment of, the (revelation of the) glory of the children of God”.¹²⁰ Classifying the genitives in question as possessive genitives,¹²¹ Vollenweider explains that “this glory generates (*erzeugt*) freedom, in a similar way as corruption produces (*bewirkt*) slavery”.¹²² Moreover, he adds that “the eleutheria evidently means participation in the divine Glory and with this in the imperishability of the coming age”.¹²³ If one adopts Vollenweider’s interpretation of the genitives, however, then the genitives in question are arguably better classified as genitives of production or perhaps as genitives of source, rather than as possessive genitives, as he claims.¹²⁴

With a view to the preceding discussion it should immediately be conceded that the precise force of the genitives in question cannot be specified with a high degree of certainty. This fact notwithstanding, I think it can be shown that certain options are more plausible than others. While it is conceivable that Paul uses two different genitive constructions in this verse, his parallel use of ‘slavery + genitive’ and ‘freedom + genitive’ suggests that the two genitives should probably be understood in the same way. If so, then τῆς φθορᾶς should probably not be explained as an objective genitive, since it is unlikely that τῆς δόξης should be interpreted in this way. Similarly, since it is awkward to interpret τῆς φθορᾶς as an attributive genitive, it is unlikely that this is the correct interpretation of τῆς δόξης. More importantly, in view of the reference to the glory about to be revealed in v. 18, it is more likely that Paul is concerned with “the freedom of the glory of the children of God” than with “the glorious freedom of the children of God”. Unfortunately, it is much more difficult to determine whether τῆς φθορᾶς and τῆς δόξης should be classified as:

- 1) possessive genitives (“from the slavery belonging to corruption into the freedom belonging to the glory of the children of God”),¹²⁵
- 2) genitives of apposition (“from the slavery which is corruption into the freedom which is glory”),¹²⁶

¹¹⁹ Moo 1996, 517, suggests that Cranfield thereby explains τῆς φθορᾶς as subjective, i.e., as a subjective genitive. Hahne 2006, 198, however, implies that Cranfield interprets the genitives in question as genitives of source.

¹²⁰ Cranfield 1985 [1975], 416.

¹²¹ Vollenweider 1989, 385 n. 494.

¹²² Vollenweider 1989, 385.

¹²³ Vollenweider 1989, 385.

¹²⁴ See Wallace 1996, 104–105, 109–110.

¹²⁵ See Wallace 1996, 81–83.

- 3) genitives of production (“from the slavery produced by corruption into the freedom produced by glory”),¹²⁷
- 4) genitives of source (“from the slavery that comes from corruption into the freedom that comes from glory”),¹²⁸ or
- 5) subjective genitives (“from corruption’s enslaving [of x] into glory’s liberating [of x]).¹²⁹

In my view, it is perhaps most likely that they should be interpreted as genitives of production or perhaps as genitives of source. If so, then Paul is concerned to state that “even creation will be set free from the slavery produced by (or derived from) corruption into the freedom produced by (or derived from) the glory of the children of God”. This interpretation is preferable to a possessive genitive or a genitive of apposition on the grounds that it seems likely that corruption and glory are in some way responsible for the conditions of slavery and freedom. It is also preferable to a subjective genitive, since the force of Paul’s pleonastic formulation is lost if the head nouns slavery and freedom are transformed into verbs or verbal nouns.¹³⁰

Beyond establishing that freedom, produced by glory, is understood as something good, and slavery, produced by corruption, is viewed as something bad, it is not easy to specify the content of the freedom and slavery in question. Since corruption produces slavery, it is clear that freedom requires the absence of corruption. Conversely, since glory produces freedom, it requires the presence of glory. This does not, however, indicate that “the *eleutheria* evidently means participation in the divine Glory and with this in the imperishability of the coming age”.¹³¹ Instead, it suggests that freedom is a designation for the condition that is produced by the coming glory. Then again, since v. 20 speaks of the subjection of creation to frustration, it is reasonable to assume that in the condition of freedom creation will no longer be subject to frustration, which means that it will be able to fulfill its intended purpose. While this condition clearly lies in the future for both creation and believers, the fact that Paul speaks of the first fruits of the Spirit in v. 23 may suggest that it is in some way anticipated in the life of the believer.

Let me now draw together the significance of this passage for the key questions of my monograph.¹³² With respect to the importance of freedom,

¹²⁶ See Wallace 1996, 95–100. Contra Hahne 2006, 198, this interpretation does not necessitate that freedom and glory are the same.

¹²⁷ See Wallace 1996, 104–105, esp. 105 n. 89.

¹²⁸ See Wallace 1996, 109–110.

¹²⁹ See Wallace 1996, 113–116.

¹³⁰ See Wallace 1996, 105 n. 89.

¹³¹ Contra Vollenweider 1989, 385.

¹³² See above, page 3.

it is crucial to note that while Paul's repeated use of ἐλευθερ- terminology in Rom 8.21 almost certainly suggests that he wishes here to place particular emphasis upon this word group or rather upon the image that it evokes, it is far from clear that his pleonastic formulation reflects a developed and unified concept of freedom. On the contrary, the difficulty of specifying or unpacking its content suggests that Paul may not be working with such a developed concept. This point, however, should not overshadow the fact that Paul makes use of an ἐλευθερ- word here to speak of the positive condition or state of both creation and the children of God, since this move does suggest that he is concerned to make the most out of the positive connotations of the word freedom. It seems most plausible to me, then, that Paul turns to freedom terminology (and imagery) at this point because it allows him to draw on a powerful complex of connotations and images associated with freedom. Paul does not here seem concerned to offer a painstaking and theoretically rigorous explication of a particular concept of freedom; rather, he is concerned to convey to his hearers/readers what the "glory about to be revealed" (v. 18) is like, and he is concerned to do so in a vivid and powerful way.

While Paul's comments on this body of death (7.24) and the weakness of the flesh (8.3; cf. 7.5) arguably stand in some relation to his discussion of corruption here, this does not justify the conclusion that the freedom in question in Rom 8.21 is grounded in or related to 'freedom from the law'. Accordingly, this verse also militates against the thesis that Paul's understanding of 'freedom' has its focus in 'freedom from the law'.¹³³

Finally, the significance of Rom 8.21 for the interpretation of the relationship between freedom and service should not be underestimated. Its importance lies in the fact that in this verse Paul employs an ἐλευθερ- word both to indicate the negative release from a given slavery and the positive condition that follows this release. As noted earlier, Vollenweider suggests that in view of this passage (and Rom 8.2) it is justified to reassess or reinterpret Paul's use of the metaphor of slavery in 6.18–22 and 7.1–6.¹³⁴ In light of Rom 8.21 (and Rom 8.2) he maintains that the positive condition of the believer is better understood as freedom rather than as slavery to righteousness (cf. Rom 6.18, 22). In my judgment, this does not justify the conclusion that Paul himself expected his readers to reinterpret or reassess his previous use of other metaphors to describe the believers' positive condition. I will concede, however, that it does provide a standpoint from which such a reinterpretation can be made, as long as we are clear that this retrospective reinterpretation must be carried out by Paul's interpreters rather than by Paul himself. Bearing this in mind, it

¹³³ See Dautzenberg 1990, 269.

¹³⁴ See above, pages 125–128.

seems to me that Paul's previous use of the metaphors of slavery and sonship can be reinterpreted in the light of his use of the *ἐλευθερ-* word group here. This has the potential to deepen our understanding of the positive condition of the Christian, since it gives us a rich set of images to work with in our attempts to see in which direction Paul's thought can be taken. In criticism of Vollenweider, however, it is necessary to ask whether the slavery metaphor can be set aside without loss.

6.6 Conclusion

While Paul's repeated use of the *ἐλευθερ-* word group in Rom 6–8 suggests that Paul is concerned with freedom in these chapters, this repetition does not yet suggest that freedom is the central theme of these chapters or that Paul was working with a unified concept of freedom. Accordingly, rather than placing chapters 6–8 (or 5–8) too quickly under the rubric of 'freedom', it is necessary to examine more closely the way in which Paul actually makes use of the *ἐλευθερ-* word group in these chapters.

With Nestle and Jones, I think due emphasis must be given to the fact that Paul does not reserve the *ἐλευθερ-* word group for believers in Rom 6.¹³⁵ At the same time, it is crucial to recognize with Vollenweider that Paul's use of *ἐλεύθερος* in v. 20 functions to sharpen his primary emphasis upon the believers' liberation from sin and enslavement to righteousness or to God in vv. 18 and 22.¹³⁶ Although this observation does not justify the conclusion that Paul's use of *ἐλεύθερος* here is "ironic" or "contrary to sense",¹³⁷ it does militate against Nestle's overestimation of the importance of v. 20 for assessing Paul's wider understanding of freedom.¹³⁸ Similarly, while Jones's more modest claim that v. 20 shows that Paul is not concerned *here* to reserve the predicate 'free' for believers is accurate,¹³⁹ he arguably fails to do justice to the secondary role that v. 20 plays in the argument.

What then are we to make of the believers' freedom from sin, and enslavement to righteousness? On the one hand, if v. 19a is, in fact, a qualified apology for the parallel use of the slavery metaphor with reference to sin and righteousness,¹⁴⁰ then Paul himself arguably provides some justification for further reflection upon the limitations of the slavery

¹³⁵ See Nestle 1972, 282; Jones 1987, 115.

¹³⁶ Cf. Vollenweider 1989, 336.

¹³⁷ Contra e.g., Kuss 1963, 392; Schlier 1977b, 212; Wilckens 1980, 39.

¹³⁸ Contra Nestle 1972, 282.

¹³⁹ See Jones 1987, 115

¹⁴⁰ See e.g., Cranfield 1985 [1975], 325; Schlier 1977b, 210; Vollenweider 1989, 326.

metaphor. On the other hand, it is far from clear that this verse expresses or implies that the believers' relation to righteousness is, in fact, freedom rather than slavery.¹⁴¹ Thus, while Paul arguably sets the theological ball rolling, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that he is working with a highly developed or robust understanding of freedom. On the contrary, his formal or neutral use of freedom terminology in vv. 18, 20 and 22 points in another direction.

To some extent, this conclusion is also important for assessing the relevance of Rom 6 for the question of the relationship between freedom and service in Paul. Let me reiterate that Rom 6 never indicates that enslavement to righteousness or to God is, in fact, freedom. In vv. 18 and 22 Paul uses freedom terminology to express the negative release from sin, and enslavement terminology to express the positive relation to righteousness or to God. From v. 20, however, it is clear that the person enslaved to righteousness or God is also "free" with respect to sin. Paul does not, however, explicitly state that freedom from sin arises from or flows from enslavement to God. Instead, he is content to indicate that enslavement to sin entails or presupposes being free with respect to righteousness and implicitly that enslavement to righteousness entails or presupposes being free with respect to sin. In conclusion, while it is probably accurate to describe freedom from sin and enslavement to righteousness, or enslavement to sin and freedom from righteousness, as two sides of the same coin in Rom 6.18–23, it is important to note that they are different sides of the coin.

In Rom 7.1–6 Paul only makes use of the ἐλευθερ- word group in his appeal to the situation of a married woman *vis-à-vis* the law, her husband and another man in vv. 2–3. Here, the phrase "free from the law" means 'not under the power or jurisdiction of the law' (cf. Rom 6.20). It indicates that the woman is not subject to the law's binding power and identifying judgment because its jurisdiction over her came to an end with her husband's death. Although the expression "free from the law" in v. 3 clearly refers to being free from the law of the husband, there can be little doubt that Paul appeals to this situation in order to say something about the Christian's relationship to the Jewish law as such.

In view of the basically synonymous use of "she is released from the law of the husband" (κατήργηται ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου τοῦ ἀνδρός) and "she is free from the law" (ἐλευθέρα ἐστὶν ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου) in vv. 2–3, it is justifiable to conclude that "we have been released from the law" in v. 6 is basically synonymous with "we are free from the law" (ἐλεύθεροι ἐσμεν ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου). A study of the verbs and metaphors that Paul employs suggests that he is concerned here with our release from the power and

¹⁴¹ Contra e.g., Schlier 1977b; Cranfield 1985 [1975], 325; Niederwimmer 1966, 186.

jurisdiction of the (Jewish) law rather than from its condemnation alone. Similarly, while Paul is undoubtedly concerned to show that we are released from the law, *through which* sinful passions are aroused, he does not suggest that we are released from the law (*only*) *insofar* as these passions are aroused through it. Instead, Paul's point appears to be that we were released (or are free) from the jurisdiction of the (Jewish) law as such.

While Jones has advanced several provocative arguments in support of his hypothesis that Paul first formulated the expression "free from the law" in Rom 7.3, I have argued that it is perhaps equally likely that Paul was able to employ this expression here precisely because he had already coined it previously. Irrespective of the resolution of this question, the observation that Paul only uses the ἐλευθερ- word group in v. 3 suggests that Paul may have placed less emphasis upon *the word combination* 'free from the law' (or 'freedom from the law') than many of his interpreters. Moreover, his alternation between the formulations "free from the law" and "released from the law" highlights the fact that he can express the idea or concept in question, namely that the believer is not under the jurisdiction of the law, with or without using an ἐλευθερ- word. Since, however, he *can* express this concept with an ἐλευθερ- word, this passage arguably provides some justification for using the phrase 'free(dom) from the law' as a category for describing the concept in question.

With a view to the importance of freedom and the relationship between freedom and service, I would argue that Rom 7.1–6 is not concerned with freedom as such. Instead, Paul is concerned to show that the believer has been put to death to the law "in order to belong to another, namely to the one who was raised from the dead, in order to bear fruit to God" (7.4). He wishes to show that now that we have been released from the law we *serve* in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter (7.6). In short, as in Rom 6, Paul does not use ἐλευθερ- terminology to speak of the positive relation to God or Christ. Instead, he speaks of being put to death to the law in order to *belong to another*, namely Christ, and of *servicing in newness of the Spirit*.

In my exegesis of Rom 8.2 I argued that Paul is concerned with "the rule of the Spirit" and "the rule of sin" rather than with "the Torah in the hands of the Spirit" and "the Torah in the hands of sin". On the one hand, I therefore concluded that Rom 8.2 is concerned with 'freedom from sin' rather than 'freedom from the law'. On the other hand, I suggested that Paul assumes and validates the importance of being 'free from the law' by highlighting the impotence of the (Jewish) law in 8.3. While I claimed with a view to Rom 7.1–6 that Rom 8.4 should probably not be understood to mean that the believer is, in fact, under the power or jurisdiction of the

Torah, I also acknowledged that v. 4 does indicate that the just requirement of the Torah is fulfilled in those who walk according to the Spirit.

In view of this second point, one could conceivably argue that Rom 8.1–4 is therefore concerned to affirm that there is a sense in which believers are “free to fulfill the law” or rather “free to have the (the just requirement of) the law fulfilled in them”. Here, however, it is crucial to note that Paul himself does not appear to develop this line of thought. Instead, his use of ἐλευθερ- terminology in 8.2 is focused upon the negative liberation from the rule of sin, as in 6.18. Moreover, the fact that he speaks of the rule of the Spirit in 8.2, the fulfillment of the just requirement of the law in 8.4 and the Spirit of sonship in 8.15 suggests that he is content to describe the positive relationship to God, Christ and the just requirement of the law with alternative terminology and metaphors. Again (as in 6.18–23; 7.1–6) we see that his primary concern is to describe the movement from a negative condition to a new relationship and mode of life.

Finally, in Rom 8.21 Paul speaks of the hope that “even creation will be set free from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God”. While Paul’s repetition of the ἐλευθερ- word group in this verse suggests that he is concerned to place particular emphasis upon the positive connotations of the word ‘freedom’, this does not indicate that he was working with a developed concept of freedom. Likewise, there is no indication that the ‘freedom’ in question is grounded in or related to ‘freedom from the law’. Finally, while the fact that Paul uses the ἐλευθερ- word group to describe the positive condition of the believer and creation in Rom 8.21 provides a standpoint from which it is possible to reassess Paul’s earlier use of the metaphors of slavery and sonship, it is necessary to emphasize that Paul himself does not offer a retrospective assessment or reinterpretation of his earlier use of these metaphors.

Part III: Conclusion

Chapter 7

Paul's Freedom Texts and Luther's Emphases

In this chapter I will provide a more synthetic account of the bearing of my exegesis upon the understanding of the three issues raised in chapters 1 and 2, namely 1) the importance of (the word and concept of) freedom in Paul's letters and theology, 2) the centrality and meaning of 'freedom from the law', and 3) the relationship between freedom and service. In other words, I will address the relationship between Paul's ἐλευθερ- texts and Luther's three emphases.

7.1 The Importance of Freedom in Paul's Letters and Theology

Assessing the importance of (the word and concept of) freedom in Paul's letters and theology is a complex and delicate matter. In fact, the position one adopts is, at least to some extent, a matter of perspective, for it depends upon the weight that one places upon a number of observations that are difficult if not impossible to contest. For example, by emphasizing the fact that the ἐλευθερ- word group does not actually occur very often in Paul's letters, it is easy to raise doubts concerning the great importance that has been attached to 'freedom' in the history of New Testament research. Similarly, one may assign considerable weight to the fact that – apart from the exclusively socio-political use of ἐλεύθερος in Col 3.11 and Eph 6.8 – the ἐλευθερ- word group is restricted to 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians and Romans. While these observations alone do not justify Jones's conclusion that "it cannot be denied that Paul could also have managed without this word",¹ they do suggest that Paul could and did manage without the ἐλευθερ- word group in many contexts.

It is also possible, however, to champion the importance of 'freedom' by placing greater weight on two observations that point in another direction. First, although Paul does not use the ἐλευθερ- word group very often, he does make use of it at a number of key points in his letters (cf. 1 Cor 9.1, 19; Gal 2.4; 5.1; 5.13; Rom 8.2). Secondly, as even Jones acknowledges, "in Galatians Paul nearly made ἐλευθερία the motto of his

¹ Jones 1987, 141.

argumentation".² Although these observations alone do not justify Vollenweider's claim that Paul "placed freedom at the center of his proclamation",³ they do show that Paul was willing and able to assign an important role to the ἐλευθερ- word group in certain contexts.

In my view, the preceding observations may be taken as relatively fixed coordinates in the task of unpacking further the importance of (the word and concept of) freedom in Paul. Rather than playing one set of observations off against the other, both sets need to be kept firmly in view. In order to advance beyond these points, however, it is necessary to address two additional questions, which are less straightforward. First, to what extent do Paul's ἐλευθερ- texts express or reflect a *unified* concept of freedom? Secondly, to what extent is it possible and necessary to move beyond Paul's ἐλευθερ- texts in order to assess the importance of the *concept(s)* of freedom in Paul?

My assessment of the first question is more similar to that of Nestle, Jones and Dautzenberg than that of Bultmann, Niederwimmer and Vollenweider. In particular, my exegesis has confirmed Jones's emphasis upon the diversity of Paul's references to 'freedom', which cannot be subsumed without loss under the headings 'freedom from sin', 'freedom from the law' and 'freedom from death'. Rather than expressing or reflecting a unified concept of freedom, my exegesis has shown that Paul employed the ἐλευθερ- word group in very different ways depending on the context.⁴ To some extent, this point is masked by Vollenweider's restricted focus upon passages in which "Paul explicitly uses eleutheria- vocabulary to describe the reality of salvation".⁵ The main problem, however, is not that Vollenweider omits discussion of the socio-political use of the word group, but that in his methodology and conclusions he appears to overestimate or exaggerate the degree to which the remaining ἐλευθερ- texts express or reflect a unified concept of freedom. My exegesis, by contrast, has not confirmed the assumption or conclusion that Paul was working with such a well-formed concept.

The diversity of Paul's usage in 1–2 Corinthians should not be underestimated. Paul's use of ἐλεύθερος in 1 Cor 12.13 refers solely to socio-political freedom. Here, it is clear that "Christian freedom" is not in view. Similarly, 1 Cor 7.39 is solely concerned to assert that a widow whose husband has died is free to be married to whomever she wishes. There is no indication that this 'freedom' is in any way related to 'freedom from the law' or even that it has its origin or determination in the Christ

² Jones 1987, 141.

³ Vollenweider 2000, 307.

⁴ Cf. e.g., Jones 1987, 141; Stolle 2005, 42; Schnelle 2006, 539.

⁵ Vollenweider 1989, 20.

event. In 1 Cor 7.21–22 Paul makes a distinction between being free in the socio-political sense (7.21) and being the Lord's freedperson (7.22). While this 'freedom' is clearly linked to belonging to Christ, Paul does not indicate that it is grounded in or related to 'freedom from the law', 'freedom from sin' or 'freedom from death'. Instead, his point is probably that the slave called in the Lord is ultimately 'free from human beings and their judgments' (cf. 7.23).

In 1 Cor 9.1, 19 Paul is concerned to assert that he is not subject to the wishes or control of other people or groups of people. Though this 'freedom' is similar in some respects to that of 1 Cor 7.22, there is a notable difference. Here, it is important to Paul's argument that he does not need to do what other people require or demand, whereas 1 Cor 7.22 does not imply that the slave is in this position. Accordingly, it would be misleading to suggest that the same 'freedom' is in view. Contrary to the claims of Vollenweider, there is no reason to link the 'freedom' that comes to expression in 9.19 with 'freedom from the law'.⁶ Against Jones, however, this 'freedom' is probably grounded in Paul's apostleship or belonging to Christ rather than in his financial independence.⁷

While it is likely that Paul appeals to the fact that he is free (9.1, 19) in order to instruct the Corinthians on how to handle their freedom (10.29), this does not mean that 9.1, 19 and 10.29 are concerned with the same 'freedom'. Instead, 1 Cor 10.29 appears to relate specifically to the freedom to eat meat sacrificed to idols or perhaps to the freedom to eat everything for which one gives thanks. Negatively, Paul is probably concerned with 'freedom from inhibitions arising from the pagan habit of eating consecrated meat as meat sacrificed to an idol' (8.7) rather than with 'freedom from the Jewish (food) law(s)'. Even if 'freedom from the law' were in view, however, then this would not alter the fact Paul does not make use of the ἐλευθερ- word group to speak of 'freedom from the law' in the other ἐλευθερ- texts in 1 Corinthians.⁸

Though it is clear that the freedom spoken of in 2 Cor 3.17 is linked to the Spirit rather than to the letter, the old covenant or the law, there is insufficient reason to conclude that the freedom in question is 'freedom from the law', 'freedom from the letter', or 'freedom from the old covenant'. Instead, in my judgment the immediate context suggests that 'freedom from the veil' or 'freedom from spiritual blindness' is in view rather than 'freedom from the law'. In sum, then, I would argue that Paul's use of

⁶ Contra Vollenweider 1989, 213.

⁷ Contra Jones 1987, 46.

⁸ This does not necessarily mean, though, that *the concept* of 'freedom from the law' is absent from 1 Corinthians. I shall return to the question of the importance of the concept of 'freedom from the law' in Paul below.

the ἐλευθερ- word group in 1–2 Corinthians strongly militates against the thesis that Paul had a unified understanding of freedom which had ‘freedom from the law’ at its center.

Let me now move on to Galatians. While Paul undoubtedly assigns an important role to the ἐλευθερ- word group in Galatians, the content of the freedom in question is by no means easy to determine. Despite the prevalence of the ‘freedom from the law’ interpretation, a more comprehensive freedom is probably in view in Gal 2.4 and Gal 5.1, 13, namely ‘freedom from the elements of the world’. Though it is conceivable that Gal 4.21–31 is concerned with this same freedom, it seems more likely that here Paul makes use of the ἐλευθερ- word group in an undefined manner to designate what is good or desirable and slavery language to designate what is bad or undesirable.

With respect to the importance of (the word and concept of) freedom in Paul, the fact that Paul makes ‘freedom’ a key word in the argument of Galatians is highly significant. In my view, this shows that in certain contexts he could assign considerable importance to the word ‘freedom’. Moreover, it suggests that he was capable of using it as an umbrella term that could characterize a number of related phenomena. This does not, of course, prove that ‘freedom’ had already become a technical term for him. Nor does it demonstrate that he had already elevated freedom into a theological concept in the strict sense. It does suggest, however, that Paul himself had taken some steps in this direction.

To some extent, the categories of ‘freedom from sin’, ‘freedom from the law’ and ‘freedom from death’ can be applied more easily to the interpretation of Romans than to 1–2 Corinthians or Galatians. Paul does speak of being set “free from sin” in 6.18, 22, being “free from the law” in 7.3, being set “free from the law (or rule) of sin and death” in 8.2, and the creation being set “free from bondage to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God” in 8.21. Here, however, it is important to stress that Paul does not appear to be working with a unified concept of freedom in these chapters. This is not to say that these passages do not stand in some relationship to each other. It is, however, to claim that the individual units do not show the influence of a unified and developed concept of freedom.

With the possible exception of Rom 8.18–25, freedom as such is not the topic of Paul’s argument in these sections, i.e., in 6.15–23; 7.1–6; 8.1–4.⁹

⁹ Cf. Dautzenberg 2001, 78; Fuchs 1958, 1103: “Es läge nun nahe, die christliche F. als F. von Sünde, Tod und Gesetz zu beschreiben, wie Paulus in Röm 5–8 tut. Aber der strenge Gegensatz zur Sünde heißt bei ihm Gnade, der zum Tod Leben, der zum Gesetz Evangelium. Die F. ist in allen diesen Lehrstücken nicht selbstständiges Thema, sondern sie hilft zur Erkenntnis, so wie die ganze Anthropologie des Paulus zur theologischen

Rather than being exclusively concerned with ‘freedom from sin’, Paul speaks of liberation from sin *and* enslavement to righteousness or to God in Rom 6.18–23. Similarly, the point of Rom 7.1–6 is not merely that believers are free or released from the law but that they may now belong to another, namely Christ, and bear fruit to God, serving in newness of the Spirit rather than oldness of the letter. Likewise, Rom 8.2 stresses not only that the law (i.e., the rule) of the Spirit of life has set the believer free from the law (i.e., the rule) of sin and death but also that the just requirement of the law is fulfilled in those who walk according to the Spirit.

While Rom 8.21 does speak of being set free from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God, it does not follow that Paul expected his hearers/readers to reinterpret retrospectively the language of Rom 6.18, 20, 22; Rom 7.3 and Rom 8.2 in the light of this verse. In this respect, he does not seem to prioritize the concept of freedom to the same extent as Vollenweider.¹⁰ Thus, I would argue that while Rom 6–8 (or 5–8) does suggest that Paul is willing and able to assign considerable importance to the ἐλευθερ- word group, it does not show that he was working with a unified concept of freedom. Nor does it indicate that he spoke of freedom as a distinct topic in his proclamation or teaching.

Having discussed the extent to which Paul’s use of the ἐλευθερ- word group expresses or reflects a unified concept of freedom, it is now necessary to inquire into the extent to which it is possible and necessary to move beyond the ἐλευθερ- word group in order to assess the importance of the concept(s) of freedom in Paul. When one turns to this question, one is immediately faced with the problem of how to define (the contours of) the concept(s) of freedom in question. More specifically, there is always the danger that one might define the contours of ‘freedom’ on the basis of one’s current (modern) understanding of that concept, or on the basis of the understanding(s) of freedom that were used by Paul’s contemporaries, rather than on the basis of Paul’s own understanding(s). In view of this problem I argued in my methodology chapter (chapter 3) that it is necessary to take one’s (initial) orientation from those Pauline passages in which the ἐλευθερ- word group appears.

If my study of these passages had shown that Paul himself was working with a (relatively) unified and developed concept of freedom, then the task would have been fairly straightforward. Having established the initial

Erkenntnis verhilft.” In view of this statement, it is surprising that Fuchs entitled his earlier exposition of Rom 5–8 *Die Freiheit des Glaubens*. See Fuchs 1949.

¹⁰ To some extent, the difference between Paul and (many of) his interpreters in this matter is already evident from the fact that whereas Paul only makes use of the substantive ἐλευθερία in Rom 8.21, they often show no hesitation in speaking of “freedom” when commenting on 6.15–23, 7.1–6 and 8.1–4.

contours of this concept of freedom from those passages in which the ἐλευθερ- word group appears, one could then identify this concept of freedom in passages that do not contain the ἐλευθερ- word group and thereby define it further. If, however, I am correct in arguing that Paul's use of the ἐλευθερ- word group does not reflect a unified concept of freedom, then the task becomes more difficult and tentative.

In my view, it is possible to proceed in one of three ways. First, one could simply abandon the attempt to address the importance of *the* concept of freedom in Paul and instead inquire into the importance of the multiple *concepts* of freedom that come to expression in his letters. On the one hand, this would entail giving due attention to the relationship between the various concepts of freedom. On the other hand, it would acknowledge that Paul himself does not appear to be working with a unified concept of freedom to which they all contribute. Here, one would begin by 1) establishing a number of categories (or concepts) with reference in the first instance to Paul's ἐλευθερ- texts, and then 2) fill out the contours of these categories (or concepts) with reference to non ἐλευθερ- texts in which they also come to expression. For example, one might begin by filling out the contours of the following categories or concepts: 'socio-political freedom' (1 Cor 7.21–22; 1 Cor 12.13; Gal 3.28); 'freedom from human beings and their judgments' (1 Cor 7.21–22); 'freedom to marry' (1 Cor 7.39–40); '(apostolic) freedom from the power or influence of others' (1 Cor 9.1, 19); 'freedom to eat consecrated meat' (1 Cor 10.29); 'freedom from the veil', i.e., 'freedom from barriers to spiritual understanding' (2 Cor 3.17); 'the freedom that we have in Christ', i.e., 'our freedom from the (elements of the) world' (Gal 2.4; 5.1, 13); 'freedom as what is ultimately good vs. slavery as what is ultimately bad' (Gal 4.21–31); 'freedom from sin' (Rom 6.15–23; Rom 8.2); 'freedom from the (Jewish) law' (Rom 7.1–6); 'freedom from death' (Rom 8.2); 'the freedom produced by the glory of the children of God' (Rom 8.21).

Secondly, one could 1) attempt to *construct* (the initial contours of) a unified and developed concept of freedom with reference to those passages in which the ἐλευθερ- word group appears and then 2) look for this concept of freedom elsewhere in Paul's letters in order to further define its contours. In undertaking this task, it would be necessary to recognize that it would not be a matter of *reconstructing* a concept that Paul himself had previously developed but rather of attempting to construct a relatively unified concept of freedom from his diverse statements concerning freedom, a process that would inevitably require prioritizing some passages and emphases over others.

Thirdly, one could 1) establish a number of categories (or concepts) with reference to those passages in which the ἐλευθερ- word group appears

and then 2) fill out the contours of these categories (or concepts) with reference to non ἐλευθερ- texts in which they also come to expression before 3) attempting to *construct* a broader concept of freedom with reference to these categories and their relationship to one another. In the second and third approaches, the important point to note is that one would be attempting to *construct* a broader concept of freedom on the basis of Paul's writings and not to *reconstruct* a concept that Paul had previously developed. In my view, the third approach is preferable to the second since it allows one to examine the extent to which particular categories (or concepts) of freedom come to expression in Pauline passages that contain and lack the ἐλευθερ- word group before attempting to construct a broader theological concept of freedom.

On the basis of the preceding argument, the following conclusions may be drawn with respect to the first key question of my work, namely the question concerning the importance of (the word and concept) of freedom in Paul. First, while Paul could make do without the word 'freedom' in many contexts, it is clear that he was willing and able to assign an important role to the ἐλευθερ- word group in certain contexts. Secondly, Paul appears to have employed the ἐλευθερ- word group in different ways depending on the context. While his ('German') interpreters have often assumed or concluded that Paul's use of the ἐλευθερ- word group expresses or reflects a (relatively) unified concept of freedom, this view is not confirmed by a careful examination of the passages themselves.

Thirdly, while a full examination of the importance of the concept(s) of freedom in Paul requires one to move beyond the ἐλευθερ- word group, this task is rendered difficult by the fact that Paul's ἐλευθερ- texts do not express or reflect a unified concept of freedom. For him, the word 'freedom' has not yet been elevated to the status of a theological concept in the strict sense, even if his use of the word in Galatians arguably points in this direction. For this reason, it is necessary to focus on the importance of multiple concepts of freedom, or to attempt to *construct* (rather than *reconstruct*) a unified theological concept of freedom with reference to passages that contain and passages that lack the ἐλευθερ- word group. If the first approach is adopted, then one can only speak of the importance of particular concepts or categories of freedom. If one wishes to go further than this, then it becomes necessary to make a clear and careful distinction between the steps that Paul himself appears to have taken and one's own constructive endeavors. For example, while it may be possible to present a cogent account of the relationship between (some of) the different categories of freedom that come to expression in Paul's letters, it is necessary to stress that it is far from clear that Paul himself had already thought through and articulated their precise relationship to each other.

7.2 The Centrality and Meaning of 'Freedom from the Law'

Any analysis of the centrality and meaning of (the expression and concept of) 'freedom from the law' in Paul must come to grips with the fact that expressions that explicitly link the ἐλευθερ- word group with the law are extremely rare in his writings. Moreover, it is crucial to note that theologically prominent expressions such as 'law-free gospel' and 'freedom from the law' are completely absent from Paul's letters.¹¹ Having made this point, it is equally important to add that Paul does come close to the latter expression on at least two occasions: in Rom 7.3 he states that if a woman's husband dies she is "free from the law" (ἐλευθέρα ... ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου) and in Rom 8.2 he explains that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death" (ὁ ... νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἠλευθέρωσέν σε ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου).

While these two verses initially appear to provide examples of expressions that speak of 'freedom from the (Jewish) law', a note of qualification is needed in each case. Since Rom 8.2 is probably concerned with liberation 'from the rule of sin and death' rather than 'from the Torah in the hands of sin and death' or the like, *this expression* is primarily related to 'liberation from sin' rather than to 'freedom from the (Jewish) law' (as I argued in my exegesis of Rom 8.2 above). Then again, in view of the reference to "what was impossible for the law because it was weak in the flesh" in 8.3, it remains possible to argue that *the concept* of 'freedom from the law' is nevertheless implicit in 8.1–4.

As for Rom 7.3, it is necessary to clarify that in this verse 'the law' in question initially refers to "the law of the husband" (τοῦ νόμου τοῦ ἀνδρός; cf. v. 2) rather than the Jewish law as such. Moreover, it should be noted that rather than stating that we are "free from the law" in 7.6, Paul writes that we have been "released from the law" (κατηργήθημεν ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου). The significance of these observations, however, is more difficult to assess. For Jones it constitutes one argument among many for his provocative thesis that Paul first coined the expression "free from the law" in Rom 7.3. For Vollenweider, by contrast, these observations do nothing to undermine his (reassertion of the traditional) thesis that in Rom 7.3 Paul seeks to illustrate the long recognized joining of freedom (from the law) and death by drawing on a legal relationship that was near at hand, even if this illustration was also only partially fitting.

In my own analysis of Rom 7.1–6, I attempted to push the debate in another direction. I suggested that the discussion concerning whether Paul

¹¹ As noted earlier, however, this observation alone does not settle the question of whether the employment of these and other phrases clarifies or distorts Paul's thought.

first coined the expression 'free from the law' in 7.3 or whether this expression reflects his established usage cannot be decided on the basis of Rom 7.1–6, which is open to both interpretations. Therefore, as I argued in my exegesis, this passage does not necessarily settle the historical questions that have been raised concerning the date at which and the extent to which Paul (first) made use of expressions such as 'free from the law' or 'freedom from the law'.

In light of the fact that Paul made use of the expression *κατηργήθημεν ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου* rather than employing an *ἐλευθερ-* word in 7.6, I observed that it is possible that Paul placed less emphasis upon *the word* 'freedom' and *the expression* 'free from the law' than the majority of his ('German') interpreters, and overall the passage does not provide firm evidence for the thesis that Paul's understanding of 'freedom' had 'freedom from the law' at its center.

At the same time, I pointed out that this passage does show that Paul made use of the expression "free from the law" on at least one occasion to specify the nature of the believers' relationship to the (Jewish) law, and I would argue that this in itself is significant. It demonstrates that Paul himself was able to employ the expression "free from the law" to describe or characterize his understanding of believers' relationship to the (Jewish) law. Accordingly, any suggestion that this expression is foreign to Paul's thought is surely laid to rest, even if its precise interpretation may be open to debate. For three reasons this point is not subverted by the fact that Paul technically used the expression to speak of the widow's relationship to the law of the husband. First, one must take into account the function of vv. 2–3 in the argument of 7.1–6. Secondly, it should be noted that the fact that Paul wrote "free from the law" in 7.3 rather than "free from the law of the husband" probably reflects and anticipates the ultimate goal of his argument. Thirdly, Paul's alternation between "released from the law of the husband" and "free from the law" in 7.2–3 shows that he could have written "we are free from the (Jewish) law" rather than "we have been set free from the (Jewish) law" in 7.6.

So far I have established that while Rom 7.1–6 does *not* demonstrate that Paul's understanding of freedom has 'freedom from the law' at its center, the expression "free from the law" in Rom 7.3 is nevertheless significant, and can indeed be interpreted to mean 'freedom from the (Jewish) law'. What are the implications of this? In particular, what does this tell us concerning the appropriateness of using expressions such as "free(dom) from the law" and "law-free" as categories for the description of Pauline Christianity?

In opposition to this (widespread) practice, Jones argues that:

the late origin of this expression makes it questionable as a category (for example: 'law-free Christianity') for the description of Pauline Christianity and of other related streams of Early Christianity, particularly as Paul himself could speak of the fulfillment of the law in his churches.¹²

Vollenweider, on the other hand, contests Jones's claim that Paul first employed the terminology of "free from the law" in Rom 7.3,¹³ and also asserts that: "Besides, whether it is two decades more or less is not what matters".¹⁴

While the question of when Paul coined the expression "free from the law" is by no means insignificant, with Vollenweider I do not think that the answer one gives to it is decisive for assessing the validity of using expressions such as "free(dom) from the law" and "law-free" as categories for the description of Pauline Christianity. If one is concerned to assess the validity or appropriateness of a category, then the main question is not *when* the category was first developed but rather whether or not this category enables one to better characterize, describe or categorize the material to which it is being applied.

Jones's observation that "Paul himself could speak of the fulfillment of the law in his churches" represents a more substantial objection to the use of this category. Since, however, Paul speaks *both* of believers being "free from the law" (7.1–6) and of the just requirement of the law being fulfilled in them (8.4), this objection is also by no means decisive. It does, however, highlight the fact that there is a difference between defending the validity of using the expression "free(dom) from the law" as a *category* for the description of Pauline Christianity and making it *the sole category* for one's description. Moreover, it makes it necessary to raise the question of whether the category of 'freedom from the law' has become too all-encompassing in subsequent theological reflection, thus "crowding out" other categories that Paul placed alongside it, such as 'fulfillment of the law'.

While a comprehensive assessment of the appropriateness of using expressions such as "free(dom) from the law" or "law-free" as categories for the description of Pauline Christianity cannot be made on the basis of Rom 7.1–6 alone, I believe the passage allows me to sketch out a possible direction for further theological reflection. In order to outline this direction, let me first return to my point concerning Paul's use of multiple expressions in relation to the law.

In my exegesis I argued that Paul's alternation between the formulations "free from the law" (Rom 7.3) and "released from the law" (Rom 7.2, 6)

¹² Jones 1987, 141.

¹³ Vollenweider 1989, 345.

¹⁴ Vollenweider 1989, 345 n. 290.

shows both that Paul could and did express the point he was attempting to make with an ἐλευθερ- expression and that he also could and did express this same argument with expressions that lacked an ἐλευθερ- word (cf. also Rom 6.14). One of his concerns here was to find formulations that would express the fact that believers are not under the jurisdiction of the (Jewish) law. The fact that Paul also used other vocabulary to express his understanding of the relationship of believers to the (Jewish) law suggests that one should not focus too narrowly on Paul's use of the ἐλευθερ- word group in assessing the appropriateness of using the expression "free(dom) from the law" as a category for the description of Pauline Christianity. Instead, it is necessary to ask whether the concept of "not-being-subject-to-the-jurisdiction-of-the-law" that Paul brings to expression in Rom 7.1–6 with the expression "free from the law" also comes to expression in other passages in which Paul does not make use of this expression.

If it could be shown that this concept is indeed present elsewhere, then from a theological perspective it would be justifiable to use the expression "free(dom) from the law" as a category for describing this Pauline emphasis. Moreover, if it could be shown that this emphasis was particularly widespread or central to Paul's thought, then a case could be made for using this expression as a central category for the description of Pauline Christianity. This case, of course, would be strengthened by the fact that Paul *does* employ the expression "free from the law" in Rom 7.1–6 to express the concept in question. From this perspective, the important point is *that* Paul used this expression to speak of the relationship of believers to the law rather than *when* he first did so.

In sum, then, while it seems to me that we cannot know with certainty when Paul or others began to use expressions such as 'free(dom) from the law', or the extent to which Paul may have used such expressions, I would argue that this question is not decisive for determining whether or not this expression should be used as a category for describing Paul's thought. Since, however, Paul himself may not have made use of this expression as a fundamental category in his proclamation and teaching, it is crucial that interpreters make a careful distinction between the steps that Paul himself appears to have taken and their own attempts to develop appropriate categories for describing his thought.

Now, having discussed the *centrality* of the category of 'freedom from the law' in Paul, let me turn to the second half of my conclusion, which concerns its *meaning*. Since Paul only makes use of the expression "free from the law" in Rom 7.1–6, this is again a particularly important passage for determining the meaning of "freedom from the law". While some scholars have claimed that Paul is concerned here solely with the fact that believers are "free from the curse or condemnation of the law", I have

argued with reference to Paul's choice of verbs and metaphors that Paul is at pains to stress that believers are "free from the power or jurisdiction of the law and thereby also from its condemnation". Moreover, I have emphasized that his point is not merely that believers are "free from the law only insofar as sinful passions are aroused through it" or "free from the negative effects of the law" but rather that they are free from the (Jewish) law as such, which Paul identifies as a/the means through which sinful passions are aroused.

While it may be readily granted that it is not easy to explain how this claim should be related to Paul's subsequent assertion that the just requirement of the law is fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (Rom 8.4; cf. Rom 13.8–10; Gal 5.14), the recognition of this difficulty should not prevent one from acknowledging the full force of Paul's assertion that believers are "free from the law" or "released from the law" in Rom 7.1–6. In this context it should be noted that in contrast to some of his interpreters,¹⁵ Paul never explicitly speaks of "freedom *for* the law" or of being "(set) free *to* obey or fulfill the law". Here too, however, it is necessary to stress again that this observation alone does not settle the question of whether the employment of these phrases clarifies or distorts Paul's thought.

Since Rom 7.1–6 is the only section in which Paul actually employs the expression "free from the law", I have given particular attention to this passage. But what meaning(s) of 'freedom from the law' can be derived from the other passages that I have examined? In my preceding discussion of the importance of freedom in Paul, I argued that Paul does not appear to make use of the ἐλευθερ- word group to speak of 'freedom from the law' in 1–2 Corinthians, while noting that this does not necessarily mean that *the concept* of 'freedom from the law' is absent from these letters. Moreover, I suggested that the freedom spoken of in Gal 2.4; 4.21–31; 5.1, 13 should probably not be narrowly defined as 'freedom from the law'. In other words, "our freedom in Christ" or "the freedom for which Christ set us free" does not appear to be equivalent to "our freedom from the law in Christ" or "the freedom from the law for which Christ set us free from the law". With respect to Galatians, however, it is necessary to add that since Paul is clearly concerned to oppose the imposition of circumcision (and law observance) in Gal 2.1–10 and 5.2–12, there can be no doubt that the concept of 'freedom from the law' is included within the more comprehensive freedom that Paul speaks of in Gal 2.4; 5.1, 13. In other words, while Paul is probably concerned more broadly with 'our freedom from the elements of the world' or 'our freedom to act without being determined by

¹⁵ See e.g., Anderson 1964, 63; Furnish 1984, 236; Hafemann 1995, 405.

the elements of the world', it is clear that this freedom entails being free from circumcision (and law observance).

Let me sum up. First, I have argued that Paul's talk of 'freedom' does not appear to have its focus in 'freedom from the law'. Moreover, I have suggested that Paul himself may not have elevated the expression 'free(dom) from the law' into a fundamental category in his proclamation and teaching. Secondly, I have claimed that it does not necessarily follow from this contention that it is inappropriate to use this expression as a category for the description of Pauline Christianity. Instead, I have acknowledged that a study that is primarily oriented upon Paul's use of the ἐλευθερ- word group is not in a position to make this judgment. Thirdly, I have argued with reference to Paul's choice of language and imagery that he is concerned in Rom 7.1–6 to assert that believers are free from the power or jurisdiction of the (Jewish) law as such rather than from its condemnation or harmful effects alone. Moreover, I have drawn attention to the fact that Paul himself never explicitly speaks of being 'free *for* (obedience to) the law' or the like. While I have not been able to resolve the question of the relationship between Paul's negative and positive statements concerning the law, I have stressed that attempting to soften or limit the force of the former is not the way forward.

7.3 The Relationship between Freedom and Service

Paul touches on the question of the relationship between freedom and service (or slavery) at numerous points in passages which contain the ἐλευθερ- word group. In 1 Cor 12.13 and Gal 3.28 Paul relativizes the importance of being a free person or a slave in the socio-political sense. Similarly, in 1 Cor 7.22 he exhorts the slave called in the Lord not to be concerned with his or her socio-political status. On the one hand, in v. 21b Paul appears to encourage the slave to take the opportunity to become free if it presents itself. On the other hand, in v. 22 he is concerned to ground the main point of v. 21, namely that the slave need not be concerned with his or her socio-political status. In v. 22 Paul asserts that the slave called in the Lord is the Lord's freedperson and that the free person who is called is likewise Christ's slave. Here, his point is probably that while the slave is enslaved in the socio-political sense, as the Lord's freedperson s/he is free from human beings and their judgments. Likewise, while the free person is free in the socio-political sense, as Christ's slave s/he is under obligation to obey him. In contrast to the interpretation of Vollenweider, this verse

does not express a developed concept of “freedom as slave-service to God and humans”.¹⁶

In 1 Cor 9.1, 19 Paul affirms that he is free (from all) and that he made himself a slave to all. In view of Luther's appeal to this verse in *The Freedom of a Christian*, it is not surprising that it has played a key role in subsequent interpretations of the relationship between freedom and service (or slavery). In my exegesis I noted that Ebeling, Schrage, Vollenweider, and others insist that the participle ὡν in 1 Cor 9.19 should be understood as causal (“because I am/was free from all”) or modal (“as one who was/is free from all”) rather than concessive (“although I was/am free from all”). Moreover, I showed how interpreters have used this verse to support their claim that according to Paul freedom (paradoxically) realizes or exercises itself in service.

With this tradition of interpretation I affirmed that in view of 1 Cor 9.1a (Οὐκ εἰμι ἐλεύθερος), it is highly unlikely that 9.19 should be understood to mean that Paul surrendered his ‘freedom’. Against these scholars, however, I maintained that the force of ὡν in 9.19 is probably concessive and argued that Paul appears to remain content with the paradoxical claim that *although* he was and remained (not a slave of human beings but) free from all (people) (and thus could not be expected, required or compelled to subject himself to the wishes of others), he (nevertheless) made himself a slave to all (people) in order to gain the many (9.19). Moreover, I explained that in contrast to many of his interpreters Paul himself does not appear to have pursued further the question of whether this self-imposed slavery should be understood as a/the manifestation of freedom or rather as the limitation or renunciation of the use of freedom. Finally, I suggested that his interpreters should make a more careful distinction between the conclusions that Paul himself draws and their own constructive attempts to pursue the subject matter with which he was wrestling.

This latter point is also relevant for the exegesis of 1 Cor 10.29. Here too, scholars have tended to specify the relationship between freedom and service (or renunciation) with greater precision than Paul. In my exegesis of this verse I argued that Paul is probably concerned with the freedom to eat consecrated meat or perhaps more broadly with the freedom to eat everything for which one gives thanks (cf. 10.30; Rom 14.6). It is clear that the freedom in question comes to expression in the eating of consecrated meat. Since, however, Paul does not suggest that this freedom is lost if one does not eat, then the freedom in question cannot be equated with such eating. Instead, it appears to consist already in the fact that one is free or permitted to eat such meat, whether or not one actually does so. But, in contrast to many of his interpreters, Paul does not appear to pursue

¹⁶ Contra Vollenweider 1989, 245.

the question of whether this refraining from eating consecrated meat for the sake of another should be understood as an/the expression of freedom or rather as the limitation or renunciation of the use of their freedom.

In Galatians Paul consistently speaks of freedom in relation to slavery.¹⁷ In Gal 2.4 freedom and slavery stand in sharp opposition to each other. The false brothers are said to have “slipped in to spy out our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus in order to enslave us”. Similarly, in Gal 4.21–31, the free woman and her children stand in stark contrast to the slave woman and her children. Finally, in 5.1 Paul follows the climactic announcement “for freedom Christ set us free” with the words “stand firm therefore and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery”. In all of these cases, the freedom and the slavery of which Paul speaks are wholly incompatible.

In view of the sharp opposition between ‘freedom’ and ‘slavery’ in these passages, Paul’s exhortation in Gal 5.13 is all the more remarkable. There he follows the statement “for you were called to freedom brothers (and sisters)” (5.13a) with the words “only not freedom for/into/as an occasion for the flesh” (5.13b) but through love serve (or be enslaved to) one another” (5.13c). As noted in my exegesis, the terse formulation of 13b is open to several interpretations, none of which can be affirmed with a high degree of certainty. For my purposes, the key point to note is that rather than providing a precise account of the relationship between freedom and mutual service (or enslavement) Paul appears to remain content to juxtapose an assertion that the Galatians were called to freedom and an exhortation to serve (or be enslaved to) one another through love, while indicating that yielding to the influence of the flesh is not the way forward.

In Rom 6.18, 22 Paul uses the ἐλευθερ- word group to speak of the negative release from the power of sin and the law, whereas the believers’ positive relationship to righteousness or God is expressed with the δουλ- word group (cf. 6.18, 22). In Rom 6.20, however, he uses the δουλ- word group to speak of the believers’ previous bondage to sin and the ἐλευθερ- word group to indicate that they were not formerly under the jurisdiction or power of righteousness. In both cases, the δουλ- word group indicates that the people in question are subject to a particular rule or power, whereas the ἐλευθερ- word group conveys that they are released from or not subject to a particular rule or power.

Though it is true that v. 20 primarily functions to bring out the full force of Paul’s emphasis upon *the believers’* liberation and enslavement in vv. 18 and 22, it does not follow from this point that Paul’s use of ‘free’ in v. 20 is “ironic” or “contrary to sense”. Similarly, while it is possible that

¹⁷ This is even true of Gal 3.28 where Paul relativizes the distinction between being a free person and being a slave in the socio-political sense.

Paul puts forward v. 19a (“I speak in human terms on account of the weakness of your flesh”) as a qualified apology for the parallel use of the slavery metaphor with reference to sin and righteousness, it is important to recognize that Paul himself does not develop this thought further. In particular, he does not state or suggest that the believers’ relation to righteousness is, in fact, freedom rather than slavery or that enslavement to righteousness is, in fact, freedom. At most, he provides the initial impetus for further theological reflection. Finally, it should be noted that Paul does not explain here that freedom from sin arises from or flows from enslavement to God. Instead, he is content to indicate that enslavement to sin entails or presupposes being free with respect to righteousness and that enslavement to righteousness presupposes or entails being free with respect to sin.

In Rom 7.1–6, Paul makes use of the ἐλευθερ- word group to describe the negative release from the jurisdiction or power of the law. Rather than using this same word group to describe the believers’ new situation, Paul speaks of belonging to another (7.3; 7.4), of bearing fruit for God (7.4), and of serving (δουλεύειν) in newness of the spirit (7.5). Moreover, in this passage, Paul shows no reservations about using the δουλ- word group with reference to the new situation of believers, perhaps because his usage here is qualified with the words “in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter”.

In Rom 8.2 Paul states that “the law (or rule) of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law (or rule) of sin and death”. Moreover, he goes on to speak of the fulfillment of the just requirement of the law in us who walk according to the Spirit (v. 4). Here Paul appears to use the ἐλευθερ- word group (exclusively) to speak of the negative release from the “law (or rule) of sin and death”. While Paul does not employ the δουλ- word group here, he does speak of “the law (or rule) of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” and of the fulfillment of the just requirement of the law in those who walk according to the Spirit. In this way, he appears to highlight the fact that the believer has come under the influence of a new power, which brings about the fulfillment of the law.

Before turning to Rom 8.21, it is necessary to comment briefly on Rom 8.12–17. In this passage, Paul describes the positive relation to God with the language of sonship rather than enslavement. Moreover, he presents a sharp contrast between “the spirit of slavery” and “the Spirit of sonship” (v. 15). Although this verse does not justify Vollenweider’s thesis that Paul’s *genuine Christian experience* first comes to expression with chapters 7 and 8,¹⁸ it does suggest that Paul is able to draw upon the negative connotations of the slavery metaphor, which are not applicable to the new

¹⁸ Vollenweider 1989, 336.

state of the believer. Then again, it is notable that he speaks here of “the Spirit of sonship” rather than “the Spirit of freedom”. While this verse does provide a standpoint from which one could critically reassess Paul’s use of the metaphor of slavery in Rom 6–7, it remains necessary to stress that Paul himself was content to employ multiple metaphors, which mutually informed each other.

In Rom 8.21 Paul states that “the creation will be set free from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God”. This verse is striking insofar as it speaks not only of being set free *from* the slavery of corruption but also of being set free *into* the freedom of the glory of the children of God. Here, Paul uses the ἐλευθερ- word group rather than the metaphors of slavery or sonship to describe the positive state of believers and creation. Accordingly, from a theological perspective, this verse may indeed provide a standpoint from which it is possible and legitimate to reassess and reinterpret Paul’s use of alternative metaphors in previous chapters. This observation, however, does not justify the assumption or conclusion that Paul himself had already undertaken this task in a systematic fashion.

With a view to the preceding argument, two conclusions may be drawn with respect to the relationship between freedom and service (or slavery) in Paul. First, in my judgment the diversity of Paul’s statements should not be overlooked. This is particularly evident in his use of the metaphor of slavery. Sometimes he employs this metaphor to describe the (present or future) situation of believers (cf. e.g., 1 Cor 7.22b, 9.19; Gal 5.13; Rom 6.18, 22; Rom 7.6). At other times, however, he emphatically distances believers from it (cf. e.g. Gal 2.4; 4.21–31; 5.1; Rom 8.15, 21). Similarly, although he usually associates ‘freedom’ with believers, he speaks on one occasion of being “free with respect to righteousness” (Rom 6.20). Though it may be theologically justifiable to reinterpret some of his statements from the standpoint of others, in order to bring more coherence to this diversity, it is crucial to note that Paul himself did not always do so.

Secondly, in contrast to his interpreters who have often assumed or concluded that Paul provides a precise account of the relationship between freedom and service (or slavery) to other people, I would argue that Paul himself appears to be largely content to *juxtapose* freedom and service (or slavery) rather than to present a precise account of the relationship between them. Accordingly, there is a need for his interpreters to distinguish more clearly between the extent to which Paul himself specified the relationship between freedom and service and their own attempts to unpack and sharpen the logic and potential implications of his statements with a view to the overall direction of his thought. Again, my criticism of the major tradition of ‘German’ scholarship is not that it undertakes this task. On the contrary, I

think there is much to be said for the thesis that “freedom is exercised or realized in service”. I do not, however, think that Paul himself had already expressed this understanding in a precise manner. While it is possible to argue that this understanding is implicit in what he did write, I think on the contrary that it almost certainly represents a further development of his thought.

Chapter 8

The Promise and Pitfalls of ‘German’ Scholarship on Freedom in Paul

Though conscious of the dangers of generalization, I think it is possible in this final chapter to highlight some of the strengths and weaknesses of two prominent traditions within ‘German’ scholarship on freedom in Paul, which I shall refer to as the major tradition and the minor tradition. Before doing so, however, I would like to set the stage for this retrospective analysis of the contributions and shortcomings of the ‘German’ tradition with a citation from the (systematic) theologian Colin Gunton:

Irenaeus’ central concept was, as we have seen, ‘recapitulation’ rather than mediation. In using it, he took a biblical term, one used rarely in Scripture itself, and adapted it to achieve a much broader and more comprehensive purpose than the original, which he took from the Letter to the Ephesians. That is the way of all theology: a word, sometimes biblical, sometimes not, is used to characterize a major and perhaps universal dimension of the biblical account of God’s creating and saving work – to recapitulate aspects of the work of God, we might say, if it does not complicate matters too much – in order to bring a range of similar acts, phenomena or events under a single head.¹

In this quotation, Gunton is concerned with what he regards as an important task of theology, namely the formation of robust theological concepts, suggesting that this practice is “the way of all theology”.²

Gunton recognizes that while Irenaeus took the term ‘recapitulation’ from the letter to the Ephesians, he “adapted it to achieve a much broader and more comprehensive purpose than the original”.³ Moreover, he goes on to acknowledge that he himself has done something similar with the word ‘mediation’, which he has taken from 1 Tim 2.5 and Heb 8.6; 9.15; 12.24.⁴ For my purposes, the important point to note is that Gunton knows and acknowledges what he is doing. He recognizes that Irenaeus has adapted the biblical term ‘recapitulation’ to achieve a more comprehensive purpose, and that he himself has likewise adapted the term ‘mediation’. He is under no illusion that the terms were already achieving these more comprehensive purposes in the New Testament.

¹ Gunton 2003 [2002], 166.

² Gunton 2003 [2002], 166.

³ Gunton 2003 [2002], 166.

⁴ Gunton 2003 [2002], 166–168.

In my view, the major tradition within 'German' scholarship on freedom has similarly adapted Paul's term 'freedom' to achieve "a much broader and more comprehensive purpose than the original".⁵ This is almost certainly the case for Luther, who placed "the whole of Christian life" under the rubric of "the freedom of a Christian".⁶ Although Luther claimed to find his two propositions in 1 Cor 9.19, there can be little doubt that he has adapted this verse to serve his more comprehensive purposes. This is already evident from the fact that whereas 1 Cor 9.19 is almost certainly concerned with the fact that Paul is free from all people,⁷ Luther asserts that the Christian person is "a free lord over all things" (*eyn freyer herr uober alle ding*).⁸ More importantly, it is shown by the fact that rather than primarily or exclusively developing his understanding of 'freedom' from Paul's use of the ἐλευθερ- word group, Luther draws upon his overall understanding of Paul's thought to explicate the meaning of "the freedom of a Christian".

On the one hand, this approach is not necessarily invalid since Luther is concerned with the broader concept or theme of freedom rather than with Paul's use of the word 'freedom' alone. On the other hand, it is significant that while Luther used the word freedom "to bring a range of similar acts, phenomena or events under a single head",⁹ Paul himself does not appear to have done so to the same extent. Even here, however, a note of caution is needed. In Galatians, Paul does appear to have moved in this direction, and the greater emphasis that Paul placed on the ἐλευθερ- word group in this letter in comparison to the rest of his writings is arguably comparable to the greater emphasis that Luther placed upon freedom in *The Freedom of a Christian* in comparison to his other writings.

When we turn from Luther to twentieth-century 'German' scholarship on freedom in Paul, it is possible to discern a similar tendency to elevate the term 'freedom' to a more comprehensive theological concept. While Weiß, Bultmann, Käsemann, Niederwimmer, Schürmann and others give greater attention to the Pauline ἐλευθερ- texts than Luther, their interpretations of Paul's idea of freedom are also not primarily or exclusively informed by these passages. Instead, like Luther, they draw upon Paul's whole theology. As with Luther, it is crucial to note that this approach is not necessarily invalid. Here I agree with Christina Grenholm, who rightly notes that the fact that a Biblical writer has not (yet) developed a certain

⁵ Gunton 2003 [2002], 166.

⁶ LW 31, 343. Cf. WA 7, 48, 35; 49, 1; WA 7, 11, 8–10. See above, page 14.

⁷ As I have argued in my exegesis of 1 Cor 9.19 above. For a different view, see Schrage 1995, 337; Collins 1999, 353.

⁸ WA 7, 21, 1–4 (= StA 2, 265, 6–9). Cf. also WA 7, 49, 22–25 (= StA 2, 264, 17–18).

⁹ Gunton 2003 [2002], 166.

idea or distinction is not sufficient in itself to declare this idea or distinction to be invalid.¹⁰ It is, however, necessary to ask whether these interpreters sufficiently acknowledge that they are contributing to the *construction* or formation of a unified concept of freedom rather than reconstructing a concept that had already been formed and articulated by Paul.

Again the question here is not whether or not what they are doing is legitimate, but rather whether or not they know and acknowledge what they are doing. For example, what does Schürmann mean when he speaks of constructing the “stately building” of the Pauline doctrine of freedom (*Freiheitslehre*) “from the scattered fragments lying about”?¹¹ If his point is that it is possible to form or construct a theological concept of freedom by bringing a range of similar phenomena in Paul’s letters under the single head of ‘freedom’, and that this concept can be referred to with some justification as the Pauline doctrine of freedom, then I am sympathetic with his aims. If, however, he thinks that Paul had already elevated the term ‘freedom’ into a rich theological concept and we must attempt to reconstruct this concept from what we find in his letters, then I am skeptical of this assumption or conclusion.

While the tendency to overestimate the extent to which Paul elevated the term ‘freedom’ into a theological concept is arguably characteristic of the major tradition within ‘German’ scholarship on freedom, the opposite inclination is also present, namely the tendency to exaggerate the extent to which the importance of the concept(s) of freedom in Paul’s letters and theology is called into question by his relatively infrequent and diverse use of the ἐλευθερ- word group. As my concluding arguments in chapter 7 have shown, I am broadly sympathetic towards this tradition of interpretation, which may be referred to as the minor tradition in view of its weaker attestation within ‘German’ scholarship. In particular, I think it has rightly highlighted the fact that Paul does not appear to have elevated the term ‘freedom’ into a theological concept in the strict sense. On the other hand, I am critical of its tendency to overstate the implications of this conclusion. Moreover, I am concerned that this tradition of interpretation is overly skeptical of the potential value of attempting to construct a broader concept of freedom which is informed by Paul’s use of the ἐλευθερ- word group without being exclusively determined by it.

In my view, this weakness is particularly evident in Jones’s suggestion that the validity of using the expression ‘freedom from the law’ as a category for the description of Pauline Christianity is called into question by the late origin of this expression and the fact that Paul also speaks of

¹⁰ Grenholm 2000, 26–27.

¹¹ Schürmann 1990a [1971], 241.

the fulfillment of the law. Apart from the fact that the late origin of the expression is by no means certain, this suggestion is rendered problematic by the fact that the question of *when* a category arose is not decisive for assessing its validity. Here, Jones fails to recognize that his study is not in a position to make a judgment concerning the validity of using this expression as a category for describing Pauline Christianity, since his findings have not demonstrated that *the concept* that comes to expression in Rom 7.1–6 is not widespread. Even if it could be concluded with a high degree of probability that Paul first coined the expression “free from the law” in Rom 7.1–6, it would not follow that *the concept* must have also come to expression for the first time in this passage. Accordingly, if one wishes to show that it is problematic to employ the expression ‘freedom from the law’ as a category for describing Pauline Christianity, it is necessary to show that this concept is not an important feature in Paul’s letters.

In the end, I think that the promise and pitfalls of ‘German’ scholarship on freedom are closely related. The promise of *the major tradition* within ‘German’ scholarship on freedom in Paul is that it shows how the term ‘freedom’ might be used as a category for describing Paul’s theology or Pauline Christianity. In addition to providing valuable discussions of categories such as ‘freedom from sin’, ‘freedom from the law’ and ‘freedom from death’, it also provides rich theological reflection upon the relationship between freedom and service (or slavery). The main pitfall of this tradition, in turn, is that it often fails to make a careful distinction between its own constructive endeavors and the steps taken by Paul, with the result that the distinctive (and limited) witness of Paul’s letters and theology is no longer permitted to speak with its own voice. Here it is perhaps appropriate to quote Karl Barth, since it seems to me that his insistence on the need to respect the “freedom of the fathers” is also applicable, in at least some respects, to the interpretation of Paul:

In the Church there are *fathers*: father Luther, father Calvin, other fathers. Why should a free theologian not be their son and disciple? But why should he insist on complete agreement with them? Why should he artificially reinterpret their findings until Luther is in agreement with him and says what he himself so badly wants to say? Why should he not respect the freedom of the fathers and let them express their wisdom and then learn from them what in his own freedom he may and can learn from them?¹²

The promise of *the minor tradition* is that it *does* take greater care to safeguard Paul’s own voice, and it rightly highlights the fact that Paul does not appear to have elevated the term ‘freedom’ into a theological concept in the strict sense.¹³ Its main pitfall, however, is that it sometimes overstates the implications of its conclusions. In particular, it appears to

¹² Barth 1961 [1953], 94. For the German original, see Barth 1953, 26.

¹³ For *the minor tradition*, see page 177.

assume too quickly that it is problematic to use the term 'freedom' as a (major) category for describing Paul's thought because Paul himself only did so to a limited extent. Moreover, it runs the risk of underestimating the extent to which particular concepts of freedom come to expression in Paul's letters in passages that do not contain the ἐλευθερ- word group.

With a view to the strengths of both traditions, I conclude that the promise of 'German' scholarship on freedom in Paul lies in its commitment to exploring the extent to which Paul's letters and theology can be illuminated through the study of the word and concept(s) of freedom. It is hoped that this monograph has contributed to the advancement of this task and that it will elicit further contributions from other scholars in the Anglophone tradition. Finally, in view of my deep debt to 'German' New Testament scholarship and theology, I hope that it will also be of some service to this extremely rich and vibrant tradition.

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