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The Aspect of Freedom in Paul's Theology

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THE ASPECT OF FREEDOM IN PAUL'S THEOLOGY

BY

M. Eugene Boring

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts

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PREFACE

The study of the New Testament properly begins with Paul, since the earliest documents of the New Testament are from his hand. In this, my first serious attempt to make a study of one aspect of the theology of the New Testament, I have thus chosen to begin with Paul. I have tried to choose a topic which would allow me to study Paul's theology as a whole, but which would permit me to approach it from a viewpoint not already overused. Thus I have chosen the topic, "The Aspect of Freedom in Paul's Theology." Of the scholars whom I have consulted, only Anders Nygren and Rudolf Bultmann have written much about Paul's doctrine of freedom. My debt to them is obvious in this thesis.

This thesis is not set forth as an exhaustive study, as a solution to a problem, or as a demonstration of a proposition. It was undertaken as an inductive study to help the writer gain a better insight into the theology of Paul and thence into that of the New Testament as a whole.

I should like to express my appreciation to the professors in the Biblical Field of Christian Theological Seminary who have guided my first steps toward serious Bible study, and to my wife whose patience and understanding have made my academic projects possible.

A word should be said about mechanics. In direct quotations, I have underlined where the original was in italics, upper case letters, spaced, or underlined for emphasis. In all cases where words were not so emphasized in the original, but appear underlined in this thesis, this has been noted. Unless otherwise noted, the version of the Bible quoted throughout is the Revised Standard Version. The Greek text used is that of Nestle. The word "Church" is capitalized when it refers to the universal Church or to any idea larger than the local congregation, and spelled with a small letter when it refers to a local congregation. The word "Law" is capitalized when referring to the Torah, and spelled with a small letter when referring to law in general. The words "Sin," "Death," and "Cosmic Powers" are sometimes capitalized to indicate that Paul considers them at least quasi-personal beings. In quotations I have followed the author's own scheme of capitalization.

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INTRODUCTION

In discussing the aspect of freedom in Paul's theology, it should first be pointed out that in this thesis we shall be concerned only with the kind of freedom which concerned Paul: freedom as a quality of the "newness of life" given by Christ. Neither freedom in its philosophic sense of freedom of the will as opposed to determinism, nor freedom in its social and political sense as used in the phrases "freedom of speech," "freedom of assembly," and "freedom of the press," was a major concern of Paul's, however true it may be that inferences on both of these subjects may be drawn from his writings.

While in Romans 8:29 and Ephesians 1:5 and 12 Paul seems to touch on the question of freedom of the will in the philosophic sense, as Augustine of Hippo and John Calvin certainly understood him to do, in reality he is here and elsewhere far from indulging in such speculation. The freedom of the will to choose, what may be called the autonomy of the self, is something which Paul apparently never questioned. His assertions in these passages rather express his faith that believers have been called into a fellowship, the Church, which, far from being the result of a last minute change of plans on God's part, has always been a part of His eternal purpose. Paul's meaning in these passages is expressed by John

Knox: "From of old and to eternity there is a divine plan which gathers up our lives within its mighty sweep."¹ Likewise, in the long "predestination" passage in Romans 9-11, the subject being discussed is not the free will of the individual versus divine predestination, but the sovereignty of God over all nations, including Israel, who supposed that she had a claim on God. Because the kind of freedom of which he speaks is not the opposite of predestination, but its corollary, Paul asserts both predestination and freedom. Paul simply never speaks of freedom in the philosophic sense of freedom of the will.

Neither does Paul mean by the word "freedom" what is usually meant in modern usage: freedom in the social and political sense. Although Hans Wedell in a very excellent article concerning the meaning of freedom in Paul's theology² relates Paul's doctrine of freedom both to the "emancipation" of women and the emancipation of slaves, neither of these was what Paul had in mind when he spoke of Christian freedom. Certainly it is true that the gospel preached by Paul has been a great force in both areas. Paul personally did much for these two causes. In the very act of sending a runaway slave back to his master, back to slavery, Paul breaks the back of slavery as an institution by treating Onesimus as a person. But Paul's eschatology precluded

¹John Knox, "Introduction and Exegesis of Romans," The Interpreter's Bible, ed. George Buttrick (12 vols.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1952-1957), IX, 374.

²Hans Wedell, "The Idea of Freedom in the Teaching of the Apostle Paul," Anglican Theological Review, XXXII (July, 1950), 204-216.

his attempting any social program to free the slaves; he did not think there was time to bother with that, "in view of the impending distress," and advised the slaves to remain as they were unless they had some opportunity to gain their freedom.³

The Pauline language of freedom, then, is not to be understood in terms of philosophy, psychology, or politics. Since these aspects of the word "freedom" are outside the scope of Paul's theology, they will be left outside the scope of this thesis.

In the following thesis I propose to study one aspect of the theology of Paul, and to set forth my research and conclusions in a somewhat systematic form. However, I do not assert that Paul himself was a systematic theologian who worked out a logical, coherent "doctrine of freedom." On the contrary, the materials from Paul's hand that we have to work with are not theological treatises, spun out in the rarified atmosphere of a seminar on New Testament Theology, but letters. Since Adolf Deissmann, who was among the first to discover that Paul's vocabulary was not a special theological jargon but was the living language of the man on the street,⁴ much of the mustiness has disappeared from Pauline studies due to the fact that Paul's letters have come

³I Cor. 7:20, 21, 26.

⁴Adolf Deissmann, Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History, translated by William E. Wilson (Harper Torchbook Edition; New York: Harper, 1957), pp. 161-183. It is in this key chapter that Deissmann sets forth the proposition that Paul's key words such as justification and redemption are not technical theological words for him and his readers, but readily-understood metaphors common to first-century life.

alive again as letters. Even Romans, the least personal of Paul's letters, is "not a compendium of doctrine."⁵ Rather, it is, "if the intention of the author is the deciding factor, a real letter, not a literary epistle; . . . it is a letter and no book."⁶ This is not to say that Paul was not a theologian. Of course he was a theologian. He could not answer "practical" questions without dragging in his whole theology, as all of I Corinthians shows. But he was not a systematic theologian, and the table of contents of any book on "Pauline Theology" would be a foreign language to him.

Thus, though some type of systematic presentation is necessary in such a study as this, it should be recognized that the systematization is for the most part imposed upon the material rather than derived from it. Knox, in speaking of the relation of the various topics, the Church, the Spirit, the kingdom of God, Christ, love, and community in Paul's thought says:

At the outset it is important to recognize that we are dealing here, not with a series of logically related ideas, but with the actual stuff of Paul's religious life. Any discussion of these terms is bound to take them up in a certain order and therefore is constantly in danger of suggesting that they stand in a certain logical or chronological relation [in Paul's thought], one idea implying another or one experience leading to another.⁷

Paul's religion was devotion to a person rather than

⁵James S. Stewart, A Man in Christ: The Vital Elements of St. Paul's Religion (New York: Harper, n.d.), p. 25.

⁶Deissmann, op. cit., p. 23.

⁷John Knox, Chapters in a Life of St. Paul (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1954), p. 128.

devotion to a system. His thought is bound up inseparably with his experience of the One who spoke to him on the Damascus road. His letters were flung off as occasions arose in "the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches"⁸ which called for them. The following two quotations from Deissmann catch the spirit of what seems to me to be the best approach to studying Paul, an approach that I have tried to make my own in this thesis:

Therefore beside the Paul who has been turned into a Western scholastic philosopher, beside the aristocratised, conventionalised, and modernised Paul, now suffering his eighth imprisonment in the paper bondage of "Paulinism," I would fain set the Paul whom I think to have seen at Tarsus, Jerusalem, and Damascus, in Antioch, Lycaonia, Galatia, Ephesus, and Corinth, and whose words became alive to me at night on the decks of Levant shipping, and to the sound of birds of passage winging their flight towards the Taurus, [who] . . . so far as he can be comprehended historically at all, will be understood not as the incarnation of a system but as a living complex of inner polarities which refuse to be parcelled out . . .⁹

.

Paul is essentially first and foremost a hero of religion. The theological element in him is secondary. Naiveté in him is stronger than reflection; mysticism stronger than dogmatism; Christ means more to him than Christology, God more than the doctrine of God. [And freedom more than the doctrine of freedom.] He is far more a man of prayer, a witness, a confessor, and a prophet, than a learned exegete and a close thinking scholastic.¹⁰

He says he is more like Amos than Aquinas.¹¹

⁸II Cor. 11:28.

⁹Deissmann, op. cit., p. x.

¹⁰Ibid, p. 6.

¹¹Ibid.

So, in succumbing to the necessity of systematization in making this study, it is not expected that Paul would approve of the outline chosen for this or for any other study of "Pauline Theology." But it is hoped that Paul would approve of the main ideas herein set forth, and recognize them as his own.

In regard to the question of which letters in the New Testament are genuine Pauline letters and thus should be used as sources in a study of his theology, I have attempted to steer something of a middle course. Thirteen New Testament epistles bear the name of Paul as their first word. Of these, Rudolf Bultmann uses "only the undoubtedly genuine letters of Paul," that is: Romans, I Corinthians, II Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, I Thessalonians, and Philemon.¹² Knox believes that all the Pauline letter corpus has been worked over by an editor, but that we are still left with nine letters "substantially as they left their author's hand."¹³ He adds II Thessalonians and Colossians to the seven letters used by Bultmann. Deissmann,¹⁴ C.H. Dodd,¹⁵ and A.M. Hunter¹⁶ accept as genuine and make use of ten epistles, that is, of all those letters usually ascribed to Paul except the Pastorals, with Dodd holding slight question

¹²Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, translated by Kendrick Grobel (2 vols.; New York: Scribners, 1951, 1955), I, 190.

¹³Knox, Chapters in a Life of St. Paul, p. 20.

¹⁴Deissmann, op. cit., p. 16.

¹⁵C.H. Dodd, The Meaning of Paul for Today (Fontana Books Edition; London: Collins, 1958), pp. 9-10.

¹⁶A.M. Hunter, Interpreting Paul's Gospel (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), p. 17.

marks over II Thessalonians and Ephesians, and Deissmann over Ephesians and Colossians.

I have attempted to base my study upon these ten epistles, that is, all except the Pastorals, while recognizing that Ephesians, Colossians, and II Thessalonians are questioned by some scholars, and not basing any conclusions upon them alone. I accept the opinion of the great majority of scholars that the Pastorals are not from Paul, at least not in their present form, though they may contain some genuine Pauline fragments. Even if the Pastorals could be accepted as genuine, they would be of no relevance for this study, for they contain neither the word nor the idea of freedom. Obviously Paul's speeches reported in Acts cannot be used as a primary source for Paul's theology. However, Luke's report of Paul's activities and views will be drawn upon for illustrative material.

CHAPTER I

THE PLACE OF FREEDOM IN PAUL'S THEOLOGY

Freedom as a Key to Paul's Thought

"What is the key to Paul's theology?" This question has often been asked, and has been answered in different ways, as scholars have attempted to find one word or phrase in which all of Paul's theology could be summed up.

Since Martin Luther, "justification by faith" has been seized upon by many as the one all-embracing concept by which everything in Paul is to be understood. Bultmann is greatly in debt to Luther at this point, as his New Testament Theology shows throughout. Although I have not seen any place where Bultmann himself says that he thinks "justification" is the clue to Paul's theology, others have said it of him. Julius Schniewind, in his reply to an essay of Bultmann's on demythologizing, says parenthetically that "it was Bultmann in his article on Paul in R.G.G. who taught us that justification is the clue to Pauline theology."¹⁷ Sometimes the emphasis is placed upon "justification," sometimes upon "by faith (alone)," and most often upon the whole phrase,

¹⁷Julius Schniewind, in Rudolf Bultmann, et al., Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate, edited by Hans Bartsch (Harper Torchbook Edition; New York: Harper, 1961), p. 58.

"justification by faith." In any case, the key point of Paul's theology is found to reside in the present experience of the believer rather than in eschatology or in some theory of the atonement. Bultmann has so stressed the importance of the present, inner experience of the believer as the basis for theology, Paul's as well as his own, that he has been accused of "substituting anthropology for theology."¹⁸ The validity of this charge is beside the point here, where our only purpose is to note that some important scholars have chosen "justification" or "justification by faith" as the "key" to Paul's theology. "Protestant theology, throughout a great part of its history, has concentrated on the thought of justification. This it has regarded as more typically Pauline than anything else."¹⁹

Another closely-related word that has been used, by James Denney and others, as the clue to Pauline thought is the word "reconciliation." Denney wrote:

Just because the experience of reconciliation . . . is the central and fundamental experience of the Christian religion, the doctrine of reconciliation is not so much one doctrine in Paul's thought as the inspiration and focus of all. . . . In the experience of reconciliation to God through Christ is to be found the principle and the touchstone of all genuine Christian doctrine.²⁰

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself"²¹ is certainly one of those statements in which Paul himself seems to sum up his faith, and "reconciliation" is a key thought in this statement.

¹⁸Ibid, p. 59.

¹⁹ Stewart, op.cit., p. 148.

²⁰Ibid, p. 149, quoting Denney's The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, p. 6.

²¹II Cor. 5:19.

The concept of reconciliation is also rooted in the present experience of the believer, though having implications both for his past and his future.

We turn now to another proposed answer to the question of the "key" to Paul's theology. Hunter says, "The fundamental question of religion . . . is 'What must I do to be saved?' Paul's theology starts from this question. . . . 'Salvation' is the word we need" to epitomize Paul's theology.²² The keyword "salvation" is more inclusive than the other suggested keys to Paul's theology, says Hunter. According to this view, the key to Pauline thought is not to be found primarily in the present experience of the believer, but is distributed about evenly over his past, present, and future.

As Paul thinks of salvation, he looks back to the time when, by faith, the believer received God's forgiveness in Christ; he dwells on his present blessedness ("this grace wherein we stand"), and he looks forward to the time when, with sin and death no more, he will enjoy the Beatific Vision.²³

Hunter says that Anderson Scott, in his Christianity According to St. Paul, was the first to use "salvation" to "unlock the wards of Paul's theology," and that he borrowed this idea from him.²⁴

John A. T. Robinson is the exponent of still another Pauline concept, "the Body," which he unhesitatingly sets forth as "the" key to Paul's theology.

²²Hunter, op. cit., pp. 21-22.

²³Ibid, p. 22.

²⁴Ibid, p. 9.

One could say without exaggeration that the concept of the body forms the keystone of Paul's theology. In its closely interconnected meanings, the word σῶμα (soma) knits together all his great themes. It is from the body of sin and death that we are delivered; it is through the body of Christ on the cross that we are saved; it is into His body the Church that we are incorporated; it is by His body in the Eucharist that this Community is sustained; it is in our body that its new life is to be manifested; it is to a resurrection of this body to the likeness of His glorious body that we are destined. Here, with the exception of the doctrine of God, are represented all the main tenets of the Christian Faith--the doctrines of Man, Sin, the Incarnation and Atonement, the Church, the Sacraments, Sanctification, and Eschatology. To trace the subtle links and interaction between the different senses of the word σῶμα is to grasp the thread that leads through the maze of Pauline thought.²⁵

Probably the most popular expression which has been used in recent years by scholars as the "key" to Paul's theology is the phrase "in Christ." With this phrase is associated all those theories which find mysticism at the heart of the Pauline theology. Deissmann and Johannes Weiss are among the earliest modern scholars to suggest this view. Deissmann uses several phrases, such as "Christ-mysticism,"²⁶ "of Christ,"²⁷ (which he calls a "mystical genitive") and "Christ-intimacy,"²⁸ as cognates for the Pauline expression "in Christ." Deissmann and most others who adopt this expression as the key to Paul's thought are obviously uncomfortable with the word "mystic" as applied to Paul, and go to great lengths

²⁵John A. T. Robinson, The Body: A Study of Pauline Theology (Studies in Biblical Theology No. 5; Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1952), p. 9.

²⁶Deissmann, op. cit., p. 24.

²⁷Ibid, p. 163

²⁸Ibid, p. 256.

to point out that they are not characterizing Paul as a Hellenistic or Oriental mystic whose goal is absorption into the "All" and whose theme is "the flight of the alone to the Alone," but that Paul's is a wholly different kind of mysticism. For Deissmann, Paul's mysticism is not loss of the human personality in God but sanctification of the personality through the presence of God, not participation in the deity but prostration before the deity, not mysticism that denies personality but mysticism that affirms personality, not union with God but communion with God through Christ, not acting mysticism, but reacting mysticism.²⁹ This latter distinction he especially emphasizes:

His mysticism is not acting mysticism, but reacting mysticism, not a mysticism which strives after absorption in the Deity but a mysticism which receives communion with God as a gift of grace.³⁰

This Christ-mysticism, designated by the Pauline expression "in Christ," has won the consideration of many modern scholars as the central idea in Paul. Wedell says that "the whole of his [Paul's] teaching is based on the idea of being in Christ," and that "We can take this as the now unanimous opinion of scholars. From this central point, all other thoughts spread like rays of the sun."³¹

We have seen that opinion is not quite "unanimous" on this

²⁹ Ibid, pp. 150-151.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 79.

³¹ Wedell, loc. cit., p. 206.

point, but that a significant number of scholars do regard "in Christ" as Paul's main idea is apparent from the following extended quotation from Stewart's A Man in Christ, a book in which Stewart's own thesis is, of course, that "in Christ" is the only handle by which Paul may be truly laid hold of:

"This personal union with Christ," says Garvie, "is the constant dominating factor in the religious experience and moral character of Paul." . . . Dean Inge is equally emphatic. "This intimate relationship with the Spirit-Christ is unquestionably the core of his religion. . . . The critic of St. Paul must give full weight to the constantly repeated words 'in Christ.' The Mystical Christ could do what the idea of a Messiah could never have done. This conception, developed in the Fourth Gospel, has been the life-blood of Christianity ever since." "Christ-faith," says J. Weiss, "Christ-piety, Christ-worship, Christ-mysticism--that is the one focus of Paul's religion; this is the special form in which he experienced Christianity." Professor H.A.A. Kennedy's verdict is a notable one. "This supremely intimate relation of union with Christ constitutes for Paul the pre-supposition of everything that counts in salvation." "Union with Christ," according to Professor H.R. Mackintosh, "is a brief name for all that the apostles mean by salvation." . . . Schweitzer's recent book The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle, while marked by the same rather exaggerated eschatological bias which characterized his earlier work, has this great merit, that it fixes on the experience of union with Christ as the very core of Christianity.³²

Thus much can be said for adopting this phrase as the key which unlocks the door of Pauline theology. It is indeed the most characteristic phrase in the apostle's terminology, occurring 164 times in Paul's letters, including the cognate expressions "in the Lord" and "in Him."³³

All the above views have this in common, that whatever key word or expression is adopted to sum up Paul's theology, an

³²Stewart, op. cit., pp. 150-151.

³³Ibid, p. 155.

emphasis is placed upon the present existence of the believer, as justified, reconciled, saved, a member of the body of Christ, or "in Christ." Dodd considers this a wholesome trend in the study of Paul. Commenting on Romans 5:8-10, he says:

In that repeated "much more" is much virtue. Theology has often represented Paul as though he were supremely or even solely interested in the death of Christ on the cross and the "Atonement" thereby effected. This is a rather ironical fate for one who showed so clearly that his eyes were set upon the risen Christ, and his thought returned gladly again and again to the wonder of the new life he gave. That positive gospel of the resurrection-life in Christ was an even greater thing to Paul than the doctrine of justification, important as that was in clearing the ground of all that cumbered the course.³⁴

Well, what is the key to Paul's theology? Perhaps this is a wrong question, and there is no one word or expression which can be properly set forth as summarizing all of Paul's theology. The fact that many honest answers have been given to this question by competent scholars would indicate that there is no one all-embracing word or formula by which alone Paul may be understood. There seem to be several "keys," all of which are correct to a degree, but no one of which is exclusively correct. This is the opinion of the writer, at least.

After all, Paul himself was a many-sided man. It is doubtful whether Paul himself would have given the same answer to the above question on two consecutive days. He who wrote of "the manifold wisdom of God" cannot himself be captured by one word. In all such discussions about the "key" to Paul's theology,

³⁴Dodd, op. cit., p. 135.

the words of H.J. Cadbury in an article significantly entitled "Concurrent Phases of Paul's Religion" should be kept in mind:

Perhaps it is the variety of his approach that causes our modern difficulty. He has been well called a "prismatic" personality. He has a many-track mind. An analysis of some of the different phases of his religion provides the best hope of a basis for the better understanding of it.³⁵

Aside from this important fact of the "prismatic" personality of Paul, there is another consideration which may account for the variety of expressions which have been chosen as "keywords" in understanding Paul, and this is the fact that Paul's theological language is chiefly metaphorical. Again Deissmann has been a pioneer in recognizing and explicating this:

In the older study of Paul it was generally the custom first to isolate the so-called "concepts" of justification, redemption, reconciliation, forgiveness, and so forth, and then from these isolated and thereby theologically stiffened "concepts" to reconstruct the "system" of "Paulinism."

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We will select only those of Paul's pictorial expressions for salvation in Christ, which have most seriously suffered violence at the hands of Paulinism-investigators. There are other synonyms, but the following five are the most important: justification, reconciliation, forgiveness, redemption, adoption. . . .

These classical words have exerted such an enormous influence upon later dogma that they have themselves in the passage of centuries become covered with so thick a coating of dogmatic verdegriis, that for many people it has become difficult to recognize the original meaning. But to the pre-dogmatic simple person of the ancient world the original meaning was clear, because he understood without difficulty that the apostolic words were pictorial.

In each of these five picture-words man stands before

³⁵H.J. Cadbury, "Concurrent Phases of Paul's Religion," Contemporary Thinking about Paul, edited by Thomas S. Kepler (Nashville: Abingdon, 1950), p. 255.

God--each time in a different guise before the same God: first as an accused person, secondly as an enemy, thirdly as a debtor, fourthly and fifthly as a slave. He stands there before God, but he is separated from God by a terrible barrier: by sin, the flesh, the world, the law. Transferred into the position "in Christ" he experiences the setting aside of the barrier and finds access to God. And in accordance with the particular picture which Paul uses, this access to God in Christ is called acquittal, or reconciliation, or remission, or redemption, or adoption. Paul, the architect, did not plan five or more doors side by side, or one after the other, into the royal palace of grace, but one single open door. But he had many different sketches of the janua vitae--the doorway to life--in his mind.³⁶ (Emphasis mine.)

I quote this lengthy passage because I will have occasion to refer to it later, and because I regard it as a classic expression of the point I am now attempting to make, namely that different words may be chosen to express the "key" to Pauline theology because Paul himself used different words, different metaphors, to express the one reality that had apprehended him in Christ. A man can use different, even conflicting metaphors, to express that which borders on the inexpressible,³⁷ and this is just what Paul does: he seizes upon every idea and relationship in his environment which can be used to communicate the good news of what had happened on Good Friday and Easter, and had happened to him on the Damascus road.

It does not dilute Paul's theology to call these words metaphors; it only makes it understandable.

³⁶Deissmann, op. cit., pp. 166-168.

³⁷The ejaculatory utterance in II Cor. 9:15, "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift," indicates that Paul must have pondered the inadequacy of language to really express the gift of God to the world in Jesus Christ.

It is right to call these ideas metaphors and to avoid the danger of carrying metaphors too far. . . . They are concurrent--synonyms for the same fact. . . . But we must not think, because they are metaphors or because there are so many of them, that the idea for which they stand is metaphorical too. The underlying fact for Paul is perfectly real and true.³⁸

There are several great Pauline words and phrases, then, which lie near to the heart of his theology. "Justification by faith," "reconciliation," "salvation," "the Body," in Christ," and "love" are all such words. There is another word which also stands in such a list. The word is "freedom."

Freedom is one of the basic, central ideas of Paul. If Paul had been asked to sum up all that the Christian life meant to him in one word or phrase, on some days he no doubt would have chosen "justification by faith" or "in Christ," on others "salvation" or "reconciliation," but on others he surely would have said "freedom," particularly during the stormy days of the Galatian trouble and the Jerusalem conference. That freedom was not just a passing phase of Paul's thought can be seen from the fact that it occurs as a dominant theme in both Galatians, which, according to most chronologies, stands among the earliest of Paul's letters, and Romans, which everyone agrees is among his latest. Thus several years separate these two letters (assuming an early date for Galatians), yet both sound the note of Christian freedom.

I have found only one author who asserts that freedom is

³⁸Cadbury, loc. cit., p. 257.

Paul's "thesis." E.M. Martinson, in an essay which is more of a homily on Paul in general than an exegetical study of the doctrine of freedom in Paul's thought, says: "'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.' That is the thesis of the apostle Paul."³⁹

As stated previously, to declare that "freedom" or any other one word represents the thesis of Paul is to claim too much. But there are several scholars who have asserted that the idea of freedom is near the center of Paul's theology, that freedom is one of the Pauline keywords.

Thus E.F. Scott, in discussing the "cardinal principles" of Paul's religion, speaks of grace and faith, the Spirit, union with Christ, and then says:

Again, Christianity is for Paul the religion of liberty. "Christ has made you free;" this idea is ever and again repeated in different words, and may almost be taken as the central motive of Paul's message. [Could this be a typist's or printer's error for "central motif?"] He thinks of the Christian as released from all earthly bonds; to his own master he stands or falls; he judges all things but is himself judged by no man. . . . There can, indeed, be no true liberty which is not founded on Paul's conception of man as a spiritual being, who lives in this material world but is subject to another, and who cannot, therefore, accept any earthly authority as final.⁴⁰ (Emphasis mine.)

J.E. Frame points out the importance of the concept of freedom in Paul's thought by saying, "The starting point of Paul's religious thought is the conviction that he has been delivered."⁴¹ (Emphasis mine.) And Knox says, "Paul's central theme [is] . . .

³⁹E.M. Martinson, "Spiritual Freedom as Paul's Thesis," Biblical Review, XX (October, 1930), p. 539.

⁴⁰E.F. Scott, "Difficulties in Paul's Religion," Contemporary Thinking about Paul, pp. 357-358.

⁴¹J.E. Frame, "Paul's Idea of Deliverance," Journal of Biblical Literature, XLIX (January, 1930), p. 2.

the way in which men, so often defeated by their own misguided efforts, may gain entry to a life which will be full and free."⁴²
(Emphasis mine.)

That Bultmann regards freedom as one of the central ideas of Paul is evidenced by the fact that in his outline of Paul's theology, "Freedom" stands alongside "The Righteousness of God," "Grace," and "Faith" as one of the four main topics he uses to outline Paul's teaching on the Christian man.⁴³

In the same vein, Dodd testifies to the centrality of the idea of freedom in Paul's thought. Speaking of the preaching of the young Paul, Dodd says:

It was above all a religion of emancipation. "For liberty you were called" is the watchword of Paul's great controversy. This liberty rested upon a personal and inward relation to Christ, replacing allegiance to laws and traditional institutions.⁴⁴ (Emphasis mine.)

Dodd further indicates that the idea of deliverance or freedom is implicit even in those key words of the Pauline theology which do not explicitly speak of freedom.

It will help towards the appreciation of what Paul meant by the forensic term "justification" if we consider other figures which he uses to describe the same experience. It is emancipation, deliverance from the yoke of an external moral standard and from the tyranny of evil habit. The justified man is like a slave freed from his master's power; or like a widow whom her husband's death has emancipated from the absolute dominion (potestas) into which Roman Law gave the married woman; or like the heir who on attaining

⁴²Knox, "Exegesis of Romans," loc. cit., p. 375.

⁴³Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, I, viii-ix.

⁴⁴Dodd, op. cit., p. 24.

his majority bids farewell to guardians and trustees, and becomes master in his own house. It is no mere change of status of which Paul speaks in such metaphors. It is a real deliverance . . .⁴⁵ (Emphasis mine.)

More than one scholar thus asserts that the common denominator of the Pauline metaphors for salvation is the idea of freedom. Deissmann gives justification, reconciliation, forgiveness, redemption, and adoption as five of the key picture-words in Paul's thought.⁴⁶ But these five metaphors are not as diverse as may appear at first glance; freedom is involved in four of the five. Thus, with respect to justification, Deissmann says, "In Christ this accused person becomes unaccused; he is awarded not condemnation but liberty."⁴⁷ (Emphasis mine.) And, although Deissmann does not point this out, adoption also is closely related to the freedom-concept for Paul. In Galatians 4:7 and Romans 8:15 for instance, the opposite of "sonship" is "slavery." Paul often thinks of the freedom which the son has that the slave does not have. In regard to all the Pauline metaphors used for the salvation experience by Paul, Deissmann explicitly says:

Here in one glance it can be seen what the essence of Pauline Christianity is: the certainty that one has been released from the dark many-walled prison . . . of evil, and rescued into the place of light and freedom, the one sphere of salvation in Christ.⁴⁸ (Emphasis mine.)

⁴⁵Ibid, pp. 127-128.

⁴⁶Above, p. 15.

⁴⁷Deissmann, op. cit., p. 168.

⁴⁸Ibid, p. 298.

Freedom, then, is not merely a tangential aspect of Paul's thought, but one of the fundamental ideas of his whole theology.

Origin and Sources of Paul's Doctrine of Freedom

Although Paul is the foremost advocate of freedom in the New Testament, he is not the originator of the idea. Paul is not to be regarded as an innovator, as he was considered to be by an older generation of New Testament scholars. F.C. Bauer is representative of this older school, and his view, in simplified form, is stated by Otto Betz:

In his view, the teaching of Jesus formed the basis of the New Testament. It was not theology, but strictly religion--the immediate expression of religious consciousness. Theological reflection started over the place of the Law. Paul was the first theological thinker. This put him in opposition to the Jewish Christians, who, as his antithesis, adhered to the Law.⁴⁹

This view that Paul was the great innovator, that Christianity took a radical new turn with him, even finds expression in some contemporary scholars such as Scott, who says, "Paul was the first man in history who was really free. . . . The idea of Christianity as the religion of freedom was, in the full extent, peculiar to Paul . . ." ⁵⁰ Most scholars of today, however, would agree with Bultmann that Paul was neither the first nor the only

⁴⁹Otto Betz, "Biblical Theology, History of," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, edited by George Buttrick (4 vols.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), I, 434.

⁵⁰Scott, op. cit., p. 357.

advocate of freedom: "The Torah-free attitude of Hellenistic Christianity is by no means simply a result of Paul's struggle against the Judaizers, and much less was his defense of freedom from the law either then or later the only one in force."⁵¹

The origin of the idea of freedom in the early Church has been supposed to have developed in the following manner. The earliest Christian community, the Jewish congregation in Jerusalem, continued to keep the Law, seeing no conflict between the Law and Christianity. Then Paul, who had been reared in a Greek environment and had Greek ideas, interpolated the idea of freedom into Christianity. Thus the Christian doctrine of freedom is to be understood in the light of a Greek origin. This view does have some validity. Undoubtedly a Greek environment had given Paul an opportunity to appreciate liberal ideas in a way that the twelve could never have done. But such a view is inadequate to explain Paul's doctrine of freedom, and the development of the doctrine of freedom in the early Church, in that it minimizes, among other things, Paul's acknowledged debt to those who were in Christ before him. In the words of H.J. Schoeps,

No doubt it is certain that in the circle of the twelve there was no figure so richly endowed as that of the apostle to the Gentiles, and it is certain too that as a thinker and a spiritually significant personality he was far superior to the comparatively naive personalities of the other apostles. But however highly we estimate the genius and originality of this apostle, we shall hardly suppose that his form of the Christian gospel represents something entirely new, and that

⁵¹Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, I, 109.

he is not dependent in part on the teaching about the faith which, before his joining it, the first Christian Church had for several years spread abroad.⁵²

Discussing Paul's knowledge of the historical Jesus, Hunter says that we have now learned "how much Paul owed to his seniors in Christ,"⁵³ and this could also be said of Paul's doctrine of freedom.

Before discussing further the actual sources of, and influences on, Paul's doctrine of freedom, I would like to further pursue the idea that Paul did not derive his freedom-doctrine from the Greeks.

In 1902 Weiss published a lecture entitled Die Christliche Freiheit nach der Verkündigung des Apostles Paulus.⁵⁴

According to Weiss, Paul's idea of freedom has its roots in Greek philosophy, especially in Stoicism. In this lecture, Weiss insists that Paul must have attended a school of rhetoric, and especially tries to prove a relationship between Paul and Seneca (4-65 A.D.) and Paul and Epictetus (50-130 A.D.). Weiss of course realizes that Epictetus lived a generation after Paul, but argues that Epictetus only repeats the older teaching that was current in Paul's day. The Stoics emphasized that

⁵²H.J. Schoeps, Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History, translated by Harold Knight (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), p. 59.

⁵³Hunter, op. cit., p. 58.

⁵⁴I have not read this lecture, which so far as I know has not been translated into English. The above summary is taken from Wedell, loc. cit., pp. 205-206.

only the truly wise man is free. Weiss pictures Paul as absorbing the sermons on freedom preached daily in the market place at Tarsus by the wandering Stoic preachers.

Weiss also sets forth the idea that Paul's teaching on Christian liberty is derived from Stoicism in his magnum opus on earliest Christianity:

That Paul calls this condition where man is able to do the good, "liberty," also shows dependence on Stoic literary usage, according to which only the wise man is really free, and freedom consists in this, namely that a man has his will under control. . . .

Especially does the play on the ideas of freedom and slavery in Rom. 6:18, 20--free from sin, to have become slaves of righteousness; slaves of sin, free in respect to righteousness, remind us of the Stoic paradox.⁵⁵

He gives three Stoic "parallels" to Paul's line of thought in Romans seven.

But Paul's idea of freedom is so different from that of the Greeks in general, and the Stoics in particular, that it is very doubtful that they share anything except a few terms, and very doubtful that either was derived from the other.

In Paul, freedom is not something native to man, or something which may be attained by will power or philosophy. The freedom of the Christian man is for Paul the freedom of one who has been set free, delivered, by a mighty act of the living God. It is "the freedom for which Christ set us free."⁵⁶ Anders Nygren,

⁵⁵Johannes Weiss, Earliest Christianity: A History of the Period A.D. 30-150, translated by F.C. Grant (2 vols.; Harper Torchbook edition; New York: Harper, 1959), II, 516.

⁵⁶Gal. 5:1.

who believes freedom is the theme of the four chapters Romans 5-8, says of them:

Again and again in these four chapters, he repeats the words "through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is particularly to be noted that each of these chapters ends with these words. When Paul here speaks of the new life of the Christian, he is at pains to say that all which he is affirming is true only "in Christ" and through Him. Without Christ we would always remain in bondage to the powers of the world.⁵⁷

A second significant difference between Pauline freedom and Greek freedom is that there is in Paul none of the Greek "imprisonment of the spirit in a fleshly body," and neither conversion nor death is regarded by Paul as release from flesh or matter.⁵⁸

The third telling difference between Paul and the Greeks (Stoics) at this point is that for them freedom was an individual matter while for Paul it was a corporate matter. Morton Scott Enslin quotes Epictetus as saying:

That man is free who lives as he wishes; who is proof against compulsion, hindrance, and violence: whose impulses are untrammelled: who gets what he wills to get, and avoids what he wills to avoid.⁵⁹

Enslin then adds:

The goal of the Stoic was to stand aloof in untroubled serenity on the mountain peak. . . . For Paul the goal was to unite all into a group of earnest men and women, united

⁵⁷Anders Nygren, Commentary on Romans, translated by Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1949), p. 194.

⁵⁸Bultmann elaborates extensively on this point in Kerygma and Myth, p. 17.

⁵⁹Morton Scott Enslin, The Ethics of Paul (New York: Harper, 1930), p. 39.

to their Lord by faith, and living in a manner worthy of him.⁶⁰

Thus the older theory of Bauer and Weiss seems to have lost caste in the world of scholarship. Although Greek influence upon Paul's doctrine of freedom, as is the case with his theology in general, is not entirely lacking, it is considered to be much less than formerly. Cosmopolitan citizen of the Empire though he was, Paul was no Hellenist of the Hellenists, but, after all, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and the eyes which once were turned toward Athens for help in understanding Paul are now turned toward Jerusalem.

If, then, we are not to look to Stoicism as a source for Paul's freedom-doctrine, where are we to look? The answer is threefold: the pre-Pauline Hellenistic Church, the teaching of Jesus, and Paul's own experience.

In the place of first importance, there stands the pre-Pauline Hellenistic Christianity which had already made a real, but embryonic, break with the Law before Paul came on the scene. As Bultmann points out, the earliest church in Jerusalem does not seem to have given a clear answer to the question of whether or not the Law is still binding upon Christians, or even to have clearly asked this question, although "in practice . . . a relative liberty toward the cultic-ritual demands of the Law must have existed."⁶¹ But when it became apparent that the

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, I, 54.

Hellenistic wing of this earliest Church was taking a very casual attitude toward the ancient Law of Israel, a retrogression set in so that the Jerusalem church lost even its rudimentary freedom, and never achieved freedom from the Law.⁶²

Paul's theology, however, must be seen against the background of the Hellenistic Church, and not as a development of conservative Palestinian Christianity. Knox, basing his view on the epistles alone and regarding Acts as very untrustworthy historically, believes that "it is likely that Paul's whole experience with Christianity, both as persecutor and as evangelist, lay outside of Palestine. Paul is a product of extra-Palestinian Christianity . . ." ⁶³ Whether Knox's view of the historical value of Acts be accepted or not, it certainly is true that Paul was never an "insider" so far as Jewish Christianity is concerned and that Bultmann's judgment that "the historical presupposition for Paul's theology is not the kerygma of the oldest Church but that of the Hellenistic Church" ⁶⁴ must be accepted.

That the Hellenistic Church had already made some kind of break with the Law is to be surmised from the charges that were brought against Stephen and by his speech to his accusers, ⁶⁵ and by the fact that some of those who were scattered in the

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Knox, Chapters in a Life of St. Paul, p. 65.

⁶⁴ Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, I, 63.

⁶⁵ Acts 6-7.

persecution which broke out in connection with his death carried on an evangelistic mission to Gentiles in Antioch.⁶⁶ Thus not Paul, but some courageous and sensitive individuals whose names we do not know were the first to sense that with the advent of Christ the religion of law was finished, and to include freedom as an element of their gospel. The Church by which and into which Paul was converted⁶⁷ was a church already aware of its freedom in Christ to some degree, and this fact must have first consideration in discussing the origin of Paul's idea of freedom.

The second source of Paul's idea of freedom is the teaching of the historic Jesus. Although the only actual references to freedom in the Gospels are Matthew 17:26 and John 8:33-36, neither of which may be certainly taken as the actual words of Jesus, and Luke 4:18, which is in a quotation from the Old Testament, the teaching of Jesus must still be considered as a source of Paul's doctrine of freedom, for the entire thrust of Jesus' life and teaching was in the opposite direction of legalism. In reference to Jesus' words about coming "not to abolish but to fulfill" the Law,⁶⁸ Stewart says that "surely the intention of the words is not to rehabilitate legalism, . . . and moreover, the incarnation could be called a 'fulfilling of the law in the

⁶⁶Acts 11:20.

⁶⁷By this I do not intend to discount Paul's conversion experience and encounter with the living Christ near Damascus, but only to say that this occurred within the context of Hellenistic, and not Palestinian, Christianity.

⁶⁸Matt. 5:17.

sense of Paul's statement that 'the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.'"⁶⁹ Even in the references from the Gospels mentioned above where Jesus speaks of freedom, the thought is true to the authentic teaching of Jesus, although the wording reflects the Sitz im Leben of the early Church rather than the events of Jesus' ministry. The hands are the hands of the early Church, but the voice is the voice of Jesus.

Luke undoubtedly catches the spirit of Jesus' ministry when he places the proclamation of "release to the captives" and "liberty to the oppressed" among the announced objectives of Jesus' ministry in His "keynote address" in the synagogue at Nazareth.⁷⁰ Freedom was an element of the gospel preached by Jesus, and this must have had its effect upon Paul. W.M. Ramsay, who emphasizes the Greek character of Paul, says flatly: "We can trace this Pauline idea [freedom] back to its origin in the teachings of Christ."⁷¹

To be sure, there are at least surface differences in their respective attitudes toward the Law. Paul felt that the Law was something from which a person needed to be redeemed-- on a par with Sin, though not to be identified with Sin. Jesus never so speaks of the Law, but rather deepens and enlarges our understanding of the meaning of the Law. He does not explicitly proclaim freedom from the Law as a part of His gospel, but He does

⁶⁹Stewart, op. cit., p. 292.

⁷⁰Lu. 4:18.

⁷¹W.M. Ramsay, The Cities of St. Paul (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1907), p. 38.

so transform the Law that it is hardly law any longer, as the Sermon on the Mount shows so plainly. The teaching of Jesus, then, may be properly named among those sources from which Paul drew inspiration in developing his own doctrine of freedom.

The third factor in the origin and development of Paul's doctrine of freedom was his own experience, of which three elements will be mentioned: his educational and cultural background, his conversion experience, and his controversies with the Judaizers.

It has already been mentioned that Paul's first-hand knowledge of the Greek world gave him a potentially more liberal spirit than any of the twelve could have had. It is also possible that Paul's Jewish education helped to prepare the way for his doctrine of freedom. It was taught in some circles of first-century Judaism that when the Messiah came, the Law would be abrogated.⁷² Perhaps this had been a part of Paul's education, so that, as soon as he was convinced that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, he was ready to give up the Law and proclaim the gospel of Christian freedom. Also the fact that Paul alone of the apostles had been a Pharisee, dedicated to seeking righteousness by means of obeying the demands of the Law which his sensitive nature told him he could never fulfill, is a factor in accounting for the vigor with which he preached Christian freedom after he was convinced that he was no longer under the Law.

Paul's conversion experience was a crucial factor in the

⁷²See Albert Schweitzer, The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle, translated by Wm. Montgomery (London: Black, 1931), p. 69.

development of all of his theology, and has a particular bearing on his doctrine of freedom. However it be explained, it is apparent from both the Acts accounts and Paul's references to it in his letters, that his conversion experience was for him a shattering, earth-shaking experience in which all of life was reoriented around this one fact: Jesus was alive, and was indeed the Christ. Bultmann indicates how closely the idea of freedom is related to Paul's personal experience by saying:

Recognizing how basically the Torah was called into question by the Hellenistic mission, that meant whether he was willing to acknowledge in the cross of Christ God's judgment upon his self-understanding up to that time-- i.e. God's condemnation of his Jewish striving after righteousness by fulfilling the works of the Law. After he had first indignantly rejected this question and become a persecutor of the Church, at his conversion he submitted to this judgment of God.⁷³

Paul spoke so fervently of freedom because he knew himself to have been set free by the Christ who had claimed him on the Damascus road.

A third relevant factor in the experience of Paul is his conflict with the Judaizers. Others had preached the doctrine of Christian freedom before Paul, but it was Paul who was to lead the battle against the resurrection of legalism within the Church, and so it was Paul who was called upon to formulate and defend the principles underlying his gospel of freedom. As Bultmann says, "Standing within the frame of Hellenistic Christianity he raised

⁷³Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, I, 187.

the theological motifs that were at work in the proclamation of the Hellenistic Church to the clarity of theological thinking,"⁷⁴ and Paul was forced into this by the conflicts with the Judaizers. It was in the crucible of conflict that Paul's emphasis upon freedom comes most clearly into focus, as the Galatian epistle illustrates.

Paul's Vocabulary of Freedom

Something about the place of freedom in Paul's thought may be indicated by a survey of his freedom vocabulary. Paul has no one word which he consistently uses to express his idea of freedom. His doctrine of freedom involves a whole cluster of words. Since this thesis is not a word study, the following paragraphs are not intended to be an exhaustive treatment. I merely want to list Paul's freedom words, and give some indication of the frequency and manner of his use of them.

There are several words used by Paul which, when translated into English, appear to be related to the idea of freedom, but which are really irrelevant to the idea of the freedom of the Christian man as set forth by Paul. Among these are χάρισμα, translated "free gift," λύσις, translated "to be free," ἀμέριμνος, translated "free from anxieties," ἀδάπανος, translated "free of charge," αὐθαίρετος, translated "of their own free will," and ἑκούσιος, translated "of your own free will." Obviously such words, though they will be found under "Free" or

⁷⁴Ibid.

"Freedom" in an English concordance, are not a part of Paul's freedom vocabulary.

There are a total of eight different words used by Paul in connection with his doctrine of freedom, of which ἐλευθερία and its cognates and ἀπολύτρωσις are the principal ones. The eight are discussed in the following paragraphs.

ἐλευθερία

The noun ἐλευθερία occurs six times in Paul,⁷⁵ always in the sense of religious freedom, freedom as a quality of the "newness of life" given by Jesus Christ, and always unqualified. This word also occurs four times in the New Testament aside from Paul, always used only of religious freedom.

Of the twenty-three times which the adjective ἐλεύθερος occurs in the New Testament, sixteen of them are in Paul. This word is the usual, "secular" word for freedom in the sense of not being a slave, but is used by Paul four times, and by the other New Testament writers three times, in the sense of religious freedom.

The verb ἐλευθερώω is used seven times in the New Testament, always in the sense of religious freedom. Five of these occurrences are in Paul, the other two are in John.

Neither the noun, adjective, nor verb are theological terms, but bear the same meaning as the English words "freedom," "free,"

⁷⁵Word counts are taken from W.F. Moulton and A.S. Geden, A Concordance to the Greek Testament (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1926).

and "(make) free" respectively.⁷⁶ It is a metaphorical use of them when Paul utilizes them to express the Christian's freedom from wrath, Sin, Law, Death, and the Cosmic Powers.

ἀπολύτρωσις

This word, usually translated "redemption," and its cognates λυτρόω, λύτρωσις, ἀπολύω, and λυτρώτης, are all derived from the first-year Greek student's old friend, λύω,⁷⁷ which means simply "I loose," and all these derivatives retain this basic idea of the root. Of these words, Paul uses only ἀπολύτρωσις, which occurs seven times in his writings.

This is the most colorful and graphic of Paul's freedom words, it was immediately understood by his readers, and it is unfortunate that the English word "redemption" by which it has been translated has come to have such abstruse theological overtones. The word originally meant "buying back a slave or captive, making him free by the payment of a ransom."⁷⁸ Dodd says that "emancipation" is its best English equivalent, and that "the secondary meanings which the word has acquired are foreign to the language of Paul."⁷⁹ He further says:

Redemption was the process by which a slave obtained his freedom. Thousands of Jews taken prisoners in the wars had been sold into slavery in the Roman dominions, and it

⁷⁶Unless otherwise noted, the meanings of all Greek words listed are taken from W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957).

⁷⁷Leslie R. Elliott, A Comparative Lexicon of New Testament Greek (Kansas City: Central Seminary Press, 1945), p. 51.

⁷⁸Arndt and Gingrich, op. cit., p. 95.

⁷⁹Dodd, op. cit., p. 58.

was a popular work of benevolence for wealthy Jews to "redeem" them into liberty. That is the source of the metaphor.⁸⁰

Deissmann says that the metaphor might be related to the practice of a slave's saving his money and buying his freedom to become the "slave" of the temple-god.⁸¹ In either case, "When Paul told his converts they were 'redeemed' by Christ's sacrifice, he was employing a metaphor which spoke to them with vivid power, for redemption from slavery was a familiar, everyday process in their world."⁸²

The word ἀπολύτρωσις is further enriched in meaning by its association with the Old Testament word לַקַּיָּא, "redeemer." "The word 'redeemer' (Heb. go'el) was derived from the fact that, if a man sold himself into slavery, the obligation to buy back his freedom for him rested upon a kinsman."⁸³ The idea of the לַקַּיָּא as the blood-avenger, the vindicator, is thus only a resultant meaning from this first, basic meaning. So when God is described as redeemer, the root idea is that he is that worthy kinsman who buys us out of slavery.

δικαίω

Unlike the preceding words, the basic meaning of δικαίω is not "freedom" but "acquittal." When, however, it is understood

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 57.

⁸¹ Deissmann, op. cit., p. 173.

⁸² Hunter, op. cit., p. 85.

⁸³ F.J. Taylor, "Redeem, Redeemer, Redemption, Ransom, Purchase," A Theological Wordbook of the Bible, edited by Alan Richardson, (New York: Macmillan, 1951), p. 186.

that Paul takes this word from the courtroom and uses it metaphorically of the Christian's experience of salvation, it is easy to see its relation to his doctrine of freedom. The accused, though guilty, is not condemned. Instead, he is acquitted, justified, and receives liberty in place of condemnation. Thus although δικαίω is translated "free" only once,⁸⁴ the idea of freedom is never far from it. It is used twenty-two times by Paul, and its noun forms δικαιοσύνη, δικαίωμα, and δικαίωσις are used a total of fifty-seven times by him.

ῥωτηρία

The noun ῥωτηρία is used fifteen times by Paul, and although its basic meaning is "deliverance,"⁸⁵ it is so translated by the Revised Standard Version only in Philippians 1:19. Likewise the verb ῥῶω, used by Paul twenty-one times, is a word closely related to the idea of freedom, though Arndt and Gingrich list "free" as one of its meanings only in relation to sickness.⁸⁶ I am not criticizing the way these words have traditionally been translated, only saying that freedom is akin to their basic meaning. For instance, ῥῶω in Romans 5:9 clearly carries the idea of "be made free from, be delivered from" in the clause "much more shall be saved by him from the wrath of God."

⁸⁴This is in Rom. 6:7, where the Revised Standard Version renders ἡδικαίωται ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας as "freed from sin."

⁸⁵Arndt and Gingrich, op. cit., p. 808.

⁸⁶Ibid, p. 744.

The noun σωτήρ is not one of Paul's favorite titles for Christ, occurring in his writings only twice.

ἀγοράζω

This word or its cognate ἐξαγοράζω occurs seven times in Paul, four times in its metaphorical use of Christians who have been bought out of slavery by Christ. Thus when used in this sense they carry the same meaning as ἀπολύτρωσις.

ῥυθμίς

This word, which means "save, rescue, deliver, set free," is used seven times by Paul, three in its ordinary, "secular" sense, three in its metaphorical sense of the deliverance wrought by Christ in behalf of believers, and once in a quotation from the Old Testament.

ἐξουσία

Only once in Paul does this word carry the sense of freedom, in I Corinthians 8:9, where it is translated "liberty." Its usual meaning, "right," "authority," or "power," in the sense of autonomy, is of course related to the idea of freedom.

ἐξαιρέω

This word, which means basically "take out, tear out," is used only once by Paul, in Galatians 1:4. Here it is used in its resultant meaning, "set free, deliver."

καταργέω

The basic meaning of καταργέω is "make ineffective, powerless, idle." A derived meaning is "to be released from an association with something or someone." Paul uses the word twenty-four times, but only once, in Romans 7:6, with the latter meaning.

CHAPTER II

THE MEANING OF FREEDOM IN PAUL'S THEOLOGY

The idea of spiritual freedom has for Paul, as for the authors of the Bible in general, two main aspects, which might be characterized by the phrases "freedom from" and "freedom for." I have borrowed the terminology of an essay by Paul Lehman in calling these two aspects respectively deliverance and fulfillment.⁸⁷

Freedom as Deliverance: "Freedom from"

Who are those tyrants from which the Christian is delivered? What is the Christian free from? As noted in the Introduction to this thesis,⁸⁸ Paul never gives any systematic answer to this question, so any itemizing of those Powers to which Christians had been subject is somewhat arbitrary. Different lists of these Powers have been formulated by different scholars. For instance, Nygren⁸⁹ and William Baird⁹⁰ list wrath, Sin, Law, and Death; Bultmann⁹¹ and

⁸⁷Paul Lehman, "Deliverance and Fulfillment: The Biblical View of Salvation," Interpretation, V (October, 1951).

⁸⁸Above, pp. 3-4.

⁸⁹Nygren, op. cit., p. 32.

⁹⁰William Baird, Paul's Message and Mission (Nashville: Abingdon, 1960), p. 153.

⁹¹Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, I. 279.

Warren Quanbeck⁹² list Sin, Law, and Death; William Hamilton⁹³ lists Sin, suffering, and Death; Hunter lists Sin, flesh, and Death in one place,⁹⁴ and Sin, flesh, and Law in another⁹⁵ as the "terrible triumvirate" from which man needs to be delivered; Lehman⁹⁶ lists wrath, Sin, Death, the Powers of darkness, and the Devil; W. Morgan⁹⁷ lists Demons, Law, and Sin; Deissmann⁹⁸ gives Sin, flesh, Death, Law, the World (including demonic powers) and suffering as those elements from which the Christian has been made free in Christ.

Which of these is the "correct" list? Obviously no one of them is "correct," in the sense that it and it alone represents Paul's thought; all of them are analyses of something which Paul never analyzes. All of these Powers belong together in his thought. To use Brunner's figure,⁹⁹ they are all partners in one firm: Sin, Law, and Death, Inc. Paul himself says in a key passage related to his doctrine of freedom: "There is therefore

⁹²Warren Quanbeck, "Theological Reorientation: The Thought of the Epistle to the Romans," Interpretation, XIV (July, 1960), p. 264.

⁹³William Hamilton, "A Theology for Modern Man: A Study of the Epistle to the Romans," Interpretation, IX (October, 1957), pp. 399-403.

⁹⁴Hunter, op. cit., p. 22.

⁹⁵Ibid, p. 23.

⁹⁶Lehman, loc. cit., p. 393.

⁹⁷W. Morgan, The Religion and Theology of Paul (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1917), p. 69.

⁹⁸Deissmann, op. cit., pp. 179-181.

⁹⁹Emil Brunner, The Letter to the Romans (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959), p. 57.

now no condemnation [wrath] for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death."¹⁰⁰ Here, condemnation (wrath), Law, Sin, and Death are all inseparably related, and regarded as one reality from which the Christian is delivered. Likewise in I Corinthians 15:56 Paul mentions Sin, Law, and Death as cooperating Powers over which the Christian is victorious through Christ, and Galatians 4:3-4 seems to connect "the elemental spirits of the universe" to the Law. In Romans 4:15 Paul relates wrath and the Law. Luther points out that in Paul Law, Sin, and wrath are interrelated Powers.¹⁰¹ Nygren, who follows Luther's interpretation of Romans closely, further says:

According to Paul there is an intimate relation between these powers of destruction. To Paul death is the "last enemy," the terrifying ruler who gathers in his hands all the threads of the old aeon; it bears the scepter of absolute sovereignty. But death has that power only with the help of sin. Sin is the weapon, the "sting," which death uses to bring humanity under its dominion. But sin, in turn, would not have much power, were it not for the law. Thus Paul calls the law "the power of sin."¹⁰²

Analyzing Paul's doctrine of freedom into various topics, then, is something foreign to Paul's understanding of these Powers from which the Christian has been freed, and is done only for convenience. Since wrath, Sin, Law, Death, and the Cosmic Powers

¹⁰⁰Rom. 8:1-2. See discussion of this passage in Appendix to this thesis.

¹⁰¹Martin Luther, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, translated by J. Theodore Mueller (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954), p. 92.

¹⁰²Nygren, op. cit., p. 265.

are explicitly named by Paul as Powers from which the Christian is delivered by Christ,¹⁰³ I have chosen to organize my discussion of "Freedom as Deliverance" around these five topics.

Freedom from Wrath

Bultmann surely expresses the mind of Paul when he says, "We can speak of God's grace only when we speak of his wrath."¹⁰⁴ Paul speaks of the wrath of God as something from which the Christian has been set free.¹⁰⁵

The Greek word ὀργή is used both of the anger of man and the wrath of God. The word occurs twenty times in Paul, all but two of them referring to the wrath of God. Nine times, Paul explicitly speaks of "the wrath of God," "God's wrath," or "his wrath." Sometimes, he simply calls it "the wrath," meaning the wrath of God. For Paul, wrath is both a present¹⁰⁶ and a future¹⁰⁷ (eschatological) work of God.

A very important point is made by Bultmann, that for Paul wrath is not a quality of God, but an action, a work, an event, of which God is the source.¹⁰⁸ Paul never says that God is angry, but that he reveals (that is, puts-into-action) His wrath. So,

¹⁰³I Th. 1:10; Rom. 6:22, 8:2; Gal. 4:4, 8-9.

¹⁰⁴Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, I, 262.

¹⁰⁵Rom. 5:9, 8:1; I Th. 1:10.

¹⁰⁶Rom. 1:18, 13:4; Eph. 5:6; I Th. 2:16.

¹⁰⁷Rom. 2:5, 2:8, 5:9; I Th. 1:10.

¹⁰⁸Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, I, 288.

the wrath of God was not thought of by Paul as "vindictive rage or the emotional reaction of an irritated self-concern,"¹⁰⁹ but as the action that a holy God takes against sin. There is great danger in thinking of God's wrath in human terms, of supposing that by the wrath of God Paul meant something akin to what we mean by the wrath of a man: an emotional outburst of anger. As Stewart says, "Between the wrath of God and most of what this world calls wrath, no parallel exists."¹¹⁰ God is never portrayed by Paul as a petty tyrant pounding on His throne with His clenched fist and demanding the blood of His enemies.

When all this has been said, however, we still do not understand Paul if we go to the opposite extreme and make the wrath of God to be for him simply the natural result of sin in a moral universe. Dodd seems to tend in this direction, as the following quotations indicate:

"The Wrath of God," therefore, as seen in its actual operation, consists in leaving sinful human nature to "stew in its own juice."¹¹¹

.....

"The Wrath," then, is revealed before our eyes as the increasing horror of sin working out its hideous law of cause and effect.¹¹²

I do not think Dodd gives enough consideration to the fact

¹⁰⁹A.M. Hunter, The Epistle to the Romans (London: SCM Press, 1955), p. 31.

¹¹⁰Stewart, op. cit., p. 219.

¹¹¹Dodd, op. cit., p. 67.

¹¹²Ibid, p. 68.

that the Hebrew mind of Paul would have a great deal of difficulty envisioning a universe operating by laws of moral cause and effect without the personal supervision of God. Also, the fact that Paul expected an eschatological climax of the wrath of God, a fact not emphasized by Dodd, indicates that God's wrath was to Paul more than the moral aspect of a cause-and-effect universe. Even when the "natural" consequences of sin are considered, "the wrath" is for Paul still "the wrath of God." Still, "wrath" is not a semi-personal being for Paul, as is the case with Sin, Law, Death, and the Cosmic Powers.

A word closely related to ὄργη in Paul's thought is κατάκριμα, the root meaning of which is not merely "condemnation," but "the punishment following sentence, punishment, doom."¹¹³ It is thus the opposite of δικαίωσις, "acquittal," and δικαίωμα when used in the sense of δικαίωσις, as in Romans 5:16. The Christian is pictured by these metaphorical words to be standing at a bar of judgment, but instead of receiving the κατάκριμα, the condemnation of doom, he receives δικαίωμα and is free from the κατάκριμα which mediates the wrath of God. In Romans 8:1, the thought is that "in Christ" we are "out of condemnation to doom," "our-from-under the wrath of God." Bultmann equates "wrath" and "the verdict of condemnation."¹¹⁴

Freedom from wrath, then, is for Paul one of the Christian's

¹¹³Arndt and Gingrich, op. cit., p. 413.

¹¹⁴Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, I, 288.

freedoms. Commenting on Romans 5:1, Nygren says "that it means freedom from the wrath of God is the first thing Paul affirms when he takes up the description of the life into which we enter through Christ."¹¹⁵ The "peace with God" there spoken of is not only the subjective feeling of peacefulness, which the Christian also may have, but "for Paul the accent manifestly falls on the objective side, on the fact that Christ has taken away the wrath of God. To live in Christ is to be free from the wrath of God."¹¹⁶ Baird, who follows Nygren closely, also discusses freedom from wrath as one of the qualities of the Christian life.¹¹⁷

Christians are free from wrath by virtue of the fact that they are free from the Law. "The law brings wrath," says Paul.¹¹⁸ Wherever the Law is in effect, there is necessarily condemnation and wrath (κατάκριμα and ὀργή), because "no human being will be justified in his sight by works of law."¹¹⁹

Even as the wrath of God is already revealed at work against all ungodliness and wickedness of men,¹²⁰ but is awaiting an eschatological consummation,¹²¹ so the Christian's freedom from

¹¹⁵Nygren, op. cit., p. 191.

¹¹⁶Ibid, p. 193.

¹¹⁷Baird, op. cit., p. 153.

¹¹⁸Rom. 4:15.

¹¹⁹Rom. 3:20.

¹²⁰Rom. 1:18-32.

¹²¹Rom. 2:5.

wrath is something which he both already possesses and something to which he looks forward. Paul declares that the believer is already free from wrath: "There is now [νῦν] no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."¹²² Yet, since "the last word as to God's wrath has not yet been uttered,"¹²³ Paul can speak of the future ἐσχατοῦ and say that "we shall be saved by him from the wrath of God,"¹²⁴ and describe Jesus as he who "delivers us from the wrath to come."¹²⁵

Freedom from wrath, like the Christian's freedom in general, is a freedom "in tension," both truly present and awaiting a future consummation. In discussing this tension, Baird says:

This life of victory and freedom . . . is limited by the present situation of man. Although the new life has come, it is not yet consummated. Although the Christian is free from wrath, the eschatological judgment, the "day of wrath" (Rom. 2:5), is yet to come. . . . Thus the end has come, but not yet fully come; Christ has come, bringing an end to the old age, yet he is still to come to bring about the consummation of the new.¹²⁶

Knox also notes the present-yet-future nature of Paul's teaching about the new life in Christ. In the first paragraph of his very excellent chapter on "The Life in Christ," Knox says:

This new life made itself known to him as forgiveness and emancipation, as pardon from the guilt of sin and release from its power, or, to use Paul's words, as "justification" (with which "reconciliation" is closely connected) and "redemption." . . . The meaning of neither the one nor the other of these two elements in

¹²²Rom. 8:1.

¹²³Nygren, op. cit., p. 202.

¹²⁴Rom. 5:9.

¹²⁵I Th. 1:10.

¹²⁶Baird, op. cit., p. 154.

the new life, it must always be remembered, could be fully known within the present age. Both were primarily and essentially eschatological realities, as was the new life itself. But just as agape and the Spirit had been truly, even if only partially, given, so forgiveness and deliverance from the power of sin had been truly, even if only partially, received.¹²⁷

Further in the same chapter he says:

This redemption or deliverance . . . is an aspect of life within the kingdom of God; it is therefore essentially eschatological and cannot be received in this life. But, as we have also seen, a real foretaste of the life of the world to come has been given us in the Spirit, and thus we have actually received an advance installment of our inheritance of freedom . . .¹²⁸

The Christian's freedom from wrath (and all else that freedom means in Paul: freedom from Sin, Law, Death, and the Cosmic Powers) not only looks forward to a future consummation, it looks backward to its basis in the salvation-occurrence, the death and resurrection of Christ. Paul does not base his doctrine of freedom on his understanding of man or his doctrine of God, in the abstract, but on an event which he is certain has happened. This salvation-event, as Bultmann points out, strictly speaking includes also the incarnation, as well as the crucifixion and resurrection, "for he who gave himself up to die is none other than the pre-existent Son of God."¹²⁹ But for Paul the resurrection of Christ is the mightiest of the mighty

¹²⁷ Knox, Chapters in a Life of St. Paul, p. 141.

¹²⁸ Ibid, p. 156.

¹²⁹ Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, I, 293.

acts of God, the final victory which set the captives free.

On this, that God raised Jesus from the dead, everything else depends. It is the conviction that Jesus lives which accounts for Paul's break with the past and starts the experience and reflection which resulted in his idea of deliverance.¹³⁰

Christ's resurrection, or rather, as Paul would have said, the fact that God raised Christ from the dead, not only delivers the believer from death, but from all those Powers to which he had formerly been subject. Paul found his doctrine of freedom not at the end of a syllogism nor as an implication of his philosophy, but in the decisive act of the living God in history.

Freedom from Sin

The locus classicus for studying Paul's teaching about freedom from Sin is the sixth chapter of Romans. In order to understand this chapter and its key idea, freedom from Sin, one must understand the Pauline idea of the nature of the tyrant, Sin, from which the man in Christ is set free.

Sin is for Paul at least a semi-personal Power which (or who) holds all mankind in slavery until they are freed by Christ. Although wrath was to Paul the wrath of a personal God, and not merely an impersonal power-of-justice at work in the world, Paul did not conceive wrath itself to be a personal being which held man in bondage. Wrath was for Paul the doom of the man who stands under God's eschatological κατάκριμα which is already making

¹³⁰Frame, loc. cit., p. 2.

itself felt in this age. But this is not the case with the remaining Powers from which man is set free by Christ. Sin and Death, as well as the Cosmic Powers, are more than abstract principles for Paul. They are beings who have a malicious evil will of their own, holding mankind in their clutches until Christ the Deliverer comes to set man free. Even the Law, which Paul to the end holds is "holy, just, and good,"¹³¹ is somehow associated with the evil elemental spirits of the universe, and, if not itself one of them, is at least their tool.¹³² Perhaps Sin, Law, and Death are all to be subsumed under the one general category of Cosmic Powers. This possibility will be discussed in a later section.

This much is certain: Sin for Paul was more than a wrong act, more than sins. The tyrant Sin who "reigns in your mortal bodies,"¹³³ who "has dominion over you,"¹³⁴ who uses the good Law to work death,¹³⁵ is more than the sum total of the evil acts of a person. In Paul's understanding, there are sins (plural) because there is Sin (singular). Martin Dibelius describes the Pauline concept of Sin in these words:

Of sins in the plural, sinful acts committed, he speaks only when he quotes the Old Testament or the tradition of the churches or conforms to their language; but within the framework of his theological thought he speaks of sin in the singular, and sometimes it sounds

¹³¹Rom. 7:12.

¹³²Gal. 4:3-9; Col. 2:14-15, 20.

¹³³Rom. 6:12.

¹³⁴Rom. 6:14.

¹³⁵Rom. 7:13.

as if it were a living being, a tyrant dominating the human race (Rom. 5:12-21) or a demon manifesting itself in the human heart (Rom. 7:7-25).¹³⁶

The man who lives under the domination of Sin deludes himself by thinking that he is free, that he sins because he chooses to sin, and that if he wanted to do so, he could choose to sin in one moment and to do good in another. It is only when man resists sin, tries to do only the good, that he discovers the wretchedness of his own condition as a slave, "sold under Sin."¹³⁷ This is true however the struggle described in Romans seven be interpreted. Paul's is no moralistic theory of sin, in which sin is simply the moral missteps that a man may stop if he has a mind to. Stewart says that for Paul, "Sin was not something a man did: it was something that took possession of him . . . it brought the will into abject slavery."¹³⁸

Paul is thus rightly called a believer in original sin. But this does not mean that he denies all human responsibility for the fact of sin. Commenting on Romans 5:12, Hunter says:

Paul does not say (as many of the doctors of the Church from Augustine on supposed him to say) "in whom all sinned," as though all men sinned implicitly in Adam's sin and were punished for his disobedience. He does not speak of Adam's descendants inheriting a debt of sinfulness from Adam. His view is rather that sin is the responsible act of every man, but that when he sins, as he does, he comes under the power of sin and death which Adam's act let loose in the world and from which, save through Christ, no man may escape.¹³⁹

¹³⁶Martin Dibelius, Paul, translated by Frank Clarke (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953), p. 111.

¹³⁷Rom. 7:14.

¹³⁸Stewart, op. cit., pp. 106-107.

¹³⁹Hunter, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 59.

Man has a responsibility for his own sin. But that is not the last word. Adam's primeval act let loose in this world a Power, Sin, and man's release from this Power comes not by his own good resolutions but by the act of the Second Adam, the mighty act of God in Jesus Christ.

The death that Christ died was somehow "to Sin."¹⁴⁰ Dodd's remarks on this verse, reproduced below, are worthy of careful study.

The sense of these words, which is not here developed, must be understood from other passages in which Paul speaks of the life and death of Jesus in relation to the condition of the world. Mankind, as we have seen, was bound in the servitude of Sin, established in the "flesh." Thus the natural, flesh-and-blood life of man was the territory, so to speak, of Sin, and all dwellers on that territory Sin claimed as his own. (This personification is implicit in the language of our passage.) Christ, by His incarnation, became a denizen of "the flesh." Sin put in his claim. In other words, Jesus was tempted to sin, as we are all tempted, in such forms as Sin might take for one in His situation. But instead of yielding, and acknowledging Sin's dominion, as we all do, he rendered a perfect obedience to God -- the makeweight to Adam's disobedience (v.19) -- and stooped in his obedience even to die (Phil. ii.8). Jesus, in plain terms, died rather than sin; and so his death, instead of being a sign of the victory of Sin over man's true nature, was a sign of the complete rout of sin in a decisive engagement.¹⁴¹

Christ's death was the mighty defeat of Sin in its own territory, and Sin was condemned "in the flesh."¹⁴²

The believer in Christ is set free from Sin because he himself participates in the salvation-event wrought by Jesus Christ.

¹⁴⁰Rom. 6:10.

¹⁴¹C.H. Dodd, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, Fontana Books Edition (London: Collins, 1959), pp. 109-110.

¹⁴²Rom. 8:3.

This participation in the death and resurrection of Christ comes by baptism. It should go without saying that Paul has no magical, ex opere operato understanding of baptism. However, Bultmann says that Paul did not "completely free himself of the mystery-conception of sacrament as having a magical effect; for he leaves vicarious baptism, which rests upon such a conception, at least uncontested (I Cor. 15:29). . ."¹⁴³ But if Paul's remark to the Corinthians about baptism for the dead be taken as simply an ad hominem rebuttal, implying no approval of the practice on Paul's part, one cannot find any place in Paul's writings a magical idea of the sacraments. Paul's idea is not that "Baptism does something objectively to the person," but rather that "In baptism God does something objectively to the person." The difference between these two ideas is the difference between magic and sacrament. I think Paul would have agreed with the statement of Karl Barth: "The potency of baptism depends upon Christ who is the chief actor in it. It has no independent potency in itself."¹⁴⁴

When this truth has been emphasized to its fullest, that Paul has no magical doctrine of baptism, we must be on guard against going to the opposite extreme and making Paul an exponent of the ultra-Protestant view which regards the sacraments as mere acted parables of spiritual truths whose value is purely subjective.

¹⁴³Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, I, 312.

¹⁴⁴Karl Barth, The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism, translated by E.A. Payne (London: SCM Press, 1948), p. 19.

On the contrary, as Hunter says,

The "realism" of Paul's language about baptism in Romans six shows, in my judgment, that he thought of the rite in the same way as the Old Testament prophets thought of their symbolic actions. By the action the prophet conceived of himself as entering into the divine purpose and helping it forward. The act was an arrabon of the total reality as yet incomplete: no bare symbol but an "effective sign" which, by the working of God's Spirit, could help to convey what it signified.¹⁴⁵

That according to Paul the believer is made free as a result of being brought by baptism into an actual participation in the once-for-all event of Jesus' death and resurrection is a point upon which several leading modern interpreters of Paul are agreed, as indicated in the following quotations.

Barth, in a tremendous paragraph, says:

What baptism portrays, according to the basic passage in Romans 6:1ff, is a supremely critical happening -- a real event whose light and shade fall upon the candidate in the course of his baptism. This happening is his participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ: that is, the fact that at a particular time and place, in the year A.D. 30 outside Jerusalem on the cross at Golgotha, not Jesus Christ alone, but with him this particular individual died eternally, and that, in the garden of Joseph of Arimathea, not Jesus Christ alone, but with Him also this particular individual rose from the dead for evermore.¹⁴⁶

Oscar Cullmann, whose study of baptism was admittedly published as a reply to Barth's little book and disagrees with its main thesis, could not be more in agreement with Barth on this point. Commenting on Romans six, Cullmann says "this means that

¹⁴⁵Hunter, Interpreting Paul's Gospel, p. 104.

¹⁴⁶Barth, op. cit., p. 11.

our individual participation in the death and resurrection of Christ results from baptism."¹⁴⁷

Alan Richardson concurs, affirming that "what Christ has done for all humanity on Calvary is appropriated by each individual Christian in his baptism."¹⁴⁸

Bultmann likewise says,

". . . the meaning of these rites is simply that it is precisely through them that the once-for-all salvation occurrence in Christ's death and resurrection is made present and actual for the individual so that it may be personally appropriated by him."¹⁴⁹

And Nygren expresses the same thought by saying, "The central thought for Paul, when he speaks of baptism, is thus the participation of the baptized in the death and resurrection of Christ."¹⁵⁰

Paul's argument in this key chapter, then, is this:

Baptism really unites those who believe to Christ's death and resurrection. Since Christ's death was a dying out from under Sin's power, so we, who died with Him, have been made free from the dominion of Sin. This much is in the indicative. It declares a fact of the believer's past history -- he has been made free from the tyrant

¹⁴⁷Oscar Cullmann, Baptism in the New Testament (Studies in Biblical Theology No. 1; Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1950), p. 13.

¹⁴⁸Alan Richardson, An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament (London: SCM Press, 1958), p. 341.

¹⁴⁹Rudolf Bultmann, "Jesus and Paul," Existence and Faith, translated with an introduction by Shubert Ogden (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1960), p. 200.

¹⁵⁰Nygren, op. cit., p. 236.

Sin. But on this indicative there rests an imperative, which is set forth in the latter half of the chapter. Since the Christian is free from Sin, he must fight against it. The Christian's freedom from Sin, though real, is, in Bultmann's fine phrase, a "struggling freedom."¹⁵¹

The Christian man is truly free from Sin. Since this freedom is not man's attainment, not conditioned by or dependent upon the strength of man, but is based upon the ἔφραξ act of God, Paul is able to speak of freedom from Sin in categorical, unlimited terms. But freedom from Sin does not mean sinlessness for Paul, and it is a mistake to say, as Deissmann does, that Paul's theory outruns what he is willing to accept in practice. Deissmann says:

As a new creature Paul the Christian is also free from sin--but, is he also sinless, incapable of sinning? In theory certainly Paul might subscribe to the statement that the Christian does not sin. But the awful experiences of practice would give him cause to doubt.¹⁵²

It is true that side by side in Paul's writings there stand both the declaration that the Christian man is free from Sin and the exhortation to struggle against it. But this does not mean that Paul resorts to hortatory subjunctives when his indicatives fall through. Rather, both his indicatives and his exhortations are valid: the Christian can struggle against Sin because, precisely because, he is freed from its dominion.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹Bultmann, Kerygma and Myth, p. 40.

¹⁵²Deissmann, "Where Paul's Theology Begins," Contemporary Thinking about Paul, p. 250.

¹⁵³Nygren labors this point, op. cit., pp. 239-246.

Paul asserts that the Christian is free from Sin, not that he is sinless. Neither in theory nor in fact did Paul suppose that the "saints" of Galatia or Corinth were morally perfect. Nevertheless, as Hunter says:

[The Christian] has entered a new world, the world of grace, and is potentially a new man, even if many bits of the "old man still cling to him (as Brunner says somewhere) like bits of egg-shell to the young chick." If he is not sinless, the power of the old master, Sin, has been broken; he has acquired a new master, Christ, and is now summoned, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to fight the good fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil.¹⁵⁴

That Paul preached an unequivocal freedom from Sin is obvious from the radical way in which he was misunderstood. Twice in Romans six he combats an imaginary objector who voices protests which he had often heard in real life: "Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?"¹⁵⁵ "Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace?"¹⁵⁶ On this point Millar Burrows says:

There was a danger of misinterpretation which evidently had to be met at once. If one need not obey the law of God to be accepted as righteous, why not just go on sinning and rely on God's merciful forgiveness? With exasperation Paul replies that the very question evinces a complete misunderstanding of the whole matter. The Christian does not desire freedom to sin; what he has been craving is freedom from sin. Salvation involves not merely exemption from the consequences of sin but deliverance from slavery to the power of sin itself.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴Hunter, Interpreting Paul's Gospel, p. 95.

¹⁵⁵Rom. 6:1.

¹⁵⁶Rom. 6:15.

¹⁵⁷Millar Burrows, An Outline of Biblical Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946), p. 184.

Being freed from Sin means for Paul being freed for something. The Christian is free from Sin to serve righteousness. Paul describes this in Romans six in terms of a slave changing masters. But he immediately realizes that this is a poor analogy, and says with little tact that he uses it because of his readers' "natural limitations."¹⁵⁸ The fact is, for Paul the Christian life is not any kind of slavery, even slavery to righteousness, but the very opposite of slavery. It is only with this awareness of his freedom in Christ that Paul tenderly calls himself repeatedly Christ's δοῦλος. Being the slave of Christ, he is free in respect to all else. But even this "slavery" is perfect freedom, and though Paul in Romans six describes conversion as going from one slavery to another, he apologizes for this metaphor as if to say that what he really means is that conversion is going from slavery to sonship, from slavery to friendship. Paul probably influenced, and certainly would have agreed with, the words ascribed to Jesus in the Gospel of John: "No longer do I call you servants [δοῦλους] . . . but I have called you friends."¹⁵⁹

Freedom from Law

"It took a Pharisee to see all that Christ's action implied."¹⁶⁰ With these words Dodd indicates that Paul's personal

¹⁵⁸Rom. 6:19.

¹⁵⁹John 15:15.

¹⁶⁰Dodd, The Meaning of Paul for Today, p. 127.

experience is one reason why the Christian's relation to the Law was such an issue for him, and why he has so much to say about it. Schoeps suggests that Paul before his conversion was one of those numerous Jewish missionaries referred to in the Gospels,¹⁶¹ and he is undoubtedly right in saying that "after Damascus the question of the validity of the law . . . became alive for him in a way which it did not for the Jerusalem apostles."¹⁶² Whether the struggle described in Romans seven be understood as a preconversion experience,¹⁶³ a postconversion experience,¹⁶⁴ or the plight of any sensitive religious person who takes a legal attitude toward religion based on the feelings of his own conscience,¹⁶⁵ the poignancy of Paul's words in this chapter show that he had personally struggled long and hard with the question of the meaning of the Law for the Christian man.

Another reason for Paul's emphasis on freedom from the Law, an emphasis which is almost a preoccupation, is his contest with the Judaizers. Had it not been for their attempts to reintroduce legalism into the Christian community, perhaps Paul would never have dealt with the question of the Law at such length in his epistles. "The problem of the Law . . . occupies a large amount of space in the letters owing to Paul's polemical position with regard to the Judaizers."¹⁶⁶ This was the question which gave Paul

¹⁶¹Schoeps, op. cit., p. 168.

¹⁶²Ibid.

¹⁶³Brunner, Stewart, Hunter, Denney, Dodd, Scott.

¹⁶⁴Luther, Barth, Nygren, Knox.

¹⁶⁵Bultmann, Kummel, Deissmann.

¹⁶⁶Deissmann, "Where Paul's Theology Begins," Contemporary Thinking about Paul, p. 250.

the most difficulty with his opponents, and which caused much of the opposition which led to his arrest, imprisonment, and death, and which probably caused him the most personal anguish: how had the event of the coming of the Messiah affected the Law, which he had served so long and so well?

The answer which Paul gives is clear: Christ is the end of the Law for everyone who believes;¹⁶⁷ the Christian is free from the Law.¹⁶⁸ The Christian is delivered from the Law both as a means of justification and as an ethical norm for the Christian life. But when this has been clearly said, it must also be said that Paul's attitude toward the Law itself is not so clear. There are, in fact, two attitudes toward the Law which Paul takes, even after his conversion, and I have not been able to harmonize them. "The Law is holy, and bears with it death."¹⁶⁹ This statement of Jacques Maritain's captures Paul's paradoxical feeling toward the Law after his conversion.

On the one hand, Paul continued to hold the Law in the highest respect. His Jewish brethren almost worshipped the Torah. Post-Captivity Judaism had personified the Law as the well-beloved daughter of God, "begotten before the world began; Jahweh was said to devote his liesure hours to its study, to

¹⁶⁷Rom. 10:4.

¹⁶⁸Rom. 7:6; Gal. 4:4, 5:18.

¹⁶⁹Jaques Maritain, The Living Thoughts of St. Paul (New York: Longmans, Greene, and Co., 1942), p. 70.

observe it himself and to read aloud from it on the Sabbath."¹⁷⁰ When Paul addresses his Jewish brethren with a tinge of sarcasm, saying that they are sure that they have in the Law "the embodiment of knowledge and truth,"¹⁷¹ he was not wholly free from this conviction himself. He had drunk deep at this spring of Jewish piety, and argued like a rabbi to the end. After his conversion he continues to regard the Old Testament as verbally inspired as a whole, and the final court of appeal.¹⁷² He bases a crucial argument on the fact that the word συνέγραμματα is singular and not plural in Genesis 12:7, though under different circumstances he himself interprets this as a collective noun with a plural meaning.¹⁷³ The use of allegorical interpretation enables Paul to quote the Old Testament with authority to support his Christian doctrines. Paul speaks of the Law as "the law of God"¹⁷⁴ and says that it is "holy and just and good"¹⁷⁵ as well as "spiritual."¹⁷⁶ Paul certainly was speaking of the Law in a favorable sense when he spoke of the Christian ethic of love as being a fulfillment of the Law.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁰Charles Guignebert, "The Law. The Scribes. The Synagogue," Contemporary Thinking about Paul, p. 65.

¹⁷¹Rom. 2:20.

¹⁷²Rom. 1:17, 3:10, 4:7, 4:17, 9:13; I Cor. 1:9.

¹⁷³Gal. 3:16; cf. Rom. 4:18, 9:8.

¹⁷⁴Rom. 7:22, 25.

¹⁷⁵Rom. 7:12.

¹⁷⁶Rom. 7:14.

¹⁷⁷Rom. 13:10.

Alongside these positive assertions about the Law lie depreciations of the most violent sort. The Law is powerless to save.¹⁷⁸ The Law actually promotes sin.¹⁷⁹ The Law was a temporary expedient.¹⁸⁰ The Law is represented as appearing upon the human scene by "slipping in"¹⁸¹ in some illegitimate manner as through a side door. In Galatians 3:19 Paul uses a Jewish tradition that the Law had been given through the mediation of angels, and not directly from God to Moses, to point out the subordinate nature of the Law, since angels are obviously subordinate to God. Commenting on this passage, Weiss says:

Here one may assume that it is at most only semi-divine, and in fact possesses a demoniacal character. And this seems to be the Apostle's actual meaning when in Gal. 4:3, 9 he designates both the bondage of the Jews under the Law and that of the heathen under their so-called "gods" (which are really demons, I Cor. 10:20) as one and the same condition, namely servitude to the "elements of the world." . . . He wishes in this way to place the Law, as belonging to this world, on the same level as matter, closely bound up with the flesh. . . . Indeed he almost seems to place the Law in opposition to God.¹⁸²

Albert Schweitzer also interprets Paul's words in Galatians 4:3-9 to mean that when Christians return to serve the Law, "instead of serving solely the one God, they once more (though in another form) submit themselves to the World-Elements, now rendered powerless by Christ, observing the 'days, months, seasons, and years' which

¹⁷⁸Rom. 7:14; 8:3.

¹⁷⁹Rom. 7:7-11.

¹⁸⁰Gal. 3:17-24.

¹⁸¹Rom. 5:20. The word is παρεστῆλθεν. Cf. Gal. 2:4, where it is translated "slipped in."

¹⁸²Weiss, op. cit., II, 548.

belong to their service."¹⁸³ Law is placed in association with the "elemental spirits" by Paul also in Colossians 2:14-15 and 20-22.

The two attitudes of Paul toward the Law seem to me to be contradictory. If Paul makes any attempt to reconcile them in his letters, it would be in Romans 7:7-14, where he portrays the (good) Law being taken by the evil Power, Sin, which uses it as a tool of destruction. But in the last analysis it is not clear to me whether Paul considers the Law to be a good entity in itself or not. It is clear that whether the Law is considered by Paul to be good or evil in itself, as it affects mankind the Law is in fact an evil from which man needs to be redeemed. "The law brings wrath,"¹⁸⁴ and wherever Law is in effect, man is doomed.

But Christ has appeared upon the scene, like an ancient Hebrew next-of-kin, to redeem us from the slavery of the Law.¹⁸⁵ Just as a widow is no longer under any legal obligation to her dead husband, the Christian has, by a death, been released from the Law.¹⁸⁶

The Law is for the Christian no longer in any sense a means of justification. Several times I have seen the couplet from Anderson Scott quoted approvingly: "Paul, as a Jew, had

¹⁸³Schweitzer, op. cit., p. 70.

¹⁸⁴Rom. 4:15.

¹⁸⁵Gal. 4:4.

¹⁸⁶Rom. 7:1-6.

thought that men should keep the Law in order that they might be saved. As a Christian he saw that men must be saved in order that they might keep the Law."¹⁸⁷ I do not think Paul would approve. Man is not able to keep the Law, saved or unsaved. True, Paul says that the δικαίωμα of the Law is fulfilled in those who are "in Christ," but this certainly does not mean that the Christian, now that he is "in Christ," will be able to keep the Law, though he could not do it before. Rather, it speaks of the requirement of the Law as having been met in our behalf by Christ. The Christian's justification, Paul repeatedly says in Romans,¹⁸⁹ is χωρὶς νόμου, "apart from the Law," that is, on another basis than that of law. I think Nygren catches the meaning of Paul when he says:

A Christian is free from the law principally in the sense that he has been justified entirely without the cooperation of the law. . . . Can one not say that the ability, which man lacks by nature, is given him through faith? Can one not say that Christ gives him the power to keep the law, so that he can really stand before God as righteous in this way? To speak in such a way about the Christian's ability to fulfill the law, and thus to stand as righteous before God is nothing less than again to bring in the law, by a back door, as a way of salvation. . . . The Gospel is not just a means for the establishment of the righteousness of the law; but the Gospel of Christ is the very righteousness of God. To be "in Christ" is full and complete righteousness; that is to be justified apart from the law. That is to be "free from the law" without reservation.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷Elias Andrews, The Meaning of Christ for Paul (Nashville: Abingdon, 1949), p. 61, and Stewart, op. cit., p. 109.

¹⁸⁸Rom. 8:4.

¹⁸⁹Rom. 3:21, 28; 4:6; 7:8, 9.

¹⁹⁰Nygren, op. cit., p. 302.

The Christian man is also free from the Law in the sense that the Law is not to be taken as his standard of conduct. The pseudo-theological distinction that is sometimes made between ceremonial law and moral law, and the assertion that Paul broke with the former but not with the latter, entirely misses the point of Paul's declaration of independence from all legal religion.

D. M. Ross is much more true to Paul's meaning when he says:

The Law is not the standard for the moral life. To claim Paul's authority for freedom from the ceremonial law, and at the same time to invoke his authority for the continuance of the legal conceptions of Judaism in the ethical sphere, is to distort his whole teaching about the Law, and to distort it with unhappy consequences for Christian theology as well as for ethics.¹⁹¹

As a matter of fact, Paul knows that the Law must be removed before any real ethics can begin, and "it is his zeal for ethical interests which stirs Paul to his extraordinary impatience with the Law."¹⁹²

Freedom from the Law in the ethical sense thus means that man's ethical life is not imposed upon him from the outside by a list of rules to which he must conform, but proceeds from his own free decision made in Christian faith in the context of the Christian community, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Christian is absolutely free from the Law, in both its ceremonial and moral aspects. But Marcion and all like him are wrong to conclude that we must then do away with the Old Testament. As noted earlier, after his conversion Paul continued to regard the

¹⁹¹D.M. Ross, The Faith of St. Paul (London: Clarke, 1923), p. 131.

¹⁹²Ibid.

Old Testament very highly. B. Harvie Branscomb points out in this connection that though Paul declared the Law was no longer binding as law, neither ceremonially nor morally, still the Law is valid as "expressing certain underlying ethical principles."¹⁹³ Probably Bultmann is correct in saying that Paul believed the Christian man had "in faith itself an unconsciously-working principle of criticism provided"¹⁹⁴ to ascertain what is for him the will of God in the Law. Just as the Christian is truly free from Sin, but not to go on sinning, so the Christian is truly free from the Law, but not to break the Law. Rather, "The Christian is not under the Law because he is above it,"¹⁹⁵ as Burrows succinctly expresses Paul's meaning.

Freedom from Death

Freedom from wrath, Sin, and the Law is also freedom from Death, for Death is inseparably related to them all. The only place where Paul explicitly says that the Christian is free from Death is in its relation to wrath, Sin, and Law.¹⁹⁶ It is nevertheless clear that Paul places Death among those Powers from which the believer is set free. Death "reigned"¹⁹⁷ and "has dominion"¹⁹⁸ like the other tyrants which had enslaved mankind before the advent of Christ. Death stands among those defeated Powers which can never

¹⁹³B. Harvie Branscomb, "Jesus' Attitude toward the Torah," Contemporary Thinking about Paul, p. 80.

¹⁹⁴Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, I, 261.

¹⁹⁵Burrows, op. cit., p. 186.

¹⁹⁶Rom. 8:1-2.

¹⁹⁷Rom. 5:14.

¹⁹⁸Rom. 6:9.

separate us from the love of Christ.¹⁹⁹ Death is then for Paul more than the natural incident at the chronological close of a man's life, but is rather "the already present nothingness of a life estranged from God,"²⁰⁰ a Power standing over against man's life every moment and limiting it.

Because he is united by baptism to the death and resurrection of Christ, the Christian is free from the tyrant Death, and is exhorted by Paul to yield himself to God "as men who have been brought from death to life."²⁰¹

Like the freedom of the Christian man in general, the Christian's freedom from Death is not a result of his moral attainment or his philosophy, but is the gift of God through Jesus Christ. Thus Paul thinks of the Christian's freedom from Death altogether in terms of resurrection rather than of immortality. To be sure, Paul uses the words for immortality, ἀφθαρσία (incorruption) and ἀθανασία (deathlessness), but never in the Greek sense of a power infused into the soul by means of which after death the soul is released from the prison of the body and soars into the sphere of divine blessedness. Rather, immortality is that which this mortal puts on at the Parousia, and is equated with the resurrection of the body.²⁰² Paul's thought about freedom from Death begins and

¹⁹⁹Rom. 8:38.

²⁰⁰Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, II, 158.

²⁰¹Rom. 6:13.

²⁰²I Cor. 15:51-54.

ends in the concept of resurrection: it begins with the resurrection of Christ, and ends with the resurrection of the believers.

Again, freedom from Death partakes of the same present-future tension as the Christian's freedom in general. The believer is already free from Death by sharing the "newness of life" of the resurrected Christ.²⁰³ But this freedom is fully manifested only at the End, when Death, the last enemy, is destroyed, and the dead are raised.²⁰⁴

Freedom from Cosmic Powers

Any study of Paul's thought must consider what Hunter calls the "dimension of the Demonic"²⁰⁵ in Paul's thinking. A part of the general world view Paul shared with his contemporaries was a belief in angels, demons, and various supernatural powers. These demons are of a much higher order than the demons of the Gospels which only cause sickness in individual men. The demons of which Paul speaks are cosmic, metaphysical beings who, until their defeat by Christ, held the destiny of all the earth in their grasp.

I think it is true to Paul's thought to say that "Cosmic Powers" is a general category under which Sin and Death, and even Law in some sense may be subsumed, but not wrath. The wrath from

²⁰³Rom. 6:4.

²⁰⁴I Cor. 15:23-27.

²⁰⁵Hunter, Interpreting Paul's Gospel, p. 74.

which man is freed by Christ is not thought of by Paul as a demonic being, but as the wrath of a personal God. Law was not considered by him to be one of the demons per se, but as their more-or-less willing tool. But Sin and Death are apparently thought by him to belong to that host of cosmic spirits whose evil will is directed against man and God. Cadbury, in discussing "cosmic conflict" as one of the "concurrent phases" of Paul's religion, says:

Like his contemporaries, Paul believed that the world was in control of invisible, supernatural, personal powers. These were of two kinds, good and evil, God and his angels, Satan and his devils. They were in constant conflict, and the fate of the world, of mankind, and of the individual rests upon the progress of the battle between them. Heretofore, thought Paul, the powers of evil had prevailed. God had been beaten by Satan when Adam and Eve sinned, and since that time Sin and Death have reigned in the world. By Sin and Death in this passage Paul does not mean sin and death as facts of human experience as we may mean them. He uses these words sometimes in that way, but he also uses them as the names of two principle hostile spirits in the great battle between God and Satan. They are as much persons as God and Satan and should be spelled with capitals. They reign over all mankind. All men are held prisoners by Sin. All men are enslaved by Death. The present evil age belongs to the powers of darkness, which are spoken of as "the rulers of this age."²⁰⁶

Paul uses a variety of terms in referring to these Cosmic Powers, so apparently Sin and Death are only two of a multitude. The following words are all used by Paul, apparently in reference to the same group of cosmic beings: "angels," ἄγγελοι; ²⁰⁷
 "demons," δαιμόνια; ²⁰⁸ "principalities," ἀρχαί; ²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ Cadbury, loc. cit., p. 258.

²⁰⁷ Rom. 8:38; I Cor. 6:3, 11:10; Col. 2:18.

²⁰⁸ I Cor. 10:20, 21.

²⁰⁹ Rom. 8:38; I Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:21, 3:10, 6:12; Col. 1:16.

"authorities," ἔξουσίαι; ²¹⁰ "powers," δυνάμεις; ²¹¹ "dominions," κυριότητες; ²¹² "thrones," θρόνος; ²¹³ and "elemental spirits," στοιχεῖα. ²¹⁴ Perhaps the "gods," θεοί, and "lords," κύριοι of I Corinthians 8:4-6 also belong in this list, since Paul regards the gods of the pagans as demons. ²¹⁵ Certainly the phrases "world rulers of this present darkness," κοσμοκράτορες τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, ²¹⁶ "spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places," τὰ πνευματικά τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις, ²¹⁷ and "rulers of this age," ἀρχόντες τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου ²¹⁸ belong to this group. "Height," ὕψωμα, ²¹⁹ and "depth," βάθος, ²²⁰ are also related astrological terms, referring to the highest point a star reaches and the abyss from which it rises. ²²¹ "Age," αἰών, ²²² and "world," κόσμος, ²²³ although

²¹⁰ I Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:21, 3:10, 6:12; Col. 1:16, 2:15.

²¹¹ Rom. 8:38; I Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:21, 3:10, 6:12; Col. 2:15.

²¹² Eph. 1:21; Col. 1:16

²¹³ Col. 1:16.

²¹⁴ Gal. 4:3, 9; Col. 2:8, 20.

²¹⁵ I Cor. 10:20.

²¹⁶ Eph. 6:12.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ I Cor. 2:6, 8.

²¹⁹ Ro. 8:38.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Hunter, Epistle to the Romans, p. 87.

²²² Gal. 1:4.

²²³ I Cor. 4:9, 6:2, Eph. 2:2, 12. Cf. Deissmann, Paul, p. 299.

having other meanings in Paul, sometimes seem to be used as summaries of this astral host of wicked spirits, for it is only in this world and in this age that the Cosmic Powers hold sway.

It is difficult to say to just what extent Paul used these terms in a metaphorical sense. When Paul describes the process by which the Christian is freed from these Powers, he undoubtedly uses metaphors, as noted in an earlier discussion in this thesis. But that the powers themselves were only figures of speech for Paul is hardly likely. Paul accepted the apocalyptic viewpoint of his day, and it is highly likely that he adopted its demonology also. These cosmic beings were real, terrifyingly real, for Paul and his contemporaries. Andrews quotes from E. Bevan's Hellenism and Christianity a passage which captures the mood of a world which had lost faith in its gods and felt itself in the clutches of hostile cosmic spirits:

We have never been thoroughly frightened; the ancient world was frightened; there is the great difference. The possibility that the Unknown contains Powers deliberately hostile to him is one the ordinary modern man can hardly entertain even in imagination . . . and until the Unknown has been realized as something terrible, till we have had the feeling of helplessness and ignorance in the face of an immense Universe, the feeling of a lost child in a huge strange city, we can hardly understand . . .²²⁴

Paul includes himself along with his Galatian readers among those who once were "slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe,"²²⁵ but since the victory of Christ over these Powers the

²²⁴ Andrews, op. cit., p. 72.

²²⁵ Gal. 4:3.

Christian is made free from them, and Paul can write to the Roman Christians that "there is nothing in death or life, in the realm of spirits or superhuman powers, . . . that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."²²⁶

Freedom as Fulfillment: "Freedom for"

Paul's gospel was a gospel of freedom. But as Raymond Stamm points out, "the preaching of such a gospel runs the risk that men who are looking for an easy salvation may equate its freedom with irresponsibility and debase its liberty into license."²²⁷ Paul's letters make it abundantly clear that just such a perverted interpretation of his doctrine of freedom was made.

There were thus two fronts on which the battle for true freedom was fought by Paul. On the extreme right were the Judaizers, who tried to impose the ritual demands of the Law upon Christian converts, believing that the only way to Christ was by way of Moses. Paul deals with them in Galatians and Philippians. On the other hand, at the extreme left, Paul's first letter to the Corinthians seems to indicate that in that church there was a group of "spiritualistic radicals"²²⁸ who believed themselves so filled with the Christ-spirit that they knew no restraint, moral or

²²⁶Rom. 8:38-39, New English Bible.

²²⁷Raymond Stamm, "Introduction and Exegesis of Galatians," Interpreter's Bible, X, 432.

²²⁸According to Wedell, loc. cit., p. 208, J.H. Ropes originated this name for them.

otherwise. Their slogan was, "We are free to do anything."²²⁹

Such misinterpretations were doubly dangerous in that they were half of the truth. Paul's doctrine of freedom asserted that the man in Christ is truly liberated, completely free. But "freedom from" is only half of the truth; "freedom for" is the other half, without which the first half is invalid. This was Paul's great difference from the Greek idea of freedom. Bultmann points out this difference:

The eschatology of Gnosticism is . . . transcended. It is not that the believer is given a new nature (physis) or that his pre-existent nature is emancipated, or that his soul is assured of a journey to heaven. The new life in faith is not an assured possession or endowment, which could lead only to libertinism. . . . Life in faith is not a possession at all. It cannot be exclusively interpreted in indicative terms; it needs an imperative to complete it. Our freedom does not excuse us from the demand under which we all stand as men, for it is freedom for obedience.²³⁰

This, of course, is precisely the point that Paul himself makes in the latter half of Romans six.

To see only the negative side of Paul's doctrine of freedom, that of "freedom from," is to miss his whole idea. By the very fact of being free from the enslaving Powers, man is also free for service to God in the body of Christ, the Church, in the attitude of Christian love. Deliverance and fulfillment are "concurrent phases of Paul's religion," to use Cadbury's phrase. That is, "freedom for" is not a secondary or derived idea from "freedom from." He

²²⁹I Cor. 10:23, New English Bible.

²³⁰Bultmann, Kerygma and Myth, p. 21.

who is delivered from wrath, Sin, Law, Death, and the Cosmic Powers is at one and the same time delivered for loving service to God in the Church, and only those who possess the latter deliverance have the former.

The two central Pauline ideas that prevent his radical doctrine of freedom from becoming irresponsible license are that of the Church as the body of Christ and the fact that love is an even higher principle than liberty.

Individualism and the "Body"

"The seeming extreme individualism of this doctrine [Christian freedom] is corrected by the doctrine of the Body. . . ." ²³¹

Thus does Dodd sum up Paul's argument on this point. Freedom, like every aspect of the Christian life, is for Paul a corporate matter, something that can be possessed only in the context of the Christian fellowship. Paul says, "He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son," ²³² and this kingdom is also a Body. Robinson, who believes that "the Body" is the theology of Paul, is certainly true to Paul's thought regarding freedom when he says:

Solidarity is the divinely ordained structure in which personal life is to be lived. Man's freedom does not lie in the fact that he is not bound, nor his individuality in the fact that he is not social. Both derive from an unconditional and inalienable responsibility to God, which is not denied by the solidarities of the body and can, indeed, be discharged only in and through them. ²³³

²³¹Dodd, The Meaning of Paul for Today, p. 146.

²³²Col. 1:13.

²³³Robinson, op. cit., p. 9.

Paul could not conceive of a man being free if he stood alone, Invictus-like, attempting to be lord of his own life. Man is free only because Christ has delivered him, and this deliverance is to the fellowship of the Church. This must surely be one of the overtones of meaning to be found in the favorite Pauline phrase "in Christ." Pauline "mysticism" connotes no cult of the solitary individual. "In passage after passage the phrase carries a corporate meaning. To be 'in Christ' signifies to be in the community of Christ, to be a member of the new people of God of which he is the head."²³⁴ Paul is thus able to grant the claim of the Corinthian radicals that they were indeed "free to do anything," but to deny their conclusions because of the fact that they are members of the redeemed community. The New English Bible, though not a literal translation of this passage, expresses the Pauline meaning:

"We are free to do anything," you say. Yes, but is everything good for us? "We are free to do anything," but does everything help the building up of the community? Each of you must regard, not his own interests, but the other man's.²³⁵

The corporate nature of freedom is also shown by Paul's contrast of slavery and sonship.²³⁶ The Christian possesses freedom as a son in a family possesses freedom, a freedom which is always aware of brothers and sisters and the will of the father. For Paul, then, Christian freedom is not that irresponsible freedom

²³⁴ A.M. Hunter, Introducing New Testament Theology (London: SCM Press, 1957), p. 96.

²³⁵ I Cor. 10:23-24, New English Bible.

²³⁶ Rom. 8:15.

of a Thoreau drifting idly on Walden pond letting the rest of the world go by, not the freedom of the "beat" generation which shrugs its shoulders at the idea of social responsibility, not Plotinus' "flight of the alone to the Alone," not even that of the American "rugged individual." It is the freedom of a son in a family, the freedom of a participant in the Spirit-led community of faith. Bultmann's fine words about the faith of the Hellenistic Church, Paul's primary source of his freedom ideas, are worthy of quotation:

This is a decisive question, the question of the Church concept. Does the salvation proclaimed by the Christian message mean only the salvation of the individual, the release of the individual soul from the contamination of sin and from suffering and death? Or does it mean salvation for the fellowship of God's people into which the individual is incorporated? The fact that the earliest Church in its mission simply took the latter for granted essentially differentiates it from the propaganda of other oriental religions of redemption; and, viewed historically, therein lies a basic reason for Christianity's triumph over them. In Christianity, the individual stands within the Congregation, and the individual congregations are joined together into one Congregation--the Church. Nor is the primary motive of this joining together the practical need of organization. Rather, churchly organization arose primarily out of the consciousness that the total Church exists before local churches do. An indication of this is the terminology: "ecclesia" denotes at first not the individual church at all, but the "people of God," the fellowship of the chosen at the end of the days.²³⁷

In the background of Paul's idea of freedom there always lies this concept of the Body.

Love over Liberty

"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."²³⁸

²³⁷Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, I, 93.

²³⁸II Cor. 3:17.

This is axiomatic for Paul. But equally true to his thinking is the fact that "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is love," for love is the first fruit of the Spirit.²³⁹ That this is no arbitrary connection of verses from two different letters of Paul's is evident from his own exhortation, "For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity [~~αφορμή~~, "supply base"] for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another."²⁴⁰ Where Christian freedom is, there is also Christian love, on guard against the degeneration of freedom to license or anarchy.

The sum of Paul's advice is that freedom must always be limited by love for the brethren. It does not mean emancipation from all restraints but liberation from the bondage of legalism in order that love may find the best way to serve.²⁴¹

This "limitation" of freedom is not an external limitation imposed upon the believer from without, which would be a new law and a new bondage, but an internal willingness to joyfully surrender one's "rights" for the sake of the beloved brother. It is with this in mind that Bultmann is able to say that "this basic freedom may at any moment take on the form of renunciation--seemingly a renunciation of freedom itself, but in reality it is an exercise of that very freedom."²⁴²

²³⁹Gal. 5:22.

²⁴⁰Gal. 5:13.

²⁴¹C.T. Craig, "Introduction and Exegesis of I Corinthians," Interpreter's Bible, X, 11.

²⁴²Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, I, 342.

Paul is himself an ideal example of what he preaches. He has a perfect right to receive money from the churches to which he ministers, but in the freedom of Christian love he renounces this right in order that he might give his opponents less ground for criticism.²⁴³ He has a perfect right to eat whatever kind of meat he desires, and it is precisely because he realizes himself to be free that he can say, "If food is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat. . . ." ²⁴⁴ Paul fought viciously against the idea that circumcision or any other legal requirement was necessary to be a Christian, yet is reported in Acts to have circumcised Timothy "because of the Jews that were in those places."²⁴⁵ In principle, Paul was dedicated only to the "Jerusalem above," which was free from any legal ceremonial requirements,²⁴⁶ but it was in loving compliance with the earthly Jerusalem's ritual that he was mobbed, arrested, imprisoned, and finally executed. The irony of Paul's end is that he who was most free from the temple's requirements freely complied with them for the sake of the good will of his less-free Jerusalem church brethren, and a misunderstanding of this renunciation cost him imprisonment and death.²⁴⁷ So Paul sealed with his death the message of his life, as his Master had done before him.

²⁴³I Cor. 9:1-23.

²⁴⁴I Cor. 8:13.

²⁴⁵Acts 16:3.

²⁴⁶Gal. 4:26.

²⁴⁷Acts 21:17-36.

CONCLUSION

This study was not begun with any point to prove or any problem to solve, and thus does not arrive at any proper conclusion. In the course of preparing this thesis, however, there are certain points that have impressed themselves upon my mind. These are listed below not as items which are demonstrated by this thesis, but as more-or-less tentative conclusions which I have come to hold in the course of writing it.

(1) Paul is not to be seen as a logical, scholastic thinker with a systematic theology, but primarily as a man of faith. His writings are from "faith to faith," and are held together into a unity not by logical consistency but by his overarching faith in Christ.

(2) There is no one word which adequately sets forth Paul's theology. But if a list of Pauline key words is made, "freedom" is properly included as representing one of the central ideas of Paul.

(3) The present experience of the believer is at least as important in Paul's thought as either eschatology or atonement.

(4) The "theological" language of Paul is largely metaphorical, and was readily understood by Paul's first readers.

(5) Paul owed much to both his Greek and his Hebrew backgrounds. It is difficult to say which is the most important

influence upon his theology, though my general impression is that scholars are more inclined to attach importance to the Hebrew background of Paul than formerly. The great differences between the Greek idea of freedom and that of Paul would indicate that on this point at least he was not greatly influenced by Greek thought.

(6) Paul is not to be seen as an innovator, but as the man called upon to clarify and defend a gospel already preached by the Hellenistic Church before he was converted.

(7) There are real differences between Paul and Jesus, but these are more in the realm of manner of expression than in basic theological content.

(8) Paul does not coin any theological terms to express his freedom-doctrine, nor modify the meaning of existing words so as to use them in a technical sense. His freedom-terminology uses words in their ordinary meaning.

(9) The epistle to the Romans is the starting point for a theological approach to Paul.

(10) Although leading the battle for Christian freedom from the Law, Paul never really resolved the question of the meaning of the Old Testament for the Church.

(11) The category of "Cosmic Powers" in the background of Paul's thought is worthy of more study. Questions not discussed in this thesis have been raised in my mind, such as "How does Paul reconcile the sovereignty of Jahweh with the role supposedly played by the Cosmic Powers in controlling the destiny of the world?"

I conclude this study aware that I have hardly begun it. Several relevant themes have not even been touched upon, such as the background of the freedom-idea in the Hebrew Old Testament and the Septuagint, and the influence of Paul's doctrine of freedom on the later writers of the New Testament. I have found that no one aspect of Paul's thought may be studied in isolation from the whole: "freedom from Death," for example, requires a grasp of Paul's eschatology, which in turn requires an understanding of first-century apocalyptic in general. One can only nibble away at the mountain of Biblical knowledge, aware that no one person can assimilate and digest it all, and hoping that one's samplings at least increase one's capacity a little while giving a general idea of the lay of the land.

I have attempted to make this study such a sampling.

APPENDIX

THE PROBLEM OF TRANSLATING ROMANS 8:2

Romans 8:2 is a key verse for any consideration of Paul's doctrine of freedom. It is a compact, pregnant verse, which even in Greek is ambiguous as to its precise meaning, though its general meaning is quite clear.

The difficult verse to be studied says: "ὁ γὰρ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἠλευθέρωσεν ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου." The latter part of the verse has caused no difficulty to translators. The meaning of the verse is, that whatever is signified by the words preceding ἠλευθέρωσεν has set you free from the law of sin and death. But what do these ten words signify? What is it that this verse declares has set the believer free from the law of sin and death? That is the problem to be studied in this appendix.

There is the problem of the meaning of the words involved. The words νόμος, ζωῆς, and ἐν have more than one meaning, and their meaning in this context alters the meaning of the entire verse. There is also the problem of the grammatical relations of the words. The key question is, does ζωῆς go with πνεύματος to make "spirit of life," or does it go with ἐν χριστῷ to make "life in Christ"? Does ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ stand in relation to

ζωῆς or to ἀλευθέρωστέν? If the former, the meaning is "life in Christ Jesus;" if the latter, the meaning is "freed you in Christ Jesus." Thus, though the ten words in the phrase we are studying are common words occurring dozens of times in the New Testament, this phrase can be translated to mean a number of different things.

Let us first note the possible meanings of the words involved. Arndt and Gingrich give five meanings for νόμος:²⁴⁸ (a) any law, (b) a rule governing one's actions; principle, (emphasis mine), (c) the Jewish Law, the Torah, (d) the Jewish Scriptures as a whole, and (e) Christianity as a "new law" as in Gal. 6:2. C.H. Dodd says that in this verse (Rom. 8:2) "law is not used in any strict sense of a code, but in the sense of principle."²⁴⁹ Nygren agrees, saying, "Here law confronts law. But law is here given a meaning which is out of the ordinary. The thought is not about a law of the same sort as that from which we are set free, but law . . . in the sense of a new order."²⁵⁰ Dodd and Nygren choose the meaning "b" above, and I think they are correct, for νόμος here surely does not refer to a law in the sense of regulations, a list of rules, but the principle of the Spirit.

Two meanings are given for the word ζωῆς.²⁵¹ In Romans 8:2, this word could mean either "life" in the common sense of

²⁴⁸Arndt and Gingrich, op. cit., pp. 544-545.

²⁴⁹C.H. Dodd, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, p. 135.

²⁵⁰Nygren, op. cit., p. 311.

²⁵¹Arndt and Gingrich, op. cit., pp. 340-341.

everyday life, sometimes spoken of in the New Testament as the believer's "walk," or it could refer to the supernatural quality of the life of the believer, "eternal life," "Life" with a capital "L." In Romans 8:2, then, the phrase ΤΟΥ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΖΩΗΣ ΕΝ ΧΡΙΣΤῶ Ἰησοῦ could mean either "the Life-Spirit . . ." or ". . . life (everyday life) 'in' Christ Jesus," depending upon whether ζωῆς is taken to go with πνεύματος or ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

Even the little preposition ἐν is ambiguous in this passage. Dana and Mantey give two basic usages:²⁵² "in" with the locative case and "by means of" with the instrumental case. Since both cases have the same form, it is difficult to determine here whether by the phrase ἐν χριστῷ Paul intends his usual meaning, "in Christ," in the sense of "in communion with Christ," or "by means of Christ."

The grammatical relations of the words are also difficult to determine in this verse. A.T. Robertson says:

Sometimes it is quite important for doctrinal reasons to be careful to note whether the adjunct is attributive or predicate. [He cites Romans 8:3 as an example.] . . . The same ambiguity arises in v. 2. . . . Here it is reasonably clear that ἐν χριστῷ is predicate with ἡλευθέρωσεν.²⁵³

But A.M. Hunter bases his translation on a different understanding of the grammatical relations by saying: "Put commas after Spirit and Jesus, and this difficult verse becomes clearer. Paul

²⁵²H.E. Dana and J.R. Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament (New York: Macmillan, 1927), p. 105.

²⁵³A.T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research (Nashville: Broadman, 1923), p. 784.

means: 'The principle of the Spirit--i.e. of the life in Christ Jesus--has set me free' ²⁵⁴ There are no grammatical rules which may be mechanically applied to this verse to exegete its true meaning. One must first attempt to determine Paul's meaning from an understanding of his theology as a whole, and interpret this verse accordingly.

There are in general two ways to translate Romans 8:2. The first way, followed by the King James Version, the American Standard Version, and the Revised Standard Version, is to translate word-for-word from the Greek, which translates the ambiguity of the Greek into English. The other approach is to make some choice among the various meanings of the words and their possible grammatical relations, based upon one's understanding of Paul as a whole, and to give the verse this interpretation in the English translation. Both approaches are illustrated in the following selections.

Translations which Preserve the Ambiguity of the Greek ²⁵⁵

King James Version (1611) -- For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

American Standard Version (1901) -- For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death.

Revised Standard Version (1946) -- For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death.

Karl Barth (from English translation of his Römerbrief, 1933) -- For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made thee free from the law of sin and of death.

²⁵⁵ For the sake of brevity, these translations are neither footnoted nor listed in the Bibliography. If from other than a well-known translation of the whole New Testament, relevant information is given in the text.

Translations which Attempt an Interpretation

Goodspeed (1923) -- For the life-giving law of the Spirit through Christ Jesus has freed you from the Law of sin and death.

Moffatt (1922) -- The law of the Spirit brings the life which is in Christ Jesus, and that law has set me free from the law of sin and death.

Verkuyl: Berkeley Version (1945) -- For the life-giving principles of the Spirit have freed you in Christ Jesus from the control of the principles of sin and death.

The Amplified New Testament (1958) -- For the law of the Spirit of life (which is) in Christ Jesus (the law of our new being) has freed me from the law of sin and of death.

Alexander Campbell (1826) -- For the law of the Spirit of Life by Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.

C.H. Dodd (from his commentary on Romans, 1932) -- The law of the Spirit brings the life which is in Christ Jesus, and that law has set me free from the law of sin and death.

New English Bible (1961) -- Because in Christ Jesus the life-giving law of the Spirit has set you free from the law of sin and death.

Weymouth, (1902) -- For the Spirit's law--life in Christ Jesus--has set me free from the law of sin and death.

Phillips (1958) -- For the new spiritual principle of life "in" Christ Jesus lifts me out of the old vicious circle of sin and death.

A.M. Hunter (from his commentary on Romans, 1955) -- The principle of the Spirit--i.e., the life in Christ Jesus--has set me free from the law of sin and death.

Conclusion

The English translation which best expresses the Pauline thought of Romans 8:2 seems to me to be: "The Spirit's principle--life in union with Christ Jesus--has freed me from the Law of sin and death." In this translation, νόμος in the first part of the

verse has the meaning "principle," in the sense of "theory," and in the latter part of the verse the capitalization indicates the Torah, the legal requirement of the Old Testament. The phrase ἐν Χριστῷ is taken in the usual Pauline sense of "in union with Christ." The word ἡμέρας is taken to mean daily life rather than Eternal Life.

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