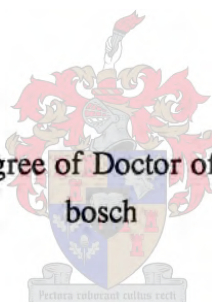


Paul and freedom: *implications for hermeneutics and theology*

Jeremia (Jeremy) Punt

Dissertation presented for the Degree of Doctor of Theology at the University of Stellen-



Promotor: Prof BC Lategan

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Date: 25/8/99.....

Summary

Freedom plays an important role in the Pauline letters and has usually been explained with reference to three theological matters: freedom from the law, sin and death. Freedom, however, characterises Pauline hermeneutics and theology in a more comprehensive way. Sadly, these notions of freedom are not allowed to emerge and this is, to a large extent, due to the overwhelming presence of the traditional approach in understanding Paul. This approach to Paul is characterised by a spiritual and individualist reading of the apostle's letters, dating back to the sixteenth century and is continued, also in scholarly literature, to this day. Recent attempts to wrestle Paul free from this interpretive framework have been only mildly successful. Attention to Paul's use of the scriptures of Israel in his letters allows for his hermeneutics to emerge more clearly as embedded within the traditions of the first century, yet clearly having an ecclesiocentric goal. The study of Paul's use of Scripture makes it possible to show how theological and hermeneutical freedoms interact and mutually inform one another in his letters. Pauline hermeneutics, along with the interpretive practices present in the first century and early church, have to be reevaluated today, for its potential to render new readings of Scripture. At the same time, the study of Pauline hermeneutics enables a reappropriation of the apostle's letters, encouraging renewed dialogue with these writings to the benefit of the contemporary global community.

Opsomming

Vryheid is 'n belangrike tema in die Pauliniese briewe en word gewoonlik aangespreek met verwysing na drie teologiese sake: vryheid van die wet, sonde en dood. Vryheid is egter kenmerkend van die Pauliniese literatuur op 'n veel meer omvattende wyse. Dit is dus teleurstellend dat die ander aspekte van vryheid in Paulus nie tot hulle reg kom nie. Hierdie toedrag van sake word aan die ingrypende invloed van die tradisionele verstaan van Paulus toegeskryf. Hierdie interpretasie raamwerk wat gekenmerk word deur 'n vergeesteliking en individualisering van die briewe van Paulus, dateer terug tot die sestiende eeu en word tot vandag toe aangetref, selfs in akademiese kringe. Onlangse pogings om Paulus uit die wurggreep van die tradisionele verstaan te bevry het tot dusver beperkte sukses getoon. Die studie van Paulus se gebruik van die geskrifte van Israel in sy briewe veroorsaak dat sy hermeneutiek op duideliker na vore te kom as enersyds eietyd tot die eerste eeu, maar andersyds ook met 'n ooglopende ekklesiosentriese doel. Dit is juis die studie van Paulus se gebruik van die Skrif wat dit moontlik maak om die noue interaksie tussen vryheid in teologiese sin en vryheid op hermeneutiese vlak in sy briewe aan te toon. Pauliniese hermeneutiek, soos ook ander hermeneutiese praktyke

in die eerste eeu en vroeg-Christelike kerk, moet vir vandag herwaardeer word vir hulle vermoë om nuwe interpretasie moontlikhede van die bybelse teks moontlik te maak. Terselfdertyd is dit die studie van Paulus se hermeneutiek wat nuwe leesmoontlikhede vir sy briewe daarstel, en dialoog aanmoedig met hierdie literatuur tot voordeel van die huidige, breë wêreldgemeenskap.

--00-00--

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I express my thanks to other family members, especially my mother, and friends and colleagues (locally and abroad) who, through their continued support, encouragement and interest in my work, ensured the necessary momentum to see it to its eventual completion. Not discounting the danger of singling out anyone, prof Jan Willem van Henten (Amsterdam) does merit special mention for his continuous inspiration and support along the way, academically and otherwise.

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It is my wish and, indeed, prayer that this work might reflect something of the ‘social embodiment’ of my and my family’s faith in God, without whom this work would not have been possible or, in any case, irrelevant.

--00-00--

I dedicate this work in loving memory to my friends, Albert Landman and Pierre du Plessis, who died untimely and tragically in 1984.

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Introduction

The theological enterprise has the unique feature that by its very nature it can never plausibly claim finality. As its subject-matter is the transcendent God and its task the encapsulation of thought about him in shifting and fallible words, theology, more than all human enterprises, has every reason to encourage freedom and to err on the side of generosity in this respect (Houlden 1989:273-274, emphasis added).

1. Problem

However, with the transformation of Christianity into a largely Gentile faith [sic during the earliest centuries], Paul's Jewish background was all but forgotten. Paul became the champion of Gentile Christianity, the defender of orthodoxy, the legislator of bourgeois morality, and the church's first systematic theologian (Howell 1993:305).

It is an ironic twist that the single writer in the New Testament with the majority of writings attributed to him, the earliest “Christian” missionary’ par excellence, the founder of many churches of believers in Christ during the first century CE, one who has even been called — perhaps, accused of! — being the second founder of Christianity,¹ that this man’s writings and views today receive a considerably bad press. The Pauline letters² and theology based on these writings are arguably the single most important set of writings within the Bible which influenced and continue to influence Christian theology. The ambivalent position of the Pauline letters are well expressed in the words of Adolf Deissmann (quoted in Dodd 1996:11):

There has probably seldom been anyone at the same time hated with such fiery hatred and loved with such strong passion as Paul.³

Theological perspectives from the Pauline letters are today even rejected, especially outside the traditional circles of Christian theology. Many ‘Third-World’ theologies, especially liberation theologians and feminist theologians either neglect, exclude or simply dismiss the Pauline let-

¹ Although some scholars argue, as in the words of Wilson (1997: front flap) ‘Christianity without Paul is quite literally nothing’, this has led to the accusation that Paul perverted Christianity into some kind of Paulinism; indeed, it was, at least originally, a pejorative comment: ‘the apostle was viewed as having taken the pleasant, practical, loving teaching of Jesus, and converted it into an arid, abstract religion’ (Silva 1994:12). As it is often put: abandoning the religion *of* Jesus, Paul founded a (new) religion *about* Jesus! Cf the criticism of such thinking by e.g. Furnish (1985:11-13). For recent discussions, cf Wenham (1995); Wright (1997).

² Although not argued in this study, seven Pauline letters, viz Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, 1 Thessalonians, Galatians, Philippians, and Philemon are taken as ‘genuine’ Pauline letters and the remaining six letters as deutero-Pauline: 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. Extensive arguments for and against this position, and variations to it, can be found in NT ‘Introductions’ and elsewhere.

³ To this can be added the element of difficulty in understanding Pauline views: ‘There is no figure in the first generation of Christianity about whom we know so much as about Paul — and precisely at the point where he reveals most about himself we are most puzzled’ (Meeks, quoted in Jones 1984:16). Jones (1984:18-23) attributes the misunderstanding and abuse of Paul’s views to his vagueness which makes his arguments vulnerable to (deliberate) misunderstanding: overemphasising the state, abandoning biblical law, and neglecting service to the world.

ters in the construction of their theologies,⁴ to the point where Jones (1984:18) argues that prominent American theologians like James Cone and Albert Cleage ‘have anathemized the apostle to the point of writing him off’. Indeed,

Von Harnack suggested that the history of dogma could be written as ‘a history of the Pauline reactions in the church, and in doing so would touch on all the turning points of the history’ (Howell 1993:304).

But, the ironic twist which has led to the current devaluation of the Pauline writings is not a twist of fate. The problem(s) which many contemporary theologians and bible readers experience with Paul, however, can be ascribed not so much to what is contained in his writings but to the interpretation of the writings of Paul.⁵ In other words, it will be claimed here that many of the problems experienced with Pauline views stem from what Paul is *perceived* to have written and ‘intended’, or from traditional interpretations. As will be argued below, even when the important dimensions of any biblical text — historical, structural and theological (cf Lategan 1988:69) — are taken into account, interpretations of the Pauline writings are often still fitted into or guided by a very specific interpretative framework. This framework can be called *Lutheran*,⁶ because the most pervasive and determinative reading of Paul is directed towards — and guided by — concerns which the sixteenth-century Martin Luther had to address. In short, the development of the ‘Protestant habit of reading Paul through the eyes of Luther’ (Meyer 1997:350), determines the interpretation of the Pauline writings.

⁴ Pregeant (1995:402-412) points out the ambiguous nature of Pauline positions regarding the status and role of women, homosexuality and social activism. However, notwithstanding Pregeant’s attempts to deconstruct the traditional views of Paul as chauvinist, anti-homosexual and social capitulator, he all but admits that the traditional views still reign supreme! A number of other noteworthy statements regarding the unacceptability of Pauline views, include the following:

George Bernard Shaw expressed what he perceived as the Pauline degradation or negation of human dignity: ‘It was Paul who converted the religion that raised one above sin and death into a religion that delivered millions of men [sic] so completely into a dominion that their own common nature became a horror to them, and the religious life became a denial of life’ (quoted in Dodd 1996:12).

Sojourner Truth is reported to have vowed after having repeatedly being preached to from Paul to be obedient as a slave, never to read from that part of the Bible should she ever become free and learn to read (Schüssler Fiorenza 1992:154; a similar response to Paul was made by Howard Thurman’s mother (Jones 1984:6).

In the Christian-Jewish dialogue, ‘Paul emerged as the major stumbling block’ (Von Waldow 1995:149).

⁵ This sentiment is echoed by Jones (1984:16-18) with reference to the (mis)appropriation of Paul among African Americans. Dodd (1996:14) includes the need to take the role of ‘intermediaries’ — between the Pauline texts and contemporary readers — into account when he considers the ‘problem with Paul’. He restricts these intermediaries to the translators of Scripture as well as biblical scholars. Dodd’s failure, however, to account for his indebtedness to the ‘evangelical tradition’, might exclude other important ‘intermediaries’ which should also be considered.

⁶ Lutheran does not in this sense refer to the modern Lutheran church or other contemporary churches, institutions or organisations which in one way or another derive their origin from Luther. This approach is not linked to any particular Christian church or denomination, but to the contrary, it will be argued that the Lutheran perspective can be found in much of what is considered Christian approaches to the Bible, and ultimately also in a correspondingly wide range of theological, and especially in certain areas thereof, e.g. soteriology.

Indeed, as Watson (1986:2) contends, 'we must go back to Luther to find the origin and inspiration of much contemporary work on Paul'.⁷ In the words of Howell (1993:306),

[m]uch of the Pauline research of the past century can be seen as a response to the image of the dynamic Paul that emerged from the pen of Luther.

Ever since the Protestant Reformation, and more especially since Martin Luther's interpretation to the writings of Paul, 'justification by faith', the central doctrine of the Reformation (Pannenberg 1981:288), became — if not *the* key to Pauline theology⁸ — at least the overarching paradigm for understanding these writings.⁹

The ecclesial and other related circumstances¹⁰ which led Luther to 'discover' the themes of *sola gratia* and *sola fidei* in Paul's letters were of such a nature that it is not difficult even today to understand why Luther — and many others! — considered his 'discovery' a 'breakthrough'.¹¹ Luther through his study of and lecturing on the Psalms and Paul's letters to Romans and Galatians found answers to many vexing questions in his mind.¹² His liberation rested on finding not only a just God whose grace extended beyond his bestowal of rightful punishment, but also a God who did not expect a structured religious system within which only those sins accounted for in confession, can be forgiven (Bainton 1977:42,44).

Luther found in Paul's letters the answers to the questions that troubled his mind:

I greatly longed to understand Paul's Epistle to the Romans and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, 'the justice of God' ... Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that 'the just shall live by faith' ... The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning ... This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven (Luther, quoted in Bainton 1977:49-50).

According to Luther, Paul provided him with much needed answers and comfort. It can also be demonstrated that Luther's reading of Paul was contextual in the full sense of the word. Soon Luther's understanding of Paul within his historical context led to the formulation

⁷ Probably earlier still, as Johnson (1997:368) notes: 'Paul's place at the center of the canon inevitably tempts us to read his letters through the lenses of the evangelists, his own theological descendants, and the apologists, and to forget that he stands historically prior to them all'.

⁸ That is, a theology constructed according to Paul's writings.

⁹ The Lutheran approach came to influence not only the understanding of the Pauline epistles, but reverberated through large parts of the understanding of the New Testament. This happened with Luther, whose negative evaluation of the James letter as a 'straw epistle' is an example, but later New Testament scholarship largely adopted the Lutheran understanding of the New Testament texts in general and contemporary Judaism particularly. Cf also Craffert (1993:234).

¹⁰ Meeks (1993:7) refers to the 'Augustinian tradition and Erasmian humanism and the beginnings of German national consciousness'. The following chapter contains a more extensive discussion of the ecclesial context of the sixteenth century with reference made to the political, economic and other circumstances as well.

¹¹ Cf Bainton's biography of Luther in which he touches on the Medieval religious setting in which Luther found himself in the 1500's (Bainton 1977:15-45). See also my chapter 2, *Paul revisited: Paul in New Perspective*.

¹² During this time (1511-1516) Luther was appointed at the University of Wittenburg.

of the *sola*-concepts, of which *sola fidei* was very prominent. These concepts were, however, taken over by subsequent generations of Protestant Christianity without taking Paul's contextualisation by Luther into account, and without asking anew for the relevance of Paul for a particular time and situation.

Eventually the Reformation's emphasis on 'justification by faith' became fixed in dogma, and the guiding principle for understanding Paul, and for that matter the whole New Testament and the Bible. This hinged on the perceived similarity between the Pauline and Lutheran contexts:¹³ Paul and Luther both found themselves in a religion (first-century 'Judaism' and medieval Roman Catholic Christianity, respectively) stressing *meritorious* works, both struggled to find a *merciful* God and both agonised over these struggles with '*introspective* consciences' (Dunn and Suggate 1993:14; Stendahl 1963).

This interpretive framework became determinative for the views propounded by Paul in his letters. But the influence of this framework even goes beyond providing an interpretive framework for Pauline theology. The framework according to which the Pauline letters are read, often determined the understanding of the first-century context within which these letters were produced. The way in which first-century Jewish beliefs, especially those regarding the function and purpose of the Torah for believers in their relationship with God, were understood and explained have for many centuries been directed by the Lutheran framework (cf e g Craffert 1993:234-235). The views by some scholars who questioned the accompanying perception of first-century 'Judaism'¹⁴ were either neglected or rejected.

In short, it can be argued that the supposed symmetry between the 'Judaism' of Paul's day and the Roman Catholicism of Luther's time, led to a specific understanding of Second Temple, or Middle Judaism.

Reformation teaching discerned a very strong analogy between Judaism, or Judaizing Christianity, on the one hand and late medieval Roman Catholicism on the other (Barr 1990:48; cf Beker 1991:117; Kruse 1996:24; Prickett 1991:2).

Later attempts to correct this view (e g Sanders 1977 and 1983) of first-century Jewish beliefs, often failed to indicate what Paul, the full-blooded Jew (Philippians 3), experienced as problems in the 'Judaism' of his day — and why. Recently, however, James Dunn¹⁵ has aligned

¹³ As formulated in e g Bainton (1977:49): 'he [Luther] persisted in grappling with Paul, who plainly had agonized over precisely his [Luther's] problem and had found a solution'. Cf Dunn and Suggate (1993:13-14).

¹⁴ To speak of Judaism (singular) should not be understood that this term implies a single, unified entity. Although one should rather speak of Judaisms, the reference in this dissertation will be to the 'singular "Judaism" as the generic entity to which they all belong' (Wright 1992:147); except for where a more nuanced approach is required, cf chapter 2.

¹⁵ Supported by many others, including D Boyarin, and, naturally, opposed by at least equally as many others.

himself with Sanders and argued strongly for understanding Paul's opposition to 'works of the Law' to refer to 'identity' or 'boundary markers' within 'covenantal nomism'. Paul is taking Jewish nationalism with its resultant exclusion of 'Gentiles' from the Christian community to task.

The particular way in which Martin Luther read the Pauline letters during the sixteenth century, the specific perception of Middle-Judaism and the resultant attitude towards the 'Old Testament' — and for that matter towards certain texts of and materials contained in the New Testament — became the standard position on these matters for many centuries, even today.¹⁶

Although this paradigm has not always been explicit in the interpretation of Paul's letters, it has always been present (Craffert 1993:234).

The Old Testament is considered to be exactly that — *old*, relevant only in as far as it can be linked to and justified by what is believed to be the teachings of the New Testament — by many users of the Bible, without regard for the Pauline appropriations of it in his letters.

Even more problematical is perhaps that in scholarly circles the predominance of the Lutheran interpretation in the 'traditional approach to Paul' (TAP) has to a large extent gone either unnoticed, or unaccounted for or unchallenged, or all three simultaneously. However, fairly recently there has been a number of attempts to wrestle the Pauline letters free from their imprisonment to traditional views. Although Paul might be out on parole — at least in some theological neighbourhoods — he is by far not yet free to walk the theological streets.

The reason for the continuing restrictions found within Pauline interpretation can be ascribed to many factors, of which a number are important for this study. These factors, however, are not only contributing to the TAP being kept in abeyance, but these very same positions are reciprocally strengthened by the TAP approach. The factors involved in this 'vicious circle' are the following:

a) *Paul as theologian*: Within the TAP the theological position attributed to Paul approached that of what today would be called a systematic theologian or dogmatician. Paul is seen as a theologian intent on and committed to working out a systematic 'justification by faith'-theology which would provide individuals with certainty about their personal salvation.

Frequently the understanding of Paul as systematic theologian developed without due consideration to his apocalyptic-eschatological views, and when those views were considered at all, it was fitted into the TAP. The result was the often heard accusation of the 'inconsistency'

¹⁶ The importance of the Lutheran framework not only for interpreting the Pauline writings, but also for Protestant theology in general, becomes succinctly clear in the words of Luz: 'From the second generation of the Reformation, the gospel was interpreted more or less along Pauline lines' (1994:31; cf Meeks 1986:185).

and even ‘incoherency’ of Paul’s views as expressed in his letters, especially regarding the status and function of the Torah ‘after Christ’. Various ingenious and less imaginative ways were employed to explain Pauline thought, but in many cases these failed to present a better understanding of Paul.

b) *The role ascribed to the Old Testament*: Within the Lutheran framework the Old Testament or the scriptures of Israel — which would be a more adequate historical and theological designation — are assigned a subordinate role in comparison to the New Testament.

The corollary is the perception that references (allusions, echoes) to Old Testament texts in the New are primarily used to avert the danger of legalism, works-righteousness and other similar perils and threats. The use made of the Old Testament, especially in the Pauline letters, is seen to be corrective of the Old Testament texts, because of its perceived ‘new’ or christological understanding in the New Testament context.

c) *Influence on contemporary understanding of Pauline letters and New Testament*: The Pauline letters and the other New Testament writings are interpreted and appropriated from the perspective of ‘justification by faith’. Although the importance of this concern to the New Testament is beyond dispute, the question is simply whether the New Testament writings present justification as such and as understood in traditional theological terms, as the central message to be communicated, or whether justification does not, perhaps, form the backdrop of and motivation for what is communicated by means of the letters. Thus: Are the Pauline letters directed to persuade their readers (listeners) of the need to be justified by faith, or is it assumed as a *sine qua non* of faith in God, and later on faith in Christ? Are the Pauline letters not rather occupied with the implications or effect of such a belief, and is it not ‘spelling out’ justification in ecclesiological terms? And does this justification function only individually and soteriologically?

Concomitantly, within a Lutheran framework of reading New Testament texts a christological emphasis is dominant, which often and too easily slips over into a christocentric, if not christomonistic reading. Although the emphasis in the New Testament on Christ and what He achieved through his incarnation, death and resurrection is not disputed, the question still remains: Is a christocentric reading of the New Testament the most adequate way to do justice to the *Corpus Paulinum*, and eventually even the rest of the New Testament?

d) *Influence on Christian theology*: It can be argued that Christian theology is dominated by an emphasis on the individual-soteriological. Notwithstanding the recent challenges posed to such an understanding from the side of Liberation, Black, Feminist, African and other

theologies, such an individual-soteriological appropriation of Christianity seems to continue nonetheless. This is also true of the South African theological scene.

The individual-soteriological emphasis is often ascribed to the 'justification by faith'-framework with its emphasis on the attaining of transcendental-located salvation by individuals. This salvation is perceived to be in temporal terms directed towards the future and, in many instances, also to the supernatural, leaving little room for concern with contemporary 'earthly' problems and issues.

In view of these considerations a Pauline theology developed on the basis of this traditional approach to Paul can become individualistic, self-centered and contrite, operating with a low or negative anthropology: a pessimism regarding human beings.

e) *Hermeneutics, control and ideology*: The dominance of this traditional reading of Paul has through the centuries strongly influenced reformed Protestant theology: a preoccupation with the individual's salvation from sin — as *ὑβρις*, as rebellion against God — and death. The individual-soteriological reading of Paul's letters became the cloth out of which much of the Christian-theological dress was cut, with a decisive influence on both the reading of the Bible and Christian theology.

This one-sided reading of Paul is the reason why his letters are seldom used to oppose unjust ecclesial, socio-political and economical practices.¹⁷ In the words of Jones (1984:5)

Very few black theologians have given the apostle serious consideration when they have sought to spin out their theologies of liberation from the Bible.

During the twentieth century the rise of the dialectical theology and existentialism further contributed to entrench the traditional approach to the Pauline writings in Protestant dogma and systematic theology.¹⁸ The low anthropology inherent to the TAP was presupposed and supported by both these developments.¹⁹

Thus:

The problem that this study attempts to address concerns the fundamental issue of the interpretation of Paul. This is indeed a multifaceted problem. Issues regarding the perceived

¹⁷ A good example is the scant attention to the Pauline letters in the Kairos document in South Africa (1986). Some exceptions do exist, of which N Elliott, D Georgi and R Horsley are perhaps most vocal in pointing out the social 'tack' found in the Pauline letters.

¹⁸ Cf Barr's (1993) argument that the neglect of 'general revelation' in the Bible can be ascribed to the dialectical theologian with perhaps the most and longest lasting influence, Karl Barth.

¹⁹ The broader world context should be seen as the backdrop of these developments: the devastation of the World Wars, etc.

'intention' of Paul's writings, Paul's socio-cultural context, Paul's religious affiliation and endeavours, and basic epistemological questions regarding the theological enterprise are all important aspects of the central issue. However, it will not be possible to examine all of these exhaustively within the constraints of this dissertation.²⁰

To state the question differently: *How can the Pauline writings and theology be wrenched free from its bondage to the TAP and be contextualised today in such a way that adequate consideration is given to these documents themselves, their context or historical setting, and their contemporary relevancy? And what would the results of this be for theology at the advent of the third millennium?*

- How can the interpretation of the Pauline interpretation be wrested free from its traditional fetters which tend to obscure the Pauline message into individual-soteriological categories and subsequently even control the discernment of the Bible as a whole, and also Christianity at large?
- What is the reason for the perception that Paul's letters are primarily and virtually exclusively directed towards and concerned with individual-soteriological matters and in what way or by which kind of rereading can the Pauline letters be (re)contextualised today?
- Why is the one particular reading of Paul's letters so dominant, pervasive and almost exhaustively perceived to be *the* only and therefore eternally-valid reading of Paul? And, how can this reading be remedied?
- How can Paul-bound be transformed into Paul-freed? How can the apostle who preached freedom and liberation be freed and liberated²¹ in order to once more become the agent of liberation in the (post)modern world?

2. Hypothesis

In short and in answer to the questions formulated above, the problems with and caused by the traditional *interpretation of Paul* (how Paul's writings have been and are read) *can adequately*

²⁰ It is necessary in a study which has potentially such a broad scope to stress not only that certain aspects will be indeed be attended to, but it is equally important to briefly note that certain matters cannot be investigated here for fear of neglecting the main problem of investigation. Certain issues which are not directly addressed (e.g. the first-century Jewish beliefs regarding the role and function of the Law in the salvation of human beings) but do have some bearing on important facets of the main problem identified in this study, will be briefly referred to by critical appropriation of the views of certain scholars with specific and detailed references made.

In some instances where it was felt that although a specific issue is not *directly* relevant to the research topic, but that it is nevertheless important to and should be viewed in conjunction with the overall topic because such discussion could provide more illumination, a footnote was included. For shorter illuminating or additional comments and references, footnotes were also employed in order not to disturb the line of argumentation.

²¹ On the use of both these terms, cf chapter 4, n 7.

be addressed with the interpretation by Paul (how Paul read his 'foundational texts'). In other words, the particular narrow, unidirectional and at times irrelevant readings made of the Pauline literature as guided by the TAP can be challenged on the basis of how Paul in his writings appropriated the scriptures of Israel by means of citations, and allusions or 'echoes'.

This hypothesis can be subdivided into the following segments, as explained in more detail below: It will be argued that the Lutheran interpretation of Paul became the basis for the traditional approach to the Pauline writings. This traditional reading created a blind spot in the understanding of Paul. Secondly, the TAP assigned a specific interpretation to freedom in Paul's letters. However, the key to a more appropriate and relevant understanding of freedom in the Pauline letters, is Paul's own use of Scripture.²²

2.1. History of the interpreted Paul

A necessary starting point for any discussion of the way(s) in which Paul is read today is to account for the influence of the Lutheran interpretation on the TAP.

Students who want to understand Paul but feel they have nothing to learn from a Martin Luther should consider a career in metallurgy. Exegesis is learned from the masters (Westerholm 1988:173, although he means this more positive than the position taken in this study; cf below, chapter two).

In order, however, to be able to deal with the Lutheran framework and its influence on the traditional reading of Paul in an adequate way, the context within which this framework was moulded should be briefly investigated. Such a 'stocktaking-exercise' will probably indicate a context which could be understood to have provided the initiating factors and issues for understanding the Lutheran concerns which shaped, what was to become, the traditional framework for reading the Pauline letters.

The investigation of Luther's context needs to be restricted to the issues which had the strongest influence in his search of the Scriptures, and which could be pointed out as those matters which necessitated the development of Luther's particular understanding of Paul.

The context which can be shown to have exerted such an important influence on Luther's reading of Paul and Luther's subsequent propagation of these views — the Lutheran framework! — should not be limited to a choice between either his personal, or a wider social or ecclesial context. It is postulated that both Luther's personal and broader context contributed to his specific understanding of Paul. Furthermore, it will be argued that Luther's personal context was strongly influenced by 'global' events in the society and the church of his day.

²² Scripture is capitalised when it is used to refer collectively to the 'scriptures of Israel'; cf chapter 3.

The investigation of the particular context within which Luther found himself during the sixteenth century cannot be confined to that era. His views had a lasting effect on the interpretation of the Pauline letters in following generations.²³ The Lutheran framework has been appropriated, developed and formatted into a theological system, the traditional approach to Paul, which exerts its views, 'ideology' and control to this day.²⁴ Whereas Luther's own readings of Paul can be shown as contextual interpretation, later readings of Paul based on the Lutheran framework cannot always make the same claim. However, the subsequent development and 'canonisation' of the Lutheran framework led to its dominant position. One can therefore speak of an epistemological and hermeneutical privilege of the Lutheran framework.

The claim is not that all of the Lutheran contributions to Christian theology are suspect. With the accompanying danger of generalisation and over-simplification, it is possible to argue that some theological questions are 'universal'. However, in this study the issue is the continuing domination of the Lutheran framework beyond its time. This framework provides almost exclusive access to the Pauline writings and 'fixes' the meaning and relevance of these writings in advance. Many preoccupations of Luther are not present in our world any longer *except* in so far as they are created by such a Lutheran reading. This tempts one to argue that perhaps the search for a gracious God has today been replaced with the search for 'gracious' human beings.²⁵

Ironically, attention to Luther's appropriations of Paul might prove worthwhile in suggesting reasons for and ways of loosening the bonds of the very Lutheran framework — as developed during the sixteenth century and continued to the present day — while developing contextual theologies for today. To go one step further, Luther can be shown to have followed closely in the footsteps of Paul in regard to hermeneutical nature and style: a creative and participative freedom in interpretation.²⁶ In fact, the contextual nature of Luther's interpretation of Paul can yield important insight for contextual theologies of this day and age.

²³ As much as the prevalent interpretation(s) of Paul during the preceding centuries influenced Luther's interpretation of Paul; attention will be given also to the contribution made by Augustine of Hippo in the fifth century CE.

²⁴ The problem with limiting the relevance of the investigation of the 'world in front of the text' to the 'long history of the interaction between text and readers in different historical contexts' (Conradie et al 1995:69) is that it fails to adequately account for the many implications of such a 'long history of interaction', of which one of the most important seems to be the establishing of an 'interpretum receptum'.

²⁵ Cf the concluding chapter, section 5.1.

²⁶ Although it is probably a somewhat exotic suggestion, it will be interesting to compare what we know of Paul's and Luther's experiences of Christ: both belonged to a well-established religion with which they never 'intended' to break with, but eventually contextualised it for a particular setting for which they were subsequently first accused of blasphemy and in later years hailed as 'great Christian thinkers' (cf Küng 1994); both experienced a 'call' with certain accompanying natural and supernatural phenomena; after the call both were secluded for a period of time after which they presented a 'radical' interpretation or message of Christ; both experienced conflict and vehement opposition, especially with the 'church authorities'; both emphasised the need for the 'correct' appropriation of the 'righteousness of God'; both caused the respective ecclesial contexts headaches with their ethos of freedom; and most important for the argument here, Luther's theology can best be appropriated with attention to his 'methods of scriptural exegesis' (e.g. Ebeling 1993:129; Goldingay 1982 on Luther's hermeneutic)

2.2. *Paul's reading of Scripture*

Following the suggestion made by Hafemann (1993:679) that many questions regarding the interpretation of Paul's letters — especially the issues of the role of the Torah and the significance of justification for Paul's view of redemptive history — 'can only be solved by a renewed study of Paul's use and understanding of the OT', an important aspect of the hypothesis of this study is that renewed attention is required for the way Paul interpreted and used the scriptures of Israel in order to arrive at a new understanding of Paul. The new understanding of Paul does not refer only, or even primarily to matters of content, but rather to the nature and style of the particular Pauline interpretation of Scripture.

Paul's reading of Scripture was guided by a strong sense of hermeneutical freedom, but the TAP has obscured this. The view that Paul accepted that Scripture has continuing value and normativity, rests on the position that Paul experienced the relation between his former and current views and beliefs — regarding God and especially in God's historical actions with his people — as one of continuation, and not as a radical disjuncture.

A careful reading of Paul's letters reveals that Paul did not harbour the traditionally supposed views of Christianity superceding and effectively obliterating Judaism. By a cautiously unbiased approach to Paul's use of Scripture, it can be shown that Paul views his own ideas to be in continuity with those of Scripture. Hays (1989:2,5) argues for 'defamiliarization' as the starting point for examining Paul's use of Scripture. By this Hays aims to take the christocentric — which often degenerates into the christomonistic — attitude to the Old Testament to task, and specifically the presentation of Paul's perceived interpretation of the 'Old Testament' as though there already existed a 'New Testament'.

More particularly, I want to argue that defamiliarisation from the TAP is essential to formulate an adequate understanding of Paul's use of Scripture. The emphasis on Paul's interpretation of Scripture outside the Lutheran confines is not intended to address only the presentation of a reading of Paul as contextual and relevant to our day and age. The reverse position is as much part of the objective: to show how Paul's appropriation of Scripture can be understood adequately only when the TAP has been lifted from the Pauline letters. The dynamic and free hermeneutic with which Paul operates emerges only when the Lutheran bias is removed.

and Pauline theology is arguably best approached from the perspective of his hermeneutics (cf my chapter 4); and so on. A parallel study of Luther and Paul might prove to be of some benefit for our understanding of both Luther and Paul, and Luther's understanding of Paul.

2.3. *Traditions of reading, and Paul*

In assessing Paul's interpretation of Scripture, two pitfalls need to be avoided. Firstly, one should not view Paul's use of Scripture as extraordinary, almost transcendental and far removed from other contemporary ways of reading. Secondly, one should not merely equate Paul's reading with a generalised conception of an ordinary, traditional approach to Scripture. The former would remove Paul from the context and traditions with which he interacted and could also result in ignoring various established exegetical and hermeneutical activities of Paul's day. The latter would fail to explain why Paul's reading of Scripture produced results so offensive to both some Jews as well as some early followers of Christ.

An attempt will be made to account for the interpretive strategies employed by Paul within the context of first century-Judaism. In this regard a number of common presuppositions existed: the perception of the text as a sacred entity, yet being alive as a 'living organism'; and, the notion that exegetes were 'inspired'. In an attempt to adapt, expand and interpret Israel's sacred tradition (Evans 1989:165), considerable interpretive freedom was accepted in Jewish circles. However, the text was deemed sacred owing primarily to the belief of the *inspiratio verbalis*, and was seen as containing the 'full revelation' of God if not the 'final' revelation. The text as 'container' for God's revelation required an interpretation that would render God's word relevant for each situation anew. This was the task of the inspired interpreters.

In framing the 'interpretive background', the traditional ways of reading and interpreting scriptural texts, within which Paul assumed the task of rereading his sacred traditions and texts from the perspective of Jesus Christ' death and resurrection, it becomes possible to argue for a specific motivation and aim according to which Paul read Scripture: motivated by a concern for *contextuality* and with an *ecclesiocentric* aim in mind!²⁷ The motivation and aim of Paul depended on a particular mode of reading, which can be called free and creative — Paul read Scripture in a dynamic way.

2.4. *Freedom and liberation in Pauline theology*

Another important aim of this study is to prove that Paul's appropriation of Scripture can and should be understood as being grounded on a dynamic, free and creative hermeneutic. The nature and style of Paul's interpretation of Scripture, and indeed with his theological thinking at large, can be described as free, creative and dynamic.

²⁷ For a fuller development of these two terms, cf chapter 4.

In Paul's letters the greek word for freedom — *ἐλευθερία* — and its derivatives are used more frequently than elsewhere in New Testament. Not only the use of *ἐλευθερία* but also other related expressions for freedom are quite pervasive throughout the Pauline letters. That the idea of freedom features quite dominantly in Paul's letters, is proved by certain studies.²⁸

However, the majority of studies on 'freedom in Paul' are limited to the consideration of the 'content' of the freedom — freedom from sin, from death, and so on. Although Peter Richardson (1979:165) wrote

[i]t is in the hammering out of a basis for his theology of freedom that Paul is most creative ... It is primarily his reflection on the Hebrew Scriptures, illuminated by his view of Jesus and the implications of Jesus' death, that encouraged insights not imagined before

he failed to explain in what the creative nature of Pauline reading of Scripture resided and how the creativeness could be understood. Furthermore, Richardson's description of Paul's freedom and creativeness is limited to accounting for Paul's ethical positions.

A more adequate understanding of Pauline hermeneutics becomes possible when attention is given to Paul's own *modus operandi*: freedom! The key to understanding Pauline freedom in action is Paul's free and creative reading of Scripture.

This also holds true for Paul's ministry. To describe Paul's ministerial practices as free probably does more justice to it than most other characterisations. Freedom determines his theological approach or to put it differently, contextuality seems to be the most adequate way to describe Paul's theological concerns, both in content, but also — and importantly — in form (or method) as well!

2.5. *Implications for theology today*

A final concern is that Paul's own exegetical practice and his dynamic, creative style of reading can make a major contribution towards satisfying the hermeneutical needs of today, where exactly this style of interpretation is sorely needed. Dynamic, creative and free readings of Scripture do not imply relativistic and 'free for all' interaction with Scripture as certain boundaries for readings are always created either by the text and its context, or by the reader and his/her communities, interests or reading formations,²⁹ and by the various relationships existing between these 'elements' which constitute the reading process.

²⁸ E.g. Jones (1987); Richardson (1979); Vollenweider (1989).

²⁹ Adam (1995b:19) argues convincingly that Fish's 'interpretive community' is better replaced by Bennett's 'reading formations' as description of constraints upon the reader within even postmodern hermeneutics. For constraints even within the position where a plurality of meaning ('interpretive interests') is accepted, also cf. Fowl (1990:391-398). For criticism of Fish's notion of interpretive communities, cf. Aichele et al (1995:34): they are 'static, homogeneous, hypothetical abstractions'.

(Post)modern attempts at the contextualisation of theology should take its cue from Paul's use of Scripture while being cognisant of the danger of imposing or positioning yet another 'grand narrative' or framework believed or argued to be an exhaustive and absolute proposal, 'the final answer' to both biblical interpretation and human needs, questions and problems. Such a 'metanarrative' of a 'final' reading of Paul is not advocated here, unless the appeal for a contextual approach to theology build on a dynamic hermeneutical freedom is seen as such. However, the very nature of the proposed approach mitigates against a straitjacket application of such an approach, which only leaves room for the possibility of an accusation of a totalising proposal relegated to the 'meta'-sphere where indeed any proposal, suggestion or even utterance can be perceived as dominating. When one reaches that stage, the accusation can be turned around, namely, that the perception of such a proposal like the one presented here, as totalising, rests on the preconceived notion of binary opposites which is fundamental to and functional within a modernist stance.³⁰

2.5.1. *Paul's hermeneutical, contextual, and pastoral theology*³¹

It is not only systematic theologians who emphasise the contextual nature of theology; of late, exegetes are making the same point. Referring to the biblical material broadly, Schüssler Fiorenza (1986:366) notes how traditional methods of biblical interpretation as for example Form and Redaction Criticism, have demonstrated that the biblical writings are 'theological responses to pastoral-practical situations and problems', and

[t]he biblical books are thus written with the intention of serving the needs of the community of faith and not of revealing timeless principles or of transmitting historically accurate records.

The one 'theologian' to which the largest single corpus of writings³² of the New Testament is attributed to — Paul — radically³³ contextualised the 'theology' which was transmitted to him through tradition. Even a cursory glance at the different ways the scriptures of Israel are quoted, cited or otherwise referred to in the Pauline letters makes it quite obvious that Paul at least had a very dynamic and creative understanding of the scriptures. Thus, scriptural

³⁰ Cf Adam (1995b:7-11;29;63) who sees binary opposition, which identifies identity and determines exclusion, as a constitutive element of totalising tendencies.

³¹ One often finds today that contextual and hermeneutical theology is contrasted with reference to liberationist approaches and the line of thinking deriving from Gadamer and others, respectively. I am not subscribing to these categories — although perhaps to the contrast in certain ways — as will be clear from what follows, and as will be made clear by the way in which the terms 'hermeneutical' and 'contextual' are applied!

³² Whether only seven or all thirteen letters are acknowledged as 'genuine' Pauline letters.

³³ The reference is to Paul's reinterpretation of the tradition received by him in terms of the Christ-events, and reciprocally, the Christ-events in terms of his received tradition. The *radical* nature of the Pauline reflections are borne out by the resistance encountered from both within 'early Christianity' (cf 2 Pt 3:16 and many of Paul's own letters, especially Galatians, 2 Corinthians) and from defenders of 'Middle Judaism'. Some scholars have proposed that Paul's 'thorn in the flesh' was actually the opposition encountered by him.

‘evidence’ not only sustains but actually promotes a contextual style in biblical interpretation and theology.

Paul’s contextual approach to ethics has been well documented. In a discussion on the ethics developed in Paul’s letter to the Galatians, Lategan (1990:318) refers to the

two theological motifs which seem to play an important role in shaping his ethical thinking in this letter. The one affects the nature of Paul’s ethics (ethics understood as a system of rules or as the responsibility for independent and founded decision-making), the other has to do with its style (the ideal of a participating and creative ethics).

However, to refer to the contextuality of Pauline ethics is not enough:

he [*sc* Paul] among the earliest leaders of the Christian movement had the clearest knack for polyphony, for bringing into overt expression the conscientious voices of many: of tradition, of scripture, of weak, of strong, of time-honoured custom, of the radically new gospel (Meeks 1993:217).

Indeed, many authors refer to Pauline ethics according to the ‘indicative-imperative’ scheme³⁴ or within the ambit of understanding Paul’s ethical admonitions, to some sort of reciprocal relationship between Pauline ethics and his theological thought.

It follows from this reciprocal relationship that when Pauline ethics is described as ‘contextual’, his ‘theological’ considerations should also be investigated from the same vantage point — to establish whether his theological views are not also characterised by contextuality and freedom. And indeed, both Paul’s ethics and theology are grounded on his free and dynamic hermeneutic.

Paul’s ‘theology’ is prominently a pastoral theology.³⁵ He was not trying to construct a neutral, objective, universal and scientifically valid theology. The concerns, joys and sorrows, uncertainties and worries, misunderstandings and disagreements, questions and proposed solutions of every congregation or person he writes to, inform Paul’s theology.

Paul had no reason to construct a ‘summa’ as such a ‘theology’ already existed, in Judaism, or more specific in that brand of Judaism he was brought up in and subscribed to,

³⁴ E.g. Lategan (1984b:323-324); Ridderbos (1975:253-258); Schrage (1982:156-161 German); Schütz (1976:290-291); Verhey (1984:104-105).

The close interaction between Paul’s ethics and theology should not be seen as idiosyncratic — Paul merely made explicit what is operational in many ‘theologies’. At the danger of oversimplifying, clear differences in the ethical concerns of various Christian denominations — e.g. stressing either individual or societal ethical concerns — can be found and can be argued to be derivative from certain theological positions — e.g. a salvationist as opposed to a communalist or social-justice approach.

³⁵ And not in the first place a ‘Systematic Theology’. This is true for the whole New Testament. Cf. Johnson (1986:7) ‘The theology found in the New Testament is closer to what we would call pastoral theology...It *does not resemble* what we call *systematic theology*...The history of religions school rightly protested against the tendency to regard the writings of the New Testament as theological treatises’ (emphasis added). Cf. also the implications for pastorality in Beker’s view on Apocalypticism as the essence of Paul’s gospel: ‘Apocalyptic is an attempt to overcome the discrepancy between the harsh realities of everyday life and the promises of God’ (Beker 1990:21).

Pharisaism.³⁶ Paul needed to 'translate' this tradition in view of Jesus Christ and within very specific historical contingencies. Granted that Paul's theological thought was theocentric and based upon his Jewish heritage and beliefs, it does not follow that the Pauline writings will necessarily elaborate a full doctrine on and of Jesus Christ. Paul's concern with Jesus Christ and his important place and role in what God wanted to achieve — according to Paul — with people and perhaps the traces of doctrinal stirrings, can be acknowledged. The Pauline letters, however, fail to provide evidence of systematic theological considerations in the way we know it today, unless they are interpreted according to the TAP.

To be relevant to the communities he served, Paul made creative use of existing traditions. His contextual interpretation was pastorally motivated. Furthermore, Paul's theological thought was hermeneutical in nature. It can be shown that Paul deliberately sought to interpret the traditions available to him from his Jewish background and in doing so, developed a very specific hermeneutic.

This hermeneutic was not developed by accident. Paul made meticulous and premeditated use of especially certain sections of the Scriptures of Israel. His theological views were carefully constructed on the basis of his interpretation of Scripture.

2.5.2. *The contextuality of theology*

Since God is to be found in the context of culture, Christian theology is contextual by definition. ... Yet there is one thing which blocks contextualization, namely, our desire to control ourselves and others (Pero 1990:68, emphasis added).

2.5.2.1. A-contextual or anti-contextual theology

The contextual nature of theology was - and is - not always accepted for what it is. Pero (1990:66-67) quotes Douglas John Hall:

[w]hat has achieved the reputation of theology in North America and society is not only non-contextual, it is *anticontextual*. Most Christians do not regard Christian theology as a mode of engaging this cultural socio- economic milieu. On the contrary, where they consider the subject at all, laypersons tend to think of theology as a more or less fixed set of beliefs, contained in embryo in the Bible, codified in various historical creeds, confessions and faith statements, refined in forbidding volumes of doctrine and relayed to congregations in simplified form through sermon, catechetical instruction and (for a few) college classes in religious knowledge (Emphasis added).

These comments aptly describe not only the North American society, but rather the general trend in theology until the 1960's. Since then, with the rise of Liberation Theology in Latin America, Black Theology and Feminist Theology the contextuality of theology and religion could no longer be denied.

³⁶ Only the presupposition that Paul 'founded' a new religion, radically different from and indeed opposite to the versions of first-century Judaism known to him, would really require of Paul to embark on a systematic rendering of his beliefs regarding Jesus Christ.

2.5.2.2. The Bible as *viva vox dei*

To admit to the validity of the phrase *viva vox dei*, is to acknowledge the inevitability of theology as a contextual enterprise. For Pero (1990:67) *viva vox dei*

means the proclamation of the gospel to a particular context, in which that gospel is heard with clarity.

Pero (1990:67) summarises the reasons why he considers theology to be contextual as follows:

1. Theology is a human enterprise.
2. Theology attempts to speak of the living God and of God's relation to a dynamic creation.
3. Theology exists for the sake of the church's confession.

In answer to the question posed by Hood in the title of his book 'Must God remain Greek?', one should also correct the obvious flaw in the question. The answer to the question 'must God remain Greek?' should read 'God must not remain only Greek'.³⁷

It is significant that all five 'theologies' that De Gruchy (1991:218-221) uses to depict the current state of theology in South Africa³⁸, can be described as contextual theologies, namely Confessing Theology, Black Theology, African Theology, Feminist Theology and Prophetic Theology.

2.5.2.3. Avoiding relativism

The challenge which always remains for the theologian or minister, is not to substitute human teaching for the gospel. Admitting to the contextuality, the time-conditionedness, the culturally

³⁷ Stanley Harakas (1991:1-6) answers the question 'must God remain Greek?' with a cumbersome 'No!Yes!Somehow!'. Harakas wants to assert the basic two sides of theology, i.e. 'God is simply, fully and totally transcendent to human experience in his being' and 'the Christian message must be incarnated in the languages, cultures and mind-sets of all people, using every possible cultural expression to convey the saving message'. Thus, '[t]he struggle here is how to acknowledge the integrity of the given character of the revelation while being able to incarnate it in every human condition'. Harakas' problem with answering the initial question seems to be his reluctance to admit that religion and theology are human enterprises. To put it bluntly, neither theology, nor religion fell out of the sky. People developed a religion and theology in answer to their existential situation and in response to God's revelation. People 'make sense' of God's revelation and Christ's incarnation. This includes the perspective of the 'inspiration' of the Holy Spirit. This is also a doctrinal statement. Cf Van Huyssteen (1987:48-51) where he discusses 'inspiration' as a metaphor and its relation to the formation of biblical texts.

³⁸ De Gruchy concedes that the summary is not exhaustive, although the incompleteness of it seems to point more to the 'theologies that remain colonial in nature (e.g., the imported theology of European missionaries) and theologies that have sought to justify and buttress apartheid (e.g., Afrikaner Calvinism)' (De Gruchy 1991:221; cf 218).

determined nature of theology is not to be equated with relativism, or an 'anything goes'-attitude.³⁹

Within the ambit of postmodern theological activity, it is important to account for the rise of relativism or even in some case, nihilism.⁴⁰ Not only is the danger ever present that professional theologians come up with 'interesting' readings (West) only, but similarly that even 'interested' readings might be ethically unsound. In this regard an ethics of interpretation, or a responsible hermeneutic (Lundin, Thiselton & Walhout 1985; cf Punt 1998b) becomes important to provide perimeters for the interpretive process without restricting the interpretation as such.

2.5.2.4. Ideology and power

Theologians often refrain from acknowledging the contextual nature of theology, for reasons other than 'objective'⁴¹ theological reasoning or mere defence of credal positions. The reluctance to admit to the contextual nature of theology sometimes seems to be connected to ideological reasons, whether political⁴² or theological⁴³ (religious, credal, confessional, etc) or both.⁴⁴

³⁹ Which Harakas (1991) tries to avoid, as this is seemingly how he perceives 'the liberation theology approach'. It is not clear if Harakas perhaps refers to a 'liberal' approach.

⁴⁰ Cf e.g. Cupitt (1990:19-82) who writes on the 'normalisation' of nihilism.

⁴¹ In the sense of a critical, scientific endeavour.

⁴² The best (contextual) example of this seems to be the legitimisation of the Nationalist Party Government's policy of apartheid by the Dutch Reformed Church. This DRC support for the government could be seen as one prominent reason for moving within the theological confines of quasi-Fundamentalism and Biblicism. Omar (1991:50) states that 'the DRC was said to be the Nationalist Party in prayer'. Cf also Die Ligdraer (1991:8) 'die ou beskuldiging dat die NG Kerk die Nasionale Party in gebed was'.

This whole theological enterprise has been termed 'State Theology' by the Kairos Document. Cf its comment on Romans 13:1-7: 'The primary concern is to justify the interests of the State and the text is pressed into its service without respect for the context and the intention of Paul' (Kairos Document 1986:5).

Nicol (1989:219) in referring to the DRC (specifically their 1986 official document Church and society) and its role in legitimising violence says: 'State violence is given a blank cheque and a position is taken close to state absolutism'.

On the lack of any real biblical support for justifying 'Apartheid' (or separate development of whatever it is called), Kirk (1985:7) states: 'In the final analysis the biblical basis for separate development seems to rest on the flimsy foundation of one particular interpretation of the story of Babel, on certain conclusions drawn from the incidence of the tongues on the day of Pentecost and on one verse in the book of Acts'. Cf also De Gruchy (1979:71-72).

For the South African situation, cf also Gifford's 'Uses of Christianity to legitimate social interests' (1991), Nürnberger's 'The Just War and Holy War theories' (1989) and Mitchell's 'A Theology of militarism in the chaplains services of the South African Defence Force' (1989).

Outside of South Africa, Berryman (1987:13) refers to the situation in Cuba in the 1960's and states that 'the church soon became the refuge for those Cubans who resented the implementation of revolutionary changes'.

⁴³ Theological ideology in the sense of vehemently protecting a certain theological code (Glebe-Möller 1989:3) or myth as the only possible and thus 'correct' theology.

⁴⁴ The interrelatedness of political and theological ideology is very often obvious in the South African context. Cf note 42 above. Ample examples exist in the rest of the world, also, e.g. North American mainline church theology and political (military) practice in Latin America, Nicaragua, etc.

There is, however, a need to fend off a naïveté on the side of contextual 'approaches to theology'. A frequent concern of contextual theologians is that they are also operating with a 'double agenda', in support for a certain political or other ideology. *Without* admitting to their own ideological concerns, they embark on the criticism of opposing readings of Scripture. Ironically, such criticism is often at its severest when the criticised theologies are deemed oblivious of their ideological strictures.

Furthermore, a naive, historicist and literalistic approach often prevails in Liberation theologies. The Bible is read (seemingly) without noticing different horizons of meaning and this results in a direct appropriation of biblical contexts by these readers. The end result is unchecked literalism and unjustified appropriation of meaning.⁴⁵

In the case of contextual theologies the context(s) by definition plays a critical role in the whole process of theologising. It may occur in isolated instances that exponents of a contextual theological orientation provide theological support for a certain socio-political or politico-economic ideology. This is not the normal trend. Taking the context seriously does not necessarily imply any kind of covert support for any specific political, religious or sectional interest. It implies a social analysis which is always open to scrutiny.

2.5.2.5. Global theology

Another question with regard to contextual theologies concerns the quest for a 'global theology'. This is often proposed as an alternative to contextual theologies. Are these theologies not in essence a divisive and alienating enterprise? Should one not rather opt for a unifying, integrating and encompassing theology?

De Gruchy (1991:221) supplies an answer in saying

each theology, while maintaining its own integrity and legitimacy, can contribute to a wholeness of perception, faith and action and in the process also undergo transformation itself'.

Thus, admitting to the actuality of the world existing in different 'worlds',⁴⁶ and that these worlds are different,

⁴⁵ Is it really adequate to present the Bible as a book which is self-evident, i.e. clear for anyone to understand? Cf the Reformational 'perspecuity' of Scripture as guide to salvation. Without pleading for restricting the possible of appropriating the meaning of the Bible to trained biblical scholars and academics only, one can question the often naive assumption that the Bible as product of complex history can be adequately interpreted without some 'handles' provided to the reader, e.g. historical background, etc.

Cf the discussion on 'literal meaning' and 'plain sense' in Schneiders (1991:162) who maintains that ancient texts 'often do not present a "plain sense"'.

⁴⁶ E.g. the so-called First and Third (Two-Thirds) Worlds.

[t]he argument of the entire Christian tradition is not with differences (rather it celebrates difference) but with divisiveness, brokenness, alienation, and segregation brought on by sinful humans (Pero 1990:67).

The contextually different theologies people develop and the unity of all believers in Christ, are not mutually exclusive.

What is required is a critical interaction [between theologies as such] that will lead to the development of more constructive theologies (De Gruchy 1991:221).

Contextualised theology should not be presented as either of contemporary significance only⁴⁷ or as though all theology is 'self-evidently', 'obviously' contextual (cf König 1981:37-43).

3. Background of this study

3.1. Pastoral concerns

From its origins, the Bible fulfilled a very specific pastoral need. Most Christians make use of the Bible as norm for their lives in their interaction with their fellow human beings and with nature. The Bible is considered as revelation of God to humans and these 'classic texts' have been used over many centuries and are still used for informing their ethos or daily 'code of conduct'.⁴⁸

The rapidly changing nature of human life on earth (see below) brings with it radically new demands, especially on believers regarding their perception of life, its meaning and their moral conduct.

Two other concerns bring to the fore the issue of change and its implications for theology and religion. Firstly, radical change seemed to have played an important role in Paul's

⁴⁷ Berryman's (1987:6) remark on Liberation Theology, '[i]t is conceivable that Liberation Theology represents the initial phase of a comparable (i.e. to the Protestant Reformation) shift in the history of Christianity', has bearing on the whole contextualisation approach to theology and religion. Cf also Lategan (1992c:8, quoting Lamb) 'the shift to dialectics and praxis is precisely the most important paradigm shift facing theology today'; Schipani (1989:2), who again refers to Cox (1984), Shaull (1981); Sebothoma (1989) talks of a 'Kuhnian' paradigm shift.

Braaten (1990:53) refers to this shift in approach when he claims that Liberation Theologies as contextual theology 'has not grown up on Reformation soil', but 'is a response to the struggles of people for human dignity and social justice'.

⁴⁸ In this respect the Bible is placed in roughly two categories: the Bible as source with a universally valid content (from which information simply needs to be 'extracted') or as link between God and believers (which believers, through creative reading, need to reinterpret for *their* lives).

This dichotomous view is inextricably linked to two different theories of language: meaning locked up in words and waiting to be discovered — meaning to be found; or, meaning using words to convey it, but differing according to contexts it is used in — meaning to be created (at least partially).

Cf for the extremes: Fish, Cupitt, and others vs Osborne, and various authors in the book edited by Black and Dockery (1991). Cf Aichele et al (1995). The more moderate approach is well exemplified in Tolbert (1989:51-52): meaning resulting from the interplay between text and author. Cf discussion on meaning below, 4.1.1.

life, as it did in the life of perhaps his most serious interlocutor, Martin Luther. The effects of these changes created on the one side a set of extremely difficult issues which both Paul and Luther had to deal with, but on the other hand allowed them — and posterity! — to perceive God and his relationship with people anew.

Secondly, radical social change is the most prominent feature of contemporary life. This includes dramatic shifts on the political front both at home and abroad in the wake of the demise of Apartheid, the collapse of absolutist regimes world wide, through the expectations of ecological disaster because of human greed and desire for money and power, to 'philosophical' changes ringing in the Postmodern era with the celebration of relativism and sometimes even nihilism.

In order to provide a basis for the following discussion of change and its radical repercussions in human life, the phenomenon of change itself needs to be analysed more systematically.

3.2. *Change*

Rapid and comprehensive change has become the hallmark of contemporary life. New lifestyles, issues, and structures are permanent features of the age we are living in. Change manifests itself in a variety of spheres of the human life, including the political, social, economic and religious aspects.⁴⁹

Change is not limited to certain countries or peoples of the world but affects everyone. Change is no newcomer to human life, it is an universal phenomenon. Change has always been 'the spice of life'. In the modern, twentieth century context this still holds true for change. The difference, however, lies in the sheer magnitude, the scale, the speed and the diversity of twentieth century change.⁵⁰

Different responses to change are possible — from denial to total absorption of change, and these options are enacted in various (also) religiously motivated groups and associations of similar oriented people. An often referred to contemporary example of resistance to change is the current resurgence of various forms of religious Fundamentalism.

⁴⁹ Not that these spheres of human life can be as neatly separated, although distinguishing is possible and sometimes even advisable.

⁵⁰ Change in the last quarter of the twentieth century is due to factors such as rapid technological advances, globalisation, and so forth. The 'snowball effect' can be seen in the obvious examples of personal computers and information technology, and the phenomenon of the Internet.

Change necessitates re-evaluation of life and its challenges. Change is creative in its very essence. Change places people before new opportunities and challenges in life, demanding them to consider alternative courses of action. The inability to deal with change can have serious repercussions in all spheres of life: politically, socially, economically, religiously. The motto ‘adapt or die’ still seems to hold true.

Evaluation of life consists for Christians ultimately in relating the revelation of God as presented in the Bible, to their lives. Theology can be understood as the systematic and critical reflection on this process.⁵¹ Change forces Christians then to reevaluate their theology and, perhaps even more importantly, to reevaluate their theological praxis.⁵²

In the formulation of theological positions, changes in basic hermeneutical and linguistic assumptions need to be acknowledged: determining the locus of meaning, the role of pre-understanding in hermeneutics, the notion of the ‘creation’ of meaning, and the dynamic nature of human language. In short, recent hermeneutical positions imply a dynamic and creative encounter between reader and text.⁵³

3.3. *Christian theology today*

A symposium sponsored by the *Tübingen Institut für ökumenische Forschung*, the Institute for the Advanced Study of Religion in the University of Chicago and the international periodical *Concilium* took place in 1984 at the University of Tübingen. The question addressed was, ‘Is there a basic consensus in Christian theology today, in spite of all our differences?’ (Küng & Tracy 1991:xv). Ultimately, the symposium wanted to examine the influence which Post-modernism⁵⁴ could have on Christianity as well as religion in general.

⁵¹ Ferguson (1986:188) sees theology as ‘the church’s reflection on God’s self-disclosure’.

⁵² Morgan & Barton (1988:29) sees the increasing secularisation of society and thus the diminishing role of ‘belief in God’ and religion, as reason for the need to rethink the whole theological enterprise.

⁵³ The belief that biblical meaning is about extracting information from the texts of the Bible in almost archaeological fashion is no longer accepted. The Bible is not providing encyclopedic-styled neutral, objective facts. On the other hand, the Bible ceases to be the ‘living word of God’ when it is no longer experienced as encountering or challenging the reader — the ‘living Word of God’ has then fallen silent.

⁵⁴ It is not always so clear what is meant by Postmodernism. Pregeant (1995:570) e.g. describes Postmodernism as ‘[a]n intellectual movement in the late twentieth century that moves away from the confidence, characteristic of the modern Western world, that human reason is able to comprehend the nature of reality. Postmodernists stress that all such attempts are carried out from some perspective limited by culture, bias, experience, etc’.

Others (e.g. Aichele et al 1995:8ff) argues that Postmodernism cannot be defined effectively because ‘the range of meanings for the term is incredibly broad’. Referring to Lyotard, Aichele et al (1995:9-10) contends that Postmodernism touches on three areas of life: aesthetic (emphasis on the constructed nature of things), epistemological (the ‘incredulity towards metanarratives’), and political (the celebration of heterogeneity).

Hans Küng and David Tracy (1991:xv) describe the setting of this symposium as one of ‘an awareness ... that we are living in ‘a time of troubles’, a time when old certainties are breaking up, a post-modern era, an era post-Auschwitz and post-Hiroshima’. To this can now be added, post-Cold War and post-Apartheid!

The ever present theological problem of relating the Bible (via the theological enterprise) to the world or life⁵⁵ presents itself in the following words of Küng and Tracy (1991:xv): ‘How can theology be “contemporary” and yet true to its identity?’

3.4. Characterisation of change

Küng (1991:445) in his paper on a new model for theology, asks himself ‘what characterizes today’s crises?’ He answers this question by distinguishing nine elements, that characterise the changed and changing world we live in.

3.4.1. The end of hegemony and polycentrism

The end (after World War II) of 400 years of western political and military, economic and cultural hegemony (first European, then American); and the development of other political and military, economic and cultural centers of power (Küng 1991:445)

Since the 1991 symposium at least four major events should also be mentioned under this heading: the end of the Cold War caused by the fall of many Eastern European Communist governments; the death of Apartheid in South Africa; the partial withdrawal of Israel from certain territories occupied since the 1966-war; and the start of a modernisation process in China.

But was this hegemony really brought to an end? Especially in the third world countries, ‘First World’-hegemony is still very much the dominant force. Mention need to be made only of the anything but neutral involvement of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Africa, the covert political and military presence of America in Latin America, and the occupation of some other Palestinian territories by Israel. Even in South Africa, racist patterns are still to be found all through the country with perhaps the only difference being black racism emerging in some quarters.

⁵⁵ This issue is present in all aspects of theology. To put it more succinctly, theologising can be understood as an hermeneutical enterprise. Cf also Stendahl’s distinction between what the text ‘meant’ and what it ‘means’ (Stendahl 1962:419-420), the explanation of this position by Barr (in the Supplementary volume of the same work, :106) and the criticism by e.g. Tuckett (1987:181 n1; 186) and Beker (1991:13-14), Fowl & Jones (1991:57ff); recently Räisänen (1990) has defended — indeed, advocated — this distinction.

The hegemony is still very much in force, albeit on a different, that is more sublime and subtle, level. What did change, was indeed the emergence of such an awareness of this hegemony and a more frank recognition of it as being such. This accounts for the easily perceived and well-recognised polycentrism.

3.4.2. Ambiguity

A profound ambiguity in science, technology and industrialization, which are the basic forces of our civilization in West and East — ambiguity, because these forces are potentially both creative and destructive. Technological and industrial culture is marked by latent and fatal potentialities for destruction: destruction of environment, and possibly the destruction of humanity, through nuclear overkill (Küng 1991:445).

More and more people are in the process of realising the ambiguous nature of an ever increasing push for a technocratic society. The increasing number of homeless people by choice includes street children, disillusioned young people joining 'Green' groups to wage war on projects identified as environment unfriendly who live in basic survivalist conditions.

3.4.3. Social antagonism

Social antagonism — exploitation and repression, racism and sexism. Apart from cultural polycentrism, this is the central challenge to theology, church and society in our century (Küng 1991:445).

Living in South Africa of today⁵⁶ one is able to perceive the terrifying impact of social antagonism on all levels of life in the country. Few people will not agree with AH Blom (1989:180) when he says '[r]acism is the cause of violence in South Africa'.⁵⁷ With the realisation that the neglect of social issues are potentially more lethal, governments worldwide including South Africa still insists that technological and scientific matters be favoured above human and social issues as exemplified in their educational policies.

3.4.4. Shaking of foundation in symbols

An evident shaking of the foundations in the symbols underlying modern culture, which is dominated by the myth of progress in all fields — scientific, technological and industrial, as well as political and social. An optimistic modern view of history (supported by progressive theologies and ideologies of both liberal — democratic and socialist — Marxist provenance) was followed by a widespread pessimistic lack of orientation, by hopelessness and fear of the future. This is certainly characteristic of modern affluent societies (Küng 1991:445-446).

⁵⁶ I.e. even after negotiations on a national level started between all (or at least the majority) of the major 'political role-players' in the South African political arena, formally at *Codesa* (Convention for a democratic South Africa) convened in December 1991, followed by the momentous events at the World Trade Center, culminating in the 27 and 28 April 1994 'first ever general elections' in South Africa, and resulting in the 'new' or 'post-Apartheid' SA.

⁵⁷ Recently (October 1996) this notion was echoed by the chairperson of the Human Rights Commission in South Africa, Barney Pitso, as well.

Postmodernistic trends have amidst the debate whether it follows on and elaborate on Modernism — thus Modernism par excellence — or whether it is opposed to and in reaction to Modernism — thus anti-Modernism — contributed to the decline of society's grand narratives or metanarratives,⁵⁸ ushering in the demise of religion and philosophy in favour of 'common sense beliefs'.

With the contemporary belief in the relative nature of truth and truth claims, the resultant uncertainty, fear and cynicism about the future is not difficult to understand.

This 'shaking of symbols' has serious implications on the way the Bible is read. To use Lategan's expression (1988:65-78), the hermeneutical pendulum has swung towards the reader, even past him/her to a nihilistic pessimism regarding the possibility of understanding and the celebration of this in methodologies like Deconstruction.

3.4.5. *Changed positions: Book, university, theology, church*

Signs of crisis and developments that are especially momentous for theology, in the framework of the modern paradigm, can be deduced from the changed, and now precarious, position of the book, the role of the university, and theology as one of the human sciences. It can also be seen from the position of the Christian church. The book, academic theology and the churches are all endangered by opposing pressures: by hyper-modern differentiation and specialization, by individualism and pluralism, as well as by an anti-modern, reactionary de-differentiation and drive to uniformity both by 'the hunger for totality' and totalitarian tendencies of secular and religious provenance. Today many impulses for academic theology, which can often be so sterile, come from outside (Küng 1991:446).

In an increasingly technologically oriented world with its drives for things scientific and technological, and with the assistance of certain developments in computer technology, the 'electronic book' is fast gaining on the printed media. In this regard the electronically based Internet which already allows access to 'on-line' periodicals, make the production of printed material seem costly and time-consuming.

Similarly, theology as practiced in academic institutions and organised religion in the form of churches — even though in some cases they attempt to adapt and relate to and interact with some of the above developments — often find themselves without the required resources or willingness to address the (post)modern world.

3.4.6. *Undermining of Christianity's dominance*

The loss of political and military, economic and cultural hegemony is accompanied by an undermining of Christianity's dominance as the 'one true', 'absolute religion', 'outside which

⁵⁸ In the words of Lyotard, 'incredulity towards the legitimizing 'metanarratives' (Aichele et al 1995:8).

there is no salvation'. For the first time we see the encounter between Christianity and other religions on the basis of rough equality (Küng 1991:446).

The difficulty of trying to reaffirm Christianity's claim of uniqueness, while admitting to the reality *and* legitimacy of other, that is 'non-Christian religions' is well illustrated in Küng's own further discussion. In establishing 'the biblical dimension' of the 'new paradigm' he refers to

[t]he significance of this single constant (Christian tradition, the gospel, faith in God in Jesus Christ) is the *one thing that must always persist and prevail* throughout all the paradigm changes in theology and the church⁵⁹ (Küng 1991:447-448, emphasis added).

In referring to the ecumenical dimension, however, Küng says that

we have to find the right way to understand and interpret the uniqueness of the Christian faith.⁶⁰ We have to arrive at a 'relative consciousness' which has countless consequences for the understanding of revelation, christology, justification, church, eschatology and social practice.⁶¹

The 'basic' three positions regarding Christianity's position vis-a-vis other religions regarding salvation, can be identified as 'exclusivism' (the traditional Christian insistence on Christ as the only way to salvation), 'inclusivism' (finding Christ in the saviours of other faiths) and 'pluralism' (Christ is only one of many saviours).⁶² Claims in the Bible⁶³ as to the privileged position of Christ in this regard, was answered by Krister Stendahl by referring to a 'special kind of language', i.e. 'confessional' or 'love language'.⁶⁴

An end to Christian 'triumphalism' and thus departure from the concept of a 'crusade-style' Christian mission to the world is foreseen in the advocacy of some Pauline scholars for a Pauline 'theology of the cross' (cf Elliott 1997).

⁵⁹ Referring to E Jüngel's 'Response to Josef Blank', in Küng & Tracy (1991:297-304).

⁶⁰ Referring to M Dhavamony's 'Indian perspectives in the New Paradigms of Theology', in Küng & Tracy (1991:424ff).

⁶¹ Referring to L Gilkey's 'The paradigm shift in Theology', in Küng & Tracy (1991:367-383).

⁶² Recently this typology was contested by one of the former great advocates of exactly this position, Gavin D'Costa (1996:223-232). He argues that the third option is really a 'devil's choice' option as such a position is humanly impossible and that what one should really talk about is different shades of exclusivism!

⁶³ E.g. in Paul's letters, 'only begotten Son of God ... no other Name ... only mediator between God and humanity'; and in Hebrews, 'once and for all'.

⁶⁴ Quoted by Marshall (1994:138); cf also her excerpt from Hill, Knitter and Madges (137-138). Gaybba (1994:8) argues against seeing the biblical exclusivist language as 'love, crisis or apocalyptic' language as in Knitter, and sees its origin rather in the 'Old Testament' heritage of the biblical authors.

However, Gaybba's reasoning can be seen as self-contradictory: stating that the exclusiveness of Jesus rests upon the strict monotheism found in Israel and therefore Jesus as the image of God is deserving of all worship fails to recognise that that same strict monotheism would not — and today in Judaism still does not — recognise 'another God' whether he is in the image of God or not. Perhaps the trinitarian position later developed in Christianity is playing havoc here with the Pauline (and other!) texts.

Cf Pregeant (1995:397-398) on the existentialist, post-Bultmann view of 'Christology as re-presentation', where Jesus Christ is seen as the 'definite' but not 'exclusive' 're-presentation' of the possibility which is continuously made available by God: 'the original possibility of authentic existence'.

3.4.7. Loss of credibility

A loss of credibility among Christians and secular post-Christians whenever Christianity is still viewed from the outset as a 'higher civilization' (because it allegedly promotes the development of science, technology and industry, or brings in its train individual freedoms, equality for women, and family stability). Instead there is a serious preparedness on the Christian side today really to listen to other religions, and learn from them (Küng 1991:446).

Following close on the realisation that Christianity has outlived its Constantinian place and in the face of an ever increasing pluralism — especially religious pluralism — many proponents of Christianity are becoming more modest in their claims for this religion. Many different positions are taken within the debate on interreligious and interfaith dialogue and will not be tabulated here.

Such loss of credibility is facilitated by the (post)modern climate of anti-foundationalism, but also important historical events since Küng (1991) aired his views in 1991, the collapse of the USSR, the fall of Berlin Wall, and the end of Apartheid in SA, to mention the most important.

3.4.8. Historical catastrophes

Historical catastrophes (two world wars, Auschwitz, Hiroshima and the Gulag Archipelago, but also the periodically recurring mass hunger in the third world) have made us conscious that today it is impossible to fabricate idealistic theological constructions of history any more. Theology has to be practiced in the face of these concrete, plural histories of human suffering. These histories especially make an 'option for the poor' an urgent necessity, though the poor are not merely the materially needy but those who suffer in body and mind (Küng 1991:447).

An academic theologian in Africa, faces a double predicament: in the first place the mere fact of being a professional theologian in a region which has been pillaged and devastated by various forms 'of violent, and sublime, actions of oppression and destruction', has to be argued and shown as morally accountable and financially justifiable; and secondly, any African theologian has to account theologically for some of the worst human disasters in the history of humanity and which has played itself out in Africa.⁶⁵

It therefore understandable that theologians take an advocacy stance and construct theologies according to the 'option for the poor', which is in biblical studies and interpretation often called the hermeneutical privilege for the poor and dispossessed. But such a stance has to demonstrate its relevance to the community directly served, and to the other Tracian 'publics', the church and academy, as well as its appropriateness for the texts interpreted. If neutral and

⁶⁵ Many examples of the last decade spring to mind: South African Apartheid, the Rwandan genocide, the Somalian and other famines, the Angolan and Mocambiquan civil wars, etc.

objective interpretation is impossible, the alternative of an advocacy stance presupposes interpretive conflict.

3.4.9. *Female consciousness*

Among the multiple histories of suffering is the suffering of millions of women who, over centuries of patriarchal supremacy, have been dominated, battered, raped, tortured and destroyed. Women's new awareness of their identity, equality and dignity has brought home to us, almost more than any other development in our century, the degree to which we are involved in a revolutionary shift from an old paradigm to a new one. For this new female consciousness, the old paradigm has broken down, even though it is still passed on in textbooks of 'classic' theology, church history and canon law (Küng 1991:447, emphasis added).

Of all matters concerning the theological and hermeneutical accounting for oppression in Africa, perhaps the issue who has received the least attention, is the perpetuating of patriarchal practices. Ranging from certain gender role socialisations and entrenched views regarding the possibilities and abilities of women as opposed to men, to responsibilities and 'rights' granted to women as exemplified in practices like clitoridectomy, to physical oppression of wives, being battered, physically and psychologically assaulted, raped, and murdered.

Many problems exist in this regard, of which conscientisation is perhaps the first: men, often in situations where they can be more easily reached than women who are confined to more secluded abodes, need to be made aware of the need to effect gender equality. However, often women prove to be their own worst enemies by resisting such conscientisation efforts, probably out of fear an insecurity of what this may entail, also for them in their often precarious positions. In Africa these problems are compounded by the traditional way of life — communalism, which in turns rests on assent to a certain set of values, beliefs and practices.

Again, the liberative role which the Bible can play in promoting gender equality by reading it with an 'advocacy stance' (Schüssler Fiorenza 1986:358-381) is promising: in the New Testament the writings of Paul — especially the seven generally accepted as authentic Pauline — can be shown to espouse values that support roles for women traditionally denied to them. By using the text as 'prototype' rather than 'archetype',⁶⁶ the texts on women can be identified even within the first century's lack of ascribing adequate roles to women, as potentially liberating and reformatory of the oppressive conditions in which women found themselves trapped. And, indeed, these text have to be contextualised for the twentieth century's concern to afford women the same opportunities and human rights as those held, claimed and continuously affirmed by men.

⁶⁶ Cf Schüssler Fiorenza (1984:8-15), and below (concluding chapter).

With the renewed gender-consciousness it is no longer possible to avoid addressing the issue of homosexuality, which is and always has been more than merely a (biological) sex-issue but rather a (socio-cultural) gender-issue.

4. Methodology

Every discussion of New Testament interpretation is grounded in a particular chronology and socially determined moment (Green 1995:6).

Given the plethora of different exegetical, hermeneutical methods and other interpretive devices — sometimes called methodolomania — it would be unwise to restrict oneself to a specific methodology.⁶⁷ In spite of the methodological excess not all questions that readers put to the biblical text have been answered successfully. The aim should rather be to select the methods most suitable for addressing particular aspects of studies of the New Testament.⁶⁸

The following paragraphs introduce some of the methodological considerations which will form part of the broader hermeneutical approach found in this study. Although an attempt is made to be as clear as possible on what the task at hand requires, it is important to remember that these methods are neither autonomous — i.e. without any association to or with other methods — nor in all aspects distinct from others.⁶⁹ What follows is also not an attempt to fully account for the hermeneutical theories discussed, but rather an attempt to explain why these theories can profitably be used for the purpose of this study. Further explanations of particular interpretive strategies can be found in those parts of the study where such strategies are employed.

4.1. Preliminary positions

For the purposes of this study, a method will be considered to be a heuristic device which is employed to investigate a particular area of concern for a specific purpose and with the aim to illuminate, or enhance the understanding of such area of concern. Furthermore, it is accepted

⁶⁷ Green describes this methodolomania in more positive terms and against the background of the demise of the historical-critical method, 'where methodological imperialism is passing from the scene' (1995:8).

⁶⁸ In this regard some scholars have proposed a comprehensive or 'multidimensional' method: in South Africa for the New Testament, cf e.g. Rousseau (1988:409-422), and for the Old Testament, cf e.g. Jonker (1993:100-115; 1996:397-411); and on a wider level: Conradie et al (1995). Tate calls his approach 'integrated' (1991:xix-xxi).

⁶⁹ Cf e.g. Conradie (1995:70) who argues that even in the case of the 'three worlds of the text'-approach — cf chapter 1 for detail on this approach — '[t]his tripartite division does not provide watertight compartments'. Given this study's broader emphasis on the tradition or history of the interpretation of text, it might serve some good purpose to trace also the history or tradition of the development of hermeneutical theory for the interpretation of the New Testament. Space, unfortunately does not allow this, except in so far as the interpretation of Pauline literature is concerned; however, cf the existing — and exhaustive — surveys provided by e.g. Kümmel (1972); Neill & Wright (1988).

that all methods have ideological overtones, chosen by their users to achieve certain purposes, some of which are consciously expressed.⁷⁰

4.1.1. On meaning

What does it mean to understand a biblical text today? It does not mean to gain an abstract, timeless knowledge of a theological truth. Nor does it mean only to reconstruct its original meaning or situation detached from us. But it does mean, beyond this, to incorporate the text into one's own life and to discover its new meaning in and for one's own situation (Luz 1994:75).

4.1.1.1. Introduction

As so much time and energy has already been spent in the biblical sciences on what constitutes the meaning of a biblical text and where this meaning 'resides' or can be found,⁷¹ and as most of these discussions are not of direct relevance for this study, it will suffice to briefly describe the theory of meaning which will be used in what follows. In short, it is accepted as the more rewarding position that *both* the text being read, including due attention to the setting of the text, *and* the reader of the text contribute to the 'text's meaning'. With Tolbert (1989:52) and many others who rely on Iser,⁷² it can therefore be argued that 'meaning occurs in the interaction of text and reader'⁷³ or in the words of Keegan (1985:73), there is

a reciprocal relation between the text and the reader as opposed to an earlier emphasis on the autonomy of the text

⁷⁰ Füssel's point (1984:15) that 'scholarly exegetical interest and the hermeneutic that guides it (rather than the formal method as such) have been directed unilaterally to the acquisition of authoritarian knowledge in the service of an elitist claim to dominance on the part of a few "reading experts" in the church', can be acknowledged to some extent. However, one should point out on the one hand, that 'alternative' or anti-establishment readings of the biblical documents are equally (if then consciously so) ideologically informed, and on the other hand, that methods as such (and not only the hermeneutic behind it from which the method in any case cannot be separated) are indeed also ideologically informed. Cf Tate (1991:173): 'Every method is in turn anchored to a set of underlying presuppositions that determine the questions to be put to the text'. Tate attempts to show 'how methods affect interpretation' (1991:173-208) by briefly summarising and explaining the value and flaws of the most important methods used to interpret the NT.

⁷¹ Cf the contribution by Kelber (1988:130-136) who identifies five modes or versions of meaning as found in five methodologies: meaning as reference (historical studies), as narrative (literary, formalist approaches), as consciousness (receptionist aesthetics), as system (structuralism), and as deferment (post-modernism, and especially deconstruction). On meaning cf also Schneiders (1991:14ff; 161ff); Tate (1991:148ff).

⁷² Cf e g also Tate (1991:xix) who holds that EV McKnight argues 'that meaning is produced by the mutual interaction between the text and reader'.

For a systematic account of the criticism leveled at the views of Iser, especially as derived from Stanley Fish, cf Aichele et al (1995:31-32; 40-51) — a general criticism is that Iser 'remains text-oriented but does not admit it' (1995:33 n11) — who holds Iser almost single-handedly responsible (:51) for biblical reader-response criticism lacking behind its secular counterparts in different ways.

⁷³ Naturally, various positions exist regarding the nature of this interaction: for Booth the real and implied (encoded) reader has to interact; Gadamer finds an interplay between reader and text which is transformative of both; Burrows and Rorem (1991:xii) claim that the 'power of this language resides not only in the receptive community but in the texts themselves'; etc (Kelber 1988:133).

In the words of Luz (1994:26): 'The attempt to understand a biblical text always includes a stable element, namely, the text itself, and a variable element, namely, the interpreter and his or her situation'. Cf also Farris (1997:365).

and, one should add, the even earlier emphasis on restricting the text's meaning to its original setting or formative processes. A brief attempt to justify this position will be made in what follows without, however, discussing this or any of the many other possible theories of meaning in detail.

4.1.1.2. Meaning as communication

It is fairly widely accepted that texts and their interpretations or meanings⁷⁴ form part of a basic human activity, namely the need to communicate. Many scholars⁷⁵ therefore employ a reasonably simple communication model in their attempts to explain the various aspects involved in the interpretation of texts. This model contains three 'unnegotiable' elements: the sender (author), the message (text) and the receiver (reader). Green (1995:1) argues that in addition to these categories other elements should be 'factored in'. One element which Green highlights is of crucial importance for this study: the noise which inevitably accompanies all communication, and which makes all communication difficult, if not impossible in some cases. This noise is due to various factors but an important — again for this study — source of noise in communication is the 'overlay of centuries of interpretation' which needs to be taken into account in the interpretive process (Green 1995:1).

The insistence that the history of the interpretation of the New Testament texts potentially distorts the meaning of these texts, has as precursor the view that this history of interpretation is of no relevance to the reading of the texts. Between 'then' and 'now' there exists only an ugly gap — à la Lessing — complicating the interpretation of the 'old texts' today. Indeed, many scholars of which Rossouw (1980:21-23) is a good example, identify the origin of the communication disturbances as the historical gap between the text and today's readers. Contrary to both Green and Rossouw, Fowl (1995:399-403)⁷⁶ maintains that the interpretation of the New Testament needs to be viewed as a continuing process, and that past and present readers are part of and integrally related to this process, goes a long way in providing a 'muffler' for the communicatory noise brought about by the centuries long interpretation of the New Testament.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ It is often deemed necessary to distinguish between explanation (historical-descriptive) and understanding (applicative), the meaning (or sense: as the text's intentions) and significance (or reference: the text's actualisation for today's context), and so forth. However, I believe my usage of these terms will not only illustrate how they overlap, but also where the emphasis lies in any particular moment!

⁷⁵ E.g. Combrink (1986:9-17); Green (1995:1-2); Lategan (1984a:1-17); Tate (1991).

⁷⁶ A more detailed discussion of both the value of the history/tradition of interpretation and the views of Fowl follows in chapter 1.

⁷⁷ In addition, Fowl succeeds in diverting attention from it by concentrating on the 'bridge' of the history of interpretation whilst he advocates the possibility of identifying the source of communicatory noise through the course of history.

4.1.1.3. Meaning and texts

Fowl (1990:379-398), taking his cue from Jeffrey Stout, has argued for the 'elimination of meaning'. This is necessitated by the fruitless opposition between the anticipation of 'textual meaning' to the detriment of being able *to use* the text. In formal discussions on 'meaning' no consensus exists on what the term 'meaning' refers to, leading only to confusion. Fowl therefore contends that the phrase 'interpretive interests' comes much closer to describing the result of the interpreters' interaction with a text.⁷⁸ When one disavows the notion of 'meaning' it does not resolve interpretive disagreements but provides a way of addressing these disagreements which according to Fowl (1990:385-388) are found especially on three levels: the formulation of one's interpretive interests; interpretive practices; and, the choice of interpretive method.⁷⁹

Fowl's remarks are helpful in showing the broad range of activity in which interpreters can indulge in, and the need for distinguishing different elements from one another in the search of the meaning of texts. These views are also helpful to overcome any remnants of archaeological notions of textual meaning: namely, that meaning is a 'property' of the text (Fowl 1995:16).

For many interpreters ... the encounter with the text is essentially a one-way conversation. That is to say, the meaning of the text is fixed, unchanging (Pregeant 1995:542).⁸⁰

Whether the proposal of Fowl to exchange discussions on meaning for discussions on 'interpretive interests' will in effect result in less confusion is, however, doubtful, as the range of 'interpretive interests' remains as broad as positions on what is meant with the 'meaning' of texts. Perhaps the elusiveness of the definition of meaning is not so much the point of Fowl's argument as is his reluctance — shared by others — to accord texts too central a role, or even a role at all, in the interpretive process.⁸¹

Recently Adam (1995:33) has, in discussing deconstruction as example of the antifoundationalist stand of postmodern biblical criticism, put across the negation of 'meaning as textual property' very forcefully:

[M]eaning — to the extent that there is such a thing — does not inhere in a text any more than it might inhere in a dream ... Meaning is what we make of texts, not an ingredient in texts.

⁷⁸ Cf also Fowl and Jones (1991:15;26 n30) and his references to Brett (1990:357-377).

⁷⁹ The latter can be guided by three choices: a pluralist option ('the maintenance of plurality as a worthy end in itself'), a social responsibility choice (relying on notions of social justice and well-being, which again presupposes a generally subscribed to 'supercommunity' as well as 'ahistorical transcultural' virtues e.g justice), or a communal or collective position ('a specified *telos* to which the life and practices' of a particular historical community is directed) (Fowl 1990:389-396).

⁸⁰ Still a fairly pervasive notion of the locus of meaning, cf Pregeant (1995:541-545).

⁸¹ Cf also a later essay by Fowl where he argues against the notion that ideologies are characteristics or properties of texts (1995:15-34).

In all the discussions on the relationship between text and meaning — including those denying a central role or a role at all to the text — at least one thing seems to be the presupposed. In order to interpret a text, a text is needed.⁸² The orientation point for most discussions on the meaning of a text is the very text itself. Therefore, as far as the debate on the location of meaning is concerned — meaning behind, within or in front of the text⁸³ — the text still occupies an important position.

The continuing importance of the text as an element to be taken into account in the interpretive process does not, however, deny the equally important role of the reader in the production of meaning.

4.1.1.4. Meaning and readers

The 'world in front of the text' or Lategan's third pendular movement emphasises the role that readers play in the interpretive process. Although it has always been taken for granted that readers are a constituent element of the textual communicatory process, lately the emphasis has shifted away from the reader as neutral, impartial, autonomous and individual 'subject' encountering the 'objective meaning' of the 'textual object', that is a 'stable text with determinate meanings' (Aichele et al 1995:39). The realisation that readers are influenced by their cultures and ideologies and experience of life in general to interpret the same text differently, that readers are as much read by the text as they themselves read the text, has turned into an acknowledgement of the reader's contribution made throughout the interpretive process.

Accompanying the realisation that meaning is not 'something found locked away within a text' which only needs the right interpretive key in order to emerge as a valid, true, objective and value-free product, is the affirmation that 'readers make meaning; what counts now is readers and the experience of reading'. Meaning

is not in the past (when the text was produced) nor in the text as object, but meaning is produced in the reader's present when the text is read (Aichele et al 1995:25;42, the latter with reference to Murfin).

⁸² However, in some more radical versions of literary criticism, the question have been asked whether there is still a text around. Cf Tate's comments on Fish's 'most radical break from dependence upon the text as the objective center of meaning — according to Fish, readers actually create the work of art through the process of reception' (1991:193). Barthes (quoted in Kelber 1988:133) argued that 'the reader alone was author of the text'. However, note also Kelber's ironical remark on Fish: Fish, paradoxically, as 'narrator of a text himself, ... in this text sought to persuade his readers that it was they who shaped the meaning of texts' (1988:133).

⁸³ For a fuller discussion of this threefold typology, cf chapter 1 where the 'world in front of the text' is accorded special attention against the background of the wider discussion of the three 'worlds' of the text.

Aichele et al (1995:24) building on Mailloux's earlier work, attempt to account for reader-response criticism by construing a threefold taxonomy of readerly approaches: psychological or subjective; interactive or phenomenological; and, social or structural. Each of these approaches departs from a specific position and is further guided by that position regarding other 'major theoretical questions':

The *psychological or subjective* approach chooses to see reading as primarily an individual and not social experience — and thus accepts that the reader and not the text dominates in the reading process; and ultimately chooses in favour of seeing the reader as an ordinary rather than expert reader. The *interactive or phenomenological* approach views the interactiveness or reciprocal relationship between text and reader as central; this approach holds the reader sometimes as an expert and sometimes as an ordinary reader, and is least interested in whether the reading process is an individual or social affair, choosing more often the former. The *social or structural* approach emphasises the 'social location and conventions' within the process of reading (as opposed to matters of the individual reader), with little interest in the interactiveness or not of the reading process, and also holds the reader to be sometimes an expert and sometimes an ordinary reader.

A criticism which can be leveled at many of the reader-oriented approaches is that they tend to remain text-oriented in that the text still retains an 'objective status'. The 'implied reader' (Iser), 'ideal reader' (Powell), and many other 'fictive (i.e. textual) readers',⁸⁴ the interpretive gaps and so forth are still 'supplied' by the text. Aichele et al (1995:44) therefore deny any claims that reader-oriented approaches — at least in the sense of 'a radical reader-response criticism invading biblical studies' — are taking over the scene of biblical interpretation. Indeed, a very serious complaint lodged by Aichele and others against reader-response criticism is that

biblical studies has not yet begun to attend seriously to the reception history of biblical texts. As long as biblical reader-response critics concentrate on the implied reader and narratee *in* the biblical texts, they will continue to neglect the reception *of* biblical texts by flesh-and-blood readers⁸⁵ (Aichele et al 1995:36, their emphasis)

The reason for the perceived unwillingness of biblical scholars to read the biblical texts as 'real' readers is understood by Moore (1989:105-106) as their fear of the 'individualistic' or

⁸⁴ Cf Long's list of 'readers' provided by the text: informed reader (Fish); mock reader (Booth); competent reader (Culler); model reader (Eco); average and super readers (Riffaterre); strong, or mistaken/mistaking reader (Bloom); deconstructing reader (Derrida); perverse reader (Barthes); feasting reader (Hartman); subjective reader (Bleich); transactive reader (Holland); validating reader (Hirsch); amazing/a-mazing reader (Roger); resisting reader (Fetterley) (1994:395-411).

⁸⁵ Moore (1989) and others have the same complaint. Cf the recent attempt by TMS Long in South Africa, reading Revelation as such a real, flesh-and-blood reader (1994:395-411) by using David Bleich's concept of dialogue.

subjective nature of the 'actual reader'. Moore therefore contends that the real readers of the Bible are 'repressed readers'. Long (1994:401) however, criticises Moore for his inability to progress beyond pointing out the problem with or failure of the 'real reader' and suggests that Temma Berg's views should be taken seriously. Berg (1989) contends that 'the prison of Christian dogmatism is responsible for' the failure of reader-response critics to read the biblical texts as real readers.⁸⁶

Another series of complaints from Aichele et al (1995:40ff) derives from their contention that biblical reader-response criticism has unreflectively 'grafted readerly terminology onto historical-critical scholarship' which had led to 'an ideological mutation that is blind to both the oppressive and liberating power of its critical discourses'. Their argument stems from the fact that biblical reader-response critics share with historical-critics certain 'tenets', namely 'that the text is an object, a "thing-in-itself", which controls the reading process'; that the meaning of the text is prescribed by the text, whether it is meaning as reference⁸⁷ or meaning as event;⁸⁸ 'positivistic and pluralistic reading practices', which allows various 'correct' meanings but only a certain 'determinate core' of meaning; the protective boundaries provided by ideologically constituted 'guilds' with their theological agendas.

For Aichele et al (1995:51-87) the 'future of reading' lies in taking the collapse of the subject-object or reader-text dichotomy serious, and so shifting the

critical attention from the textual object to *how* readers make meaning within a set of particular reading conventions. Furthermore, once reading practices are viewed as the site of construction of reality and are questioned self-reflexively, then this could open up the question of the ethics and politics that has surfaced so forcefully in other guilds (emphasis in original).

However, whether the text and its 'guidance function' in the reading process needs to be discarded in order both to acknowledge the role of the reader in the production of meaning and to account for the ideological nature of all reading or interpretation is doubtful.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Long himself, does not go all the way: after identifying his variety of readerly positions (402-404) he fails to actually account for how these positions influence his reading, which positions are dominant, what the ideological implications of the choice for a certain position(s) as dominant might be, etc. As admitted trained — theological and academic — reader, he also fails to account for important theological lines (as opposed to other theological positions) which might influence his reading.

⁸⁷ Aichele et al (1995:45) contends that the reference is often not to a 'real sociohistorical referent' but to the 'linguistic and imaginative constructs by historical critics', meaning that biblical reader-response discourse ends up being self-referential.

⁸⁸ That is, meaning as significance which in Aichele et al's minds recalls the New Hermeneutic's insistence on the text's ability to transform its readers — although the New Hermeneutic held the reader as 'the sole authority who could attest to the truth of his or her transformation' (1995:45-47).

⁸⁹ Perhaps the best example of how the text is read *contra* the position by Aichele et al, namely in historical-critical fashion and according the text an objective status, while taking the ideological nature of the text as well as the reading of the text into account, can be found in the liberationist approaches e.g. Liberation, Feminist and other such theologies.

Still, a real need in reader-oriented approaches to the Bible is the urgent requirement to study the reception of biblical texts by real readers and as real readers. An attempt to deal at least with the study of the reception of scriptural texts by real readers — Paul (chapter three), Luther (chapter one), and various biblical scholars of recent centuries and decades (chapter two) — forms an important part of this study. In these chapters the emphasis falls not so much on what the texts allow or disallow, advocate or deny, or how the texts can be seen to require certain ‘readings’, but on the social, political, economic, cultural, theological-ecclesial and other circumstances which could have given rise to those readers reading the way they did.

Moreover, the implications and effects of those earlier readings for the real readers of today will receive attention when an attempt is made to map out some perimeters for understanding Pauline notions of (hermeneutical) freedom (chapter four), and the study eventually concludes with a description of Pauline ‘thought’ which is led out from the ‘dogmatic prison’ that have captured and held Paul captive for many centuries and the possible implications of this for ‘freeing’ of Paul for theological reflection today (chapter five). The plea in the last chapter, as indeed throughout this study is to allow readers to interact freely, in a dynamic way with the text, allowing for a contextual approach to the Bible.

4.1.1.5. Meaning, and method (and readers)

When the role of the reader in the interpretive process and especially his/her contribution to meaning is considered, one cannot neglect to account for the guiding role played by methodologies. By this is not meant that in order to stress the contribution of the reader in the production of meaning that Reader-response or Reception theories should necessarily be used, but that methods to a large extent provide for and allocate a certain role to readers. For example, when the historical-critical method is used in interpreting a text, the method as such does not allow for regarding the reader’s direct contribution to the process, as meaning is now seen to be locked up in the historical background of the text, or the author’s intention, and so forth. Also, using a structuralist approach would locate meaning in the ‘deep-structures’ embedded in the text and disallows the interpreters’s skill and (ideological) interest in ‘locating’ those structures in the text.

Part of the problem with the ‘reader-unfriendly’ theories is that the reader in any case still contributes to meaning, even within a traditional historical-critical or grammatico-historical approach where the reader’s training, presuppositions and aims of his/her interpretation can decisively influence his/her interpretation. Perhaps one should substitute the ‘even’ with ‘especially’ because in those theories the reader’s training, presuppositions and ideology largely, if not completely, goes unaccounted for. In short, these theories do not eliminate the

reader's contribution but simply do not allow for considering the reader's contribution in the process of producing meaning.

One probably needs to advance one further step, and this takes one right into a vicious circle: a reader is not only the 'victim' of the perimeters of the methodology selected by him/her, but a reader probably chooses a certain methodological approach to a text because of his/her interpretive aims and goals. Tate (1991:173-174) argues that

[d]epending upon what the aims might be, a text may mean different things to different readers at different times... These methods in turn influence the way in which interpreters perceive and use the data of the text.

And furthermore

[e]very method is in turn anchored to a set of presuppositions that determine the questions to be put to the text; and the answers are those expected in advance (Tate 1991:173).

The reaction of those who deny the reader any role in the production of meaning is understandable within the context of the erstwhile — and to a certain extent today still, especially in the church — pervasive 'archaeological' notion of meaning: Meaning is excavated from texts, and the more exegetical work that is done and with the necessary commitment of the excavator, the end result is assured in the form of *the* meaning of the text. However, the denial of any role played by or ascribed to the text in the interpretive process seems equally unfounded!

4.1.1.6. Conclusion

The emphasis in this study will be on the reading and reception of the Pauline texts. Following an inverted chronological study of the reception of Pauline texts by Augustine and Luther, the steps followed by Paul in his reception of texts from the Scriptures of Israel will then be traced.

4.1.2. On truth

Another concept deserves attention especially within the postmodern context, namely truth. The intention is not to look at truth from a philosophical perspective — as in 'the truth communicated by the text' — or at definitions of truth but to briefly glimpse at truth as a ethical-hermeneutical factor in the interpretation of the Bible.

The modernistic view of truth according to correspondence theory is no longer tenable. According to this view, truth exists as something out there, and it is accepted that truth is attainable especially through the more precise and consistent application of scientific research. However, in this view truth presupposes unity and creates binary opposites — what is true

excludes what is false — when in fact scientific research invariably produces more variety and less unity (Du Toit 1996:366).

In postmodern thought the notion of truth as a transcendental unity ‘out there’,⁹⁰ is discarded with the acceptance that

[t]ruth does not lie above and outside this truth, but appears in a variety of forms within this truth. These are determined by time, cultural history, tradition, and the particular rules of the language and the community using it (Du Toit 1996:367).

This does not imply ‘absolute relativism’, but takes the relativity of our existence seriously, and indeed, also the relativity of relativism. In this regard truth-claims are also of extreme importance to this study because one is confronted with

the question of authority: who determines that something should be seen as absolute, and why? What sources, ideologies and power strategies are at work in the determination of truth? (Du Toit 1996:366)

It is also the argument in (especially certain sections of) this study that the Lutheran framework became dominant in the interpretation of the Pauline literature to the extent that it offered the only ‘true’ understanding of Paul. Moreover, the Lutheran understanding of Paul excluded his letters from many contextual matters, including such diverse issues as Liberation Theology and the advocacy of a creative, dynamic hermeneutic.

4.2. Accounting for tradition in interpretation

It is apparent from the argument above that the history of tradition of interpreting the Pauline letters is at stake. The investigation of that interpretive tradition will require attention to what Jauss and the School of Constance, call an ‘aesthetics of reception’ (Jauss 1982b) and what is elsewhere simply referred to as the history or tradition of interpretation. As Jauss argues at length, literary history can be considered at least as important as literary theory (1982b:3-45).

The necessity to explain the relevance and importance of the tradition or history of interpretation as such, and specifically for this study goes without saying. Although the importance of the history or tradition of interpretation for understanding the Pauline letters have been suggested throughout this introduction, a more extensive explanation of how it is understood and what its value will be here, will follow the first chapter, where it will be discussed under the heading ‘the world in front of the text’.

Nevertheless, a brief clarifying comment is in order at this stage. In accounting for tradition in interpretation the emphasis will not be, in a Source- or Form-critical fashion, on the traditional elements utilised by Paul in construing and producing his writings. The delicate,

⁹⁰ Cf Malpas (1992:287ff) on the changing conceptions of truth in Modernism and Postmodernism.

and at times apparently not so delicate, process whereby the Pauline letters may or may not have been edited either by omission of original material or additions at a later stage as suggested in some places by some scholars — especially in those places where Paul is really ‘difficult’ to understand — will not get the attention it deserves. Specific traditions used by Paul will not be analysed and catalogued, and furthermore, Paul’s use of certain (Hellenistic and — the words of — Jesus) traditions will not even be attended to, with the necessary explanations for this course of action provided at a later stage (cf chapter three).

Attention *will* be given to Paul’s use of the scriptures of Israel, but within the context of accounting for Paul’s dynamic and creative use of Scripture and not so much with a Source-critical search for matters traditional. The emphasis is on Paul’s use of these traditions and not the traditions as such — again, this does not imply a Redaction-critical approach as the emphasis is not on the composition of the Pauline letters.

4.3. *Bibliological study*⁹¹

Paul deserves to be first and foremost looked at through the eyes of biblical scholars. No one will deny systematicians their place or role in theology, but to start building the Pauline house on systematic foundations seems like confusing foundation and roof.⁹² Without undue privileging of the biblical text, it seems justifiable to at least take the text as point of departure (pretext?) for arguing about its meaning.

In order to read and interpret any literary text to its fullest worth, it is necessary to keep all the aspects involved in the hermeneutical process in mind. According to Lategan (1988:69) ‘[t]he three basic features of the text are its historical, structural and theological or contextual aspects’ and he explains that

[t]he biblical text is historical in a double sense of the word — in itself it is a historical phenomenon with its origin, transmission and interpretation part of human history. It has a structural dimension in so far as it consists of a[n] intricate network of relations which manifests itself

⁹¹ I deliberately avoid calling this aspect an exegetical study, because this often implies a formal process with the isolation of a certain pericope, a study of its genre, the narrower and broader literary structure of the text, etc. The scope of this study is in general broader than the application of a particular method to a specific text. In as far as the meaning of certain texts from the Pauline letters is considered, exegesis naturally does play a role. This study is therefore ‘*more and less*’ exegetical: less, because it is not the investigation of a text(s) in light of a ‘hypothesis’; more, because it deals with interpretive activity related to Paul, and by Paul.

⁹² It is accepted that there is mutual informing between exegesis and theology, a reciprocal relationship. The ‘spiralling’ movement between theology (read systematic theology) and exegesis is not neglected and all (theological) presuppositions will be laid on the table. Far from denying the interaction between theology and exegesis, the starting point in exegesis is merely emphasised in this study. The distinction between theology and exegesis should not be seen as the Gablerian separation (Boers 1979:23-38), as the distinction is used in a functional way. For the concept of ‘hermeneutic spiral’, see (amongst others) Thiselton (1980:18) and Lundin et al (1985:25). Cf the book by Osborne (1991) with this title. For criticism of the ‘foundational’ approach in favour of ‘webs of significance’, cf Hauerwas, Murphy and Nation (1994).

on the linguistic, the literary and theological level of the text. It finally has a theological dimension, not only in so far as it speaks about God and God's relationship to mankind, but also because it is used explicitly for theological purposes and is read primarily in an interpretative community of its own, namely a community of believers (Lategan 1988:69).

The attempt to read and interpret a text within these three parameters constitutes the recent quest for a more integrated approach.⁹³ This is in reaction to historical-critical, structural and other approaches which tended to one-sidedly concentrate on the historical context (the diachronic aspect), the text as literary unit (the synchronic, or more precisely, the text-immanent aspect) or other predilections.

A typology often used nowadays to account for all three the aspects involved in the interpreting of texts as referred to above, is the 'worlds of the text': the world behind the text, the world within or of the text, and the world in front of the text. In the next chapter a more elaborate explanation of this typology will be provided and its relevance for this study indicated and explained.

Suffice it to mention here that the Pauline texts which are subjected to exegetical inquiry in this study will not be studied in the first place for their own sake: the texts are placed under scrutiny for as much as it is deemed possible to argue that those texts informs or in any case contribute to the broader argument. Although such texts are not claimed as 'prooftexts', neither is an attempt made to argue for encountering them *tabula rasa* — the textual study is part and parcel of the broader argument. It is indeed accepted that in this exegetical-hermeneutical process, the texts are read in a responsible way, with due regard to an ethics of reading, but also an ethics of responsibility (for particular readings) (cf Punt 1998b:128-142).

4.4. Literature study

A most basic aspect of this research is, on the one hand, to place itself within the current debate on adequate ways of reading Paul, and specifically the understanding of Paul's reading of Scripture. This placement would serve the double purpose of investigating the wide and pervasive influence of the Lutheran framework on Pauline views, while criticising such views and searching for an alternative and more relevant framework. On the other hand, this study could be expected to offer, as substitute for the — at least partly — disavowed Lutheran framework,

⁹³ Lategan (1988:69) illustrates this by referring to Güttgemanns (1983), Dormeyer (1986), Egger (1987), Jeanrond (1986) and Rousseau (1986). Cf also Schneiders (1991), Tate (1991) and West (1991). Cf also Rousseau (1988:413; cf also 1986:48-51) with his multidimensional model entailing a 'cube of textual communication'. This cube consists of two axes, the vertical one of modes (syntactic, semantic and pragmatic) and a horizontal one dimensions (textual, historical and theological). In this cube he then plots the static ('thrust'), dynamic ('perspective') and dialectic ('strategy') components.

a framework within which to (co-)present the Pauline letters in a contextual and relevant way to his contemporary readers.

A literature study is fairly standard practice in most studies of this nature, but one important difference in this particular study's first part is that the majority of the literature consulted will not belong to those often indicated in studies of this nature as 'secondary' literature. The reason for this is simply that the investigation of Pauline interpretation over the last two centuries demands an analysis of what could be deemed the most important or guiding (direction-giving) views.

Therefore, the chosen topic necessitates a rather extensive literature survey: both a study of the fixation of the Lutheran framework over many decades, and recent attempts to overcome the Lutheran framework.

4.5. *Hermeneutical spiral*

I admit to having had an already formed hypothesis, if not identical in content as portrayed and described here, then at least in substance. The problem and hypothesis of this inquiry gradually formed in my mind since earlier under- and post-graduate studies which exposed me to certain trends within New Testament scholarship and theology in the broader sense of the word. My own teaching career at the University of Fort Hare, presented a very different academic and personal challenge, and my new context of a Historically Black University (Historically Disadvantaged Institution) required the asking of different theological questions. The above already provides some details on my growing up and living in a certain country, South Africa, with its terrible and life-devastating Apartheid policies where one was (and to a certain extent after 1994 still is) exposed to extremely politicised agendas. This is the context for one's — also my — search for answers as a Christian, and also as a 'theologian': attempting to correlate my belief and understanding of the Bible to reality.

Returning to the problem and hypothesis of the inquiry, and in view of the admittance of certain preconceived ideas, it is not simply a matter of, when testing the hypothesis, finding positive results because I went looking for it and 'fixed' the results, but it is rather an attempt to be honest about my presuppositions, because '[a]ll observation is theory laden'⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Draper (1991:236) quotes Hanson (1961) and Barbour (1966) on the 'general agreement in the scientific community that "all data are theory laden"'. Cf West (1991:11-12) on the demise of the Enlightenment's 'objective observer', referring to Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. The next step is to reckon with the fact that 'all theory is value-laden'. Cf also the comments made by Tate (1991:173ff) on the relationship between interpretive aims and choice of interpretive method, the relationship between interpretive method and perception and use of the textual data, and the relationship between interpretive method and presuppositions regarding the text — all three relationship effectively establishing some interpretive circle, if not spiral.

(Hamerton-Kelly 1992:1). Thus, because no neutrality or objectivism is possible, the second best would seem honesty regarding one's presuppositions in as far as one is conscious of them. This honesty about one's assumptions and point(s) of departure is to acknowledge to oneself and to others the aims and deeper motives (as far as they are known, at least).

This view of attempting to lay one's presuppositions bare should not be mistaken for relativism, or fatalism, or cynicism — definitely not interpretive nihilism. Neither is one relieved of making as serious as possible an attempt to be as unbiased as possible, not with the aim of achieving neutrality or objectivity, but to avoid an unethical ventriloquist approach to the text. Acceptance of one's own subjectivity in interpretation is not to have excuses, as well as justification for those excuses, for relativistic eisegesis,⁹⁵ but enables oneself towards ideology criticism of one's own position, enabling a critical attitude towards oneself and one's assumptions providing censure (strictures) and sanction where necessary.

An admitted 'non-neutral' stance towards interpretation thus relieves one from attempting to achieve the impossible — a neutral, value-free interpretation — but at the same time allows one to enter into discussion with those entertaining different positions as derived with different (or the same) methods applied to the interpreted texts.

The choice of what is relevant and the evaluation of a quality is conditioned by the national, class and philosophical base (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1987).

5. Conclusion

This introduction gives the broad perimeters within which this study takes place, and on identifying the area of investigation, the 'problem' and hypothesis of the study, and the relevance of all that for South Africa and even the global context. This claim on the relevance of this study is perhaps more my anticipation of the possible value of this study than a reflection of the real influence it may wield. However, it at least implies my consciousness of the ideological implications of this work.

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⁹⁵ The choice of words is deliberate: traditionally exegesis ('leading out' the meaning of the text: finding, discovering the meaning in the text) is opposed to eisegesis ('leading' meaning 'in(to)' the text: imposing one's own thoughts on the text). Although I accept that all interpretation borders on eisegesis on basis of the reader's involvement in the production of meaning, this statement hardly allows for an uncritical accounting for either the text and its traditions of interpretation or the reader's assumptions, values, culture, ideology and so forth.

CHAPTER ONE

Paul bound:

The traditional approach to Paul¹ — a history of dominance

PART ONE: Reception Studies

1. Introduction

Philological-historical critics try to look behind the text, while formalist critics try to look inside it. Their eyes are focussed to miss what is happening in front of the text — their encounter with the text in the act of reading (Aichele et al 1995:24).²

Our presuppositions about these [biblical, JP] texts mediate our experience of them. And our presuppositions have been formed by historical, social and cultural processes. We read these texts as members of particular socio-historical communities. We read these texts as people who participate in particular interpretive traditions (Smit 1994a:309)

It is generally emphasised³ — as indeed will be done in a later chapter — that it is important to take the background or situation or context⁴ of a text into account in order to facilitate the interpretation process. In this regard, Paul's 'context' will be described in general within the parameters of some important influences on his life and ministry. However, to investigate the context(s) contemporary to Paul is, alone, not adequate, as these investigations and (re)constructions of such Pauline context(s) have been shaped by the concerns, ideologies, and so forth of the readers and interpreters of the Bible through the centuries. Therefore Segovia (1995a:31) argues that according to his interpretive model of choice — cultural studies — in the end all methods and models of interpretation, all meanings based upon texts, and all historical reconstruction are first and foremost 'constructions'. Or, perhaps less sharply Smit (1994b:274) argues, the study of the 'Bible in history' is an important part of the historical study of these texts.

¹ The TAP was largely influenced by Luther's interpretation of Paul as argued below. Although it is still possible to identify 'Lutheran interpretation' of Paul today, many different 'Lutheran' positions exist. Cf Boyarin (1994:271 n4) on the 'quite different' positions of the German and Scandinavian Lutherans; for a brief view of the historical development of the Scandinavian Lutheran tradition, cf Gonzáles (1985:91-93). However, the issue here is more the general Lutheran 'trend' as explained below, and not so much particular, different emphases in the Lutheran tradition.

² Cf Jauss (1970:7) who criticises both the Marxist and the formalist schools for its lack of emphasis on the role of the audience in literary theory: the devaluation of the reader to someone totally subjected to the exigencies of historical materialism, and to a perceiving subject merely following directions set by a text.

³ Apart from a New Critical close-reading, Structuralist or other formalist and 'text-immanent' approaches to the text, where the text is appropriated without — or, with hardly — any consideration for its originating context and its (possible) contributory effect on the text. From a readerly perspective the possible contribution that attention to a text's context can make to its interpretation, is also sometimes questioned. Cf Botha (1994:291-308) on how to 'read the context'.

⁴ For some scholars these terms are not synonyms, but carry different shades of meaning and various agendas: 'background', e.g. has come into disrepute for allegedly presupposing a separate and distinct — from the text — aspect in the interpretation process.

Although it cannot be denied in any way that

Scripture has functioned as a 'living voice' and ... has informed the character of witnessing communities of faith during almost two millennia (Burrows and Rorem 1991:xi; cf Froehlich 1991:13),

the inverse is also true. The very same witnessing communities have established readings of Scripture which in turn have influenced — and still do! — subsequent readings of the biblical texts. It implies, therefore, that what interpreters of the Bible through the centuries believed these texts to 'mean', becomes even more important in many ways and on different levels than the, supposed and much coveted, 'original meaning' of the biblical texts (cf Sawyer 1990:316; 1995:164).

For the Pauline writings it means that the investigation of the historical setting of a Pauline text does not preclude taking another important aspect into account, namely the tradition of Pauline interpretation. Quite to the contrary. With the realisation of the influence of traditions of interpretation on the reading of the Bible, reception history⁵ becomes all important.⁶ The need to take the tradition of interpretation into account becomes pronounced when it is accepted that the reader–interpreter is — to whatever extent — involved in the production of the meaning of the text, on the one hand, and that this person is the product of his/her culture and traditions, on the other — a relationship characterised by what Lategan (1997:118) calls the 'interactive nature of the communication process'. As far as the relationship between text and history is concerned and this relationship is stressed within the interpretive process, it will be argued that it is at least equally as important⁷ to take the history of the interpretation of a

⁵ The latter term will be used in conjunction with 'tradition of interpretation' and 'history of interpretation' to refer to those processes of the reading and interpretation of texts as indissolubly connected to and influenced by earlier readings and interpretive traditions. The terms are not synonyms and are not always used with reference to the same concept. At times a particular term seems more applicable: e.g. at times the particular notion of a *tradition* being called into existence by a certain interpretive line might be more appropriate than the particular *historical* development of such a tradition, or even the circumstances and motive for a specific reception of the texts. However, all three terms refer to the connection between text, readers and the interpretation(s) of the texts already in existence.

It is important to note that the term 'history of interpretation' (*Auslegungsgeschichte*) is not used simply as a history of exegetical methods — and/or hermeneutical theory — through the ages. Cf Rogerson & Jeanrond (1992:424–443).

⁶ Sawyer (1990:317) states that reception history has recently claimed a place for itself as a legitimate avenue of investigation in biblical interpretation, alongside others such as textual criticism and the like. Cf Lategan (1997:116–121) on the discovery and growing importance of reception studies in hermeneutics — although he emphasises the current reception of biblical texts in the (South) African context, his point can be extended to include reception history as well!

⁷ Unfortunately, scant attention is generally given to the history or tradition of interpretation; cf recently Pregeant (1995), who devotes only 2 pages — of an almost six hundred page-book — to a discussion of matters 'after the New Testament'. Granted that one can hardly expect authors who write introductions to the New Testament to provide full-fledged historical accounts of the post-first century historical developments, one can certainly expect some broad outlines of the development of determinative interpretive lines or frameworks which to this day still influences the reading of the New Testament. Perhaps a serious problem in this regard is that these 'lines' or 'framework' mostly escape recognition due to its unreflective and general acceptance by the interpreters. Although different in scope and aim, cf the attempts by Babcock (1990) and Beker (1991) to account for aspects of the Pauline framework through the centuries. For the same venture applied to Matthew's gospel, cf Luz (1994).

text into account, that is, the history unfolding after the final form of the text was consolidated.⁸

The tradition of Pauline interpretation overlaps with many other aspects of the investigation of the *corpus Paulinum*, for example the historical background, theological interpretation, ethics, and so forth of the Pauline letters. In this chapter, however, the discussion will take as its point of departure the insights gained from especially *Rezeptionsgeschichte* or reception history in the broader sense. It will be important to investigate the socio-historical and other factors influencing the readers and their understanding(s) of the Pauline writings, especially one of those readers whose particular interpretation of Paul has left an indelible mark on the reading of the Pauline letters ever since, and which led to what can be called the 'traditional' reading of the Pauline letters.

Although from the perspective of the development of biblical criticism, of late the 'worlds *behind*, *off/in* and *in front of* the text' are to a certain extent and at least theoretically taken into account,⁹ very slight regard is still given — to coin a phrase — the 'text according to the world', produced in, or by, 'the world in front of the text': the resultant reading and interpretation of the text as influenced by assumptions and presuppositions of generations of readers, leading to a 'rewritten' or reconstituted text. The 'world in front of the text', it is argued, implies and should include the concerns the interpreter should have with the interpretation of the particular text through the ages.¹⁰ It also implies that the 'history of interpretation'

⁸ Cf Fowl (1995:401) who in denying the possibility of a-historical interpretation, and in opposition to creating a contrast between historical and a-historical readings, wants to wrest away interpretive control from historical critics and accuses them for absolutising only a part of the history of texts, viz what lies behind these texts. '[B]y the time one gets to exploring issues regarding how subsequent generations read these texts, historical critics have largely fallen by the wayside'. Cf also Lategan's insistence that the 'biblical text is historical in a double sense of the word — in itself a historical phenomenon with its origin, transmission and interpretation part of human history' (1988:69). The emphasis here will be on the latter historical aspect, as elucidated by Fowl above.

⁹ E.g. Barr (1995); Conradie et al (1995:91-196); Moloney (1995:319-321); Schneiders (1991); Tate (1991); West (1991). Cf Green (1995:6-9). Variations in their positions do exist — see below — but the common denominator is reference to these three textual worlds, emphasising three relationships with the text: author (within its situation) and text; text as (literary) text; and, the text and reader (within his/her situation). Lawrie furthermore suggests that one might identify another equally important world: the world *beneath* the text. This would refer to the range of approaches that deals with the 'hidden world' of ideology and the unconscious (1995:211).

¹⁰ Cf e.g. Barr (1995:2-4). However, not everyone who employs the 'world in front of the text'-concept identifies it in that way, cf e.g. West (1993:36) for whom this world rather indicates a thematic-canonical reading of texts. Cf below for different ways of understanding this 'world'.

Conradie (1995:25-29) identifies the following six elements as indicative of ways in which biblical interpretation is influenced by tradition: 'the history of the early church as an interpretation of the core gospel; the process of canonization; the role of creeds; the role of "confessions"; the influence of theological schools; and, the influence of contemporary church praxis'. Naturally many more elements of influence can — and should — be tabulated, but space does not allow that. Suffice it to say that the recently emphasised role of the 'ordinary readers' in the history of interpretation is still unaccounted for! Cf Draper on the 'great and little traditions' (1996:1-2); one should not too easily ascribe a liberative function to the 'people's' 'little traditions' (Punt 1997:144, n15).

One should be careful, however, not to equate the notion of the tradition of interpretation with that of Christian tradition in general. Still, Christian tradition naturally exercises influence on the interpretation of the Bible by creating a horizon of understanding or context of pre-understanding which allows the understanding of the Bible

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has a bearing on the way the text is understood or interpreted currently, in a normative sense. Eventually it could lead to the establishment of a 'traditional' reading which is not only normative but also 'generative': fixing a paradigm which guides the reader or interpreter in such a way so as to predispose the eventual reading.¹¹ In such a situation a secondary reading can become the primary if not, ultimately, the exclusive interpretive key applied to the text — and eventually displaces or effectively subsumes the text.¹²

Although this approach to the Bible, and specifically to the interpretation of the Bible raises the issues of the biblical canon, the authority of the Bible, the relationship between Scripture and tradition and so on, these issues will not be attended to here.

To conclude: The aim of this chapter is (1) to explain the importance of acknowledging and accounting for the fact that one always, consciously or unconsciously approaches a text within a broader 'traditionally established' framework of understanding,¹³ (2) to argue that a particular theological framework influenced and was subsequently further developed by Martin Luther in his understanding of the Pauline letters in the sixteenth century, and (3) that this 'Lutheran framework' has since dominated Pauline studies,¹⁴ continuing to this day in what

(cf Conradie 1995:29-31). Although this role of Christian tradition is creative in enabling interpretation, it can also be delimiting in allowing interpretation only within the confines of a particular tradition. This naturally requires dialogue between various strands of Christian (and other) tradition(s), as well as between various interpretive traditions, and ultimately stimulates the need for continuing interpretation.

Finally, the relationship of the Bible and Christian tradition resembles that of the renowned (for some, reputed) hermeneutical circle: the Christian tradition which allows the interpretation of the Bible is itself the product of the this process! (Cf Conradie 1995:29).

¹¹ In related way, the moulding of particular ways of interpretation is called 'frames of reading or registers of interpretation' by Schüssler Fiorenza (referred to in Karris 1994:5 n12 as 'meaning frames'). She has in mind the almost set ideological traditions or patterns — androcentric and kyriocentric — according to which the role of women in the Bible is understood. These frames have been fashioned by centuries long influence of scholarly, secular and ecclesial schooling, and these frames clearly allow for certain readings only: those that fit the frame!

However, whereas Schüssler Fiorenza's concern lies with the ideological incarceration of the portrayal of women in the Bible, the goal here is to argue for the development of a specific, and content-related tradition for understanding Pauline thought. Acknowledging the very important ideological concerns present in this tradition, the emphasis is however more on the reciprocity of tradition and interpretation.

¹² Thiselton's complaint (1992:266) that secondary historical reconstructions are sometimes mediated in the Christian community without adequate investigation, holds true especially in the case of Pauline interpretation with regard to the influence of the Lutheran framework on understanding the historical context and the letters of Paul in general.

¹³ The distinction of Froehlich (1991:341) between 'principles' (governing theological assumptions) and 'rules' (specific techniques) in the history of hermeneutics in the church is appropriate here; for somewhat different reasons than Froehlich (342), I also privilege the former!

¹⁴ What we are reading is not the Pauline letter, but 'Paul, according to Luther'. One of the clearest expressions of this can be found in Tillich's 'Protestant Principle' (Braaten 1990:47-48; cf also Taylor 1987:297; Lebrecht 1984:493). Not everyone accepts the Lutheran interpretation as a legacy to be rejected or a bondage of Paul at all, cf Adam (1995a:232); and recent proponents of a neo-Lutheran reading of Paul would include e.g. Westerholm (1988), and to some extent even Campbell (1992) and Stowers (1994). A stronger neo-Lutheran approach can be found in Thielman (1994), Cranfield (1991) and others.

have already been referred to as the TAP. The main goal of this chapter, then is to substantiate the claim of the overpowering and misdirected influence of the Lutheran reading of Paul.¹⁵

This discussion links up with the next chapter where the focus will be on the historical development or appropriation of the Lutheran framework in the study of the Pauline writings since the seventeenth century. The argument in that chapter will be that *this* framework — as much as it was in continuation with (certain) earlier traditions and can be explained (and even justified) within a certain historical period — is neither satisfactory nor adequate for the contemporary understanding of Paul,¹⁶ especially in view of what recent background studies have revealed about first-century Judaism.¹⁷ The importance of advocating a different broad framework as an alternative understanding of Paul, often referred to as the ‘New Perspective on Paul’ will be stressed.¹⁸

2. A framework for discussing the traditional approach to Paul

2.1. Introduction: Three ‘worlds’, and the text

Lategan suggests (1984; also 1997:116-121) three broad approaches to the interpretation of biblical texts, based on three different sets of relationships with the text: the relationship between the author (and accompanying circumstances) and the text, the text’s relationship with itself, and the relationship between text and reader (and associated issues). Not only is this *schema* accepted and endorsed by many biblical scholars locally and abroad,¹⁹ but each of

¹⁵ The unintentional irony in this approach relates to Luther’s and the Reformation’s movement away from the contemporary, powerful allegorical approach of the Church to the interpretation of the Bible, to a quest for the original meaning of the text (cf Sawyer 1990:318). The irony deepens with the current argument in favour of reckoning with the tradition of interpretation.

¹⁶ The evaluation of Luther’s reading of Paul should be pursued within the ambit of contextualisation. With regard to the contemporary reading of Paul, many factors come into play: the history of interpretation, new scholarly methodologies regarding Paul’s letters, hermeneutical ‘advances’, the understanding of early ‘Judaism’ and ‘Christianity’. (Cf the Introduction.) It is interesting to note that Lategan (1992:115) argues that in South African biblical studies the concern with contextualisation is accompanied by interest in reception studies. An important consideration regards the ‘central question’: Is the twentieth century’s quest still along soteriological lines? I think not! Cf Braaten (1990:9) description of the central difference between Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches as the shift from soteriology to ecclesiology; and, chapter 5 below.

¹⁷ The other consideration of unsuitability of such an a-contextual programme — viz the contextualisation of Paul in the sixteenth century made into a fixated and rigidly dogmatic framework superimposed on Paul as an ‘universal and atemporal’ key to Paul — will come under discussion in a later chapter.

¹⁸ Coined by James DG Dunn in his provocative article (1982/3) with the same title, originally delivered as a lecture ‘*Let Paul be Paul*’ in 1982.

¹⁹ In South Africa Spangenberg (1995:1-10) is a notable exception in his critique of Lategan’s taxonomy; however, Spangenberg argues for a different set of ‘paradigms’ and accompanying shifts from a philosophical-historical outlook, whereas Lategan operates from a literary perspective.

these relationships has been and is still investigated. Currently, the last relationship is more in vogue²⁰ than the first two.

These three ‘textual relationships’ have been elaborated within a typology of the so-called three ‘worlds of the text’. This typology has become fairly widespread as a way of referring to three overlapping, not mutually exclusive but rather mutually-informed, yet somewhat distinct areas of investigation — paradigms²¹ or umbrella models, to use Segovia’s terminology (1995a:5-9) — in the exegetical-hermeneutical process.²² The three ‘worlds’ each designates a particular, yet not separate, area of investigation within the broader process of the interpretation of texts. The three areas of investigation are frequently tied up with assumptions of interpreters and their interpretive methods on where the meaning of a text is located,²³ and/or how the nature of the text is constituted.²⁴ The ‘text’ as such clearly constitutes the orientation point from which the three ‘worlds’ are perceived.

In general terms, the ‘world behind the text’ refers to the historical context or setting of the text which is taken into account when the text is read. The characteristics of a text as literary product or result, and which is again capable of ‘presenting’ a new ‘reality’, a ‘new world’ to its readers comes into focus within the ‘world of the text’. Finally, what the ‘world in front of the text’ refers to is somewhat more disputed but, it will be argued, is generally perceived as concerned with the reader’s involvement in and contribution to the interpretive process. At times the tradition or history of the interpretation of the text from the time since it

²⁰ Cf the criticism expressed by Aichele et al in their discussion of Reader-response criticism, viz that most biblical scholars ascribing to it, in practice defy it with a continued insistence on a stable text with determinate meaning and (at least) covert subscription to the ideology of historical criticism (1995:20-69).

²¹ ‘[A] certain sharing of values and practices, of theory and criticism. I do not mean to imply uniformity or close agreement among the different practitioners, nor do I wish to create hard-and-fast distinctions’ (Segovia 1995a:6 n7). Kuhn has used the term ‘paradigm’ in two senses: one, ‘a constellation of beliefs, values, techniques ... shared by members of a given community’, and two, ‘it denotes one element in that constellation’ (quoted in Hoffmann 1997:137 n5).

²² Some reaction against this taxonomy is exemplified by Adam (1995b:33), whose concern in rejecting the notion of ‘worlds of the text’ is perhaps more with the *locus* of meaning — ‘meaning is what we make of texts, not an ingredient in texts’ — than with the taxonomy, the latter which is emphasising different areas and angles of interpretive interest, as such.

Farris (1997:361) accepts the notion of ‘worlds of the text’ as places ‘where meaning is sought’, and subsequently changes ‘worlds’ to ‘meaning’: meaning behind, in or in front of the text — he then relates these different models of meaning to homiletics.

²³ In the case of the first two worlds (behind, in/of the text) meaning is conceptualised as an available, almost tangible entity which resides in a particular location (either the authorial intention or the textual structure): a ‘product’ to be found or discovered. In the world in front of the text, meaning is seen less as an objective ‘something’ than a process, where the reader, with or without interaction with the text itself ‘creates’ meaning. Within the discussion on meaning, other matters are naturally also involved such as broader philosophical concerns, the influence of the Enlightenment and related trends such as Positivism (and the decline thereof). These concerns will not be discussed here.

²⁴ Cf Segovia (1995a:5-32): the text as means in the historical paradigm; the text as medium in the literary/formalist paradigm; the text as means and medium in the social/cultural paradigm; and, the text as construction in the [real-, JP] readerly (‘cultural studies’) paradigm.

achieved its ‘final form’ to this day, is also included in this category — although not sufficiently as will be argued below.

These perhaps traditional three angles of incidence for reading and interpreting biblical texts are often then referred to as different ‘worlds’ in order to account for three different ‘settings’ related to the text. The world-imagery is sometimes explained by referring to three images or metaphors which describe the role attributed to the text in the interpretive process: the text as window, portrait and mirror (cf e.g. Goldingay 1995:6, also n9; Moloney 1995:319-321).²⁵

- In the world behind the text-approaches the text is taken as a *window* onto the historical background of the text, through which the ‘real’ author’s world is accentuated (e.g. Green 1995:7). And the intention of the author, which is equated with the meaning of the particular text, can be gathered by looking through this window.
- The text can be viewed as a *portrait* or painting with a world of its own, when the text is read from the perspective of the world of or within the text. Reading from the perspective of the world in (or, of) the text requires a construction of the textual world as presented by the text itself rather than a reconstruction of the ‘original, real’ world behind the text:

[T]he heightened interest on the text as cultural product or artifact and as literature, with the consequence that the validity of varying readings of the text is adjudicated not with reference to a reconstructed history behind the text but with reference to the evidence provided in the text itself (Green 1995:7-8).

²⁵ Abrams (1953) is often quoted as the origin of these metaphors. He suggests a ‘frame of reference’ with four ‘elements’ — universe, work, artist, audience — with which to characterise and categorise aesthetic theories. The categories used by Abrams — mimetic, pragmatic, expressive and objective — are derived from the relationship between two or more of these elements: respectively, between universe and work; between audience and work; between artist and work; and, the work as autonomous whole.

The dependency on Abrams, however, fails when his metaphor of ‘mirror’ for the first relationship above is appropriated by biblical critics whose main concern is with meaning and its location, and not aesthetic appreciation. The ‘work’ is a mirror or imitation or reflection of the world, in terms of what Abrams calls mimetic theories. According to the worlds of the text-typology, which is ironically often argued to be built upon the insights of Abrams, the ‘world behind the text’ refers to the relationship between text and its historical setting or embeddedness, in which the text is believed to function as a ‘window’ on its contemporary world. It is indeed only in the ‘world in front of the text’ where the understanding of the text can be seen as expression of the interpreter’s beliefs, values and so on, that the metaphor of the text as ‘mirror’ is applied — precisely the opposite use of the same metaphor.

Perhaps the reason for the hiatus between Abrams’ work and the hermeneutical theories of biblical critics, can be found in their different goals. Abrams’ concern is with describing, historically, the development of aesthetic thinking, particularly the ‘radical shift to the artist’ (1953:3), whereas biblical critics had and have a penchant towards meaning and describing its location. Abrams’ interest is with the understanding of how the production of art takes place, whereas biblical scholars investigate predominantly how the understanding of the ‘produced art’ or biblical text take place. The difference therefore is between ‘production of art’ or aesthetic theory, and hermeneutical theory.

The difference can be seen in the following: Abrams’ point of departure is the artist (or his/her mind, 1953:viii) whereas biblical hermeneutists find theirs in the text; ‘audience’ is for Abrams exclusively a ‘historical’ category, whereas biblical critics need to factor into consideration the contribution of the contemporary reader/interpreter.

- When the text is approached from the vantage point of the world in front of the text,²⁶ the text can be said to attain the position of a *mirror*, reflecting back insight on the interpreter's world. As in the world behind the text-approach, the text again becomes representative of those involved with the text, not containing the intention of the author however, but reflecting the interests of its reader(s).

Since, however, the Bible is nothing without readers and listeners, some scholarly attention to the history of their responses would seem to be called for (Sawyer 1990:317).

The 'worlds'-typology clearly corresponds to the typology of Lategan and what he has elsewhere (1988:65-78) identified as 'pendulum swings' between the approaches or study of the text from the various vantage points of the text as source, the text as text, or the text as appropriated by the reader.²⁷ A very good example of how the worlds of the text-typology and Lategan's typologies correspond and interact with each other can be seen in Tate (1991). The intention of this study is, however, neither the investigation or the legitimization of these typologies but rather to utilise one neglected segment of it — to be in the 'third world' — in order to give the necessary attention to interpretive history 'connecting' the text and today's readers.²⁸

Although it is commonly used in referring to particular ways of reading or point of interpretive entry to reading Scripture, there is nevertheless no consensus on the meaning and the use of the different 'worlds of the text'. The 'textual world' of primary concern for the discussion here — 'the world in front of the text' — is simply not understood in the same way by all its proponents. It will therefore be helpful to briefly look at some of the various positions on the 'world in front of the text' before proceeding to the evaluation and implementation of such

²⁶ The world in front of the text also includes the reception history of the text — as will be argued below — as a most important aspect of readerly interests influencing meaning. On the other hand, the presence and influence of reception history in both other 'worlds' as well is a good example of the overlapping of the three worlds: in the following section on Luther's appropriation of the Pauline writings it will become clear how reception historically influenced especially Luther's understanding on the world behind the Pauline texts.

In the end all interpretive patterns, paradigms, methods and techniques naturally constitute 'reception history'. Segovia (1995a:31) identifies the same phenomenon when he refers to 'all interpretive models, retrievals of meaning from texts, and reconstructions of history as constructs'. Burrows and Rorem (1991:xii) also underscore the notion of reception history's penetrating influence: '[T]he elucidation of the truth lodged within or behind the text is at one and the same time a charting of perceptions rooted within or behind the communities of readers'.

In this study reception history will be used in restricted ways: namely to identify how a particular interpretation of a set of texts became the dominant or even exclusive interpretive key, to the extent of not only becoming a(nother) constructed text but even replacing the texts of which it is the interpretation.

²⁷ Cf also Segovia (1995a:1-32) on hermeneutical paradigms from the perspective of the function ascribed to the text within each paradigm: The text as means (historical); medium (literary); both means and medium (socio-cultural); and, construction (readerly). At one stage, Segovia (1995a:9) refers to the first three paradigms as three impulses: historical, formalist, and hermeneutical! These paradigms correspond broadly with the three worlds-typology and Lategan's identification of a threefold relationship to the text in biblical hermeneutics.

²⁸ According to Fowl (1995:401), the supposed historical gap or ditch between the biblical times and our own can be obliterated by attention to the history of the interpretation of the texts — cf below.

an interpretive strategy. Finally, it will be important to note, when it is used, in what way and by which interpretive strategies the 'world in front of the text' is attributed and accounted for, and in this way is lifted out of its obscurity.

2.2. The world in front of the text

The 'world in front of the text', then, generally refers to attempts, through the use of many and a great variety of methods, to locate the meaning of the text neither as a product to be discovered in a historical reconstruction of the text nor in the literary qualities — either content or form, or both — of the text itself. In the 'third world' of the text, meaning is perceived much more as a process than a product, and meaning is seen as something not so much discovered as created — or at least contributed to and moulded — by the reader/interpreter.²⁹

However, in the study of and accounting for the 'third world' of the text, or the relationship between the reader and the text, the emphasis is often very much on literary theoretical aspects. In the study of the Bible the role of the reader, from the perspective of Speech Act theory, Reception theory, Reader-response criticism or Intertextuality (to name but a few) is still being investigated from the vantage point of the text and its structure. However, in these readerly approaches a serious hiatus has occurred in the sense that a new 'ugly ditch' (à la Lessing) threatens the biblical reader, namely the failure to account for the real reading(s) of the texts, the tradition or history of interpretation of the text, or the reception history of texts.³⁰

However, Fowl (1995:399-403; also Burrows and Rorem 1991:xiii) propose to overcome³¹ the gap between the historical context of the text³² — and in effect the text itself — and

²⁹ For the debate on the levels of involvement and contribution by the text and reader respectively in the fabrication of meaning, cf below. Farris (1997:366) claims that biblical scholars learned about the formative role of readers in the creation of meaning from various contextual theologies, viz African American, Latin American and Feminist theologies, and specifically from the preaching traditions which are part of these theologies.

Cf Jodock (1990:371-372,380) who argues for a 'new emphasis on the knower' in general, but also on the interpreter's active involvement in establishing textual meaning; this role was formerly obscured by the emphasis on the priority of the text, 'allowing interpretations to assume the authority of the text itself'. For the latter, cf Boone (1989:77-97).

³⁰ The gap between readers of the biblical text, both then and now (temporal), and here and there (spatial)! Cf also Sawyer (1995:153-154).

³¹ In historical critical approaches it was often seen an important task to create a 'productive distance' between the texts and their modern interpreters, but this in effect dissolved the relationship between the two (Luz 1994:8). Like Fowl, Luz (1994:36,55) also finds in reception history the 'bridge' between 'then' and 'now', especially with his appreciation for the 'classical christological hermeneutic' which saw biblical texts and their interpretations as expressions of and guided by 'the living Christ'. Appropriate attention to the history of interpretation, bridges another gap: 'for when we understand interpreting the Bible as an act of reappropriating, reconceiving and rewriting, we have attached ourselves to a long and illustrious lineage of biblical interpreters' (Schwartz 1990:3).

³² One can argue that a historical approach to the New Testament should in any case entail attention not only to the historicity of the text itself, but also to its interpretation through the years (Fowl 1995:401-403; Riches 1994:348).

its readers today by focussing on the 'third world'. Fowl goes even one step further by arguing that the existence of the gap disappears with adequate attention to the tradition or history of interpretation of texts. Luz follows the implications of his argument to come to the same conclusion:

History of effects brings together the texts and us, their interpreters; or better: the history of effects shows us that we are already together and that it is an illusion to treat the texts in a position of distance and in a merely 'objective' way (1994:25).

Fowl concludes by saying that taking the history of interpretation of a text into account does not mean repeating what was done in the past, because changing contexts might play havoc with attempts to achieve continuity in this way. The need to achieve continuity with those who preceded the interpretations of today also imply

selective retrieval, debate, and argument ... because the history of interpretation is both exceedingly diverse and sometimes wrong (Fowl 1995:403; cf Froehlich 1991:9; Räisänen 1992:323; Smith 1993:216-217).³³

It remains a question, however, whether insistence on interpretive continuity between the centuries-long tradition of the interpretation of the Bible and the readers of the Bible today should be our greatest concern.³⁴ Perhaps the notion of a dialectical relationship — hinted at by Fowl — might serve our purposes better, to both allow readers today to retain the valuable aspects of the interpretive practices and results of the past as well as to allow for the inclusion of (post-)modern resources and scholarship.

Riches (1994:348-349) also shows that attention to the history of the interpretation of a text entails two areas of investigation:

[O]n the one hand, their [*sc* the texts'] power to shape the lives of the communities which read them and on the other, how readings of the texts are constrained by the inherited understandings and expectations of the communities which live by them.

The history of the interpretation of texts implies the possibility of both a formative and restrictive function in the way the texts are appropriated in communities continuing this tradition of interpretation.³⁵ In this case even a cursory investigation of Luther's reading of Paul shows how these texts empowered Luther, but simultaneously illuminates how a particular approach to Paul influenced and ultimately constrained Luther's understanding of Paul — the effect of which still carries on to this day!³⁶

³³ Luz (1994:25) also acknowledges our need to protest against and argue with history and even to fight against its burden; nevertheless, this does not alleviate our indebtedness to history.

³⁴ A brief discussion on the contemporary importance, or lack thereof, of earlier interpretive practices going right back to the first century, follows in the final chapter.

³⁵ For Riches the history of the interpretation of texts depends on 'what it is about these texts which gives them their power: their meshing together of metaphor and symbol, their gradual formation into a collection of texts' (1994:348). It will be argued below that apart from a *wirkungsgeschichtliche* approach which centers on the strategies contained in the text, a more *rezeptionsgeschichtliche*-oriented approach capable of taking also socio-structural factors into account in its study of the history of interpretation, will be employed here.

³⁶ In a double sense: Not only is Luther's reading — like all others — a limited reading, but his interpretation of Paul has been accepted in some circles as the exclusive interpretive paradigm for the Pauline letters.

Before turning to an investigation of Luther's particular reception history of the Pauline texts, it is imperative to explore how the notion of 'the world in front of the text' can be helpful in our understanding of textual reception.

2.2.1. Towards describing 'the world in front of the text'

The investigation of the 'third world' is often described as that aspect of the interpretive or reading process where the relationship between text and its reader are explored. In the words of Lategan (1997:118):

Reception forms an integral part of the tradition and the reaction of the hearers is a co-determining factor with regard to the form and the substance of the message that is subsequently passed on.

There are, however, a number of different positions on what particularly in the relationship context-text-reader, the 'world in front of the text' would refer to and what is generally meant with a reading strategy 'in front of the text'.

Although there is at least an emerging awareness of the important role that the history/tradition of interpretation plays in the interpretation and understanding of biblical texts, this aspect of textual interpretation is still in need of further clarification. In order to do so, different views offered so far need to be compared and evaluated. I will briefly refer to and reflect on four such positions and then attempt to arrive at a 'working definition' for this aspect of interpretive strategy which will then be further employed in this study.

2.2.1.1. WR Tate

For Randolph Tate the 'world in front of the text' simply refers to the 'world of the reader' (1991:145). The importance of this world within an interpretative theory of texts is derived from a communication model where

[c]ommunication has not occurred until the message (text) has reached its final destination (1991:146).

When a reader reads a text, s/he brings his/her presuppositions and assumptions about the text and its possible meaning, as well as about life in general, to play (at least a co-) determinative role in the reading process.

When we read a text we infer meaning, and that meaning is in some measure determined by our understanding of our world (1991:146).

Tate accepts that the interpretive process involves both text (within context) and reader, that is, the meaning of texts does not reside in texts merely waiting to be unearthed by an

ideal,³⁷ or model³⁸ or considerate³⁹ or competent⁴⁰ or informed reader, neither does the meaning of text become equivalent to the hunches, biases, or moods of the reader:

Reading is ... a dialogical [*sc* process] (i.e., reading is a process through which the text and reader engage in an ongoing dialogue) (Tate 1991:148).

The involvement of both text and reader in the interpretation process, demands attention to both the world of the author and the world of the reader (1991:146).

Tate therefore insists that the 'world in front of the text' deals with the 'world of the reader', which for Tate particularly has to do with the reader's preunderstanding and presuppositions (readerly and theological) as well as the specific choice of interpretive methodology.

Although Tate takes the role of the reader and his/her contribution to the process of reading and interpretation serious, as well as the open-endedness of this process

[r]eading is dynamic, open-ended, always subject to modification, change, evaluation, and rereading* (Tate 1991:148)

he fails to account for history of the text's interpretation *and* its influence(s) on subsequent readers and their readings.

2.2.1.2. DL Barr

Barr (1995:2-4) refers to 'the world in front of the text' under the rather vague sub-heading 'our culture'.⁴¹ However, in examining the relevance of this 'world' for the purpose of reading the New Testament, Barr explains the relevance of the 'third world' as the history of the text's interpretation as well as the influence wielded by the particular (historical) interpreters' culture, ideological positions and general hermeneutical aims and goals. The implication of this realisation is that because

we read every writing through the experience of earlier readers

therefore

(t)he best we can hope for is to be aware of how earlier interpretations shape our perceptions of the text.

Barr briefly refers to the importance of accounting for interpretive traditions, by mentioning cultural and other differences between the culture contemporary to the text, the subsequent (especially current) readers, and the history of an 'official' tradition of interpretation of the

³⁷ For a wide range of such readerly depictions, cf Long (1994:400-401).

³⁸ Cf Tate's reference to Eco and Iser (1991:156-161): the model reader is activated by the text and becomes capable of creatively 'filling the gaps of indeterminacy' left in the text by the author.

³⁹ Cf Malina (1991:14-17) emphasising the need to put the text into its appropriate social context.

⁴⁰ Readers who are more informed and competent than others; cf 'cognizant of the restraints placed upon the process of reading to by the linguistic, figurative, and ideological structures of the text' (Tate 1991:162).

⁴¹ Cf also Green (1995:8), and the other references to Green above.

Bible orientated to masculine concerns — what a feminist scholar referred to as the ‘malestream’ tradition (Schüssler Fiorenza).

Barr provides an example of how a certain interpretive tradition of a particular text or set of texts develops and eventually becomes the established framework according to which this text and even other texts are read. Barr deals with the individualised or ‘personalised’ reading tradition developed since the sixteenth century, and which probably extends back to St Augustine’s use of the Bible in the fourth century CE (cf also Stock 1996).

Barr’s proposed accounting for the history of interpretation is to become conscious of the development of certain interpretive patterns. One should ‘enter into dialogue’ with the text and not ‘project our meanings back into it’. However, what Barr fails to account for is almost tantamount to the opposite of his advice: Not that our contemporary culture ‘misleads’ us in interpretation, but that our culture has almost ‘produced’ a new text. The interpretive tradition(s) continually ‘teaches’ us and provides us with the interpretive framework, or to continue the metaphor, the ‘language’ with which we enter into and conduct this debate with the text. The effect of the overpowering influence of a particular interpretive stance on subsequent interpreters is that in order to get to grips with the text, several layers of interpretive veneer covering the text have to be removed.⁴²

Apart from the mere (perhaps unintentionally so, patronising) acknowledgement that feminist readings provide ‘exciting new meanings ... that men never saw’, Barr also fails to account for the ideological or political implications of the history of interpretation privileging certain interpretations and therefore certain socio-cultural positions, too. This is especially apparent because of his choice of example, the Pauline literature — which is often accused of complicity in gender and other kinds of oppression — to demonstrate the nature of the influence of interpretive traditions.

2.2.1.3. SM Schneiders

Schneiders (1991:157), following Ricoeur, views the ‘third world’ as the process when the reader by interpretation enters into and appropriates the world of meaning that the text projects and is thereby changed.

⁴² Far from arguing for the need for an ‘objective’ or ‘neutral’ text or interpretive position, the point is that it is necessary to realise that no-one is capable of encountering a text, especially a religious text accepted as normative by communities subscribing to that text, neutrally.

For Schneiders the ‘world in front of — or as she calls it, *before* — the text’ is the world generated by the text.⁴³ It constitutes an alternative vision of the world⁴⁴ and exists by virtue of the interaction between text and reader (1991:167).

Schneiders’ view of ‘the world before the text’ corresponds more to the general agreement on the meaning of ‘the world of, or within the text’, namely attention to the text as a literary composition or creation. To understand how Schneiders portrays the third world, it is important to summarise her view on what constitutes the ‘world in the text’. For her the second world is chiefly concerned with the text as literature, the particular kind of expression (‘witness’) and in its mode of written discourse (1991:132-156). In fairness to Schneiders, she does towards the end of her discussion of the text as inscribed language and literature (1991:148-153) refer to the New Testament as an ‘art object’ and a ‘classic’, always inviting interpretation and thus creating an ‘effective history’ (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) and so already anticipate the ‘world in front of the text’. However, it is clear that the ‘world within or of the text’ for Schneiders does not really concern the ‘world’ or the alternative reality projected by the text — this would be the content of the ‘world in front of or before the text’.

For Schneiders then the ‘world before the text’ is so strongly and directly connected to the text that it virtually forms part of the text, leading her to comment that

[a] literary work clears a space, creates a world, into which the reader is invited (1991:167)

and,

[t]his different world is the world before the text, the world that the text generates and projects and invites the reader to enter (1991:168).

This ‘world’ is more an attribute of the text than it is a reference to the reception which befalls the text, or the history and tradition of the text’s interpretation, or a reference to the reader’s cultural and ideological setting.

The problem with Schneiders’ position is that she ascribes to the third world a function which really disallows accounting for the ‘effective history’ of the text — apart from seeing it as a derivative from viewing the text as artefact — as well as for the reception of the text amidst the interpreter’s culture and ideologies. This shortcoming can perhaps be attributed to her emphasis on the literary aspects of biblical interpretation.

In this regard the comments of Fowl (1995:399-403) on ‘ways of being historical’ become applicable. Notwithstanding the current disinclination to matters historical, especially

⁴³ Not just any text, but a ‘classic text’: ‘The classic text is one whose subject matter is somehow universal, whose composition is singularly effective, and whose style is beautiful to such an extent that the work is relevant to the human situation as such’ (Schneiders 1991:150-151; cf 153).

⁴⁴ Schneiders hastens to say that the world ‘projected by the text’ is not an imaginative or fictional world (1991:167).

One: Paul bound — the traditional approach to Paul

in the aftermath of the general suspicion cast on the historical-critical method — both in terms of the results it produced but more importantly in terms of its cognitivist, rationalist, positivist and logocentric epistemology⁴⁵ — Fowl insists that all readings are historical. All readings take place in time and space, and an important aspect of interpreting a text while accounting for it historically, is to reckon with the legacy or tradition of interpretation.

2.2.1.4. GO West

The explanation by Gerald West of ‘the world in front of the text’ approaches what would probably be called by some biblical scholars a form of ‘canonical criticism’:

[T]his mode of reading emphasizes the major metaphors, themes, and symbols that run through a text or collection of texts

and

with this particular mode of reading the first step ... is to recognize and accept the final form of a text or collection of texts (1993:36).

West’s partiality towards this approach to the biblical texts is explained on the following grounds: This reading is suitable for a collective work incorporating many diverse documents, like the Bible; the text is seen as ‘dynamic medium’ and not as a ‘static object’; the ‘predominant symbols, themes, and metaphors’ are responsible for determining the meaning of the texts; and, contextual ‘appropriation’ within this mode of reading is ‘essential’.

A more detailed account of West’s approach, and those of others with a similar perspective on the ‘third world’ will follow below, when the ‘canonical’ approach is situated within the current discussion.

2.2.1.5. A preliminary conclusion: Extending the ‘world in front of the text’

The above discussion makes clear the influence of reception history on the range of interpretive methods dealing with the relationship between reader and text is in need of more detailed attention. In order to avoid misunderstanding, this statement needs to be explained more fully.

Far from arguing for the need for an ‘objective’ or ‘neutral’ text, reader, or interpretive position, my point is one of insisting that no-one is capable of encountering a text, especially a religious text accepted as normative by communities subscribing to that text, as ‘text only’. A religious text always stands in a particular history and tradition of interpretation, and this tradition prescribes to a large extent the perimeters of the resultant interpretation.

⁴⁵ Cf Segovia’s thorough and consistent criticism lodged against Historical criticism on many levels (1995a:1-32; 1995b:1-17; 1995c:276-298). Historical criticism is sometimes fiercely defended in theologically conservative or fundamentalist circles for a variety of reasons including those which can arguably be called reasons of ideology and the preservation of power; cf e.g. Boone (1989).

The argument is also not one of attempting to reestablish a historical-critical concern for the ‘real’, unadulterated or ‘true’ form of the text: the texts behind the text, the pre-interpreted text. Although perhaps a theoretical possibility with certain texts, it is unrealistic to expect readers to be able to peel away layers of interpretive tradition to find the ‘true’ text. At any rate, the notion that interpretive tradition is necessarily bad for the text and her interpreters is not an assumption carried here.

Rather, my contention is — following Bultmann’s insistence on acknowledging the impossibility of presuppositionless exegesis — that in order to engage the text in any serious way, the interpretive traditions which have melted into the text need to be clearly identified, and its role in and influence on the interpretation of the text, accounted for. Much of this, it is acknowledged, is only possible in dialogue with other interpretive traditions!

Accepting that all texts are reader-mediated, will revitalise the concept of *Vorverständnis*⁴⁶ (Lategan 1992:9), and require contemporary readers to read not only the texts but also the interpretive traditions superimposed on the texts.

Even if we cannot trace the rationale for, nor the exact shape of, these changes, critical biblical scholarship has persuasively shown that such processes were at work in earlier communities of believers. Those who seek to be wise readers of Scripture may well benefit from knowing about these various stages of the reception of the texts of the Bible (Fowl & Jones 1991:38).

As far as all observation is theory-laden — and as all three broad interpretive ventures outlined above in terms of the worlds behind, in and before the text are engagements between human readers and their texts — all aspects of biblical interpretation are ‘reception history’ and part of the ‘third world of the text’. By this statement is not only meant that traditional commentaries built on historical-critical investigations are saturated with interpretive tradition and scholarly (read: mediated) methodology. All readings of texts — whether from a ‘readerly’ perspective, or from a historical-diachronic or synchronic perspective, or from a literary or text-immanent perspective — are negotiated or mediated sense-making activities, standing within and subscribing, consciously or unconsciously, to certain traditions of interpretation.

⁴⁶ Pleading for the reader to enter the hermeneutical circle, ‘a choice against closure and for openness and the possibility of change and revision’, Lategan argues: ‘Rightly understood, the *Vorverständnis* is not a rigid ideological key to unlock texts. By definition it is open to corruption, to change, to replacement — and the place where this happens, is in the encounter with the text itself’ (1992:9).

Accepting the impossibility of any pure or neutral biblical interpretation, in the ‘third world’ of the text our attention will be directed directly towards the investigation of the historical formation and maintenance of certain interpretive traditions.⁴⁷

Against this background, the ‘world in front of the text’ will be used here to refer to that aspect of textual interpretation where (1) the relationship between the text and its readers is explored, and in particular, where (2) the influence of the history of interpretation is taken into account and investigated; (3) the impact of the socio-political and economic influences on the past readers of the text are considered; (4) the ideological considerations of present readers for choosing and reading a particular text are studied; and, (5) the function and meaning of the text are delineated within its broader framework — in the case of the Bible, the text in canonical context.

It is now necessary to state more clearly what one of these elements, namely the tradition or history of interpretation entails, as it forms an important point of departure within the whole argument. This will be preceded by a brief discussion of some scholarly endeavours in the area of reception studies.

2.3. Reception history, tradition and history of interpretation⁴⁸

If biblical scholarship is more than history and philology, it must take account of the context of the Bible, not only the original Sitz im Leben, but also its continuing ‘contextualisation’ in the religious communities that have preserved it and for whom it makes sense (Sawyer 1990:319).

Luz (1994:23) introduces his discussion of the value of the ‘history of effects’ for the interpretation of texts, by making the almost self-evident — but often unaccounted for — remark that biblical texts and the history of their (textual) effects are related in two ways. The texts themselves are the product or result of a history of effects and the texts are accompanied by a

⁴⁷ From these discussions it should now be clear that the ‘three worlds’ of the texts can be distinguished but not separated, and no one should think it possible to study the history or the text as detached observers. Cf Utzschneider (1997:9) who argues from Eco’s threefold distinction (trichotomy) — *intentio auctoris*, *intention operis*, *intensio lectoris* — that historical criticism should be redefined in terms of the aesthetics of reception, so that the historical critic can become a ‘reader’. He refers to ‘voices (Hardmeier, Steck and Dohmen) which relate redactional criticism and reception aesthetics to each other’ (9, 15 n52).

⁴⁸ Cf Georgi (1992:51-83) and Smit (1994b:274) on the importance to see the history of the interpretation of texts as more than mere historical phases, but in *rezeptionsgeschichtliche* fashion, to account for the socio-historical conditions and settings of these historical interpretations. Another equally important element is to recognise and account for the lasting influence of (some of) these entrenched interpretations — which, because of its general acceptance by scholars, prove very difficult to dislodge.

For some possible reasons for the history of interpretation gaining importance in recent years, cf Sawyer (1990:317).

Lategan (1992:4-7) provides a brief but useful comment on the rise of reception studies, and the possibility to distinguish between Reception theory (‘a more coherent movement’) and Reader-response theory (‘a variety of often very diverse literary approaches’).

history of effects constituted by the various interpretations made by the Church through the centuries. On the one hand then, it must be realised that texts

are not the ultimate point of departure nor the ultimate authority but products of human reception, human experiences, and human history,

and therefore secondary to the encounter between people and the living God. On the other hand, the biblical texts have a history of effects which

cannot be separated from the texts, because it is an expression of the texts' own power.

These effects cannot be separated from the texts in as much as it often becomes difficult if not simply impossible to know where the texts ends and the effects begin.

Naturally there are various different ways in which one could account for the importance of the tradition of interpretation in one's reading of texts. Perhaps there are even a larger variety of ways of utilising the insights of the history of the interpretation of certain texts than what was referred to above. At any rate, it seems as if a number of different elements can be identified as important matters to be taken into consideration when the history of interpretation of texts is considered. Attention is required for the dominant lines of interpretation, as informed by the particular interpretive community or, à la Tracy, different publics — church, society and academy — and in continuation with the possibilities offered by the text and dependent upon the reception-setting.

2.3.1. Accounting for textual reception: Antecedent moves

It can benefit this discussion to cast a cursory glance at the precursors of the 'world in front of the text' — those interpretive strategies which in the past were used to investigate the traditions lying behind and leading to the formation of the text in its current form. Froehlich (1991:7) neatly summarises the relationship between formation of the text, and its interpretation by the communities of faith when he argues that as much as there cannot be a church without the Bible, as much there can be no Bible without the church:⁴⁹

[T]he church which received the apostolic witness, selected the canon, and gave the biblical witness unity by its interpretation.

⁴⁹ The close link between (history of) the church and (the interpretation of) the Bible was best expressed by Ebeling: the history of the Church can be seen as the history of the interpretation of the Bible, especially the 'extremely complicated history of a self-interpreting and an interpreted Bible' (quoted in Froehlich 1991:7, cf n4; 8; so also Barth, quoted in Froehlich 1991:343; Luz 1994:16-17). For criticism of Ebeling's thesis, cf Froehlich (1991:11-12); Räisänen (1992:309, n18) argues that whereas Ebeling, in view of the connection with the interpretation of Bible, understands church history as a 'prescriptive discipline', Räisänen rather opts for the 'effective history' of the Bible as 'empirical-historical task'.

It is interesting to note how the relationship between biblical studies and church has been expressed in different and contrasting ways — for example, for Von Harnack biblical studies is an element of church history, and for Bultmann and Ebeling the opposite was true. However, the importance here is that regardless of the different posturing of the liaison between biblical interpretation and the life of the church, the interconnectedness of the two is never denied.

As mentioned above, from another perspective one can argue that the biblical texts and interpretive history are related because the texts themselves are the distillations of people's experience and understanding of history, the histories surrounding Israel and Jesus Christ. The biblical texts reflect and are the 'products of human reception, human experiences, and human history' (Luz 1994:23). In as much as the historically oriented investigation of the Bible attempted to uncover the history of the formation of these texts in relation to their contexts, attention to the effective history of these texts started long before the 'end-product' in form of the 'canon' was established or the interpretation of these texts as scriptural canon commenced.

The investigation of the reception of texts is therefore not a novelty in the arena of biblical studies. In the recent past many attempts were made to expose the layered traditions which eventually culminated in an encoded text as we have it today. Although the earlier process of textual formation and the study thereof differ markedly⁵⁰ from what is commonly referred to as reception studies, the value of these earlier attempts lies in their clear illustration of the development of traditions concurrently with the 'textualisation' of the text, and the reciprocal relation between them. In the interest of space, suffice it to mention only two such broader antecedent patterns, and briefly discuss only one of these.

2.3.1.1. The pre-canonical history of the Bible, and Historical criticism

Burrows and Rorem (1991:xii) argue that the need to study the 'living histories' of biblical texts 'insofar as their reception in communities shapes their common life' is a corollary of the historical critical efforts — especially as found in form and redaction studies — to establish the pre-canonical histories of texts. Approaches such as Source criticism and *Traditionsgeschichte* or studies in the tradition-history⁵¹ of the biblical texts also serve as example of the reception of biblical texts — admittedly however, the aim(s) of such historical critical approaches differed, sometimes radically, from today's reception studies.

2.3.1.2. The Bible as canon, and Canonical criticism

The canonical texts stands in need of a canonical interpretation, or a 'traditioned sense' (Burrows 1991:153)

⁵⁰ In various aspects of such studies: their methods, aims, presuppositions, supposed 'theology and philosophy', etc.

⁵¹ Cf Chilton (1995:37-60) who argues that 'Traditio-Historical criticism' attempted to elucidate 'the history of the traditions that made up the texts' as opposed to Textual criticism which tries to clarify the history of the texts.

*[E]vents in front of the text — the history of interpretation — are of far greater interest to this method [sc canonical criticism] than to others*⁵² (Farris 1997:366).

In another attempt to account for the influence of reception through the course of time, and particularly to explain the establishment of certain traditions in the form of a text, and eventually also the interpretation of that text today, scholars have investigated the formation of the biblical canon.⁵³ It is neither by mistake nor coincidence that one of the foremost scholars in this area — who is generally accorded the title of being ‘the father’ of Canonical criticism — has also written a commentary in which he attempted to embrace the reception history of that text.⁵⁴

In the attempt to interpret the Bible from a canonical perspective, two dominant lines of investigation can be identified: The approach of Brevard Childs which tends to emphasise the canon as a normative and fixed collection of documents, and James Sanders emphasises the norming function of the canon. From the perspective of the influence of interpretive traditions on the understanding of texts, it is especially the approach of Sanders that can cast some light on the use of traditions of reading the biblical text and its use in biblical interpretation. In this way his approach suggests itself in some way as precursor to accounting for reception history in biblical interpretation (Pontifical Biblical Commission 1995:27-29).

It should be noted that the particular appropriation of the ‘world in front of the text’ by Gerald West approximates the canonical approach described here. West (1991:237-238, n191) claims that his understanding of ‘the world in front of the text’ as particular reading strategy is built upon the views of Schneiders (1989:3-10) who developed this reading strategy in order to have an ‘oppressive text function liberatively’. Schneiders, again, draws on the work of

⁵² It is interesting to note that within the Pontifical Biblical Commission’s (1995:13-46) somewhat unusual list of categories of methods and approaches for biblical interpretation (historical-critical; literary analysis; approaches based on tradition; those using human sciences; contextual approaches; and, fundamentalist interpretation) the ‘Canonical approach’ is listed as an approach based on tradition (:27-29).

⁵³ Tate (1991:183-185) views Canonical criticism, however, as an author-centred approach to interpreting texts. ‘[C]anonical criticism moves beyond the final redaction of a text to the point when the texts were accepted as canonical by believing communities’ (1991:183).

⁵⁴ B. Childs wrote a commentary on Exodus in 1974 which contained a history-of-exegesis section (cf Bockmuehl 1995a:59, n3; Froehlich 1991:10; Sawyer 1990:317). Cf also the criticism of Froehlich on Child’s Exodus project.

Luz (1994:71 n34) — himself responsible for a commentary on Matthew’s gospel which tries to account for the effective history of this text — differs also from Childs’ argument that the canonical dimension of biblical texts belongs to ‘the historical and descriptive explanation of texts’, rather than to ‘(applicative) understanding’ of texts.

A recent explanation by Childs (1995:16-17) of the importance of the ‘theological role’ of the interpretive tradition, unfortunately seems to boil down to a celebration of the ‘pre-critical’ stance of early biblical interpreters. Cf Coggins (1993:172-173) for the need to take the history of interpretation into account in the writing of biblical commentaries; Murphy’s attempt to use the history of exegesis as a ‘hermeneutical tool’ (1986:87-91).

Gadamer and Ricoeur — especially the latter — and emphasises the ‘distanciation’ of the text from its originating circumstances, including the (intention of the) author. Advocating a ‘hermeneutics of transformation’, the world created by the text and projected ahead of itself is ‘appropriated’, by means of

a kind of deconstituting of the self and reconstitution of the self according to the coordinates of the world of the text.

In evaluating different approaches that can be applied to the text of the Bible by ‘ordinary readers’, Gerald West considers the ‘reading in front of the text’ as having considerable value. For West (1993:36-40) this reading strategy

emphasizes the major metaphors, themes, and symbols that run through a text or collection of texts.

West argues that this approach is especially suitable for a assortment of different texts combined within one collection, as happened with the process of canon-forming of ‘the Bible’. It helps in securing a view of the text as ‘dynamic medium’ as opposed to ‘static object’, emphasising the meaning of the text for the present and even the future. ‘Predominant symbols, themes and metaphors’ are used to articulate the meaning of the biblical text for the contemporary readers. For West the emphasis contained in this way of approaching the Bible — as opposed to reading ‘behind’ or ‘(with-)in’ the text — is that ‘appropriating the text for (the readers’) present context’ is non-negotiable.

For West, the advantages of ‘reading in front of the text’ lie in its point of departure. The understanding of certain themes by (ordinary) readers ‘maximizes the participation of the community’ in reading the biblical text. Other advantages includes the ‘easy movement from text to context’; ‘more immediate appropriation of the text’; and, as reading strategy being close to the actual reading of the Bible by ordinary readers. Disadvantages of ‘reading in front of the text’ include its apparent inability to develop or stimulate a ‘critical consciousness’; and that the whole biblical canon might *not* be read in favour of pre-selected texts, thus leaving certain predisposed misreadings intact.

Whereas West’s option for a canonical approach to the Bible addresses the ‘training’ of ordinary readers in order to approach the Bible in an appropriate way, other scholars also advocating an approach to the Bible which has as point of departure the complete or canonised biblical text (particularly Childs and Sanders) have different aims which will not be discussed here in full. Suffice it to note that although Childs’ insistence on the need to read a biblical text theologically, did allow the biblical canon within the community of faith to be highlighted, his overriding concern is apparently to protect a conservative evangelical emphasis on biblical theology. In this respect the reception of the biblical texts are relegated to historical concerns and are to be appreciated as such and nothing else.

Sanders, on the other hand, although his work has arguably never received the same acclaim as that of Childs', succeeded to draw attention to a number of important matters concerning the reception of the Bible. The notion of a 'canonical process' or 'progressive development' of the scriptures as developed by Sanders clearly illustrates how the early Christian communities accepted the Bible as normative authority. Through a long, and not always conscious process of reevaluating and reappropriating biblical texts, and by means of a variety of hermeneutic procedures, 'often midrashic in nature', these texts were contextualised to address new circumstances within the communities. Such procedures enhanced interaction between the texts and the community, and introduced interpretations continuously trying to recontextualise the tradition (Pontefical Biblical Commission 1995:28).

Canonical studies as produced by Sanders, allow for the possibility to consider the history of the reception of the texts in the past as well as in the present as an interactive event, with influences of the text on the reader, as much as the reader or past readers (the interpretive traditions) determine 'what' text is read, and 'how' it is read.

2.3.2. *School of Constance*

A literary work is not an object which stands by itself and which offers the same face to each reader in each period. It is not a monument which reveals its timeless essence in a monologue (Jauss, quoted in Selden 1985:115).

One of the most important influences in the development of reception theories, through which the reader is accorded a more central role in the interpretive process, came from literary theorists at the University of Constance. The School of Constance is generally seen to be represented in literary studies by especially Hans Robert Jauss with his 'aesthetic of reception' (or reception theory), and Wolfgang Iser with his emphasis on Reader-response criticism (or 'aesthetic of response') especially in the study of the Bible.⁵⁵

Of specific importance here are the views of Jauss (and not so much those of Iser)⁵⁶ because his theory can be described as a 'social/structural model or Reader-response criticism'

⁵⁵ Cf Eagleton (1989:75-86) on the 'ideology of the aesthetic': aesthetic according to him 'denotes ... a whole program of social, psychical and political reconstruction on the part of the early European bourgeoisie'. Aesthetic is seen by Eagleton as the only way for bourgeoisie society to resolve the conflict between its 'own secularizing material activities' which question 'the very metaphysical values it urgently needs to validate its own political order' (1989:85).

⁵⁶ In the words of Holub (1984:83): 'Although he (Iser) does not exclude social or historical factors, they are clearly subordinated to or incorporated in more detailed textual considerations. If one thinks of Jauss as dealing with the macrocosm of reception, then Iser occupies himself with the microcosm of response (*Wirkung*)'. Cf e g the explanation and criticism of Iser's views in Aichele et al (1995:31-51) and Holub (1984:82-106). Aichele et al's most severe criticism against Iser is that he fails to take the 'real reader' serious. For Iser the reader exists only in so far as the text allows him/her to exist. This is caused — contrary to Iser's opinion of his own views — by his essentially formalist stance! (1995: espec 39; cf 38-51)

(Holub 1984:58-63) aimed at delineating the readers' *Erwartungshorizon*.⁵⁷ By this is meant the readers' horizon of expectation which is dependent on their socio-historical context and their specific cultural, ethical and literary expectations.

Jauss's aesthetics of reception examines how different texts fit or do not fit within the expectations of the historical moment (Aichele et al 1995:35)

Lategan (1989:5) therefore traces the distinction between theoretical and empirical reader-oriented research back to Jauss who distinguished between *Wirkung* and *Rezeption*. These two points of view refer to approaches to a text from the perspective of either the interpretive elements contained within the text, or those deriving from the reader her/himself.

Jauss' theory of the aesthetics of reception proved to be as provocative as he probably intended it to be, and his work has been hailed as the origin of modern reception criticism.⁵⁸ According to Holub (1984:53-82), Jauss' work on reception falls into roughly two subsequent, theoretical approaches and conclusions: Aesthetics of reception and aesthetics of experience.

2.3.2.1. Aesthetics of reception

With his 1967 lecture at the University of Constance, Jauss presented his attempt to restore literary history to its proper place, which for him implied a proper balance — or a superceding of the dichotomy (Holub 1984:57) — between 'the demand of historical mediations' (as found in Marxist theories) and 'advances made in aesthetic perception' (as in Formalist approaches) in order to reestablish the link between past and present.⁵⁹ Jauss' lecture was intended as provocation and challenge, not as a reactionary thesis (Holub 1984:54).

This lecture, later published in different collections (cf Jauss 1970; 1982b) under the title of *Literary history as a challenge to literary theory* consisted of seven theses,⁶⁰ which changed

⁵⁷ Called '[t]he "methodological centerpiece" of his most important theoretical essay', by Holub (1984:59). The notion of 'horizon' is borrowed from Gadamer, who emphasised that interpretation of literature 'arises from a dialogue between past and present' (Selden 1985:115). Since Gadamer, the notion of 'horizon' acquired a 'anti-positivist connotation to the study of horizon', denying the ability to describe or reconstruct the past as objective fact, and stressing rather the dialogical nature of the venture, as well as the inescapability of the hermeneutical circle (McCallum 1992:226).

With a retrospective glance, Froehlich (1991:340) uses similar vocabulary when he claims that *Auslegungsgeschichte* provides "an interpretive horizon" for the comprehensive task of doing church history in its universal dimensions'.

⁵⁸ So e.g. McKnight (1985:75); elsewhere (1992:267) he describes Jauss' — and Iser's — work as analogous to dislodging and taking the first olive from a bottle, after which the rest comes out easily!

⁵⁹ The intertextual links, both continuous and discontinuous, of this presentation with JCF Schiller's lecture on 'universal history' almost 200 years ago are commented upon by various scholars, e.g. Holub (1983:53-54); McKnight (1985:75).

⁶⁰ McKnight (1985:77-78; 1992:267) summarises Jauss' argument by stating that his *first two* theses argue that the 'reader's past experience of the "literary data" is the dialogue that creates "the first condition for a literary theory"'; the *next two* theses 'state the value of the reconstruction of the horizon of expectations of a work'; and, the *last three* theses describe the 'historical relevance of literature (the productive aspects) from three perspectives: diachronic (the ordering of the individual work in its own literary series, synchronic (the cross-section arrangement of contemporaneous works so as to discover a general system of relationships of literature of

the shape of literary historical methods. In a way which would have done Jauss' theories proud, scholars (e g Holub 1984:81-82; McKnight 1985:76) have emphasised that the 'success' of Jauss were due to some extent to the prevailing socio-historical context especially in Germany.

For Jauss the aesthetics of reception necessitates the viewing of literature as 'a dialectical process of production *and reception*' (Holub 1984:57, his emphasis). A proper history of literature is one that 'will play a conscious mediating role between past and present'. In Jauss' aesthetics of reception the synthesising of history and aesthetics were largely dependent upon and effected by his introduction of the idea of a 'horizon of expectations'. As indicated above, this horizon is explained as

an intersubjective system or structure of expectations, a 'system of references' or a mind-set that a hypothetical individual might bring to any text (Holub 1984:59).

The horizon, as the specific reception required from the reader by the work of literature can be constructed by specific textual signals or where these are absent, in three general ways: attention to specific inherent norms of the genre; through the tacit relationship with other known works from the same literary-historical context; and, the possibility that the text can be appropriated within the 'narrow horizon of literary expectations' or within the 'wider horizon' of the reader's life experience (Jauss 1970:14; 1982b:24).

It is especially in the third way of constructing the horizon of expectation that the argument in this study finds a valuable contribution. Attention to the genre of the text as constitutive of the horizon still adheres to formalist theory with the objectifiable and fixed text predetermining meaning. Constructing the horizon of interpretation by means of an intertextual reading of other literary texts from the same literary-historical context moves the horizon already one step away from the confines of the text only. However, it is in describing the horizon of expectation according to the life-experiences and -expectations of the reader that a true dialogue — if not fusion — between the text and the reader becomes possible.

2.3.2.2. Aesthetics of experience

With the receding influence of the Russian Formalists in the 1970's as well as a change in Jauss' own scholarly interests, the notions of aesthetics of reception and horizon of expectation fade from his later work. Reacting to what he calls an 'aesthetics of negativity' — where literature and art in general retains a positive value only when it traverses the particular society which produced it — Jauss proposes an aesthetics of experience.

one historical moment), and social (the discernment of the effect of the special history of literature from the general history of its readers)'.

An aesthetic of experience acknowledges the limitations of Jauss' earlier aesthetics of reception, which excluded primary aesthetic experience and ignored 'pre-autonomous art'. With his new aesthetic Jauss aims to account for the 'practical, communicative and norm-constituting function' of literature and art, and reintroduces the idea of '*Genuss*' (German for both pleasure, enjoyment and usefulness). Aesthetic pleasure occurs with the surrender of the subject-reader to the object-text, while the former occupies 'a position that brackets the existence of the object and thereby makes it an aesthetic one' (Jauss 1982a:30-31).

For Jauss aesthetic pleasure consists in three categories: *poiesis*, *aesthesis*, and *catharsis*. *Poiesis* refers to 'the productive side of aesthetic experience, the pleasure that stems from the application of one's creative abilities', and Jauss notes how in modern times *poiesis* now includes not only the efforts of the artist but the audience as well. *Aesthesis* refers to the 'receptive side of aesthetic experience', which includes both a supportive and sustaining as well as negative or critical function towards society. *Catharsis* refers to the 'communicative component between art and recipient' which lies on the level of 'identification', and Jauss includes five patterns of such interaction: associative, admiring, sympathetic, cathartic, and ironic (Holub 1984:75-81).

Holub suggests that Jauss' concern with aesthetic experience constitutes a 'revision' of his initial hypotheses about reception. Although the level of 'provocation' which Jauss achieved was less than with his aesthetics of reception, his self-critical rectifying of some earlier theoretical positions led to a strengthening of his general position. Ironic then, is that

the chief reason for the failure of Jauss' work to ignite the German critical community as it once did is that the constituency and the mood of that community have altered dramatically (Holub 1984:81-82).

As much as Jauss' initial reception studies curried favour with his 'audience' because of the literary-historical circumstances then, his later work failed to evoke the same response not so much because of the work as such, but because of the changed circumstances of reception!

2.3.2.3. The value of Jauss' work

Reception aesthetics, then, is not seen as an autonomous methodological paradigm, but as a partial reflection that can serve to subject art to the historicity of understanding and to gain for aesthetic experience the lost social and communicative function (McKnight 1985:78).

It is quite clear that the work of Jauss and the School of Constance have contributed much toward the study of the role of reception in reading and that the value of their work is still appreciated. In addition to the general recognition of Jauss' work, the following issues which emerged from his study of literary history and which are considered for the argument here, will be mentioned.

Reception aesthetics never pretended to be the final word in delineating the importance of the role of the reader in the interpretive process. One the biggest assets of reception aesthetics is probably its insistence on a theory of literary communication in an interdisciplinary context, including the contributions made by 'linguistics, semiotics, sociology, anthropology, philosophy and even biology'. This implies that the School of Constance and Jauss' horizon of study expanded

from a theory of reception and effect of literature based on the science of the text to a theory of literary communication

inclusive of other disciplines (McKnight 1985:78).

In an attempt to account for the relationship and interaction between literary and general history, Jauss makes an important contribution, regarding the 'socially *formative* function of literature' (Jauss 1982b:40).⁶¹ This notion allows for the literary text to assume an active role in its own reception, 'calling into question and altering social conventions through both content and form' (Holub 1984:68). In this way, Jauss succeeds in calling attention to the importance of 'literature's effect on society'.

Jauss' handling of texts has met with a mixed reception. On the one hand it implies, and rightly so, that a text is never created nor exists independent of social and other elements, and that its reception always takes place in a social context which influences the reception of that text. On the other hand, this contextual element in the hermeneutics of Jauss is largely dissolved in his insistence on the objectivable nature of the text's 'frame of reference' (McCallum 1992:228; see also next section).

2.3.2.4. Criticism of the views of Jauss

Perhaps the most serious weakness of Jauss' aesthetics of reception is that although it makes sense in theory, it is difficult to concretely put it into practice (Aichele et al 1995:36). The School of Constance and especially Jauss have been criticised that their version of reception theory was too privatistic, bourgeois and apolitical (Holub 1984:121-134; cf Aichele et al 1995:36).

Other points of criticism concern the notion that for all his insistence on the reader's involvement in the interpretive process, he is still bent on identifying and relying on the

⁶¹ Accounting for this link, Jauss also proposed that the difference between a literary event and a historical occurrence is situated in the latter's continuing influence whereas a literary work needs to be 'actualised' by contemporary readers. In a later writing, he contends that the distinction is situated in literary documents' ability to reach beyond its period of production. Both these arguments are easily refuted, cf Holub (1984:67-68).

‘objectivity’ of the text. McCallum (1992:226-230) for example, describes Jauss’ work as ‘straight-forwardly foundationalist’,⁶² in the sense that he objectifies the original reception of texts

by linguistic constraints that anchor the text, if not as an ‘objective fact’, then at least as a ‘reified event’

and which serves as ‘grounding mechanism’. McCallum accuses Jauss of a covert smuggling-in of

a Formalist set of norms in terms of which aesthetic value is determined by a text’s ability to defamiliarize, ... to change the horizon of expectations (1992:229).

With the shifting horizons of interpretation becoming fixed in an objectifiable frame of reference for textual reception, the reader is delivered into the hands of a text which by means of its literary genres and conventions ‘prefixes’ meaning.⁶³

Jauss is also accused of employing another foundationalist — ‘bracketing’ — strategy in his claims of neutrality for the literary critic/historian⁶⁴ as well as his ‘covert valorization of the Formalist aesthetic’. Similarly, Selden (1985:116; also Holub 1984:60) criticises Jauss for his weakness regarding the self-critical appraisal of, and consequent bias towards his own ‘horizons’. Regardless of his insistence on the necessity to take all interpretations of a text into consideration and thus realising one’s own historical limitation, Jauss fails to merge ‘all the points of view which have arisen’. Often Jauss choose to accept those interpretations which square with his own ‘hermeneutical sense’ — and discard others which clash with his own sensibilities.

The attempt of Jauss to provide empirical means with which to objectify the horizon of expectation,⁶⁵ is also open to the same criticism of hankering back to an appraised objectivity.

Despite his struggle to escape a positivist-historicist paradigm, then, Jauss, in adopting objectivity as methodological principle, appears to fall back into the very errors he criticizes (Holub 1984:58-63).

The success or failure of a literary work as experienced by its readers depends upon the work’s ability to satisfy readers’ expectations, and therefore these expectations can be reconstructed,

⁶² McCallum accuses all literary theorists not subscribing to a pragmatist approach to reading, of adherence to a Theory of the Reader-approach. According to McCallum, the early Fish and Iser are phenomenological, Holland and Bleich psychological, Jauss a historical, and various others sociological foundationalists! (1992:217-233)

⁶³ Jauss objectifies the horizons of interpretation not only with an appeal to a formalist approach to the text, but at times also with claiming it possible on basis of ‘the historical succession of readers’ (McCallum 1992:229).

⁶⁴ ‘Jauss’s literary historian [is] indemnified from the vicissitudes of historical reception’ (McCallum 1992:229).

⁶⁵ Holub (1984:59) complains that Jauss’s notion of ‘horizon’ is so vaguely defined that it is not certain which elements are included in or excluded from it!

which in turn will ascertain the issues or ‘questions’ addressed by the text, the text’s original intention and its contemporary understanding.⁶⁶

These and other criticisms of Jauss notwithstanding, his work did contribute largely to the recognition of the active involvement of the reader in the process of reading a text. In what follows, the significance and value of Jauss’ theories on the determining influence of the reader’s literary-historical context will be elaborated upon and used to investigate a particular form of reception of the Pauline letters.

2.3.3. *Wirkungsgeschichte*⁶⁷

The mutual presence to each other of text and readers creates its own dynamic, for the text exercises an influence and provokes reactions. It makes a resonant claim that is heard by its readers, whether as individuals or as members of a group. The reader is in any case never an isolated subject. He or she belongs to a social context and lives within a tradition. Readers come to the text with their own questions, exercise a certain selectivity, propose an interpretation and, in the end, are able to create a further work or else take initiatives inspired directly from their reading of Scripture (Pontefical Biblical Commission 1995:32).

Recently there has been a few, renewed, efforts to account for the *Wirkungsgeschichte*, or ‘effective history’ of biblical texts, an approach developed in literary studies between 1960 and 1970, when the relationship between a text and its reader(s) came under investigation. Gadamer referred to the different ways of interpreting a text which forms a history of its own as the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the text.⁶⁸ *Wirkungsgeschichte* implies that the meaning of a text cannot be resolved fully by and in the person of the individual reader.⁶⁹ One’s reading is always augmented and thus relativised by the already existing readings of others.⁷⁰ Lategan

⁶⁶ The original purpose of the text *qua* the issues it addressed, Jauss stressed, is always determined contextually. Relying on Gadamer’s criticism of historical objectivity, Jauss argues that the reconstruction is done in ‘the context of our present’ which encircles the historical context (1970:20-21; cf McKnight 1985:77).

⁶⁷ Lategan (1992:5) notes the Gadamerian concept of *Wirkungsgeschichte* as one of the factors leading to the rise of reception theory.

⁶⁸ Cf Schneiders (1991:159-160) in support of the Gadamerian notion, who provides the following definition: ‘By “effective history” is meant historical reality not only as initiating event but also as modified and amplified by all that the initiating event has produced’.

⁶⁹ The notion of the effective history of a text is to be understood in a post-positivist framework, where the human mind is seen not as ‘a pure capacity for the intelligible but itself a historical reality shaped by the tradition in which it participates’ (Schneiders 1991:159).

Schneiders (1991:160) also refers to Gadamer’s concept of ‘application’ by which he meant that ‘the knower...is always implicated in the knowing and therefore the known’. Similarly, the text is not an objectifiable entity (‘objective “knowable”’, as in Schneiders) in the sense of the ‘real past’, because the past cannot be described in a detached and ‘objective’ way.

⁷⁰ Schneiders (1991:153) ascribes the ability to create ‘effective history’ to classical texts (‘those that survive the period of their creation’). The effective history created by such text ‘becomes part of and modifies and enriches their meaning’. Cf Rogerson & Jeanrond (1992:440), who also refer to Habermas’ criticism of Gadamer in this regard (too much trust in ‘the undistorted flow of communication’), as well as that of Ricoeur (arguing against ‘Gadamer’s total rejection of methodological moves in text interpretation’).

For the possible negative implications of the history of the text’s interpretation and its influence, cf Fowl (1995:402-403).

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(1982:48-52) refers to the dynamic nature of the New Testament writings which stimulates an ongoing interpretive process of the texts itself. In this regard it is claimed that texts have an 'effective history' which derives from the text's ability to offer ever-new, continuing interpretive possibilities. Indeed, the 'critical dimension' of an 'in front of the text'-reading is established by acknowledging that

the text itself can generate an effective history which is constitutive of the effective historical consciousness of subsequent readers (Schneiders 1989:8; cf West 1991:238 n191).

The Pontefical Biblical Commission (1995:31) claims that this approach rests upon two principles:

a text only becomes a literary work in so far as it encounters readers who give life to it by appropriating it to themselves

and,

this appropriation of the text, which can occur either on the individual or communal level and can take shape in various spheres (literary, artistic, theological, ascetical and mystical), contributes to a better understanding of the text itself.

Schneiders (1991:160) puts the second point even clearer when she contends that

[b]y 'effective history' is meant historical reality not only as initiating event but also as modified and amplified by all that the initiating event has produced.

It follows therefore that a *Wirkungsgeschichtliche* investigation of biblical texts will have a two-fold immediate aim: an analysis of the development in the interpretation of the texts, over the course of time and 'under the influence of the concerns readers have brought to the text'. Secondly, such an approach will want to appraise the impact or importance of the role played by tradition in establishing the meaning of the biblical texts (Pontefical Biblical Commission 1995:32).

Recently Räisänen (1992:303-324) has argued that the investigation of the 'effective' history of the Bible has been neglected in biblical scholarship. However, Räisänen's understanding of the 'effective history' of the biblical texts does not parallel the common — Gadamerian — assessment of it, as he distinguishes both the history of the interpretation and use of the Bible from it. Perhaps the severest of Räisänen's criticisms of *Wirkungsgeschichte* is reserved for when the particular tradition of interpretation of the Bible becomes determinative for its understanding, especially in so far as confessional statements and documents determine the understanding of the Bible (cf :306-308).

Thus 'effective history' has been, and is, appealed to as support for a tradition-bound exegesis (:307),

and

Gadamer's talk of effective history is just a way of saying that we are influenced by tradition ('we are always subject to the effects of effective-history') (:306 n13, quoting Gadamer)

He thus prefers to see the 'effective history' of the Bible as the specific *new ideas or events* that came into being through history because of the Bible.

Whereas the history of the interpretation of the Bible concerns all interpretation — both theological and any other interpretation — of the Bible, effective history refers to ‘actual effectiveness’ of the texts: in as much as the texts have led to new ideas and practices, ‘the actual empirical effects⁷¹ of the Bible’ (:313).⁷² The use of the Bible is also different from its effective history, as the former refers to where the Bible is employed to justify an already decided upon position. Since Räsänen still considers the ‘empirical historical and religio-historical study’ of the Bible as distinct from the ‘theological (or philosophical) evaluation of its results’, the effective history of the Bible becomes a theological enterprise for him.

The conclusions of Räsänen concerning the value of the study of the effects of the Bible naturally correspond closely with his particular view of the material to be studied. He concludes that such an investigation should be attended to in as much as the effective history of the Bible is a critical issue, can operate according to sound methodology, and deals with the ‘vital issues’ of life. However, whether such investigation of the effects of the Bible will prove the ‘effectiveness’ or ineffectiveness of the Bible, Räsänen argues, remains to be seen. Finally, he pleads that whichever the case might be,

great care should be devoted to the construction of a proper theoretical framework for the pursuit (:324).⁷³

⁷¹ He refers to specific cases (e.g. Origen’s sacrifice of his manhood); the creation of a new ‘symbolic universe of Christians’; emotional impact (e.g. encouragement, hope, fear); and, biblical *personae* serving as models of identification (:315) — the major influence the Bible had, however, was through the notion that it is a ‘holy book’ (:316). Räsänen adds that the Bible hardly ever created these impacts on its own; although being a ‘necessary condition’ for these effects, it was not a ‘sufficient condition’ as other factors were also involved (:314-315).

⁷² He criticises the distinction he finds in Luz’s work on Matthew, between the history of the interpretation of the Bible (its interpretation in commentaries and other theological writings) and its effective history (‘its history, reception, and actualization in *other media*’), claiming that the difference between these two does not lie in biblical reception in different media, but ‘the actual “effectiveness” of a text and such “reception” as does not let it be effective’ (1992:311).

In Luz’s 1994 study of the effective history of Matthew’s gospel, neither of these two distinctions are present; furthermore, Luz quotes Ebeling’s statement on the link between the interpretation of the Bible and church history with affirmation, adding only that in addition to the ‘(verbal) interpretation’, the Bible also stimulates ‘a history of “fruits” or a “history of effects”’ (1994:17).

Räsänen’s criticism (1992:313) that Luz limits the ‘effective history’ of the Bible to the Church prejudices the matter and certainly fails to allow for other possibilities of Luz’s application of effective history; this criticism is contradicted in Luz’s study on Matthew, where Luz refers to views on e.g. labour (1994:29), anti-Semitism (1994:33).

⁷³ Although Bockmuehl, Luz, and Räsänen make valuable contributions towards greater conceptual clarity regarding the notion of ‘effective history’ of the Bible, this is, however, not the proper place to formulate a theoretical framework. My intention is rather to claim the importance of accounting for reception — in the broad sense of the word — of biblical texts in the interpretive venture. Not only the history of effects of the Bible (in the church) as opposed to the history of its exegesis (Luz); not only ‘biblical effects’ in society as opposed to those in ‘religious circles’ (Räsänen); not only the derivative (‘primary applications and misapplications’) as opposed to its legitimising (secondary, ‘proof-texting’) use (Bockmuehl), will be counted as part of the continuing reception history in my argument!

In reaction to Räsänen it has to be added that he directs his attention to one aspect of the history of the interpretation of the Bible: the effects produced by the Bible. Another, at least equally important area of investigation, also in dire need of attention, is the investigation of the social or structural circumstances leading to particular readings of the Bible which, in turn, produced those effects. Clearly, the interpretation of the Bible — including the use and abuse thereof — and the effects produced by its reading, cannot be separated (cf also Bockmuehl 1995a:61-62). And secondly, as hinted above, the guiding or normative element inherent in textual reception for subsequent interpretation is still neglected. Although Räsänen (1992:306-308) revolts against the use of effective history in support of the notion a 'traditional' — or confessional — reading, it cannot be denied that such readings do influence Bible readers.

An important element which emerges within this discussion on the text's 'effective history' is that once a text has been read or interpreted, it will never be the same text again in the future reading thereof (cf Beker 1991:13-16). The interpretive traditions through the course of history make it impossible to return to the text as though untouched by interpretation. Schneiders (1991:160) explains this phenomenon with reference to the American public's understanding of the Vietnam War:

we Americans cannot know the Vietnam War 'as it happened' but only in terms of its effective history, that is, in terms of all that the Vietnam War has come to be down to today.

In effect, the interpretive traditions surrounding the text almost reconstitute the text, in the sense that the former provides the perimeters and context for how the text can — indeed, should — be understood.

The effective history of the Bible need not be a restrictive or oppressing traditional view, but can be a valuable resource for liberative readings of its texts. In his argument in favour of a reactualisation of (postmodern) allegory,⁷⁴ Brett (1995:75) supports Francis Watson in arguing that a more meaningful way of 'taking sides' with matters of biblical social justice resides not in the texts themselves but in their 'continuing effects'. As has been pointed out by especially feminist but also by liberationist scholars that the textuality of the Bible and its originating context(s) provides less of a resource for an emancipatory reading than the continuing effects of the Bible.

However, the 'fruits the texts produce throughout history' can be ambivalent or simply detrimental to certain communities, and evidence of this exists in some of the practices —

⁷⁴ Cf the support for allegory from Luz (1994:21-22) also amidst a discussion on the continuing effects of the interpretation of texts, issuing forth from (1) a holistic view of interpretation (both 'words' and 'actions') and (2) the power/productivity of texts. For the recent promotion of an reenactment of the medieval *quadriga* in biblical interpretation, cf Houtepen (1997:107-126); and Wainwright (1995:639-662) stressing a reconceived *quadriga*, or four-fold sense of Scripture.

deliberately advocated or tacitly approved — by the Church. Many examples spring to mind: global issues such as the human domination and destruction of the earth, the oppression of women, and the condoning of active and latent racism, to more local issues such as the advocacy of Apartheid in South Africa.⁷⁵

2.3.4. *Rezeptionsgeschichte*

Texts are never read in isolation but always in interpretive contexts, and the contexts in which interpreters live determine the meaning of the text they read (Ehrman 1991:20, emphasis added).

The acknowledgment that the other, earlier readings from history are always present and influence the current reader even before the reader turns to the text, is very important. A reader does not encounter a text *tabula rasa*, but are already, prior to reading the text, carrying certain presuppositions related to — in support of or contrary to — the existing reading(s). Furthermore, these readings from history bear down upon the reader whether or not the reader is aware of it (Lategan 1992:5). However, although the notion of ‘effective history’ of the text accounts for the tradition of interpretation having some bearing on the reader-interpreter, it remains incapable of explaining the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of that tradition. Even when one argues that the text provides the gaps and polyvalency which give rise to the continuing and modifying stream of interpretation, one is still pressed to explain why the gaps are filled in particular ways and especially (for the argument here) why the polyvalent nature of the text often changes into a generally accepted mono-semantic discourse on the text. In this regard then, careful attention to the history of the reception of texts can play a valuable role in identifying possible elements contributing to the particular reception of a text.

In a recent article, Martyn Thompson (1993:248-272) argues persuasively that for understanding historical meaning it is necessary to retain both the substantialist — the text as constructed by the author — and pragmatist — the text as read by readers — perspectives⁷⁶ within literary theory. He argues from the perspective that the recently established emphasis on the pragmatic or reader-oriented approach tends to minimize and in some cases even nullify the notion of authorial intention. Accompanying this shift towards pragmatics, is the now — according to Thompson — common⁷⁷ distinction between the *Wirkungsgeschichte* or ‘effective history’ and the *Rezeptionsgeschichte* or reception history of a text.

⁷⁵ Cf e.g. Luz’s reference to the use of Matthean texts in the condonation and propagation of ancient and modern (anti-Judaism and) anti-Semitism. Linking on to the methodological insistence of Räisänen, Thiselton (1995:10-36) also pleads for a more adequate ‘hermeneutical’ approach to the ‘history of interpretation’ (cf his criticism of James Barr’s reproach of the Barthian reaction against natural theology).

⁷⁶ These are not poles or oppositions because Thompson (1993:271-272) reasons that these two views are not in competition with one another. However, his article is taken to the constant rivalry between them, or at least between scholars accepting either of these as point of departure.

⁷⁷ Yet not always so satisfactory, cf Holub (1984:x1). Cf Lategan (1989:5) who adds that the distinction between *Wirkung* and *Rezeption* in reader-oriented studies is ‘not unproblematic’.

Wirkungsgeschichte explains how, according to the structures and direct messages of the text, changing appropriations of the text come about. *Rezeptionsgeschichte*, on the other hand, although also stressing different readings of the text, accounts for different interpretations of the same text by focussing on the ‘changing horizons of expectations’ of readers. In the view of Wolfgang Iser, the former is concerned with analyzing textual structures and strategies that both invite and control, whereas the latter looks at the socio-historical conditions for reading and responding to texts⁷⁸ (Thompson 1993:255).

In this chapter the emphasis will indeed be on the socio-historical circumstances which led Luther to develop views that today live on in what can be called the Lutheran framework in Pauline interpretation. This framework found its ‘institutionalizing’ (fixation) in the sixteenth century thought of Martin Luther, who was struggling to come to grips with his particular situation. Naturally the Lutheran framework had its precursors and accompanying events, which will be attended to below. The reason for reference to the Lutheran framework is to emphasise that Luther’s particular contribution — and more particularly the tradition following him — to the history of Pauline interpretation was institutionalised in the Christian church and became the dominant way of reading Paul’s writings in that context through subsequent centuries, to this day.⁷⁹

In short, in order to understand the reason(s) for the onset of the Lutheran line of interpretation, it is necessary to investigate the socio-historical circumstances prevalent during Luther’s life as a possible key to his interpretation of the Bible. The Lutheran framework became ‘fixed’ and as it was carried on through the ages — although modified and refined in certain respects — it stayed virtually the same in its basic concept. These broad trajectories within Pauline studies will also be traced through time. The unquestioned supremacy of the Lutheran framework as primary — and even sole — interpretive key to the Pauline literature was first challenged by the work of Schweitzer. His research on the nature of Jewish theology and religion mitigated against the Lutheran understanding of Paul — and accompanying view of first-century Judaism — and arguably initiated some of the first moves towards a ‘new perspective’ on Paul.

However, although the emphasis will be on the ‘real’ or historical setting of Luther’s interpretation of the Pauline writings, the interaction between the texts themselves and Luther

⁷⁸ Similar concerns about limiting the ‘readers’ and ‘effects’ of texts to textual devices and strategies have been expressed by Aichele (1995:20-69), as referred to above.

⁷⁹ Although an important and interesting question, room does not allow for investigating the reason(s) for the enduring presence and even popularity of the Lutheran legacy over four centuries! However, in the next chapter the continuation of the Lutheran framework — and especially some of its implicit and explicit assumptions — in New Testament scholarship will be traced briefly.

is not denied. Therefore, in an effort to account for both the substantialist and pragmatic approaches to texts and the ‘histories’ or ‘traditions’ they call into being, I will use the term ‘reception history’ as a term inclusive of both these concerns.

2.4. Conclusion

[B]iblical studies has not yet begun to attend seriously to the reception history of biblical texts. As long as biblical reader-response critics concentrate on the implied reader and narratee in the biblical texts, they will continue to neglect the reception of biblical texts by flesh-and-blood readers (Aichele et al 1995:36; emphasis in the original).

Stowers (1994:6) has recently referred to the refusal and general failure of New Testament scholars to view ancient manuscripts and critical editions of texts as interpreted texts rather than ‘given, or uninterpretive texts’ as a ‘blind spot’.⁸⁰ From a literary perspective Stowers wants to persuade readers that ‘[t]exts belong to languages and therefore also derive their meanings from social practices’ (1994:6). Unfortunately the blind spot increases not only in size but also in intensity with the realisation that so far the vast majority of New Testament scholars were very reluctant to incorporate a study of — or even acknowledge the importance for biblical interpretation of — the influence of ‘traditional’ interpretive practices in their attempts to exegete and explain biblical texts.

Generally speaking, the importance of reception studies and its sad neglect in New Testament studies until now, can perhaps best be understood — amongst other reasons — with reference to the ‘due recognition to the reader-mediated nature of texts’:

It became clear that every statement about a reader, a text, a meaning was dependent on a prior reading. All meta-language, all theory, all understanding is reader-mediated (Lategan 1992:8).

This does not mean, however, that texts become mere contentless points of orientation for readers, and ‘it does not mean that [texts] lose their identity, completely subjected to the whim of interpreters’ (Lategan 1992:9). It does mean that the ‘methodological deadlock’ between subject (reader, or ‘interpretive act’, or ‘reader’s construction’) and object (‘author’s’ text) is relativised and eventually broken — at least theoretically.⁸¹ Lategan argues that text and reader ‘do not belong to the same order’, do not operate on the same level and therefore need not

⁸⁰ Bockmuehl (1995a:58,60) calls it a ‘forgotten factor’ and ‘an unknown blank on the map of New Testament scholarship’. In a similar way, Aichele et al (1995:35 n13) calls the neglect of the ‘flesh-and-blood readers’ in favour of identifying the implied reader or narratee a ‘blindspot’: ‘most biblical Reader-response criticism remains resolutely formalist — what counts is supposed to be already there in the text — and neither the psychological/subjective nor the social/structural dimensions of the Reader-response critic’s own agenda is given consideration’.

⁸¹ Lategan (1992:8) quotes Freud in saying that the dichotomy of reader-subject and text-object continues ‘in practice’ — this ensures the emerging of ongoing and renewed readings: ‘Reader-response criticisms are at once generated and undone by this unresolved tension’.

A plea to discard the object-subject dichotomy in biblical Reader-response criticism — because it ‘has collapsed under the weight of poststructuralist and postmodernist theory, especially deconstruction’ — is entered by Aichele et al (1995:51-87, espec 52-55).

stand in 'unresolved tension with each other': reader and (reader-mediated) text 'no longer represent conflicting positions', but different perspectives on reality (1992:8).

In this study, attention to both the reception history of the Pauline texts — especially during the Reformation period — and its 'effective history' will be required. As the emphasis in this chapter will be on reception history, it is necessary to briefly summarise the above argument and infer the most important aspects of reception studies for the remainder of this study, particularly the Lutheran reception of the Pauline letters.

2.4.1. Reception history: Difficulties, problems, and deficiencies

[H]istory also illustrates the prevalence from time too [sic] time of interpretations that are tendentious and false, baneful in their effect — such as, for example, those that have promoted anti-semitism or other forms of racial discrimination or, yet again, various kinds of millenarian delusions. This serves to show that this approach cannot constitute a discipline that would be purely autonomous. Discernment is required (Pontefical Biblical Commission 1995:32).

Advocating the need to account for the interpretive history of texts, does not mean that it as such — or the consideration thereof in the interpretive process — is straightforward or without problems. Recently, Long (1996:288) argued that 'a history of interpretation may be construed as persistent impulse to override textual indeterminacy in the interests of ideological (theological) conformity'. On the other hand, Fowl (1995:402-403) claims that the simple 'repeating' of the traditional reading of a text will not necessarily result in continuity as situations change over time. Even more importantly, interpretive traditions are often 'exceedingly diverse and sometimes wrong'.⁸² In the words of Smith (1993:216)

[a] new conception of scripture for our day will be continuous with and will extrapolate from what has gone before ... Despite this, it will be critical of all, and must move well beyond them, to supersede.

The notion that concern with the reception history of texts could imply that one should ascribe a controlling or regulative function to the interpretive tradition seems not only to miss the point but is actually a contradictory notion.⁸³ Far from allowing another straitjacket to be fitted onto the texts and their interpretation to provide the rigid boundaries of appropriating texts, the value of reception history is to be found in its illustration of different interpretations of the same texts in different contexts and, perhaps, showing a continuing relevance of these texts. As argued for example by Fowl (1997:xviii):

⁸² Smith refers to precisely these two problems as 'decisive deficiencies in most of these inherited interpretations': a failure to account for the plurality of views of scripture, and the sometimes disastrous consequences of a community's involvement with its Scripture (1993:217).

⁸³ Cf in this regard the criticism of Gadamer's notion that 'the effective power of the tradition precedes the interpreting subject' by Luz (1994:81 n5): Luz suggests certain criteria to 'avoid the preponderance of the tradition, which again leads its victims into sheer heteronomy' and argues that 'the imposing character of a tradition is no guarantor of its truth, because there are many and contradicting traditions'.

Rather, pre-modern scriptural interpretation should be seen as a conversation partner providing insights and resources for reading scripture theologically in the present.

Another, overlapping danger which is to be avoided, and which is a possible consequence of subject-object thinking, is the attempt to derive the world in front of the text from the text itself (Aichele et al 1995:28-33; 38-51), or at least, from the text *only*. Such an understanding of this world effectively paralyses the notion of a living and continuing history accompanying the text. That readers construct the world in front of the text should not be seen as an optional or additional feature of the reading process, but have to be acknowledged as an integral element of all reading. Distinguishing between 'text' and 'work',⁸⁴ Petersen's notion that in the reading process readers create works from the texts being read, leads him to argue that not only do 'works' derive from and are 'in' readers, but that readers also inhabit the 'worlds of our works': 'while reading we build up a world around us'. In reception studies attention to the relationship between readers and texts should therefore be accompanied by the relationship between 'readers and the worlds they create from texts' (Petersen 1984:42-43).

The 'world' which a reader creates from the text cannot be seen in isolation from the reader's own culture, ideology and 'social place or location'. Failure to account for this aspect of reading as well as the almost consistent disregard for the history or tradition of interpretation of the text and this tradition's role not only in the 'production' of the meaning of the texts but also in one's choice of methodology,⁸⁵ will eventually petrify and domesticate that tradition to the extent of rendering it invisible yet active in its continuing influence on contemporary interpretive practice. The unrecognised and therefore unchecked influence of such a tradition can paradoxically lead to the contradiction of other and perhaps contextually and contemporary more adequate readings, by not tolerating any such divergent (from this tradition) readings.⁸⁶

The danger is, indeed, in the modern world, as Cormie (1991:190) argues, that interpretive traditions can readily become powerful tools for controlling the meaning of texts, especially by 'professional middle-class culture and sensibilities'. It has to be remembered that the available history of interpretation, especially in so far as this is available today in written form, represents the interests and thoughts of the powerful of church and society: '[T]hose who have won and not those who have lost in the course of history'. This means that the history of the interpretation of the Bible can easily function as

⁸⁴ 'Works' are created by readers from the text and are 'subjective in the sense of being mental phenomena, and are *in us*' (Petersen 1984:42).

⁸⁵ Aichele and his co-writers argue for much more than these three issues, which can be summarised as their insistence on dissolving the 'reader-text dichotomy': the reader and interpretive conventions assume the status of autonomous controlling agents of 'meaning' — texts no longer exist autonomously as deposits of meaning to be retrieved.

⁸⁶ In this context the issue of methodological accountability in reception studies naturally becomes very important, cf e.g. Räisänen (1992:303-324; Thiselton (1995:10-36).

nothing but a legitimization of successful historical processes or, even more cynically, nothing but a secondary hermeneutical legitimization of secondary biblical legitimations, which have been used in the history of the church to justify the acts of the rulers of the church, or, sometimes, of the rulers of the world (Luz 1994:64).

2.4.2. *The positive value of reception history*

The history of influence of the Bible ... can help us see the difference between the situations [sc where people make different interpretations of the same texts] and thus to prevent premature theological condemnations of other Christian's decisions (Luz 1994:27).

In general it can be pointed out that the study of the reception history of a text, inclusive of its 'effective history', enables the recovery of many more and a bigger variety of readings of the text than what would have been possible otherwise.⁸⁷

In an evaluating the last thirty years of biblical studies, Davies (1986:43-64) argues that two factors are characteristic of this period: the explosion of knowledge and the new pluralism. Discussing the latter in the second part of his article (:54-59) he has to contend with another, equally pervasive realisation: namely, the influence of religious or confessional traditions on biblical studies in general and exegesis in particular.⁸⁸ Religious and/or interpretive traditions have had a guiding and thus formative and determinative influence on the way the Bible is read and understood.

The 'world in front of the text' is a phrase that is used predominantly to refer to the area of investigation where the final textual product's relationship to its readers or audience is dealt with. One should in this regard, however, be careful of not being subject-object oriented.⁸⁹ Apart from the tenability of the subject-object scheme being increasingly questioned, and although from a certain (decidedly modernist) perspective the reader is perhaps more often subject and text object, these roles are interchangeable. At any rate, this approach to interpretation

highlight[s] the reality that interpretation is not foremost the passing on of objective information from text to reader

⁸⁷ Whether one can argue that 'all the dimensions of meaning contained in such a writing' are therefore 'uncovered' (Pontefical Biblical Commission 1995:32), is doubtful.

⁸⁸ Cf Houlden (1989:406) who discards the notion of "scientific", ideologically presuppositionless' study of the New Testament, and refers to the 'strong philosophical and theological concerns' of especially the prominent New Testament scholars, e.g. Rudolf Bultmann.

Cf above for the debate between Luz and Räisänen (and, to a certain extent, Bockmuehl) on whether confessional traditions can be viewed as part of the 'effective history' of the Bible.

⁸⁹ Reference to 'author', 'text', and 'reader' should not necessarily call the subject-object scheme to mind: these distinctions are helpful in the study of textual reception in that they provide for certain emphases and so on. However, when using 'author', 'text', and 'reader' as functionable categories, one has to insist that they are inseparable and always in relationship to one another: 'a specification of one of these terms will imply a specification of the rest' (McCallum 1992:241).

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and thus emphasises and takes into account that

[d]ifferent reading communities are situated in distinctive cultural settings and work from diverse presuppositions, and therefore 'hear' or construe the same text differently (Green 1995:8; cf Segovia 1995a:29-32).

Or to quote Luz (1994:20):⁹⁰

The biblical writings are not objects to be investigated, but rather companions on the path of humanity to new lands through the centuries

and,

[h]istory of effects brings together the texts and us, their interpreters; or better: the history of effects shows us that we are already together and that it is an illusion to treat the texts in a position of distance and in a merely 'objective' way.

Morgan and Barton (1988:14) view the tradition of interpretation of a given text in analogy to 'legal precedent'. In a way similar to what happens with authoritative interpretations (by judges) in the legal system, the tradition of interpretation of the Bible is taken into account not for providing certainty in interpretation, but because of its capacity to reduce uncertainty. However, it will be clear from what follows below, that the interpretive tradition of texts can become so overpowering that it can virtually silence 'non-traditional' readings of these texts. Interpretive traditions always face the danger of claiming or receiving such authoritative status, that it drowns out other possible readings and defines which readings are 'right' and which are 'wrong'.⁹¹ Because of the potentially suffocating and imposing nature of such conformism, Benjamin (quoted in Rowland and Corner 1989:46) argues that rather than forsaking tradition altogether, it has to be wrested away from conformism.

Luz lists six contributions made by the history of effects to biblical interpretation in the European context:

- avoiding 'premature pronouncements derived from the Bible about life, society, and church'
- serving as encouragement to all Bible readers to formulate their own readings
- renewing interest in history and historical research
- liberating the Bible from its relegation to a normative document from the distant past, and its perceived irrelevance
- liberating the Bible as sourcebook or proof-text for abstract and theoretical theological doctrines
- highlighting the ecumenical nature of our interpretation: aiming to contribute 'toward an open church that lives in dialogue because its members are aware of the contextuality of their own interpretations and do not claim to possess absolute truths' (1994:100-102).

⁹⁰ With reference to Gadamer, cf Luz's (1994:25) insistence on human beings' connectedness with history: our uncomfortability and even protesting and fighting against the 'burden of history' do not absolve our complicity in history — the 'absolutized subject of modern times' has to be unmasked!

⁹¹ Jobling and Rose (1996:381-417) therefore propose a 'Philistine reading' to mitigate against the exclusivity or systems of exclusion promoted by such authorised readings!

To these can be added the reintroduction of the ‘subject of interpretation into the process of interpretation’ (Luz 1994:28). In as much as the reception history of the biblical texts reveals the confessional and cultural biases of the earlier interpreters of the Bible, it makes us equally aware of the need to account for our own specific interpretations.⁹²

If it is true, as form and redaction critics have often demonstrated with remarkable skill and technical dexterity, that texts have histories which precede their canonical form, it is also true that texts continue to have living ‘histories’ insofar as their reception in communities shapes their common life (Burrows and Rorem 1991:xii)

An important but often unrecognised ‘added value’ of reception studies is its valuable if so often unutilised potential to integrate two elements so common in biblical interpretive theory and practice today, as they are operated in isolation: the concern for the development of certain ‘ideas’ and often called a ‘history of ideas’ approach; and, concern for the influence of cultural contexts on the textual traditions, its formation and continuing negotiation, and eventually the readers of the text. Reception history allows for the integration of the ideas and cultural context through its concern for the fuller picture of readers’ interactions with texts, where the meaning or idea of the text is viewed as co-constituted by the cultural context as much as the cultural context is, to some extent at least, understood, described and presented — that is, constructed — according to developing ‘ideas’.

2.4.3. *Reception as reading and ‘writing’*

Reception studies, however, entail more than ‘comparative interpretation’⁹³ (Sawyer 1995): failure to account for the world *in front of* the text, from a reader orientated approach, may result in the inability to account for the normative influence of a particular interpretive tradition on subsequent interpretation. Furthermore, such failure will render it unlikely to perceive and appreciate that a whole new text — in the sense of a distinct ‘entity’ as such — is called into existence in a formative way within and because of the particular interpretive approach or process.⁹⁴ It is important then to account for the reception history because of the fact that the transmission of an interpretive tradition forces certain changes on the tradition: the *traditum*

⁹² Cf Punt (1998:123-152) for a more elaborate argument on the need to take the particular locations and ideology of the biblical interpreter serious.

⁹³ Clines (1997:91,94) also argues for the history of the interpretation of the Bible to be reconceived as ‘comparative interpretation’, as an ‘array of interpretations that have already been offered in the course of history’ and from which contemporary interpreters may pick and choose — an ‘end-user theory of interpretation’.

⁹⁴ Cf e.g. the Pontefical Biblical Commission (1995:32). Naturally, interpretation as creative venture is present even when the importance of the history of interpretation goes unacknowledged — acknowledgement thereof, however, allows this aspect to be accounted for. E.g. Farris (1997:366) argues with reference to the historical process of canon formation and the contextualised use of the biblical texts by communities of faith, that ‘history is not determinative of meaning’. However, although he approvingly admits to canonical criticism’s appreciation of the history of interpretation, he neglects to point out that the latter history (of interpretation) can and indeed, is in many instances, determinative — and even constitutive — of meaning.

(or original tradition) is never the equivalent of the *traditio* (or tradition-ing process) (Beker 1991:13-16).

Addressing the tremendous influence of the biblical texts in the formation of African American religious and cultural identity, worldviews and experience, Wimbush (1993:130-132) argues that within the history of African American appropriation of the Bible, the text as something 'out there', with a separate existence and 'assumed universal authority' is changed into 'a language and image world'. The Bible is no longer a 'text', a 'static source of eternal truth that required a certain authority to be engaged', but a 'language world that could easily, freely, with much creative play, be engaged 'from below', or from the margins' (:139). Although his concern is not so much with interpretive traditions as such,⁹⁵ in his analysis of African American hermeneutics Wimbush acknowledges the formative power of interpretations for understanding every day life and experiences, but moreover for the interpretation of the texts itself.

In such a context as described above the importance of the 'worlds' of the text becomes equal, or perhaps even subordinate — pragmatically — to the (newly created) 'text of the (interpreting) world', the 'text according to the world'. A reader is then not only capable of creating a new reading of the text, but virtually a new text, which in time can even become canonised in tradition: not only providing the lenses with which to read the original text, but displacing and capable in the most radical sense of even replacing the original text⁹⁶ to such an extent that a tradition contradictory to the 'general sense'⁹⁷ of the text is given birth to and allowed to supercede the common or traditional understanding of the text.⁹⁸

Boone (1989:78-80) explains, with reference to Foucault, how the interpreted text gradually replaces the text to be interpreted: commentary replaces text. Again, although commentary itself also necessarily recasts the texts themselves, the unwillingness to account for this process almost inevitably leads to a cover-up of how commentary is prejudiced to the 'finalisation' of the text. Although Boone is at pains to explain how in fundamentalist discourse the interpreters attain an almost 'inerrant' status, which is required in order to interpret

⁹⁵ Wimbush does, however, emphasise that the liberative approach of early African American bible reading formed the 'phenomenological, socio-political and cultural foundation' for subsequent readings. The implication, one can argue, is that the foundation provided the perimeters within which the texts could be appropriated.

⁹⁶ The Jewish notion of the 'rewritten Bible' is perhaps one the best examples of how this happens, cf e.g. Hayward (1990:595-598) and Loewe (1990:349) — this process should not be confused with the call by Banana (1993; cf Punt 1997:132-134) and others to 'rewrite' the Bible.

⁹⁷ Which now becomes little more than the traditional or dominant way of understanding the text, which has excluded the genesis of new or different readings by virtue of its existence and therefore formative influence on all readings.

⁹⁸ Stegemann (1996:273ff) cites the development and promotion of anti-Semitism with reference to the NT as an example of an interpretive tradition going beyond NT statements on the issue.

the 'inerrant Bible' correctly, it should not be ignored that the history or tradition of interpretation has played as much an (in)formative role in Fundamentalist, as in other (especially) Reformed traditions.

We should never underestimate our predisposition to believe what is presented under the guise of an authoritative report and is also consistent with the mythological structure of a society from which we derive comfort, and which it may be uncomfortable to dispute (Kermode, quoted in Boone 1989:80).

Eventually, Boone (1989:95) argues, the *interpreted* text constitutes the authority which is to be found within fundamentalism. Hence, the accepted or traditional way(s) of interpreting the Bible becomes or replaces the Bible.⁹⁹

Segovia has recently pleaded for the adequacy, indeed, the necessity of 'intercultural criticism' as a hermeneutical approach to the biblical texts. He characterises this approach to interpretation as one where the text is viewed as 'construction'. With this concept Segovia wants to express the notion that interpretation and meaning is the result of an interactive process between reader and text, but never in a neutral way: the text is 'filtered by and through the reader' (1995c:296, cf 1995a:28-31; 1995b:7-17). However, as much as Segovia rightly stresses the interactive involvement and constitutive role of the reader in the interpretive process, he tends to minimise¹⁰⁰ and even ignore the influential role which the interpretive traditions has to play in the 'real readers' construction of the text. Although Segovia's concern with the real readers of the texts within their social contexts — historical, cultural, political, economical and so on — is commendable, the emphasis on reader as social and historical individual and/or part of a social and historical community, and the neglect to account for the tradition of interpretation's control over current reading of the text seems dangerous.

Not to account for the way in which an established traditional reading or interpretation virtually silences — if not supplants — the original text,¹⁰¹ is to run the risk of uncritically reinterpreting the tradition-embalmed text.¹⁰² What happens particularly in *midrash*, can probably be found in all interpretation, but is, however, not always consciously recognised as such:

⁹⁹ Again, this practice is not restricted to fundamentalist groups. Cf e.g. Goulder (1994:4) 'When people have been brought up in a long and unchallenged religious environment, the community's interpretations of its traditions have all the authority of the Bible itself'.

¹⁰⁰ Perhaps in reaction to a rigid 'history of ideas'-approach, which understood 'the early Christian movement ... exclusively in terms of theological positions, conflicts, and developments' (1995b:282). Cf Lindbeck's critique of the 'cognitivist' model of viewing the history of doctrine as 'informative propositions or truth claims about objective realities', and therefore sees religion as ideas (Meeks 1986:177).

¹⁰¹ From a religious studies perspective, Bloom (1992:16) senses the actual displacement of the biblical texts when he argues that the traditional notion of Christianity as a 'religion of the book' is inaccurate: Christianity is 'the religion of the Church Fathers and the Protestant theologians who broke with the Church'.

¹⁰² Segovia entertains the idea of the text as 'construction' as a particular paradigm ('another major development') for the study of the Bible, but reaches his somewhat different conclusion (the readers as constructors of textual meaning vis-à-vis my emphasis on the reception historical framework fitted onto the text), from another direction (the 'role' assigned to the text in biblical hermeneutical paradigms vis-à-vis my questioning of the 'three worlds of the text'-typology losing sight of the formative or generative role of the 'world in front of the text'). He points to the significance of 'cultural studies or ideological criticism' in biblical hermeneutics where 'flesh-and-blood'-readers' activity with regard to the text is taken into account, and all their interpretive attempts

The words of the wise are not added to the text; they are the text as well, linking its words to another form, not an integrated, hierarchical system, but an ongoing tradition, a structure of mutual belonging (Bruns 1990:202).

The text can become the palimpsest onto which the interpretation is copied, while the text itself fades out in the background.¹⁰³ To put it bluntly, readers soon end up reading their own texts and not the texts which they purport to read (cf Fish, referred to in Boone 1990:65);¹⁰⁴ the danger is that we start with reading the Lutheran Paul and not with the 'biblical' Paul, or, as if the Lutheran Paul *is* Paul, the 'only' Paul!

2.4.4. Reception histories and 'truth'

Another problem associated with the notion that interpretation is not merely the 'reproduction of old meaning, but the production of a new meaning in a new situation out of the old text' (Luz 1994:63), concerns what is nowadays commonly referred to as the ethics of interpretation. If the possibility of multiple interpretations that are relevant and valid is conceded, does that mean a relativistic condonement of all such interpretations? Which interpretations are 'correct'? Who decides which interpretations are correct? On what terms or criteria are these decisions made?

Luz (1994:71-74; 82-85; 91-97) proposes two criteria to deal with the variety of new and different interpretations¹⁰⁵ of the biblical texts emerging from new and different historical experiences and concerns.

The *first* criterion offered by Luz is 'formal', oriented to the text's historical context and author, and requires 'correspondence with the original meaning of the texts'.¹⁰⁶ Contemporary interpretations need to take 'the whole or center of the biblical message' into account and not a single text only. For Luz, this whole is summarised in 'the essentials of the history of Jesus'. With reference to the church fathers and Protestant reformers, he argues that understanding the

are acknowledged as constructions (1995a:7,28-32).

¹⁰³ Genette refers to the reworking of texts in different genres and languages as a process similar to the creation of a palimpsest — a new text is written on top of another (or more), previous layer of text which remains visible to some extent. He calls his theory 'hypertextuality' and the older layers of text 'hypotexts' (cf Van Zyl-Smit 1996:5). The similarities of my argument on the creative force of the interpretation of texts with Genette's hypertextuality is clear to see — my emphasis is, however, on the interpretation or hypertext obscuring the original, to such an extent that the interpreted text displaces the original.

¹⁰⁴ Segovia (1995b:16) concludes with saying that all *exegesis* is in the end *eisegesis*.

¹⁰⁵ This is not meant to deny the very real danger of transgressing interpretive boundaries and becoming hermeneutically unethical, through the results 'from a refusal to engage in adaptation' of traditions for new and changed situations and circumstances (Beker 1991:30-31).

¹⁰⁶ Luz (1994:77-82) explains what he means by showing how subsequent interpretations of the parable of the tares (Mt 13:24-30, 36-43) stayed within the 'matrix' of the 'traditional story'. Cf Beker (1991:31). This does not imply a criterion of 'chronological priority' (cf Sawyer 1995:159).

Bible entailed more than reason and criticism, but was 'primarily an act of faith'. After a rather emphatic earlier denouncement of historical criticism (1994:5-13), Luz thus advocates the relative value and significance of historical study to ascertain as best as possible, and in dialogue with as many as possible other historical interpretations, the history of Jesus Christ.¹⁰⁷ 'Jesus Christ is not a defined truth, but a starting point and a goal' (Luz 1994:91).

A *second* criterion for deciding on the validity or truth of and among the plurality of interpretations, is functional or pragmatic and concerns the contemporary readers or 'hearers', namely truth as an event of love.¹⁰⁸ In reaction against a spiritualised and internalised interpretation of Scripture such as the Reformation's dichotomy between gospel and Law, faith and ethics, and its emphasis on the first aspect, the gospel or faith, Luz opts for a functional criterion aimed at keeping faith and practice together. He finds this criterion in love — both the receptive dimension (the love humans receive from God) and the active side (the love humans are to show and do to others).¹⁰⁹

Although Luz does not offer it as such, a *third* criterion is 'constituted by the need for dialogue' on the validity of the interpretation of texts, a middle way 'between relativity and absolute truth'.

Therefore theological dialogue, based on the model of truth as a way, has the character of sharing experiences, of questioning and counselling, of common searching, but rarely, if ever, the character of condemning (1994:89-91).

Luz's criteria have a number of problems. In general, it can be argued that Luz establishes these criteria (also relative to time and history) as adjudicating measures, which already presupposes criteria which are external¹¹⁰ to the encompassing scope of interpretive history, and thus to a certain extent purporting to be 'objective' in nature (the very notion of which Luz decries). It must be granted though that Luz admits to the subjective and even arbitrary choice of these criteria (e.g. :93). Nevertheless, the criteria, as much as Luz 'bases' them on the biblical texts themselves, are also 'constructions' and thus equally liable for adjudication. Luz is ultimately compelled to refloat the boat of historical study (:85-89) after he scuttled it earlier (:15-22; espec 10-13), in an apparent effort to be able to offer some 'objective' criteria. As

¹⁰⁷ The history of Jesus is decidedly different for Luz from doctrinal positions on Jesus, and especially from christological doctrines (1994:83-84).

¹⁰⁸ This criterion for example discredits rigid doctrinal formulations of the church which assume a hegemonic status and insist upon their acceptance by the faithful in 'total heteronomy' (Luz 1994:73). This criterion corresponds closely with Sawyer's suggestion — borrowed from Schüssler Fiorenza — to evaluate interpretations according to a 'religious scale of values' (1995:159).

¹⁰⁹ These two criteria converge, according to Luz (1994:96-97) in the history of Jesus!

¹¹⁰ This gives rise to Luz's criticism of Gadamer: Luz argues that in addition to the need for bible interpreters to develop an 'effective-historical consciousness' to prevent 'us from losing the experience of history', a 'historical consciousness' is also required to prevent 'us from absolutizing history and tradition'.

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much as Luz sees his criteria as enabling and not restrictive ('not in the sense of limiting the truth but in the sense of making the search for it possible', :90), the criteria do limit the plurality of interpretations.

Reception studies as an aspect of biblical hermeneutics have to take the 'truth-question' seriously. Perhaps the most pressing need is to develop some criteria for the evaluation of the history of the interpretation of texts. The development of such criteria should, however, not be construed or used to create the impression that the tradition and history of interpretation is anything else but (also) 'construction', or that such traditions and histories are at best of times vague and elusive. Nevertheless, the question concerning the adequacy and usefulness of interpretive traditions and histories cannot be avoided.

2.4.5. Reception history and Paul

By 'interpretive communities' Fish does not mean a collective of individuals but a bundle of strategies or norms of interpretation that we hold in common and which regulate the way in which we think and perceive (Freud 1987:107).

In religious communities these strategies or norms often take the form of tradition(s) which can span centuries. Their influence on reading can be either inhibitive or regulative, aimed at maintaining the status quo, or stimulative and creative, opening up new possibilities of understanding the text and the self (Lategan 1992:10).

In Paul's case, the Lutheran reading of his textual heritage is so dominant, that many readers and even professional interpreters either do not seem to realise its overpowering presence in the interpretive process or at least fail to consciously account for it. Perhaps it has just become 'second nature' to read Paul the traditional way. Other reading paradigms might illustrate this aspect better. For example, the current portrayal of Paul by feminists and womanists as either a feminist or misogynist, or by evangelicals as an apostle of 'born-againness', or by others as a social activist.

The meaning of a text is inexhaustible because no context can provide all the keys to all its possibilities (McKnight 1988:241).

The interpretation of (also!) the Pauline literature in such a way that it serves the needs of various communities is common practice, but should happen within limits¹¹¹ so as to avoid a relativistic lapse. When a text could mean anything to anybody, it soon means nothing at all!

¹¹¹ Limits being those established within an 'ethics of interpretation'. In an essay on the ethics of interpretation, Fowl (1990:391-397) argues that in current climate in which different interpretations are not only acknowledged and affirmed but even encouraged, and in addition to a pluralist reading which approves of a plurality of meaning (what Fowl prefers to call 'interpretive interests'), two positions exist which would avoid relativistic interpretive practices: the 'social responsibility' view presupposes at least two concerns — trans-cultural notions of social justice and well-being as well as a shared *polis* — which would act as constraining factors against relativism in the interpretive process; in a third position, the communal or collective one, the restraining factor is the 'specified *telos* or goal' to which a particular historical community's 'life and practices are directed.'

The grip of the Lutheran framework on the Pauline writings in particular and the Bible in general — in the broader Reformed tradition — can be seen as the ‘unofficial interpretive culture’ (Graff 1989:5) for reading these texts. Although Graff uses this expression when he refers to the modern mass-communications environment where secondary texts surrounds and explains texts, his argument is applicable in biblical studies too (cf Smit 1994a:310-313). A long tradition of how to understand the biblical texts is available for modern readers in various forms: commentaries, lexionaries, education and instruction, hymnals, homilies, and many more. This is particularly true in the case of casting the Pauline letters in a Lutheran mould to the extent that even the understanding of contemporary Jewish culture and religion, was aligned with this Lutheran mould. In the case of the long history of the Lutheran influence on the Pauline writings the ‘unofficial’ has become the ‘official’ interpretive culture.

It should be stressed that the problem is not one of being in principle against the interpretation of Paul from a particular conscious and acknowledged perspective.¹¹² Indeed, this would be preferable to the avowed neutrality and objectivity often espoused by biblical interpreters in the past which as often added up to nothing more but a smokescreen for ideological and other interests. Acknowledging the existence of and even preference for particular positions, however, require interpreters to be consciously aware of and admit to their stances. It is only to be hoped that such readers would let their readings interact with other different (in comparison to their own) readings.¹¹³ One problem, however, with the ‘unofficial interpretive culture’ is that it is considered ‘shameful’ to admit to knowledge of the text as mediated knowledge, deriving from secondary sources (Graff 1989:6).

The importance of taking ‘the world in front of the text’ serious is not only a methodological appeal for the sake of presenting as complete as possible an explanation of texts. It is crucial for a new and creative, contextual understanding because of the continuing dominance of an existing, general hermeneutical framework according to which these texts are read. The dominance of Luther’s sixteenth century interpretation of Paul is probably one of the best examples of a corpus of texts crying out for the liberation from an all-imposing framework of interpretation. This framework has become a stumbling block in the reading of Paul and is preventing an effective contemporary ‘hearing’ of Paul (cf Green 1995:1).

¹¹² Cf Schüssler Fiorenza (1986:360-364) on the ‘advocacy’ stance of Liberation Theologies, arguing the inevitability of having a particular stance but also the need to make it explicit. Schüssler Fiorenza argues that Kuhn’s paradigm theory offers a conceptual theoretical framework that allows for a particular stance within a particular tradition (of interpretation).

¹¹³ Cf West’s studies (e.g. 1991, 1993a, 1993b) as an example of and attempt at some interaction between ‘trained’ and ‘ordinary’ readers.

2.4.6. Concluding remarks

The exegesis of any text, certainly of a biblical text, needs more than the exploration of its prehistory and its Sitz im Leben in order to allow it to be heard in its full meaning today. 'To ask what a text means should also involve the question what it has meant' (Heffner 1991:129).

Interpreting a text is not simply playing with words but an act with historical consequences (Luz 1994:33).

In acknowledging the importance of reception studies for interpreting biblical texts, a certain ambiguity, however, remains. Although it is clear that 'we stand inescapably in the shadow of those who have gone before us' (Bockmuehl 1995a:59), that shadow can have a positive as well as a negative effect on interpretation. When a particular interpretive tradition becomes an exclusive or overpowering prescription for how to read a text, it becomes interpretive imperialism and exclusivism.

While it is clear that texts and their interpretations simply do not exist in a historical void, the inverse is equally true. Historical circumstances and contexts give rise to new appropriations and interpretations of Scripture. The interaction between cause and effect is not easy to describe because (textual or interpretive) cause and (historical) effect often stand in a reciprocal relationship to each other.

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CHAPTER ONE

Paul bound:

The traditional approach to Paul — a history of dominance

PART TWO: Luther and Paul

1. Luther and his interpretive framework

The history of interpretation nicely echoes the history of the church (Sawyer 1990:318; cf Froehlich 1991:7-9;343).

I have become convinced myself that ... [u]nderstanding must take into account the text's post-history as the paradigm of its own historicity, i e, as the way in which the text itself can function as a source of human self-interpretation in a variety of contexts, and thus, through its historical interpretations, is participating in the shaping of life (Froehlich 1991:9).

1.1. Introduction

In the first part of this chapter attention was devoted to the theoretical consideration of reception history, and in the following section and next chapter, two aspects related to the traditional approach to Paul (TAP) will be addressed. It will be argued that the TAP has its basis in the Lutheran framework, and serves as an important instance of reception history for the reading of the Pauline letters. Following here, then, the 'origin' of and eventual relationship between the specific world Luther created from the text, and Luther himself (cf Petersen 1984:11) in his context will be considered — thus, the reception of Paul by Luther. The next chapter is concerned with the solidifying of the traditional understanding of Paul in New Testament scholarship, and an opposing — and still developing — interpretive tradition. This will amount to a brief study of the continuing or effective history of the Pauline texts, but specifically as received, or interpreted within the perimeters of the Lutheran framework.

However, in order to first come to terms with the history of interpretation of the Pauline corpus, one needs to give one, rather long, step backwards: to the time and thought of Martin Luther.¹ This traditional approach to Paul is still the dominating theological framework for many biblical scholars and when Paul is encountered in the church, this understanding his letters reigns supreme, as will be argued in the section below.

In the introductory chapter reference was made to the 'Lutheran framework', by which is understood that Luther's sixteenth century theological interpretation or contextualisation of

¹ The step is actually some 12 centuries *longer*, to the time of St Augustine of Hippo, on whom Luther leaned quite heavily for his version of interpreting the Pauline letters. However, although the Augustinian influence — cf below — on Luther's views regarding Paul will be taken into account, the specific Lutheran emphasis — although not in unadulterated form — seems to have lasted the day.

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Paul became a — or rather *the* — canon² according to which Paul, and subsequently Middle Judaism as Paul's 'opponent' was understood.

Luther's description of Judaism had more to do with his battles with Catholicism and his own personal conflicts than with either Paul or Palestinian Judaism (Boyarin 1994:42).

More particularly, as Rowland (1990:441; cf Barr 1990:48) argues, the Lutheran framework distorted Judaism by creating a false version of Judaism as if its emphasis was on 'works' that is a legalistic means of 'working for' salvation, and was therefore also judged to be devoid of spirituality.

This approach³ views Paul as someone beset with an internal struggle in trying to attain salvation by satisfying the demands of the Jewish law through meritorious works. Paul, however, became disillusioned when he realised that no human being can ever fully meet the demands of God's law to Israel and thus never, in this way, achieve righteousness before God. Correspondingly, the Jewish religion of Paul's day is seen as a narrow, legalistic religion.

Paul's divine revelatory encounter on the Damascus Road made this clear in his own mind. Due to his dissatisfaction with Jewish law and his search for a 'graceful God', he was susceptible to receive Jesus Christ, and to have faith in him, as the new (and only!) norm of righteousness. The old covenant where the Law reigns, which in turn is understood as ultimate norm of righteousness,⁴ or as a soteriological option, or as a way of achieving salvation through meritorious deeds, is replaced by a New Covenant embodied in Jesus Christ, the new and better and universal soteriological option: the *sola gratia* of God. Again, a corresponding view of the religion advocated by Paul is supposed: a law-free — not only anomistic, but even antinomistic — religion of grace and forgiveness, rich in spirituality.

Over against this 'legalistic' Jewish old order stands the 'Christian' view of salvation as something only and exclusively attainable through God's gift of faith, namely 'justification by faith'. Furthermore, Paul rejects Judaism for its holding on to meritorious works and for refusing to accept Jesus Christ as the new and only 'norm of righteousness'. Thus,

[a]ccording to the traditional approach stemming from the Reformation, Paul is attacking the idea that salvation can be earned by acts of obedience to the law, as held by his Jewish or Jewish

² Cf also Braaten (1990:81), who identifies the gospel of God in Jesus Christ as the heart of Scripture, forming a 'canon within the canon' and expressed 'with utmost clarity' in Paul's letters to Galatia and Rome with the terms righteousness/justification. He contends that within the (American) Lutheran tradition, 'justification' has become a 'metalinguistic principle' (Jenson), a 'hermeneutical' key (Forde), or even the 'fulcrum' of thought (Bertram). Braaten (1990:73) himself is included in this evaluation and use of justification, which has a 'critical function in determining the framework of theological thinking'. Inevitably, Braaten looks to Paul for support, asking: 'Is it [justification, JP] the center of Paul's theology?' and 'Was Luther's interpretation of Paul right?' (Braaten 1990:15-18).

³ Cf also Braaten (1990:81-82), assuming not only this to be the 'basic elements' of Paul's teaching but also that it is 'well-known'. Cf Boyarin (1994:41) for a similar short characterisation of the Lutheran interpretation of Paul.

⁴ Cf Johnson (1986:305) in his discussion on the 'occasion and issues' regarding Galatians.

Christian opponents. He himself preaches the gospel of salvation solely by the grace of God, and the idea that salvation is to earned by man's [sic] achievement is therefore anathema to him (Watson 1986:1).

Such a traditional interpretation is primarily concerned with the soteriological implications of Paul's writings. The most important issue is the basis of righteousness: How does one obtain righteousness? More pointedly, the theological question in Luther's mind, carried over into Paul's theology was: Is justification the result of God's free grace, without any, not even supplementary deeds towards the achievement of such justification? Or does justification rest, fully or in some measure on human achievement according to the commandments of the Law?

Although Luther's understanding of Paul primarily focused on the soteriological aspect in Paul's thought, the Lutheran framework eventually dominates the understanding of Paul's theology as a whole including the 'basic' theological categories, like the nature of God, christology,⁵ anthropology, sin, grace and so on.⁶ Even more seriously, the implications of this understanding of Paul impinge on the nature of Paul's letters. These are understood as theses of systematic theology,⁷ especially espousing soteriology. Related to this is the effect Luther's approach to Paul had on the understanding of Judaism. Eventually, the traditional framework at least indirectly supported an anti-Judaic — and in effect an anti-Semitic — understanding of Pauline letters.⁸

This study should ideally be supplemented by the history of the interpretation of particular Pauline texts in Luther's writings. However, because the scope of this study is not primarily to analyse Luther's specific interpretation of the Pauline texts, but rather his general approach to the Pauline letters and how this approach have influenced the understanding of the

⁵ E.g. the vicarious suffering of Christ (Heick 1965:333). Cf. against this Patte (1983:309), who argues vigorously against the notion of vicarious suffering (satisfying God) in Paul. He stresses Paul's portrayal of Christ's suffering as 'paschal' in nature, 'a sacrifice liberating people (sinners) from bondage (the powers of sin)'.

⁶ McGrath (1993:517) suggests that even for Luther the concept of 'justification through faith' was the center of Pauline thought, but also the key for Christian theology and spirituality, the 'article by which the Church stands or falls'. Cf. Braaten (1990:22-28), Heick (1965:338).

⁷ Cf. Watson (1986:1). González (1985:175) argues that Luther himself did not intend to construct a systematic theology, but that exactly *that* followed in the wake of Luther's death and the subsequent triumph of the Lutheran orthodoxy or 'Protestant Scholasticism'.

⁸ Luther withheld himself of accusing the Jews as 'slayers of Christ'. Viewing the Jews as 'stiff-necked people to have rejected Christ', Luther held that the contemporary Jews should not be blamed for that. In light of practices in the Church, Luther thought a Jew would rather become 'a sow' than a Christian. However, towards the end of his life whilst under some pressure and upon hearing about 'Judaizing' in Moravia, Luther directed a 'vulgar blast' towards the Jews, arguing for their deportation or else strict economical and religious confinement (Bainton 1979:296-298; cf. Elliott 1994:13; Küng 1994:152; Sanders 1987:8 n1). However, Von Waldow (1995:143-144) argues that Luther's anti-Semitism merely mirrors the traditional Church's anti-Semitism. He quotes Hitler who apparently laconically responded to the protests of church leaders about the treatment of the Jews in Nazi Germany with the following statement: 'I thought that I am just putting into effect what Christianity had preached and practiced for 2000 years'.

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Pauline letters, the emphasis will be on investigating the circumstances which could conceivably have led Luther to his basic understanding of Paul. Therefore, if it can be accepted that Luther

reduced the Pauline and biblical gospel to a narrowly-focused concern with the deliverance of a trembling and guilty sinner from the law of a wrathful deity (Williams 1996:1)

it will be important to ask how this particular way of understanding the Pauline letters came about. To clarify Luther's particular, and the later Lutheran tradition's, understanding of Paul the various factors influencing his thinking need to be investigated.

1.2. Luther's world

1.2.1. Medieval piety

Martin Luther's distinctive understanding of Paul took shape, like all human understanding, in a particular socio-historical context. In order to understand this context, a closer look at the historical circumstances and reigning ideas of his time is necessary.

Luther's world was that of late medieval piety, which was characterised by a keen and deep religious interest.⁹ Diverse traditions regarding the supernatural sphere were blended with Christian sentiments. Bainton (1977:19) mentions the combination of old German paganism and Christian mythology and how this led to the belief in 'elves, gnomes, fairies, mermen and mermaids, spirits and witches'. There was also an active belief¹⁰ in evil spirits and their ability to interfere in human and natural life, causing social and personal problems and natural disasters. Bainton concludes that 'Luther himself was never emancipated from such beliefs'. Medieval religion did not try to allay the plethora of beliefs causing tension and fear. Rather, this was exploited and sometimes deliberately induced.

Hell was stoked not because men lived in perpetual dread, but precisely because they did not,¹¹ and in order to instill enough fear to drive them to the sacraments of the church (Bainton 1977:20).

1.2.2. Theology: Main emphases

⁹ Cf also Heick (1965:314). This does not necessarily mean a Christian consciousness or that the Church was taken seriously everywhere. To the contrary, only with the Reformation '[r]eligion became again a dominant factor even in politics for another century and a half' (Bainton 1977:15).

¹⁰ Especially amongst the rural 'peasantry' and strengthened at home and at school (Bainton:1977:19-20).

¹¹ Cf later, in chapter 2, the discussion initiated by Stendahl (1963) on the 'introspective conscience' of the West.

Many significant developments in theology took place during the Middle Ages.¹² In general it can be said that Medieval theology excelled in attempts to provide for the accumulation of merit, at speculation and mysticism and these proved to be the ‘heavenly ladders’ for ‘ascent to God’ (Heick 1965:307,314).

The central role that the Church of the Middle Ages played in theology, both on an academic and personal level, cannot be underemphasized. According to Lynch (1992):

[i]nternational, multinational and yet intimately local, the Church was the central institution of the European Middle Ages.

1.2.3. Mysticism

Mysticism generated a new piety¹³ during the Middle Ages, a piety not intent on challenging the teachings and doctrines of the Church, but rather aimed at liberating ‘forces and treasures which lay bound in the church’s teaching’. This was a calculated move towards an ‘impetuous, outspoken, religious subjectivism’. The new piety was characterised by certainty, experience and conversion¹⁴ (Heick 1965:259).

After initial resistance to Mysticism by the Church, resulting in the annihilation of whole communities,¹⁵ the movement became widespread during the fifteenth century and had considerable influence on lay piety.

The influence of Mysticism on Luther’s life began with his close relationship to Johann von Staupitz, the vicar of the Augustinian order at the University of Erfurt where Luther in 1511 became a teacher. Von Staupitz was to have a ‘determinative influence upon his [Luther’s] development’¹⁶ (Bainton 1977:39).

¹² Naturally only a very broad discussion and evaluation are offered here, and only in so far as it is relevant to the establishing of the formation of Luther’s thought. For a more detailed approach to hermeneutics during the Middle Ages, cf e g Smalley (1983).

¹³ The most eloquent expression and clearest embodiment of this can be found in Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153).

¹⁴ ‘The new piety is most clearly visible in the enthusiasm for the Crusades, and in the fostering of innumerable monasteries’ (Heick 1965:259).

¹⁵ E g the Cathari, Albigensis and the Sect of the Free Spirit (Heick 1965:305).

¹⁶ Cf also Kooiman (1965:17-19) on the ‘pastoral relationship’ between Von Staupitz and Luther, and that Luther referred to Von Staupitz as ‘the one that showed me the way to the Gospel’. (Cf also Luther’s letter to prince Johan Frederik, WA. Br 11, S.67; and to count Albrecht von Mansfeld, WA. Br 9, S.627; and to Von Staupitz himself, WA. Br 3, S.155f and WA. 1, S.525f). Kooiman stresses that Von Staupitz’s help was not of theological but of spiritual nature.

Kooiman summarises the help from Von Staupitz to Luther in the following areas: about guilt and confession, on despair regarding election, and regarding the humanity of the historical Jesus. The help of Von Staupitz enabled Luther to search the Scriptures anew. Cf also Ferguson (1986:154).

However, Luther never embraced Mysticism in the same way as Von Staupitz, and Heick (1965:316) attributes this to three factors:

his aversion to quietism, his vivid sense of personality in God and man, and his strong ethical interest.

But with Mysticism's emphasis on the individual's subjective certainty regarding one's soteriological position, the indelible mark left on Luther's troubled conscience is clear to see. Even the Mysticism discarded by Luther, strengthened his fears of uncertainty and doubt as to his position before a sin-adjudging God.

1.2.4. Scholasticism

During the long years of the Middle Ages, Scholasticism developed slowly and was in full bloom by the time of the Reformation.¹⁷ Although systematic, the 'abstract' nature of the teachings of Scholasticism did not lessen the fears and doubts of the troubled Luther. To the contrary, through his scholastic studies Martin Luther was eventually driven to despair.

It is important to note the 'paradigm switch' from Neo-Platonic to Aristotelian thought that was effected in the philosophical approach to theological discourse in the Church in the early Middle Ages. This switch became the basis of the Scholastic enterprise, a move which would later be severely criticised by Luther.¹⁸

The rise of scholastic thought was rooted in the search for inward certainty about salvation,¹⁹ and like Mysticism contributed to a new sense of piety. However, the search for inward certainty as well as the pious intentions thereof was well placed within the confines of the Church's dogma.

The real founder of high Scholasticism was Alexander of Hales (d. 1245; cf Heick 1965:282-283), but the movement reached its peak within the Dominican order, and its highest point in Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274), a prominent exponent of Aristotelian thought.

¹⁷ It is not the intention to provide a full discussion of the fascinating development of Scholasticism, but only to refer to this movement as far as it has a bearing on the discussion here. Naturally this may provide a one-sided view which is neither defended nor avoided. The influence of Scholastic thought in the development of Luther's understanding of Paul is at issue and as far as that point is stressed, the reference to Scholasticism will have served its purpose.

¹⁸ Heick (1965:317) quotes Luther as calling Aristotle 'the destroyer of godly doctrine'. Heick argues that Paul was also opposed to Aristotelian thought (Heick 1965:329). Ironically, after Luther's death the Lutheran Orthodoxy again appropriated Aristotelean thought in constructing its theological thought (González 1985:175).

¹⁹ In Scholasticism this search was more scientific and objective, in comparison with Mysticism's personal and subjective quest (Heick 1965:259).

Scholasticism was ... a new spirit of inquiry based on the study of Aristotelian logic (Lynch 1992:246, espec 253; cf Rogerson and Jeanrond 1992:437).

The study of Aristotle's writings²⁰ received special attention during the thirteenth century, the 'golden age of Roman Catholicism'. This did not happen without initial opposition. The study of Aristotle was permitted only from 1231 and then only when cleansed 'from every suspicion of error'. However, in 1255, less than twenty five years later, the study of Aristotle was made obligatory at the University of Paris.

The study of Aristotle implied a new approach to the dogma of the Church, namely, 'the writing of a summa, a very elaborate but carefully balanced treatment of all the objects of theology'. This resulted in a synthesis of Augustinian concepts and ecclesial law with Aristotelian philosophy, representing revelation and reason respectively. Both were regarded to be of equal importance (Heick 1965:280-282).

Scholasticism's major theological contribution was in the areas of soteriology and (theological) anthropology. Original sin was negatively defined (lack of original righteousness) and manifested in seven capital sins; justification was seen as a 'gradual process of human recovery' and not as a judicial act of God²¹ (Heick 1965:289).

Two broad streams developed within Scholastic thought, namely Nominalism and Realism,²² initially represented by Roscellinus of Compiegne (d. ca. 1125) and Anselm of Canterbury (d. 1109), respectively. Within the development of Scholasticism, Abelard (a pupil of Roscellinus) played an important role in blending realism and nominalism.²³ In later Scholasticism this led to a displacement of Neo-Platonic idealism by an Aristotelian critical and empirical attitude (Heick 1965:266-269).

Duns Scotus (d. 1308) represents a turning point in Medieval Scholasticism. In contrast to the Aristotelian approach of Thomas Aquinas, he promoted the fusion of the Platonian and

²⁰ It is important to note that during the Medieval time the interpretation of written texts played a significant role in academic learning, also (especially) within Scholasticism. These texts were called 'authorities' and were written centuries earlier. In the case of the Church, they were the Holy Scripture and writings of the church fathers. Scholasticism attempted the harmonizing of conflicting views found in different writings. Cf Lynch (1992:253): 'This interaction of authoritative texts and formal logic shaped all university teaching'.

²¹ This conception of justification 'indicates that the religious life of Roman Catholicism does not center in faith but in love and good works' (Heick 1965:289).

²² This refers to the views of Plato, Aristotle ('realists', though in different ways) and the Stoics (nominalists), and concerns the perceived relation between reality and (generic, universal) ideas or concepts. For Plato the idea is primary, i.e. preexistent and thus possesses reality (*universalia ante rem*), Aristotle holds that ideas are spiritual forces, active in matter (*universalia in re*), and the Stoics saw ideas as mental abstractions (*nomina*) derived from the common attributes of things (*universalia post rem*) (Heick 1965:266-267).

²³ Heick (1965:268) describes Abelard's theology as a 'rationalist' and 'mediating theology'.

Augustinian approaches within the Realism approach. By emphasizing the human will²⁴ above reason or the intellect, Duns Scotus moved away from the dominant scholastic approach since Thomas.²⁵ Compensating for a speculative theological attitude, he relied primarily upon the authority of the Bible, but then again as mediated by the Church as patron and protector of its extent and content (Heick 1965:300-301; cf Schwartz 1990:4).

Duns Scotus rediscovered the personal God of the Bible, emphasising the voluntaristic aspect of Augustine's theology. However, he remained within the Semi-Pelagian perimeters of his time, with applying the voluntaristic notion not only to his Christology, but also to his anthropology.

The theological stream within which Luther would receive his Scholastic theological education derived from Duns Scotus, but then a Scotism influenced by the nominalism revived of William of Occam (d. 1349). For Occam

all knowledge is derived from intuitive observation of the individual thing. It is only by way of abstraction that the intellect creates a generic conception (Heick 1965:302).

For Occam the Bible remained, if not in practice at least theoretically, the doctrinal authority. Scripture was the source of all truth there is to be known, due to its inspired nature. Occam's reliance on Scripture was, as in the case of Duns Scotus, mitigated by his belief that the Church's doctrine embodied, and thus regulated the Scriptural truth (Heick 1965:302-303; Kooiman 1965:14).

Occam's modernistic theology was the dominant theological approach for almost a century. It is also here where the connection to Luther was made. The main exponent of the views of Occam in Germany was Gabriel Biel²⁶ (d. 1495), whose pupil John Nathin taught Luther the Occamistic theory at the University of Erfurt. This teaching consisted of a mixture of Pelagian tendencies of human freedom uncorrupted by sin and capable of turning to God, and Augustinian predestination. The former was the dominant influence, since predestination was perceived as only to be actualised in the human's meritorious works. But it was precisely this teaching that would eventually fail Luther²⁷ (Heick 1965:303-304, 321).

²⁴ Cf Ferguson (198:153) who sees the innovation of this new approach (or *via moderna* as he calls it later, 154) in its view of God as 'personal will' and sin as the 'expression and result of the rebellious will of human beings'.

²⁵ For Thomas Aquinas reason was an 'autonomous agent' which were also capable of deciding the meaning of Scripture.

²⁶ Cf Kooiman (1965:14) on the 'Bielian' version of Occam.

²⁷ Kooiman (1965:16) describes the result of this voluntaristic slant of Occamism as 'een verregaand optimisme aangaande de mogelijkheid van de mens om het goede te willen', and that this optimism was indeed responsible for the despair of the young monk called Luther.

Furthermore, nominalist thought with its failure to synthesise reason and perception, requires a relativising of all things. Naturally this leads to uncertainty especially in theological thought. The influence of relativism on Luther, as initiated by Nominalism, should perhaps also be investigated.

Thus, Scholasticism in its peculiar (for those days) systematic approach to theology, was driven by a need for soteriological certainty in the face of the human danger of falling by the wayside of unforgiven sins. Luther, the Scholastically educated,²⁸ entered into this labyrinth of sins, in which he was stalked by the sphinx of eternal death, the God who acts righteous and thus punishes sins.

1.2.5. Philosophical: Humanism

The rise of Humanism, arguably in opposition to the Church's emphasis on a 'low', Augustinian anthropology (which pervaded the Medieval world) also had a significant influence on Luther's thoughts. The particular nature of medieval anthropology can also be seen as closely related to medieval piety. Corley (1997:8) calls it 'Augustinian in its view of conversion — that is, a period of gradual awakening, marked by guilt and conviction of sin, followed by a resolution in God's grace'.

The humanists rejected the Augustinian worldview, especially its anthropology, which was pervasive within the Church of the time. In its place a different, independent and decidedly Hellenistic view of the world took shape (Heick 1965:285).

With Humanism came a new interest in the ancient languages, especially the study of Greek and Hebrew. In the sixteenth century Reuchlin published a Hebrew grammar and Erasmus the first edition of his Greek New Testament.²⁹ However, '[i]n the end, the common tenets of Greek philosophy bound them all to the church of Thomas of Aquinas' (Heick 1965:299).

The significance of Humanism for this study lies not so much in its influence on Luther, as Luther often criticised this movement severely. However, Humanism was symptomatic of an important change in the contemporary views on anthropology, namely its emphasis on the individual. Although Luther feverishly disagreed with the positive humanist evaluation of human nature, Luther were at one with Humanism's individualistic tendencies.

On the other hand, Humanism found in Luther's doctrine of justification a threat to the freedom of human beings (Bartsch et al 1983:512). It is possible to conclude therefore, that

²⁸ Kooiman (1965:14-16) finds three important influences of Occamism on Luther: the impossibility of the human mind to understand divine reality, the absolute power of God and his will, and the authority of Scripture. Ferguson (1986:154) warns that the influence of this new theological stream on Luther's life and thought should not be underestimated.

²⁹ Cf Ferguson (1986:154) for the use made by Luther of 'the tools and methods of the biblical humanists, and particularly Erasmus' translation of the New Testament'.

Luther's hermeneutical position neither owes its beginning to humanistic influence nor is it finally congruent with humanistic hermeneutics (Ebeling 1993:131).

1.2.6. Political moves

The Middle Ages saw the rise of nationalism in Western Europe. These nationalistic tendencies worked against the universal claims of the Church. The collapse of imperial reign in the thirteenth century strengthened ideas of nationalism, which led, even after the restoration of the Church's imperial designs in the fourteenth century, to persistent tension between state and Church powers (Heick 1965:285,297).

Rather than acknowledging an universal church, there emerged a renewed interest in the possibility of a 'national church', a movement that became particularly apparent in England during the fourteenth century (Heick 1965:297).

Gradually the Church lost its dominance over the civilised world. The end of the perceived theocratic rule of the world was in sight. The days when the Church, as agent of God, was determining the whole of human existence to the extent of being prescriptive in all spheres of worldly existence, including (especially?) affairs of state were drawing to a close.

The Church had to cope with an increasing skepticism regarding the Church's claims to absolute truth. This were the direct result of the Western world's contact with the scientific endeavours and social life of the Arabic countries (Heick 1965:285).

The politics of Luther's day unwittingly contributed towards a situation in which Luther could challenge the Church on its dogma, without invoking the wrath of the State. The full complexities of late Medieval politics cannot be discussed here, but suffice it to say that Luther even had the support of some princes³⁰ in his efforts.

1.2.7. Economic changes

During the later Middle Ages the prevalent economic system changed from barter economy to money and credit economy. This change led to the Church becoming the foremost international money institute. Unfortunately, the Church's system of taxation as well as the soon disreputable system of indulgences led to a corruption of the morals of the Church (Heick 1965:296).

³⁰ E g Frederick the Wise who supported Luther in the attack on the St Peter's indulgence, but he may also have had as ulterior motive: his own money coffers.

The Church realized that, given a time when people were searching increasingly for inward certainty and the Church was needing money for its many elaborate ventures, these two factors could be brought together. Thus an elaborate system of announcing indulgences was devised, resulting in Christians paying money for remission of time in the purgatory. The money was initially used for funding the crusades, but eventually came to be used for various projects of the Church itself.

This system of indulgences culminated in the St Peter's indulgence, which theologically went beyond any other indulgence by promising full remission of sins. In the words of Tetzel (quoted in Bainton 1977:60,66), the Dominican appointed by pope Leo X to proclaim the indulgence:

As soon as the coin in the coffer rings,
the soul from purgatory springs.

1.2.8. Cultural revival

The Renaissance movement, prevalent amongst the upper classes embodied the desire to herald, celebrate and delight in the innate powers and abilities of human nature. The Renaissance with its emphasis on the inherent quality of human nature championed a more radical and positive anthropology than Humanism. Although a 'cultural and aesthetic' movement with major achievements in literature and art, it harboured very clear anti- or at least non-Christian tendencies.

The negativity felt towards traditional Christianity can probably be understood as reaction against the paralysing low anthropology of its theology.

As with Humanism, the socio-cultural emphasis was very much on the individual, and it is not altogether inappropriate to refer to those post-Enlightenment and post-Renaissance years as the time of the discovery of the individual.

1.2.9. Conclusion

The Medieval times saw the Church succumb to the many pressures from within and without and these weakened its moral fibre. Internally the elaborate and degenerate clergy, including the pope and the ever increasing system for managing the superficial 'meritorious works' led to a decline in faith and morals. The genuine attempts to resurrect a new piety also met with opposition of the Church.

Extravagant claims were formulated in the Medieval Church including the doctrine of 'papal supremacy' (Heick 1965:255-258), which implied the rise and invincibility of the papacy³¹ amidst — ironically — its degeneration.³²

Various theological and philosophical-theological positions emerged in response to the changing needs of the Medieval world. Mysticism and Scholasticism did not attempt to challenge the traditional doctrines of the Church, but rather to provide it with a more secure footing whilst interpreting it in a new and creative way.³³ The search for certainty regarding salvation lived on amidst the experience of committing sins of which the forgiving thereof was not at all certain.³⁴

Internally, the Church did move through a period of attempted reform during the fifteenth century, without obtaining the required results.³⁵ Lynch (1992:336) stresses that

[t]he central ecclesiastical fact of the fifteenth century was that church reform had been tried seriously and had failed.

In this respect the importance of the councils at Constance (1414-1418), Basel (1431-1449) and Florence (1438-1445), the Great Schism (1378-1414) and Conciliarism can be mentioned.

But probably the most noteworthy of all the attempts at reform, was the fact that the doctrine of the Church was never addressed. This would have to wait for, what Lynch (1992:336) calls, the 'generation of religious strife (1517-1555)'. The failed attempts at reform, however, 'generated immense disillusionment and fed the flames of increasingly bitter criticism' and thus the ground has been prepared for the reforms of the sixteenth century (cf Lynch 1992:336-338).

The bitterness and general unhappiness amongst the lay people in the Church about the behaviour of the clerics, led to another noteworthy aspect that can also be seen as contributing to the sixteenth century Reformation, namely the split between religious institution and religious devotion.³⁶

³¹ Cf lines from the sermon of Innocent III (1198-1216) quoted by Heick (1965:280): 'The pope holds a position between God and man ... greater than man ... judged by none'.

³² It eventually led to calls for the abolishment of the papacy among some of the most radical reformers prior to the sixteenth century (Lynch 1992:336).

³³ Even the 'so-called forerunners of the Reformation' can be seen to have failed to challenge the most basic principle of the Church, viz the Scholastic concept of grace as *gratia infusa*, and accordingly with the gospel as nothing but the new law (Heick 1965:306-307). On 'infused grace', cf Ferguson (1986:155); and for the 'infused' versus 'forensic' grace debate between the Catholics and early Protestants, cf Dunn and Suggate (1993:9-10).

³⁴ The Council of Trent (1545 to 1563) reconfirmed the (Roman Catholic) Church's position over against that of the Reformation: justification is a process of cooperation between divine grace and human obedience to divine and Church laws (cf Thielman 1993:529).

³⁵ Apart from 'occasional successes of local and regional reforms' (Lynch 1992:337).

³⁶ Cf Lynch (1992:338). Other factors also contributed to this separation, e.g. the new piety which began to emerge.

Externally the Church lost its position of power over the state amidst the tide of rising nationalism in Western Europe. In an ironic way, the papacy in its (successful) struggle against the conciliarists made deals with the European rulers which led to the disruption and effective blocking of the reform. It was this reform that could have brought about the reform of the Church's central institution, the papacy. Also, by these ecclesio-political pacts the significance of the Church in society was considerably diminished.

Beneath the glitter of papal ceremony and the strong statements of papal theory, the leadership of western Christianity had already passed into the hands of lay rulers in the century before the Reformation (Lynch 1992:334, espec 335).³⁷

1.3. Luther's personal experiences

[T]he Reformation grew out of the experiences of Luther the man (Heick 1965:317).

Martin Luther was naturally influenced by the above tendencies and teachings so prevalent in the Medieval years and especially the Church. Many of these typical Medieval preoccupations shows forth from his writings.³⁸ However, a number of formative experiences in Luther's life need to be illuminated in addition to this Medieval world described in such general terms. These events were not of a fundamentally different nature than those daily present in the late medieval world, but — in Luther's experience thereof — rather amplify some of these trends.³⁹

The first and directive event took place in 1505 when Luther found himself in a storm and, afraid for his life took an oath to join a cloister.⁴⁰ This event took place in the life of a person born of peasantry, amidst feelings of depression and an active belief in the involvement of transcendental activity in human life. This did not make Luther different from other 'children of his age', except maybe in one aspect:

he was extraordinary sensitive and subject to recurrent periods of exaltation and depression of spirit⁴¹ (Bainton 1977:20).

³⁷ The actions of Pope Eugenius IV (1431-1447) in first half of the fifteenth century to triumph over the attempted conciliar reforms as referred to by Lynch (1992:333-334), is a good example of the papacy clinging to its position in the Church even if it meant relinquishing real, effective power in society.

³⁸ Some of these will be illustrated in quotes from and references to Luther in this section.

³⁹ The thought of Luther harbouring certain psychological deficiencies, are discounted by Bainton (1977:18ff), who is at pains to portray Luther as a 'normal' late medieval person. To the other extreme, to present Luther as a 'forceful personality' (Heick 1965:317) is equally debatable. Although an important factor to be considered, Luther's subsequent 'change of heart' cannot be ascribed simply to his personal life and experiences, as Dunn seems to hint, 'The problem lay in his own spiritual life' (Dunn and Suggate 1993:5). For the Catholic tradition's attempt to discredit Luther, even as a 'child of the Devil' (Cochlaeus) and 'guilt-ridden psychopath' (Grisar), cf Atkinson (1984:314-320).

⁴⁰ How much this decision was influenced by the atmosphere in Luther's home and school is not clear. Bainton (1977:16-19) reckons that Luther's experiences at home and even the harsh education system cannot be seen as the reasons for Luther's 'religious disquiet'.

⁴¹ Although the emerging sensitivities pictured in the above section are already indicative thereof, this statement forcefully recalls Stendahl's contemporary concept of the 'introspective conscience' of the West. Cf below.

The 'haven of the cowl', given the fear and tensions of Medieval religious experience, was highly sought after.⁴² This, however, proved not be a haven for Luther⁴³ but rather exacerbated his tensions and fear of God⁴⁴ and further diminished the possibility of coming into a right relationship with God. God could not be satisfied because Luther (like all other people) even after taking up the cowl, still could not fulfill the conditions required to be cleared of sin in the presence of God.

The second major experience of Luther's religious life occurred during the saying of his first mass. Because the priest performs a rite of transforming and thus shares in an exclusive power and privilege, great emphasis was placed upon the correct forms when officiating. Luther was struck by an almighty fear for the Holy God, intensified by a mood of unworthiness.

This second religious-emotional trauma in Luther's life culminated in later years when he laid down the cowl, but not before he embarked on a journey in pursuit of holiness. Frequently Luther was struck in the knowledge that even his best efforts did not satisfy God. Luther's trip to Rome in 1510 and what he saw of the Church did nothing to lessen his feelings of the worthlessness of human effort (Bainton 1977:29-38).

The third and decisive religious experience⁴⁵ was Luther's study of Scripture⁴⁶ after he had been appointed at the University of Wittenburg. This study happened during the time when Luther became increasingly dissatisfied with the confessional system according to which only confessed sins could be forgiven. However, as human beings are corrupt in their nature, the confessional fails because it is only activated periodically. In a mood of frightful insecurity,⁴⁷ Luther arrived at a deadlock when he realised that according to the Church's doctrine

⁴² Thomas Aquinas referred to the cowl as the 'second baptism'. Cf Bainton (1977:24).

⁴³ Luther, quoted in Heick (1965:322): 'As a monk I led an irreproachable life. Nevertheless, I felt that I was a sinner before God'. Cf also Ferguson (1986:154), Kooiman (1965:40).

⁴⁴ Luther, quoted in Heick (1965:322): 'Not only did I not love, but I actually hated the righteous God who punishes sinners'.

⁴⁵ The so-called *Turnerlebnis*. Although this event took place somewhere in proximity to Luther's lecturing on the Psalms, Ebeling (1993:134) is hesitant to venture a suggestion on how exactly this relationship should be perceived. Ebeling does fault much of the scholarly investigation into this relationship for their restrictive view: reading Luther's *Dictata* only from the perspective of his statements on 'justification'. Luther, argues Ebeling, was more involved in 'the existential struggle for the right understanding and exposition of the text of the Psalms as God's Word, and more precisely as the testimony to Christ, and thus as the struggle with the hermeneutical problem itself!' (1993:134-135).

⁴⁶ As explained in the section on Luther and the Bible below.

⁴⁷ The teachings of Occam would have contributed to this by emphasising the 'absolute power and will' of God. Occam reversed the Thomistic, 'God wills something because its good' to become 'Something is good because God wills it' (Kooiman 1965:15).

unconfessed sins remained unforgiven. This led to the fundamental doubt: Can God be just? (Bainton 1977:39-45).

The factor, after years of dissatisfaction with and the studying of Scripture, which triggered the change in Luther's own mind was the announcement in 1517 of the St Peter's indulgence.⁴⁸ Luther spoke against this practice in at least three of his 1516 sermons, which grew out of the crusades. In 1517 the Pope, Leo X granted an indulgence to Albert of Brandenburg of the house of Hohenzollern. This enabled Albert to gain funds for acquiring a third see (Mainz), funds which Leo could also use to complete the St Peter's project half-finished by his predecessor Julius II.

This indulgence, proclaimed by the Dominican Tetzel, guaranteed a 'plenary and perfect remission of all sins'. It was not offered in Luther's parish, simply because Frederick the Wise did not want it to encroach on the already established indulgences of the All Saints at Wittenburg.

Luther, however, reacted very strongly against the sermon by Tetzel and Albert's printed instructions regarding this indulgence. He nailed his 95 theses on the door of the Wittenburg Castle Church door on the eve of All Saints. Luther stressed three things: Criticism of the object of expenditure, a denial of the pope's powers over purgatory and a protest at the deceiving the sinner into a false complacency. Luther did not at this stage question the position of the pope, purgatory as such, or even the indulgences.⁴⁹ His concern was with corrupt practices in the Church (Bainton 1977:51-64; Ferguson 1986:156).

Although Luther took no immediate steps to promote his theses, they nonetheless became the talk of Germany in a short period of time and were eventually published (cf Küng (1994:135).

Without further pursuing the life of Martin Luther, it may be noted in passing that Luther eventually moved to the 'logical conclusions' of his theses:

the sacramental system with its emphasis on works and merits was wrong; ... the pope could err and in fact was the anti-Christ...; and ... monasticism, mass, penance, and merits were ... perversions of the free grace of God in Christ (Ferguson 1986:156).

As could be expected, Rome reacted strongly and denounced Luther. After Luther and his friends burned the papal bull, he had to defend his views in 1521 at the imperial Diet of

⁴⁸ Luther applied what he understood as Paul's teaching on faith and works to his personal life as well as the Church, and in the case of the latter, especially to the teaching on indulgences (Dunn and Suggate 1993:12).

⁴⁹ Thesis 71: 'Whoever speaks against the truth of apostolic indulgence, let him be accursed and damned'. Quoted in Ferguson (1986:156).

Worms.⁵⁰ When Luther did not avail himself of this final opportunity to recant, he was taken into protective custody at the Wartburg castle. Here he spent the final years of his life until his death in 1546. During this time Luther preached, taught and wrote while giving guidance to the movement he started.

Important for the present argument is not only to establish the socio-historical background for Luther's fundamental question 'how shall I find a gracious God?', but also to investigate Luther's particular reading of Paul's writings. The next section will deal with this issue.

1.4. Luther and the Bible

Although Martin Luther (1483-1546) ... applied the interpretive methods which were prepared both by the critical academic tradition ... and by the great humanist thinkers ..., the Reformers' actual praxis of reading the biblical texts, in particular their fresh theological reading perspectives, differed greatly from their predecessors and led to the development of a new attitude in biblical reading. In that sense, one may be justified in describing the Reformation as a hermeneutical event (Rogerson and Jeanrond 1992:437).

Luther was a decisive stimulus to the development of biblical interpretation over the next four centuries (Goldingay 1982:55).

Without denying the notion that

Augustine, Luther, and Calvin, from strikingly different cultural traditions, together spoke of responding to a powerful force of Scripture itself (Childs 1997:204)

— as will be explained in some detail below — it can also be shown that Luther operated hermeneutically within other, non-biblical or not directly biblically connected frameworks of thought. However, the powerful role of the Bible in acting as 'the vehicle for the transformation of perspective' (Childs 1997:204) can clearly be seen throughout Luther's life and work. Riches (1994:343) argues that Luther's role as biblical interpreter at the University of Wittenberg was 'no neutral task'. His searching of the Scriptures was a way to free himself from 'the pangs of conscience', his *Anfechtung*.

Rogerson and Jeanrond (1992:438) argue that Luther's 'reading perspective' consisted of two related elements: His belief in justification by faith alone, and the accompanying view of human nature. Luther prided himself on his 'logic and argument' in his study of the Bible, and attempted to take into consideration both the literal meaning and the historical background of the biblical texts. This implies listening to the Spirit without whose involvement historical study remains 'lifeless and pointless' (Goldingay 1982:51-52).

⁵⁰ According to Gonzáles (1985:29), by this time Luther 'had come to the main theological conclusions that would characterize the whole of his thought.'

1.4.1. The Augustinian tradition

Augustine, the fountainhead of Western Christianity, ... based his notions⁵¹ (virtually contrary to those of Paul) on close and careful readings of the apostle [sc Paul] (Fredriksen 1991:75).

Luther joined a particular religious order when he became a monk, namely the Augustinian Hermits or Eremites at Erfurt (Dunn and Suggate 1993:5; Ferguson 1986:154; Lynch 1992:337). As it could be expected, this order exerted, especially through its adherence to the teachings of Augustine, a particular influence on Luther.

However, initially not so much Augustinian teaching, but Occamistic theology shaped Luther's theological thought. Indeed, it was the discrepancy between the voluntaristic tendencies of Occamism and his own experience that caused Luther his greatest anguish. Kooiman (1965:16) claims that it was only possible for Luther to escape from the 'grote zielenood' (great crisis of the soul) in which he found himself, through 'a new interpretation of the heart of Scripture'.

In this reinterpretation of Scripture, the views of Augustine were a dominant influence. Indeed, as Corley (1997:5) argues, 'in the West, the impact of Augustine (AD 354-430) on the discussion of Paul can hardly be overrated'. According to Goldingay, Luther found his interpretation of Scripture 'confirmed' in Augustine. In his earlier studies, Luther did encounter some of the writings of Augustine⁵² but then in an Occammistic framework. Eventually Luther came to the conclusion that Occam cannot be reconciled with Augustine.

According to Kooiman (1965:16-17), two aspects of Augustine's thought⁵³ made a special impression on Luther: His teachings on predestination and his hermeneutical distinction between letter and spirit.

For this study the latter aspect is of specific importance, for the letter/spirit distinction was to become an integral part of Luther's hermeneutic. The notion of Scripture only *becoming* Word of God through the Holy Spirit's mediation between the scriptural content and its reader, proved to be the basis of the Lutheran hermeneutic⁵⁴ (Kooiman 1965:16-17).

⁵¹ Although Frederiksen considers especially the interpretation of the human body as presented in Paul, this statement can be extended to include Augustine's reading of Paul in general. For opposition to the view that Augustine misread/misrepresented Pauline thought, cf e.g. Fowl (1997:xxv); Gorday (1997:307-310).

⁵² E.g. *The City of God* and *The Trinity* (Kooiman 1965:16).

⁵³ Kooiman (1965:16) reasons that in general Augustine's emphasis on the personal experience of God proved to be a relief to a Luther frustrated by 'abstract theological truths'.

⁵⁴ Luther broke with Augustine's idea that biblical interpretation should find its norm in the 'tradition of the church', especially with difficult texts. Cf Ferguson (1986:152). Cf also below for Luther's distinction between *verba* and *scriptura*.

Georgi (1991:3) finds the connection between Paul, Augustine and Luther in Augustine's 'verinnerlichende Exegese von Paulus'. This line of interpretation was not only confirmed by Luther but 'institutionalised'. This 'spiritual' and individualised reading still exists today as the predominant way of reading the Bible and especially Paul's writings.

Luther's question: 'how do I get a just God?', for all that it led to radical changes in society was primarily concerned with the sphere of human inwardness, with liberating men and women from spiritual bondage⁵⁵ (Riches 1994:351).

It is important to note that Luther also deviated in important ways from the Augustinian approach to the Bible. These differences account for the fact that the traditional reading of Paul is more in line with a Lutheran than an Augustinian approach. Luther's approach differed from that of Augustine in the following ways:

- the authority of the Bible superseded that of the Church
- denying the canonical status of the Bible as a whole (cf Rogerson and Jeanrond 1992:438)
- using a mitigated 'allegorical' approach (in which typology was more important)⁵⁶
- an emphasis on the 'literal', common sense meaning⁵⁷
- postulating as corollary to justification by faith alone-doctrine, Judaism as 'works-righteousness' religion.

1.4.2. Study of the Bible

The Reformation constituted a moment when the Bible came alive in an unparalleled way, particularly in the life of Luther (Goldingay 1982:33).

Luther wanted the Church to return to the intention and vision of Christ its founder, as portrayed in the New Testament. For Luther the Bible, by presenting God's plan for humanity in Jesus Christ, was the ultimate revelation for human beings and provided the source of contact with God himself. The Bible is the locus where God speaks to people today as He spoke to the prophets and apostles in the past (cf Atkinson 1984:324-325).

⁵⁵ In the words of Howell (1993:305): '(Augustine) projected his own spiritual struggles into the personality of the apostle — an agonizing and tormented conscience, the soul released from guilt and bondage to the law, repentance, penance, and introspection as the Christian way of life. In this way Augustine ... foreshadowed Martin Luther, who, like his great forebear, found in the Pauline message emancipation from an overbearing guilt'.

⁵⁶ The presence of typology and allegory along with other kinds of non-literal exegesis, leads Bernard (1991:98) to refer to Augustine's exegesis more appropriately as 'figurative', rather than forcing all of it into the categories of typology and allegory. Cf Gorday (1997:310) for Augustine's use of the Donatist Tyconius in his development of typology.

⁵⁷ Augustine's approach sanctioned the removal of the biblical event from its context, 'as long as they [sc exegetes] are guided by the truth of the faith that is exemplified most fully by the love demonstrated by Christ on the cross' (Bernard 1991:97). Luther's *sensus literalis* allowed him to challenge certain practices of the Church, as well as to attack the 'allegorical hermeneutics of medieval exegesis' (Hanson 1989:63). Forde (1983:244) finds the move towards the appreciation of the literal text already present in such people like Faber Stapulensis and Nominalism, 'with its literalism and insistence on biblical authority'.

Contrary to common but unfounded assertions, Luther's contact with the Bible probably started at a very young age.⁵⁸ In the Mansfeld state school which Luther attended certain biblical texts⁵⁹ were memorised, and since his 12th year at the cathedral school at Magdenburg he came in even closer contact with the Bible (Kooiman 1965:8-9).

In 1501 Luther enrolled at the University of Erfurt and again was exposed to regular readings of the Bible during the meals while boarding at the hospitium. When Luther arrived at the cloister⁶⁰ in 1505 he received his own copy⁶¹ of the Vulgate.⁶² After his ordination to the priesthood in 1507, Luther also had to attend lessons on the Bible and he excelled in these studies.

With his appointment at Wittenberg in 1511, Luther assumed the chair of biblical exegesis at the University.⁶³ Bainton (1977:45) links this appointment to the attempt of Von Staupitz to provide Luther with assistance in his religious problems by involving him in a study of the Bible.⁶⁴ He started his teaching⁶⁵ on Psalms and in 1515 to 1517 lectured on Romans and Galatians.

In his study of the Scripture Luther discovered not only a just God, but a merciful God. Indeed, Luther discovered

⁵⁸ Kooiman (1965:5-10) questioned some of the *Tischreden* that purported that the reading of the Bible was something uncommon in Luther's early life, and that he was even discouraged from reading the Bible by Von Staupitz.

⁵⁹ E.g. the ten commandments and the Lord's prayer — these were learnt in Latin.

⁶⁰ In the Augustinian order of monks in which Luther became involved, one of their rules from 1287 specified that members are compelled 'to read Scripture eagerly, to listen to it with care, and to study it vigorously' (Kooiman 1965:12).

⁶¹ Kooiman (1965:10-11) is at great pains to point out that Bibles were more readily available for sale than usually assumed, but were expensive. However, the so-called postilles or plenaria (liturgically specified portions of Scripture accompanied by short explanations or commentaries) were quite common and not exorbitantly priced (for comparison: in Leipzig in 1510 a plenarium was sold for one fifth guilder, and an ox for 3 guilders and a complete Bible for 5 guilders).

⁶² The Latin translation of the New Testament by St Jerome (Sophronius Eusebius Hieronymus), dating back to the fourth century AD. For a short account of the history of the origin and development of the Vulgate traditions, cf Metzger (1968:75-79, 154, 164).

⁶³ According to Kooiman (1965:21-22; quoting K. Bauer's *Die Wittenberger Universitäts-theologie und die Anfänge der Deutschen Reformation*, 1928) Luther was the first ever lecturer to teach only biblical exegesis during his whole career.

⁶⁴ Bainton (1977:45) expresses this in the typical Protestant emphasis on the Bible: 'anyone who seeks to discover the secret of Christianity is inevitably driven to the Bible'. Cf also the Roman Catholic scholar Hans Küng (1994:127-153) who refers to Luther's 'return to the Gospel as the classical instance of a paradigm shift'. Kooiman (1965:20) sees the appointment of Luther in this position as an attempt of Von Staupitz to ensure that Luther would succeed him. Luther's 15 points of objection against the appointment were not accepted by Von Staupitz.

⁶⁵ His preparation were initially in the form of glosses on the texts. Kooiman (1965:23-24) calls Luther the 'last great master of the glossing-method', as Luther gradually changed over to the 'scholias' which were of more 'biblical-theological, dogmatic nature' while reflecting something of the person of the author.

that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us by faith (Luther, quoted in Bainton 1959 (1977):49).

This discovery centered on Romans 1:17, and for Luther the understanding of this verse and eventually the whole Bible, gospel and Christianity itself, hinged on the phrase *δικαιοσύνη γὰρ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ [sc τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ] ἀποκαλύπτεται* 'for in it [that is, the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed'. Luther was particularly at pains to understand the phrase *θεοῦ* (of God) and specifically the genitive. Luther read the phrase in conjunction with the last part of the verse, the quote from Habakuk 2:4 *ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται* 'the righteous shall live by faith', and concluded that the genitive of *θεοῦ* should be understood 'passively', that is as subjective genitive — righteousness received as free gift from God, through faith (Riches 1994:343-344).

Luther, like so many of the other 'reformers' stressed the importance of returning to Scripture,⁶⁶ and to search for scriptural principles in matters of faith rather than decretal and dogmatic positions.⁶⁷ In this light one can understand

Luther's ... consistent attempt to make the gospel relevant to the needs and conditions of his contemporaries (Heick 1965:316).

It should be added, however, that Luther's understanding of the Bible was strongly influenced by a number of factors which in the end led him to his 'discovery' of Romans 1:17. This discovery meant not only that Scripture became Luther's point of theological orientation, but that a particular part of Scripture would eventually 'dictate' his theology. Finally, it would be fair to argue that all this led to a reciprocal relationship or hermeneutical circle between his biblical views and his theology, and, between his biblically based theology and his particular socio-historical context.

In later years another 'decretal or dogmatic' position would arise from Luther's study of the Bible based on the notion of 'justification by faith'. This would become the key to much of Christian theology, and the interpretation of the Bible. If then not so scholastic, Luther's justification-principle would become not only the principle by which 'the church stands or falls' (Braaten 1990) but also a compelling and exclusive hermeneutical device for interpreting the Paul's letters and the rest of the Christian Bible.

⁶⁶ This was accompanied by the study of the original languages. In Luther's case only since 1516, until when he used the Vulgate, the text of which was considered 'inspired' (Kooiman 1965:26-27). In a letter to Count Albrecht von Mansfeld, Luther directly interprets his new understanding of penitence to the learning of Greek and Hebrew (WA, 1, S. 525f, quoted in Kooiman 1965:19).

⁶⁷ This was to a large extent due to the Occamistic influence on Luther — with which Luther differed though — in placing the authority of the Bible even above that of the Church. In this Luther and the other Reformers differed from Augustine's practice where the Church's tradition guided the interpreter and the interpretation of Scripture. Cf above, and Ferguson (1986:152). In Occamism it was accepted that knowledge of God and belief was not accessible to the human mind, but could be found in Scripture which had absolute authority. However, the Church's dogma was seen as the only interpretation of Scripture and Scripture as the source of proof texts. See above; also Kooiman (1965:14-15, 48); Borchardt (1984:1-2).

1.4.3. Luther and the Medieval hermeneutic⁶⁸

The hermeneutical approach with which Luther started to interpret the Psalms was in line with Medieval practice and can be summarised with the broad, though often misunderstood term ‘allegorical’.⁶⁹ Luther was initially not interested in reading the Old Testament in its ‘historical-literal’ sense — at least not interested in attaching any significant value to either the historical or literal — but interpreted the Psalms *in spiritu et prophetico sensu*, which for Luther meant christologically.

In the allegorical approach Luther was not only following the early church but also Augustine, the line which was continued by the humanist Faber Stapulensis⁷⁰ and whose writ-

⁶⁸ The danger of anachronism lurks: in the late medieval years the notion of ‘hermeneutic/s’ was not on the level (*not* in form, *not* in content, *not* in aim) of the modern debate. This discussion is not a high-handed attempt at value-judgements of medieval exegesis or hermeneutics, or for that matter of that of Paul, the early church and the Patristic fathers.

Ferguson (1986:152) furthermore sees no real innovation in the hermeneutic of the Middle Ages, as ‘[e]ssentially it is a period of transition, from the old patristic exegetical theology to the partial divorce between the Bible and theology’.

⁶⁹ Cf Ferguson (1986:159-160). For the summation of Medieval hermeneutic as ‘allegorical’, cf Ferguson (1986:152). The umbrella term ‘allegorical’ approach generally assumed the ‘real’ meaning of the text to be hidden underneath or beyond the historical-literal sense of the written words — the relationship between literal and allegorical senses of the text was, however, not always understood in the same way. In Luther’s case it had as corollary ‘verbal inspiration’, i.e. the Holy Spirit wrote the Bible. Kooiman (1965:28), however, prefers to describe it as ‘profetisch’ rather than as allegorical. Opposition to allegory within the Church (e.g. the later Jerome and Chrysostom) existed, originating with the Antiochene school with its emphasis on the ‘historical reality of biblical revelation’ (Ferguson 1986:151). However, the notion of a ‘deeper meaning’ in the text was perpetuated even in Antiochene circles, where typological exegesis was equally at home as in the Alexandrian school (Rogerson and Jeanrond 1992:435), and where ‘literal meaning’ could include metaphor (Schwartz 1990:4).

⁷⁰ Although Faber, following Augustine, also distinguished between letter and spirit, his understanding of this contrast differed from the traditional understanding derived from Origen. For the latter, letter and spirit indicated the double sense of Scripture: the literal meaning is associated with the letter that leads to death, and the allegorical meaning with the life-giving Spirit. The literal meaning is, however, not discarded but becomes the letter of death in as far as it produces a meaning or sense which does not follow the spiritual understanding of Scripture. The literal is thus not devalued but in fact is seen as the foundation of the spiritual, the basis of doctrinal proof, and the norm for the spiritual sense. In the hermeneutical theory of Thomas, the double sense of scriptural text have virtually disappeared: the literal was seen as the sense intended by the ‘Author of Scripture’, with not only the words but also the signified having the function of pointing beyond themselves. The second, allegorical sense is therefore derived from the ‘meaningfulness of the thing signified’. However, Thomas stopped short of equating the first and second sense, combining the literal and spiritual into one, because 1) the second category of spiritual or allegorical sense has become a formalised category, and 2) the spiritual meaning often became far removed from the literal.

Faber, however, argued that the meaning intended by the Holy Spirit as Author of Scripture, should properly be called the literal sense. In an attempt to clarify the confusion between literal and allegorical, Faber distinguished between a literal-historical and a literal-prophetic sense, an improper and proper literal sense, a sense preferred by the human mind and a sense infused by the Spirit. As a concerned humanist influenced by pietistic mysticism, Faber wanted to establish solid hermeneutical principles based on the literal sense of the text. He therefore avoids allegory while preserving the christological interpretation. This implies that the very same letter can be the letter of death to some and become the life-giving spirit for others (Ebeling 1993:135-140).

Ebeling argues further that in Luther’s hermeneutic the letter and spirit distinction (which becomes that which is at hand and at a human’s disposal as opposed to that which is secret and unavailable to humans, or the flesh as opposed to the spirit, or the visible as opposed to the invisible) is based on Faber’s notions. It is also not merely a form of Neoplatonism. Luther’s dependency on the letter/spirit opposition should also be related to the influence of

ings influenced Luther (Kooiman 1965:27-28). In the end the major differences between the humanist and the reformist approach to the Bible would lie in the authority and function of Scripture, and the 'radically transformed selfunderstanding of the biblical interpreter' (Rogerson and Jeanrond 1992:437).

The allegorical was one aspect of the fourfold scriptural sense or *quadrige* of medieval hermeneutics. 'Allegory was invoked to neutralize morally troubling passages' (Schwartz 1990:5). The fourfold scriptural sense itself was often referred to as allegorical but actually consisted of four aspects: literal (historical), allegorical (mystical), tropological (individually moral) and anagogical (eschatological) exegesis. In theory this was an integrated approach⁷¹ but in practice each of the four approaches went its own way. In addition, many different combinations and arrangements existed between these four different aspects, which then carried a varied amount of weight depending on the text and interpreter. The fourfold scriptural sense obviously harboured some dangers,⁷² but also enabled a varied approach to the text (Kooiman 1965:31-33).

The method was kept on the rails theologically by the requirement that its lessons had to be consistent with the faith itself, as established by the literal, historical sense of Scripture (Goldingay 1982:54).

However, with the invention and development of the printing press, and with the reformational stress on the individual Bible-reader, the constraints imposed on allegory began to diminish.⁷³

The allegorical approach implied the extension of the interpretation or meaning of the text. This, however, was only done when another text was found that would support the extended interpretation (Kooiman 1965:32,40-41). This 'intertextual' approach of Luther to the Bible would become determinative for his views on the 'unity' of Scripture and the nature of the Biblical writings. In the process Luther interpreted both the Old Testament and the New Testament christocentrically. The Pauline writings became in his hands almost doctrinal treatises,⁷⁴ and not occasional writings.

Nicholas of Cusa, the fact that Luther almost exclusively signified this opposition with concepts from the Bible, and a dependency on Augustine and Mysticism (1993:140-142). This leads Ebeling to conclude that this opposition is, ultimately, not an ontological dualism but a theological dualism (:143-150).

⁷¹ Cf the positive criticism of Karl Holl and Gordon Rupp as quoted in Kooiman (1965:32). Schwartz (1990:4) refers to the fourfold sense as a systemisation of interpretation, but complains that the boundaries between the four senses were 'at least as blurred as our contemporary theoretical categories'.

⁷² In addition, the allegorical approach itself was used 'to serve, if not confer, political power' (Schwartz 1990:5).

⁷³ On the other hand, there was also a move away from the 'excesses of spiritualism' occasioned by the 'Platonizing of Origen' (Forde 1983:244).

⁷⁴ 'The image of Paul in medieval minds was that of the normative teacher of revealed truth, the epitome of a professor of theology' (Froehlich 1991:344).

Linking up with the allegorical interpretation, Luther distinguished hermeneutically between letter (*lettera*) and spirit (*spiritus*), the former kills but the spirit gives life. For Luther the difference was a spiritual one.⁷⁵ The spiritual sense was only comprehensible where the reader and the Spirit was in a lasting relationship.⁷⁶ Kooiman (1965:30-31) argues that Luther accepted the 'literal-prophetic' (allegorical) hermeneutic of the early church, but did not use it in an 'arbitrary or mechanical' way. Luther's allegorical approach was fully christological, reading Scripture in view of the crucified and resurrected Christ.⁷⁷

Luther did not follow the traditional approach of Tyconius and Augustine, who stressed the relationship between the first two senses, the literal and allegorical.⁷⁸ He deemed the combination of the second and third senses, the allegorical and tropological, of great importance. The christological was made applicable to the individual's life.⁷⁹ (Kooiman 1965:33;40).

Gradually Luther's initial strong allegorical approach changed.⁸⁰ In his first *colleges*, but especially in his sermons he used an unmitigated allegory to explain a text.⁸¹ This approach was modified to a christological-soteriological method, which attempted to do justice to all the aspects of the fourfold scriptural sense: the christological, soteriological, ecclesiological and the eschatological (Kooiman 1965:43).

⁷⁵ Luther followed Faber in the spirit-letter distinction, but not in placing it in a neo-platonist framework (Kooiman 1965:30; cf Forde 1983:243-244; Rogerson and Jeanron 1992:428). Cf Ebeling (1993:135-150) who argues at length that the dualism was theological and not philosophical; so too Hendrix (1983:236-237) argues that Luther leaned heavily on Augustine for the letter/spirit distinction, with 'letter' referring to the 'operation of the text on the reader at any level as law without grace', and 'spirit' to such an 'operation' 'as grace alone'.

⁷⁶ Ferguson (1986:158,161-163) provides a short overview of Luther's insistence that only a believer guided by the Spirit can read the Bible in the correct way. Cf Schwartz (1990:7), who adds that one of Luther's equally famous Reformist-successors, Calvin, stressed the illumination of Scripture by the Spirit even more.

⁷⁷ Kooiman (1965:31) quotes Luther's well-known anecdote: 'If I have a text as hard to crack as the shell of a nut, I throw it against the rock of Christ and then I have the excellent kernel (*heerlijke pit*)'. Cf Ebeling (1993:135,154 n37); Schwartz (1990:7). Ebeling (1993:135) extends the metaphor by claiming that Luther's nutcracker had two hermeneutical schemes as two arms: the *Quadriga* and the letter/spirit antithesis.

⁷⁸ In practise this meant, in the words of Kooiman (1965:32-33): 'Alles wat de Schrift van Christus zegt, kan in allegorische zin ook op de Kerk betrokken worden'.

⁷⁹ Kooiman (1965:33-34) sees the fusion of the christological (cf allegorical) and tropological exegesis as the basis for Luther's twofold discovery, i.e. God revealed his righteousness in Christ, and this righteousness is acquired by faith. Kooiman uses the example of Luther's notes on 'opus Dei' (the work of God) which literally means the works of God, allegorically denotes Christ and tropologically the faith of the believer. Also, the 'work of God' understood in an christological- tropological sense was the 'exegetische wortel van Luthers theologia crucis' (Kooiman:1965:34).

⁸⁰ The remark by Von Waldow (1995:155) namely that 'Luther in his capacity as professor of OT' criticised the allegorical method, but 'as a preacher used it himself', is not validated by the evidence — Luther eagerly participated in allegorical exegesis of the OT in both instances. Ebeling correctly stresses that although Luther made a fundamental shift in hermeneutical position in 1519, occasional lapses regarding allegorical exegesis did happen from time to time (1993:131). Luther never relinquished the use of allegory (Hendrix 1983:231).

⁸¹ Cf the example quoted in Kooiman (1965:42) on Psalm 60:10.

Kooiman (1965:44-45) argues that in Luther the christological and tropological reading of the Bible became one — the christological as the source of Scripture and the application of this on the life of the individual believer. This constitutes for Kooiman the center of the quadriga and Luther's work put an end to the 'speculative and arbitrary' exegesis which originated with Origen and (the earlier) Jerome.⁸²

It is clear, therefore, that his exegetical methods shaped Luther's theological insights to a large extent: the unifocal christological approach with the attention on the individual.⁸³ This also explains the close relationship for Luther between christology and human justification.

The question that remains is in what way Luther's reading of Scripture in such an unqualified christological way can or should be understood as allegorical as well.⁸⁴ The main characteristic of allegorical interpretation, that is the assumption of a hidden meaning to be discovered and supplied by the interpreter, is not difficult to identify in Luther's work.⁸⁵

A corollary of the allegorical-christological approach of Luther, was the belief that only someone in an enduring relationship with the Spirit could find or discover the christological and spiritual truth⁸⁶ which was hidden beneath the external historical account which again constituted the life of Jesus Christ (Kooiman 1965:46-47).

⁸² Rogerson and Jeanrond call Origen 'the leading allegorist in the early Church' (1992:435) and insist that Jerome, although acknowledging the value of the spiritual sense of Scripture, saw the literal meaning of the text as more fundamental and gradually shifted his allegiance to the latter (:427,436). Cf Kooiman (1965:45) 'Hij bevrijdt zich van de [allegorisch, JP] methode'. Occasionally Luther still dabbled in the allegorical, when it suited his purposes and especially in sermons. Cf Kooiman (1965:45); Schwartz (1990:7).

⁸³ Cf Kooiman (1965:43-44) 'Steeds meer gaat hij het zo zien, dat de christologische zin het uitgangspunt is, maar *de tropologische degene waar het voor ons op aankomt*' and 'De pofetische ... is de grondslag van de andere ... *De tropologische is de belangrijkste, de eerste and laatste and daarop is de Schrift gericht*' (emphasis added).

⁸⁴ Cf Kooiman (1965:45) 'Wanneer wij Luther goed willen begrijpen, moeten we dus steeds bedenken, dat hij een christologische exegese (die wij allegorisch noemen) niet allegorisch achtte, maar letterlijk'. Cf Dawson (1992:8) on 'literal' meaning as simply that meaning accepted by a community as '*the meaning*'.

⁸⁵ Cf Dawson (1992:6) who emphasises 'narrativity' as the essential element of allegory. Perhaps in this sense one could call Protestantism an extended christological allegory?

⁸⁶ Kooiman (1965:47) distinguishes sharply between 'allegorical' and 'spiritual' in that the latter leads to 'innerlijk veranderd te worden'. He acknowledges the origin of spiritual exegesis as allegory. Forde argues that Luther's 'basic problem' with the medieval fourfold hermeneutic was with its 'theological and anthropological presuppositions': the text as the 'jumping-off place' for the free and rational human spirit; with the 'root problem' that the 'hearer' has the opportunity to change the text, instead of the text transforming the 'hearer' (1983:245-246).

1.4.4. Prophet of Modernity: Towards a grammatico-historical method⁸⁷

Luther stands at the door which ushers in the modern understanding of the Bible (Ferguson 1986:164).

Luther's initial allegorising gradually changed into a quasi-allegorical methodology and exegesis, and he eventually broke with allegory in favour of a literal⁸⁸ or grammatico-historical practice. While in 1513 to 1515 Luther read the Psalms allegorically (*Dictate super Psalterium*), in his Seven Penitential Psalms of 1517 he had practically broken with medievalian allegory.

By 1518 Luther was not only convinced that the traditional allegorical style of exegesis was wrong, but he also ridiculed its practitioners. Ebeling argues that Luther's change of expository method was fully matured by 1519, with the publication of his *Operationes in Psalmos* (1993:131). The eventual result of allegorising, namely the maintaining of evil practices in the Church along with the justification thereof, led Luther to conclude that the use of allegory for interpreting the Bible is not only wrong but also sinful.⁸⁹ In effect, it meant that the text was 'silenced', through appeals to authority (the pope), the fathers (theologians), the Holy Spirit (enthusiasts), and ambiguity (Erasmus) (Goldingay 1982:35).

Instead of the perceived uncontrollable, unchecked and arbitrary and thus possible dangerous practices of allegory, Luther proposed a literal or common sense reading of Scripture.⁹⁰ Luther now postulated that although many applications may be possible, only a single meaning — what the author himself meant — exists for each scriptural passage. This meaning can be discovered by the study of the historical background and grammar of the passage. This

⁸⁷ According to Ferguson (1986:166), Luther's 'single major contribution'; Burrows (1997:249) also reasons that although Luther followed patristic and medieval exegetical concern with the notion of the 'unity of scripture', 'he stood among the *moderni*' in his insistence on the literal sense and not the spiritual meanings of the 'four-fold sense' providing the coherence of Scripture. However, Hanson (1989:63) cautions, 'it would be anachronistic to find in Luther the historical-critical method as such'. In any case, before Luther the literal approach to the Bible was already found in Nicholas of Lyra (ca. 1270-1340) and in the Renaissance as e.g. in Erasmus (Goldingay 1982:36), the existence of which Ebeling (1993:136) calls 'quite unusual, but not revolutionary'. For the literal-spiritual meaning distinction, cf. above.

⁸⁸ At times a 'literalist' approach, as in his debate with Zwingli. This historical emphasis led, furthermore, to some 'troublesome results': awareness of the diversity of context in which Scripture is interpreted, an insistence on the historical grounding of the Christian faith, and the assumption that Scripture narrates 'actual history' (Goldingay 1982:37-40).

⁸⁹ Not that a 'literal' reading of Scripture excluded the possibility of abusing the Bible for a variety of purposes; examples of which abound, even in contemporary uses of the Bible.

⁹⁰ Ferguson (1986:160) calls Luther's choice 'the *sensus literalis, grammaticus, or historicus*'. This approach was not new, dating back to the Renaissance and it was practiced not only in the Church but also in the Enlightenment circles (Goldingay 1982:56). Goldingay adds that the development of scholarly biblical study was at heart a quest for a 'historical approach to Scripture' — however, many scholars attempted to rid themselves of dogmatic or credal biases while 'deeply affected by all sorts of biases: rationalism, romanticism, evolutionism, and so on'. Eventually, Goldingay laments, 'historical study fell short of an adequate listening to the Bible'.

involved the full use of available philological, historical and other available tools (Ferguson 1986:160). Luther's 'goal' with biblical interpretation was to treat it both historically and theologically. However, this does not mean that Luther had a 'perfectly balanced, integrated approach' (Goldingay 1982:55-56).

In cases where an interpretation of a scriptural passage proved grammatically impossible, Luther rejected it. He made this criterion applicable to his own interpretations as interpretations 'should arise from the text of Scripture itself, not be brought to it from the outside' (Goldingay 1982:35). Luther is responsible for the formulation that Scripture is *sui ipsius interpres* (its own best interpreter). This was possible because of another notion formulated as the *claritas*⁹¹ of the biblical message — notwithstanding the often mysterious nature of many individual passages (Goldingay 1982:36). Ferguson (1986:161) puts it succinctly

Scripture possesses *claritas*, e.g., it has its own illuminating power.

Luther's reading of the Bible in a grammatico-historical way convinced him even more completely that the central message of the Bible was to be sought in the Law/gospel antithesis and could be formulated as 'justification by faith'.⁹² As Burrows contends, for Luther a 'proper' reading could never consist of simply a literary of historical examination of the text (1997:248-249).

For Luther himself, however, the appropriate interpretation of a text lay neither in the recovery of the unique literal sense nor in the unfolding of multilevel meanings, but in the discovery of legitimate meaning, based on grammatical and historical analysis, informed by theological reflection, and applied to one's own life and the church of the present (Hendrix 1983:238).

1.4.5. Luther and the Bible

This is the crucial point: Luther's vocation as a theologian and reformer took shape on the basis of the discoveries he made when reading scripture (Burrows 1997:251).

The clash between the theology taught to Luther and his personal experiences became evident when he started to read the Bible. This was true of the theological and spiritual threatening notion of the *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ*.⁹³ In a context of spiritual *Anfechtung* Luther's encounter with Scripture forced him to rethink his 'theological position'. In this sense the foundations of Luther's thought were thoroughly biblical.

For Luther, doing theology consists in discussing the meaning and implications of passages of the Bible (Goldingay 1982:35).

⁹¹ But this was not seen by Luther as 'an explicit dimension of the text as such', but this clarity 'was to be discerned in the very "grammar" of scripture' and this was a theological and not a philological task — 'the grammar of scripture was itself *verbum Dei*'! (Burrows 1997:249).

⁹² Ferguson (1986:164) laments that Luther disturbed the balance between history and faith in favour of the latter and in support of his (Luther's) christocentric hermeneutic.

⁹³ Cf the following section on righteousness. Also Kooiman (1965:39ff).

However, Luther did not have a one-directional approach to Scripture. In as much as he described Scripture as infallible, he was willing to be critical of the canonical books as well (Goldingay 1982:45).

In the end, as Ebeling (1993:130) argues, Luther's exegesis of the Bible could be characterised by a 'theological unity and totality', leading to an 'intermixture of exegetical and systematic thinking'. The reciprocity of Luther's exegetical efforts and his theological thought would only become stronger over time.

1.4.5.1. Hermeneutical presuppositions and preunderstanding

Beyond the exacting work of grasping the text as such,⁹⁴ Luther identified the exegete's task as follows: first, that of proper listening to the living Word of God (verbum Dei) as one heard this in and through the biblical 'words' (verba); second, and as a consequence, that of proper speaking or preaching (Burrows 1997:250).

Luther's assumptions regarding the Bible guided his approach to it. Ferguson (1986:156-157) summarises the presuppositions of Luther's hermeneutical system as follows:

- Luther's disillusionment with the Church's authority led him to 'frame a new theological structure *based on biblical authority*'.⁹⁵
- Luther's personal life and experiences, and his theological education in the ways of Scotus and Occam (*via moderna*) led him to conclude that the central message of the Bible consists of 'God's grace and human faith over against law and works'.
- Through study of the Bible and disappointment with the results of allegorical methodology, Luther strongly emphasised the historical nature of the Bible:

the historical context ... became the fundamental methodological assumption of Luther's approach to the Bible.⁹⁶

To these hermeneutical principles of Luther, Burrows (1997:251) adds the following aspects of Luther's view of Scripture:

- Scripture is a unified whole with its coherence to be found in the christological.
- Scripture was not reliant on the interpretation of external (ecclesial) authorities, but interpreted itself.
- The 'grammar' (or historical-philological) concerns of the Bible was overridden by the 'subject-matter': the Word of God, heard in the words of the Bible.

⁹⁴ By means of rigorous scholarship and methodology, which was, always, in service of the exegetical task as formulated here (Burrows 1997:250) — and all of that relegated to and expressed in preaching: '[i]t is the preaching of the law and the gospel that "solves" the problem of interpretation' (Forde 1983:252).

⁹⁵ My emphasis. Goldingay argues that in order to free the Bible from the authority of the Church, subsequent Protestant thought stressed the fact that the Bible was God's word and thus the final ground of authority, leading at times to biblicism (1982:57).

⁹⁶ The irony in this was that Luther projected his personal experience within and of the Church onto the Jewish religion of Paul's time, probably because Luther found what he sought in Paul: a kindred spirit. The untenability of both his views on first century Judaism and Paul's *Anfechtung*, will be shown in later discussions.

■ A 'saving and efficacious use of the Word of God' rested on both the 'role of the promise from God's side and of faith from ours'.

In a parallel way Luther made certain assumptions regarding the 'nature' of the Bible:

- The Bible is authoritative
- The Bible is inspired
- The Bible is christocentric
- The Bible is understandable

These assumptions were made by a man with a troubled conscience and in the midst of a heated struggle between him and the Roman Church. The interlinking of the first three assumptions were crucial: the Bible is authoritative because it is inspired, and this again rests upon its message regarding Jesus Christ. The Bible is clear and understandable in so far as the fundamental distinction between Law and gospel is clear (Ferguson 1986:158-159).

It is important also to recognise that Luther distinguished between the *verba* and *scriptura* as far as the Bible was concerned. In affirming the importance of *sola scriptura*⁹⁷ he referred to the authority of God's word as it becomes present among believers, and not to the *verba* which are the literal biblical texts and thus human formulations (Hanson 1989:62). For Luther the *sola* of *sola Scriptura* referred not to the written text of the Bible but to the authority of the 'Word of God' (Graham 1989:135). Failure to take this distinction into account, will make much of Luther's exegetical practice incomprehensible. In his mind, there was a

clear distinction between the Bible as human document and Scripture as God's Word, revealed to us precisely within that human document by the Holy Spirit (Hanson 1989:64).

Burrows puts it well when he summarises Luther's use of historical-philological methods by saying that '[h]is interest was not in the manner of reading but in the apprehension of the proper subject matter — namely, the gospel which promised a saving encounter with the living Word of God' (1997:250).

1.4.5.2. Christocentric and typological interpretation

This christocentric emphasis is perhaps the central feature of Luther's hermeneutical position (Ferguson 1986:162).

As is normal within the hermeneutical spiral, Luther's scripturally derived theological position determined his understanding of the biblical texts, and vice versa.⁹⁸ Although the purpose of all his extensive writing activity was 'to direct attention to Scripture' (Goldingay 1982:34), he read Scripture according to a definite and unashamed bias, to find and present Christ.

⁹⁷ However, as Goldingay argues, *sola scriptura* was always subordinate to *solus Christus* as the 'more fundamental principle' (1982:46).

⁹⁸ Naturally Luther's exegetical and theological positions developed over time, as described above. Cf Kooiman (1965:41-42).

Luther's christological — or rather Christocentric — reading of Scripture was not based on the assumption that certain texts of the Old Testament are explained by the New Testament, but that the New Testament is the exposition of the Old Testament as such.⁹⁹ The two testaments respectively embody the distinction between letter and spirit, and thus simultaneously provide the solution as to the testamental relationship — the New Testament gospel supersedes the law of the Old Testament. The center of Luther's hermeneutic was what Kooiman calls the 'soteriological-christological principal' (Kooiman 1965:30-31;41).

In taking leave of the allegorical approach, Luther applied a typological way of reading Scripture,¹⁰⁰ and especially in his appropriation of the Old Testament. However, as Ferguson (1986:162) rightly points out, in typology a different, concealed kind of allegory reappears: allegory in disguise, but still allegory in one way or another.¹⁰¹ This raises questions about the all too easy exonerating of Luther of dealings with allegory (e g Goldingay 1982:35-40).

Luther's fundamental principle, to which all others were secondary was that of 'Christ alone'. Even Luther's insistence on 'Scripture alone' was secondary to the christocentric in Luther's work. '[T]o echo the language more familiar in his writing, the Word of God is the heart of scripture' (Burrows 1997:250).

1.4.5.3. Revelatory

Luther's initial approach to the Bible was a novel one. By combining the second and third senses of the quadriga he could emphasize the living nature of Scripture. Scripture became the authority to which both Church and theology must bow, because in it God himself speaks: *viva vox Dei*.

Although the Bible is so important to Luther, he is not narrowly biblical in his theology. He will listen not only to Scripture, but also to the fathers, to the subsequent teaching of the church, to reason and to human experience (Goldingay 1982:41).

Although Luther asserts the priority of text over tradition, he does argue for the priority of tradition over reason and 'enthusiasm', because tradition is 'a stream which issues from a spring which is Scripture itself' (Goldingay 1982:41).

The Bible is not simply a collection of traditional 'faith-truths' and 'laws of life', but the living source of life for believers, or 'a theological "sourcebook"' (Burrows 1997:249). The

⁹⁹ Ferguson (1986:193) refers to the 'exclusively christocentric' reading of the Bible by Luther and Barth. Barth and other representatives of dialectical theology, e g Bornkamm, Fuchs, Conzelmann, Klein, and Hübner (Watson 1986:9), mined the Lutheran interpretation of Paul to its fullest extent.

¹⁰⁰ According to Ferguson (1986:162), the gospel of Jesus Christ constituted 'Scripture' for Luther.

¹⁰¹ Cf chapter 3 for a fuller discussion of allegory and typology.

Bible is not so much the point from where God send forth to all people great and supernatural knowledge, but contains the revelation through which God makes his will known to people in order to establish *κοινωνία* with them (Kooiman 1965:47-48).

Luther held an ambivalent position regarding the canon. He included some deuterocanonical or apocryphal books and discriminated between other canonical books, both in the Old and New Testaments. Although this approach gave rise to the question whether 'canon's bounds' are finally settled, he did not seek formally to re-open the question of canon.

On the other hand, with his strong *solus Christus*-principle, Luther's approach to the biblical canon gave rise to the thought found also in subsequent Protestantism that 'the word of God is not more than the canon of Scripture (as taught in Catholicism) but is less than it' (Goldingay 1982:46).

Thus, for Luther the individual parts and texts of the Bible had to be interpreted in light of the 'whole' — justification by faith¹⁰² (Ferguson 1986:161). And, this concept 'justification by faith' was for Luther most clearly expressed in the corpus Paulinum.

1.5. Luther and Paul

'[T]he righteousness of God' ... became to me the very gate to paradise (Luther, quoted by Heick 1965:323).¹⁰³

It is not without justification that Goldingay (1982:34) claims that Luther's 'spiritual pilgrimage' began with his encounter with the Bible. There is further little doubt that the single most important part of the Bible for Luther was the Pauline writings,¹⁰⁴ especially the letters to Romans and Galatians. Luther not only based his interpretation of the gospel on these writings, but also used its terminology in construing his theology.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Goldingay explains this as what became known later as the canon within the canon-approach, which could mean either that more attention should be devoted to those parts of Scripture which are especially relevant in a given situation, or the identification of a part of Scripture as the center of the 'real' Word of God within it. In Luther's case the latter is more applicable, with its acknowledgement of the diversity of Scripture and Luther's firm choice for the 'Christ alone'-principle (1982:46-47). Cf Burrows (1997:250; 259 n17).

¹⁰³ So also e.g. Bainton (1977:50); Goldingay (1982:34); Kooiman (1965:40).

¹⁰⁴ Heick (1965:316): 'The Augustinian and Pauline character of the Lutheran Reformation is conspicuous'. Cf also Kooiman (1965:40) on the importance of the Pauline *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* for Luther, who was 'knocking unashamedly on Paul's door' to get to the meaning of this phrase.

¹⁰⁵ In this regard the remarks of De Saussure should be kept in mind, viz that words or terminology do not embody or internalise meaning, but rather that words or signifiers are used to convey certain meanings. The implication here is that Paul need not have meant the same as Luther!

Most importantly, it was Paul who provided the answer to his existential crisis¹⁰⁶ to reconcile the justice of God with his grace and forgiveness.¹⁰⁷

1.5.1. Righteousness¹⁰⁸ and justification

The very same phrase that drove Luther to despair in his search for salvation from sin, 'the righteousness of God', became *the* answer to his troubled conscience. 'Righteousness' was no longer the philosophical principle according to which God punishes sinners, but Luther came to understand it as the gift¹⁰⁹ of God by which people can live, namely faith.

Luther stressed that this very phrase at first prevented him from understanding Paul's letter to the Romans.¹¹⁰ In Medieval theology this phrase was understood to indicate a characteristic of God according to which He is bound to punish people in accordance with their sins and unrighteousness.¹¹¹

His 'discovery' that *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* refers to an action emanating from God, would prove determinative for Luther. The notion that human effort is of no soteriological consequence, that God is solely responsible for the justification or salvation of human beings became the touchstone not only of Lutheran theology, but also of subsequent Protestantism. 'The insight granted to Luther has remained at the heart of Protestant Christian thought' (Dunn and Suggate 1993:8). This leads Pannenberg to conclude that for Luther justification by faith was equivalent to Christian freedom, as this was a freedom *extra nos* and situated in Jesus Christ:¹¹²

Prominent as the question of justification certainly was in Luther's mind, his argument depends primarily on the notion of faith¹¹³ (1981:291).

¹⁰⁶ Cf Kooiman (1965:41) which refers to this as an 'exegetisch inzicht, dat samenviel met de ontwarring van een dogmatisch raadsel and hem de ervaring gaf van een verlossing uit een groot innerlijke nood'.

¹⁰⁷ The Occamist tradition, emphasising the supreme and absolute will of God, in its teachings on righteousness also stressed the will, even capriciousness of God (Kooiman 1965:15).

¹⁰⁸ Cf Kooiman (1965:34-38) on Luther's reading of 'righteousness of God' (*iustitia Dei*) in the Psalms in an allegorical-tropological way. By means of this approach Luther became convinced about the meaning of this term: allegorically 'righteousness' means 'Christ in person', and tropologically it means 'Christ working in us, being in us'. Cf note 102 in part 1 of this chapter on 'readings' as 'constructions'.

¹⁰⁹ A 'passive' righteousness in the sense that God is the one who acts in making people righteous. Cf above, and Dunn and Suggate (1993:5-8); Kooiman (1965:40); Ferguson (1986:155).

¹¹⁰ WA. 54, S.185f. Cf Kooiman (1965:39ff) for the reference and some quotes in this regard.

¹¹¹ For the effect of this on Luther, cf above 'Luther's personal experiences'.

¹¹² Pannenberg further argues that sufficient reason exists for discussing the central doctrine of the Reformation 'under the heading of liberty rather than that of justification' (1981:288-289). Cf the final two chapters for an elaboration on the notion of freedom and liberty.

¹¹³ Pannenberg asserts that Luther saw faith beyond assent to the doctrine of the Church (as in medieval times), to add the element of trust to faith, as well as the surrender of the believer him/herself to the one to whom the trust is directed.

1.5.2. Law and gospel

By 'works of the law' Luther understood Paul to mean the hard work and achievements by which one might hope to commend oneself to God (Dunn and Suggate 1993:11).

Luther's understanding of the Law in the New Testament was influenced by his struggle in the Church. The Law (as reflected in the New Testament) became for him a meritorious although never fulfillable principle. Consequently he understood Judaism as a 'works-righteousness' religion. These two notions became embedded in mainstream Christianity, and in the work of numerous scholars.

Luther sharply distinguished between Law and gospel, but he admitted to both emphases being found in the New Testament, even in Jesus' and Paul's words themselves. Hermeneutically, the Law/gospel contrast flowed forth from the letter/spirit distinction, with the letter never able to carry the 'spirit'. 'As law (letter which kills) and gospel (spirit which gives life) the text sets its own agenda'. The way in which the Law/gospel contrast is to be dealt with, according to Luther, is by *preaching*: until such time as the letter or the Law has been preached to make clear that the all works are sin, and the spirit or the gospel has been preached as the gift of grace and salvation, this distinction has not been handled effectively at all (Forde 1983:246-249).

Luther's discovery of the 'faith-principle' was reliant upon an antecedent view of the Law. This view saw the Law as the basis of God-human relationships, but also as the inability of humans to satisfy its demands and divine punishment issuing forth from this human inadequacy. For Luther, this state of affairs was embodied in Judaism during the time of Paul.¹¹⁴

The 'Law' in Paul's writings was symbolic for the demands required by the righteousness of God, that is, human acts on basis of which humans beings are saved. But, these acts could only condemn people further and instill terror in them. Consequently, for Luther this was the role of the Law: to condemn and terrify.

He furthermore sharply distinguished between the moral and ritual-ceremonial aspects of the Jewish law.¹¹⁵ The moral law was seen as the universal aspects of the Law, whereas the rest accounted for Jewish ceremonial and ritual activities. The Law as moral principle had an important function in the life of the believer, namely as a pedagogue to the gospel. The Law

¹¹⁴ Cf e g Thielman (1993:530) 'Luther assumes that the Jews, against whose view of the Law Paul was arguing, held the same theology of justification as the medieval Roman Catholic Church'.

¹¹⁵ A prevalent distinction to this day, but increasingly and effectively challenged by Jacob Neusner and others.

had the preparatory function of creating in the believer, through fear and distress, a conducive climate for the believer to receive the gospel of grace.

The necessity of the Law was a given, but also human rebellion. This is due to the deep seated resistance of human beings to God's will. The Law is necessary and important to guide humans along the road of life, because the justified person is still a sinner, *simul justus et peccator*.

Distinguishing between Law and gospel, but yet retaining both emphases led scholars to detect the famous 'indicative-imperative' in the thought of Paul.¹¹⁶

1.6. Luther and the Church

1.6.1. Teaching of the Church

The teaching of the Church of Luther's day was saturated by the philosophical and theological trends described above.¹¹⁷ The scholastic movement played the biggest role in the formulation of the Church's dogma, because of the new 'style' of theologising (the writing of summa's) and their influence (Heick 1965:289).

The teaching of the Medieval Church regarding salvation can broadly be described as synergism or Semi-Pelagian,¹¹⁸ namely the idea that the human being is neither dead (Augustine), nor healthy (Pelagius). The human condition is one of illness and as much in need of divine grace as of human, that is, meritorious works.¹¹⁹

This line of thinking was supplemented by Gregory the Great's doctrine of purgatory, which for him was scripturally based on Matthew 12:32.

¹¹⁶ Cf Bultmann (1924:123-140). Also e.g. Ridderbos (1975:253-258, 270-271); Schrage (1982:156-161); Verhey (1984:104-105).

¹¹⁷ Cf Heick (1965:326-327) that summarizes it with (1) 'God blissfully resting in himself', and (2) 'legalistic moralism'.

¹¹⁸ Braaten (1990:35-36) denies this; he contends that only the nominalist school of thought can be described Semi-Pelagian, claiming that modern Protestantism is more Pelagian than Thomas' theology was. But on the very next page Braaten contradicts himself in describing the effect of belief in the *infusio gratiae* or initiating, prevenient grace in clear Semi-Pelagian terms: 'prevenient grace is given in order to make possible some inner development which by the *cooperation of one's will* finally elicits the forgiving favor of God' (emphasis added).

¹¹⁹ The intention here is not to provide a detailed account of Medieval Church doctrine, but rather to identify the broader lines of theological thought during this time. Concepts like original sin are therefore not discussed. Furthermore, it is fully realised that not all the different contemporary opinions can be bundled together in a neat and justifiable synthesis. However, there is a need for abstraction — implying generalisation — in order to argue the case. When not avoided altogether, caricatures are hopefully functional.

Gregory's hermeneutics was firmly rooted in a set of theological and ecclesial convictions (Rogerson and Jeanrond 1992:437).

Purgatory was the culmination of his Semi-Pelagian¹²⁰ system of elaborate casuistry, launching a theology of fear and of ethical notions with no scriptural base (Heick 1965:244).

Grace itself was understood along Semi-Pelagian lines. Thomas Aquinas for example insisted upon the voluntaristic preparation of the human for grace. Grace, as a disposition in God is made active in the human being by the infusion of grace, *gratia infusa*. Thus

'[j]ustification ... is a gradual process of human recovery' (Heick 1965:289).

The emphasis was on the capability of a person to, by his/her own natural strength, do meritorious works even before the process of *gratia infusa* took place (Heick 1965:321; Kooiman 1965:16).

The infusion of grace is accompanied with the infusion of love. By means of these infusions the good works of the human are transformed and perfected. On basis of these transformations eternal life can now justly be claimed as reward. If a particular person store up more merit than necessary, these are kept in a treasury,¹²¹ managed by the pope and administered by the priests. Heick (1965:289) concludes that

the religious life of Roman Catholicism does not center in faith but in love and good works.

The sacraments can be seen to embody the above tendencies, conditioned by a twofold concern — the concern of the individual for some practical form of salvation and the hierarchical aspirations of the Church to make the individual's salvation co-dependent on the Church. This resulted in the sacraments acquiring a dual purpose — a means of grace and a tool of power (Heick 1965:290).

1.6.2. Luther's response¹²²

The church is a daughter of the Word, not the mother of the Word (Luther, quoted in Schwartz 1990:6).

¹²⁰ Although in theory Augustinian (with reference to his use of themes like the consequences of the Fall, original sin, inherited guilt and death as punishment for sin), at heart Semi-Pelagian: 'God justified man by imparting his commandments, which man had to fulfill and might even surpass' (Heick 1965:243, citing the *Moralia*, IX, 34, 54)

¹²¹ *Thesaurus supererogationis meritorum*.

¹²² Luther never intended to create division in the Church, nor to establish an independent church. Luther's reform was occasioned by love for the church and loyalty to the gospel (Braaten 1990:4). Bainton (1977:51) sees Luther's initial reform to be directed more toward the syllabus in theological education: stress on the Bible rather than on decretals and scholastics. Heick (1965:313) simply says 'Luther ... became a reformer without any intention on his part'. Also Küng (1994:135).

This section will relate only to those aspects of Luther's teaching in response to the Church, which directly concerns the interpretation of the Pauline writings.

Luther's reaction to the accepted teachings of the Church resulted from his study of Scripture, and his emphasis on the authority of the Bible over the teachings of the Church.

Luther frequently attacked Scholasticism, although he himself used Occamistic terminology from time to time. Especially the teachings on freedom of the will, grace, faith, righteousness, works, and merits were criticised by Luther. Luther accused Thomas Aquinas of relying too much on Aristotelian theory in his theology. For Luther,

the Scholastics were unsafe leaders in matters of gospel and the essentials of salvation (Heick 1965:317).

During the period 1513 to 1517 he came to certain conclusions regarding 'sin, law, the gospel, Christ, faith, justification, sacrifice in the mass, the seven sacraments and the authority of the Church'. The views Luther adopted after the publication of his theses, were the result of his conflict with many opponents, especially the official Church. These thoughts were elaborations of Luther's initial opinions, and were associated with 'faith, works, Law and gospel, sin and grace, justification, and atonement' (Heick 1965:318).

Heick (1965:318) describes Luther as a person in a 'continuous state of doctrinal development'. The validation of this 'developmental' analysis of Luther is probably a study on its own, but the importance of Luther's teaching for our purposes is to establish its lasting value and the level of its continued influence on (Protestant) theology and — related to this— the interpretation of the Bible, especially the Pauline writings. The value of Luther's efforts resides in the 'principle by which the Church stands or falls' — justification by faith.¹²³ The free grace of God bestowed by means of faith to human beings, was Luther's (and the Reformation's) answer to the nagging problem of how to obtain inward certainty.

1.6.3. *Sola fide*

Braaten (1990:23,28) claims that for Luther the concept of 'justification'¹²⁴ was of foundational importance:

The doctrine of justification for Luther was the fundamental and central dogma of Christianity, and

¹²³ Cf Reid in Wright et al (1980:10), who expands it beyond the (Protestant) Church: 'The doctrine of Justification by Faith is at the heart of Christianity'.

¹²⁴ For the controversy on the nature of 'justification', see Heick (1965:323-326). The options range from the 'analytical' (Seebrugge and Holl: an act of grace and estimate of the person's moral condition), through the 'forensic' (Melancthon and the 17th century orthodoxy: declarative announcement) to the 'synthetic' (Barth and others: the imputation of Christ's ultimate 'good work' on the cross). The third option seems the most adequate within Luther's history.

the foundational truth with generative power affecting the entire organism of Christian faith, love, and thought.

Although Pannenberg (1981:288-289) argues that the central 'doctrine' of the Reformation is more properly liberty than justification, he does agree that

[t]he notion of justification by faith was coined in a polemical situation, and it served a similar function later on in Lutheran-criticism of late medieval works-righteousness.

Justification as concept embodies the monergistic soteriological activity of God in human lives. Justification by implication denies any human support or addition to God's actions regarding the salvation of humankind. This is more clearly expressed in Luther's understanding of 'forgiveness of sins', which can also be said to be the most frequent way of referring to the notion of justification¹²⁵ (Braaten 1990:23,83).

Thus,

[a]gainst the Scholastic emphasis on human abilities, Luther stressed the all-importance of faith for the Christian life (Heick 1965:337).

Luther criticised Scholasticism for its 'artificial edifice', consisting in the synthesis of revealed and natural theology. In his criticism Luther (re)discovered the personal God¹²⁶ in Scripture, challenging the prevalent abstract, metaphysical conception of God — Heick (1965:285) views this as the 'real and abiding significance of the Reformation'.

The individual person was of great importance to Luther,¹²⁷ in line with individualistic tendencies of his day were highlighted above. During the course of the Reformation, the significance of personal life and the value of personality were highly valued (cf Heick 1965:320). The influence of these tendencies are still prevalent in the most branches of Western theology today, and are also bearing the brunt of the accusations of 'Eurocentrism' by 'Two-Thirds World' theologians.

1.7. Summarising remarks: 'Contextual' Luther?¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Cf also Einar Billing, quoted by Braaten (1990:82-83) saying 'never believe that you have a correct understanding of a thought of Luther before you have succeeded in reducing it to a simple corollary of the thought of forgiveness of sins'.

¹²⁶ Cf Duns Scotus above.

¹²⁷ Heick (1965:341) contends that 'Luther was not the religious individualist Protestant liberalism pictured him to be'. Luther nevertheless with his particular theological emphasis and as a child of his time clearly prepared the soil of 'privatised individualism'. Cf also Atkinson (1984:323) on individualism and subjectivism in Luther's theology.

¹²⁸ Although not argued in full above, Augustine's contextuality should not be overlooked, either. Augustine's position on Paul can only be understood appropriately within its historical context, where Augustine was confronted with Pelagian thought regarding the free will of human beings, Manichean fatalism and determinism, and Donatist legalism — all of which Augustine encountered in the context of Middle-Platonism, preoccupied with reconciling human responsibility for historical events and the belief in 'rational, benign divine governance of the world' (Gorday 1997:307-308).

Luther ... responded to major cultural changes by producing powerful new readings of the classical texts (Riches 1994:346)

Luther's great discovery of justification by faith was a powerful word of God for the time (Dunn and Suggate 1993:16).

Luther's concern with constructing a doctrinal system, disavowing human effort in salvation and thereby ensuring (in his mind, at least) certainty of salvation, led Luther to read the Pauline writings and their context in a particular way. This particular way — as exemplified in the principle of justification by faith — would become fixed in an almost scholastic way in Melancthon and others following Luther. It is therefore not so much a matter of Paul being

absolutely wrong when he imputes to Judaism that they obey the law in order to earn salvation (Von Waldow 1995:149)

as it was Luther and the reformationists who, in their struggle against the traditional Church and its practices, sought and 'found' in Paul such a portrayal of Judaism.

Martin Luther was deeply dissatisfied with the inability of the theology of his day to provide a sustainable religion and morality. Through strenuous theological searching and study of the Scripture, he developed a theology of 'grace alone'.¹²⁹ Luther's choice for a theology of grace rested on his particular interpretation of the New Testament, and especially the Pauline writings. Yet, this interpretation, bore the marks of his contextual situation.

His [Luther's] exegesis was theological but it was also self-consciously subjective and 'contextual', in the sense that Luther expected to find in scripture guidance in facing contemporary questions and crises of his day (Burrows 1997:251; cf Hendrix 1983:237).

Barr (1990:161) argues that justification was the true center of the Pauline letters for Luther *in his situation*. Like all human beings, Luther also was a child of his times. Naturally from a (post-)modern perspective this implied that Luther - in various ways - was restricted and limited by occupying a particular time and space in history.¹³⁰ On the other hand, however, Luther's historical situatedness made it possible to embark on his particular approach to Scripture and Paul in particular.

Martin Luther's revolutionary interpretation of scripture and his leadership of the Reformation would not have been possible without the Augustinian tradition and Erasmian humanism and the beginnings of a German national consciousness (Meeks 1993:6-7).

¹²⁹ *Sola gratia*, in close accompaniment with *sola fide* and *sola scriptura*. Cf Heick (1965:319) 'By rooting forgiveness in justification by faith, Luther secured for the sinner the certainty of salvation'. The synthetic character of Medieval Christianity was not only challenged by Luther and the Reformation's *agape*-theology, but also by classical learning's revival and concomitant *eros*-theology (Heick 1965:308).

¹³⁰ Luther and his influence on Christian theology and hermeneutics should therefore not be sacralised and immortalised. E g even though Luther veered away from a 'doctrinal' reading of Scripture towards a more grammatical-historical approach, Luther did not always take the historical setting of the text and the historical argument contained in it into consideration, especially when using a text from the Bible as proof-text (Ferguson 1986:164).

That Luther's particular reading and interpretation of Paul was conditioned by his contextual situation, can be seen to be borne out negatively in the following decades. With the dragon-theology of merit having been slain, and the knight-theology of grace riding victorious, seventeenth century Orthodoxy, ironically but gradually resuscitated the slain beast.¹³¹ As a subtle form of Pelagianism was gradually reintroduced, again to meet the needs of the time,¹³² Luther's emphasis on grace not works bowed the knee before what became the ultimate 'work', the 'work of faith'.¹³³ However, the Lutheran interpretation of Paul remained,¹³⁴ to be forcefully confirmed in the nineteenth century with Baur's Hegelian distinction between Judaism and Christianity, and continuing ever since (Braaten 1990:28-37).

2. Conclusion

The exegesis of any text, certainly of a biblical text, needs more than the exploration of its prehistory and its Sitz im Leben in order to allow it to be heard in its full meaning today. 'To ask what a text means should also involve the question what it has meant' (Heffner 1991:129).

Interpreting a text is not simply playing with words but an act with historical consequences (Luz 1994:33).

In this chapter I attempted to account for the importance of reception history of texts, and particularly the significance of one such interpretive history for a particular set of texts: Luther's reading of Paul in the sixteenth century. In acknowledging the importance of reception studies for interpreting biblical texts, a certain ambiguity, however, remains: although it is acknowledged that 'we stand inescapably in the shadow of those who have gone before us' (Bockmuehl 1995:59), that shadow can have a positive as well as a negative effect on interpretation. The

¹³¹ The *ordo salutis* reflected this with justification following logically and temporally upon the faith of the believer. Cf Gonzáles (1985:175-176) who treats the 'triumph of the Orthodoxy' according to three of its characteristics: emphasis on systematic thought; the use of Aristotelian thought; and, the influence of 'schools'. Gonzáles refers to the emerging Orthodoxy as 'Protestant Scholasticism'. Cf also the remarks of Childs (1997:208) on the disintegration of Luther's emphasis on justification and its resultant inspiration during the first generation of his followers, with Melancthon's 'increasingly scholastic formulations' and the emergence of Lutheran confessionalism.

¹³² Braaten (1990:29) refers to 'the peculiar polemical requirements' of the time: the need for positions against the Roman Catholics (who rejected the faith principle as arbitrary fancy, but insisted upon the authority of the Bible) and against the 'fanatical enthusiasts' (who were spiritualising Scripture into 'inward gnosis and feeling').

¹³³ The very notion of which Dunn and Suggate (1993:10-11) defends Luther against: 'Faith is ... the sinner's "empty hand" stretched out to receive the undeserved grace of God'.

¹³⁴ Cf Tillich, quoted in Braaten (1990:48): 'The paradox of the New Being, the principle of justification by grace through faith, lies at the center of the experiences of Paul', and relating Tillich's modern wo/man's existential question of meaning in a meaningless world to 'Paul's question, How do I become liberated from the law?' This begs another question: was this Paul's question? Barth's equation of Luther's struggle to establish the article of justification with Paul's polemic with the Judaizers, also give evidence of the Lutheran framework. Barth's noting of Luther's claim that Paul was the great apostolic teacher of justification as an exaggeration, does not remove the taint of the Lutheran framework (cf Braaten 1990:68). As is argued here that Luther's contextualisation was not continued by his followers, but the fruits of his contextual efforts merely replicated in a (anti)contextual way, Witvliet (1985:79) argues the same for Barth's theology — 'far more contextual than people often suppose' — being decontextualised by those following in his footsteps.

argument here is that as much as Luther's reading of Paul constituted a contextual reading, the fixation of that tradition into virtually the only appropriate way to understand Paul led to many undesirable consequences. Interpretive imperialism and exclusivism set in when an interpretive tradition becomes the exclusive, even if secondary, hermeneutical key with which to appropriate the texts.

It can be argued that the developments in the study of the history of interpretation have done the reading and understanding of texts worlds of good, especially by returning the human or personal dimension to the interpretation of texts while discarding the subject-object polarity of modernism. The history of interpretation is, in the words of Smith (1993:223) restricted to 'texts' and fails to deal with 'Scripture'. Whereas the interpretation of Scripture is concerned with the interpretation of human life and the universe, texts are only the vehicles for mediating these concerns 'and in effect secondary'. This notion is particularly relevant when the history of Pauline interpretation is considered, where the Pauline texts have been read more readily as Scripture rather than as mere informative texts. The Pauline writings as Scripture have been interpreted as conveyors of particular ways of understanding life itself, seen nowhere else better than in the sixteenth centuries interpretations of these writings.

As was argued in the first part of this chapter, the tradition of interpretation cannot be severed from the texts it interprets and the historical circumstances surrounding it. Indeed, texts and their interpretations simply do not exist in a historical void, but create historical effects and influence history. The inverse is equally true. Historical circumstances and contexts give rise to new appropriations and interpretations of Scripture. The difficulties surrounding any venture into the investigation of the tradition and history of interpretation of texts, including distinguishing where the tradition begins and texts end for example, do not free us from the obligation to understand how such tradition and history of interpretation have influenced subsequent understanding of texts. In this regard, it was argued that Luther's specific circumstances led to a particular understanding of the Pauline writings, with both the texts themselves and a particular interpretive tradition contributing to this understanding.

The one pervasive feature of Pauline research until recently, and which still holds true for a significant portion of Pauline scholarship today, is the influence of the Lutheran framework: The interpretation of Paul according to Martin Luther's sixteenth century understanding of Paul, with a concomitant view of first century Judaism, and of human life itself.¹³⁵ It can be claimed — and in the following chapter the corroboration of this claim follows — that the Lutheran reading of Paul is still fixed as the operative and normative grid for reading the

¹³⁵ The latter is arguably present in all texts functioning as Scripture! Cf Smith (1993:238-242) on the real issue of understanding Scripture as the way(s) of understanding human life and the world in which we live.

corpus Paulinum.¹³⁶ Luther's insistence on the principle of justification by faith have had an even wider impact:

It is a principle which liberates Luther from his toils in late medieval piety; it is also one which divides not only Europe, but the whole world into two (Riches 1994:344).

Some of the baggage that the TAP picked up along the way of four and a half centuries, rearranged if not changed certain aspects of what Luther initially claimed as the Pauline gospel. One example is Luther's insistence on the connection between faith and good works, with the latter following upon the former:

justification sets us free for joyous service and obedience
and

the seed of faith bears the fruit of love toward the neighbour (Williams 1996:2).

Luther clearly did not propagate the internalising of the Christian faith and religion to the extent of losing sight of its need to do good works without self-interest, as this would in his view invalidate the Christian commitment.¹³⁷

However, the consistent interpretation of Paul along the lines of Luther — emphasising religious-spiritual issues — has made the Pauline letters all but impenetrable¹³⁸ for liberationist theologies. The plea is not one of serviceability to the so-called 'genitive theologies' as such, but in so far as these theologies represent actual and '(the?) real' problems of the modern world, the current Pauline paradigm of interpretation needs to be scrutinised for its exclusivity, its absolutising of the meaning of Paul's letters.

Riches (1994:351) argues that as long as the Lutheran framework determines the understanding of Paul, matters of 'human inwardness' will dominate, because the Lutheran approach to the Pauline literature seeks meaning in the original, authorial meaning of the texts. In Liberation theologies, on the other hand, there is more acknowledgement of meaning as a derivative of the dialogue between the text and the experience of the reader, and thus other readings — of recovery (Rowland) — have become possible. Riches in effect presents the matter as one of literary theory concerning the meaning of 'meaning'!

¹³⁶ It is, after all, a reading which 'still resonates strongly and speaks powerfully to the self-indulgent and self-righteous of the twentieth century', and 'it still speaks with tremendous force to a self-centered individualism today' (Dunn and Suggate 1993:13,16).

¹³⁷ The pervasive influence of the Lutheran framework in Pauline studies can be seen in the presentation of Paul's message as an atemporal and general, individualised and spiritualised account: the human being's predicament of being unable to acquire the necessary requirements for salvation from God. The constant refinement of the various variables within this phantom message ascribed to Paul, has led to the inability of scholars to make Paul relevant for contemporary life, apart from the spiritualisation approach. Cf below, chapters 4 and 5, for a discussion of the 'social' aspects of the Pauline letters.

¹³⁸ A few exceptions exist, e.g. Segundo (1986). In fact, some scholars even claim that Paul has no bearing on social issues, cf the perpetual lament in this regard in Jewett (1994).

However, it remains a question whether the predominant ‘problem’ with the Lutheran framework is its modernist search for the original, authorial intention of the text. As was argued above, Luther’s reading was occasioned by his circumstances without which his particular approach to the text becomes difficult to explain; similarly, in many Liberation theologies the search for the text’s original meaning dominates and the social context often stimulates other questions to the text rather than that it occasions a different literary view of texts and their meaning. The more eminent problem with the Lutheran framework in the interpretation of Paul seems to be that the ‘results’ of the dialogue between Luther, his context and the texts became normative and authoritative for all future dialogue about these texts!

In a somewhat ironic way, the efforts of Luther to wrest the interpretation of the Bible away from ecclesial control exercised through, what Schwartz (1990:4) calls, ‘tradition with a capital T’ has resulted in the establishment of an equally pervasive and monolithic ‘traditional reading’ of at least the Pauline letters. Another irony is that ecclesial control of the Bible was exchanged for ‘academic’ control of the Bible: the Bible became the book of the university.

CHAPTER TWO

Paul revisited: The 'New Perspective' on Paul

1. Introduction

The established 'Paul' is so important for theology that he will continue prominently in the field. A coalition of interests, however, including an interdisciplinary study of religion, may conspire to develop alternative approaches and constructions (Horsley 1995:1151).

Horsley's statement refers mainly to the lack of New Testament, especially Pauline, scholars to avail themselves of sociological theory and method in their studies of Paul — and their entrapment in functionalist models when sociological methodology *is* employed — but his reference to an 'established Paul' also rings true for Pauline studies in general. The contention here, in short, is not only that it was the Lutheran framework which for many years was capable of exerting its pervasive influence on the interpretation of Paul's writings and created and modelled — and at times, modified, but always within the perimeters of that interpretive framework — 'our Paul', but also that this framework today still largely governs the way in which the Pauline letters are understood.

At least one reason for the Lutheran framework's ability to direct the interpretation of the *corpus Paulinum*, is because this framework ostensibly offered — and still offers — a broad and inclusive outline for interpreting these letters, and eventually even the rest of the New Testament and the whole Christian Bible.¹ This holds true not only for the church — as Käsemann puts it:

The history of Pauline interpretation is the history of the apostle's ecclesiastical domestication (quoted in Elliott 1994:1)

— but the Lutheran framework is the dominant interpretive grid used for the Paulines in the academy, as well. In addition, the Lutheran framework offered — indeed, required — a way of understanding Paul's thought and first-century Judaism² that mutually complemented one another, and in that way created 'the proper', or a plausible setting or context for understanding the Pauline writings. The interpretive setting of the Pauline letters was perceived as proper even in the late parts of the twentieth century because the Lutheran — or perhaps, a neo-Lutheran — framework was bolstered through appeals to a particular perception of the modern

¹ Käsemann's (1971:2) accusation that Stendahl's NPP-proposals are a threat to Protestant theology and of 'fateful significance for the whole of Christianity', should be understood in this light. Cf Elliott (1994:68).

² The word 'Judaism' is used here in a similar way as adopted and explained by Grabbe (1994:465): 'to refer to the umbrella religion, with all its subvarieties' and it 'implies no monolithic or "orthodox" view of religion'. Cf Grabbe (1994:464) and the arguments below! In the mean time, the concerns of Pilch (1997:119-125) are noted, namely that both 'Judaism'/'Jews' and 'Christianity'/'Christians' are inevitably anachronistic, finding their inception only towards the end of the first century CE and the fourth century CE, respectively.

or contemporary world: a (post)modern world inhabited by individuals alienated from themselves, other people, and the metaphysical — the latter at least in the traditional sense of the word.

However, within what can be called the New Perspective on Paul (NPP) the untenability of the traditional approach to Paul is accepted; that is, that he is primarily advocating an individualised justification by faith as built upon and informed by a conscience troubled by guilt, and its corollary in the presentation of Judaism as a works-righteousness religion. On the other hand, the NPP has not yet reached the stage where it can offer the same encompassing framework for understanding Paul as the Lutheran framework did and, for some, continues to do.

With a few exceptions,³ the implications of the NPP for an alternative 'Pauline theology' have not been presented in a systematic way. It is not the intention to do so here, either. In the single instances where scholars have attempted a detailed analysis of Paul along the lines of a NPP, criticism of the major conclusions often led to the failure of such hypotheses to win the day regarding the 'proper' understanding of Paul's letters. A good example is the early work of EP Sanders in 1977 which — apart from the debatable understanding of the religious groups of Paul's day — concluded with the argument that Paul rejected 'Judaism' simply because it was not 'Christianity'.

Even if it is accepted with Hafemann (1993:674) that the NPP is the modern consensus among scholars — which at times seems to be a difficult claim to justify⁴ — a serious problem still remains. The Lutheran framework imposed on understanding the Pauline material needs an equally broad framework for understanding Paul in a (this?) new way. Such a framework will of course also have to correlate with the NPP, and with the rejection of 'Judaism' as a 'works-righteousness' religion.

But most of all, such a new perspective eventually has to make sense to the church, if it is to attain a similar status as its Lutheran counterpart. Perhaps this is the greatest challenge

³ A rare exception is the recent publication by JGD Dunn (1998). Cf also Dunn's 1988 Romans commentaries, his 1993 Galatians commentary and his 1993 *The theology of Paul's letter to the Galatians*. However, the diffuseness of the NPP makes it difficult to categorise scholarly work on Paul as instances of NPP-treatments of the Pauline letters; e.g. would not Boyarin (1994) and Segal (1990a) also qualify as extensive NPP-treatments of Paul? Or, would it not be better to refer to the latter authors' work as second generation NPP? Such characterisations eventually appear to be arbitrary; Elliott e.g. refers to Boyarin's (1994) complicitous critique of the Lutheran framework's domination of Pauline interpretation which still subscribes to the basic parameters of that framework in his use of Baur. As Elliott puts it, 'the conventional reading [sc of Romans] ... that ... has served so well the Lutheran dogmatics Boyarin hopes to discredit' (:387 n31; cf 1997:381-384).

⁴ Cf Porter (1996:23 n6) who claims that 'there are still significant scholars who have not accepted the new understanding', although it is widely hailed as a 'paradigm shift' in Pauline studies.

which lies before the NPP, in view of the continuing ecclesial reception of Paul within a Lutheran framework. In fact, this challenge faces all alternative interpretations of the Pauline letters, but especially in the church as broader Christian community where, arguably, the Lutheran framework still reigns supreme, and constitutes the consensus.

2. Modern trends in Pauline interpretation: A brief sketch of developments

2.1. Introduction

In this section a brief overview of contemporary interpretation of Paul will be presented, without any claim to be exhaustive.⁵ The aim of this is to show how the tradition of interpretation followed upon — and ultimately also in — the initial steps of Luther. Although it can be argued that Luther's followers, for example Melancton, dogmatised certain elements of his thought, it cannot be denied that this was done in an effort to re-contextualise Luther's contextualisation of Paul. However, the emphasis here is not to describe in detail the internal relationship between different positions.

The emphasis, rather, is to point out that certain decidedly Lutheran elements remained — coinciding with what can be perceived as the 'core' elements of Pauline theology — and that these persistently influenced Pauline scholars. In fact, it will be shown that the traditional approach proved the mainstay of Pauline research deep into the twentieth century.

The adherence to Luther's views entailed the affirmation of the presuppositions of the traditional approach to Paul, and ultimately its dominance in the field of Pauline studies.

2.2. The main trajectories⁶

The period of modern Pauline research is generally held to have commenced with FC Baur, and the Tübingen school which was strongly connected to his views. Baur's attempt to account for the history of the early church by means of historical description alone, without 'recourse to supernatural interventions or to explanations based on the miraculous', ushered in the period of modern study of the New Testament (Hafemann 1993:668).

⁵ Studies on the history of the interpretation of Paul include Kümmel (1972), Neill and Wright (1988), and many others. Recent surveys of Pauline research includes Merk (1988:1-81) on Pauline studies from 1936 to 1985; Vos (1989:23-40) on some trends in recent Pauline studies.

⁶ Various options exist for investigating the era of modern research on Paul. Here the main representatives of the 'shifts' in interpretation are briefly listed, and their complicity in the Lutheran framework — whether acknowledged or assumed — noted. The single rubric under which these views are considered, does not suggest any necessary similarity in position, theory or method, apart from sharing in a variety of ways and to different degrees in the Lutheran heritage.

2.2.1. FC Baur

Scott Hafemann (1993:666) argues that the specific interpretive framework that Baur established in the early nineteenth century, ‘provided both the framework and presuppositions for the modern study of Paul’s writings until the mid-1970’s’. The major preoccupations of Baur were: the attempt to find a center of or in Pauline thought, Paul’s conception of the Law and the character and identity of Paul’s opponents. These matters were expressed by Baur in a distinctly Hegelian⁷ interpretive framework.⁸

In Baur’s 1831 study of the setting of the Corinthian letters he applied the dialectical, evolutionary approach of Hegel, suggesting a situation consisting of a ‘fundamental opposition’ between Gentile (or Diaspora) and Jewish (or Palestine) Christianity.⁹ The former consisted of an ‘universal, Law-free and Hellenistically determined gospel’ and was represented by Paul (and the Apollos group); the latter of a ‘particular, Law-orientated, Jewish-bound’ account of the Jesus events, finding its guidance through Peter and the links with the original apostles.

The Corinthian situation was viewed by Baur as reflective of the broader situation also, with which Paul had to cope during his ministry and as reflected in his letters. A bitter conflict raged between Paul and the original apostles, with the Law/gospel contrast as the central issue and bone of contention. This contest rippled outwards to the other New Testament writings, and even to early Christianity until the second century.

The interpretation of Baur reached its peak in his 1875 publications on Paul’s life, ministry and writings.¹⁰ For Baur the authentic Paul was found only where the Jewish-Christian contrast manifested itself, combined with a Pauline ‘doctrine’ of law-free justification by faith.

Apart from many accolades to be bestowed on Baur for his majestic work on Paul and the study of the New Testament in general, as well as the many and serious criticisms¹¹ to be

⁷ Cf Howell (1993:307). Baur, disavowing the concept of a personal and transcendent God, adopted the Hegelian abstract God as ‘an infinite Spirit or eternal Idea’. In later years he rejected the Hegelian view in favour of a simpler rationalism based on ‘universal ethical principles’ (Hafemann 1993:666-667).

⁸ Many of Baur’s ideas can be found in his precursors, e.g. Semler, Michaelis, Schleiermacher, Eichorn. However, Baur’s distinct contribution is found in his successful attempt to ‘construct a system of linear development encompassing the full sweep of New Testament theology’ (Howell 1993:308).

⁹ The strategy of posing a difference in opinion between two trains of theological thought, perceived to have been fundamental during early Christianity, has been taken up and pursued further by many scholars — one of the most recent examples is Michael Goulder (1994).

¹⁰ Howell (1993:307) calls Baur’s 1845 work entitled *Paulus der Apostel Jesu Christi*, his ‘seminal thesis’ because in this book the Hegelian analysis of early Christianity is argued consistently.

¹¹ E.g., of the criticism against Baur by Munck: that the leaders in Jerusalem seemingly did not want to exclude or Judaize Gentile Christians; that Paul worked ceaselessly to achieve unity between Jewish and Gentile Christians; and, that Paul had no hesitation in stressing his theological views on the importance of the Jewish nation to Christianity (Rom 9-11) (Howell 1993:309).

leveled at him, the intention here is to focus on only one aspect, that is, to highlight Baur's contribution in perpetuating the Lutheran framework.

[H]is reading of Paul was clearly influenced by nineteenth century notions of cultural and historical progress: according to these canons, Judaism was 'a religion based on law' and had only 'a subordinate and secondary place in the history of the religious development of mankind' [sic], while Christianity constituted 'the absolute religion, the religion of the spirit and freedom' (Barclay 1996:197, quoting Baur).

The views and hypothesis of Baur clearly presupposed and subsumed the Reformation's Law/gospel contrast, as represented in what Baur saw as the struggle between the Jerusalem Christians represented by James and Peter and insisting on the maintenance of Jewish law and traditions, and on the other hand the Hellenistic orientated Paul with his law-free, salvation-by-faith gospel.

Hafemann (1993:668) underlines three central aspects¹² in the work of Baur, which have since Baur provided the point of entry to the study of Paul: the identity of Paul's opponents,¹³ the Pauline view of the Law¹⁴ and the search for a 'generating center' in Pauline thought.¹⁵ It is clear that the answers to all three these questions were predetermined by Luther's interpretation centuries ago: Paul had to fight the legalistic works-righteousness of the Judaizers by proclaiming a radical disjunction with the meritorious works-Judaism, as sanctioned and sustained by the Law, and for this Paul used the tool of justification by faith. Luther's interpretive framework was entrenched by Baur's interpretation.¹⁶

¹² The unavoidable interaction between these three aspects is clear as it emerges from Baur's own writings and the discussion here.

¹³ To be very clear, one should perhaps add the following phrase to 'opponents': *and the nature of Jewish religion* — the latter was generally presupposed and constructed to fit the profile of the antithetically constructed opponents.

¹⁴ Hafemann acknowledges that the 'pendulum is swinging' towards the NPP (:674); that the 'Law-debate' is the currently dominant in Pauline studies (:671); that the 'modern consensus' on the Lutheran Law/gospel antithesis was destroyed by the NPP (but that amidst dissatisfaction the concept of justification by faith, as the center of Pauline thought lives on) (:671); that the traditional view of Paul's opponents as legalist Judaizers had to be destroyed for the NPP to make sense (:672) — thus: for Hafemann the NPP presents no less than a 'paradigm-shift' in the interpretation of Paul. This position probably explains Hafemann's failure to account for the current, persistent pervasiveness of the Lutheran approach to Paul.

¹⁵ Hafemann argues for these three aspects of 'modern' Pauline interpretation as being 'determinative' for the past 150 years, i.e. since Baur. From the preceding discussion of Luther's reading of Paul, it is clear that all three are already present there, accompanied by Luther's concomitant answers. One could argue that, not the modern interpreters of Paul, but indeed Luther himself placed these issues on the table. See below. Hafemann does admit that Baur's view of Paul's opponents as 'Judaizers' dates back to the Reformation (:668); and that Baur was influenced by Luther's Law/gospel contrast (:671).

¹⁶ Even if one holds, with Watson (1986:10-13), that Baur himself opposed the Lutheran view of earning salvation with his own notion of Paul opposing Jewish particularism. The Lutheran framework has Paul fighting an approach by relying on generalising also the (Jewish) attempts of earning salvation, and thus leaves no room for Baur's particularity-generality contrast.

Watson further argues that many adherents of the Reformational tradition were unable to make use of Baur's ideas, because Baur saw 'Paul's historical context and his theological reflection as a unity'. But this is exactly the case in the Lutheran framework: a specific perception of Judaism is read back into Paul's (supposed) justification 'doctrine', leading to the assumption that Paul's reaction against legalism was due to Jewish belief and practices in the first century.

Watson, referring to Bultmann, mentioned that some scholars did assume Baur's views to be on par with the Lutheran approach. However, this statement is not altogether accurate as the assimilation of Baur within the

2.2.2. Liberal Protestantism

Ritschl, with his dual distinctions between Paul and Gentile Christianity, and between Peter and the original apostles and the Judaisers, followed in the tracks of Baur. However, in keeping with the age of Idealism, he divorced Paul from history.¹⁷

The well known student of Ritschl, Adolf von Harnack, widened the gap between Jesus and first-century Judaism on the one hand, and early Christianity — and Paul — on the other, by insisting that Paul began a process of the ‘hellenization of Jesus’ message.¹⁸ Paul is said to have transformed the simple and straightforward ‘message of love’ of Jesus into a ‘religion’ of redemption. The historical Jesus belongs to Judaism, whereas the Christ of faith described by Paul derives from Hellenism (Dunn 1991:7-8).

2.2.3. JB Lightfoot and the Religionsgeschichtliche school

JB Lightfoot, in the scholarly circles of England, undermined or at least substantially modified Baur’s hypothesis.¹⁹ He accepted the rigorous division between Paul and Jewish Christianity as suggested by Baur, but by using a different, historical methodology of analysing certain texts Lightfoot redated the documents Baur placed in the second century. In this way Lightfoot also undid the chronology suggested by the Tübingen school (Dunn 1991:3-4).

Lightfoot’s magisterial commentaries ... became a powerful apologetic against the extreme literary criticisms of the time, and a caveat against drawing conclusions about relations in the primitive church from secondary sources (Howell 1993:308).

Furthermore, Lightfoot questioned the identity of the opponents of Paul, suggesting that apart from the traditional Judaisers, Paul also had to deal with a gnostic-oriented ‘Christian

Lutheran style of reading Paul, would seem to be rather the *general* trend, due to the tacit assumptions held within the Lutheran framework. Contrary to Watson, one can argue that it is indeed the ‘Jewish exclusivism’ (based on their perception of ‘their Law’ which they should keep perfectly in order to receive salvation from God) which is ‘generalised’. Baur’s work is seen as providing ‘historical substance’ and legitimation to reading Paul’s struggle as one against ‘works-righteousness Judaism’. But, Watson might be confusing cause (Law/gospel contrast) and result (generalisation). Cf the quote from Baur in Watson (1986:12).

For the apparent contradiction between universalistic and particularistic elements in Baur, cf Boyarin (1994:11), who describes Baur’s view of Paul’s motivational force as a ‘vision of universalism’. However, ‘[t]he identification of the “old Paul” as a Lutheran one seems to go back to F C Baur himself’ (Boyarin 1994:271 n4). Cf Boyarin (1994:49-51; 275 n21) for further criticism of Watson, especially for claiming Paul to be a ‘universalist’ but then insisting that Paul’s call for separation from the Jewish community was Paul’s motivational drive.

¹⁷ Cf Dunn (1991:4) regarding the portrayal of Jesus as a ‘timeless moralist’.

¹⁸ Cf also Dunn’s reference (1990:37) to Wrede’s accusation leveled at Paul being the ‘second founder’ of Christianity, and Reimarus’ questioning early Christianity’s faithfulness to ‘the intention of Jesus’.

¹⁹ Cf CK Barrett’s remark, ‘Baur asked the right questions, and ... Lightfoot set them in the right historical perspective’ (quoted in Bruce 1979:43).

Essene movement'. Breaking with the monolithic concept of Baur's Jewish Christianity, Lightfoot thus proposed another kind of 'Jewish heresy' (Hafemann 1993:668-669).

In Germany and the rest of the Anglo-Saxon world the main shift²⁰ from Baur's position can be found in the *Religionsgeschichtliche* (History of Religions, or Comparative Religions) school, with the names of W Bousset and R Reitzenstein deserving mention as its main proponents. The *Religionsgeschichtliche* school proposed that a third entity should be situated between Gentile Christianity, on the one hand, and Jewish Christianity²¹ on the other, namely Hellenistic Christianity.

[T]he attention of NT scholars was now forcefully directed to the conceptual world of Hellenism (Hafemann 1993:669).

The strength of the *Religionsgeschichtliche* school can be seen in its ability to offer, in opposition to the Tübingen school, another reconstruction of the development of Early Christianity. Heitmüller and Bousset interpreted Christianity from the perspective of a mystery cult, with Jesus transformed into the acclaimed κύριος. Within this reconstruction the role played by Gnosticism cannot be overestimated (Dunn 1991:7-8; Hafemann 1993:668-669). Reitzenstein concluded from his extensive analysis of a variety of Gnostic material, that Pauline Christology rests on Gnostic terminology (Howell 1993:309-311).

As much as the particular approach of the *Religionsgeschichtliche* school to Paul questioned the work of Baur, it did nothing to lessen the influence of the Lutheran framework. Moreover, its emphasis on the Hellenistic setting exacerbated the division between the Jewish matrix of early Christianity and Paul's supposed Hellenistic nature (cf Dunn 1991:8). However, with recent discoveries such as the Qumran Scrolls and with wider research in contemporary Jewish and intertestamental literature, the Jewishness of Paul is being rediscovered (Howell 1993:310), admitted and even emphasised (Young 1997).

2.2.4. *The Liberal school*²²

The major contribution of the Liberal school can be located in its particular view on the relationship between Paul and Jesus. Interpreting the Gospels rationally or mythologically, Jesus Christ became a 'pious religious teacher' and all supernatural events were rationally explained, reinterpreted or mythologised. In Holtzmann, this approach to Jesus was extended to the person of Paul.

²⁰ Lütgert, with his distinction between 'Gnostics' or 'Pneumatics' and Judaisers, prepared the way for the change (Hafemann 1993:669).

²¹ Or the Primitive Church (Dunn 1991:4).

²² The Liberal school is often related to the History of Religions-approach, as both emphasise the radical Greek nature of Paul's ideas (Howell 1993:311).

Holtzmann replaced the juridical-forensic understanding of Paul's gospel of righteousness, which had grown out of the Protestant Reformation, with a mystical-ethical line (Howell 1993:312).

Although the 'objective, redemptive, historical event of Christ's incarnation, death and resurrection' of the Reformation's Paul was replaced in the Liberal school with a righteousness dependent upon the 'ethical, mystical (non-objective) communion with Christ' (Howell 1993:312), the 'center' of Pauline thought as 'righteousness by faith' was retained.

2.2.5. R Bultmann²³

Luther's theology is eminently existential (Heick 1965:329).

[I]n many evangelical circles people are preaching existentialism in Pauline dress and imagining it to be our biblical and Reformation heritage (Wright 1980:34).

It can be said that the interpretation of the Law/gospel contrast in Paul's letters reached its twentieth-century climax in Bultmann's appropriation of 'the language both of Paul and of Luther' (Wright 1997:14). According to Bultmann, Paul attributed the Christian tradition within a Hellenistic framework at a time when it has become devoid of traces of a historical Jesus or Jewish and Palestinian traditions. Paul's opposition, however, consisted of legalistic Judaism based on the Jewish Law.²⁴

The roots of Rudolf Bultmann's interpretation lie firmly embedded in the *Religionsgeschichtliche* school, being the 'representative *par excellence*' of this approach (Howell 1993:313). However, not only did Bultmann with his particular views on Gnosticism eventually bring the *Religionsgeschichtliche* school to its knees, but, more important for this discussion, with his particular philosophical approach established a certain interpretive trend in the interpretation of Paul.

- Bultmann's insistence on the presence of Gnostic opponents in the Corinthian setting went beyond the textual evidence and dealt a heavy blow to the *Religionsgeschichtliche* school's view of a pre-Christian Gnosticism.²⁵ The main thesis of Bultmann regarding

²³ The extent of Bultmann's influence on NT studies, and Pauline studies in particular is difficult to over-estimate: 'No doubt the most influential NT scholar of the twentieth century' (Hafemann 1993:676). The emphasis here, again, is however on his share in the scholarly continuation and even further cultivation of the Lutheran framework in Pauline studies.

²⁴ In the words of Thielman (1993:530): 'The Lutheran picture of ancient Judaism [is] now clad in the impressive robes of scholarship'. Cf Wright (1997:15). Donaldson (1989:657) notes that Bultmann's point is not that Paul 'invented' but took over the notion that the Law is antithetical to Christ from the Hellenistic Jewish church.

²⁵ A good example of such criticism can be found in Ellis' critique of the *Religionsgeschichtliche* approach: 'it tend to convert parallels into influences and influences into sources'; these supposed sources date back to a time much later than that of Paul; and, 'its historical inquiry is compromised by an inadequate world view that presupposes a self-contained natural world immune from the interference of the supernatural' (1980:1176).

the relationship between early Christianity and Judaism was the position that 'Christianity very quickly distanced itself from its distinctively Jewish matrix' (Dunn 1991:9).

- The existential interpretation of Paul comes to full bloom in Bultmann. The question whether the existentialist interpretation of Paul was occasioned by the Lutheran interpretation, is answered in the affirmative by Stendahl (1963:207).²⁶

Bultmann saw Paul's opposition to Judaism's legalism based on two grounds: quantitative (no one can satisfy *all* the demands of the Law and fulfill it perfectly) and qualitative (the attempt to *fulfill* the demands of the Law). Bultmann then isolates the problem of *καύχησις* (boasting), the human being's need for self-affirmation in the existentialist sense, as the core of Pauline thought.²⁷

From Bultmann's synthesis of Lutheran theology and existentialist philosophy Paul emerged as opposing a fundamental human perversion, our desire to justify ourselves (Barclay 1996:198).

Stendahl (1963:207) views this generalisation of Pauline theology as an 'even more drastic translation' and 'even more far-reaching' reading than Luther and the Reformation's introspective conscience. But even so, Bultmann's views are to be found 'in the prolongation of the same [Lutheran, JP] line'.²⁸

Thus, although not the only scholar to attempt it, Bultmann succeeded very well in establishing an individualised and generalised interpretation of Paul. Paul sees the righteousness of God as a forensic concept, that is righteousness granted to the individual based on the individual's justification by faith. Within Bultmann's existentialist categories, Paul becomes concerned with individuals in need of making a decision, as God is viewed from an anthropological perspective and not from the view of God's redemptive plan with the world.²⁹

This correlated with the view of earliest Christianity being something very distinct from Judaism,³⁰ the distinction and separation caused by different views on the salvation of people. Judaism had become a 'perverted religion' in which human beings were 'boastful', not only attempting to fulfill the Law, but also assuming this to be a real possibility.

²⁶ In this chicken-egg argument, Houlden (1989:406) seems to argue that it was both the 'strong philosophical and theological concerns' that occasioned Bultmann's specific exegetical approach and especially demythologisation. Cf also Morgan and Barton (1988:114), who find 'strong roots' of Bultmann's 'existentialist language' in the Augustinian tradition, the precursor to the Lutheran framework.

²⁷ Cf Watson (1986:5) in his evaluation of Bultmann: 'The Pauline term for the fundamental sin is "boasting" (cf Rom. 3:27)'.

²⁸ Cf Hafemann (1993:676): 'Luther's Law/gospel contrast therefore reaches its apex in Bultmann's reading of Paul'.

²⁹ Bultmann found his views supported by his reading of Paul's interpretation (demythologising) of 'the Jewish apocalyptic gospel of Jesus as the Messianic Son of Man' (Hafemann 1993:676).

³⁰ Bultmann was naturally strongly influenced in this by the *Religionsgeschichtliche* school.

2.2.6. E Käsemann

If I had to choose the works of one Pauline exegete to take with me to a desert island, it would be Käsemann. The power, the drive, the exegetical honesty and thoroughness, the passion for truth and for freedom, are wonderful to read, and send me back to Paul again and again with fresh eyes (Wright 1997:18).

Although Käsemann opposed the existentialist interpretation of Paul in the strongest terms, he became *the* exponent of understanding Paul's writings according to the Lutheran tradition.³¹ Wright (1997:17-18) illustrates in a concise way how Käsemann availed himself of both Schweitzer's insistence on the importance of Jewish apocalyptic in Pauline thought, and the insistence of Bultmann 'and the other Lutherans' that justification was the center of Pauline thought.

He endeavoured to understand Paul within his specific historical-religious context, which for Käsemann was Jewish apocalypticism. Unlike Bultmann's attempt at demythologizing the apocalyptic nature of Pauline thought into existentialist categories, Käsemann inverted Bultmann's position by celebrating apocalypticism as the 'mother' of all Christian theology (1987:31-42; cf Deidun 1986:233).

Paul's apocalyptic theology meant for Käsemann that the righteousness of God should not be understood as God's 'activity' or the gift he bestows on humans, but as God's 'identity' or the nature of God in action, as contained in his venture to save humankind according to his covenantal faithfulness to his creation and people³² (Hafemann 1993:676; McGrath 1993:520).

For Käsemann the Pauline doctrine of justification was the result of an anti-Jewish struggle, and is only comprehensible in such a polemical context. The underlying issue of the clash between Judaism and Christianity was exemplified in Paul's countering of the attempt to earn salvation by one's righteous works.³³

For all the 'cosmic outreach of Paul's thought' in Käsemann's work, Deidun argues that

³¹ Morgan and Barton (1988:115) states that this interpretation has been put on the defensive by the 'historical work of K Stendahl and EP Sanders among others'.

³² Käsemann's salient contribution was his insistence — a first! — that Paul produced a criticism of Judaism from *within* Judaism, and that in doing so Paul continued a central feature of Judaism: its self-criticism, as found, e.g., in the OT prophets, John the Baptist and Jesus (Wright 1997:17).

³³ Cf Watson (1986:9). Käsemann's Pauline Law/gospel contrast becomes, in the hands of Watson, a condemnation of the 'generalised Paul'. Watson fails to take into account that the generalization rests on the Law/gospel contrast. Perhaps Watson is also not fully aware of the influence of his attempts to show by means of a sociological approach that early Christianity was quite separate from Judaism — demanding a particularism-generalism distinction. Cf Watson on Baur (1986:10-13).

there is more of Käsemann than of Paul in his theological polemic; oracular solutions abound; and not infrequently the theological edifice is made to rest on uncertain exegetical foundations (1986:233-234).

2.2.7. Conclusion

The one pervasive feature of Pauline research until recently, and which still holds true for a significant portion of Pauline scholarship today, is the Lutheran framework: the interpretation of Paul according to Martin Luther's sixteenth century understanding of Paul, with the appropriate and concomitant view of first-century Judaism. It can be claimed — and in the following section the substantiation of this claim follows — that the Lutheran reading of Paul is still largely the operative and normative grid for reading the *corpus Paulinum*.

In South African Pauline studies³⁴ too, the dominant and all-pervasive framework is still the Lutheran framework, sometimes with and sometimes without all its profound innovations. The pervasive influence of this framework can be seen in the presentation of Paul's message as an atemporal and general, individualised and spiritualised account: the human being's predicament of being unable to acquire the necessary requirements for salvation from God. The corresponding portrayal of first-century Judaism therefore has to be that of a meritorious and legalistic religion. The constant refinement of the diverse number of variables within this phantom message ascribed to Paul, has led to the inability of scholars to make Paul relevant for contemporary life, apart from a particular spiritualised approach.³⁵

3. 'The New Perspective'

*The new era in interpretation of Paul is generally recognized to have its starting point in an essay by Krister Stendahl on 'The apostle Paul and the introspective conscience of the West' (Barclay 1996:199).*³⁶

3.1. Introduction

³⁴ Cf the annual meeting of the NTSSA in 1993 on Galatians, held in Bloemfontein: the vast majority of the papers presented utilised the Lutheran framework for interpreting Galatians.

³⁵ Arguably at least the Protestant section of Christianity will refer to (the Lutheran version of) Paul's justification by faith as (at least) one of its central doctrines; cf Braaten (1990) and recent studies, e.g. by Kruse (1996).

³⁶ Kruse (1996:24) argues that with EP Sanders' *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977), 'Christian attitudes to Judaism really began to change'. Barclay (1996:199-200) points to Stendahl as the inaugurator of the NPP, and Sanders as 'the figure who ensured the full impact of the new perspective'. Bandstra calls Sanders' 1977 study an 'epoch-making book' and the 'catalyst' of the NPP (1990:251).

The validity and adequacy of the Lutheran framework for Pauline interpretation³⁷ are seriously questioned by exponents of the New Perspective on Paul. Although, according to Craffert (1993:234)

objections to the modernisation of Paul along the lines of Luther's quest for a gracious God have been well documented,

there is by no means consensus on what such objections entail. Neither has the NPP-approach — as one range of such objections — been worked out in anywhere near the detail with which the traditional approach to Paul has been documented.

It will be a misrepresentation if the terminology 'New Perspective' leads one to think of this reinterpretation of Paul as a monolithic enterprise or even as a well-defined position.³⁸ Opinions differ amongst representatives as to the views of first-century Judaism regarding the role of the Law in relation to salvation, the nature of the situations Paul addressed, Paul's view and presentation of the Jewish Law, the range of concepts like 'justification' and 'righteousness of God', and so on.

The Lutheran framework's influence on the understanding of Paul's thought is in terms of theology most pervasive in the ambit of soteriology, and the nature of and role played by the Jewish Law.³⁹ Indeed, the NPP is often equally seen to be merely of importance in this aspect, namely soteriology, which in a biblical-theology approach is related to 'the Jewish law'.⁴⁰ However, as with the Lutheran framework the broadness of the NPP's implications on

³⁷ Søren Kierkegaard is quoted by Braaten (1990:5) in a slightly different context, bemoaning the fact that 'Lutheranism ... had become a fixed condition, itself in dire need for correction.'

³⁸ The common denominator in the NPP is the rejection of first-century Judaism as legalistic in nature, and its corollary in the 'Law/gospel antithesis' of Reformational thought. No consensus exists on (1) why Paul rejected Judaism and 'works of the Law', and (2) what 'works of the Law' actually consisted of (cf e.g. Hafemann 1993:673). So, although agreement exists that 'works (of the Law)' was not the primary issue for Paul, the reason(s) for this is explained differently: Paul's polemic is not directed against 'works' in general but against Jewish exclusivism (Dunn); or that the 'works'-argument is merely a subsidiary issue to the 'real problem' (Sanders); or that the 'works'-argument misrepresents Judaism, puts up an untenable contrast with 'faith' and that Paul's *sola gratia* statements are 'idiosyncratic and impractical' (Räsänen).

Serious difference of opinion exists on many other aspects: regarding the Pauline view of the Law (e.g. Dunn: Paul spoke out against a Jewish misunderstanding or distortion of the Law; Sanders and Räsänen: Paul misrepresented the Jewish law); Paul's presentation of *post-Christ religion* (e.g. Sanders: dual covenant scheme; Dunn: 'Christianity' as third entity); Paul's *reasoning* (e.g. Räsänen: Paul the 'muddlehead'; Dunn: Paul the logical and consistent thinker); the relationship between the Jewish and 'Christian' groups, etc.

³⁹ Dunn (1983:100) credits Stendahl with showing upon the influence of Lutheran thought on the contemporary understanding of Paul, and Sanders with displaying the concomitant influence on the 'traditional' portrait of first-century Judaism.

⁴⁰ Cf the recent *Dictionary of Paul and his letters*; the NPP is, however, relegated to a barely a page in a sub-section of 'Paul and the Law', within the rubric of 'Paul and his interpreters' (cf Hafemann 1993:672-673). For Hafemann, however, the *crux interpretum* is to be found in the assignment of primary importance to either the Hellenistic or Jewish leg of the Hellenistic-Jewish Paul. I want to contend, following Neyrey (1990:17-18) that Paul was socialised as an observant Jew of particular Pharisee conviction, and that one's reading of Paul will be determined, not merely by the choice for or against Judaism as primary context but by the particular evaluation (of Paul's view) of first-century Judaism as stressed by the NPP.

the Pauline letters is encompassing and should be presented as such, namely an overarching framework within which Pauline thought can be placed.

Two aspects of concern are generally shared by scholars who are appreciative of the NPP: The misrepresentation of the 'goal' of the Pauline letters, and the caricaturisation of the Jewish religion in Paul's day.⁴¹ However, among NPP-proponents, there is generally more agreement on what Paul and early Jewish religion were *not* about, than on what would constitute a more accurate presentation of these two matters: Paul did not write letters aiming to present a 'gracious God' to the recipients, and Judaism in Paul's time was not a narrow legalistic works-righteousness religion.

On danger of distorting the views of scholars, a further broad consensus exists with regard to the portrayal of Paul as a confident Jew, who in the face of his rather successful Gentile mission argued for the inclusion of Gentile converts in the messianic community. Furthermore, scholars generally agree that the mistaken view of Jewish religion of Paul's day has been made into a caricature by the Lutheran interpretation and accept that this religion was build upon the conception of God's grace as experienced in the election of the Jewish people as people of God.

In addressing the whole issue of the NPP, these two matters — Paul's intent with his letters, and the presentation of Judaism in the time of Paul — can hardly be separated. The 'new' views of both matters are mutually informing, and the reciprocal nature of their relationship requires continuous rethinking of the one in relation to the other. In the following argument, no attempt will be made to dissociate the two, although ultimately the emphasis will be on the understanding of Paul according to the NPP.

What follows is an all too brief synopsis of certain early voices, a number of prominent NPP-exponents, as well as an attempt at a synthesis of the dominant characteristics of the NPP, followed by points of criticism leveled against this approach. The brevity of the discussion is necessitated, however, by the need to establish the broad parameters of the NPP, its proponents and its adversaries. Those elements of detail which will suffer neglect from this broader approach will be compensated for by the ability to grasp the broad sense and nature of the NPP-project.⁴²

⁴¹ As Kruse (1996:27) puts it: '[T]he now widely held view of first-century Judaism as a religion based, not on human merit, but on God's election and grace, has raised questions about Paul's own understanding of the nature of first-century Judaism'. However, Kruse fails to mention the debate on whether Paul misunderstood first-century Judaism, or referred to a particular manifestation thereof, or deliberately misrepresented it, etc!

⁴² Although charges of reductionism, generalisation and simplification cannot be avoided in such an endeavour to present the 'bigger picture', these strategies can be useful as long as it is admitted as such without claiming that the results are in any way comprehensive or final. The NPP as a significant development — amidst certain problematic aspects contained in it — in Pauline studies serves the larger purpose of this study. Detailed studies on many of the issues not addressed here, will be referred to in the notes and bibliography.

3.2. Some early voices of protest against the traditional Paul:⁴³

New and different perspectives on the understanding of Paul did not emerge without earlier historical-academic precedent(s). A number of scholars questioned various aspects of the dominant lines of Pauline interpretation, in particular as far as the accompanying portrayal of first-century Judaism was concerned. As will be clear from the overview of earlier investigations of the Pauline corpus, the NPP can hardly be presented as a novelty in biblical scholarship. On the other hand, it has to be noted that the earlier scholars who read Paul against the grain, neither did so with a common goal, nor were their studies directed to similar aspects in Pauline research.

3.2.1. CG Montefiore

Montefiore challenged the traditional portrayal of first-century Judaism as a religion based on meritorious works from the perspective that Paul misrepresented⁴⁴ Judaism(s)⁴⁵ in his letters. He rejected strongly the attempt to define Judaism in comparison and stark contrast to what Paul's theology was assumed to consist of. The rabbinic literature provides ample evidence of God as a graceful God who acts in mercy, of the Law as gift and a reason for 'delight', and that a value equal to that found in Paul, was placed on faith in God.⁴⁶

According to Montefiore, the Pauline discourse against Jewish legalism was not directed against the 'more warm, positive, and life-embracing' Palestinian Judaism, but rather at the Diaspora version of Judaism with a 'pessimistic view of the world and human nature, and its legalistic attitude toward the Law' (Howell 1993:322).⁴⁷ His argument is that Paul could impossibly have been a rabbinic Jew before his Damascus-road experience, as Paul's argument

⁴³ For a similar kind of review of early voices of protest against the Lutheran reading of Paul, cf Kruse (1996:27-53) — for Kruse that is prior to Sanders' 1977 *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. Westerholm (1988:15-101) presents a review of some — past and present — voices of protest at the Lutheran reading of Paul.

⁴⁴ Not necessarily deliberately, but rather because Paul as diaspora Jew was unacquainted with rabbinic Judaism.

⁴⁵ He refers to 'rabbinic', 'apocalyptic', and 'Hellenistic' Judaisms, all 'fluid and growing' in the first century. Montefiore argues that Paul differed in at least three areas from rabbinic Judaism: the Law as a good gift from God, as occasion for joy and not to be experienced as a burden; the rabbinic emphasis on repentance and forgiveness is lacking in Paul's presentation of Judaism; Paul's theology is more pessimistic than that of rabbinic Judaism (cf Westerholm 1988:35-38).

⁴⁶ Montefiore argued that as much as rabbinic literature from 300-500 CE gives evidence of Judaism as 'rich, warm, joyous and optimistic', 'rabbinic Judaism' around 50 CE was even 'better, happier and [a] more noble religion' (Kruse 1996:28).

⁴⁷ The untenability of the supposed differences or even opposition between Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism in light of recent research, will be dealt with below. Cf e g Lieu, North and Rajak (1992:1-8); Murray (1982:194-208).

about the Law and his ignoring of repentance do not fit that profile. Paul's pre-Christian religion was not rabbinic Judaism, but diaspora Judaism (Kruse 1996:29).

[T]he Pauline theories of the law and soteriology, and the basic Pauline pessimism, cannot have grown from rabbinic soil (Westerholm 1988:39).

Montefiore thus explained Paul's views on the Law as an 'aberration' and typified it as a neglect of the Jewish notion of repentance which can be considered a deviation from the Jewish Law. Paul in effect misunderstood the Jewish Law, in all probability due to the influence of Hellenism⁴⁸ on Paul (Thielman 1993:530-531).⁴⁹

3.2.2. GF Moore

Following in the footsteps of Montefiore, Moore stressed the important role of grace, forgiveness and repentance in the early rabbinic literature.⁵⁰ Indeed, argues Moore, the portrayal of Judaism in Christian literature since the earliest times was regulated by apologetic or even polemic concerns. After the initial descriptions of Judaism which were nothing else but attempts to villify Jews, in medieval times Christian authors had to investigate Judaism more closely in order to engage in debate with 'learned defenders of Judaism'.

It was during the Reformation that the help of Jewish literature was even enlisted to develop Christian doctrine based on Scripture — alone — as alternative to the ecclesial authorities. But it was only in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in studies carried out by Christian scholars that Judaism was illuminated according to its own literature. However, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries some scholars again criticise Judaism as 'legalistic', in an apologetic attempt to present a foil for what was believed to be the teaching of Jesus (Kruse 1996:29-30).

3.2.3. A Schweitzer

The doctrine of righteousness by faith is therefore a subsidiary crater (Nebenkrater) which has formed within the rim of the main crater — the mystical doctrine of redemption through the being in Christ (Schweitzer 1956:225).

⁴⁸ Compare Sandmel's concurrence with this: Paul's version of (Hellenistic) Judaism was pervasively influenced by Greek thought, perceiving the Law as a conduit to other religious ideals. Maccoby radicalised this sentiment by claiming Gnosticism as the roots for Paul's view on the Law. Cf Thielman (1993:531).

⁴⁹ The notion of Paul misunderstanding or at least misrepresenting the Jewish Law would emerge strongly again in the writings of Schoeps and more recently, those of Räisänen. Cf below.

⁵⁰ Moore reacted against F Weber who contended that Israel's covenantal benefits were cancelled with the Golden Calf episode in the desert. Ever since, Jews individually have to ensure their own salvation through works of righteousness. Although Weber's reference to Israel's fall from grace is absent in the work of later scholars, the 'works-righteousness' soteriological scheme remained in e.g. the work of Bousset, Schürer, Billerbeck and Bultmann (cf Westerholm 1988:47-48).

Albert Schweitzer approached the interpretation of the Pauline letters from the perspective of apocalyptic Judaism, claiming that Paul shared the thoroughgoing eschatology of Jesus. Building on the existing ideas in apocalyptic Judaism, he contended that Paul used this tradition to construct his own ideas regarding the “already” realized messianic kingdom begun at Christ’s resurrection and a “not yet” kingdom of God’ (Howell 1993:318). Schweitzer claimed that Paul subscribed to the idea that the Law remained in force only until the onset of the Messianic age (Kruse 1996:30). He argued that the concept of the righteousness of God was a minor — or at best, secondary (cf Davies 1967:xiii) — issue and was developed only because of his dispute with the Judaisers,⁵¹ and as a polemical doctrine (*Kampfeslehre*, so also Wrede; cf Vos 1989:85). The real or ‘central crater’ of Pauline theology is Christ-mysticism.

For Schweitzer then the specific Pauline message was to be found in the concept of ‘being in Christ’. This concept has to be understood in light of Schweitzer’s marrying of the eschatological notion of Paul as revealed by Wrede, with the cultic mysticism which Deissmann stressed as ‘the characteristic expression’ of Paul’s Christianity. In Schweitzer’s opinion the phrase ‘in Christ’ denotes

an eschatological reality which was experienced physically and sacramentally and brought about by the inaugurated eschatological kingdom of God now present with the turn of the ages (Hafemann 1993:675).

The mere possibility that Paul in his letters was not exclusively or even primarily concerned with issues of justification,⁵² gave impetus to breaking away from the Lutheran framework and suggested the possibility of different approaches to Pauline interpretation.⁵³

3.2.4. J Munck

Hafemann (1993:672) summarizes the position of Munck by stating that ‘[f]or Munck there was no essential theological conflict between Paul and Jewish Christianity’. However, Munck’s views failed to make an impact, because of some of his other views, for example his failure to account for the role of the Law when the only difference between Paul and the original apostles were one of ‘mission strategy’; his portrayal of Paul — by virtue of his conviction that the arrival of the messianic age depended on his ministry — as becoming the central figure in salvation history and in that way usurping the position of Christ; and, Paul’s opponents viewed as Gentile Judaisers (Hafemann 1993:671).

⁵¹ On this matter, cf the support from Stendahl (1963:204 n10), but also the criticism of this view as being an exaggeration in Braaten (1990:68).

⁵² Although, as Howell rightly argues, Schweitzer’s criticism of the *Religionsgeschichtliche* and Liberal schools restored attention to the ‘redemptive-historical character of the Pauline kerygma’ (1993:319).

⁵³ Wright (1997:14) argues that Schweitzer’s lasting contribution was the ‘four questions that are always asked about Paul’ that deals with: his historical context; his theology (and its ‘starting point and centre’); the proper exegetical approach to the Pauline letters; and, Paul’s significance for today.

3.2.5. HJ Schoeps

In contrast to Montefiore, Schoeps is unwilling to accept that Paul's thoughts have simply been influenced by non-Jewish traditions, arguing that Paul shared many ideas with the Judaism⁵⁴ of the first century,⁵⁵ particularly its eschatological framework. However, Paul diverged from traditional rabbinic views on grounds of his belief 'that the Messianic age had begun with the death and resurrection of Jesus' (Schoeps 1961:173) — making Pauline soteriology 'fundamentally un-Jewish when he views Jesus as God's incarnate Son, possessing "real divinity"' (Westerholm 1988:43). Flowing forth from this conviction, and retrospectively (Schoeps 1961:175) within a 'solution to plight'-scheme, Schoeps sets out to explain how Paul construed his 'theology'.

He argues that Paul misrepresented Judaism at large by failing to account for a number of important notions within Judaic tradition and belief. The power of repentance, which will avert the wrath of God for transgression of the Law, was a fundamental concept among adherents of Judaism. Paul's notion of *νόμος* — as used in the Septuagint and continued by Paul — failed to translate the Hebrew *תּוֹרָה* in an adequate way. Whereas the Hebrew term expresses the notion of 'instruction embracing both law and doctrine', *νόμος* as legal term simply refers to 'a moral way of life prescribed by God' and therefore the 'sum of prescriptions' of God and to be obeyed by human beings (Schoeps 1961:29,188). Paul's inadequate presentation of the Jewish position is due to his inability to see how closely related the concepts of 'covenant' and 'Law' are: the latter cannot be understood properly without recognising the importance of its link to the covenant of divine grace, which was initiated by God.

If obedience to the law is valued primarily as an affirmation of God's covenant, then it is scarcely just to regard such 'works of the law' as an attempt to gain righteousness by human effort and an *alternative* to faith in the pursuit of justification ... fidelity to the covenant can only be expressed by the affirmation implied in obedience to its demands (Westerholm 1988:46).

Schoeps argued therefore, that Paul's failure to appreciate the covenantal setting of the Law, led him to legalistic moralisation of the Law (Schoeps 1961:218; cf Kruse 1996:32).

Schoeps did much to show that the supposed opposition between Paul and the Jewish Christian apostles and the accompanying negative image of Judaism relied on Baur's views. Although Schoeps attempted to expose the irrelevance of the Lutheran interpretation of the

⁵⁴ Schoeps criticised Montefiore for assuming rabbinic Judaism to have been a 'unified whole'; and, for assuming a radical distinction between rabbinic and apocalyptic Judaism (Westerholm 1988:40). It is commonly accepted today that it is historically more accurate to refer to first-century Judaism in the plural; cf below.

⁵⁵ 'Schoeps interprets Pauline eschatology, sacramentalism, and nomology in the same way — there is a Jewish flavoring but an even deeper conditioning from the religious syncretism of the first-century eastern Mediterranean world' (Howell 1993:322).

Law for 'mainstream Judaism' arguing that Paul was opposing a distinct Hellenistic branch of Judaism only (e.g. Howell 1993:322) and therefore misrepresenting Judaism at large,⁵⁶ he failed to wrest his interpretation away from the Reformational view of the Jewish Law in Paul: 'Schoeps did not deny the basic Reformation understanding of the Law in Paul' (Hafemann 1983:672).

Schoeps' emphasis on Paul's misunderstanding of Judaism was an attempt rather to salvage the genuine nature of Judaism than to challenge a Lutheran understanding of Paul. It might even be argued that Schoeps accepted the Lutheran Paul, and blamed Paul for it. Although the challenge to the Lutheran understanding of Paul is implied in Schoeps' exposition of first-century Judaism, the delutheranisation of Paul would have to wait a while longer!

3.2.6. *WD Davies*

Davies argued ... that Paul was at bottom, a Jewish rabbi who believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Jewish Messiah (Wright 1997:16).

In a way similar to the views expressed by Munck, Davies stressed the continuity between the views of Paul and Jewish Christianity. He discarded the opinion that the Pauline opposition to the Law was mere polemic developed in the heat of the moment and thus not representative of Judaism — in short, that Paul deliberately misrepresented Judaism. In other aspects, however, Davies held Paul to reflect the ordinary 'rabbinic' Jewish sentiments.⁵⁷

Davies believes it is inaccurate to interpret Paul as a figure standing in opposition to the Law. Rather, Paul belonged to the mainstream of first-century Pharisaic Judaism (Howell 1993:323).

Paul's letters reflect a Pharisaic Jew for whom the Messianic era was initiated with the incarnation of Jesus Christ;⁵⁸ according to Davies, 'for Paul the Christian, Christ is the new Torah' (Howell 1993:323).

Davies argued that Paul was not only well acquainted with the rabbinic Judaism of first-century Palestine, but that Paul's 'life and thought were in fact determined by Pharisaic concepts which he baptized into Christ' (Kruse 1996:31). Davies was similarly not inclined to accept that the Law/gospel contrast determined Paul's thought, nor that the justification theme was the central concern of Paul.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ As such Schoeps was a precursor of the contemporary view, as expressed by Räisänen, that Paul misrepresented Judaism of his time, regarding the function of the Law and soteriology. Cf Hays (1989:196 n27).

⁵⁷ Davies argued against a rigid distinction between Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism (as found in Montefiore and Schoeps), and between apocalyptic and Pharisaic Judaism (so Schweitzer). Cf Howell (1993:323). Wright (1997:16) stresses the point that Davies denied the validity of reading Pauline thought as derived from Judaism, and 'plants him [Paul] firmly back into the soil of his native Judaism'.

⁵⁸ Davies (1967:71): 'a Pharisee who had accepted Jesus as the Messiah'. Cf Hafemann (1993:672,675); Thielman (1993:531); Watson (1986:15).

⁵⁹ Cf *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (1980).

For Davies then, Paul's debate with Judaism was a 'family dispute' about the best possible appropriation of Jewish traditions — indeed, 'the gospel for Paul was not the annulling of Judaism but its completion' (Davies 1980:323). This debate took place before the Jamnia events of around 70 CE, at a time when there was no 'normative Judaism'; that is, no fixed doctrine or even full consensus within the many manifestations of Judaism. Although the Law was not always consistently interpreted by Paul, he held that it was being fulfilled in Jesus as the Messiah, in this way inaugurating a new era. Davies concludes that the reason for our wrong understanding of the Law as all negative, is the Reformational grid into which the portrayal of the Jewish Law was or is forced.

3.2.7. D Georgi

Georgi, following in the footsteps of his mentor G Bornkamm, attempted to set the record straight on the Jewishness of Paul's opponents. Georgi managed to retain the valuable insight of the *Religionsgeschichtliche* school that early Christianity should be understood within the first-century religious context, but eschewed the skewed and historically indefensible bias towards Gnosticism.

Although Georgi concentrated on Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, he presents a convincing view of the 'missionary activities of the Hellenistic Jews' as pneumatic missionaries whose activities and self-understanding were based on the 'divine man' (θεῖος ἀνὴρ) tradition in Hellenistic Judaism. Hafemann (1993:669-670) contends that where the position of Lütgert and the *Religionsgeschichtliche* school challenged Baur's thesis, the position of Georgi led to serious doubt regarding the very legitimacy of Baur's views.⁶⁰

3.3. Important representatives of the NPP

From what has been said so far, it is clear that the forerunners of the NPP, apart from their shared opposition to the Lutheran framework, did not represent a single, unified approach to the Pauline letters. This trend will be confirmed by the following brief consideration of some of the important representatives of the NPP.

⁶⁰ Georgi's views are challenged on various aspects, including historical reconstruction (the existence of a 'divine man' view in Judaism), methodology (an encompassing hypothesis built on scanty 'evidence') and interpretations of key terms (e.g. 'servants of Christ' as 'envoys'). Equally, attempts at resuscitating the Baurian position with regard to Paul's opponents, by eminent scholars such as CK Barrett, are severely hampered by amongst others, the views of the NPP. Some within the NPP even doubt whether Paul's letters had anything to do with his opponents and their positions.

3.3.1. K Stendahl⁶¹

Whereas Paul was concerned about the possibility for Gentiles to be included in the messianic community,⁶² his statements are now read as answers to the quest for assurance about man's salvation out of a common human predicament (Stendahl 1963:206).

Krister Stendahl read a paper in 1961⁶³ at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, where he argued for understanding Paul as a first-century Jew with a 'robust conscience', as opposed to the twentieth century individualist 'introspective conscience' traditionally⁶⁴ ascribed to Paul. This initiated a new look at the study of Pauline theology.

His [*sc* Paul's] focus and agenda generally ... were usually on the formation and 'edification' of communities as part of the final fulfillment of God's historical promises, which, he believed, had begun in the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ (Horsley 1995:1152).

Stendahl argues that Augustine's specific interpretation of Paul's letters, as picked up by Luther in the sixteenth century, diverted attention from two basic issues 'with which he [*sc* Paul] *actually* deals': the role of the Law in light of the Messiah, and the relationship between Jewish and Gentile believers in light of the Messiah (Stendahl 1963:204).

3.3.1.1. The Jewish Law, and the Messiah

Stendahl (1963:200-205) compares Paul's statements on being able to fulfill the requirements set out by God with Luther's experience of being trapped in sin. In Philippians 3:6 Paul professed to be 'blameless as to righteousness required by the Law'. Paul's assertions in Rom 2:17-3:20 and Gal 3:10-12 on the impossibility of keeping the Law, should be seen in light of the abuse of the 'Jewish advantage', showing also that 'the Jews are not better than the Gentiles'.

Paul's remarks about the impossibility of fulfilling the Law is part of a 'theological and theoretical scriptural argument about the relations between Jews and Gentiles'. In any case, Paul 'never urges Jews to find in Christ the answer to an anguished conscience' (Stendahl 1963:202). Paul is not in a concerned and contrite state of mind with feelings of personal inadequacy. This state of affairs is true for Paul both before *and* after his Damascus road

⁶¹ Hafemann (1993:675) identifies Stendahl (together with Sanders) as being responsible for breaking the Lutheran hold on Paul as indicated by the Law/gospel contrast. Cf Dunn (1991:284 n64) who suggests that Stendahl's views gained new impetus with the work done by Sanders.

⁶² Watson (1986:14), however, contends that Stendahl considers the 'Jew-Gentile problem as more or less irrelevant'. His reasons for this is not clear. Similar to Davies, Stendahl is very concerned about the value of the 'Jew-Gentile problem' for the present day. Cf e g Stendahl (1976:126ff), and his four articles on exactly this issue (1976:126-127).

⁶³ Published in 1963 in the *Harvard Theological Review*, and subsequently in one of his books *Paul amongst Jews and Gentiles* (1976).

⁶⁴ I e since Augustine and especially since the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation.

encounter with Christ. The Lutheran *simul justus et peccator* can hardly be the core of the Pauline view on anthropology when ‘forgiveness’ is not used at all in the undisputed Pauline writings.

Compared with Martin Luther’s struggles, Paul’s robust conscience emerges even more clearly. Luther’s struggles under the systems of penance and indulgences, as described above, culminated in his question where to find a gracious God. With the penetrating self-examination of an Augustinian monk, caught up in the constraints of medieval piety, Luther identifies Paul’s struggle as one pertaining to Jewish legalism.

Stendahl (1963:206) illustrates the role that the Law played in Paul’s thought (when divorced from the Lutheran framework) with the translation of Gal 3:24. The Law is the ‘custodian’ of the Jews, with its inception hundreds of years after the Abrahamic promise and then of validity only until the Messiah came. To read παιδαγωγός as ‘tutor’ or ‘schoolmaster’, as the King James Version-translators ‘in unconscious accord with Western tradition’ did, and to understand the Law’s function of making humans aware of their self-righteousness and the need for it to be crushed, is to turn Paul on his head.

3.3.1.2. The relationship Jewish Christians/Gentile Christians

Stendahl argues that Paul’s views on the Law were formulated in light of the advent of the Messiah, but only in so far as there were practical circumstances that necessitated it. Paul’s contingent situation was one of construing a theological argument to enable him to justify the inclusion of Gentile believers in the messianic community and to persuade the Gentile and Jewish believers to coexist peacefully — which made Paul’s purpose in using the theme of justification an apologetic, rather than polemic one (Stendahl 1963:205-206; 1976:127,129-131; cf Barclay 1996:200).

This specific Pauline emphasis weakened when the churches by the turn of the first century consisted almost exclusively of Gentile or non-Jewish members. In Augustine’s appropriation of Paul, as continued by Luther, Paul’s call to apostleship among the Gentiles was transformed into a timeless and universal problem on the Law and justification (Stendahl 1963:205).

3.3.1.3. Paul’s conscience

In Stendahl’s view, a ‘radical difference’ therefore exists between Paul’s thought and Luther’s interpretation of it. The Pauline robust conscience is well attested in other rabbinic Jewish

writings, and Stendahl cites Volz's inability to find more than one illustration of a troubled conscience in Rabbinic literature.⁶⁵

Stendahl (1963:208-214) admits to the important role played by *ἁμαρτία* (sin) in Paul's writings, but insists that for Paul his major sin was situated in his earlier persecution of the followers of Jesus. For this sin Paul had made amends by his ceaseless efforts in the church of Christ (1 Cor 15:10). In Rom 5:6-11 sin is portrayed as something belonging to the past, wiped out by the actions of Jesus Christ. Although Paul did not hold that a human was without sin after entry into the messianic community by baptism — his admonitions against the sins of members of the church being proof of this — his conscience was not troubled by sins. Paul's 'struggle with his body' is found in a context of confidence, not despondency.

Paul's confident conscience is clear throughout his letters (Rom 9:1-2; Cor 1:12), and this is not diminished by his expectancy of a final judgement (2 Cor 5:9-10), or by tensions with rival preachers (1 Cor 4:4). Even Paul's 'thorn in the flesh' (2 Cor 12:7) is seen by Stendahl as a physical handicap, unrelated to sin or conscience and rather a measure of identification with Christ, 'crucified in weakness' (2 Cor 13:4; 4:10) (Stendahl 1963:210-211).

The crucial 'proof text' of Paul's supposed troubled conscience is Romans 7. Stendahl forcefully argues for Romans 7 as yet more evidence of Paul's confident conscience. Paul's argument ends with 'sin' being held accountable and the ego being acquitted. Stendahl laments that the discussion on Romans 7 is concerned with whether this reflects a pre-Christian or Christian experience while the argument actually concerns the Law: 'a defence for the holiness and goodness of the Law'.

The Lutheran interpretation, however, substituted the issue of the distinction between good Law and bad Sin with the human will being the center of deprivation. Without denying Paul's statements on the 'precarious situation of man in this world, where even the holy Law of God does not help', Stendahl refuses to relegate the theological concern of Romans 7 to a 'subjective conscience struggle' (Stendahl 1963:211-214).

In sum then, Stendahl turned Pauline studies around by providing a plausible explanation of the interaction between Paul's historical context and Paul's message in that context. And by eschewing a generalised and individualised interpretation of Paul, Stendahl could present

⁶⁵ Cf also Westerholm for the influence of Kümmel's powerful, anti-biographical reading of Rom 7 on Stendahl (1988:53-65).

Judaism in a way different from the dominant legalistic approach, and in this way followed in the footsteps of Davies and Schoeps.⁶⁶

Stendahl caused several cracks in the mould of Lutheran interpretation. Stendahl saw Paul as the apostle sent with a 'prophetic' calling to the Gentiles, to preach and minister to them with the aim of including them in the 'new covenant', a covenant based not on the Jewish Law, but on Jesus Christ and his incarnational accomplishments.

Justification by faith is not the center of Pauline thought, but an 'apologetic doctrine' in defense of the status of the Gentiles before God. Stendahl contends that it

was hammered out by Paul for the very specific and limited purpose of defending the right of Gentile converts to be full and genuine heirs to the promises of God to Israel.

Paul was not engaged in construing theological arguments on the nature and way(s) of salvation, but was simply concerned about the 'relation between Jew and Gentile' (Stendahl 1976:2-3).

The reformational emphasis on justification by faith moved this teaching of Paul from its original setting in describing the way Gentiles are included in God's plan for the world, to an

abstract doctrinal response to the despair and failure of humanity brought about by the attempt to live up to the moral demands of the Law or by the pride caused by humanity's attempt to justify itself by the Law (Hafemann 1993:675).

Stendahl thus holds to a 'dual covenant'⁶⁷ scheme, in which the Law is not abrogated⁶⁸ or even relativised — that is, at least not for Jews. Jews and Gentiles have distinctively different covenants, the one based on the Torah and the other on Christ.

3.3.1.4. Criticism leveled at Stendahl's views

Stendahl did groundbreaking work for what could eventually be described as the NPP, not so much in the sense that he made the initial discoveries, but rather in the forceful way he argued for a different pattern for understanding Paul and his letters in the context of the first century. Stendahl's ability to formulate a coherent framework for reading the Pauline material while accounting for recent findings in the research of many biblical and other scholars of the early

⁶⁶ Cf Stendahl (1963:204 n8). Contrary to Watson (1986:10-13), one cannot see Stendahl as being in position 'close' to that of Baur, except maybe for the denial of both that Paul's thoughts on the Law and justification are about 'a general and timeless human problem'.

⁶⁷ Cf Hall (1993:60) who, in referring to Stendahl, writes '... faithful Jews are those who ground their faith in Torah ... Faithful Gentiles are those ... who now commune in covenantal relationship with God and Israel through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ'.

⁶⁸ This results in keeping 'the missionary urge to convert Israel' in check (Stendahl 1976:4).

period of this era — some of whom have been mentioned above — secured an important place for his work regarding the writings of Paul.

However important Stendahl's work on Paul proved to be, a number of problems with his views emerged. Stendahl presupposed a radical break between Jews and 'Christians' during the first century which simply cannot be accepted as the norm, at least not in as radical a way as suggested by him. 'Christians' still found themselves very much within 'Judaism'. Added to this criticism, is the uncertainty in Stendahl's work on what the position of 'Jewish Christians' would be within Pauline thought and churches. Stendahl's 'two-covenant theory' — justification for 'Jewish Christians' through the Law, and for 'Gentile Christians' through faith — is not borne out by the Pauline letters' historical indications.

At least initially Stendahl failed to deal with the universal call of Paul that people should become one with Christ, clearly referring not only to Gentiles but to Jews as well. Yet, it also needs to be mentioned that, although earlier Stendahl claimed (1963:202) that Paul held that

the old covenant, even with its provision for forgiveness and grace, is not a valid alternative any more. The only metanoia (repentance/conversion) and the only grace which counts is the one now available in Messiah,

at a later stage (1976:4), Stendahl argues that Paul asserts 'a God-willed coexistence between Judaism and Christianity'.

Stendahl's idea of Paul's 'robust conscience' has been criticised, on the grounds that Phil 3:6 cannot serve the purposes Stendahl uses it for, namely as 'a balanced statement on Paul's pre-Christian condition' (Espy 1985:166-188).⁶⁹ Recently, his view of 'ancient personality' has also met with criticism, from a social-scientific perspective, on two scores: Malina (1996:54ff) accuses Stendahl's portrayal of Paul's 'robust conscience' as an example of 'pop-psychology', projecting modern, individualistic psychology back upon first-century Mediterranean person, and secondly, that he follows a history-of-ideas approach.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Cf also Westerholm (1988:161, espec n52) who urges that Phil 3:6 should not be divorced from other general passages on sin (e g Rom 1-3,5,7 etc) and passages expressing Paul's 'own sense of sin', e g 1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13. However, Espy's position raises some suspicion, e g he reads Rom 7 as autobiographical (:174); includes the deutero-Paulines in his synthesis (e g 1 Tim 1:5) (:175); etc — the impression is created that Espy's 'theology' determines his exegesis.

⁷⁰ More generally, Corley's (1997:16) argument that neither Augustine nor Luther, for all their 'spiritual introspection', claim Paul as their archetype but rather found in Paul the promise of grace, is tenuous. Paul serves not only as the 'basis' of their respective 'theologies' but both found in Paul the 'solution' to their problems — and both the introspective moment as well as the concept of undeserved grace, as divine answer to the former, are present in their thought. The same remark can be directed at Seifrid's insistence that Luther's 'theology of the cross and his defense of a *iustitia aliena* marked a radical departure from the introspection of the medieval theology of humility' (1994:93).

3.3.2. EP Sanders

What was at stake was not a way of life characterized by 'requirements', but whether or not the requirements for membership into the Israel of God would result in there being 'neither Jew nor Greek' (Sanders 1983:159).

Ed Parish Sanders (a student of Davies) took the 'new reading' of Paul's letters a step further with an approach somewhat different to that of Stendahl,⁷¹ but accentuating and clarifying the position advanced by Stendahl. As Barclay (1996:200) argues, Sanders 'ensured the full impact of the new perspective'.⁷² Rather than focusing on Pauline theology, Sanders concentrated on the 'pattern' of Jewish religion in the first century, as compared with the particular Pauline emphases.⁷³ His *Paul, the Law and the Jewish people* (1983) was even more successful in demonstrating his opinions on the role of the Law in Jewish religion and in Paul's thought. Sanders' views on the relationship between Pauline and rabbinic thought can be summarised as follows:

Thus Pauline theology is *not* distinct from rabbinic thinking in its insistence that 'justification' is by divine grace, not human works (Westerholm 1988:50).

3.3.2.1. Covenantal Nomism

Rejecting the sixteenth-century Reformation idea of Paul opposing legalistic Jews with a works-righteousness religion, Sanders identified the pattern of Jewish religion as that of 'covenantal nomism' — centered in the covenant and its grace, and maintained by the Law.

Sanders believes that later Palestinian Judaism (200 BCE—200 CE) was not a legalistic works-righteousness religion, but that it taught salvation by God's grace and then obedience to the Law only as the condition for right standing within the covenant community, a pattern he calls 'covenantal nomism' (Howell 1993:324).

Paul did not need and also did not have a 'theology of Law', but responded in various ways to different circumstances on the issue of the Law. Practical reasons and contingent situations in his Gentile mission compelled Paul to consider the particularly Jewish aspects of the Law — circumcision, Sabbath, other holy days and dietary laws — obstructive and thus annulled.

[W]hat Paul criticized was not self-righteousness but Israel's lack of faith in Christ and national exclusiveness which bars Gentiles from an equal standing in the salvific community (Howell 1993:324).

⁷¹ As Barclay (1996:199-200) points out, Stendahl insisted that Paul's emphasis on 'justification by faith' — as defense mechanism for Gentile Christians absolving them of the need to accept and practice Jewish customs and rituals — was apologetic *only*, and not polemical towards Jewry, whereas Sanders includes the latter as part of Paul's reasoning: 'Paul's theology as in some sense fundamentally *opposed* to Judaism' (his emphasis).

⁷² Cf Dunn (1990:186). Wright (1997:18,21) is of the opinion that Sanders, more than any other scholar or all of them put together, influenced current Pauline scholarship, and that his views 'dominate the landscape' of Pauline interpretation.

⁷³ Cf Sanders' major work titled *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 1977.

Sanders concluded that Paul thought the Law to be 'for condemning everyone so that everyone could be saved through Jesus' (Thielman 1993:531).

Paul's commitment to the Gentile mission brought the authority of the Law into question and required him to disavow the Law at least in so far as it imposed demands on the converts, in particular, circumcision, Sabbath observance and dietary laws (Barclay 1996:201).

Keeping the Jewish law was the human response to God's covenantal initiative. Sanders thus, in a stroke, cut the ground from under the majority reading of Paul, especially in mainline Protestantism (Wright 1997:19).

Having the Law as, in modern phrase, a radicalised 'custodian' (παιδαγωγός) to Christ, did not preclude Paul to invalidate the Law. In many situations Paul still argues on the basis of the Law.

3.3.2.2. Participationist eschatology

This religious design of covenantal nomism was opposed by Paul with another concept of religion, namely 'participationist eschatology'⁷⁴ embodied in the phrase 'in Christ' or 'becoming one in Christ' (Sanders 1977:438,552). The reason for rejecting the 'righteousness of the Law' is to be found therefore, in Paul's 'exclusive christological soteriology' which Paul believed to be directed to Jews as well as Gentiles (Bandstra 1990:252).

For Sanders the Pauline understanding of salvation is the movement from one sphere of lordship to another, from sin, death and the Law to righteousness, life and the gospel. To be saved, for Paul, is brought about by and consists of, becoming one in Christ (cf Hafemann 1993:675).

Unlike Stendahl, Sanders maintains that Paul's arguments concerning Judaism were not merely apologetic in nature, but had a distinct polemic character as well. 'Sanders saw Paul's theology as in some sense fundamentally *opposed* to Judaism' (Barclay 1996:200, his emphasis). The reason for Paul's polemic stance can be found in his christological exclusivism and his insistence that Judaism is wrong in the sense that it is not Christianity;

[i]n short, this is what Paul finds wrong in Judaism: it is not Christianity (Sanders 1977:552), certainly not because Judaism is a second-rate, legalistic or 'works-righteousness religion'.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Traces of the ideas developed by Schweitzer on the role of eschatological mysticism in Pauline thought, can be detected in Sanders. Cf Wright (1997:19) who puts it even stronger, claiming that Sanders 'firmly sided' with Schweitzer.

⁷⁵ Cf also Sanders (1983:36): 'It is evident that the various statements of human transgression are arguments in favor of a position to which Paul came on some other ground'. Sanders argues that Paul's arguments on the Law are 'mere arguments' and not the 'real reason' for rejecting Judaism (cf also Bandstra 1990:258).

3.3.2.3. From solution to plight

Sanders argues (following the lead of Moore) that Paul arrived at his interpretation of the Law in a retrospective way. Starting with the assumption of his own experience of Jesus as saviour, Paul worked ‘backwards’ to the insight that all people, Jews and Gentiles were in need of this salvation provided by Jesus. In this way Paul forsook the Jewish system of ‘covenantal nomism’ as irrelevant and obsolete in the light of the Jesus event.

A central point of Sanders’ argument is that Paul did not feel overburdened, ‘helpless and hopeless’ under the plight of the Jewish law and therefore turned to salvation in Christ (Bandstra 1990:252). Paul’s ‘robust conscience’ (Phil 3:6) even before his ‘conversion’ to Christ testifies to the absence of a fearful disposition towards the Law.⁷⁶

3.3.2.4. Value of Sanders’ work

The sympathetic treatment which Judaism received from Sanders has been commented upon by various scholars, and his textual and community-based approach — as opposed to a synthetic method — also met with favourable response.⁷⁷ The extensive nature of Sanders’ work has provided a broad base for the understanding of Jewish life during the first century of this era.

Sanders’ work not only provides a new look at Jewish ‘religious patterns’ of the first century but also offers a fresh perspective to the Pauline letters. He emphasises the contingent nature of Paul’s letters and thought, although he shares Schweitzer’s emphasis on the mystical or ‘participationist’ thinking of Paul, understood within an eschatological framework.

3.3.2.5. Criticism leveled at Sanders

Despite positive reactions, the views of Sanders have also been criticised, by James Dunn in particular. The fundamental criticism leveled at Sanders is his failure to provide ‘a plausible explanation for the Jewishness of Paul’s letters’. This criticism is exacerbated by Sanders’ contention of what Paul experienced as the problem with the Judaism of his time: that it is not Christianity (Sanders 1977:552). With a Paul divorced from Judaism, the indebtedness of all believers to Israel, the Jewish ‘advantage’, and Paul’s concern for non-Christian Jews are difficult to understand (cf Thielman 1993:532).

⁷⁶ According to Sanders Paul’s attempt to retain some usefulness for the Law after Christ whose salvation is extended to both Jew and Gentile, led Paul to make some inconsistent statements regarding the role of the Law — a role which mainly referred to its increase and recognition of sin (cf e.g. Bandstra 1990:253).

⁷⁷ Cf recently Horsley (1995:1153 n8).

The Lutheran Paul has been replaced by an idiosyncratic Paul who in arbitrary and irrational manner turns his face against the glory and greatness of Judaism's covenant theology and abandons Judaism simply because it is not Christianity (Dunn 1990:187).

Dunn therefore has great difficulty with Sanders' conclusion that Paul sharply diverged from first-century Judaism.

Boyarin (1994:43-47) by and large supports Sanders, but differs on two aspects: the 'solution-to-plight direction' and the universalist position of Paul. Boyarin argues that Paul had a theological, not a personal problem with the exclusive and ethnocentric implications of the Law, and that the salvation of *all* advocated by Paul, was clearly salvation '*in Christ*'.

Beckwith (1990:79) recently criticised Sanders' views⁷⁸ on early Jewish soteriology as being both novel and unconvincing. Beckwith believes the intertestamental literature proves the (Jewish) religion of this period to be

at its best the true faith of the Old Testament, but its most frequent weakness is in the area of soteriology.

Beckwith argues — with reference to 'plenty of evidence in rabbinical sources,⁷⁹ especially' but without offering any of this 'proof' — that superficial views of sin and salvation characterise the intertestamental period. According to Beckwith's opinion, Jesus and Paul rightly challenged these 'shallow perceptions'. In addition, Westerholm (1988:143-150;165-169;172-173; cf Howell 1993:324) maintains that Sanders' portrayal of Judaism neglects elements of a 'faith works synergism that is organically discontinuous with the Pauline proclamation of salvation by grace through faith alone'.

3.3.3. JGD Dunn

[T]he leading edge of Paul's theological thinking was the conviction that God's purpose embraced Gentile as well as Jew, not the question of how a guilty man might find a gracious God (Dunn 1990:232).

James GD Dunn coined the phrase 'New Perspective on Paul' in his forceful paper, published in 1983 (also 1990:183-205). Taking his cue from Sanders and agreeing that the Jewish pattern of religion is one of 'covenantal nomism', Dunn analyses Paul's reasons for finding in Jesus Christ the motivational force for and foundation of a new way for humans to relate to God.

Dunn sees the antagonism between Jewish and Gentile Christians in his churches as the starting point of Paul's understanding of the Law. In Paul's polemic against the Jews and the

⁷⁸ Beckwith refers to Sanders' 1977 *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* — and adds '*etc*' (Beckwith 1990:79).

⁷⁹ The practice of using rabbinical material as an adequate expression of views contemporary in Jesus' and Paul's time, is increasingly challenged. The extant rabbinical documents should probably be dated many years later than the letters of Paul, and the question is simply to what extent rabbinical writings reflect first-century Judaism in any case? Cf e g Evans (1992:114-148), Segal (1995:1-7).

Law, Dunn notes that the apostle's arguments are directed not against Judaism as such but at 'a particular interpretation and application of the Jewish tradition'. Dunn is also careful to restrict his comments only to Judaism of the first century. In short, his argument is that the notions of 'nationalistic presumption' and 'ethnic restrictiveness' were attacked by Paul as being an improper interpretation of Scripture (Barclay 1996:202).

3.3.3.1. 'Works of the Law' as boundary markers

Judaism was based, after all, on the fundamental recognition that God has chosen and redeemed the people of Israel when they had absolutely nothing to commend them — when in fact they were merely slaves in Egypt (Dunn and Suggate 1993:15).

Dunn is at pains to point out that the portrayal of first-century Judaism in the Lutheran understanding of Paul was a fundamentally distorted one of 'narrow legalistic religion'. Following Sanders to some extent,⁸⁰ Dunn accepts the description of first-century Judaism as 'covenantal nomism' (e.g. 1990:242-243), with the Jewish law providing the means of 'staying in' the covenant, and with Paul attacking 'covenantal nomism' as 'the view that accepting and living by the law is a sign and condition of favoured status' (Dunn 1990:187).

Dunn views Paul's critical engagement with Judaism from a social perspective, and argues that Paul's invective against the Law should be understood in terms of the social role of the Law. Particularly the phrase 'works of the Law' is taken by Dunn as a reference to 'boundary markers'. It refers to three important aspects of the social influence of the Law on the Jewish people: circumcision, dietary laws and Sabbath observance.

What Paul rejects, according to Dunn, is not the Jewish law, but the 'works of the Law' as explained above (1990:215-236). These 'works' perpetuate the religiously inscribed ethnocentrism of first-century Judaism as 'identity and boundary markers defining the people of God'.

3.3.3.2. Jewish Nationalism

The trouble was that Israel's theology of election gave this sense of national and cultural distinctiveness a religious dimension too (Dunn and Suggate 1993:19).

Dunn's agreement with Sanders and others that according to Paul God's grace embraces both Jew and Gentile, is worked out in a detailed analysis of the reasons for Paul's polemic against the Law. Paul is opposing Jewish exclusivism as manifested in nationalism. Dunn argues that Paul countered (some) Jews who were emphasising too strongly their 'distinctiveness' from

⁸⁰ Because, eventually, Dunn (1990:188) admits: 'I find Sanders' Paul little more convincing (and much less attractive) than the Lutheran Paul'.

Gentiles on the basis of Israel's status as the 'chosen people' of God, investing their identity 'too far in the presumption that Israel was set apart from "the nations"' (1990:172).

In Dunn's analysis, the objects of Paul's critique were 'nationalistic presumption' and 'ethnic restrictiveness' neither of which were, in Paul's view, a proper interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures (Barclay 1996:202).

It was in the Torah and especially in Deuteronomy where the Jewish distinctiveness was properly inscribed in covenantal terminology (of God's acceptance of the Jewish people as the starting point for their obedience) and where Dunn finds that '[c]lassic Jewish teaching here is very like Reformation teaching'. However, the Jewish sense of distinctiveness from other nations had two corollaries: the Law was used as 'a kind of defensive barricade which surrounded Israel and protected it from the defilement of the other nations', and 'Gentiles were outside the realm of that grace and favour' (1993:15-21).

The Christian doctrine of justification by faith begins as Paul's protest not as an individual sinner against a Jewish legalism, but as Paul's protest on behalf of Gentiles against Jewish exclusivism (:25).

Paul criticised the nationalistic elements of first-century Judaism in terms of the 'social function' of the Law.⁸¹ The traditional understanding of Paul's strictures against 'boasting' as related to self-achievement, is explained by Dunn as the Jew's privileged position before God over against other nations. The other element of Jewish nationalism decried by Paul, is 'justification by works' (Dunn and Suggate 1993:25-26).

3.3.3.3. New religion?

Luther was right to see Paul's conversion as a key to understanding Paul's doctrine of justification by faith. What he failed to appreciate was the character of that conversion — what Paul was converted from, and what he was converted to (Dunn and Suggate 1993:22).

Dunn differs from Sanders and Stendahl in that he asserts the continuing aspects of the early Pauline movement with first-century Judaism. Paul presents, based on the Christ event, no 'new religion' but a 'fundamental' revisioning of existing Judaism.

In short, we may say it was the continuity in the discontinuity, the apocalyptic climax of the salvation-history which constituted the heart of his gospel (Dunn 1994a:367-388).

No decisive break occurred between Paul and first-century Judaism, as Paul was 'converted' *from* being a persecutor of Christ. The change was a redirection of his erstwhile zeal to 'safeguard the privileges and prerogatives of Israel ... from any abuse or curtailment'. Equally, in his encounter with Christ, Paul 'was converted *to* the Gentiles':

⁸¹ Cf Boyarin (1994:51-51) on Paul being a 'culture-critic' according to Dunn.

What he protested against as a Christian was what he had defended so vigorously as a Pharisee. This was the conviction that God's election of Israel meant Israel's maintaining its set-apartness from Gentiles (:24).

In short then, the polemic in which Paul was embroiled regarding the role of the Law, especially as far as Gentile followers of Christ were concerned, was an internal Christian (Jewish) conflict (1990:195).⁸²

3.3.3.4. Criticism of Dunn's position

It is clear that Dunn's position approaches Baur's earlier contention that Judaism was 'particularist' and exclusivist,⁸³ although Barclay points out that Dunn never agrees to Baur's portrayal of Christianity as 'the absolute religion' (Barclay 1996:202,204).

Strong criticism from Elliott (1994; 1997) centers around his accusation that Dunn revived the Baurian contrast between Jewish ethnocentrism and Christian universalism. Elliott holds that this contrast, even if in muted and revised form as in Dunn's emphasis on supposed Jewish-nationalist purposes for insisting upon the observance of the Torah, is no longer tenable.

Perhaps one of the most serious concerns with Dunn's thesis is the fairly tendentious evidence offered for claiming that circumcision is an ethnic, identity marker in a nationalistic sense. The strong censure emanating from Neusner (e.g. 1995:305) is telling of the opposition leveled at Dunn: '[t]hat is Dunn's error: confusing theological categories with historical description'.⁸⁴

An often heard complaint against Dunn's NPP-views is that he has only been 'semi-converted' to the NPP (Deidun 1992:79-80). With reference to his Romans commentary, Deidun accuses Dunn of still describing the positions of the Jews in terms of the Law (contra Sanders and his notion of *covenantal* nomism), and that Dunn's emphasis on what he perceives as the 'self-consciously righteousness', self-seeking attitude of the Jews, busy with the advancement of their own piety, is very "old perspective" stuff.⁸⁵

⁸² For a brief review of the arguments for and against Paul seeing himself 'breaking' with Judaism, cf Snodgrass (1988:97-98). Barclay (1995:199 n61) argues that Dunn contradicts himself on the matter of whether Paul 'broke' with 'Judaism'. Barclay finds Dunn's notion of Judaism as 'a broad stream' with Paul's interpretation of Judaism as a legitimate option among others, inadequate (:118-119).

⁸³ Cf the strong opposition to Dunn's views, but also to the NPP in general, on this score in Elliott (1994:espec 69-71).

⁸⁴ For Jewish nationalism — in its varied forms — cf Mendels (1992). Interestingly, 'circumcision' is not even listed in his subject index!

⁸⁵ Snodgrass (1988:102) adds that the difference between confidence placed in works that are identity markers, and works viewed as 'human achievement to present oneself to God' is very slim!

The NPP's continuation of anti-Semitic tendencies by positing a radical opposition between Judaism and Christianity — à la Baur — is also pointed out by Elliott as a particular debilitating factor in Dunn's reading of Paul.⁸⁶

3.3.4. *A continuing, current debate*

The New Perspective on Paul — at least in the way it has been employed here — refers to the variety of attempts to account for the 'whys' and 'wherefores' of the Pauline letters in deliberate contrast to the Lutheran approach to Paul. The use of the NPP also met with some skepticism.⁸⁷

The question is: *can* one pay respects to the 'new perspective' without being in principle disposed to go along with a far less flattering picture of Paul than the one on offer under the 'old perspective?' (Deidun 1992:82)⁸⁸.

And Hengel argues that

no one understood the real essence of Pauline theology, the salvation given *sola gratia*, by faith alone, better than Augustine and Martin Luther (1991:86).

However, it seems as if the emerging consensus among scholars who do accept the need to view Paul from a 'new' point of view, is based on at least the following two concerns: a reappraisal of first-century Judaism, and an emphasis on understanding Paul's letters and thought in its first-century Jewish setting.

Although there is an emerging consensus among scholars regarding the nature of first-century Judaism, especially as far as soteriological structure is concerned, general agreement on the nature, direction and purpose of Paul's polemic against the 'Judaizers', 'works of the Law' and even the Law as such is still lacking. It is more possible, however, to find among NPP-advocates a broad, negative consensus regarding what Paul's polemic is *not* about. Paul is not simply denouncing 'Judaism' as 'works-righteousness' religion (whether purposefully or subtly), nor presenting 'Christianity' as individualist, 'spiritual' or 'higher-order' religion as a foil to the latter.⁸⁹

It is interesting if not ironic that amidst the general agreement on grace as the foundation of first-century Judaism, no consensus exists on the object of Pauline polemic. 'What is Paul

⁸⁶ Although Dunn is often at pains to argue that his theories should not be construed as anti-Semitic (e.g. 1990:80).

⁸⁷ Cf also Seifrid (1994:73-95), insisting Luther's theology of the cross and resurrection does more to contribute to the understanding of Paul than the NPP, as represented in Sanders, Dunn and Wright.

⁸⁸ Elsewhere, Deidun argues that Paul's statements on the Law is only 'coherent' in so far as it is interpreted according to Lutheran categories (1986:236).

⁸⁹ Cf e.g. Westerholm (1988:143): 'Perhaps the thesis most central to the "new perspective" on Paul is that, for Judaism at least, salvation was *not* based on works' (emphasis in original).

fighting, and why?' The general consensus does not resolve all differences of opinion regarding the relationship between Paul and Judaism. Was Paul misrepresenting Judaism, deliberate or unconsciously? Was Paul participating in an internal Jewish debate? Was Paul referring only to a particular strand or sect of Judaism? The difference of opinions concerns especially the understanding both of the role of the Law in first-century Judaism and the content of as well as reason for Paul's criticism of the Law.⁹⁰

3.4. A NPP view: Towards a framework for understanding

From the discussion of various representatives of the NPP, and particularly in view of the preceding paragraphs, it is clear that the NPP incorporates particular views about Paul and his first-century context — as well as first-century Judaism. Although the difference in approach can at times easily be discerned when compared with the traditional or Lutheran approach to Paul, the NPP is as polymorphic and polyvalent, as fluid and elusive when it comes to describing it, and is more in line with Postmodern trends.

Against the background of the brief overview provided above, the most important implications of a NPP-approach for this study can be summarised.⁹¹

3.4.1. Judaism(s)⁹²

From his own experience, and with considerable acumen, Luther had described a religion of 'works'; the pattern, it was supposed, would serve for Judaism as well. And, in fact, the correctness of the model was thought to be established by the effort of one or two intrepid souls who culled from rabinnic writings quotations to illustrate each of its aspects. The hermeneutical circle was then made complete when these quotations were taken to provide background material for understanding Paul: the apostle was interpreted in contrast to Judaism, which itself was interpreted in the light of Catholicism, which in turn was interpreted by Luther's reading of Paul (Westerholm 1988:33).

The Lutheran framework is one of the best illustrations of how readers do *not* encounter the context of the text as objective and is clear from the portrayal of Judaism and first-century

⁹⁰ Cf the views of Räisänen (1983) on the Law in Paul, claiming not only that Paul's thought on this topic is not systematic, but also that it is inconsistent and incoherent. Cf Hafemann (1993:675-676).

⁹¹ But, like all outlines and summaries, it is necessarily a selective process guided to a large extent by the concerns and interests of the author. E g, for this author, the value of the NPP's emphasis on the social implications of Paul's letters — as well as its emphasis on the struggle between Jewish and Gentile 'Christians' — is important for addressing the South African ecclesial but also the broader socio-political and economic context. The full extent of such an emphasis will emerge more clearly in the final chapter of and conclusion to this study.

⁹² Neusner is particularly vocal in arguing for the use of the term 'first-century Judaism(s)' because 'Judaism' is 'a word that can stand for just about anything' (e g 1991:3; cf 1989:27 n13; Pilch 1997:122) — cf his use of 'formative Judaism'. Cf Grabbe (1994:464-465;527) and note 2. Although the plural nature of the Jewish religious experience is accepted, for the sake of convention 'Judaisms' (plural) will be used only when the plurality of first-century Judaism is particularly in view or is deemed necessary of particular emphasis.

Jews.⁹³ In this study it has so far been noted that the Lutheran framework did not only serve as interpretive outline for the Pauline letters, but that it moreover presupposed a specific socio-historical, and religious, context which was called upon to explain its particular interpretation of Paul.⁹⁴

In a number of studies, literary theorists have pointed out that a context is nothing but yet another 'text' in need of interpretation.⁹⁵ The context of a text is not 'just there', but have to be determined by way of interpretation. In short, a context is not so much reconstructed as it is constructed. Instead of taking context as the hermeneutical point of departure, Culler (1988:xiv) uses the useful concept of 'framing'⁹⁶ to describe the process of how the context of a text is determined. Signs are framed through discourse, institutional arrangements, value systems and other semiotic mechanisms — and in this way the meaning of the text itself is framed.

In the case of the Lutheran framework the first-century social and religious context,⁹⁷ especially as far as Judaism was concerned, was framed in a very particular way — and this framing has been questioned by the NPP.⁹⁸ Some important elements of criticism deriving from the NPP on the Lutheran framework's (often, assumed) understanding of first-century Judaism deserves closer attention, but particularly an alternative understanding of Judaism.

⁹³ Pilch insists that it is anachronistic to speak of 'Jews' in the Bible, and that the term 'Judeans' should be used, based on the terms used in Hebrew (יְהוּדִים) and Greek (Ἰουδαῖοι) as well as the ancient custom of identifying people in terms of their geographic place of origin, family or 'group' (1997:120-124). Pilch refers also to the suggestion of Koester to rather use the term '(of) Israel' than 'Judaism'.

⁹⁴ At times, the Augustinian-Lutheran framing of the Pauline texts resulted not so much in a different socio-historical context for the text as in an a(nti)-historical reading of the text. Cf e.g. Meyer (1997:espec 348) on Rom 9-11 which has been — and is still often — read as 'a discussion of divine predestination and human responsibility' in the light of 'Augustine's preoccupation with the issue of the freedom of the will'.

⁹⁵ Cf also Botha (1994:291-307) on 'how to read the context'.

⁹⁶ Cf also Botha's study on 'framing' the Markan text (1993:29-56).

⁹⁷ Any remarks regarding Paul's background should take at least three major influences into account: Judaism, Hellenism and 'Christianity'. Howell (1993:303-326) describes how in the history of interpretation, the 'background' of Paul has been identified in at least *four* ways: as Hellenistic, Roman, Jewish and Christian. These influences can be subdivided and grouped into numerous categories — these concerns which will not be discussed here. As far as the Roman influence on Paul's life is concerned, it should probably not be portrayed as distinct or separate from the Hellenistic, which in the first century was a blend of Roman and Greek ('Greco-Roman'). Influences in terms of governing politics (e.g. the Roman Empire's system of granting a form of relative self-government, for whatever reasons: appeasing the people, to avoid revolts, etc) were rather limited in Paul's life — even when Paul was punished, it was inflicted by the local authorities. The one major influence was probably the Roman leg of Paul's dual citizenship: the protracted process of calling on Caesar to mediate in his case, costing Paul his life, according to tradition?

⁹⁸ Cf also Neusner who insists that '[t]hat invented, essentially fictive Judaism tells us only about the system-builders who invented it, that is, the Christianity of the Christian *adversus judaeos*-writers' (1989:31).

3.4.1.1. Redescribing Second Temple Judaism(s)⁹⁹

It is clear from the section on the Lutheran approach to Paul, that *this* understanding of Paul entails a very specific evaluation of first-century Judaism; in the words of Von Waldow,

Jewish casuistic combined with legalism, superficial ritualism, self-righteousness and the conviction that God's grace can be earned by obeying the law (1995:151).

Although such an understanding of early Judaism can be shown to be incompatible with the latest research, it does not lessen the difficulty of (re)describing the nature of first-century 'Judaisms'.¹⁰⁰

Even if a comprehensive description no longer seems possible, it is important to have clarity about its main features, in order to address the concerns highlighted by the NPP.

The characterisation of Christian religion as a 'system of beliefs', and Judaism as 'not even a religion, rather a way of life' (Von Waldow 1995:145) is more of an oversimplification than an apt description of these two religions. The credal and confessional nature of especially Protestant Christianity cannot be denied, but similarly, neither early nor contemporary Judaism can be described without reference to certain beliefs. The contentious point is the role and function of Torah in Judaism¹⁰¹ which — along with other aspects of Jewish religious practice — is often erroneously perceived from the perspective of modern Christianity.

Jacob Neusner (1991:5-6) argues that although both religions took over the 'inherited symbolic structure of Israel's religion', this 'symbolic structure' was given meaning in two distinct ways in Christianity and Judaism. Whereas Judaism emphasised the sanctification of Israel,¹⁰² in Christianity the salvation of Israel was most important.¹⁰³ Sanctification implies

⁹⁹ Cf Dunn (1991:11-16), who lists five reasons for the 're-emergence' of Jewishness as 'matrix' for understanding early Christianity: the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls; Intertestamental Judaism; Rabbinic Judaism; the reappraisal of the character of Judaism (cf NPP); Christian anti-Semitism. Cf Botha (1994:185-209) on the resurgence of the Jewish framework for understanding Jesus — espec that

- Judaism was in no way monolithic
- legalism is a figment of Christian imagination
- overoptimism re supposed early Jewish Messianism
- the temple's role was not that important
- circumcision was not *the* identity marker (vs Dunn).

¹⁰⁰ It almost goes without saying that anti-Judaism, if not anti-Semitism, was alive and well in early Christianity, too (cf the essays in Richardson and Granskou 1986).

¹⁰¹ Cf Grabbe (1994:537-545): Without doubt the center of pre-70 CE Jewish religious life — belief and practice — was the Temple in Jerusalem, dominated by the importance of the priesthood and cult. However, Judaism was always a 'religion of the book' as well, but the role of Scripture in Judaism should not be understood in analogy with contemporary Christian belief(s) as this would entail anachronism and ethnocentrism. For the use of Scripture in the first-century Jewish and Christian communities, cf the following chapter!

¹⁰² Cf also Renwick (1991:4-5 n2; 22-23) who is supportive of Neusner's theories and argues that the 'goal' of Pharisaism and other Jewish groups was not about 'forgiveness' or the 'escape from divine judgement', but *life in the presence of God*.

¹⁰³ 'Each appealed to a genus utterly outside of the imagination of the other' (Neusner 1989:27).

concern with a single nation, Israel, but salvation concerns the whole of humanity. Salvation 'categorically entails the eschatological dimension and so encompasses all of history', whereas sanctification 'categorically requires the designation of what is holy and what is not holy'.¹⁰⁴ Neusner's salient point is that the appeal to Jewish texts to elucidate hermeneutical problems in New Testament exegesis should be abandoned as

[i]ncomprehension marks relations between Judaism and Christianity in the first century, even though the groups were two sectors of the same people (e.g. 1989:18-31; espec 26).

In addition, Neusner claims, the use of Judaic material from any period in order to explain for example Pauline notions of the Jewish law, violates 'rules of historical relevance' and 'disrupt[s] the natural flow of theological thinking'. '[T]he reason is they assume a continuity where there has been, and can only have been, a radical break' (:20).¹⁰⁵

It has become widely accepted that it is not possible at all to talk of first-century Judaism in monolithic terms. There simply was no authoritative or normative Judaism during that time: Judaism was a *pluriform* phenomenon. It is broadly accepted that the following 'styles' of Judaism were present during the first century: rabbinic (or Palestinian) Judaism, Hellenistic (or diaspora) Judaism, and apocalyptic Judaism (cf e.g. Howell 1993:317). However, increasing discomfort is expressed at the supposed differences or even opposition between Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism in light of recent research (cf e.g. Lieu, North and Rajak 1992:1-8; Murray 1982:194-208).

Recent years have witnessed a gradual acceptance of the pluriformity of Jewish life during the time of the New Testament. Bij de Vaate and Van Henten (1996:27-28) argue that scholars have become increasingly aware of the diversity of Jewish life in Palestine and in Diaspora during the Hellenistic and Roman period. Similarly, Murray (1982:196,201-202) claims that the supposed distinction between Hellenistic and Palestinian Judaism as separate 'entities' is patently false, given the pervasive influence of Hellenism¹⁰⁶ even within Palestine. This would mean that the notion of *Hellenistic Judaism*¹⁰⁷ is not an oxymoron at all — then again, neither a tautology.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Cf Boyarin (1994: espec 228-260) on the, both positive and negative, implications of — what he posits as — Jewish exclusivity as well as that of Christian (Pauline) universality.

¹⁰⁵ So, e.g., although both Pharisees and Christians used the same classification in their religions in the first century, they both 'radically revised existing categories' which explains why both reread the received Scriptures: they both 'reworked what they had received in light of what they proposed to give'. Neusner's point is that one deals with 'different people talking about different things to different groups' (1989:29).

¹⁰⁶ In the sense of 'the mixed culture that developed in the various parts of the eastern Mediterranean area before, during and after the Hellenistic period proper', and thus distinct from the Hellenistic period of 'political dominance' (cf Engberg-Pedersen 1995:xviii n5).

¹⁰⁷ A number of related issues will not be dealt with here. E.g., for the idea of Jewish or Hebrew thought translated into Greek, cf Barr (1966:34-64; espec 63); Roetzel (1982:6ff).

¹⁰⁸ Feldman (1986:83-111) argues that there was a distinction in the degree of Hellenisation between the Jewish groups in diaspora and those in Palestine.

Engberg-Pedersen (1995:xvix-xix) writes that the boundaries between ‘Hellenism’ and ‘Judaism’ as two different and separate entities, have been eroded, especially because of two recent developments. The first is the increasing awareness of the falseness of ‘rationally superior out-going Greek or “Western” culture and the justly submitting “Oriental” cultures conquered by Alexander’. This has led to research which shows the ‘initial insularity of the Greek conquerors in the conquered lands’ and the consistent influence of Greek culture in the Mediterranean area long before Alexander’s conquests.¹⁰⁹ Secondly, ‘big, generalizing claims about Diaspora Judaism versus Palestinian Judaism’ are no longer possible; similarities and differences need to be accounted for in a more cautious way.

It is possible to refer to a number of identifiable characteristics of first-century Judaism(s),¹¹⁰ but the central concern of this argument is with the *pivotal role of divine grace* among all Jewish religious groups. Wright (1991; 1997:118ff) emphasised the importance of the notion of the divine covenant in the life of the Jews (cf Getty 1987:92-99).

Protestants are not surprised anymore when today a Catholic states his belief in justification by faith, but they might be surprised to hear that many Jewish theologians claim that Judaism believes the same (Von Waldow 1995:153).

Or, in the words of Getty (1987:94), ‘[t]his is what Paul’s gospel had in common with Judaism — that *justification is through faith*’ (emphasis in original). But the covenant was not simply about the designation of Israel as a special or ‘chosen people’, but referred to the divine scheme for dealing with sin in the world, as well as bringing salvation to the whole world. The latter was often described in eschatological — ‘the final fulfillment of Israel’s long-cherished hope — and ‘law-court’ terms, as the ‘ancestral covenant charter, the Torah’ spelt out the terms of participating in the covenant.

Justification in this setting, then, is not a matter of *how someone enters the community of the true people of God*, but of *how you tell who belongs to that community*, not least in the period of time before the eschatological event itself, when the matter will become public knowledge. ‘Justification’ in the first century was not about how some-one might establish a relationship with God. It was about God’s eschatological definition, both future and present, of who was, in fact, a member of his people¹¹¹ (Wright 1997:119).

¹⁰⁹ Hellenistic culture is a term indicating ‘the culture that results from mixing *originally* Greek cultural elements with *originally* non-Greek cultural elements. It is the *mixture* (in a given time and place) that constitutes Hellenistic culture proper (in that place)’ (Engberg-Pedersen 1995:xvii-xviii; emphasis in original).

¹¹⁰ Detailed and comprehensive studies of the historical context, beliefs and practices of first-century Judaism abound; cf e.g. Grabbe (1994); Sanders (1992). For a more popular approach, cf Soards (1987) emphasising the two pillars of Judaism (from which Paul stems): atonement and election — the latter as the embodying of faith in a God of grace.

¹¹¹ Cf Wright (1980:18) who based his conclusions on the work of Sanders (1977), proposing in general the same conclusion as Dunn (1983): Jewish ‘works of the Law’ is about ‘exclusivist nationalistic boundary markers’. Wright refers to these works as ‘the attempt to prove ... that one is already a member of Abraham’s family’.

Scholars have in recent literature made it more and more evident that first-century Judaism emphasised human reconciliation with God through faith (cf Segal 1990a:121), based on the divine grace demonstrated in the covenantal relationship.¹¹²

3.4.1.2. Jewish particularism and exclusivism versus Christian universalism?¹¹³

The often harsh distinctions forced on different ‘categories’, forms or strands of Judaism during the first century — as for example in Montefiore’s work — have been questioned. This is especially true of the notion that Hellenistic and Palestinian Judaism were two quite different and even opposing movements (e g Davies 1967:1-16). The equally often presumed distinctions between Hellenistic and Palestinian Judaism are increasingly questioned, especially since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and continuing investigation of the early Jewish literature: Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Apocrypha, Targums, Midrashim and Mishnaic traditions (Howell 1993:322).

The boundary lines between Jewish and non-Jewish appear to be less rigid, and even blurred (Bij de Vaate and Van Henten 1996:28). This realisation could lead to one of two conclusions, the more adequate of which is still in contention. Relaxed ‘border-control’ in the first century would probably have initiated more cordial relationships between Jews and non-Jews, and such interaction could lead to one of two reactions, and some positions in between: mutual acceptance of Jewish and non-Jewish *bona fides*, or, a more determined effort — at least from the Jewish ‘hardliners’ — to reestablish social (and political) control by insistence on adequate lines of demarcation.

Some scholars, however, insist that the characteristic elements and claims of the two first-century ‘groups’, on the one hand the various Judaisms, and on the other hand the — perhaps smaller variety of but still different — ‘Christian’ groups, determined their relationship to a large extent. In his attempt to uncover the identity of Paul — rather than his theology — as it emerges from his letters, Volf (1996:43-50) argues for retaining the traditional (Baurian) view of the ‘universality of Christianity’ versus the ‘exclusivism of Judaism’ and sees Paul’s shift initiated by the Damascus-road events as a move

from the bodiliness of genealogy to the pure spirituality of faith, from the particularity of ‘peoplehood’ to the universality of multiculturalism, from the locality of land to the globality of the world.

¹¹² This view on first-century Judaism is not unique to Pauline studies. Kilgallen (1991:330) in an article on Luke 7:36-50 for example simply asserts that ‘the traditional Jewish system ... urged repentance and return to God’. He continues that ‘the Christian system, while knowing the place of its God, insists that faith be placed in Jesus’.

¹¹³ It is really impossible to cover this important question adequately here, and as it is not the major theme of this thesis, I will attempt to *briefly* point out certain representative contrasting perspectives before formulating the view which I have accepted here.

In his argument, Volf aligns himself closely with Boyarin,¹¹⁴ who in turn, finds his starting point in Dunn's thesis that Paul's polemic directed at the Law was an attempt to address Jewish nationalism and ethnocentrism which effectively excluded 'Gentiles' from the covenantal relationship with God.

Much of the tension between the insistence on Jewish particularism on the one hand, and universalism on the other, can probably be addressed by taking into consideration how the exodus tradition — as paradigm of the Jewish people's identity before their God — developed and was appropriated over time. Pixley (1991:229-240; cf Samartha 1994:352-353) delineates three successive stages of development in the appropriation of the exodus-tradition in the Scriptures of Israel: in the early accounts the nature of the claim of God's liberation from Egypt was *religious*, but acquired during the course of the monarchical period a *nationalist* purpose, and still later and as an attempt to come to grips with the national disaster of exile, '*chosenness*' or an exclusive relationship with God was emphasised.

But the Baurian template of Christian universalism versus Jewish particularism is becoming more and more untenable, particularly when used to interpret the Pauline injunctions against the Law. Richard Horsley has recently severely criticised any attempt to explain Pauline thought in terms of the dichotomy 'Judaism' and 'Christianity', which 'more than any other modern construct ... determines the construction of "Paul"'.¹¹⁵

Despite widespread admission of the anachronism involved (for both!), use of the constructs continue. However much the concepts may have been changing, the dichotomy, enshrined in standard studies and reference works in the field, still carries the connotations of Christian 'universalism' and transcendent spirituality versus (a divinely rejected) Jewish particularism and legalism. Numerous recent studies have demonstrated that key aspects of these pretentious, all-encompassing constructs have no basis in Pauline and other literature, including the Book of Acts, which is of questionable validity as a historical source (Horsley 1995:1153).

Horsley argues that it is only in late Antiquity that one finds evidence for the 'constructs' of 'Judaism' and 'Christianity' as used since the nineteenth century.

In similar vein, Segal has recently written extensively on the relationship between Pauline and Jewish thought on universalism and particularism in the first-century Jewish-Hellenistic world¹¹⁵ (1990a; 1995:1-30). In explaining Pauline thought on the relationship Jew-Gentile, he argues from the perspective of the Jewish environment, and the different models of

¹¹⁴ Boyarin, however, criticises the coercive 'universalising' or multicultural transformation of the Jewish tradition (1994:228-260).

¹¹⁵ His arguments are in line with the increasing tendency to explain Paul's mission to the Gentiles, both in his own perception of it and in the presentation thereof, against the background of a revised Jewish pattern of universalism, rather than of the rejection of Jewish particularism (Donaldson 1994:166-193).

incorporating Gentiles into the Jewish tradition,¹¹⁶ in particular. Apart from a fully-fledged conversion to Judaism,¹¹⁷ two other models for Gentile inclusion, those of 'resident sojourner'¹¹⁸ and 'Noachide commandments'¹¹⁹ were available, though with different purposes and motivations.

The difference between the Noachide commandments and the rules for the sojourner is clear from a social point of view. The resident sojourner must, because of his close association with the Israelites, observe some laws of Judaism, while the Noachian commandments refer to the ultimate disposition of Gentiles and thus entirely to Gentiles who are not observant (Segal 1995:16).

The corresponding social situations would be in the case of the sojourner Gentile, one where Jews are in the majority and have political power, and the opposite where the Noachian commandments were the model to accommodate righteous Gentiles.¹²⁰

Paul, a Jew and ex-Pharisee at that, was faced with a situation where Gentiles were increasingly the majority within the church which included Jewish Christians, and was hard-pressed to avoid 'two classes of Christians'. Naturally Paul addressed this issue from his own socio-religious framework:

Paul begs moderation and continues to argue that the Gentiles are to be added to the community of the faithful through the model of the Noachian commandments,¹²¹ with no specific rules of Judaism in place, especially not circumcision (Segal 1995:20).

Paul argues that all people sin and are judged by the Law (e.g. Rom 1:18-3:20), and therefore that all people — Jews and Gentiles — need to 'repent and enter the way through faith'. As

¹¹⁶ A basic distinction in first-century Judaism Segal insists upon, is the difference between conversion and salvation: the former entails the Law, the latter not necessarily as in the case of 'righteous Gentiles' (1995:5-6; cf Boyarin 1994:299-300 n1). It also bears well reminding that first-century 'Christianity' was in many ways related to other Jewish groups, although it should probably not be seen as a Jewish 'sect' such as e.g. Pharisaism was (cf Meeks 1985:106). Cf in this regard also Goldenberg (1997:99-107) who concludes that through its internal diversity and notwithstanding Jewish acculturation in the Greco-Roman world, 'in the long run the gentile world was marginal to the religious cosmos of virtually all Jews in antiquity'. In the end, concludes Goldenberg, there was much more diversity in Jewish attitudes to 'Gentiles' and their religious practices, including high levels of tolerance, than what is often acknowledged.

¹¹⁷ Or proselytism, which was something quite impossible in some 'hardline' Jewish groups where circumcision on the eighth day was required, cf *Jubilees* 15:26-27 (Segal 1995:10-11). Conversion implied, of course, full observance of the Law, including circumcision (cf also Grabbe 1994:535-536). On the other hand, Donaldson proposes that the category of proselytism is probably the 'place to begin' when Pauline mission and gospel is explained according to the revisioning of Jewish universalism (1994:193).

¹¹⁸ This model 'derived from the biblical rules incumbent upon "the stranger in your gates"'. Certain Jewish ceremonial and moral regulations were applicable to non-Jews in a majority Jewish community, as expressed in Lev 17:7-9; 10ff; 18:6-26; Ex 20:10f; 12:18f (Segal 1995:8).

¹¹⁹ This 'rabbinic doctrine is derived from a sophisticated and theological formulation that some legal enactments were given before Sinai to all human beings'. Various versions of such Noachide commandments exist, and the first proper or full formulation dates back to the third century CE. However, earlier, pre-Christian versions are found in e.g. *Jubilees* (where the function of these commandments are, however, expressed to seal the condemnation of Gentiles) and *Sibylline Oracles*, as well as in writings by Pseudo-Phocylides and Aristaeas. Such commandments seem to include the prohibition of idolatry, promiscuity and violence (Segal 1995:8-12).

¹²⁰ Segal points out that in such situations where the Jews lacked political power, this model avoided a potential 'backlash' from the Gentile communities on 'stealing their children' (1995:17).

¹²¹ Unlike the 'apostolic decree' as presented by Luke (Ac 15:20,29; 21:25), which assumes the model of rules applicable to the sojourner (Segal 1995:13-20).

there are no 'separate covenants' for Jews and Gentiles,¹²² both Jew and Gentile need to be 'transformed by their faith in the risen, spiritual Christ'. Gentile Christians are therefore to be treated as 'righteous Gentiles'; not as 'resident sojourners', but as 'equals'. Regarding his views on the practice of the Law and the salvation of the Gentiles, Paul's approach approximates other positions in Judaism.¹²³

Segal therefore argues that Paul's 'basic assumption' in his letters is not a 'critique of works centered righteousness', which Segal calls a concern 'characteristic of a later time'. Paul's primary concern is with 'the process of transformation by faith that brings justification', a universal process for both Jewish and Gentile converts to Christianity. In the process he distinguished between 'fleshly and spiritual observances', or as Segal calls it, between 'ceremonial' and 'moral' law. Segal agrees with Dunn that 'works of the Law' *denotes* the effects of ceremonial laws in the community, but adds that it *refers* to ceremonial laws as such, as well: 'Paul is saying that the special laws of Judaism are not relevant for salvation' (1995:23-24). The special or ceremonial Jewish laws are not nullified, but relativised by faith in Christ; they are now voluntary, 'although he [Paul] concedes they may be practiced for the sake of church unity'.¹²⁴

The effect of Paul's preaching and his vision of a new, unified Christian community was the destruction of the *ritual* distinction between Jew and Gentile within the Christian sect (Segal 1995:27, emphasis in the original).

Paul, Segal argues (1995:29), provides significant insight into the Jewish position(s) on universalism in the first century.

Both Judaism and Christianity, under influence of the events of the Hellenistic period and the dominant cultural forces of the day, argued not just for universalism but also for toleration of differences within monotheistic religion.

3.4.1.3. The call/conversion debate: A benchmark?

Without repeating earlier discussions, an important aspect of the NPP relates to Paul's perception of his apostolate and subsequent mission, and the origin¹²⁵ thereof. Did Paul, on the road

¹²² As e.g. Gaston (1987), Gager (1983) and, of course, Stendahl (cf above) argues: for the Jews, on basis of the Law; for Christians on basis of Christ. Cf recently also Bockmuehl's argument that the Jewish law was retained for Jewish 'Christians' and the Noachide commandments for other 'Christians' (1995b:72-101, espec 100).

¹²³ Although his emphasis on 'the centrality of faith, his insistence that all need transformation, and his specific language for flesh and spirit' are different from the positions of other Hellenistic Jewish writers (Segal 1995:23).

¹²⁴ This would explain charges of 'inconsistency' (Sanders) and 'incoherency' (Räsänen) leveled against Paul's statements on the Law: although Paul operates according to the Noachian commandments-model, 'he is willing to accept some of the rules of the sojourner if that will achieve peace and unity within his community of Christians' (Segal 1995:26-27). Bockmuehl (1995b:100) contends that Paul attempted 'to forge a united body of Jewish and Gentile Christians in a fellowship of equals, in which the former continue to live by the special laws and the latter merely by the Noachide laws'.

¹²⁵ Some scholars have indeed found the origin of Paul's gospel in his Damascus road-experience, cf e.g. Jeremias, Bruce, and Kim (cf Howell 1993:325).

to Damascus, experience a 'conversion' in the classical, missionary sense, or did he simply receive a specific 'call' as in the Old Testament prophetic tradition?¹²⁶

For a very long time, the consensus amongst Pauline scholars was that Paul's experience on the road to Damascus was nothing short of a conversion experience.¹²⁷ This notion tied in with and rested on the general understanding of Paul's radical change from a 'works-righteousness' religion to a 'salvation by divine grace' religion, from 'Judaism' to 'Christianity'.¹²⁸

However, within the ambit of the NPP the emphasis in describing Paul's Damascus experience has shifted from the notion of religious conversion to change in religious commitment, or to view it as a 'call'.¹²⁹ And again, the particular view of Paul's experience as a 'call' relates to Paul's religious affiliation before and after this event. In the words of Von Waldow (1995:152),

Paul did not betray his Jewish roots, and Damascus did not mean conversion to a new religion, rather Paul became a Jew who believed in Jesus Christ.

Paul did, however, continue within another (and new) Jewish group whose religion was build upon Jesus Christ. This group allowed Gentiles to join them without expecting certain 'Jewish' prerequisites regarding the Torah.

The strongest evidence for the reevaluation of Paul's Damascus experience is often argued to be, as Dunn and Suggate (1993:24) do, that Paul never calls his conversion a 'conversion', but that Paul speaks of it as a 'calling or commissioning'. On basis of this event Paul also claims apostolic legitimacy, equal to that of the 'original' disciples or apostles.

A number of related matters and questions are often posed in the call/conversion debate. At the time of Paul's call,¹³⁰ some churches founded by the followers of Jesus Christ were

¹²⁶ Addressing the issue in broader terms is impossible here. However, suffice it to mention that writing the (or, a) history or theology of early Christianity is notoriously difficult. Wright (1992:15) refers to some extraordinary hypotheses in this regard: the 'Big Bang' theory, the 'steady development' hypothesis and the 'Tübingen' hypothesis.

¹²⁷ Even among those scholars who view Paul's Damascus road-experience as a conversion, there is difference of opinion regarding the nature of the conversion. Some like Bruce suggested that Paul's conversion was 'an objective time-space revelation of the risen Jesus', while others (e.g. Baur and Holtzmann) saw it more as 'a subjective, internal, psychological experience'. Cf Howell (1993:325).

¹²⁸ As Donaldson (1989:680) points out, 'conversion' is usually seen in terms of radical discontinuity: change from 'disbelief to belief, from sin to piety, or from one religion to another'.

¹²⁹ After his experience, Paul still believed in the same God, and still saw himself as a Jew (Donaldson 1989:680). However, a radical continuity between first-century Judaism and the followers of Christ has been pointed out by Dunn, claiming that the result was a new entity. The continuity existed primarily in both Christianity's emergence from Second Temple Judaism, and the continuing Jewish character of Christianity (1991:5).

¹³⁰ I.e. from the beginning of his (re-)interpretation of his Jewish religious traditions in light of Jesus Christ, temporalised and localised in Paul's claim to have received a direct revelation from Christ while on his way to Damascus to persecute the followers of Christ for their beliefs (=deviancy and apostasy from Judaism).

already operating. A number of questions in this regard still demand some research: to what extent were these churches in 'full operation'? Did they operate apart from the synagogue (cf Watson 1986)? Were they distinct from other forms of Jewish religious expression in terms of practices like rituals and liturgy? What was the nature of their theological convictions?¹³¹

A most important matter related to the call/conversion debate is that it serves as a benchmark for the evaluation of the significance of the NPP for Pauline studies. By this is meant not so much attributing the determinative place for his theology and ministry to Paul's Damascus experience (so Kim 1982; Segal 1990a), as the distinction between seeing it as a 'call', a 'commissioning', or 'conversion'. The choice for seeing Paul's 'ecstatic' or 'mystic' experience as either a 'call' or 'conversion', determines the extent to which Pauline scholars have 'bought into' the NPP. Without making this into any sort of hard and fast yardstick, as exceptions do occur,¹³² the emphasis on the continuity between Paul's letters and his Jewish heritage and traditions, and indeed his embeddedness in first-century Judaism¹³³ suggest that his religious experience on the Damascus road amounted more to a change in direction — although with some 'decisive shifts of values, orientation, and commitment' or a 'paradigm-shift' à la Kuhn (Donaldson 1989:681) — than a fundamentally new route.¹³⁴

Theologically it is correct to say that the scriptures and traditions of Judaism are a central and ineffaceable part of the Pauline Christians' identity. *Socially*, however, the Pauline groups never were a sect of Judaism (Meeks 1985:106; emphasis in the original).

The tendency to revert to describing Paul's Damascus road experience as 'conversion' betrays the difficulty in finally breaking with the Lutheran understanding of Paul and its concomitant view of Judaism. The call/conversion debate also introduces anew the question

¹³¹ In anticipation of the following chapters of this study, it deserves mention that, when viewed from a 'christocentric' perspective, the notion of a 'call' is experienced as a much more radical turn, than when viewed from a theocentric perspective. In the case of the latter, Paul realigns himself with God in order to include more people in the grace of God which he and his people has been party to for many centuries.

¹³² Not everyone associated with the NPP views this experience of Paul as a call; cf e.g. Segal (1990a:72ff) for a strong argument that 'conversion' is the appropriate term to describe Paul's experience on the road to Damascus — although his reliance on the descriptions in Acts as well as a decidedly experiential-subjectivist theological approach combined with his insistence on reading Paul in a Jewish mystical framework, might have taken him onto a different route — in the first part of his book, while embracing Dunn's theory on 'works of the Law' as ethnic identity markers in the second part. Segal defines conversion as a change in community, which is expressed in spiritual and transformational language and at times as a 'mystical transformation (a private personal experience)'. In addition, Newman (1992:70,73) criticises Segal for not breaking with the Bultmann tradition, where the Hellenistic setting (Segal's "mythical" gentile community at Damascus') determines the interpretation of the text.

¹³³ As Newman (1992:72) insists, '[t]he narrative horizon generated by the Jewish Scriptures thus functioned heuristically': Jewish (mystical) apocalypticism provided the framework for understanding history in religious ways.

¹³⁴ For other fairly recent contributions to the question of Pauline 'conversion', cf also Donaldson (1989:655-682); Dunn (1990:89-107); Hurtado (1993:273-284); the essays in Longenecker (1997); Martin (1981:24-31); Meeks (1993:18ff); Ralston (1990:198-215); Sugirtharajah (1991:352); Tobin (1993:55, 311, espec n34).

whether the pre- and post-Damascus Paul perceived himself, and whether he was perceived, to adhere to a 'different' religious system.¹³⁵

3.4.2. *The Law in Paul*

These areas of agreement and disagreement [between the Lutheran and Calvinist traditions] characterized much of the debate among New Testament scholars on Paul and the law from the time of the Reformers until some fifteen years ago (Bandstra 1990:251).

The role of the Law in Pauline thought has for centuries been discussed, analysed and described according to the categories invoked by the Lutheran — and subsequent, Protestant — traditions. With the Law as probably the most discussed and contested area in Pauline studies, no attempt will be made here to provide an exhaustive summary of the role and function of the Law in Pauline thought.¹³⁶ It is, however, obvious from the discussion so far, that the attempt to explain Pauline thought on the Law is central to both 'old' and 'new' perspectives on Paul.

Von Waldow (1995:153-154) argues that the origin of the wrong perception of the function of the 'Jewish law' or Torah — as translation for תּוֹרָה — can be found with the Septuagint's translation of תּוֹרָה with νόμος. Torah, derived from the Hebrew root, ירה — which means to teach or give instruction — in the context of the 'Old Testament' more properly means something like 'instruction or guidance on how to live'.¹³⁷ The setting presupposes a 'personal relationship between teacher and pupil', and

the spirit which motivates this Torah-teaching ... is love, benevolence and compassion.

Although aspects of authority are implied and expressed in related terms — commandment, statute or ordinance — 'torah' has no direct 'legal connotations'. Von Waldow concludes that such a view on the meaning of Torah in Judaism, requires a reevaluation of the Law in the Protestant tradition. Perhaps one should add: a primary reevaluation would require another, de-Lutheranised look at what Paul wrote about the Torah, and an even closer look at how Luther interpreted Paul's statements on the Torah.

Clearly there is no longer room in the interpretation of Paul to argue that Paul's injunctions against the Law, and 'works of the Law' are directed at 'works-righteousness', as if first-century Judaism espoused a legalistic, meritorious religiosity built upon human achievement.¹³⁸ On the other hand, the centrality of the Law in Pauline thought should not surprise, as Judaism

¹³⁵ Cf Barclay's forceful arguments that Paul was seen as an 'apostate' by his fellow-Jews, and that he can be described as an anomaly as well: 'By an extraordinary transference of ideology, Paul deracinates a culturally conservative expression of the Jewish tradition and uses it in the service of his largely Gentile communities' (1995:110).

¹³⁶ For a brief summary that allows for a quick overview of the most important positions on Paul and the Law, cf Snodgrass (1988:94-96).

¹³⁷ Martin Buber suggests that 'directive' translates Torah better than 'law' (cf Von Waldow 1995:154).

¹³⁸ Cf Meyer's lament (1997:338-355) of the 'Protestant habit of reading Paul through the eyes of Luther' which results in reading Rom 10:4 wrongly to refer to Christ as the 'termination' of the Law.

was indeed — although probably in varying levels — characterised by ‘covenantal nomism’ (Sanders). Perhaps this is as far as one can go in ‘summarising’ the NPP-view on the Law in Paul.

Various and wide-ranging interpretations regarding Paul’s statements on the Law have been forthcoming, ranging from his ostentious misunderstanding of the Law (in Jewish Palestine, being a Hellenistic Jew), through his concern with the Law being put to ethnocentric or nationalistic use, to his deliberate misrepresentation of the Law in Jewish life and thought. Paul enters into an intense dialogue with his tradition (i.e. Judaism) accusing it of misunderstanding or misrepresenting the Law.¹³⁹ However, and again, the charge against Judaism regarding the Law, is not one of attempting ‘to earn salvation *de novo*’ (cf Wright 1980:18). The Law in Paul’s thought is part of a larger scheme of religion: covenantal nomism. The Law is only by way of analogy and in a secondary way the ‘schoolmaster’ leading human beings to Christ.¹⁴⁰

This really begs the question from a NPP-approach: Why did Paul change to Christianity if there existed no conditions and events in Judaism which confirmed that the Law was not ‘the measure of righteousness’?¹⁴¹

As with the question on the meaning of Paul’s Damascus experience, it seems as if the issue regarding his problem with the Law can be best explained in terms of the early Christian community and Paul’s concern with its unity and harmony. Paul was called on the Damascus road not so much to leave the Law as measure of righteousness (because the Law did not have that function), but to accept Jesus as the promised Messiah¹⁴² and to preach about him to the

¹³⁹ According to some scholars, however, it was Paul himself that misunderstood the intention of the Law, and thus misrepresented it, e.g. Räisänen (1987:xxvi-xxix). Cf Hong (1993:191-193): ‘Räisänen [following Sanders, JP] thus concludes that Paul misrepresents the Law in Judaism’. Schoeps (1972:349-360) has forwarded this accusation much earlier. Räisänen (1987:xxix) himself refers to the shared view of Rhyne, Dunn, Badenas and Schnabel ‘... that what Paul rejects is not the Torah itself but some Jewish misunderstanding of it’ as the ‘old thesis’. Nevertheless, whether Paul or Judaism misunderstood the function of the Law, the NPP discards the notion of the Law as soteriological agent in either first-century Judaism or (obviously!) Paul.

¹⁴⁰ Stendahl (1963:215). For the idea of arguing via ‘sub-theme’ and ‘analogy’, cf Ziesler (1991:191-194) who argues for the same two ways of understanding the theme of ‘justification’ within Pauline thought. The different views on the Law dates back to the Luther-Calvin contrast regarding the Law. The Lutheran tradition identified three uses for the Law: theological (the pedagogue idea), political (to maintain civil order), and the third (identified by Melancthon) one of gratitude (works as response to grace). Calvin changed this order to: gratitude, theological and political (cf Fuchs 1992:232).

¹⁴¹ As in the traditional approach: obedience to the commandments of the Law as means of achieving righteousness. Cf e.g. Ladd (1974:368-369).

¹⁴² Staying thus in line with Jewish thought, whether or not one accepts with Sanders that Christ seemed ‘the better option’. Segal is of opinion that Paul did not merely see Christ as the long-awaited Messiah, as this would have meant the retention of the Law (the insistence that ‘the rules of Jewish life be imposed on all’) and the maintenance of his Pharisaic traditions by Paul (1990a:147). However, the ‘radical reorientation’ which Segal reads from Paul’s ‘conversion’-experience, was tied to Christ and the requirement of faith, not to Christ’s messiahship.

Gentiles. This explains the great significance both Paul (e.g. Gal 1:16, 2:8; Rom 11:13) and Acts (e.g. 9:15-16, 26:16-18) attach to being called 'to the Gentiles'. Traditionally the call to the Gentiles was simply seen as coincidence: Paul having had this Hellenistic upbringing and thus able to relate to Gentiles, a notion not particularly well attested in the texts. However, being called 'to the Gentiles' was not just a particular mode or emphasis which could then just as well have been a call 'to the Jews'.¹⁴³

3.4.3. *A center for Pauline theology: Justification?*

The notion of 'justification' of people by God is frequently asserted to be the key to Paul's writings, as well as the Bible and therefore the whole of Christianity: namely, God saves human beings by grace alone through Christ — the monergistic soteriological principle (cf Braaten 1990).¹⁴⁴ Of late, however, the notion of Schweitzer that 'justification' is a subsidiary concern for Paul, has been taken up by Beker (1980:15-16) and Wanamaker (1983:48-49) who argue — with Structuralist underpinnings — that the Christ-event was Paul's 'primary symbolic structure' with the secondary ones being, among others, justification by faith.

The Pauline emphasis on justification is not denied by the NPP. To the contrary, justification is seen by the NPP as the presupposition of Paul, not only after his Damascus experience, but even before it. Justification by faith also lies behind the Jewish religion,¹⁴⁵ if expressed in different terminology. The grace of God is therefore seen as the golden thread running through the whole Bible. Although he fills it with his own explanation of Jewish nationalism, Dunn's criticism of the Lutheran reading of justification is nevertheless valid:

justification by faith as Paul formulated it cannot be reduced to the experience of individual salvation as though that was all there is to it (Dunn and Suggate 1993:28).

The statement by Seifrid, who from a neo-Lutheran approach to Paul, argues that

[t]o attempt to correct the personal nature of forensic justification by 'reversing' direction towards social justice is to remove the article on which all true justice hangs (Seifrid 1994:94),

needs to be neatly reversed: God's quest for (social) justice in this world, implies his justification of the unjust, also on a personal and individual level.

¹⁴³ Davies (1967:68-69), taking his cue from J Weiss, contends that it is indeed Acts' preoccupation with Paul and his associates' preaching to the Jews which casts doubts on its accuracy in describing the Pauline mission. On another level, Davies argues, Acts can be seen to lend weight to the view (of e.g. Schweitzer and Dodd) that Paul's mission to the Gentiles was occasioned by the resistance his version of the gospel met with amongst Jews.

¹⁴⁴ Motyer (1992:71-89) concludes that 'justification takes us right to the heart of Christianity's self-definition over against Judaism'. For a brief overview of four positions on the status of justification in Pauline thought, cf Fung (1981:4-11).

¹⁴⁵ Wright (1980:19-20) emphasizes the need to look at justification from the perspective of the Old Testament. Following Paul in Gal 3:6, Wright refers to Genesis 15 and 17, and the call of Abraham within the context of 'faith' and 'righteousness', the latter meaning 'status within the covenant'.

In the NPP 'justification' is no longer necessarily at the center of Pauline theology, and 'justification' is no longer taken 'as the starting point for Paul's interpretation with Judaism' (Deidun 1986:234). The possibility of identifying such a 'key' or 'basic issue' in Pauline thought is not so much excluded as is the notion that this is found in 'justification'. Indeed, the central concern found in the Pauline letters is that of the newly formed communities of believers. Underwriting the formation of such communities by 'justification', shifts Paul's primary concern to the establishment of a unified Christian church, with 'justification' providing its essential foundation.¹⁴⁶

3.4.4. *Social dimensions of Paul's gospel*

In the NPP, the social dimensions of Paul's views come into focus, and in particular his effort to accommodate and reconcile Jewish and Gentile followers of Christ (Barclay 1996:201).

A number of emphases found among NPP-advocates move Pauline thought towards a more socio-political position, such as Dunn's emphasis that Paul addressed Jewish exclusivism¹⁴⁷ related to the social function of the Law, or Georgi's insistence that Paul's primary concern was with relationships between Jewish and Gentile Christians.

Apart from specific social emphases in the Pauline letters, the NPP has refocused the reading of these letters away from a narrow individualist and spiritualist position, to include the socio-political setting as well as communal perspectives. Dunn, for example, argues that Paul's use of 'justice' and 'righteousness' should be understood from an 'Old Testament'-perspective. 'Righteousness' should be understood as a relational concept, not an ethical norm used to 'measure' people and their actions. 'Righteousness' should be understood with reference to both its horizontal (human relationships) and vertical (the relationship between God and people) dimensions.

3.4.5. *Summary: A framework for understanding*

To argue the case of *the* 'new perspective on Paul' as if it is a singular notion describing a radically different interpretive approach to the Pauline letters, is patently unwise. The NPP is not a single concept with a number of different emphases seamlessly synthesized into an all-encompassing hermeneutic for reading Paul!

¹⁴⁶ Ziesler (1991:190) argues that although the emphasis on justification as divine act of grace permeates the Bible, Pauline statements in this regard cannot be sidetracked because the terminology is very much Pauline, and 'the history of the question is so much the history of Pauline interpretation'.

¹⁴⁷ Cf then also Dunn's references to the value of a new understanding of Paul for contemporary socio-political concerns; he refers to British missionaries in the 19th century, Nazi Germany, Apartheid South Africa, contemporary Zionism and the break-up of Eastern Europe (Dunn and Sugget 1993:28).

It is however, I believe, possible and indeed valuable to perceive the NPP rather as a broader, inclusive option. It is only possible to give credence to all the diversity and variety contained in the NPP, when it is viewed as an ‘umbrella’-concept. Then again, to have the NPP so broad to be inclusive of all and every newer reading strategy applied to the Pauline letters, would also be nonsensical.

The value of the NPP lies in various aspects, ranging from its questioning and criticism of the overwhelming power of the Lutheran paradigm as primary interpretive key to the Pauline letters, through its ability to offer a historically and otherwise more plausible Jewish setting of the letters, to the variety of alternative readings of vexing issues in Pauline thought.

The NPP should not, however, become the ‘master narrative’ in Pauline studies. It should not be portrayed as the unalterable interpretive framework for making sense of Paul.

To argue that the primary issue identified by the NPP in the Pauline letters concerns Paul’s attempts to reconcile opposing groups, that is Jewish and Gentile followers of Christ, is not to reduce Pauline theology to sociology. Paul’s concern with unifying members of communities of believers, as well as communities with one another (cf 2 Cor 8-9), was as much a theological matter as soteriology, christology and others are believed to be.

Paul’s secondary concerns center around the attempts of those who want to attain justification by any other means than by way of faith in Christ, based on the cross-events as figuration of God’s (latest outpouring of) grace and mediated by the Spirit. All other attempts at justification are doomed to failure and are described as sin.

Emerging very clearly from the NPP is the specific orientation of Paul, which goes beyond a Jewish background and embeddedness. The scriptures of Israel evidently played an important role in Paul’s thought, as attested to in the arguments he offers in his letters. They also provided the ‘theological framework’ for the Pauline notion of justification.¹⁴⁸ Paul’s use of Scripture will be explored at length, because more than only providing the interpretive context for the content of his letters, Paul’s hermeneutic allows the interpretation of his letters to move beyond the Lutheran impasse, as well as some of the obscurities of the NPP.

¹⁴⁸ Wright (1980:19): ‘Paul himself, who has most to say about justification, sends us back to Genesis to understand it’. So also Dunn (e.g. 1993:31-42) on the ‘OT’ roots of Paul’s statements on ‘justice’ and ‘righteousness’; Thielman (1994:239-240) for the ‘Jewish Scriptures’ as Paul’s basis of argument with his ‘Jewish compatriots’.

3.5. Opposition to the NPP

In an attempt to describe some broad lines of reaction against the approaches and proposals contained within the broader sphere of the NPP, Hafemann (1993:673-674) highlights the following three sets of responses by biblical scholars:

- Some scholars stress the ‘positive role of obedience in the soteriological structures of Judaism and Pauline Christianity’. Following others such as Cranfield and Stuhlmacher, the studies by CH Cosgrove, R Heiligenthal, F Thielman, and PJ Tomson are all concerned to indicate that first-century notions on the role of the Law attributed to it a stronger role than one of merely providing the perimeters of response or obedience within the Jewish and Christian religions. The emphasis is on the synergy between divine grace and human obedience as prescribed in the Law.
- There is a noticeable revival of the Tübingen school’s hypothesis, as is evidenced in the work of, for example, FF Bruce, S Kim, and G Lüdemann. Although aspects of the Tübingen’s school’s lasting influence can be detected in NPP-scholars as well — particularly in the work of Dunn — scholars such as those mentioned above, reiterate the basic framework of Baur and use his work as the grid within which to read and understand the Pauline letters.
- Among certain scholars there is to be found no less than a fully-fledged return to Luther’s interpretation of Paul: O Hofius, M Hengel, RH Gundry, TR Schreiner, BL Martin and S Westerholm (in part) all evidence the Lutheran framework for understanding Paul, and naturally, first-century Judaism.

Apart from such a broad sketch of opposition leveled at the NPP, it is also important to note in somewhat more detail the reactions of some Pauline scholars. This will serve a double purpose, namely to explain on the one hand certain well-formulated attacks on the NPP, while on the other hand showing up the implications — both positive and negative — of the NPP.

3.5.1. CEB Cranfield

According to Hafemann (1993:672), Cranfield opposes the ‘modern consensus’ on the untenability of the Law/gospel contrast in Paul. In opposition to the ‘axiom’ of the modern consensus, namely Paul’s conviction that Christ had abolished the Law, Cranfield offers the well known thesis that Paul opposes not the Law itself but merely a distortion of the Law, that is, legalism.

Cranfield still operates from within the confines of the Lutheran framework and concurs with the Reformation's understanding of Paul's opponents, the nature of Judaism and the centrality of justification in Pauline thought. He maintains that Paul did not advocate the abolishment of the Law, but the abolishment of its first-century Jewish perversion of the Law into legalism, as indicated by 'works of the Law'.

It is a question whether Cranfield should be viewed as opposing the Law/gospel contrast. Surely, Cranfield does not question the Reformational roots of this contrast. Also, his argument on legalism as the first-century Jewish interpretation of the Law and as the backbone of first-century Judaism as such (i.e. characteristic of the whole of 'Judaism'), posits as much a Law/gospel contrast in Paul's thought as did Luther's position on the 'meritorious works of Judaism'. This position still accepts that Paul viewed Judaism as a 'meritorious works' religion, and that Paul argued along the lines of a soteriological Law/gospel contrast.

Although Cranfield offers serious opposition to the NPP, his views like those of his followers — scholars like Moule,¹⁴⁹ Bring and Fuller — have been challenged along the following lines: his thesis is 'self-confirming' (Paul's negative statements regarding the Law refers to legalism, even when the phrase 'works of the Law' is not used); his failure to account for Paul's 'abolitionist' statements on the Law; and the historical basis for his views (in light of Sanders' work on Judaism) (Hafemann 1993:672). To this should be added that Cranfield is instrumental in keeping the Lutheran framework in Pauline interpretation alive.¹⁵⁰

3.5.2. *Biblical theology: H Gese and P Stuhlmacher*

In a similar way to Cranfield, Hafemann (1993:672) reasons that Gese and Stuhlmacher challenged the Law/gospel contrast in Paul's theology. Hafemann ascribes this to their efforts to reject the Law/gospel contrast by referring to Law and gospel as two distinct ways of salvation, and argues that they present the distinction as a theological matter, namely two salvation-historical periods.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Cf his attempt to argue that the Lutheran framework makes sense in at least Romans, and that 'covenantal nomism' still implies the need to perform 'good works' on the danger of not being allowed to 'stay in' (1987:48-49).

¹⁵⁰ So also e.g. Gundry (1985); Schreiner (1989:47-74) who accepts the social function of the Law, but then reduces the issue to the distinction between moral and ritual law — Dunn argues that Paul's critique of the Law produces such a distinction in practice, but 'is not reason enough for reducing the critique to that distinction' (1990:213) and thus for the revival of the Lutheran interpretation; and, Thielman (1993:529-542; 1994).

¹⁵¹ Although Hafemann admits that this view does not strike at the essence of 'the more traditional view'.

However, as their framework for understanding Paul, Gese and Stuhlmacher still accept the Lutheran framework's view on the centrality of justification by faith in Paul, and consequently Paul's critique of the Law, leading back to the Law/gospel contrast. In terms of a salvation-historical argument, the Law is seen to be imprisoned in the old (Sinai) covenant and therefore along with humanity it is in need of redemption from the power of sin.

Although a refinement of the Lutheran framework's view on the Law, the essential Law/gospel contrast, with its accompanying view of the nature of Judaism and its soteriology remains firmly entrenched in (this version of) biblical theology.

3.5.3. *S Westerholm*

Stephen Westerholm (1988)¹⁵² would qualify as an opponent to the NPP in as far as he represents a modified or neo-Lutheran reading¹⁵³ of and approach to the Pauline letters. The validity of the Lutheran position is situated in the fundamental contrast between 'grace' and 'works', with the latter required since the Sinaitic legislation (1988:106). With the covenant of grace built, at least partly then, upon the requirement of human 'works', it was doomed to failure because of human sin. Paul's gospel can, however, succeed where the Law failed, and this requires that Paul excludes 'the human activity which doomed the law to failure' (:163).

The general argument of Westerholm is well summarised in the following statement by Howell (1993:324):

As Westerholm argues, it is probably fair to say that while Sanders has successfully shown that first-century Palestinian Judaism was not a purely legalistic religion, there was still a faith-works synergism that is organically discontinuous with the Pauline proclamation of salvation by grace through faith alone. The apostle was significantly more pessimistic (or better, realistic) about human sinfulness and more insistent on *sola gratia* than was Rabbinical Judaism.

A number of problems with Westerholm's — and Howell's — argument would include the following: Is the supposed 'Pauline proclamation of salvation by grace through faith alone' deriving from Paul or from Luther and the Lutheran framework? Is 'faith' not becoming in this scheme another 'work' in terms of the Lutheran understanding of human virtue as requirement for securing grace of God? Especially since Westerholm, in essentialist terms, decries 'all doing' (Ziesler 1991:191).

It is clear from Westerholm's argument that he regards 'works of the Law' as 'works' in general (e.g. 1988:114-115, 119), and he still operates with an understanding of obedience in

¹⁵² Bandstra (1990:253,261) calls this work 'a fantastically good book'.

¹⁵³ So e.g. Dunn (1990:9 n15; 237). Barclay (1996:204) believes this is in opposition to 'some exaggerated features of the new perspective'; Boyarin (1996:196) contends that Westerholm's Lutheran reading of Paul excludes the 'slandering of Judaism'.

first-century Judaism as a means of 'getting in' instead of 'staying in' (to use Sanders' terminology) (1988:145-147). This leads to a reading of Paul as motivated by a sense of the universality of sin and the conviction that only grace can save.

Boyarin (1996:197), however, notes that Westerholm's interpretation of Paul excludes 'slandering Judaism': Paul's criticism of Judaism is its failure to keep the Law, not its keeping of the Law. But Westerholm fails to grasp the central point of Paul, namely his concern with the 're-creation of Universal Israel' for which grace was a necessary condition. He interprets Paul according to issues of 'universal sin and salvation by grace', which drives Paul's concern for the justification of Gentiles to the periphery.

Perhaps because Westerholm's attempt to scuttle the NPP is 'not sufficiently grounded in Paul's particular historical situation and that of first-century Judaism' (Boyarin 1996:197), it has not been found successful except by those intent on maintaining the Lutheran hermeneutic in Pauline interpretation.

3.5.4. *N Elliott*

Neil Elliott has recently (1994; 1997) argued strongly against both the Lutheran framework and the NPP — especially as articulated by Dunn. Elliott perceives in Dunn a revival if in muted form of a Baurian framework of understanding. Indeed, Elliott's strongest criticisms of the traditional interpretation of Paul as well as of the NPP, are reserved for the framework of Baur, which posits 'Jewish exclusivism' as the focus of Paul's opposition. Paul opposes such Jewish exclusivism from his own perspective of 'Christian (or monotheistic) universalism'.

[H]is [Baur's] posing the problem of Paul's theology in terms of a tension between Jewish ethnocentrism, and 'inclusivity' or 'universalism', is currently the ascendant paradigm in Pauline studies, put forward by James DG Dunn and others as an alternative to the still influential 'Lutheran' reading and dubbed 'the New Perspective on Paul' (1997:372).

Elliott's problems with the NPP emerge as he argues strongly against what he perceives as the 'sociological' reinvention of the Baur dialectic between early Christianity and early (Second Temple) Judaism. But other elements within the NPP also bothers Elliott: the inclusion of Gentiles in the 'Christian' church was taken for granted even before Paul appeared on the ecclesial scene.

However, Elliott's strongest criticism of the NPP is reserved for what he perceives as an almost renewed anti-Jewish if not anti-Semitic image stimulated by the results of the NPP.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ For some scholars who attach themselves to the NPP, e.g. Sanders and Dunn, albeit in different ways, Paul's invective against the Law and 'Judaism' centers on the notion(s) of Jewish particularism and Christian universalism. This opposition which was almost canonised by Baur, is widely believed to have contributed to (Christian) anti-Semitism. Cf e.g. Barclay (1996:198).

Although Christian scholars often offer this interpretation in the context of post-Holocaust inter-faith dialogue, it hardly improves¹⁵⁵ upon the theological anti-Judaism detected in the Lutheran paradigm (1994:70).

Christianity stays the 'absolute' religion, and is still susceptible to 'Christian chauvinism' or triumphalism.

Elliott concludes that in the end the NPP still does not succeed in providing an interpretation of Paul that is intelligible 'from the Jewish point of view'¹⁵⁶ (1994:71). He opts for a renewed emphasis on the 'political reading' of Paul (1994:82-90), not quite unlike what Dieter Georgi has attempted in some of his studies on Paul (cf further below).

3.5.5. Pieter F Craffert

In an 1993-article Pieter Craffert tries to account for Pauline 'Christianity' within the broader situation of first-century Judaism. He deals with this matter while severely criticising the NPP. In short, Craffert expresses his doubts regarding the usefulness and the adequateness, in fact, the 'correctness' of any approach outside a social scientific perspective (1993:233-262). He argues that the NPP is still, as in the case of the Lutheran framework which he also decries, a 'history of ideas'¹⁵⁷ approach and is fundamentally flawed in its failure to acknowledge and consider

the fact that all ideas, concepts and knowledge are socially determined (1993:235).

Craffert views the NPP as yet another approach which can be typified as idealistic in the sense that it treats ideas as autonomous concepts that can be separated from the social systems which produced it.

In the NPP the delutheranising of Paul takes place amidst what is seen and portrayed as a conflict of religious ideas:

¹⁵⁵ Elliott is perhaps overstating his case, what with Judaism in the NPP no longer being seen in the Lutheran perspective as a second-rate, degenerate, legalistic and meritorious and in fact self-serving religion; granted, Judaism is in the NPP sometimes presented as an exclusivist, ethnocentric religion, but this is arguably already an 'improvement' upon the older view in that not so much the very nature of Judaism is questioned, as exclusivity as one element of Judaism.

¹⁵⁶ A claim not borne out by the evidence, especially if the studies of Boyarin and Segal (referred to above in various contexts) are anything to go by!

¹⁵⁷ For the 'history of ideas', cf Macksey (1994:388-392). For reaction against a cognitivist 'history of ideas'-approach in the study of ethics and ethos in the New Testament, cf Meeks (1986b:4-6) who argues for a 'cultural-linguist' (Lindbeck) approach when dealing with the NT texts: 'In order to understand the subculture of the early Christians, what we have to do is not abstract from it their ideas, ideals, or principles, nor to define some mysterious inner world behind their world of symbols — their feelings, attitudes, dispositions, or self-understanding. Rather, we ask how their symbolic universe works. The culture of people does not only express who they are; it is constitutive of who they are' (:4). Deidun (1986:239) compliments Meeks who 'performs the salutary service of reminding Pauline scholars that the genesis and interaction of abstract ideas cannot in themselves explain the development of Paul's theology'.

Paul's break with or rejection of Judaism which is decided primarily on the basis of conflicting theological ideas (Craffert 1993:235).

The specific theological content of these ideas falls within the ambit of soteriology, and these ideas are attended to without consideration for their socio-historical situation. Craffert takes Sanders to task especially for moving from a theological or ideological argument to a sociological conclusion, without letting these two structures inform one another. Craffert also finds the argument, introduced by Sanders, that the deviation from a conjectured religious pattern (covenantal nomism) constitute a new religious pattern (participationist apocalypticism), invalid (1993:236-237).

Craffert rightly emphasises certain important matters in his evaluation of the NPP. Certainly there is a greater need, especially in the contemporary post-historical study phase of biblical studies, to ensure that due attention is given to the situatedness of the ideological component of the text, and the relationship between our understanding of the text and our perception and construction of the context of the text. However, it seems as if the NPP is — at least at times — exactly doing that,¹⁵⁸ although not necessarily according to Craffert's preferred methodology, the social-scientific approach. On the other hand, there is however no clear indication that Craffert seriously consider the systems of thought and belief in first-century Jewish and 'Christian' religious groups.

Craffert's choice of models equally predisposes — at least in the same way as he accuses Dunn, Watson and Meeks — his conclusions. The view that first-century Jewish religion in the Diaspora relied on the 'holy man' type of practices leads him to conclude that

Paul perfectly fits the shamanistic role of a divine man involved in rivalries over mediating the sacred and providing access to divine power and magic,

and

it is likely that Paul was not at all concerned with rejecting or breaking away from Judaism, but with getting a foothold in the market of mediating the sacred and distributing divine power¹⁵⁹ (1993:256).

¹⁵⁸ Cf Craffert's reluctant acknowledgement of Dunn's attempt to take Paul's context seriously as well as Dunn's explicit claim that he argues from a sociological perspective (1993:238). Dunn is faulted for his tacit acceptance of a 'normative Christianity', accused of remaining in the Protestant mould (the comparison of 'Paul's theological views' with the assumed 'typical' view of normative Judaism) and pushed aside as another example of a 'history-of-ideas' approach. Similarly, Craffert disavows Watson's attempt to combine socio-historical matters with Pauline reflection as being built on the treatment of first-century Judaism as an abstract entity: a 'normative' movement, and a religious system (1993:239-241). Meeks' argument that the Pauline household communities broke away from first-century Judaism, is considered implausible by Craffert as this would assume that 'organisational and structural independence' of the Pauline communities occasioned the rupture (1993:241-242).

¹⁵⁹ Cf also Castelli (1991) who argues on different propositions for what she perceives as Paul's grasp for power amidst the conflict with the other apostles!

Craffert's method clearly determines his results!¹⁶⁰

His ardent reaction to what he calls the 'history of ideas' approach probably also causes him to misread the opposition's arguments, or at least leads to the failure to treat the different authors and their arguments on equal terms. Dunn, for example, does not suggest anywhere that Paul is either 'attacking' Judaism or that Paul presents Judaism as 'an inferior or inadequate religion'.¹⁶¹ Craffert's postulation of a broad base of religious activity ('the religious market') with at most 'holy men' or 'magicians' competing for the biggest share in this market, naturally nullifies the possibility of even considering exclusivist claims made by early Judaism as well as — perhaps in a more muted way — early Christianity.¹⁶² To ascribe this only to the particular aspirations of specific holy men is to be bound by the confines of Craffert's construction of first-century religiosity.¹⁶³

As much as Craffert faults the NPP for its construction of both first-century Judaism and Paul's perception thereof, contemporary social-scientific studies have also been criticised. The categorical claim of these studies to be able to finally present the *real* social conditions and social setting of the first-century Mediterranean world is perhaps somewhat exaggerated and effectively passes constructions on as reconstructions.¹⁶⁴

3.6. Summarising remarks

¹⁶⁰ Craffert argues that Paul should not be accorded blame for anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic propaganda, but should be criticised for 'furthering the mentality of divine sanction and absolute truth for his viewpoint'; and, 'his mistake was ... in identifying his selfdefinition with God's view and in claiming truth for his viewpoints' (1993:258; cf 1994:859-876). The latter claim is rather anachronistic, in a double sense of the word: Paul and his contemporaries did not subscribe to the rather postmodernist disavowal of truth, certainty and so on. And secondly, religion (in whatever form, but almost certainly in monotheistic guise, cf Schwartz (1997) who works this aspect of monotheism out in terms of identity and violence) by its very nature deals in — broader and narrower but still — exclusivistic claims on the divine!

¹⁶¹ The most one can argue for is that Dunn presents a sustained Jewish attempt to reserve God for their nationalist or ethnic purposes! Only if exclusivism — as opposed to universalism — is equated with inferiority, can Dunn be pronounced guilty of such transgressions.

¹⁶² The accusation that the NPP harbours an anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic stance (cf also Elliot above) is an oversimplification of the religious claims of the early followers of Jesus. Without condoning such antagonism but in order to avoid an anachronistic and 'politically-correct' manipulation of the first-century religious world, one should reckon with both Jewish and 'Christian' animosity. The possible roots of later (modern) anti-Semitism in the portrayal of early Judaism as an exclusivist religion, is a topic for another discussion.

¹⁶³ It also gives evidence of a highly individualistic interpretation or view of Paul, which hardly squares with the broader picture; cf Martin (1994:117-141; Horsley 1995:1152) for the anti-individualistic nature of Hellenistic life and thought.

¹⁶⁴ Cf also Kee (1989:106) and Schüssler-Fiorenza (1994:449-451).

The importance of the NPP is that it alerts us to the dangers of reading the Pauline letters from a Reformational, individualist perspective.¹⁶⁵

For Paul, as for Jesus, the salvation of the individual is set in the context of God's redefinition of Israel, his call of a worldwide family (Wright 1980:21),

and

we have taken the doctrine of justification out of the context of the covenant and reduced it to the idea that what God wants is inward religion (Wright 1980:33).

By absolutising the concept of 'justification by faith', it was removed from its historical and literary context of Paul's letters and first-century Jewish religious belief and practice. The justification concept became not only the foundation for a 'new theology' but also the secondary or interpretive filter for all later theological formulations. Furthermore, it presupposed a foil with its 'characterization of observant Jews as self-righteous legalists' (Von Waldow 1995:153).

The NPP effectively breaks with the 'spiritualist' reading of Paul, especially in so far as a 'spiritualist' reading often implied a depoliticised Paul (*contra* Elliott). Another victim of the NPP is the 'essentialist' interpretation of Paul. No longer can Paul be regarded as a 'systematic theologian', or in its extreme, the founder of a new religion.

Within the NPP, the corporate aspect present in Paul's letters is allowed to emerge, clearly showing a Pauline concern with the community in contrast to the conventional 'individualist' approach to Paul and his letters.

To conclude this section it bears repeating that it is doubtful whether the consensus among Pauline scholars is the NPP, as Hafemann (1993:674) contends. It is perhaps even more doubtful whether all those included under the rubric of the NPP (cf Barclay 1996:201 n13) can justifiably be classified as such. It therefore becomes necessary to proceed beyond the NPP, using the 'new perspectives' on the Pauline letters as a starting point.

4. Moving beyond the NPP

4.1. Introduction

¹⁶⁵ For this, Wright (1980:33-34) accuses the modern 'sincerity cult' of the autonomous individual, influenced by the 'Spirit of the Age' as embodied in the 'Romantic movement, the heritage of Idealism' and the 'popular existentialism'. Cf Lundin (1993:5) who refers along similar lines to the modern 'therapeutic understanding' of the world: '[T]here is "nothing at stake beyond a manipulatable sense of well-being"' (quoting Rieff). Concurrently Wright pleads for a return to the 'historical' dimension of Christian belief: To take up links with the 'historical people of God', as the context for justification, opposing the 'present trend away from historical Christianity'.

Whereas the NPP is often judged by its ability to present a justifiable position of first-century Judaism and Christianity, Barclay (1996:203) rightfully emphasises the ‘social and ideological milieu’ of the NPP itself.¹⁶⁶ Despite the criticism levelled at the NPP, the importance of the approach lies in the fact that it is a twentieth-century attempt to contextualise the Pauline gospel and to take the situation of reception seriously. Or, to put it in the words of Lategan (1995:949):

Reception theory has made us aware of the important role which audiences play in making successful communication possible. Audiences are not passive receptors, but active participants in a process of interactive exchange.

This ‘interactive exchange’ between the broader contemporary audiences and their contexts, and the Pauline texts within their contexts, has been pursued by the NPP. In doing so, it has indeed made a ‘new’ understanding of Paul possible. What follows is therefore an attempt to, often with the NPP as starting point, map out some important new directions within Pauline studies which will come into play in the following chapters in more detail.

Perhaps the most important contribution of the NPP is the critical assessment of centuries of Pauline understanding and simultaneously providing a more adequate way¹⁶⁷ of interpreting Paul. But equally important is the renewed interest in hermeneutics that accompanies the whole NPP enterprise and further developments. The result is a revitalised exegesis of primary texts, including the New Testament writings of Paul as well as some Rabbinic texts. The NPP has also reopened the whole issue of contextualisation of Paul and the basic presuppositions of reformed theology. And most importantly for this study — a matter which will be argued at length in the following chapters — the NPP has given new impetus to research on the relationship between Paul and the tradition(s) from which he emerged.

The new perspective on Paul — in the broadest sense of a post-traditional reading of the Pauline letters — has raised a number of important issues. It is, for example, in the wake of the NPP no longer adequate to postulate the ‘Old Testament’ and ‘New Testament’ as two separate (collections of) documents. These two sets of documents should be understood as

¹⁶⁶ The same applies of course to other and earlier interpretive patterns found in the history of the interpretation of the Pauline letters: cf e.g. Wright (1997:15-16) who positions the existentialist interpretation of Paul — providing confidence to Christians amidst crises in the world — by Bultmann in the time of Hitler’s rise to power; and, Davies’ emphasis on Paul’s Jewish background in the post-Second World War era and the disgust at ‘the vile anti-Semitism which caused the Holocaust’. Cf Boyarin’s own alignment with the NPP (and James Dunn’s theses in particular) accompanied by a stinging critique of Käsemann’s interpretation of Paul related not only to Käsemann’s Lutheran reading of Paul, but especially his lack of ‘moral responsibility’ as a ‘post-war German’ (1996:193-196); Von Waldow (1995) for the need to rethink traditional positions on Second Temple Judaism in order to facilitate the Christian-Jewish debate.

¹⁶⁷ The adequacy is not resident in the positivist constructed ‘historically proved’ view of Paul, but in that the NPP keeps socio-historical (contra Craffert), literary and theological aspects intact — although all these elements may not be present in any particular NPP-advocate as such. As always, it remains, however, a question whether representatives of the NPP always ‘put their ideologies on the table’, and whether they will be willing to look at their own ‘histories of reception’.

together constituting one Bible. This is necessitated by Paul's Jewishness, and the relationship between the two renders the redemptive- or salvation-historical approach inadequate, at least in as far as it does not explain the 'Old Testament' and 'New Testament' relationship adequately: the promise-fulfillment scheme is often dependent on a traditional, one-sided understanding of Paul's writings.

Moving away from an essentialist approach to Paul, the NPP has stressed the theocentric tenor of the Pauline writings. With the resultant renewed emphasis on the divine covenant, and thus on the *grace-ful* God of Israel, as continued by the revelation in and by Jesus Christ, the scene is set to move the reading of the Paulines away from a narrow pisticism or fideism,¹⁶⁸ and to envisage a God involved in the world, where pluralistic tendencies are addressed whilst eschewing christomonism. The further emphasis on the apocalyptic theology of Paul,¹⁶⁹ with its two-age typology, dualistic worldview, and the need to create wholeness on earth because of or in preparation of what comes, has led to the identification of a different incentive in Paul's thought. The contingent nature (and thus freedom) of theology follows on such a reappropriation of Paul.

What an irony that, when not obscured by Western theologically determined historiography, Paul's mission and letters appear insistently particularistic, so obsessed with both local and worldwide community that they discourage individualism, and highly political especially in their anti-imperial agenda (Horsley 1998:162).

In its wider application, the newer appreciation of Pauline thought establishes a strong position against anti-Semitism, and in fact against Christian triumphalism as such, as argued below.

Wayne Meeks claims that Paul's encounter on the road to Damascus and his subsequent life give no indication of the desperate and desolate Jew portrayed by the traditional interpretation of Paul:

He is not, in his self-description, a despairing Jewish sinner who has been 'saved' by becoming a Christian, but a confident and zealous Jew whose zeal has been turned in a radically new — but still Jewish — direction by the God he has always sought to obey (Meeks 1993:20).

This is made explicitly clear in at least two of Paul's letters, Galatians and Philippians. In Gal 1:13-17 and Phil 3:4-11 Paul argues extensively against the idea that some level of Jewish practice is compulsory for being taken up into the people of God.

¹⁶⁸ As well as from the debate on whether 'faith' in the Pauline scheme of things becomes *the* 'work' by which salvation is procured. 'Once we release Paul's justification-language from the burden of having to describe "how someone becomes a Christian", however, this is simply no longer a problem. ... Faith is the badge of covenant membership, not something someone "performs" as a kind of initiation test' (Wright 1997:125).

¹⁶⁹ Cf Braaten (1990:11ff) on Pannenberg and Moltmann helping to 'recapture the apocalyptic horizon in Paul's idea of the righteousness of God'; and on Käsemann and Stuhlmacher with their 'exegetical support' for 'eschatological reinterpretation of justification': 'We receive God's justification under the sign of promise and expectation'; although Bultmann limited it to 'existential experience of the individual'.

A number of final comments on the New Perspective on Paul, its corollaries and some important developments in understanding Paul following in its wake, serve to draw the major conclusions of these studies together in order to facilitate the following discussion and to conclude this chapter.

4.2. Rereading Paul, in his (primary) context: Judaism¹⁷⁰

In Paul we are dealing with a man who simply has not learned enough Church history to understand the differences between Christianity and Judaism, much less to recognize the distinction between two religious communities (Johnson 1997:368).

The historical-cultural context of the tradition therefore becomes important again, but now from the perspective of reception (Lategan 1997:119).

One of the major presupposition of this study regards the contextuality of theology, in its different sub-genres. The study of Paul's background is in no small way also a contextual enterprise; indeed, as has been argued consistently so far, the major weakness of the Lutheran approach to Paul was the solipsistic transposition of a preconceived view of Pauline theology — derived from and in opposition to the dominant contemporary (Catholic) church beliefs and practices — to first-century (Jewish) religious patterns. By this is understood the various different ways of (re-)constructing a plausible first-century historical context for Paul, and reflective of the dominant concerns of the time (of such reconstructions).¹⁷¹ This pattern was stoically defended and continuously reinscribed in subsequent generations of scholars.

[T]heologically determined biblical studies fabricated a parochial-political and legalistic-ritualistic 'Judaism'¹⁷² as an Other-religion over against true, universal and purely spiritual religion: Western European Christianity (Horsley 1998:154).

The NPP has to its credit that it has reemphasised 'wie stark die paulinische Theologie im zeitgenössischen jüdischen Kontext verankert ist' (Strecker 1996:14).

It is clear that in the shadow of the Lutheran framework, the ability to use the Pauline letters to promote and defend anti-Semitism, has become an important context for the NPP

¹⁷⁰ Identifying Judaism as the primary context for understanding the Pauline letters, should not be read to imply that the broader Greco-Roman or Hellenistic world did not also impact on Pauline thought (cf Horsley 1998:162-172). The issue is, however, that of the particular socio-historical construction of Paul's Jewish context according to and within the Lutheran framework, and Paul's situatedness in that context. Horsley (1995:1152-1153) finds rhetorical criticism particularly helpful in understanding Pauline thought because it 'will help us appreciate that whatever theology Paul might express is embedded in his arguments addressed to particular situations'.

¹⁷¹ Barclay argues that 'the most obvious influence' of the NPP can be found in the 'theological respect' now granted to Judaism (1996:203).

¹⁷² For a strong attack on the traditional perception of early Jewish — and especially Rabbinic — thought as legalistic, cf Brooks (1990). He contends that Jewish religion was seen as 'the purveyor of deep spirituality and ethics'. The 'act of participating in the legal system — an engagement that absorbed and lent sanctity to human life — constituted the proper goal of religious practice'. The Jewish law was seen as 'God's finest gift to humanity'.

emphasis on a re-evaluation of Second Temple Judaism.¹⁷³ Even amidst the continued insistence by some Pauline scholars that Paul's letters evidence some kind of criticism of Judaism, the portrayal of Judaism as 'works-righteousness religion' is no longer seriously defended (Barclay 1996:203-204) — if, unfortunately, still tacitly accepted especially in (some) conservative evangelical or Reformed academic and ecclesial circles.

The first major and comprehensive attempt to outline Paul's background should probably be credited to Baur. The Baur hypothesis entailed, in short, the acceptance of Christian universalism and Jewish exclusivism. The long reign of this theory, often referred to as the Tübingen school, was bolstered further by the resurgence of finding Hellenistic influence in Paul by way of the *Religionsgeschichtliche* approach. But this view is clearly on the decline.

The Baur hypothesis have increasingly come under attack, although some NPP-scholars like Dunn in some respects reinvented the views of Baur. Other scholars such as Neusner have questioned the traditional portrayal of Jewish exclusivity, without denying its existence in the first century. Going beyond Neusner in an attempt to understand Paul's views with regard to first-century Judaism, Segal, however, offers another interpretation of Jewish exclusivity and Pauline universalism, as explained above.

In a related, if not in a NPP-way, Elliott proposes that a new attempt has to be made to identify the 'historical Paul', analogous to the search for the 'historical Jesus'. He proposes the following four criteria: dissimilarity, historical intelligibility, rhetorical intelligibility, and invoking a 'political key' (1994:85-86; cf Furnish 1994:8-12).

Not as a direct response to Elliott, Barclay nevertheless examines Paul in his first-century Jewish context, and concludes that Paul was seen by his fellow-Jews as an apostate, a 'label [which] fits historical reality' (1995:118). Barclay describes Paul as diaspora Jew, highly assimilated (i.e., socially integrated), but comparatively low in acculturation (his mastery of Hellenistic education and Greek) as well as accommodation (subscribing to the Hellenistic conceptual framework).

It seems possible to argue not only that anti-Semitism was the result of the Lutheran reading of Paul, but that anti-Semitism, in turn, had problems with the Judaic setting of Paul. It is not surprising then to notice that in post-Lutheran studies of Paul, an increasing number of scholars turn to Paul's Jewish setting.

¹⁷³ Pointed out at least since Stendahl (1976:126) and recently effectively so by Barclay (1996:197-214) and Boyarin (1996:193-198).

As Paul Meyer has recently argued,

[o]ne might very well ask what the consequences would be of a consistent Christian interpretation that insists on identifying the Mosaic Torah with old aeon... That consequence might not be as reprehensible as that other paternalizing view of Judaism as a lower order of religious commitment and behavior on its way to Christianity, but it surely would miss by an even wider mark Paul's deep engagement with the Judaism from which he came and to which he remained profoundly tied (1997:351).

4.3. Paul and his communities: Towards a 'social gospel'

Despite some nuanced restatements in a neo-Lutheran mould, these statements do not translate into adequate hermeneutical strategies for interpreting Paul (as in Thielman 1994:238-245). To accept that first-century Judaism was not a legalistic, meritorious, works-righteousness religion, does not automatically lead to the conclusion that Paul is not fighting 'human boasting' *in general*. Paul's concern is often still seen to be an individualist, spiritualistic and essentialist one, found in the individual's rejection of any attempt to achieve personal salvation while accepting the free grace of God by faith. On the other hand, the NPP's insistence on moving away from the 'individualist' and 'spiritualised' Paul, largely cleared the way to consider Paul in relation to his communities.

Taking his cue from the current concern with ecclesiology in Christian theology, Barclay emphasises the shift from an individualist to a communal reading of Paul.¹⁷⁴ Arguing that Bultmann's existentialist position is no longer able to carry the day either philosophically or theologically,

churches are in general more exercised about their social identity and social roles than about ensuring their members are individually put right with God on the correct terms (1996:204).

This new reading of Paul also implies a shift from the spiritualist approach to an emphasis on the social aspects involved in Paul's letters. Barclay contends that the emphasis on ecclesiology has led the NPP to consider the 'social origins and effects' of Paul's statements about justification.

The NPP has therefore — whether directly or indirectly — refocused attention on the socio-political aspects and implications of the Pauline letters. Whether or not the ideas of scholars like Dunn with his emphasis on Jewish nationalistic goals with the propagation of the Law are always borne out by historical evidence, the NPP questions the overwhelmingly spiritualistic reading of the Pauline letters. To quote Stendahl (1976:40):

¹⁷⁴ He neglects, however, to add the overwhelmingly 'soteriological' emphasis found in traditional understandings of Paul's thoughts; partly perhaps due to a confusion of two matters' quite distinct relationship to the Jewish law: conversion and justification. Cf Segal on the universalism-particularism debate and on rabbinic Judaism's distinction between the relationship between the Law and (proper) conversion, and between the Law and justification (1995:5).

Paul's thoughts about justification were triggered by the issues of divisions and identities in a pluralistic and torn world, not primarily by the inner tensions of individual souls and consciences.

It would, however, be cause for concern to relegate Paul's social concerns to the non-theological. The issue of the 'unification of Jews and Gentiles' was for Paul a profound theological concern (Boyarin 1996:197).

4.4. Paul and politics: Multiculturalism

[T]he new perspective suggests that Paul could serve as a valuable resource in our struggles to fashion a harmonious but multicultural society (Barclay 1996:213).

The NPP's concern with the political implications of his gospel is to be understood in the light of the contemporary concerns with social identity and 'otherness', accompanied by a renewed appreciation of diversity. With the rejection of colonialism and imperialism — preached at least, if not practiced — and against the historical background of Christian mission gone wrong, on the one hand, and on the other hand the development of new theologies particularly in the Two-thirds World as well as 'sanctioning of inculturation', diversity has acquired a positive value. In addition, 'Western cultural hegemony' was dented by the 'cultural crisis in the West and the questioning of its Enlightenment legacy' (Barclay 1996:205).

Dunn's work reveals a great concern with issues of multiculturalism,¹⁷⁵ particularly in view of his insistence that Paul's polemic is directed against 'nationalistic presuppositions' or 'ethnic restrictions'.¹⁷⁶ Whether the available evidence bears out the centrality of circumcision as 'identity-marker'¹⁷⁷ and even stronger, the maintenance of the Law for serving a nationalistic purpose in first-century Judaism, remains a question. It is clear, however, that the observance of the Law was more than religious posturing, regardless of the sincerity and devotion thereof; the Law served important functions of social identity.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Boyarin has in a significant study, based largely on the NPP, discussed Paul's politics of difference. Suffice it to mention here that he decries Paul's 'Hellenistic desire for the Other' in what Boyarin calls his attempt to offer in his letters a universalising attempt to assimilate all in Christ, through dualism and allegorical hermeneutics (1994: espec 7,9,14,96,156). For a brief discussion, appreciation and criticism of Boyarin's views, cf Barclay (1996:206-209).

¹⁷⁶ In private conversation with Dunn during June 1995, he mentioned that while working on what he considers the Pauline injunction against nationalistic arrogance, he could not help but to be reminded of the situation surrounding Apartheid in South Africa. Recently, it was emphasised that Christianity should not espouse or favour a particular 'nationalism' (Usry and Keener 1996:178 n2).

¹⁷⁷ Circumcision was indeed practiced by other ancient peoples as well, e.g. Egyptians, Ethiopians, Phoenicians and Arabs (Cohen, quoted in Stanley 1996:112 n37), and was after all only a male symbol, probably not practiced by all Jews in Diaspora. On the other hand, Barclay (1995:93) insists that 'Jewish communities in the Diaspora invested a great deal more in this physical trait than in habits of speech'.

¹⁷⁸ Cf the recent arguments of Horn regarding the renunciation of circumcision in early Christianity (1996:479-505). Cf Stanley (1996:110-115) on the ability of Jews to preserve their sense of (social) identity in the Diaspora, hinting at the role played by 'signs, symbols and underlying values' (:111 n33, referring to Royce).

Elliott has moved beyond Dunn's analysis which he finds to be biased against first-century Judaism because of its dependency on Baur. Elliott argues very strongly for reading Paul with a 'political key', by identifying Paul's 'preferential option for the poor' as well as considering the 'political aspect of the cross' (1994:87-89).

I suspect that the continual remembrance of the poor for which Paul expressed such resolve was not incidental to his theology, and that the scars he bore on his body were the measure of his commitment to that vision (1994:90).

From a NPP-approach Barclay argues that a primary concern of Paul's ministry and letters can be found in his desire to advance multicultural communities.¹⁷⁹ Therefore Paul relativised those aspects of Jewish particularism — circumcision, dietary laws, and Sabbath observance¹⁸⁰ — 'in the interests of establishing multiethnic communities' (1996:210 n34). Referring to Jewish 'ancestral customs', Barclay insists that Paul was not intent on 'erasing' or 'eradicating cultural specificities', but to relativise such matters in the interest of promoting multiculturalism within the communities established by him.¹⁸¹ Paul therefore never relinquishes his own Jewishness which he at times proudly asserts (e.g. Phil 3:3-6) along with his insistence on Jewish privileges (e.g. Rom 9:4-5). He considers these as ἀδιάφορα, indifferent matters, and was willing to adapt his own behaviour. His ultimate commitment now is Christ (Barclay 1996:210-211). In short:

Paul does not present the gospel as if it carries a whole new cultural package, designed to eradicate and replace all others. It is rather a cluster of values, focussed in love, which enables the creation of a new community in which variant cultural traditions can be practiced (Barclay 1996:211).

In conclusion, in our modern world which is not only multicultural but also multi-religious, the latter needs more theological reflection. Perhaps Barclay takes the first steps in this regard, with his argument that Paul's 'radical notion of divine grace' serves to both affirm and relativise the Christian tradition. Paul used the notion of divine grace 'to destabilize the church at least as much as those outside it' (1996:213). Much more reflection is necessary on how to understand Paul's letters in a multireligious context. The formulation of a multi-

¹⁷⁹ For some possible reasons for the often highly tense relationship between Jews and 'Greeks' (as socio-ethnic description, unlike the more 'ideological' term viz 'Gentile'), and the problems this caused for Paul in uniting Jews and Greeks in a single 'Christian house-church', cf Stanley (1996:101-124).

¹⁸⁰ The other distinctive Jewish characteristic, 'aniconic monotheism', was retained by Paul in his churches. In anticipation of criticism for failure to explain why monotheism was not also 'relativised', Barclay argues that 'Paul partially deconstructs his own Christological exclusivism' with theocentric appeals to the 'grace of God' (1996:211-213). Such an explanation still shies away from dealing with the divinity or not of Christ; it serves us well to remember that the Trinitarian doctrine was formulated well after Paul's life-time (in the fourth century CE).

¹⁸¹ Cf also Wuellner (1986:73) who insists that Paul's ministry was not only directed at 'the transformation of the multiplicity of individuals into a unity' but also at 'the transformation of the multiplicity of different social and ethnic/cultural value systems into a unity', in short, for a 'new social order'.

religious hermeneutic might be the starting point.¹⁸² In this regard, Paul's hermeneutic might prove beneficial, as will also be argued in the following chapters.

5. Conclusion

The task of providing a flexible 'framework' within which to understand Paul, incorporating the valuable NPP insights as well as others, is becoming unavoidable. A 'new framework' for Paul is needed to replace the still vested and overpowering presence of the Lutheran framework. The New Perspective on Paul enables the contemporary reader in many ways to read Paul in a historically more sound and, arguably, adequate way. To ask for the contemporary relevance of Paul, one needs to suspend — if not abrogate — the Lutheran framework of Pauline interpretation.¹⁸³

The emphasis of the NPP, it should be noted, is the contemporary relevance of Pauline thought. Someone like Stendahl¹⁸⁴ might have agreed with Luther's interpretation of Paul, had he himself lived in the sixteenth century. The issue here, however, is not whether Luther's interpretation of Paul is justified or not, but whether the Lutheran framework as interpretive framework for reading and interpreting Paul can be justified today. And the answer to that question has to be a firm NO!

The NPP can fill the lacunae in the understanding of Pauline thought and provide (at least) a 'new model according to which "Pauline theology" can be analyzed and presented' (Furnish 1989:338). As with any 'framework' of understanding, a real danger is the claim for absolute status, which often leads to a solipsistic abuse of the (textual) material to 'prove' the argument. In turn, the NPP will have to avoid the danger of becoming such an absolutist

¹⁸² Cf e g Kwok (1995:32-43); Punt (1998c:25-26); Samartha (1994:340-362); Sugirtharajah (1991a:352-363).

¹⁸³ Braaten (1990:42), anticipating the irrelevancy slur regarding justification not being the existential problem of contemporary Christians, ponders the probability of 'Luther's struggles of conscience' being 'no longer ours today'. He nevertheless, however, assumes that Luther's struggles reflected Paul's struggles. On the other hand, Luther's religious experience and theology as such might be of value in our (post)modern age of 'self-righteousness' and 'individual selfcentredness' — often religiously inscribed (cf Dunn and Suggate 1993:13,16). Ziesler offers a similar kind of argument: if an analogy between Paul's insistence that belief in Christ is the only requirement for believers, is established — and, the important part, admitted as constructed analogy — the NPP 'may not be quite as devastating in its effect on the Church's faith as at first appears' (1991:194).

¹⁸⁴ To be fair, Stendahl did throughout emphasise (calling it 'liberating and creative', Stendahl 1963:215) the distinction between the original, descriptive 'meant' and the interpretation, the explanatory 'means'. The priority attached to the former betrays his confidence in achieving this 'objective' result (Stendahl 1963:215). But on the 'means'-leg of his distinction, see his quirk on 'every man has a "legalistic Jew" in his heart' (Stendahl 1963:215), and even more decisively his remarks on the nature of his kind of theology as being of a 'playful tentative character', 'too serious to allow humans to think theologically without playfulness and irony' (Stendahl 1976:viii). Had Stendahl realised the role of the observer's ideology in the interpretation process, he might have reneged on the 'objectivity' of 'descriptive theology'.

entity. Rather, the value of the NPP is that it is an open and operational model, more suitable for interpreting the Pauline message in a contextual and relevant way. As long as the 'new perspective on Paul' continuously allows for ongoing interpretation, it will stay new, in the fullest sense of the word.¹⁸⁵

Barclay (1996:203-206) is at pains to point out, not only the relevancy of the NPP for the late twentieth-century world, but also how many NPP-construals can be shown to have been influenced by current concerns. The three matters which Barclay indicates as important contributions of the NPP to the study of Paul — theological respect for Judaism, community as the goals of Christian faith, and multicultural concerns — are all in some way responses to modern concerns: Christian (inspired) anti-Semitism, concern with ecclesiology, and 'the current rejection of colonialism and the current concern with "the politics of difference"'. The point is clear: the newer perspective on Paul is a contextual approach to the Pauline letters, with reference to the current situation as much as it attempts to be a contextual approach to the first-century setting of the Pauline letters.

The question which remains is of course whether the NPP is not also in danger of (re)imposing on Pauline interpretation an absolutist, rigid framework of understanding. The differences between the Lutheran and the NPP makes this unlikely. The varied nature of the NPP as 'an approach' to Paul, accounting also for the extratextual evidence as far as the historical dimensions of the Pauline texts are concerned, will prevent this. But above all, the fact that within the NPP one finds a conscious articulation of the framework which makes it available for discussion will avoid absolutist claims for this interpretive framework.

Clearly the NPP has advanced our understanding of Paul, both by cutting the tethers between the Lutheran programme and Paul, and by allowing for new vistas on the Pauline material. Although it cannot be claimed that the NPP provides a comprehensive interpretive framework for the Pauline letters, it at least highlighted certain important aspects of Pauline thought. An important benefit of the NPP was its increased attention to Pauline hermeneutics. In order to move beyond the impasses of both the traditional, Lutheran interpretation of Paul, and the NPP, it is suggested that more attention should be devoted to Paul's use of the Scriptures of Israel.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ As Strecker argues, there is an 'Innovationspotential' to be found in the NPP for Pauline studies, a potential which has to be mined lest the 'innovativen Kräfte aus der Paulusforschung' degenerates into 'eine Karriere im Hüttenwesen' (Strecker 1996:15).

¹⁸⁶ A similar suggestion is made by Dunn as far as the investigation of the concept of 'divine justice' is concerned: 'we need to go back behind Paul to the earlier language on which he drew: from Luther to Paul; from Paul to the Old Testament' (Dunn and Suggate 1993:31). This is in contrast to Sanders who does not regard Paul as 'a serious expositor of what the Old Testament says', as he used a 'proof text'-approach to make the texts say what Paul wanted them to say. This 'willy-nilly' treatment of Paul's use of Scripture, leads to the 'unraveling' of Sanders' case (Corley 1994:21).

The project at hand is, however, broader than the attempt to provide more and other plausible historical and/or theological explanations of Paul, first-century Judaism and the Law, however important these may be. Attention to Paul's use of Scripture, it is contended, can provide for an even 'newer' perspective on Paul's theological programme, specifically on its nature as one characterised by 'freedom'. Starting the discussion with Paul's use of Scripture and his hermeneutical freedom, an attempt will be made to correlate Paul's hermeneutical freedom with his theological freedom, eventually posing the question of the relevance of Paul's hermeneutical and theological approach for (post)modern theological and biblical studies.

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CHAPTER THREE

Paul before Luther: Paul, hermeneutics and the scriptures of Israel.

PART ONE: The context of Pauline hermeneutics

[T]here is no question about the important role Scripture played in his [sc Paul's] thinking about the gospel and in the argumentation of his letters (Furnish 1989:333).

1. Introduction

In as far as Christianity can rightfully be called a 'religion of the book',¹ it was both 'endowed and saddled'² with the Old Testament, or more proper, the scriptures of Israel.³ Christianity was — and is —

compelled to find ways of interpreting it [the Old Testament, JP], in all its bulk and variety, in light of Christian perspectives which, as we are now vividly aware, it was never written to display (Houlden 1990:110).

The Old Testament was in fact often perceived as being so far removed from 'Christianity' in terms of content, that in the past 'only drastic treatment' could render it useful for the Church. In the words of Houlden (1990:110):

It was an invitation to ingenuity, schematization, controversy and (usually unconscious) drastic selectivity.

Methods like typology and allegory were employed to absorb the Old Testament into Christian life, because of 'doctrinally motivated' compulsion: 'it was read in the light of Christian doctrine'.

Modern biblical scholarship of the Old Testament 'has above all made the whole apparatus of traditional Christian use of the OT problematic'. The admitted profoundness of

¹ Cf Talmage (1987:81) who argues that the title 'people of the book' was extended to Jews and Christians by Islam, indicating that they were in possession of 'pre-Quranic revelation and therefore assured of the option of retaining their ancestral religion rather than having to convert'. Cf Borelli (1995:147-155); Simonetti (1994:1); and, Tröger (1995:209-214). Jeffrey (1996:xi-xii) argues that originally a less positive connotation attached to this epithet was bestowed by Islam on Judaism, and implicitly on Christianity as well.

Bloom (1992:16,83) argues that neither Christianity nor Judaism are religions of the book: Christianity is built on the teachings of the Church Fathers and the sixteenth century-Protestant Reformers, and Judaism's Oral Torah override the Written Torah. To this one can add the salient point that although both these religions are highly 'scriptural' religions, their scriptures include much more than the Bible or the Tanak, respectively.

² Only Philemon and 2 and 3 John in the New Testament do not contain allusions to or quotes from the Old Testament (Evans 1989:169).

³ The terms 'scriptures of Israel' or collectively 'Scripture', and 'Old Testament' will be used interchangeably, with personal preference given to the two former terms on both historical and theological grounds. Cf Hays (1989:5) who has Scripture referring to 'the texts that Christians later began to call the 'Old Testament''. Hays (1989:x) avoids 'Hebrew Bible' because of Paul's predominant use of the Septuaginta for his quotes and references.

the religious concepts of the Old Testament now has to be reassessed, whether its significance is intrinsic or situated within its being the 'Old Testament' of Christianity.⁴

In Pauline studies, it has been amply demonstrated by history,⁵ that Pauline appropriation of the scriptures of Israel — regardless of Paul's stated claims — bore within it the seeds for a very negative assessment of these scriptures. It will be contended throughout this study that the perceived relationship between Paul and the scriptures of Israel is not only of concern for the position and status of the 'Old Testament' within Christianity, but also and particularly for an adequate understanding of Paul *in contextu*. The emphasis will be on the latter aspect.

More importantly and of crucial significance for the argument of this thesis, Hafemann (1993:679) advances the view that current questions in the interpretation of the letters of Paul, specifically the traditional issues of the Law and the significance of justification⁶ and how these issues are involved with Paul's view on 'redemptive history',

can only be solved by a *renewed study of Paul's use and understanding of the OT*,⁷ within the larger question of the relationship of Paul and his gospel to Israel as the old covenant people of God.⁸

This 'renewed' study of Paul needs to account for the influence of the 'traditional' understanding of Paul, which implies a critical approach to the still persistent and dominant influence of the traditional approach to Paul (TAP). A new approach to Paul, as argued in the previous chapter and suggested by Hafemann's quote above, will not only have to take the New Perspective on Paul (NPP) seriously, but will also need to interpret Paul, the apostle and his writings, anew in light of this perspective.

⁴ Cf Prickett (1991:3) who claims that the interpretation of the Bible begins with the 'format and arrangement' of the books contained in the Bible, and that with the 'renaming' of a certain section of it as 'Old Testament', 'the New Testament is thus signalled in advance as superseding the Old'.

⁵ Of which the Marcionite position of the second century is perhaps the best example, with the views of Von Harnack and Bultmann some of the most recent.

⁶ Often seen as *the* major aspects of Paul's significance for Christianity today. Since the 16th century Reformation *justification* has in many circles become the issue 'by which the Church stands or falls' (cf Braaten 1990). However, as far as the centrality of a term or 'doctrine' in the Reformation is concerned, Pannenberg (1981:288) argues that the theme of 'justification' should more properly be replaced with 'liberty' or 'freedom' (1982:) — cf the discussion in Chapter 4.

⁷ Emphasis added. Although this study is not intent on pursuing Hafemann's programme of 'solving' these matters, it does concur with the recognised need to reevaluate Paul's use of Scripture; the value of such study will be elaborated upon in the later parts of this, as well as subsequent chapters!

⁸ Cf Roetzel (1982:17): 'By attending to the ways the Old Testament comes to life for Paul and how it functions in the letters of Paul we gain a better idea not only of how the apostle's argument unfolds but also of how the past remains alive for Paul and his community'.

Other scholars, however, sometimes regards Paul's use of Scripture as of not such great importance, e.g. Dunn (1993) discusses it as a 'lesser issue' in his study of the theology of Galatians. Dunn (1993:121) does admit that Paul 'cites the scriptures ... explicitly at a number of key points in his main argument'. Cf also Müller (1989:33).

To approach Paul from a new perspective entails taking the historical background or context into account in an as unbiased as possible way,⁹ while attempting to interpret Paul's letters according to the 'new context' as highlighted by the new perspective. However, to re-read Paul for today also implies a renewed effort at understanding Paul's reading of the scriptures of Israel and this means coming to terms with the literary environment of Paul's writings. In short, Paul's interpretive strategy also needs to be approached from the vantage point of the new perspective, both in form and content while moving beyond the impasses in which this perspective finds itself.

It will be argued in the next chapter that freedom is characteristic of Paul's thought, life and ministry.¹⁰ It has also been suggested by various scholars that 'freedom' is a core metaphor of Paul's theology.¹¹ The theme of 'freedom' is explicitly present throughout Paul's writings,¹² but the focus of this chapter will be on its significance for his hermeneutics, that is, Paul's understanding and interpretation of the Israel's sacred scriptures.¹³ This freedom will be shown to refer to both content¹⁴ and formal aspects: Paul not only preaches freedom but practices it as well. It will also be argued that the one aspect of freedom (material, or content) informs the other (formal, or technical).

There have been many attempts to describe Paul's direct¹⁵ and indirect — that is, without quoting Scripture explicitly, with or without the standard formulas — reliance on Scripture. However, it is important to situate the discussion of Paul's hermeneutic within the framework

⁹ Not in a 'neutral' way, which is patently impossible. An attempt can, however, be made to jettison prejudices and partial notions. This naturally requires the prior step of acknowledging their existence which is the corollary of discarding the 'myth of (absolute) objectivity'.

¹⁰ As it has been argued by many scholars, although consistently and almost exclusively with reference to 'theological freedom', i.e. freedom as theological concept; cf e.g. Bruce (1977); Jones (1987); Vollenweider (1989). Cf the discussion and extensive references in chapter 4.

¹¹ Cf Longenecker (1964). The point here is not to initiate (yet another!) *Mitte* search, but to isolate at least one of the most important aspects in Pauline theology and to explore how it can contribute towards a more adequate understanding of Pauline issues.

¹² Statistically Paul uses the Greek word for freedom *ἐλευθερία* more often than any other writer in the New Testament. Moreover, Paul often employs the 'meaning' freedom without necessarily using *ἐλευθερία*, and modern linguistics has shown that meanings are context-dependent and that a word can operate in different semantic domains.

¹³ The term 'Pauline hermeneutics' is premeditated, cognisant however of the fact that Paul never in his letters available to us embarked on a systematic discussion of his 'hermeneutics': the term is used for Paul's theory and practice in as far as he uses and interprets Scripture and possibly other traditions as well. The other modern cultural, theological and other baggage assigned to 'hermeneutic(s)' is neither implied nor assumed in my use of the term when applied to Pauline writings.

¹⁴ Often however, freedom is only understood theologically (i.e. free from the power of sin and death), without regard for hermeneutical aspects thereof. The majority of theological readings are predetermined as it accepts *a priori* that Paul's concern is with (the TAP's emphasis on) 'justification by faith'.

Freedom as specifically 'content' in Paul's letters will be addressed in the next chapter, where a more holistic reading of Paul's 'freedom' will endeavour to show upon the wide reach of this 'theme' in the Pauline letters.

¹⁵ I.e. in direct quotes, usually with the use of formulas, e.g. *καθὼς γέγραπται*. Cf Stanley (1992) on Paul's citation technique.

of the NPP. In this chapter, it will be shown how the TAP also dominated the understanding of Paul's use of Scripture and led to reinforcement of the 'traditional' understanding of Paul and of anti-Jewish conceptions.¹⁶ Conversely, when Paul's reading of Scripture is seen within a NPP framework it becomes possible to interpret Paul's attitude to Scripture as non-supersessionist.¹⁷

A short overview of recurrent reading and exegetical practices in early Christianity and first-century Judaism(s)¹⁸ will provide some necessary perspectives on the hermeneutics contemporary to Paul. These perspectives are necessary to situate the arguments which frequently attempt to justify or vilify Paul's hermeneutics on the basis of first-century reading practices.

To conclude this chapter, the possibility of employing an intertextual reading in Paul's letters will be investigated. It will be contended that Intertextuality facilitates the understanding of Paul's reading of Scripture, and furthermore, shows the interrelatedness and continuity between Paul's views and those of the scriptures of Israel.¹⁹ The question — which has surfaced recently in a number of studies and which is quite understandable in light of (post)modern developments — namely, whether Paul's hermeneutical approach and practices are normative for exegesis today, will be postponed until the final chapter of this study.²⁰

The aim of this chapter is thus to offer a number of suggestions for understanding Paul's 'hermeneutic' or strategies of interpretation, historically within a first century framework of late Judaism(s) and early Christianity, and theologically in the context of the new perspective on Paul.

2. Paul and the 'Old Testament': The traditional view²¹

Ever since the Primitive Church adopted the Hebrew scriptures as part of the Christian canon the question of interpretation arose (Von Waldow 1995:154).

¹⁶ Cf the comment of Hays (1989:8) regarding Bultmann's '*a priori* theological judgement of the Old Testament — and Judaism' as inhibiting adequate attention to Paul's use of the Old Testament.

¹⁷ Hays (1989: 97-99,107) is at pains to illustrate that Paul's reading of Scripture is not supersessionist. The whole debate of the relationship between Jesus and Paul — Paul as the second founder of Christianity — can also benefit from renewed attention to Paul's appropriation of Scripture. On the latter matter, cf Grant (1989:17); Wenham (1995); Wright (1997).

¹⁸ And other first-century movements, as and where necessary. Similarly, Paul's appropriation of the Jesus sayings and tradition will not be addressed, unless it is necessitated by the discussion.

¹⁹ Although the value of such studies become ever more important, no specific study of selected Pauline passages will be done here. Certain Pauline texts will only be referred to as examples.

²⁰ This question is situated to a large extent in the 'postmodern' discussion and within the continuing break-up of the historical critical paradigm of approaching Scripture. From the side of literary theorists, as well as among some theologians, attempts can be identified where 'pre-critical' approaches to Scripture are advocated and practiced.

²¹ A cursory 'summary characterization' of this is given by Hays (1989:5-14).

2.1. Introduction

The 'traditional view'²² regarding Paul's reading of Scripture, can be analysed from a developmental theory perspective. This notion of development assumes that Paul's reading has been influenced by his endeavour to persuade his readers of the (christological) justification by faith. This entails a specific rereading of Scripture by Paul, which today then needs to be justified as Paul frequently does not adhere to commonly and contemporary accepted hermeneutical strategies. Paul's reading is in the end seen as the superior reading. He expounds the 'gospel' whereas the scriptures of Israel advocated a 'works-righteousness'. The implication is a discontinuity between Paul and the religious traditions of Israel.

The features of this developmentally oriented reading of Paul can be summarized as follows:²³

2.2. Discontinuous

The common assumption is that Paul's writings represent a radical break with the past, as portrayed and embodied in the 'Old' Testament. The break is due to the superiority of Pauline soteriology, which emphasises 'justification by faith' and which was seen to be in direct opposition to the 'works-righteousness' of Judaism and as depicted in the 'Old' Testament.

The most radical forms of this thesis is to be found in Marcion of Sinope²⁴ (Snodgrass 1991:412), Schleiermacher and Von Harnack (Von Waldow 1995:155), and later in the twentieth century New Testament scholar Rudolf Bultmann.²⁵ Both Marcion and Bultmann perceived Christianity to have the 'keys to salvation', as described in its most eloquent form in Paul's letters. Marcion viewed the Old Testament as 'inferior to salvation', while Bultmann described Christianity as 'achieving its true nature only when it has emancipated itself from a religiously degenerate, legalistic Judaism' (Houlden 1990:110-111). The most positive comment Bultmann could make regarding the relationship of the Old Testament to the New, was

²² This is a generalisation, but it will be argued that certain characteristics indeed constitute such a broad description and can be used for comparative purposes.

²³ New Testament scholars do not normally follow the progression as outlined in the paragraphs above, but rather the opposite sequence. This can be ascribed to the failure to recognise the influence of the TAP on their views regarding Paul, which prescribes the position of discontinuity as point of departure and the confirmation of this approach as end-result.

²⁴ Marcion wanted to rid Christianity from Jewish influence, and was influenced by Gnosticism, arguing that the God of the Old Testament was the demiurge, the creator of evil. His canon consisted of Luke's gospel and the majority of the Pauline letters, some of which were, however, truncated (Snodgrass 1991:412).

²⁵ The Old Testament is the 'necessary presupposition' for the New Testament, but is also only a historical account of 'Israel's failure' (Snodgrass 1991:413).

that the former constituted the *Vorverständnis* for reading the New Testament,²⁶ the ‘preliminary to the Gospel’, in true Lutheran style of contrasting the Law of the Old Testament with the gospel of the New Testament.

Often the perceived discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments is ‘alleviated’ by stressing also aspects of continuity between the Testaments (Snodgrass 1991:409; cf Feinberg 1988). However, discontinuity remains the dominant perspective. In the words of Snodgrass:

while some parts of the New Testament are direct extensions of the Old Testament message, some parts of the Old Testament message have been superceded.

2.3. Supersessionist

The supersessionist approach to the Old Testament was defined already by Augustine in his now (in)famous credo:

[t]he New Testament is in the Old concealed; the Old Testament is in the New revealed.²⁷

According to this view, the Old Testament is seen as a preparation for the New Testament. It therefore implies that ‘in the Old Testament the truth is hidden, in the New Testament it is in the open’ (Von Waldow 1995:155).

Although he does not see ‘a development in revelation’ and rather asserts ‘progress in the outworking of salvation-history in the biblical period’, Luther also argued that the Old Testament is superceded by the New Testament.²⁸ In this regard, Goldingay (1982:47-51) argues that Luther found ‘a strong thread of continuity’ regarding messianic promises, and discontinuity regarding the two Testaments’ chief teachings: the Old Testament’s teaching concerning ‘the teaching of laws, the showing up of sin, and the demanding of good’,²⁹ whereas the New Testament’s chief teaching was regarded as ‘the proclamation of grace and peace through the forgiveness of sins in Christ’.

²⁶ Houlden (1990:111) rightfully stresses that this approach should not be confused with earliest Christian appropriation of Scripture: there the Old Testament still functioned as Scripture, ‘prefiguring the NT and telling directly of Christ’. Bultmann’s approach also differs from the first two centuries’ approach where the emphasis was on the text and not so much on the ‘theological and existential themes’.

²⁷ *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum* LXXIII, on Ex 20:19 (quoted in Roth 1997:77). Roth argues that this formulation effectively describes the ‘way in which each Gospel is narrated according to a storyline that lies both hidden and ready in the [sc Pharisaic] canon [sc, i.e. the Law and Prophets] shared by evangelist and audience’. However Roth’s position is on the evangelists use of ‘some ancient model’ in their construction of the ‘Jesus narrative’, not with the relationship of the ‘testaments’ or a hierarchical ranking based on such a perceived relationship.

²⁸ For the development in Luther’s thought concerning the relationship of Old and New Testament, and his gradual shift to a more ‘historical’ approach, cf Goldingay (1982:47-51).

²⁹ For some of the concern with Law and laws, Luther found value: helping towards as a national law-code intend on embodying the natural law in all people; and, to clarify God’s expectations, reminding of sin, and drawing people to Christ for forgiveness (Goldingay 1982:51). Cf Forde’s insistence — *qua* Luther — on taking the Old Testament as law without attempts to translate it into ‘gospel’ (1983:240-252).

The supersessionist approach relies upon the identification of a christological or christocentric hermeneutic³⁰ active in Paul's engagement with Israel's Scripture. It is not implied that the christological component in Paul's thought is merely a modern construct, but it can arguably be shown that the christological has a limited hermeneutical scope in his letters.³¹

2.4. Justifying the Pauline anomaly

2.4.1. Radical discontinuity: The Old Testament as a 'tool'

One of the most radical ways regarding Paul's discontinuous reading of Scripture holds that Paul merely used the Old Testament as a convenient base for his arguments in his conflict with (Jewish-Christian) opponents.

This approach is represented by *Adolf von Harnack*³² who insists that Paul was not intent upon establishing a — as it is called today — 'religion of a Holy Book'. Von Harnack argued that Scripture played no formative role in Paul's thought and theology. His use of the Old Testament provided him with a tool with which to effectively challenge his Judaising opponents (Von Harnack 1995:33,45,48-49; cf Hays 1989:7).

The notion that Paul used the Old Testament for his own, apologetic purposes reached a summit in *Rudolf Bultmann*. Apart from Scripture not having a 'formative' role in Paul's theology, Bultmann contended that Scripture also did not exert a 'foundational' influence on Paul through Paul's appropriation of it in his writings.³³

Bultmann interpreted Paul in light of the 'powerful traditional Lutheran antithesis between Law and Gospel' (Hays 1989:7), and thus found only a negative role for the Old Testament in Paul's thought. The Old Testament is indicative of a previous era, during which

³⁰ Cf e.g. Steiner, quoted in Hays (1989:ix), who refers to 'the Psalms and the literature of prophecy in the Old Testament [that] foretell Jesus so graphically'.

³¹ Cf Hays (1989:x; 61-63; 84-86; 98-99; 177; 213 n60). As to the importance of the christological element in Paul's thought, there is little disagreement, but its interpretation, function and relation to other elements lead to some dissent.

³² Cf his well-known summary of the OT in the history of the church, quoted in Houlden (1990:111): 'The rejection of the OT in the second century was a mistake which the great Church rightly refused to make; the retention of it in the sixteenth century was due to a fatal legacy which the Reformation was not yet able to overcome; but for Protestantism since the nineteenth century to treasure it as a canonical document is the result of a religious and ecclesiastical paralysis'.

³³ Any residues of the Old Testament worldview and thought should be sought out and eliminated from Paul, leading to Bultmann's well-known programme of 'demythologizing'. Cf also Hays (1989:7).

the Law ruled supreme, but which had in Jesus Christ come to an end. The Old Testament thus becomes ‘the presupposition for existence under grace’ (Bultmann, quoted in Hays 1989:7) or a ‘negative foil to grace’.

2.4.2. Radical (historical) continuity³⁴: The christological re-reading (re-writing) of the Old Testament

Another alternative is to argue for a continuity that subsumes the Old Testament,³⁵ so that instead of discontinuity one can talk of a radical continuity. Unfortunately the radical nature of the continuity usually implies in a paradoxical way the obliteration of the Old Testament voice *per se*.³⁶

With this approach the Old Testament becomes a christological sourcebook which can only be appropriated when read within the ambit of (christological) typology. Whereas in the previous approach of justifying Paul’s use of the Old Testament the radical nature was obvious, in this approach the superficial nature of the solution is perhaps most striking. The superficiality of this approach is well exemplified by RT France:

The aim [of Paul’s quotations, JP] was not to alter the essential meaning, but to bring it out more clearly (1983:631).³⁷

France attempts to justify the freedom — without admitting to that freedom — with which the writers of the New Testament, including Paul, made use of quotations from the Old Testament. He does this by correctly postulating an eagerness amongst these writers to actualise the traditions available to them:

³⁴ Hays (1989:8) refers to the reactions of scholars opposing Bultmann’s approach as failing in their ‘anachronistical’ assertion ‘that Paul read the Old Testament as “real history”’.

³⁵ Cf 2.3 above on the supersessionist reading.

³⁶ One brief example as illustrated in the translation of the Old Testament. In Gal 3 Paul uses the well-known Hab 2:4 quotation *ὁ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται* (‘the righteous one will live through faith’). The LXX *ἐκ πίστεώς μου* (‘through my faithfulness’) translates the Hebrew (as found in the MT) *בְּאֱמוּנָתוֹ* (‘through his faithfulness’) the latter which naturally refers to obedience to the Torah. Leaving out of the discussion for a moment the change in pronouns between LXX and MT, and the lack of it altogether in Pauline use! — Paul’s quoting of Scripture’s *πίστις* in the sense of ‘faith’ and then specifically in the sense of being opposed to ‘works’ as medium of salvation, and not in the ‘proper’ Jewish sense of *אֱמוּנָה* ‘faithfulness’ is taken for granted.

Silva (1993:641) explains the notion that Paul is indeed defending faith as opposed to ‘works’, by claiming (1) that Habakkuk involves himself in the interpretation of Gen 15:6, also containing the roots *אמן* and *צִדִּיק*; and (2) for Habakkuk there was ‘no dichotomy between faith and faithfulness’.

Thus, the NIV translates Hab 2:4 — retrospectively — as faith, with a note saying ‘or faithfulness’. The suggestion is clear: Paul’s reading is the biblically more accurate one, and replaces other possible readings of Habakkuk! Cf Noll (1993:781-782) who argues that Paul’s use of Hab 2:4 is ‘fundamentally different’ from the Qumran *peshar* that interprets “faith” as faith in the Teacher of Righteousness’ (i.e., in his exegetical insights and legal rulings).

³⁷ This statement is not necessarily mitigated by the article being part of the popular ‘LION Handbook to the Bible’, but perhaps rather aggravated for presenting this view of the OT to a wide audience.

...they were convinced that the Old Testament was the word of God, supremely relevant to their situation, and they would spare no pains to bring it home to their readers (France 1983:631).

Unfortunately, France shies away from admitting to Paul's freedom in reading Scripture, especially from the consequences of such a position: Paul's reading *radically* changed the sense of the scriptural passages for specific contextual and pastoral purposes.

Another way (if less superficial) of justifying Paul's use of Israel's scriptures is represented by Richard Longenecker. Longenecker insists on understanding Paul's method of interpretation as midrash,³⁸ arguing that in this Paul was following the acceptable ways of exegesis in the first-century Jewish world. Hays (1989:8) contends that Longenecker's appeal to accept both Paul's Jewish and Christian presuppositions is unacceptable. The plea amounts to postulating as many presuppositions in Paul's use of the Old Testament as necessary, even if they be mutually contradictory.³⁹

An approach which attempts to acknowledge the Old Testament as pre-Christian document yet as valuable in its own right, is that of *Heilsgeschichte* (salvation history). Following earlier attempts of scholars such as Eichorn, Gressman and Gunkel who studied the Old Testament from the perspective of the history of the religion of Israel, scholars like Koeberle, Procksch and Volz at the turn of the century initiated a reading of the Old Testament which attempted to make the study of the Old Testament of service to the Church as well. Although this salvation historical-approach succeeded in placing the Old Testament in the center of Israelite history as well as in the center of the Christian Bible, the tendency still remains to read the Old Testament christologically.

2.5. The influence of the traditional approach to Paul

The suggestion that the TAP has been overcome is contradicted by the still very common perception that Paul is primarily concerned with the attempts of Jewish Christians to justify themselves, and to advocate this actively through their moral keeping of the Law.⁴⁰ The TAP imposed an approach on the Old Testament, which presupposed not only two covenants, but also that one is bad and the other good, stemming from an imposed negativity regarding Judaism, both ancient and contemporary (cf Dinter 1983:48).

³⁸ On Paul's interpretation in relation to midrash, cf below.

³⁹ These include 'Jewish presuppositions of "corporate solidarity" and "historical correspondences"' and 'Christian presuppositions of "eschatological fulfillment" and "messianic presence"' (Longenecker, quoted in Hays 1989:8). Whether the elements of midrash found in the Pauline letters necessarily amount to the acceptance of 'Jewish presuppositions' is one question; whether an identifiable set of 'Christian' presuppositions — especially in the sense of different from or opposed to its Jewish counterparts can be specified if justified, is another pressing question.

⁴⁰ Cf e.g. George Steiner's 1988 review of Alter and Kermode's *Literary guide to the Bible*, in which he refers to Paul's 'bitter, wholly consequent hatred of the Jew expressed in Romans' (Quoted in Hays 1989:ix). From the side one can remark that perhaps 'wholly' also implies 'holy'.

The renewed emphasis on the Old Testament 'in its own right' during the time of the Reformation is praised by Houlden (1990:111), but he does not seem to recognise that that 'right' was watered down by the specific grid of understanding applied to the Old Testament. During — and since — the Reformation much study was devoted to the Old Testament within its Jewish context, but both the Old Testament and early Judaism were read along the lines of Luther. Although 'the Jews, at least of the OT period, acquired positive value as representing an important phase of God's guidance for his people' (Houlden 1990:112) since the Reformation times, they remained in the shadows of the TAP.

Perhaps the greatest exponent of the TAP is Rudolf Bultmann, whose influence in this field is recognisable to this day.⁴¹ His evaluation of Paul's use of Israel's scriptures is predetermined with his Law-Gospel antithesis, leading to his quasi-Marcionite questioning of the Old Testament as revelation of God and his statements on the invalidity of the Old Testament for contemporary Christians:

To the Christian faith the Old Testament is not in the true sense God's word (Bultmann 1963:31-32; cf Hays 1989:7-8).

An example of how Bultmann still influences scholarly work can be found in Marks (1984:71-92). He sees the intention of Pauline interpretation as an attempt to distance itself from the scriptures of Israel, resulting in radical discontinuity between Paul and the Old Testament. Paul is presented as 'fixated on individual salvation'. What can only be described as a caricature of Pauline interpretation is clearly due to Marks' reliance on 'Paul's most influential Protestant expositors' (Hays 1989:159).⁴²

2.6. Summarising remarks

Indeed, Paul's whole understanding of God's justice as fundamentally an act of gracious generosity is derived directly from the Old Testament, particularly the Psalms and Isaiah (Dunn and Suggate 1993:15).

Prickett (1991:3) argues that although the terms allocated to the two sections of the Bible as 'Old' and 'New' Testaments indicate the superceding of the one by the other, the relationship between the two is 'in many ways better seen as a continuation'. Concepts and imagery found in the New Testament 'overtly presupposes the existence of the earlier Hebrew writings'. However, with certain theological and other interpretive assumptions taken for granted in earliest Christianity, the subordinate position of the 'Old Testament' soon became entrenched!

⁴¹ Ernst Käsemann, and his followers followed Bultmann in the Lutheran approach to Paul, if not in other respects.

⁴² Cf the further criticism on Marks by Hays (1989:95ff). Marks identifies Paul's hermeneutic as 'supersessionist', whereas Hays sees Paul opting for a 'dialectical' approach (:133): Hays stresses Paul's 'essential continuity' with the scriptures and Marks, his 'effective discontinuity'.

The determinative influence of particular presuppositions on hermeneutical and exegetical practice is perhaps nowhere clearer than indeed in Pauline studies. The pervasive and often disruptive influence of presuppositions is especially striking where these presuppositions are not admitted or acknowledged. The fact of the matter is that the bland acknowledgement that ‘there is no exegesis without presuppositions’ is very seldom put into practice. In fact, this acknowledgement becomes a licence to continue with unexamined presuppositions. It is in this context that unethical and irresponsible hermeneutics become a distinct possibility.

It is important to insist that

[t]he meaning of the Hebrew Scriptures, hence their validity for us as the Word of God, does not depend on their subordination to the New Testament (Dinter 1983:48).

However, it will not be sufficient to blame all problems of Pauline interpretation on the TAP. This implies the need for more intense and careful study of Pauline hermeneutics, in its proper first-century context.

3. First-century exegesis and hermeneutics: Jewish and Christian

3.1. Introduction

Most scholarly effort so far was directed at describing the technical nature and methods of exegesis and reading in the first-century, rather than explaining Paul’s hermeneutical and exegetical practices.⁴³ Many of these very detailed and technical studies are generally purely descriptive in nature.⁴⁴

It has already been argued that the main influence on Paul’s life — including his interpretive practice — was Jewish. This requires an examination of first-century Jewish interpretive practices. Two levels need to be distinguished, as is also common today in any interpretive community: implicit and explicit interpretation. In first-century Jewish life an example of ‘implicit’ interpretation would be the reinterpretation of existing traditions through narrative elucidation or re-reading.⁴⁵ ‘Explicit’ exegesis involved attempts to ‘interpret the Bible historically in terms of their own time’ (Stemberger 1991:37).

⁴³ Cf Hays (1989:9). Hays reasons that this is to avoid addressing the ‘hermeneutical perplexities’ involved.

⁴⁴ The value of descriptive studies is obvious, but they beg the question(s) regarding Paul’s interests, motifs, choice of particular strategies and texts, etc. Cf Hays (1989:9;196 n26) and his criticism on Hanson and Koch. Hays lists the following five ‘traditional’ categories of research on Paul’s use of Scripture: textual criticism, incidence of citation, sources and historical background, theological legitimacy, and biblical inspiration and authority. But, Hays disparages, none deal adequately with Paul’s role as interpreter of Israel’s scriptures.

⁴⁵ Examples range from the Old Testament’s Chronicles to the book of Jubilees, Qumran’s Genesis Apocryphon or Pseudo-Philo’s *Book of Biblical Antiquities* (Stemberger 1991:37).

The possibility of targumic influence in Paul's use of Scripture has been discussed,⁴⁶ but this has until now not been considered to be a major factor. Although 'Aramaic interpretive renderings' of the scriptures of Israel formed part of the synagogal liturgy, it is doubtful that any written Targumim were available during Paul's lifetime.⁴⁷ Many of the studies done on the influence of targum readings on the New Testament writings stress only its possible influence in the Gospels.⁴⁸

The novel way in which the New Testament authors including Paul read the scriptures of Israel, has been explained with reference to a 'christological' hermeneutic. The experience and understanding of the events surrounding Jesus Christ have led to the particular interpretations. This still does not explain why many New Testament interpretations seem to adhere closely to other first-century exegetical techniques, or even why the interpretive content sometimes agrees with those found outside the early Christian community.⁴⁹ The christological reading of the scriptures of Israel is not sufficient explanation for first-century 'Christian' interpretation like that found in Paul.

3.2. *Reading sacred texts*

Sarna (1987:9) contends that with the expansion of Hellenism across the first-century world, the modus of 'reading' the *Hebrew Bible* among the Jews changed to one of studying the Bible.

The flood-tides of Hellenism engulfed the ancient Near Eastern world and transformed its civilisation, so that the cultural environment that produced the Hebrew Bible was no longer familiar to the reader.

The scriptures of Israel, providing the matrix of Jewish existence in the full sense of the word,⁵⁰ 'demanded not surface reading but deep study and interpretation'.

⁴⁶ Cf Deut 30:12-14 in Rom 10:6-8 (Silva 1993:635).

⁴⁷ Cf Grabbe (1990:340); Silva (1993:635). Evans (1992:66,97-99) argues that subsequent to the discoveries by Paul Kahle of the 'Cairo Genizah (storeroom) fragments' and 'targum fragments among the Dead Sea Scrolls', the contention of Martin McNamara that a Palestinian Targum existed already during the first century, and Bruce Chilton's distinction between 'dictional' and 'thematic coherence' between Jesus' sayings and certain passages of the Isaiah Targum, the debate of the possible influence of Targums on the NT writings has been stimulated.

Cf Deist (1978:127-130) on the origin and dating of the Targumim. Loewe (1990:349) posits that the Targumim reached 'their present form' during the Amoraic period (c. 200-550 CE). Stemberger (1991:38) refers to the problems of dating the Targumim as 'almost insurmountable'.

⁴⁸ Cf Evans (1992:97-113) for an overview and some literature.

⁴⁹ Cf Grabbe (1990:341). He refers for example to 1 Cor 10:4 and its use of Ex 17:1-7 in light of Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities* 10:7, 11:15: Jesus as the rock that followed Israel in the desert.

⁵⁰ Primarily because the Jewish language, life-style, values, ideals, and hope were all still seen to derive from Scripture.

Interpretation, during the first century and until the sixteenth century, was not concerned with finding the ‘*literal*’ meaning of the text as is often the case in interpretive work today.⁵¹ In the first century it could be seen as derogatory and polemical to be ‘accused’ of literal interpretation. According to Young (1990:401), literal interpretation was given as the reason for the failure of the Jews to realise that Scripture referred to Jesus, and secondly, it could lead to ‘heresy and absurdities’. The real issue for the church was not whether to choose between literal and non-literal interpretation, but how to decide what the texts refer to, and specifically how to explain Jesus as the real reference of the texts.

3.3. *Literalist interpretation*

The reading of the scriptures of Israel was sometimes done in a straightforward way, which can be seen as the ‘most basic approach’ to Scripture. Jeanrond (1991:16) argues that this approach was especially in force with the interpretation of ‘deuteronomistic legislation’. However, to contend as Simonetti (1994:2) does that among the first-century Jews ‘the predominant interest was the literal approach’, is patently unjustified.

Predominantly because of the ‘hermeneutical and cultural gap’ that existed between the scriptural texts and the first century communities, the literalist approach was not the dominant approach in most cases. Scripture simply did not make sense when read literally.

3.4. *Allegory*

‘[A]llegory’, both as a genre (?) of text production and as a reading practice is a notoriously slippery one (Boyarín 1990:229 n26).

The early Church in its appropriation of the ‘Old Testament’ soon found itself in a predicament as far as the literal interpretation of these texts was concerned. In order to ‘achieve the transformation of meaning’ and to contextualise the scriptures of Israel, those methods already present in Scripture itself — such as allegory and typology — were employed. According to Prickett (1991:3), the eventual ‘basic arrangement’ of the New Testament reflects the influence of the ‘Old Testament’.

In accounting for the possible influence of allegory in Paul’s use of Scripture, Silva (1993:635) is at great pains to point out that the early followers of Christ found themselves in

⁵¹ Cf the well-known essay by Stendahl (1962:419-420) in the *Interpreter’s Dictionary* where he distinguishes quite sharply between ‘what the text meant’ and ‘what the text means’. See also the different stance by Barr (1962:104-111) in the supplementary volume.

a Hellenistic world.⁵² However, although Silva argues that their situation meant that they had to 'confront' and 'accommodate to' pagan culture as a matter of 'survival', it is doubtful whether the picture needs to be portrayed so starkly.⁵³ Naturally these early Christians had to account for their faith, but in a situation which in the first century might not have been perceived so *new* and *threatening*. On the contrary, Paul's letters — as is the case with the other New Testament writings, in varying degrees as determined by the different exigencies — are examples themselves that the early followers of Jesus succeeded very well in blending their beliefs into a cultural world different to that of their forebears.

One of the strong philosophical influences on the first-century world and also the early 'Christian church' and 'Judaism', derived from Alexandria⁵⁴ and can be described as Middle Platonism.⁵⁵ A common interpretive strategy found in this type of philosophy was called 'allegory'.⁵⁶ This approach is so prevalent in the writings of Philo, that it had almost led to an identification of allegory with Philo.⁵⁷

⁵² Silva does argue later (:637) that the Alexandrian world as typified by Philo, was 'geographically and conceptually distant from Palestinian Judaism'. However, lately the value for the distinction of the labels Palestinian as opposed to Hellenistic Judaism, have come under scrutiny as insufficient and not *representative* of the real division between Jews living inside and outside of Palestine. The division centered more on the different attitudes to the temple in Jerusalem and its accompanying cult — furthermore this criterion distinguish Jewish groups *inside* Palestine as well (Murray 1982:194-208; Murray 1990:342).

⁵³ This is probably a more accurate description of the portrayal found in the Intertestamental literature, which in some cases clearly and vividly illuminate the clash of the Hellenistic with the Jewish and everything that entailed.

⁵⁴ Although the school of Antioch denounced the use of allegory in interpretation, a deeper meaning of the text was acknowledged *κατὰ θεωρίαν*. The text had only one sense (*διάνοια*), but a double historical reference or use was deemed possible. Cf Louth (1990:13); Norris (1990:31). Allegorical interpretation did occur within the school of Antioch occasionally (Jeanrond 1991:184 n20); and whereas both 'schools' understood 'literal' meaning as 'concrete' meaning, the Antiochenes included metaphor under literal meaning (Schwartz 1990:4). A distinction between the schools of Antioch and Alexandria on the basis of 'literal' interpretation seems oversimplified (Young 1990:401), as both schools 'owed their respective hermeneutical tendencies to the locally established Jewish tradition of hermeneutics' (Jeanrond 1991:19). However, Jeanrond does claim that the Alexandrian approach is allegorical as opposed to the grammatical-historical strategy of the Antiochenes, and eventually reverts to the 'literal-non-literal' distinction (:21-22).

⁵⁵ Evans (1992:81) refers to Neo-Platonism which as concept is normally reserved for the philosophical trend 'at the end of paganism'. Cf Ferguson (1993:364).

⁵⁶ This interpretive strategy probably originated with the Stoics who attempted to account for Homer's epics in light of cultural changes and upheavals (Jeanrond 1991:13-15; Evans 1992:81; Edwards 1993:71; Silva 1993:636; Simonetti 1994:4-5). However, Carny (1988:31-32) sees some differences between the Philo's exegetical methods and those found in reading the works of Homer and Hesiod; the most important is 'Philo's special attitude towards the literal meaning'.

Allegory fitted in with the Platonic dualistic world view, which attached importance to the noumenal or unseen world as opposed to the inherently evil phenomenal or material world. Cf Carny (1988:33), stressing the 'interrelation between Philo's conception of the world and his theory of allegorical interpretation'; also Boyarin (1990:225); 'Allegoresis is thus explicitly founded in a platonic Universe'.

In terms of age, Edwards (1993:71) contends that 'the composition of allegory is as old as that of poetry', and refers to the *Gilgamesh epos* where sleep foreshadows death.

Amongst biblical interpreters, allegory has long been a valuable way to account for the anthropomorphic language of the Bible (Schwartz 1990:4).

⁵⁷ Evans (1992:81) notes that Philo's aim with his allegorical exegesis probably consisted of showing Jewish religion to be a 'superior worldview'.

Although the extent and degree of resemblances in the New Testament writings differ, there is no doubt that the text does contain clear examples of allegory when compared with the writings of Philo.⁵⁸

Allegory constitutes a non-literal mode of reading,⁵⁹ which emphasises a deeper or hidden meaning. This is also considered the more important or 'real, true' meaning.⁶⁰ The power, and simultaneously, danger of allegory lies in how the deeper meaning is identified.⁶¹ The amazing possibilities of thus ensuring a truly contextual reading of ancient yet sacred texts, are obvious.⁶²

[T]he allegorical method proved to be a very useful tool for saving textual integrity and rationality beyond the hermeneutical and cultural gap (Jeanrond 1991:15).

However, the process of assigning a deeper meaning to the literal expression, can also become anything from playful to fanciful or even dangerous — as many listeners have found out and still do in Christian churches today.⁶³

A number of passages in Paul's letters have been identified as possible instances of allegory: 1 Cor 9:9 (muzzling the ox now refers to 'Christian' workers), 1 Cor 10:3 (wilderness rock becomes Jesus), 2 Cor 3:12-16 (veil on Moses' face alludes to Jewish unbelief), and particularly Gal 4:21-31 (Sarah and Hagar as analogy for 'Christians' and 'Judaizers'). In Galatians 4:24 the word ἀλληγορέω is actually used. However, scholars do not agree whether Paul used the term here in the modern — technical — sense of the word,⁶⁴ making this the one

⁵⁸ One should be careful of epitomising Philo, either in terms of allegory or in Middle Platonic thought — which is the natural result of having so much extant from Philo and so little from anywhere else. However, all indications are that both allegorical interpretation and Middle Platonism were pervasive, also during the first century. Cf Ferguson (1993:450).

⁵⁹ Cf Lauer (1987:155) on Erasmus' allegory, being allotted 'a place of pride', providing spiritual meaning to what is not apparent in itself — allegory is to be handled with 'skill and learning' by 'sincere scholars'. Lauer argues that 'spiritual meaning is to literal what *libertas* is to ceremonies'.

⁶⁰ Carny (1988:34) hastens to add that allegorical interpretation is not 'demythologization' of language: 'the literal contents and sense' are not abolished. Cf Evans (1989:168) who adds that the 'allegorist does not ... necessarily assume that the text is unhistorical, without a literal meaning. His exegesis is simply not concerned with this aspect of the biblical text'.

⁶¹ According to Carny (1988:37) '[a]llegory is the language of signs (Chiffresprache) by which one existent makes itself known in another existent to whoever is capable of "reading" this language'.

⁶² The text is freed from all kinds of constraints related to its original (historical) context and meaning, and can address new situations. In the Christian church allegorical reading and interpreting acquired a christological flavour. Cf Louth (1990:14).

⁶³ On a personal note, the most recent allegorical sermon I heard was on Joh 2: changing water into wine meant Christ can also change people around. In this case the preacher wanted to emphasise happiness, so that became the change that Christ effects in people.

⁶⁴ E.g. Silva (1993:636) is eager to stress that Paul did not 'dehistorise' the Genesis account, nor did he attempt to conform Genesis to the Platonic scheme — these two elements are seen by Silva as constitutive of 'Philonian interpretation' in which allegory is found.

Paul, however, seemed more concerned with the pattern of history than its temporal elements; and, allegory might have originated within a Middle Platonic or Philonic worldview but whether one should adhere to it in order to be able to allegorise, is highly doubtful. Barr (1989:4) on the other hand, has no qualms in describing Gal 4 as 'allegory'. Cf Grabbe (1990:341).

passage in Paul that has frequently been discussed from the perspective of allegory.⁶⁵ With reference to 2 Cor 3:6, Barr (1989:4) posits that our terminology related to literal and allegorical meaning — as two opposites — actually derives from Paul, '[t]hat's the basic place from which the idea of literality comes'.⁶⁶

Allegory during the first centuries of the common era is often held to be characterised by its lack of historical consciousness, or to phrase it differently, by its failure to keep the historical relations of the (literal) text in mind. However, this understanding of allegory has been questioned recently. Barr (1989:13-14) argues that ancient allegory was not so much to be identified with ahistorical (or antihistorical) tendencies, as with 'decontextualisation'. Allegory failed to take the body of text as a whole seriously, but was a rather atomizing approach where small sections or even words in texts are treated on their own. Furthermore, in allegorical interpretation the 'culture' from which the text originated was not taken into consideration.

The intention is not to claim Paul's exclusive dependency on allegory, nor to assume an "organic connection" between Paul's use of Scripture and Alexandrian exegesis', which so far has not been proven (Silva 1993:636). With the increasing postmodern consciousness of the late twentieth centuries, allegory has become less of a threat to the stability of the text with fixed meanings as assumed by literalist approaches. The allegorical elements found in Pauline hermeneutics deserves serious attention.

3.4.1. Typology

Typology as a reading strategy⁶⁷ is often contrasted with allegory. The following description is typical:

A method of biblical interpretation that sees persons, things, or events in the OT as foreshadowings or patterns ('types') of persons, things, or events in the NT, particularly as they occur within the framework of history as opposed to allegory (Huey & Corley 1983:193; cf McNeil 1990:713).

⁶⁵ Evans (1993:82-86) refers to a number of other passages in the New Testament possibly portraying such an allegorical stance: Joh 6 and Hebrews. Evans also refers to three dominant themes in Philo specifically, which resounds in some NT writings as well: the Logos; the Perfect Man (in similar vein Evans argues that Philo's understanding of two Adams according to two creation accounts, possibly account for the 1 Cor 15 'Adam-Christ typology'); and, shadow and substance.

⁶⁶ Cf discussion of this text below.

⁶⁷ Typology can also be used in the general sense of 'example' or 'conception', or 'clarifying system', or as in Young (1994:29) 'the procedure of organizing a body of material or set of cases into different types'. Typology in biblical studies can also refer to two matters; that of interpretive strategy or mode of reading; or, a 'presupposition', i.e. 'a belief that the biblical story (of the past) has some bearing on the present'. The latter is chosen by Evans (1989:169) who finds evidence of typology in the Old Testament, too. However, this notion of typology is perhaps too broad, bordering on being vague and generalising.

It would nevertheless be possible to argue that typology is a special or particular kind of allegory.⁶⁸ Typology exhibits the traditional allegorical characteristics, namely a hidden or deeper meaning,⁶⁹ and (sometimes!) an arbitrary choice as to what the 'real, deeper referent' seems to be. The major difference between typology and allegory is often explained by assuming that in the case of the former the meaning, sense or referent of the text is searched for on a horizontal or temporal plane — as opposed to a vertical or spatial rendering of a text's meaning in allegory.⁷⁰

However, even such a contrast will not always bear out scrutiny. Typology's historical frame of reference is not always its main emphasis, and allegory surely functions equally well in history.⁷¹ Further, the arbitrariness involved in both allegory and typology cannot be denied, and associations evoked by typology cannot be justified in the sense that the '(historical) means justify the (christological) end'.

A third aspect — characteristic of both allegory and typology — complementary to the two other notions of 'hidden meaning' and 'arbitrariness', is that the reader or interpreter is responsible for providing the content of the 'deeper meaning'. Allegory and typology can only function amongst 'considerate readers'⁷² who are consciously willing to look for or unconsciously assume certain correspondences between the text and its referents(s). Thus, there is no doubt that in allegory and typology 'meaning' is truly created and not 'found' or 'discovered'.

⁶⁸ Cf Jeanrond (1991:18): 'The allegorical interpretation of the 'Old Testament' is usually called *typological*'. Typological reading of the scriptures of Israel had as its major presupposition that the texts 'look beyond itself for interpretation'. Evans (1989:168) views the typological as basic to allegorical and peshar interpretation because it has the present sharing in the events of the past. Why this should be called typological and not rather contextual or contemporising is not clear. Attempts to distinguish between allegory and typology often falter in practice, cf Barker (1994:209) who says in Gal 4:21-31 it is 'difficult to separate the two'.

⁶⁹ Cf Silva (1993:640) who refers in reference to typology to 'a certain undercurrent — 'a deeper meaning' in Scripture 'that could only become clear after the fulfillment of the promises'.

Carny (1988:33) argues against a distinction between allegory, typology and others as reading strategies in Paul's day: 'In those days there existed no distinction between the terms to designate methods', all of which 'were considered as the means to reach the hidden meaning beyond the literal one'.

Cf Frei (1986:40) who argues that '[t]ypological or figural interpretation ... stood in an unstable equilibrium between allegorical and literal interpretations'. Frei, unlike most who finds value in the way in which New Testament authors find types of Jesus in the Old Testament, values the figural — and not so much the supposed 'historical correspondence' — idea of typology.

⁷⁰ Cf Carny (1988:35); Evans (1989:168) 'Unlike allegory, typology is closely tied to history'.

⁷¹ To argue as McNeil (1990:713) that allegory's establishment of the meaning of the text 'is something with no continuity with the historical intention of the writer' is too crude. E.g. in 1 Cor 10:11 McNeil has to argue that the use of 'types' is 'not strictly typological exegesis, but the allegorization of an OT text' (:714).

⁷² A term used by Malina (cf 1991:16); within his Social-scientific criticism he wants to emphasise the need to identify 'a set of scenarios proper to the time, place, and culture of the biblical author'. It can be extended to include even broader categories: theological (to include a specific, e.g. christological, theological purpose); psychological (willingness and eagerness to find meaning), etc. Aageson (1993:8) in portraying interpretation as dialogical or interactive, refers to the reader as a 'willing interpretive partner'. Cf Silva (1993:640) who mentions the 'heavy theologizing' associated with the use of typology, which should not be read into Paul's use of *τύπος* as e.g. in 1 Cor 10:11 where *τύπος* refers to 'example'. Jeanrond (1991:19) puts it harsher: 'the typological interpreters have forced these texts [of Scripture, JP] into the straight-jacket of their own theological presuppositions'.

The defense of typology based on the 'intrinsic possibilities' of the text, is only defensible in extreme cases of allegory, and certainly does not apply to equally extreme typologies wrought in the mind of the author rather than in the potentiality of the text. Murray (1990:345) refers to typology as 'a mode of reading' activated 'by response to a text's intrinsic potentiality to generate metaphor and symbol (e g the paradise, flood and Babel stories)'. Allegory is viewed as 'artificially imposed interpretations with no basis in the text'. The fact is that such 'possibilities' is not only identified but often also supplied by the interpreter of the text.⁷³

3.5. *Midrash (Rabbinic exegesis)*⁷⁴

[T]he real medium of rabbinic concern with the Bible is and remains the Midrash (Stemberger 1991:40)

The very common Jewish way of reading Scripture,⁷⁵ including 'interpretive exposition' was

⁷³ Cf the distinction offered by Houlden (1990:110), who refers to allegory as 'seeing moral and theological meaning behind statements and stories ostensibly about quite other matters', and typology as 'discerning parallels of symbol and story between the OT and NT' — the 'intrinsic possibilities of the text' is in the eye of the beholder, or the mind of the interpreter.

⁷⁴ The debate on the nature of midrash will not be dealt with here. Cf e g Bruns (1990:189-213) who argues against Neusner — who sees midrash as literature — for accepting midrash as 'a hermeneutical practice' (210 n5), not a method but a historical process, not a logical exercise but a social practice (:190-191). Bruns summarises midrash as 'a technique of polysemic exegesis', 'instrument of social control', and 'a powerful medium of cultural and religious difference' (:206). My views on midrash are closely aligned to those of Bruns.

Room also does not allow for an extensive discussion on the following issues related to the study of midrash: context or setting — *Sitz im Leben* — i e rabbinical schools and/or synagogue; integrity, i e holistic or atomistic; form and style, i e lemmatic; and, in terms of style Midrash, Dictum or Logion, Mashal, Ma'aseh, Haggadah, Petihah and Hatimah. As far as items from the previous might be important for the argument below, it will however be discussed. For a summary of the above, cf Alexander (1990:454-457).

For a brief but impressive account of Jewish exegesis up to today, cf Loewe (1990:346-354). In this study the fruits of the Tannaitic (c. 50 BCE - 200 CE) period will deserve our attention.

⁷⁵ However, some distinctions regarding midrash should be put into place, because it is 'tendentious' to use midrash as descriptive term for Jewish interpretation of the Bible, ranging from the Septuagint to the 'classic rabbinic commentaries such as Mekhilta deRabbi Ishmael, Sufra, Sifrei and Genesis Rabba'. Certain differences in method, content and form took place over time (Alexander 1990:453). The classification of midrash texts are normally done according to the categories of halakhic or aggadic, and exegetical or homiletical. The following four groups account for the main divisions in midrash texts: Halakhic midrashim; Exegetical midrashim; Homiletic midrashim; and, Anthologies (Yalqutim) and Collected Works (Alexander 1990:453-454). Evans (1989:167) swiftly organises midrash into two categories: halakhic (concerned with legal matters, and thus 'academic') and haggadic (concerned with homiletical matters, and thus 'in the synagogue'). Cf Simonneti (1994:2). For criticism of this common division on the basis that it relies on an allegorical-philosophical polemic associated with Maimonides, cf Zahavy (1994:82). Bruns (1990:191) argues that this distinction is not always reflected in practice, as the 'force of the text' is as much a concern in midrash as its form and meaning. My use of midrash will be restricted to the early forms of midrash as found in the first century, unless indicated otherwise.

called 'midrash'.⁷⁶ In midrashic interpretation⁷⁷ the emphasis was on the text itself, which also provided the 'starting point'. Sacred texts were interpreted — in the form of running commentary on verses from the text (Zahavy 1994:81) — for practical instruction. The aim was to explain God's will to his people in order for them to live accordingly. The structure of midrash was based on the assumption 'that (*Scripture*) has relevance to this (*aspect of life*)'. According to Evans (1992:116), midrash interpretation is 'in a large measure founded on the assumption that Scripture contains potentially unlimited meaning'.⁷⁸

Zahavy argues that midrash for all its attempts at relevance and contextualising was a theological genre. '[N]early all the messages of rabbinic midrash are rigorously controlled within structured religious schemata' (1994:81). Midrash was not intent on elaborating or commenting by narrating 'ordinary' human stories.

Furthermore, in Jewish communities the divine nature of Scripture was very highly valued, and as such Scripture could never become outdated, but only be in need of contemporary interpretation. '[D]ivine revelation can never be out of date'.⁷⁹ Midrash presupposed more than one meaning, as Stemberger puts it: 'There is no such thing as *the* correct exegesis'.⁸⁰

Stemberger (1991:41-42) argues also that the basic notion underlying that of divine Scripture with its polyvalency, is that

God has revealed himself in the Bible once and for all. This revelation must therefore apply for all times to come, for all situations in life. Any time, any person learns from the Bible what God wills here and now.

⁷⁶ Derived from the Hebrew נָדַח 'to seek'. Cf in the New Testament Joh 5:39 and 7:52 where ἐρευνάω is used in a similar way, viz 'to seek (to understand)' or as in Louw & Nida (1988:104) 'try to learn'. Cf Stemberger (1991:40).

In the Qumran community midrash was also related to interpretation, cf 1QS 8:15 'This is the study (מִדְרָשׁ) of the Law' (referred to in Evans 1992:116). Alexander (1990:452) contends that in early Jewish literature, מִדְרָשׁ could refer to three possible activities: 'interpretation of scripture', 'the activity of studying scripture', and 'a legal inquiry or court of inquiry'. Zahavy (1994:81) argues that midrash is popularly perceived as interpretive activity as well as style; often it describes some contemporary text interpretations.

Midrash became a standard rabbinic way of interpretation. However, it is questionable whether 'the Talmud ... and the midrashim ... give an accurate picture of first-century Pharisaism', as Silva (1993:637) contends in such an unnuanced way.

⁷⁷ Midrash can refer to a 'process', a interpretive strategy — 'as a distinctive method of interpreting Scripture, as a system of hermeneutical rules and techniques' — as well as to an 'artefact' or product of midrashic interpretation — 'the concrete end-product of the application of the hermeneutical system' ranging 'from the exegesis of a single word, phrase or verse of scripture to a whole biblical book' (Alexander 1990:453). The attention in this study is on the former.

⁷⁸ Cf Sarna (1987:10): 'Rabbinic exegesis is firmly grounded in the cardinal principle that embedded in the sacred text is a multiplicity of meanings, the full richness of which cannot be expressed through a single body of doctrine or by any monolithic system that is logically self-consistent'.

⁷⁹ Cf Stemberger (1991:40), who also refers to Christian approaches which consider 'biblical regulations which no longer correspond to the legal sensibilities of the time as time-conditioned, outdated statements'.

⁸⁰ Stemberger refers in this regard to *Sanhedrin* 34a: 'Any scriptural passage has a number of meanings'.

The perception in midrash that a text was both divine as well as the final revelation of God, implied the carefully study of all facets of the text, including its 'linguistic peculiarities', 'different forms of writing' and so on.⁸¹ The text is in no way to be considered to have merely an arbitrary form. This also explains the perception of the frugal nature of Scripture: 'no word is in vain, no consonant is useless'.

The notion of polyvalent meaning in midrash was borne out — or even made possible — by its 'lemmatic' form,⁸² which 'opens up two possibilities'. A variety of interpretation could be given to the lemmata — which could consist of a unitary body of text, or disconnected texts. Secondly, the lemmatic form allowed for the 'explicit development of an exegetical argument'.⁸³ Alexander (1990:456) argues that these possibilities of multivalent interpretation of Scripture were fully exploited by the practitioners of midrash, or 'darshanim'.⁸⁴

Midrash in its earlier years functioned 'fairly straightforward' but became very technical in later rabbinical practice.⁸⁵ Individual words and even letters were interpreted in very inventive ways. Midrash became 'creative' to such an extent that the 'original concern of the text' often disappeared.⁸⁶ However, in whatever variety of midrash, self-evident or creative, the

⁸¹ Cf Stemmerger (1991:42) for a whole range of textual facets which were scrutinised.

⁸² The 'fundamental' form of midrashim is 'biblical lemma + comment' (Alexander 1990:456).

⁸³ The Targums were basically translations of Scripture and 'consequently can offer effectively only a monovalent reading'; the Qumran pesharim were also lemmatic, but treat Scripture 'essentially monovalent', because it is 'mantic or oracular in style, not argumentative, and do not make explicit their exegetical reasoning' (Alexander 1990:456). On Targums as involving some interpretation as well, cf Evans (1989:166); Hayward (1990:595-598) and Loewe (1990:349).

⁸⁴ Evans (1989:165) refers to the 'rewritten Bible' phase as one of 'early exegesis', after the appearance of a 'stabilized text': the interpretation was not so much intent on commenting on the text, as using the text to 'rewrite the tradition'. Hayward (1990:595-598) contends that the Targumim can also be viewed as examples of the 'rewritten Bible' to the extent that they 'interweave with their rendering of the Biblical text into Aramaic explanatory comments and edifying homiletic material'.

'In the late phase of the Midrash tradition (from about the eighth century), the genre of the "rewritten Bible"' is found yet again as the radical result of midrash. This genre was intent on providing 'edification and entertainment' (Stemmerger 1991:41).

The expression 'rewritten Bible' originates from Geza Vermes to describe the dynamic, centripetal — 'always revert(ing) to the historical sequence of events' — nature of this interpretation. Cf Müller (1993:203 n22).

⁸⁵ However, '[r]abbinic literature is notoriously difficult to date' (Evans 1992:118).

⁸⁶ In this regard Carny (1988:32-33) argues that Philonic and Rabbinic hermeneutics do not differ as much as was always contended. On the contrary, there is 'an osmosis between Greek allegory and the Midrash'. For a different view, cf Boyarin (1990:229-230 n26) and below on Intertextuality.

Loewe (1990:348) argues that although certain aspects of the rules in midrash 'are reminiscent of the universe of discourse within which logic, as known to the Greeks operates, the two systems serves such different purposes that it is difficult to postulate a Greek academic (as distinct from forensic) influence'. Loewe continues to explain that the 'Aristotelian *organon* was designed to promote properly disciplined thinking, and through it, cultural enrichment. The rabbinic rules were designed to allow room for elaborative interpretation of Pentateuchal texts that involve practical institutions or prohibited matters, but at the same time to exercise a conservative control over innovation'.

goal was always the 'application' of the text rather than commentary on the text in the sense of understanding the text for itself (Snodgrass 1991:420).⁸⁷

The creative and novel appropriations of the texts of Scripture were not viewed negatively as if 'reading into the text',⁸⁸ as such a practice was 'not admissible from within the tradition'.⁸⁹ *Darshanim* perceived their role to be one of actualising (cf Simonetti 1994:3) what was latent or locked up in the literary form of the text. They thought that the text itself was the origin for their explanations of and comments on it. It naturally follows that the interpreters of Scripture did not claim 'copyright' for their productions; they did not have 'a strong proprietorial attitude towards their ideas' (Alexander 1990:454).⁹⁰

An element of restraint was built into midrash interpretation by not discarding the 'literal' understanding of texts.⁹¹ The 'axiom of the literal inspiration' of the text led to two interpretive premises: 'nothing is pleonastic' and thus making use of every aspect of the text including the letters, their value, and so on;⁹² secondly, extravagant interpretations of the text should be constrained.⁹³ (Loewe 1990:348)

Alexander (1990:457) posits that the *darshanim* developed a 'doctrine' according to which they justified their midrashim. This doctrine contained two elements: 'Scripture is divine speech', and 'God gave to Moses on Sinai ... the Oral Torah as well' (cf Zahavy 1994:82).

In terms of exegetical practice, a number of general remarks on midrash is known,⁹⁴ but certain rules were also employed within the parameters of which texts were interpreted. The

⁸⁷ The rabbinic practices of ever multiplying new applications for the sacred texts led to the 'establishment' of the 'dual Torah' (Neusner).

⁸⁸ Alexander (1990:457) admits that 'external description of midrash', from 'outside the tradition, from a modern, objective academic standpoint' will evaluate it as 'eisegesis, as a reading into Scripture of ideas that were not originally or historically there'.

⁸⁹ However, Stemberger (1991:43) does concede that a 'playful element' manifests itself in midrash but that, he insists, is on a level 'comparable to spiritual scriptural reading'.

⁹⁰ Cf Decock (1993:271), quoting Reventlow, who argues that this was due because 'the idea of an individual author's right over his creation' was still non-existent.

Contrary to the latter opinion, cf Liwak (1988:89-101) who argues that 'literary individuality' appeared along with the 'disintegration of the old social ideal' in the time of the OT prophets, not only in Israel but also elsewhere (Egypt, Assyria, ancient Greece).

⁹¹ Stemberger (1991:42) refers to the rule of *Shabbat* 63a: 'The Bible does not lose its literal meaning'.

⁹² Leading to 'meticulous' attention to texts (Simonetti 1994:2).

⁹³ The first premise was associated with Rabbi Akiba, and the second with his contemporary, Rabbi Ishmael.

⁹⁴ Cf Alexander (1990:458), e.g. 'Torah speaks in human language' (Babylonian Talmud Berakoth 31b); 'No verse can ever lose its plain sense (*peshat*)' (Babylonian Talmud *Shabbat* 63a; *Sanhedrin* 34a).

initial seven rules, some of which appear frequently in some New Testament writings,⁹⁵ were later extended to thirteen and subsequently to thirty-two.⁹⁶

A number of similarities exist on a *formal* level between the Pauline letters and the midrashic use of Scripture, the first of which being that both relied on authoritative introductory formulas.⁹⁷ In Paul's writings evidence is also found of two other typical midrashic techniques. The 'drawing of parallels between passages' (קריק, to string) based on a significant word common to the different passages can perhaps explain Paul's method in Rom 9:25-29 when using Hos 2:23, Hos 1:10 and Is 10:22-23, and Is 1:9. Another possible rabbinic feature is when the text(s) is supplied with running commentary or exposition and yet presented as a unit⁹⁸ — a hermeneutical category known as 'may our Master teach us', or *Yelammedenu rabbeni*. However, this dates back to a much later rabbinic method found in commentaries (Silva 1993:637).

In evaluating the possible influence of rabbinic techniques on Pauline interpretation of Scripture, Silva (1993:637) contends that the evidence is 'ambiguous'. He lists three complicatory factors, the first of which is *chronological*. Available rabbinic material dates back to no earlier than the third century CE.⁹⁹ Furthermore, very little real comparison is possible between the 'Pharisees of Jesus' day' and the later, second century rabbinic schools which later became 'mainstream Judaism'. The *relative vagueness* of some of the 'adduced parallels' is another problematic aspect. Some supposed rabbinic techniques are common sense, as for

⁹⁵ The seven derived from Hillel (cf e.g. Alexander 1990:458; Meijia 1987:31; Ellis 1988:699ff). Evans (1992:117-118) argues — with some examples — that all seven rules are to be found practiced in the NT, which is evidence of their use during the first century. Cf Silva (1993:637).

⁹⁶ Probably by Rabbi Ishmael (second century) and Rabbi Eliezer ben Yose ha gelili (= the Galilean), respectively. The latter expansion was especially to cater for the interpretation of narrative, however, many of these rules were 'atomistic' and had 'little or nothing to do with the literary or historical context' of the scriptural passage to be interpreted. These rules were primarily applied to homiletical and not legal midrash — only the sets of seven and thirteen were applied to Halakhah texts, but all three sets including the set of thirty two to the Haggadah texts (Alexander 1990:458; Evans 1992:118). Loewe (1990:349) contends that 'there is little evidence of these rules being used as a touchstone of exegetical validity'.

Legal texts were treated stricter, and practices like *gematria* (computation of the numerical value of words and phrases) and *notarikon* (treating words as acronyms) — included in the list of thirty two rules — were not found applied to these texts as with non-legal texts.

However, even these rules are not exhaustive of midrashic practice. Alexander (1990:458) argues that 'numerous techniques [were] disclosed by modern academic analysis which do not appear to be formally recognized anywhere in rabbinic hermeneutics' and are not included in the above lists: e.g. *heqqesh* (argument from analogy); *semukhim* (inference based on the juxtaposition of verses); and, *'al tigre'i* (replacing a word with one that sounds similar).

⁹⁷ The wording found in Midrash sometimes differed from the Pauline and Qumranic versions.

⁹⁸ Ellis (1988:708) refers to Gal 4:21-31 as a possible example: Paul begins with a general reference using Gen 16 and 21 as basis, does his exposition while referring to another text, Is 54:1, and makes his application by quoting yet another text, Gen 21:10. There are verbal and conceptual relations between these texts.

⁹⁹ Stemmerger (1991:40) dates the first midrashim — on Exodus to Deuteronomy — 'around the third century CE'.

example the *qal wahomer* argument. 'Distinctively rabbinic' examples of exegesis in Paul's writings are not easy to find. Even the term 'midrashic' is particularly ambiguous. Apart from a common notion of interpretation, midrash is also viewed as distinctively Jewish, but there is lack of consensus wherein this distinctiveness is situated.¹⁰⁰

Later rabbinic methods of reading Scripture are helpful in illustrating numerous similarities between Jewish culture and Paul, and the increased knowledge of first-century Jewish interpretation 'is of inestimable help, at least in a general way' for understanding Pauline hermeneutics (Silva 1993:638).

It should be stressed, for it might not be clear in the above, that midrash did not preclude attention to the *peshat* or 'literal' sense of the text.¹⁰¹ On the contrary, midrash encompasses the literal meaning of the text, for midrash entailed 'searching the text for the obvious and more' (Evans 1989:166).

The Tannaim believed their midrash to be the 'true' and thus 'actual' sense of Scripture and therefore 'peshat'. The more comprehensive meaning of midrash later changed and midrash and peshat came to represent two different notions of interaction with the text (Longenecker 1975:32-34).

3.6. *Pesher (Qumran)*

The reading of the scriptures of Israel with the aim of situating a text in time and place, is called 'pesher'.¹⁰² This way of reading Old Testament texts was especially prevalent in the Qumran community¹⁰³ as many of their extant manuscripts show. In pesher interpretation a 'special knowledge of divine mysteries' is claimed (Jeanrond 1991:17).

¹⁰⁰ Some suggest 'embellished narratives', others argue for exegetical procedures unlike the 'grammatico-historical', and others still contend that Midrash refers to 'Jewish interpretation [which] actualizes the text'. Silva (1993:638) finds the latter to be 'less prejudicial', but despairs of Midrash as such being a term 'to serve to clarify Pauline exegesis' because of the 'pejorative or sloppy use' of the term.

¹⁰¹ Halakhic interpretation, concerned with legal matters and prescribing 'courses of action', tended to stress the value of the 'peshat'-meaning (Schwartz 1990:6).

¹⁰² Derived from the Hebrew (and Aramaic) פָּשַׁר 'to solve or interpret'.

¹⁰³ Biblical interpretation was quite common in the Qumran community, described as 'one of the most interesting and distinctive features' of it (Silva 1993:636). Cf also Noll (1993:779ff) calling pesher 'the most distinctive Qumran method'.

Loewe (1990:347) posits two dominant concerns in the 'thinking' of the Qumran community: 'their self-awareness as an isolated and embattled remnant representing true Judaism', and 'the sense of eschatological immediacy'.

Evans (1992:49) argues that 'ancient methods of biblical interpretation' is one of the areas where the Scrolls have contributed to biblical scholarship.

The text to be interpreted is believed to contain a special message or meaning which can only be unlocked by an interpreter inspired by God.¹⁰⁴ The inspired interpreter is responsible for explaining the text according to a historical event or person: not the text itself, but this event or person actually forms the basis for interpreting the text. In Peshier, the line of interpretation is 'this (*event or person*) is that (*of which Scripture speaks*)'¹⁰⁵ (Snodgrass 1991:420).

A number of apparent similarities between Qumranic and Pauline interpretation of Scripture have been pointed out: the common use of the introductory formula 'as it is written'; the use of Scripture in 'a generally literal way';¹⁰⁶ the 'modernising of the text' by having its 'general sense' address a contemporary situation; and, 'eschatological exegesis'. However, it was concluded

that such similarities 'do not affect anything more than the periphery of their theologies' (Fitzmeyer, quoted in Silva 1993:636).

According to Fitzmeyer, these similarities only function on the surface level because, although both lines of interpretation proceed from the Old Testament text, the Qumranite and Pauline *presuppositions* differ.

It is in terms of 'eschatological exegesis' that Silva (1993:636) feels himself especially pressed to explain differences between Paul's approach and that of the Qumran writings. Granting that in as far as the eschatological line of thought penetrated both the Pauline and Qumran writings there is a 'rough parallel', Silva argues that differences manifested themselves on what appears to be formal or methodological, as well as theological levels. Qumran resorted to 'verse-by-verse interpretations', leading to 'highly arbitrary applications'; and, Qumran emphasised the 'yet-to-come deliverance'. Paul, on the other hand, took 'Jesus' death and resurrection' to constitute 'the manifestation of God's kingdom'.¹⁰⁷

3.7. Testimonia

Another Jewish interpretive practice was the use of 'testimonia: collections of Old Testament texts that had been grouped thematically for apologetic, liturgical, and catechetical purposes'.

¹⁰⁴ 'Scripture containing ... mysteries in need of explanation' (Evans 1989:167).

¹⁰⁵ It involved the application of biblical prophecies to 'current or even contemporary events' (Jeanrond 1991:17), 'taking place in the Qumran sect and in Palestine in general' (Simonetti 1994:3). Or in the words of Evans (1989:167) 'pesher exegesis understands specific biblical passages as fulfilled in specific historical events and experiences'.

¹⁰⁶ However, allegory was found in pesher as well, e.g. 'Nahum, Fragment 1: Bashan is interpreted as the Kittim, Carmel as their king, Lebanon as their leaders' (Simonetti 1994:4).

¹⁰⁷ Silva argues further that Paul's dominant 'eschatological' perspective is 'the conviction that the age to come is already here'. This is a highly debatable point — and Silva's reference to 1 Cor 10:11 does not suffice — as Paul's authentic letters do seem to convey a very strong future expectation. Perhaps one should rather read Paul's views on Jesus' death and resurrection as the *inauguration* of God's kingdom.

The existence of these testimonia is commonly accepted today, as evidenced for example by discoveries at Qumran.¹⁰⁸ In the case of New Testament authors, the acceptance of the presence of such collections of Old Testament materials is the only plausible explanation for the shared use of certain combinations of texts, sometimes agreeing even in wording. These texts are not attested in the Septuagint or other text corpuses. The testimonia have circulated in oral and written forms, being available as practical resources to 'itinerant preachers and gentile congregations' (Snodgrass 1991:422-423).

Testimonia acquired a form of relative independence as collections and seem to have consisted of anthologies or 'thematic collections' of (proof-) texts taken from Scripture.¹⁰⁹ This practice of 'weaving together unconnected texts' into chains of *testimonia* is found among the New Testament authors for the purpose of addressing a new situation, and at a later stage featured prominently in anti-Jewish polemic:

until Origen Christian writers, Jewish or Gentile, rather *exploit* the Bible for their own purposes than attempt continuous exposition (Murray 1990:343,345).

Testimonia featured prominently in the christological reinterpretation of Scripture by New Testament authors. It enabled the detachment of scriptural texts from their original contexts, and the arrangement of these texts according to thematic concerns¹¹⁰ (Murray 1990:344).

The use of *Testimonia* in early Christian exegesis is another instance of apparent disregard for the literal or original sense of Scripture in favour of the all-important aim of contextuality: the text has to address the new situation.

3.8. Summarising remarks

In Judaism, exegesis does not begin with the complete, finished text of the Bible; rather, it is the driving force in the development within the Bible, which has constantly taken up earlier sacred traditions anew, adapted them to new situations in life, and made them more profound (Stemberger 1991:37).

Jewish exegesis is rooted in the adaptation, expansion, and interpretation of Israel's sacred tradition (Evans 1989:165).

¹⁰⁸ Cf Murray (1990:343); Noll (1993:779).

¹⁰⁹ Lindars (1990:675-677; 717-718) wants to distinguish proof texts from testimonia, and argues that the latter formed a 'particular class of OT quotations' and were 'concerned with the fulfillment of prophecy'. Proof texts were used by New Testament authors as appeals and sanctions for their arguments. *Testimonia*, however, were used predominantly in showing upon Jesus Christ as the real Messiah in whom 'the End Time has begun to be fulfilled'; and texts like Ps 2 and 110 feature prominently. Other authors equate *testimonia* with proof-texts; cf e.g. Murray (1990:344).

¹¹⁰ Murray (1990:344) argues that this practice is 'implied' in the NT, as 'several sequences are traditional by the second century, and from the third there are formal collections'.

Many of the 'Jewish' styles and methods of interpretation 'remained traditional after the definite estrangement of the church from Judaism'. In the New Testament many examples can be identified where the interpretation remained close to its Jewish origins, 'often with no breach or tension' (Murray 1990:343) — the Marcionites are a notable exception.

Freedom in reading and interpreting Scripture was common amongst first-century Jews:

In rabbinic exegesis the impulse was less to delimit meanings than to justify their proliferation. 'The exegesis of verses of Scripture defined a convention in Israelite life even before books of holy writings attained the status of scripture'. Polysemy prevailed, both in the expositions of rabbinic law, *halakhah*, and in the more homiletic or narrative midrashim, *aggadah* (Schwartz 1990:5, quoting Judah Goldin),

and Christians:¹¹¹

Like all kinds of Jews, Jewish Christians read their Bible as a collection of divine oracles, which when decoded could give messages for later times (Murray 1990:343).

Within the Jewish halakhic tradition the 'quest for hermeneutical closure' was seen as an 'illusion' (Hays 1989:4). The literal meaning of texts had to be transcended in order to 'integrate the interpretation of the scriptures into a larger theological framework' (Jeanrond 1991:17). The multiplicity of interpretations of the same text did not mitigate against one another, and newer readings were not seen as absolving earlier ones; to the contrary, the Jewish interpretive tradition provides a model for 'the simultaneous legitimacy of a number of meanings' (Schwartz 1990:5).

What would today be called the dynamic interpretive freedom of the Jewish tradition did not, however, imply that the text itself could be changed or violated. Jeanrond (1991:17) notes that, apart from transcending the text's literal meaning, ancient Jewish exegesis is characterised by

a set of rules which instructs and at the same time contains the range of interpretations in the community and thus attempts to protect the community's religious identity and coherence.

Even in the case of the Massoretes who over centuries composed the consonantal text of Scripture and vocalised it, no 'modification' or any alteration of the text was done although they sometimes clearly disapproved of particular received readings.¹¹² The Massoretes constructed an elaborate system of notes to ensure that the text will be copied correctly. This was known as the massora and appeared in the margins and also in some cases at the end of the text. In the event where passages were felt to be 'irreverent to God' deliberate alterations to the text were suggested.

¹¹¹ Cf Hays (1989:4). The 'warrant' for this freedom was different, however: for the Rabbi's it resided in 'majority opinion within an interpretive community', but for Paul in 'claiming immediate revelatory illumination'.

¹¹² Cf Deist (1978:52-59). Deist also refers to the saying of Rabbi Aquiba (*Pirke Avot* 3:17) in this regard, 'The massora is a hedge around the law'. Müller (1993:204) argues that 'growing interest in establishing the wording' of the scriptures of Israel probably led to 'similar interest' in bringing the LXX's wording closer to what would become the MT.

It is also important to note that in Jewish appropriation of Scripture, it was not only interpreted with recourse to tradition, but the interpreters had the task of reading Scripture in light of Scripture. These practices are clearly illustrated in the *aggadah*-readings, where rhetorical strategies abounded. Such exegesis was informed, as was the case with 'Christian' interpretation of Scripture, by political and polemical motives:

Judaism was being defined through these very acts of interpretation, defined and defended against such ideological cross-currents as the Christians, ... the Karaites, ... Greek pragmatism, and Alexandrian culture (Schwartz 1990:6).

3.8.1. Sacred text

With the fixing of the text of Scripture towards the end of the first century, the immense respect for the literality of the existing texts was solidified.

The *respect for the (literal) text* as text, is echoed not only in Jewish readings but also in Philo, albeit for different reasons if for the same purpose, namely, multiple interpretations according to context. Uffenheimer (1988:161) stresses that in first-century — and later — Judaism the 'main tenet' was *inspiratio verbalis* which led to the text being approached 'as a metahuman language containing an unlimited multiplicity of meanings'.¹¹³ Equally, Philo's allegory should not be understood as a negative reflection on the 'inspired nature'¹¹⁴ or literality of the text: the literal meaning of the text remained for Philo an actual representation of 'real facts', meaning it 'cannot therefore be dismissed as the "shadow" of the truth, as merely carrying the truth' (Carny 1988:31). The text which not only carries the hidden meaning but also gives an account of the actual acts is thus valued by Philo; the literal expression on which the allegory is based, is part of the 'whole structure which must be apprehended integrally' (Carny 1988:34,37).

Sarna (1987:15-16), after highlighting some aspects of Jewish rabbinical exegesis which he in some cases terms 'fanciful', nevertheless insists that for Jewish commentators 'the bibli-

¹¹³ In this regard Uffenheimer (1988:161) refers to the subsequent well-known rabbinical saying שבעים פנים לתורה 'the Torah has seventy faces'. Sarna (1987:10) explains the number as 'typological and communicating comprehensiveness' — he adds another saying (attributed to tanna Ben Bag-Bag): 'Turn it over, turn it over, for everything is in it'. Cf Schwartz (1990:5) who argues that this saying refers not only to the acknowledgement of the comprehensiveness of the Torah, but also to the 'ceaseless activity' that follows the former.

¹¹⁴ A text can only conceivably have a 'deeper' meaning when it is perceived as inspired, which implies that error due to human agency is inconceivable and that the text has universal validity — which needs to be explored in new and different situations (Louth 1990:12).

Indeed, the allegorisation of the text was in order to protect the 'divine text' from denigrating God's nature or actions. The difference between the Greek and Jewish conceptions of 'inspiration' should be noted: for the Greeks it implied the 'human words' which were inspired, whereas for the Jews the Torah represented God's words (Jeanrond 1991:16).

cal canon in its definite form ... functions as normative' and should appropriately be called *sacred scriptures* with all it implies.¹¹⁵

The decisive factor for Scripture as sacred text according to Jewish and Christian perception was the perceived origin of Scripture, namely that it derives from God. Mejia (1987:32) calls this 'an article of faith'; Murray (1990:344) calls 'the Bible a body of divine oracles'; and Stemberger (1991:40) argues that 'no letter of the Bible can be done away with: exegesis applies it to each particular situation'. This meant in the extreme that in some communities the 'letter of Scripture' was even revered, as Noll (1993:779) contends happened at Qumran.¹¹⁶

The very usage of the Targumim is explained by Stemberger (1991:38) in relation to the Jewish valuation of Scripture. Used in homiletical context, the Targumim was clearly understood as something besides the 'revealed Bible', and thus the Mishnah required that the person who read the text of Scripture in a meeting, was not allowed to present the Targum as well.

The concept of 'sacred text' to which nothing should be added and nothing removed,¹¹⁷ should be balanced by the notion of contextualising this text. Although the text as text was respected very highly, it is nonetheless not the 'final word'. The texts which were transmitted were not considered in any way 'final' or 'complete', on the contrary, only by contemporising the textual traditions could it become the word of God in a 'complete' or 'comprehensive' sense.

3.8.2. *Living text*

Scripture, although containing the full revelation of God, was not viewed by the Jews as a fixed or static entity but as a 'living organism'. This perception was not formed through a process of post first-century rabbinical interpretation, but was indeed 'a continuation of an established process that was contemporaneous with the formation of biblical literature itself' (Sarna 1987:11). As emphasised above, the polyvalency of Scripture is directly related to its status as inspired or God-given texts:

it is the inexhaustible fountain of truth; in a very real sense all truth is latent in it, waiting to be discovered by the application of the right hermeneutical methods.

¹¹⁵ Cf Alexander (1990:457-458) who describes Scripture 'as divine speech', a description which includes the 'inerrant nature' thereof, and its 'lack of redundancy'. However, 'there was by no means universal consensus as to rabbinic Judaism's fidelity to the sacred text' (Talmage 1987:81).

¹¹⁶ In this regard, one should not be tempted to make too much of the difference in the lemmatic uses of midrashim and peshirim: the former frequently abbreviates the lemma (with '*ve-khulleh*' or 'etc.') but the distinction between text and comment remains clear; in pesharim the full text is quoted and never abbreviated (Alexander 1990:456).

¹¹⁷ Sentiments perhaps echoed also in NT texts such as Mt 5:17-19 (espec 18) and Gal 3:15?

The concept of Scripture as sacred text kept the text 'alive' and required continual appropriation thereof, the sacrality becoming indeed a stimulus for and not a taboo against interpretation. It was then not '*although*' but '*because*' of the Jewish perception of Scripture as sacred, that their continuing and contextualising interpretation was a matter of course. The text contained a 'potentiality'¹¹⁸ which not only could but indeed had to be realised and applied in new situations. This implied a 'unitary, comprehensive, holistic approach' to the text, which was the only way to 'discern' this potential. Concerning the teaching of the text, Sarna (1987:16) argues that it was always accompanied by

traditional exegesis which succeeded in transforming that which is time-bound into that which is eternally relevant, and in translating the timelessness of the text into that which is supremely timely. The chronological and cultural gap between the reader and the text was effectively bridged.¹¹⁹

The continuing interpretation of Scripture could only function in a context where the unity of Scripture was accepted.¹²⁰ This unity included both Scripture and its interpretation.

As the canonisation of the Tanak did not alter the conception of these texts as 'sacred', neither did it preclude them being viewed as 'living' texts. As Cohen (1987:193) puts it well:

Thus the canonization of the Tanak did not stifle the creative spirit as much as it redirected it ... The emergence of canonized texts allowed the Jews great freedom in interpreting their sacred traditions, a freedom that had earlier been denied them when the traditions circulated in fluid form.

Creative and dynamic interpretation of the canonical texts was stimulated not only by the belief that the texts were 'multivalent', but by the very process of canonisation itself.¹²¹

The more pragmatic concern of making texts relevant to contemporary issues seems to have played a role as well in the interpretive freedom exercised in Jewish circles. Noll refers to Qumran where he contends interpreters resorted to 'considerable liberty in introducing *variant readings* for purposes of clarification of the text' (1993:779, emphasis added).

¹¹⁸ Sarna (1987:16) quotes a rabbinic saying which to a certain extent refers to this potentiality: 'Whatever a mature student may expound in the future, it was already told to Moses on Sinai'. The sacred nature of Scripture determined that no fanciful interpretations may be forced onto the text, and the *darshanim* considered their task as one of exposing the latent aspects of the text. Cf Alexander (1990:457).

¹¹⁹ The usefulness of such a formulation or understanding of hermeneutics is not the issue here, but the attempt to come to grips with the early Jewish understanding of hermeneutics: ever-continuing and dynamic.

¹²⁰ Cf Alexander (1990:457-458) who posits 'scripture as totally coherent and self-consistent body of truth' as one of the axioms of midrashic hermeneutics. However, 'internal consistency' did not mitigate against the idea that Scripture might 'generate contradictory propositions': the former was 'at the level of the actual text', and the latter 'at the level of interpretation'.

Cf also Stemmerger (1991:43) who refers to the emphasis on the 'absolute unity of revelation', quoting *Pesahim 6b*: 'In the Torah there is no before and after'.

¹²¹ After the fixing of the canonical text (probably around the early second century CE), there is increasing emphasis on 'reproducing the precise wording' of the Tanak — 'the only place in the ancient world where this happened' according to Stanley (1997b:26).

3.8.3. Inspired exegetes

In early Judaism the notion existed that the exegete himself was 'inspired', which meant that the interpreter was capable of discerning layers of meaning in the text which were not previously revealed (Stemberger 1991:37). Bruns (1990:212 n22) follows Hartman in locating midrash 'in the extraordinary intimacy that exists between God and exegete'. This led to a very high valuation of the Oral Torah, attributed the same 'divine authority' as that of the Torah proper (Murray 1990:343).

The impact of the 'sacredness' of the text and its, almost contradictory, 'tentativeness' or 'incompleteness' in its interpretation led to the sacralising of the results of interpretation (Zahavy 1994:82). The Written Torah finds its extension in the Oral Torah. Rabbinic interpretive practice since the first century, led to the formation of what is commonly called the dual Torah, or in the terms of Sarna (1987) *torah she-bikhtav* (the written Torah) and the *torah she-be'al peh* (the oral Torah).¹²² The written Torah refers to the 'closed, canonic text, fixed and inviolable', whereas the oral Torah refers to the 'open-ended, ever developing' interpretations of the written Torah.¹²³

Regarding the idea of 'inspired exegete', the notion of 'existential familiarity' of the receiver of the exegesis should be added. Scripture as revelation of God 'was experienced immediately in liturgical action and private prayer' (Kannengieser 1991:30).

Among Christians this perception of the interpreter or reader of Scripture being able to establish the 'real' meaning beyond the literal was accompanied by the notion of 'the guidance of the Holy Spirit'. Scripture was read 'through a prophetic perspective'. Murray (1990:343) regards this aspect in early Christianity of such importance that he calls it 'a rebirth of prophecy'.

Not only is Jesus the mediator of new revelation, but the Holy Spirit gives his disciples prophetic power to interpret all scripture in terms of Christ (Murray 1990:344).

In the New Testament Paul can also claim inspiration or something akin to it, for his arguments, as happens for example in his advice on marriage in 1 Cor 7.¹²⁴

¹²² Not that the notion of dual Torah met with universal consensus; cf Talmage (1987:81,95 n1) who refers to the opposition thereof among Karaite Judaism who holds that the oral Torah is a 'perversion and distortion of the entrusted revelation' — however, Talmage argues, Karaism might have been representative of 'sectarian' Judaism.

¹²³ Cf Alexander (1990:458). Decock (1993:272) argues that the 'unity between sacred text and its interpretation' exemplified in the Dual Torah continued 'the very process which produced the text, i.e. interpretation of older texts'.

¹²⁴ Whether the argument of Paul on having the Spirit (*δοκῶ δὲ καὶ γὰρ πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἔχειν*, 1 Cor 7:40b) is about having the same authority as Jesus and that Paul can — or even should, for the new situation — thus 'adapt, change and even reject' the teachings of Jesus, as Tuckett (1991:315) contends is questionable. On the relationship between tradition and Spirit in Paul, cf e.g. Müller (1989:31-60).

4. Conclusion: Paul's 'rabbinic' methods as the 'easy way out'?

Der Vergleich der paulinischen Schriftauslegung mit der zeitgenössischen jüdischen Exegese zeigt hinsichtlich der Verwendung der exegetischen Methoden und Auslegungsregeln die Herkunft des Paulus aus einem durchschnittlichen Diaspora-Judentum (Koch 1986:230).

A simplistic appeal to Jewish and early rabbinic practices of interpretation to explain Paul's interpretive struggle with Scripture will certainly not be sufficient. Nonetheless, a study of Jewish interpretive assumptions and practices does illuminate important aspects of Paul.¹²⁵

For example, it is obvious from certain techniques employed by Paul, that he was influenced¹²⁶ by midrashic innovation (Hays 1989:10-14); however, as midrash constituted a 'theological genre' (Zahavy 1994:81), and even as literary type and in terms of intentions and goals it differed in many ways from the Pauline letters.

It is becoming increasingly common to distinguish early Jewish exegesis from the later rabbinical practices.¹²⁷ Because the latter is a much later development, it is rightly questioned whether rabbinic practices can be used to explain Paul's reading of Scripture. However, rabbinic exegesis does illustrate the notions of interpretation already present in Paul's day.¹²⁸

The rabbinic view of Scripture was not that of 'a single, uniform, self-consistent system, but is a stratified work'. The human and thus fallible understanding of God and his nature and commandments by some characters in Scripture are not hidden away. This view of Scripture is well exemplified in the rabbinic exegesis which gives 'every appearance of constituting critiques of biblical morality'. Good examples are the attempts to clarify and justify certain biblical figures like Abraham (misrepresenting his relationship with Sarah) and Elisha (the episode of the children insulting him) (cf Sarna 1987:12-15).

¹²⁵ It is sometimes questioned whether rabbinic practices constitute an influence on Paul at all, either with reference to Paul's 'hellenised Judaism' or by claiming a later date (than Paul's lifespan) for 'rabbinic Judaism'. In both cases, however, extremes can easily be avoided with reference to the wide influence of Hellenism, also in and around Palestine, and the early or precursor 'rabbinic' practices attested in Paul's time already — as is argued here.

¹²⁶ However, influence should *not* be forcefully directed to constitute 'source', and eventually 'dependency' as well!

¹²⁷ Starting with the Tannaitic Period of 70-200 CE. Cf also Decock (1993) who typifies 70-135 CE as the years when change from the cultic to the Torah, from priest to rabbi (scribe) took place.

¹²⁸ When presented with the choice of 'common' or even scholarly agreed upon, modern assumptions, or the second and third century rabbinic practices of what constitutes an accurate or good reading of the Bible, as a heuristic device for understanding Pauline hermeneutics, one should not discard the latter. Some caution in handling these later materials in order to explain its predecessors, is naturally a necessity (cf e.g. Alexander 1983:237-246; Hays 1989:11). However, cf Prockter (1983) on the neglect of the study of rabbinic practices among NT scholars.

The rabbinic reinterpretation, or rewriting ... raises questions about the authority of the text, the legitimacy of the exegesis, and the relationship between tradition and text (Sarna 1987:15).

The still dominant grammatico-historical interpretation in its many guises as used and defended by contemporary exegetes often fails to appreciate the rabbinic opinion regarding the literal sense of Scripture, or *פשוט*. Although rabbinic interpreters recognized the value of the literal interpretation of Scripture,¹²⁹ it was at the same time accepted that the biblical writers wrote not only for their contemporaries as the initial recipients of the documents. Rabbinical interpretation allows for the possibility that biblical authors 'wrote also for our sake'.¹³⁰

It is not suggested that rabbinic exegesis should be accepted as either the basis for evaluating Pauline exegesis or as the norm for contemporary exegesis.¹³¹ It is argued, however, that a proper understanding of Paul's use of Scripture will be worse off if the Jewish setting of Paul's activity is not fully recognised. Indeed, a study of Jewish interpretive assumptions and techniques have an important contribution to make to understanding Pauline hermeneutics.

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¹²⁹ Cf the strong feelings of Maimonides (1135-1204) about the literal sense of Scripture. In his *Sefer Ha-Mitsvot* he writes 'there is no Scripture except according to its literal sense' (Sarna 1987:16).

¹³⁰ Sarna (1987:17) refers to phrases like 'When your son shall ask you in the future, "What means ...?"', and texts like Is. 30:8; Jer 30:2,3, 36:28,29; Dan 12:4 to substantiate this practice. Ultimately Sarna also employs the argument that the biblical text could not conceivably have had its two and a half thousand years of existence if only the historical and literal-original sense was important. The Bible survived — and grew — because it 'was very early understood to be proleptic in nature'. Cf the title of the book by Aageson (1993); other contributions by Hartman (1986; 1993). For a strong contrasting view, insisting on the particularity of Paul's writings and insisting he 'did not write for us', cf Furnish (1985:15).

Frei (1986:74) thinks that a renewed study of midrash and peshat in Jewish writings, might 'begin to repair a series of contacts established and broken time and again in the history of the church' with Judaism.

¹³¹ Earlier rabbinic practices were harshly criticised in medieval Jewish exegesis. Cf Sarna (1987:17-19), referring especially to the 'Spanish school' but not exclusively to them. Interestingly, the rabbi's halakhic or legal rulings were not contested, but 'the exegesis by which such were derived from the text'.

CHAPTER THREE

*Paul before Luther: Paul, hermeneutics and the scriptures of Israel.**

PART TWO: Pauline exegesis and hermeneutics¹

1. Pauline exegesis and hermeneutics

The New Testament writers interpreted Old Testament texts within the culture of events contemporary to them. This is not to say that their exegesis was arbitrary or out of context, but it does mean that their reading of Old Testament Scripture was applied, fulfilled, and understood within the framework of their contemporary developments (Pettegrew 1991:283; cf also Thiselton 1980:18).

1.1. Introduction

On face value — that is, for readers of the Bible today — the way in which the Old Testament is interpreted or used by New Testament authors seems to border on misinterpretation or abuse. The New Testament authors do not always quote the literal texts, and sometimes they quote a text out its context, seemingly without any regard for its original sense. Some authors quote the same text but with different interpretations of it.² Sometimes it is not even clear whether it is a quote or allusion at all.³

In his contribution on the use of the ‘Old Testament’ by the various New Testament authors, Snodgrass (1991:414) contrasts Matthew’s interpretive approach to that of Paul. Snodgrass refers to Paul’s appropriation of these texts as ‘circumstantial’ and argues that Paul used those texts merely as substantiation, that is, as proof texts.

* A section of this chapter was presented as a paper entitled *Paul, hermeneutics, and the scriptures of Israel*, at the 1996 annual NTSSA meeting in Pretoria. An edited version of that paper was subsequently published (Punt 1996:377-426).

¹ Admittedly, both *exegesis* and *hermeneutics* are modern terms and were not used by Paul; their functionality for the discussion determine their use here. Cf Stockhausen (1990:196). One delimitation at this stage: this study takes into account only the way in which the scriptures of Israel, or ‘Old Testament’ was appropriated by Paul. Other traditions used by Paul would include the ‘sayings of Jesus’ and the ‘early Christian traditions’, as well as other contemporary philosophical and/or religious traditions. Cf Von Lips (1991:30). For specific studies on other traditions such as the ‘sayings of Jesus’, cf e.g. Wenham (1986:271-279) on 2 Cor 1:17-18.

² Cf Evans (1989:164) on Gen 15:6 in Gal 3:6 and Jam 2:23; Ps 2:7 in Ac 13:33 and Mk 1:11.

³ In order to ‘properly assess’ the function of Scripture in the New Testament, Evans (1989:170-171) proposes seven aspects worth investigation: identification of the particular text; identification of its text-type; investigation of the text’s wider tradition; the understanding of the text by Jewish and Christian groups; comparing the New Testament’s interpretation of the text with other interpretations, contemporary and older; the function of the cited text in comparison with other citations in the same New Testament book; and, the contribution of the citation to the book’s overall argument.

The view that Paul uses Scripture in a consistent⁴ proof text-way (or *Stichwort* approach) led to the conclusion that Paul reads or rather misreads Scripture for his particular purposes and outside or even counter to his traditions. Scott (1993:192 n18) summarises the position of Hays (1989) as follows:

Paul engages in a private reading of Scripture, a spontaneous and intuitive reflection on Old Testament texts which is largely unaffected by intervening Jewish tradition because his reading occurs in the isolated 'cave of resonant signification',

and 'Paul is basically an idiosyncratic reader of the Old Testament with some Christian presuppositions and a few hermeneutical constraints'.⁵

In contrast to such a position, it will be argued that in order to investigate Paul's hermeneutics and especially to appreciate what it wants to accomplish, one has to take Paul's specific socio-cultural setting and his reliance on received traditions into account.⁶ In the words of Stockhausen (1990:202),

[Paul, JP] found a meaning visible only to the eyes of faith, but he used culturally conditioned tools and presuppositions to bring it to light.

Paul, as the other New Testament authors, did not write his letters 'from scratch' — within a socio-cultural vacuum — but made use of traditions known to him, which in Paul's case amounted to a whole variety of traditions.

The most important range of traditions Paul used in his writings was Jewish. However, as indicated earlier, even within Jewish thought of the first century there existed a variety of 'Judaisms' or different streams or movements within Judaism.⁷ Other traditions deriving from the broader first-century Hellenistic setting also feature in Paul's writings implying that it also had an influence on Pauline thought.⁸ Naturally, some Christian traditions, that is, traditions deriving from the early communities of followers of Jesus would also at this stage have been in circulation and Paul's letters give evidence of contact with these traditions.⁹

⁴ What seems like a Pauline proof text-approach in some instances, can, however, also be understood as instances of *gezerah shavah* (lit, an equivalent regulation): one text may be explained by another, if similar words or phrases occur in both — as in Gal 3 and 4 (Scott 1993:191-220). Cf Plag (1994:135-141) on Paul's use of the *gezerah shavah*.

⁵ Scott (1993:192 n18) admits that Hays does 'acknowledge some influence of tradition in Paul's use of Scripture'. Against the notion of private reading, cf Snodgrass (1991:415-420) on corporate personality; however, against 'corporate personality' as an outdated approach, cf Malina (1996:54).

⁶ Against the idea of Pauline hermeneutical idiosyncrasy appearing 'peculiar and scandalous' in his day, Evans (1993a:51) stresses, 'this kind of deconstruction or "scandalous inversion", was frequently practiced by Israel's classical prophets'.

⁷ Cf Tuckett (1991:308-309), who refers to many strands of Jewish tradition used by Paul, and stresses that some — typical Jewish (whatever this would mean) — assumptions are presupposed by Paul, e.g. monotheism.

⁸ Malherbe (1987) has emphasised some of the Hellenistic traditions; he argues that Paul extensively used the 'philosophic tradition of pastoral care'. Cf also Tuckett's (1991:309) reference to Paul's use of other 'non-Jewish traditions', e.g. Paul quoting Menander in 1 Cor 15:33. But, on the other hand, Barclay (1995:108) argues that as far as acculturation to the Hellenistic world was concerned, 'Paul makes little attempt to translate the traditional biblical language of covenant and election into the idiom of Graeco-Roman culture'.

⁹ Tuckett (1991:309) quotes Hengel who referred to this era, i.e. the first twenty years after the death of Christ, as an 'explosive era' in development of Christian thought.

Taking into account *that* Paul used traditions accounts for an important first step in interpreting Paul's letters. Another crucial aspect regarding traditions is that they 'need interpretation'. As Tuckett (1991:309) argues, different contexts lead to the different usage and appreciation of the same traditions. The issue under investigation in this part of the study is then not so much a 'statistical' account for Pauline citations and allusions to the scriptures of Israel,¹⁰ but accounting for Paul's usage thereof. Indeed, 'more important than the question of whether Paul misreads Scripture is how the sacred texts function for him' (Roetzel 1982:17).

1.2. Pauline citations and allusions¹¹

[T]he Bible used by the New Testament writers is an interpreted Bible. Between the Old and the New Testaments lies the intermediary of Jewish tradition (Brown 1984:31).

The discussion in this section will be limited to some aspects of Paul's citations which may be considered as essential 'raw data' for the following discussion of Paul's interpretive activity. The emphasis will not be on the data of the citations as such, nor on a discussion of the statistical implications flowing from it (detailed studies in this regard do exist and will be referred to in the course of what follows), but the discussion will center on the apparent reasons for Paul's methodology, as well as his strategy with the citations.¹²

The citations of and especially the allusions to the scriptures of Israel found in Paul are often not easy for modern readers of the Bible to recognise. It will be argued below that the textual traditions used by Paul cannot even be determined with certainty. When accounting for Paul's use of Scripture, especially moving into the uncertain terrain of Paul's reception, one will have to recognise the difficulty of the *identification* of scriptural allusions. In the words of Von Lips (1991:48): 'Dieses Problem stellt sich für uns heute möglicherweise umgekehrt dar

¹⁰ Many of these studies already exist: Ellis (1957); Hanson (1974); Kaiser (1985); Koch (1986); and many others!

¹¹ Although not of deciding concern for this study, Porter (1997:79-96) rightly insists that clearer definition of 'citation' or 'quotation', 'allusion' or 'echo' is lacking but necessary for the proper study of the use of the 'OT' in the NT. In contrast to numerous criteria such as set e g by Koch (7) and Stanley (3), Porter argues that the identification of a direct quotation or citation depends on 'formal correspondence with actual words found in antecedent texts' (:95). An allusion (or echo) on the other hand, refers to 'the nonformal invocation by an author of a text ... that the author could reasonably have been expected to know'. In short, Porter insists that the use of Scripture in the NT should be approached from the perspective of the author, or 'the language of the author', *not* from that of the (reconstructed) 'audience'.

However, whether the definitions of citations and allusions are exhausted with these descriptions, the view of text transmission in a rather uncomplicated way, and especially the seeming disregard for the 'constructed-ness' of the author, too, are matters which will have to be addressed elsewhere! Stanley, criticised by Porter, proposes in the same volume (1997a:44-58) to view 'OT' quotations or citations used by NT authors as rhetorical acts, which would require at least some concern for 'audience'.

¹² In conjunction with the previous section, it will emerge that the modern interpreter of Paul is influenced by his or her interpretive stance which will lead to different appropriations and evaluations of Pauline interpretive activities.

als für die damaligen Leser der Paulusbriefe'. First-century listeners to Paul would have been familiar with the Jesus tradition, even in Gentile congregations where at least a broader Pauline tradition would have been present, as well as the 'Old Testament'. Part of the first-century audience(s) of Paul would also have been familiar with the Jesus tradition as well as with the scriptures of Israel — even in Gentile congregations where at least a broader Pauline tradition was present.

1.2.1. Data

In a number of studies, some fairly recent, great efforts were made to give a statistical account of Paul's citations.¹³ Many categories have been used to analyse the citations and the broader picture in terms of its introductory formulas (e.g. Stanley (1992); according to the textual corusses followed;¹⁴ and so forth.

The problem with all such categories is that they tend to be too rigid to accommodate the many variables of Paul's citation practice,¹⁵ as well as the unstable nature of the texts from which the citations are seemingly taken. Paul's use of citations, as will be seen later, did not preclude the changing or adapting of the basic text. Furthermore, the textual traditions underlying the majority of Pauline citations were not yet fixed by the first century and existed in many variegated forms.

1.2.2. Textual traditions

Paul made predominantly use of the Septuagint (hereafter LXX) tradition(s) when quoting from or alluding to passages of Israel's scriptures. Although his training was foremost in the Jewish tradition,¹⁶ the pervasiveness of first-century Hellenism¹⁷ probably ensured that Paul

¹³ Ellis (1957); Hanson (1975); Koch (1986); Silva (1993:631, whose statistics are based on those of Michel, Ellis and Koch); and various others.

¹⁴ Cf Silva (1993:631), who employs the following categories: 'Paul = LXX = MT; Paul = MT not = LXX; Paul = LXX not = MT; Paul not = LXX not = MT; Debated'. Silva includes the citations of all thirteen letters traditionally attributed to Paul.

¹⁵ Cf Silva (1993:632) who complains that some citations could be analysed according to more than one of his categories.

¹⁶ Some scholars argue that although born and bred in the Greco-Roman setting of Tarsus, Paul escaped this as a major influence in his life. Paul's early years were spent in the Jewish community in Tarsus, and it is in doubt whether and if, to what extent, he participated in the Greco-Roman educationary process. Cf Silva (1993:638).

¹⁷ The reason for the composition of the LXX. Cf Deist (1978:155). The origin of the Greek translation of the 'OT' is generally identified as the large Jewish community of Alexandria in Egypt. Cf Müller (1993:199).

used and read the LXX, and not the Massoretic text (hereafter MT).¹⁸

The Hebrew text of Scripture became 'a critical norm' only since the time of Origen. In the earliest forms of Christianity, 'it made no difference to read the Greek Septuagint rather than the Torah written in Hebrew, at least as far as the *divine* nature of scripture was concerned' (Kannengieser 1991:30). If the number of citations ascribed to the LXX is anything to go by, the LXX was also the natural choice in terms of availability and accessibility. As put by Müller (1993:194-207), '[t]he Septuagint [was] the Bible of the New Testament church',¹⁹ but it was shared with Judaism²⁰ (Müller 1989b:55).

Roth (1997:59-79) argues that in the formative period of Judaism and Christianity in the first century, the 'Law and Prophets' functioned as the 'canon'. The scriptures of Israel served as 'primary matrix' of early (Jewish-) Christian literary activity. Patte (1975:171) points to the 'anthological' use²¹ of Scripture in apocalyptic texts,²² in this era, providing the 'language' for the composition of new texts, which Roth expands to cover the use of the 'Pharisaic canon' in the Gospels as well as in Paul (1997:61). As will be argued in more detail below (cf 1.5.2), Paul also made use of the 'Pharisaic canon', although he did not exclude the Writings either, as attested by citations from the book of Psalms.

¹⁸ As indeed did most of the early Church, in non-Jewish communities as well as Jewish communities (Lemche 1993:190). Brown (1984:30), Von Lips (1991:33) and many others argue for the LXX as the 'most obvious source' of New Testament writers.

Silva (1993:632,638) argues that Paul's 'dependence on the current Greek translation of his day is clearly established', although Paul would have been 'familiar' with the Hebrew version of Scripture as well. Silva argues further that the latter sometimes determined 'how he [Paul, JP] used the OT'.

Regarding the question as to which tradition, LXX or MT, is the more reliable and trustworthy rendering of the tradition, it will not be argued here but simply accepted that the LXX was based on a *Vorlage* older than the MT known today. Cf Klein (1974:69); Grabbe (1990:340); Evans (1992:70-75) who calls the LXX 'an important pre-MT witness'; Silva (1993:632) who also refers to findings at Qumran in this regard. Müller (1989b:66 n27) argues against the notion of a 'pre-Massoretic Massoretic' text which is supported by Robert and Würthheim.

¹⁹ Müller (1989b: 68-71; 1993:204-207) bemoans the inheritance of the humanist-guided Reformation with its 'archaeological' emphasis on the original, which led to the LXX becoming an unequal partner to the 'Biblica Hebraica', the disjunction between the two 'testaments', and overlooking the 'flow of traditions which fed the Old Testament canon and characterised it'. He pleads for a revamped role for the LXX, at least on equal footing with the 'Biblica Hebraica' which is in any case not the original text — for Müller it concerns ultimately 'the unity of the Christian canon'!

²⁰ 'Only when the Church ... equalized some of its own writings with the sacred books of Judaism did the unique Christian Bible, the two-part canon, emerge' (Müller 1989b:54). The Jews dissociated themselves from the Greek translation, when the Church at the middle of the second century chose against the Hebrew worded text in favour of the Greek (Müller 1989a:112ff; 1989b:57). Müller (1989b:65) contends that Sundberg 'proved' that the 'Septuagint tradition gained a foothold in Palestine'. This is further supported by Hanhart and Orlinsky.

²¹ A second use was the 'structural', which is Patte's description of the apocalypticists application of scriptural passages to structure the new compositions (Patte 1975:171-172). Roth emphasises the 'structural use' of Scripture by the evangelists to format their compositions.

²² Not excluding the influence of cultural elements whose origins were to be found outside of the Jewish experience; such elements were, however, ironically the reason for the 'canonising' of a 'former culture' (Patte 1975:207).

Many and diverse copies or editions existed of both the LXX²³ and the MT.²⁴ Disagreements in these textual traditions can be found on two levels: the differences between various editions of the same tradition; and, differences in the LXX's translation of the MT.

(1) Certain New Testament MSS containing the Pauline letters have different versions of the same Old Testament quotation. This is called a 'complicating issue' of 'textual variation' in the Pauline letters themselves by Silva (1993:633). These discrepancies are often explained by referring to variant textual traditions.²⁵

(2) Different categories can be established according to the way in which the LXX and MT agree with or differ from one another in the instances when Paul quotes from it. Silva (1993:631) provides such a listing, referring to instances where the LXX's translation of the texts used by Paul seems to follow the MT fairly closely (a 'literal translation'), and others where the LXX differs from the MT version of the same passage.²⁶ In the case of the latter, Paul sometimes seems to follow the LXX version, at other times the MT version.²⁷ Silva demonstrates that only in a handful of cases Paul follows the MT against the reading of the LXX.

²³ Cf Silva (1993:632): 'What we (naively) call the Septuagint, or LXX, is really a collection of various translations done at different times by different people who had differing skills and different approaches'. This naturally makes the identification of 'the LXX of the first century' virtually impossible. One should also take into account the long process of textual transmission of 'the LXX' which by Paul's time probably already existed for three centuries. Cf Evans (1992:73-75), who mentions the 'diversity of the first-century Greek OT text' which is 'documented' in some of the Qumran writings, and is evidenced in the surviving Old Latin translation fragments; also Klein (1974:10-26) and Müller (1989b:67 n28), (1993:197).

The transmission process was also affected by 'major revisions and even competing Greek translations': competing recensions of the LXX by Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, produced in the second and third centuries CE, as well as other later versions. Cf Klein (1974:5-6); Deist (1978:159-164, 170-173); Tov (1989:229-231); Evans (1992:73-75); and Silva (1993:632). For a brief summary of different source theories: Tov (1989:224-225).

²⁴ The MT version known to us today was probably 'standardised' into its current form only 'some centuries' after Paul. The Massoretic tradition can be dated in the late first or early second century (Deist 1978:50; Evans 1992:71; Müller 1993:194-195,198).

Müller (1989b:56-57) argues for a earlier fixing of the 'extent' of the canon, not the 'text', i.e. that at the time of the New Testament the Bible of the Jews consisted 'of the very same books which form the *Biblia Hebraica* today'.

Deist (1978:51) posits two reasons for the urge to produce a 'standardised text': Jewish nationalism and the Jewish-Christian controversy. Cf Lemche (1993:190) and Müller (1993:204) on the latter issue.

Klein (1974:69-70) argues that the 'MT had a separate history, perhaps in an isolated locale like Babylon'. Deist (1978:52) posits two locations for the origin of the MT: Tiberias in Palestine, as well as Babylon in the East.

²⁵ Cf Klein (1974:viii,13ff) for arguments on the existence of 'local' variants of the Hebrew texts, as seen in the Qumran findings. Cf Müller (1993:198) who refers to 'examples of the so-called 'proto-Massoretic' text'.

²⁶ Silva (1993:631) accounts for the discrepancies by suggesting three factors which could have influenced the LXX translators: 'free translation'; 'mistranslation'; or the use of 'different MSS' than what would later constitute the MT. Later (:632) he also adds: 'the translator's method of work, their exegesis, their style, etc'. 'No hard evidence' exists that differences between the LXX and MT can be ascribed to 'the lack of uniformity among Hebrew MSS' (Silva 1993:632).

²⁷ However, it can also be argued that Paul followed a different version of the LXX, one which is not available to us today.

The seemingly endless arguments and counter-arguments on the issue of which textual tradition Paul used are, however, not only tiresome, but apparently also do not advance our understanding of Paul's use of Scripture. For example, some passages quoted by Paul do not agree with either the extant MT or LXX versions. The issue needs to be pursued nonetheless, because Paul's appropriation of Scripture is not only significant in terms of the context in which he uses it in his letters, but also in as far as he possibly adapts the quote. But if one argues that Paul adapts the quote, surely one should be able to show that the so-called 'adapted' version did not exist in any contemporary but different version of the LXX — or should the burden of evidence be put on the other side? If an isolated MSS or later translation is available that contains the version of the quote that Paul used, it will normally be the easier explanation to argue that Paul used that particular version even if it is less well attested or contained in one of the lesser manuscripts.²⁸

The process of deciding whether a citation in Paul follows either the LXX or the MT, is appropriately described by Silva (1993:632) to be influenced by a 'strong subjective element'.²⁹ The ideological assumptions of the interpreter of Paul's letters will guide the reading of Paul's interpretation in a particular direction.³⁰

Another complicating, yet unavoidable, factor in accounting for Pauline citations and allusions is that the LXX translators not only provided a Greek equivalent for the Hebrew, but simultaneously 'passed on the tradition' with all that it entailed.³¹ The translators of the LXX did their translation in the early Jewish context, in which such transmission process 'was exceedingly creative'. Müller (1993:202-204) argues that this does not mean that the LXX should be seen as an altogether new interpretation of the Jewish traditions, a 'rewritten Bible', but that

²⁸ Cf Silva (1993:633). Silva also refers to some examples which might reflect a mixed text, like Is 10:22-23 in Rom 9:27-28: Paul uses *κύριος* as in Codex B, instead of *θεός* as in Codex A which he usually follows.

²⁹ He shows upon two examples: Deut 19:5 in 2 Cor 13:1 (on the inclusion of *πάν* by Paul) and Hab 2:4 in Rom 1:17 and Gal 3:11 (did Paul follow the MT against the LXX?).

³⁰ It will be argued, as already hinted above, that the currently most pervasive interpretive as well as theological framework in terms of which Paul is positioned, is the Lutheran one.

³¹ Müller (1993:206) argues that this tradition-transmission as well as interpretive process present in the LXX continues 'in the way it [LXX, JP] is absorbed in the New Testament'. In earlier studies, Müller (1989a; 1989b:59-65) reviews the position of the *Letter of Aristeas*, 'the novel written by a Hellenistic Jew living at Alexandria', around 100 BCE. The intent of this Letter is to invest the LXX with 'divine authority', also defending the 'translatory' nature of and, sometimes, inaccuracies within the LXX. Stemberger (1991:37) posits that the LXX was influenced by 'implicit exegesis', as opposed to 'explicit' exegesis.

this translation is to be understood as part of the dynamic process of handing on traditions, in course of which these traditions were given actuality.³²

Müller (1993:203) also argues that the guiding principle in the LXX translation was not so much to remain true to the original intent and purposes of the earliest forms of the tradition, but to contextualise the translation in its new setting or 'to implement the actual meaning of the text'. Repeating the commonplace that to translate is to interpret, Müller adds that in the case of the LXX this necessity was made a virtue: the Jewish Bible is hellenised.³³

1.2.3. Technique

Certainly the apostle feels no compulsion in every instance to reproduce texts exactly (Silva 1993:632).

Silva (1993:632) like so many other students of Paul, bemoans the fact that Paul's use of the scriptures of Israel follows no 'simple pattern'. However, whereas Paul's 'manual of style' differed significantly from ours, it was quite similar to those of his contemporaries as has been shown quite convincingly by Stanley (1992).

Paul varied in his attention to the detail of the citation he used, which he at times seems to gloss over, or even omit. Silva (1993:632) argues that Paul's attention to detail is determined by his evaluation of the appropriateness or necessity of it. At times Paul's attention to detail is not only apparent, but his argument is based on it!³⁴

In the end, however, the gist of the discussion does not concern Paul's hermeneutic techniques, because as with other authors, these techniques are 'not as significant as the hermeneutic axioms which underlie those techniques' (Sanders, quoted in Rogers 1997:30).

³² As argued earlier (1989b:65), Müller holds that the LXX translators felt not 'disharmony' between the two interests of: 'accentuation of the integrity of the text and the translation of it', and 'the recognition that the process ... of translation will involve an interpretation'. The paraphrastic nature of the LXX leads Evans (1989:166) to conclude that it is also 'in a sense ... a targum'. This loose remark tends to obscure rather than clarify!

³³ Müller refers to the translation of יהוה with κύριος, and the difference in the order of the books in the LXX. Roetzel (1982:7-9) contends that the 'Hellenistic spirit influenced the translation of the Hebrew scriptures into Greek' and argues that the Greek of the LXX introduced significant Hellenistic understandings of Jewish ideas as expressed in Hebrew, in at least three areas: the view of God (the disappearance of the personal name, etc); the understanding of the law (the Greek νόμος 'as code which governs community life or an individual's conduct' is at odds with תורה and its notions of instruction or guidance); and, the perception of faith (the Hebrew distinction between reliability or faithfulness and faith or belief is not found in the LXX).

³⁴ Silva (1993:632) refers to σπέρμα in Gal 3:16 as an example of Paul's attention to detail. This remark is unclear, as Paul's argument hinges to a large extent on the reading of σπέρμα: it is not simply another piece of detail!

1.3. Allusions

To account for the allusions to the Old Testament in Paul's letters is no small task. The pervasiveness of Scriptural allusions in Paul has caused some to remark on Paul's practice as one of 'living in the Bible'.³⁵ Scripture epistemologically and existentially defined life itself for Paul. Paul's use of Scripture went beyond explicit reference and commentary (Young & Ford 1987:63,80-84).

The distinction between allusion and quotation is arbitrary.³⁶ Paul's letters do not seem to disclose any concern about the way in which Scripture is cited as opposed to 'alluded to', and certainly no agreed criterion exists on which to base this distinction which lays so heavily on the shoulders and in the minds of modern scholars. Allusions can refer to a wide range of references:

loose quotations, reference to events, intentional appeals to specific passages, verbal similarities used (perhaps unconsciously) to express a different idea, broad undercurrents of themes, even totally unintentional correspondences (Silva 1993:634).

This leads Silva to despair of actually listing all allusions in the Pauline corpus.³⁷

1.4. NPP and Pauline interpretation

The mainstream Western Christian tradition running from Augustine through Luther (in its Protestant branch) to Bultmann has rendered a reading of Paul fixated on individual salvation, but is has been able to do so only by strenuously suppressing the voice of Scripture in Paul's letters, stifling Paul's own claim to expound a gospel that underscores God's faithfulness to Israel (Hays 1989:159, emphasis added).

1.4.1. The traditional approach to Paul and Pauline interpretation³⁸

Heick (1965:348) summarises Luther's view of the Bible as the 'Word of God as a living Word'.³⁹ Luther's dictum for what truly constitutes Scripture, *was Christum treibet*, also

³⁵ Indeed, Silva (1993:634) argues that 'hardly a paragraph in the Pauline corpus fails to reflect the influence of the OT on the apostle's language and thought'.

³⁶ Allusions would entail 'verbal correspondence' to scriptural texts, whereas citations or quotations would additionally have some introductory formula.

³⁷ Silva (1993:634-635) demonstrates what he calls Paul's 'great dependence' on the OT by referring to OT allusions in Philippians, renowned (reputed?) for having no OT quotations. Cf also Hays (1989:21-24) for allusions to Job in Philippians.

³⁸ Although the reference to the TAP concerns the theological — and broader even — 'straitjacket' into which Pauline readings are forced, another is aptly described by Müller (1993:205). He refers to a historical legacy — accompanied by epistemological concerns? — according to which the Hebrew Bible is seen as the 'original' text of the scriptures of Israel, with the LXX relegated to the status of a translation, and not a particularly good one at that: a 'secondary witness'. This view of the LXX originated in the Humanist informed Reformation with its insistence on identifying the 'original'. The implications of this privileging of the MT or disadvantaging of the LXX are still to be worked out!

³⁹ A brief discussion on Luther's view of the Bible and his hermeneutical practice can be found above, chapter 1.

heavily influenced his reading of both Testaments. As argued earlier, Luther's approach to Scripture was much more dependent on his *solus Christus*-principle than his advocacy of *sola scriptura*. Luther's christocentric reading was the *norma normans* for his understanding of Scripture. Hagen (1994:57-67) pleads for the elaboration of the *et cetera* added to Luther's quotations of Scripture in the *Weimarer Ausgabe* (WA). These abbreviated *et cetera* sections often contain the 'most important parts of Luther's arguments'. To do justice to Luther, all the references contained in *et cetera* should be carefully examined. Hagen further asserts that this elliptical use of Scripture by Luther was in accordance to Pauline practice.⁴⁰

The elliptical use of Scripture presupposes that Paul had memorized large portions of Scripture. Referring to the description of medieval commentators as 'walking concordances', Hagen ascribes this practice to Luther as well as to Paul (1994:61,65).

Hagen is also of the opinion that Luther's way of citing Scripture in his 'commentaries' was according to medieval practice. This usage should not be confused with the modern practice of writing commentaries, which was established in the nineteenth century. According to Hagen Luther presupposed the unity, clarity, and completeness of Scripture, which made any 'interpretation' in the modern sense of the word unnecessary.

However, Hagen fails to acknowledge the biased nature of Luther's use of quotations.

1.4.2. NPP contribution: Pauline interpretation

It has been extensively argued above that Paul should be freed from the restraints imposed by a Lutheran inspired reading of his letters. It was proposed that Paul be read within the framework of the 'new perspective' on Paul.

It will be argued here that Paul's reading of Scripture was based on the principle of hermeneutical freedom. However, unless the tethers are removed from Paul, this principle of freedom will not emerge. If it is not accepted that Paul saw himself as part of the history of God's involvedness with his people, his interpretation of Scripture will similarly be clouded. Paul is convinced that Scripture has continuing value and normativity, which rests on his experience of the relation between his former and later beliefs. This relationship emphasised the continuity of God's actions with his people. It is one of the important contributions of the NPP to establish continuity between the Pharisaic Saul and the Christian Paul.

⁴⁰ Cf Hagen (1994:63, cf 63, 65): 'Paul's style of citing the Old Testament elliptically was imitated by Luther; Paul himself was imitating the Hebraic use of ellipsis'.

The corollary of this position is that through a careful reading of Paul's letters, it can be shown that Paul did not subscribe to the idea that Christianity superseded and effectively obliterated Judaism.⁴¹ An unbiased approach of Paul's use of the scriptures of Israel reveals that Paul understood his own ideas to be in continuity with those of Scripture.

Hays (1989:2,5) proposes 'defamiliarization' as the starting point for examining Paul's reading of Scripture. For Hays this implies the recognition of an even stronger than christocentric attitude towards the Old Testament, one that can be called a 'christomonistic' reading often practiced by Christians when reading the Old Testament.⁴² But, in addition, readers should be defamiliarised from the Lutheran framework dominating the understanding of both Paul and Old Testament. However, Hays mentions this issue only in passing (1989:159).

In the end, it seems as if the key towards a more adequate interpretation of Paul for today lies in the ability and the extent to which the reader can appreciate the use of Scripture in these writings. The NPP can provide a helpful guide for such a rereading of Paul, but finally Paul's own rereading of Scripture seems to suggest the more appropriate focus.

1.5. Mode of Pauline interpretation

Paul's decidedly pastoral aims with his letters did not, of course, mean that he merely 'rewrote' Scripture or that he simply accepted that Scripture had the same meaning for his readers as it had for the initial readers of Scripture. However, Paul read Scripture in a very particular way and used scriptural quotations and allusions with a specific aim in mind.

1.5.1. Hermeneutic and contextual theologian⁴³

⁴¹ Cf Hays (1989:53): 'The Reformation theme of justification by faith has so obsessed generations of readers ... that they have set Law and gospel in simplistic antithesis, *ignoring the internal signs of coherence in Rom. 3:1-26 ...*', and 'Christian caricatures of the Old Testament have made it difficult for belated generations of Gentile readers to grasp Paul's passion for asserting the continuity of his gospel with the message of the Law and the Prophets. *By following the echoes of Psalm 143* [in Romans 3, JP], however, we can discover the scriptural idea of God's saving justice at the foundation of Paul's argument in Romans'.

⁴² Centuries of Christians have grown accustomed to having 'the Bible', and in Hays mind they do not realise how strange Paul's interpretation of the 'Old Testament' without the 'New Testament' would have been for Paul's contemporaries (Cf Hays 1989:1-5; also quoting Meeks).

⁴³ The distinction proposed by Vorster (1988:43) between 'hermeneutic' and 'contextual' theology illuminates the many differences between contemporary contextual theologies and 'traditional' theologies, relating to point of departure, *modus operandi*, etc — but only to a certain extent. Eventually all theologies contain certain 'hermeneutical' elements as well as 'contextual' elements, and the characterising of 'hermeneutical' theology as one searching 'for principles of truth and norms to guide Christians' and 'contextual' theology as 'not in the first instance interested in understanding, but in action' remains caricatures. 'Contextual' theology has a wider field of application than just the understanding of a text and its context. It includes the understanding of human existence in particular structures according to very specific heuristic models, e.g. materialist analysis. 'Hermeneutical' theology generally emphasise 'action', be it then spiritualised or evangelising. More pointedly, in Paul's case, the hermeneutical and contextual elements function in a complementary and reciprocal way. The above distinction then becomes obscure and counter-productive on terminological level.

Scripture was his [Paul's, JP] native air, the text-book of his education, the language of his own theology (Dunn 1993:121).

Paul is primarily ... an interpreter who both in his exegesis and in his appropriation of Christian tradition adapts and reformulates previous interpretation in a distinctive and innovative manner (Beker 1991:15).

The description of Paul as a theologian is controversial.⁴⁴ For the immediate purpose, it is more important that Paul's theological activity be described from the perspective of how he used Scripture.

Paul's theological activity has been described by various scholars as 'full of life and creativity' and Paul as an 'energetic and creative thinker' (Banks 1994:1,6).⁴⁵ Paul was not intent on the construction of a 'theology' in the modern sense, that is, on developing a complete and doctrinal system. None of his letters — not even Romans — reflect such a comprehensive attempt. As Paul developed his theological views in response to various contingent situations and needs, the search for a systematic structure of development of thought in Paul's views is not appropriate.⁴⁶ The lack of a systematic approach, however, hardly occasions the need to argue for incoherency in Paul's thought.⁴⁷

The scriptures of Israel were frequently used by Paul to anchor his argument, but then in a very specific way. Tobin (1993:299) thinks that for his arguments directed at the Roman church, 'Paul tried to ground his controversial conclusions by appeals to Jewish Scriptures and to traditionally Jewish viewpoints'. Tobin is at great pains to show that Paul did not use Scripture in an opportunistic way. From Romans 1 and 2, it is clear that Paul have gone to great

⁴⁴ The debate on whether Paul should or should not be portrayed as a theologian is beyond the scope of this contribution — my position, however, will become clear in this section as well as in chapter 5 (cf Hays 1989:246). In this regard, cf e.g. Beker (1991), Furnish (1990; 1994), Keck (1993), Mauser (1989).

⁴⁵ The discussion on Paul's theological activity is characterised by terms which may not be all that clarifying — especially since we are not dealing with a 20th century 'paid-theologian': coherent, but not systematic (Beker); not coherent or systematic (Räsänen, on Paul's views on the Torah); both coherent and systematic (espec Ridderbos 1975), and various other positions. The whole of Neyrey's 1990-study laments the fact that Pauline thought is too often analysed according to modern categories, foreign to Paul's context!

⁴⁶ However, the restriction of Paul's creativity to 'a greater clarification of truths already basic to all Christian thought' (Guthrie 1981:39-40) seems to reduce it to superficial innovations; other problems with Guthrie's position would include his apparent acceptance of some 'early orthodoxy', his failure to consider Paul's use of tradition, opposition experienced by Paul for his views, etc.

⁴⁷ Certain apparent contradictory statements — e.g. Paul's views on the Torah when Galatians (6:15) is compared with Corinthians (1 Cor 7:19); on this instance, cf Barr (1995:113) who simply states that '[e]vidently Paul adapted his teaching to his circumstances' — can probably be best, or most adequately explained from the 'contextual nature' of Paul's theologising.

(rhetorical) lengths to demonstrate that his controversial conclusions⁴⁸ are firmly *rooted in* Scripture.⁴⁹

For Paul, Scripture is sacred or divine because Scripture is *ἡ γραφή*, 'proceeding from God himself' and thus has an 'ultimate authority'. As such Scripture is for Paul his starting point as well as criterion. In polemical contexts, Paul used Scripture 'as final court of appeal' (Silva 1993:638-639).⁵⁰

The notion that 'God ultimately was the source of the Book' was an idea the early church shared with the non-Christian Jews, even after the church separated itself as an 'autonomous body of believers' from the synagogue.

The radical shift in hermeneutics inaugurated by Paul the apostle created the novelty of a christological focus in a pre-established recognition of *divine* scripture (Kannengieser 1991:29).

Scripture thus allowed for 'privileged access to God', which guaranteed its continuing relevance for the community.

Returning to Paul's status as theologian, Lapidé (1984:34-35) emphasises from a Jewish perspective that Paul, like Jesus, was no theologian in the Western sense of the word because they were Jews. Paul's letters are 'concrete biblical answers to the pressing questions of daily life'.

All of his responses, even the most well-reasoned, seem curiously fragmentary and remain, in truly Jewish manner, open-ended both vertically as well as horizontally.

Lapidé further depicts Paul as an 'undogmatic *diogmatist*', intent on pursuing the truth for his followers.

Also from a Jewish perspective, Falk (1985) ascribes the conflict between Jesus and Paul⁵¹ on the one hand and the Jews on the other hand, to opposing Pharisaic schools: Bet Hil-

⁴⁸ In Romans 1 and 2 these are that the impartial God will reward (and punish) both Jew and Gentile *equally* according to their deeds.

⁴⁹ This inference does not imply that Paul had no ulterior motives with his scriptural appeals — e g to calm suspicions and skepticism about him in Rome — but that his appeals never used Scripture as valueless tools.

⁵⁰ Cf Stockhausen (1990:196-197). Silva disagrees with Von Harnack (e g 1995: espec 45) who held that Paul merely invoked Scripture as a 'tool' in polemic with his Judaizing opponents. Silva argues that Paul even invoked Scripture on the issues where he differed from tradition, e g Gal 3 on the law which — Paul wants to argue — does not give life as the OT states. Stanley, arguing from Clark and Gerrig's 'demonstration theory' also insists that NT authors' use of direct quotations amounts to more than the reinforcement of a point or settling of a dispute (1997a:56). For another interpretation of Gal 3, cf Scott (1993:187-221).

⁵¹ According to Rabbi Jacob Ermden's theory, Falk (1985:47) contends that Jesus and Paul founded Christianity on the Jewish Noachide laws. He explains the possible later dating of these laws, by arguing that they were published only after Christianity became an established religion, lest Christian recognition of these laws being the basis of their religion cause problems. For the same reason, Falk argues, neither Jesus nor Paul mentioned the Noachide laws. The Noachide laws are not mentioned in the third-century Mishnah, as this only happens in the later Tosefta (Falk 1985:47).

lél versus Bet Shammai. Falk (1985:134) argues that Jesus and Paul 'had ties' with the school of Rabbi Hillel, who held the view that 'righteous Gentiles merit salvation'. Although Paul acknowledged his Pharisaic ties (cf Phil 3:5), biblical scholarship⁵² has given little attention to the influence of this affiliation on his way of reading and using Scripture. This is probably due to the negative perception of Pharisees stimulated by their presentation in the Gospels⁵³ and to the difficulty of distinguishing the different Jewish groups in general and dating extant Jewish textual material in particular.

However, regardless of specific Pharisaic schools, another important facet is the two opposing notions of interpretation concerning the literalism of the Sadducees and the 'creativity' of the Pharisees. Loewe (1990:347) refers to the differences between Sadducees and Pharisees as far their appropriation of Scripture was concerned. The Sadducees while

entertaining a static view of pentateuchal inspiration and regarding 'the traditions of the elders' as being without divine sanction, purported to fulfill biblical law *ad litteram*.

The Pharisees again

conscious that a dynamic approach alone could preserve a divinely revealed law, laid the foundations out of which rabbinic Judaism would develop (Loewe 1990:347).

The Pharisees therefore read tradition in what can be referred to as a dynamic and creative way, not for frivolous reasons, but to contextualise the Torah for new situations. In Paul's letters a number of elements normally associated with Pharisaic belief can be detected,⁵⁴ of which the hermeneutical pointers are especially important for this study, namely a 'liberal estimate of what was Scriptural ... and ... method of Scriptural exegesis'. As Roetzel (1982:14) shows, the important matter was the fact that the Pharisees read Scripture while being 'open to innovation'.

According to Loewe (1990:347-348), however, Paul deviated from traditional Jewish interpretation of Scripture. '[T]he exegetical address to the OT found in the NT in no way parallels that of the rabbis'. This can be seen in at least two important instances. Paul interprets Scripture in a typological way, assuming the fulfillment ('full realization') of the scriptural prophecies in Christ. This leads, in Loewe's view, to a neglect of the paramount impor-

⁵² Exceptions exist, of course: e.g. Jeremias (1969:88-94) on Paul as follower of Hillel. Apart from showing upon Paul's use of the middoth (:92-94), Jeremias insisted also that Paul's idea of authorial inspiration derived from the 'Palestinian' — where the personality and individuality of the author is allowed to emerge — and not Hellenistic context, where the author is a mere 'tool' (*Griffel*) of the Spirit as in Philo (:89).

⁵³ I am not going to argue the (mis-)representation of the Pharisees in the Gospels here. Cf e.g. Roetzel (1982:14) on the positive (especially in comparison to the Essenes) views of Pharisees in Josephus. For a broader discussion on Jesus, Paul and the Pharisees, cf Dunn (1990:61-88).

⁵⁴ E.g. the resurrection of the just at the end of time; predestination and human responsibility in a dialectical relationship; and, doing a normal day's work. Naturally Paul also differed with the Pharisees in many ways, e.g. free association with Gentiles; a relaxed attitude to purity laws; the role of the Messiah; and, his particular interpretation of Torah (Roetzel 1982:14).

tance of the 'exegesis of the Hebrew Bible'. In similar fashion, Paul's identification of the Messiah with a 'subsumed and transcended Torah', is said to 'downgrade the essential channel of revelation in Judaism: מצוה (commandment). The notion of commandment is replaced by μίμησις (imitation) and παραινέσις (exhortation) (Loewe 1990:347).

Although differences between Paul and his 'non-Christian' counterparts can be expected, there is no indication that Paul did not take the text of Scripture seriously. Indeed, as will be argued below, Paul's letters are permeated with scriptural citations and allusions, and at times Pauline interpretive practice closely resembles 'rabbinic' practice.

Although Paul was not a theologian in the traditional sense his letters do contain important theological concerns.⁵⁵ One important aspect has already been discussed: Paul's *christological* approach.⁵⁶ The question is in what way christological concerns can be said to have directed Paul's reading of Scripture (cf Stockhausen 1990:201 and Noll 1993:780).

Paul's christological approach to Scripture complemented his relationship with the *Jesus tradition* (cf Müller 1989:40-50). Grant (1989:17) argues that Paul was familiar with the collections of sayings of the Jesus tradition, and 'through these of what Jesus had taught in regard to the Old Testament'. Concepts similar to that of Jesus occur in Paul's letters: fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies (1 Cor 11:25); rejection of legalism (Gal 3:10); summary of the Torah (Gal 5:14; Rom 13:9); and, Scripture as 'a book of hope'. However, Grant (1989:18) argues that Paul's reading of Scripture exhibits many more Messianic allusions, not found before, e.g. Christ as second Adam.

Keeping these presuppositions in mind, and considering Paul's hermeneutics explains the sometimes novel and often strange ways in which the New Testament authors interact with the Old Testament (Snodgrass 1991:415-420). Although Paul's christological concerns are evident, it remains a question whether these concerns account fully for Paul's use of Scripture. As Hays contends (1989:120-121), Paul's christological convictions lie at hand but it is his ecclesiocentric hermeneutic that puts his hermeneutics into perspective (cf Swartley 1994:12

⁵⁵ Snodgrass (1991:415-420) argues that the 'key to understanding' the New Testament authors' use of Scripture can be discovered in the presuppositions they held, which are in his view located in four areas: corporate personality, christology, typology and eschatology.

⁵⁶ Murray (1990:345) discusses in what way christological interpretation of Scripture in the early church took place, naming five modes: 'passages are interpreted as explicitly speaking of Christ (in terms of the royal, prophetic or priestly models); the reference of the prophetic texts is transferred from their original subjects to Christ; theophanies are interpreted as earlier appearances of Christ; persons, events, or institutions may be regarded ... as types of Christ, the cross, the church, etc; passages could be helped to deliver ... by means of interpreted glosses'. However, as Roetzel (1982:19) argues in relationship to Paul's use of traditions, 'Paul's relationship with Christ was not exhaustive'.

n16). Nevertheless, 'christology is the foundation on which his ecclesiocentric counterreadings are constructed'. These concerns are complementary, rather than contradictory:

Paul's understanding of Jesus Christ as the one true heir of the promise to Abraham is the essential presupposition for his hermeneutical strategies, though these strategies are not in themselves christocentric⁵⁷ (Hays 1989:121).

Another important and very controversial line in Paul's thinking, is his emphasis on eschatological fulfillment. This concept is understood by Noll (1993:780) to mean the 'consistent appropriation of Scripture, not as past history but as present fulfillment'. During the history of Pauline interpretation, it has often been suggested that Pauline theology should be placed within an — Jewish — apocalyptic matrix.⁵⁸

Some scholars prefer to call Paul's approach to the future 'eschatological' rather than 'apocalyptic':

'Eschatology' is a more appropriate term of description for Pauline thought than 'apocalyptic'. Apocalyptic is primarily concerned with future events, whereas eschatology encompasses the entire present-future polarity. Within Pauline 'eschatology', then, are both realized and futuristic coordinates (Howell 1993:320 n62).

It is important to understand the concept in first-century terms rather than today's doctrinal formulations, which often focus exclusively on certain 'end-of-time' events with apocalyptic overtones, or emphasise a combined 'realised-futurist' understanding as the implication of the Christ events. For Paul, Scripture actually prefigures life in the present time, and within the community.

However,

the Scriptures do more than rehearse Israel's sacred story, they also, Paul and the Qumraners believe, anticipate a future, ... the Scriptures of old embraces the writer's future,

which lead to a 'dynamic relationship' between the 'storied past and the time of Paul and his contemporaries'.⁵⁹ Past and future are in a dialectical relationship, where the one informs the

⁵⁷ Hays, one can almost say, adds insult to injury, by claiming that Paul's emphasis on the death of Christ as hermeneutical key to Scripture — a christocentric hermeneutic — is not borne out by his interpretive practice (Hays 1989:84). Cf, however, Aageson (1993:130-131) on the close relation of Christology to Paul's ecclesiocentric hermeneutics.

⁵⁸ Recently, this has most forcefully been proposed by JC Beker in numerous studies, but arguably built upon his 1992 *Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel: the Coming Triumph of God*. Cf also recently Plevnik (1997).

⁵⁹ Hays (1989:172), although conceding that Qumran texts are 'the closest analogy to Paul's temporal sensibilities' within first-century Judaism, and perhaps due to his insistence on the idiosyncratic reading by Paul of Scripture, argues for 'three fundamental differences' between Pauline hermeneutics and Qumran *pescharim*: 'whereas Paul uses Scripture to justify the inclusion of uncircumcised Gentiles in the people of God and to relativize the Law's ritual requirements, Qumran exegesis operates in service of a rigorously exclusive sectarian Judaism that regards mainstream Jewish practices as ritualistically lax; the scrolls contain no parallel to Paul's conviction that the decisive eschatological event had already occurred; and Qumran biblical commentary is characteristically apologetic, seeking to vindicate the community's practices against outsiders, whereas Paul uses Scripture to nurture and warn the community'.

other (Roetzel 1982:17). Hays (1989:172-173) similarly submits that in both Pauline and Qumran appropriation of Scripture, there is no trace of a 'consciousness of disjunction from Israel's past or a reluctance to speak of God's activity in the present'.⁶⁰ Indeed, Paul speaks as one belonging to the long line of biblical prophets (so Merklein 1992; Sandnes 1991; Segal 1990).

Paul understands himself and his communities of readers as being in the midst of the climactic time, *καιρός*. Paul sees the community addressed by Scripture as the eschatological community.

[T]he eschatological perspective becomes the hermeneutical warrant for major shifts and revisions in the reading of Scripture (Hays 1989:169).

Typology (or correspondence) in history finds its origin in Paul's view of eschatology.⁶¹ Silva (1993:640) regards typology to be the 'guiding principle' in Paul's use of Scripture: 'God was Lord of history'.⁶² For Silva, different adjectives describe this concern: typological (focussing on historical correspondences between Old and New Testament people and events), eschatological (focussing on the incarnation of Christ as inauguration of the end of time), and canonical (the meaning of texts is determined by the combination of Old and New Testaments). In short, when a typological reading is detected in Paul, it assumes that Paul 'saw a fundamental and organic connection between OT history and the eschatological realities of Christ's coming'.⁶³

It is doubtful whether typology in Pauline hermeneutics should be understood along 'doctrinal-theological' lines, as the typological consciousness detected in Paul functioned more as 'a framework of literary-historical sensibility', wherein 'linkage is conceived in figurative terms rather than in terms of literal immanent causality'.

⁶⁰ In terms of Scripture's ability to address the present time, Hays (1989:170-171, with reference to Patte 1975) argues that Paul's view of time in relation to the Bible, differed fundamentally from that of other ancient Jewish interpreters ('apocalyptic visionaries, Alexandrian allegorists, and rabbinic midrashists'). The latter did not allow that Scripture could address contemporary time, only the past and future as indicated (in their view) in Scripture. Thus, '[f]or the rabbis, God's word is a deposit stored up in time past and entrusted to the community's ongoing interpretation; for Paul, God's word is alive and active in the present time, embodied in the community's Spirit-empowered life and proclamation'. Unlike Paul, other Jewish interpreters of Scripture had to rely on the likes of halakhic interpretation of Scripture to make Scripture present in their lives. However, cf Tomson (1990) for a 'halakhic' reading of Paul's letters.

⁶¹ For typology in Paul's writings, cf Ellis (1957: espec 126-135). Criticism can be leveled at the rigid contrast often maintained between allegory and typology, insistence on a necessary 'historical correspondence' in typology can also be questioned — for some critical remarks in this regard, cf Young (1993:103-120; 1994:29-48).

⁶² But for Silva (1993:640) the christological nature of Paul's hermeneutics is central: 'the hermeneutics of the apostle to the Gentiles was ultimately rooted in Christ'.

⁶³ The final remark of Silva (1993:640) comes perilously close to Christomonism, when he argues that 'the whole OT was a witness to Christ'.

Typology forges imaginative correlations of events within a narrative sequence; not all narratives, however, are historical (Hays 1989:161).

In this regard, Hays (1989:95-104) emphasises the Israel/church typology, leading to his conclusion that Paul's hermeneutic can be described as 'ecclesiocentric'.

1.5.2. Tradition and revelation

During the first century the scriptures of Israel were not regarded as a closed and completed matter. On the contrary, as Decock (1993:280) argues for first-century Judaism — of which first-century Christianity was a constituent part — 'Scripture was not seen as the complete revelation of God's Word by itself'. Hughes (1979:164 n68) writes that

the creative interaction of an author with the scriptural text, resulting in a new form of revelation in which both the original scripture writer and his later interpreter are equally agents under God, is found in all the exegetical traditions at the time of our writer [*sc.* of Hebrews].⁶⁴

Paul and his communities stand in a similar relationship to Scripture. The latter was not just a chronicle of revelation in the past; the words of Scripture sound from the page in the present moment and address the community of believers with authority (Hays 1989:165).⁶⁵

Paul's reading was done in and for and on behalf of the church, with the word of Scripture becoming the word for the community.⁶⁶ His emphasis on the formation of the community is understandable in light of his view that '[t]he enfleshment of the word in the church makes the meaning of Scripture knowable'. A dialectical relationship exists between the living word of Scripture and the creation of communities. Where Scripture speaks, communities are created, 'whose lives are hermeneutical testimonies'.

With regard to the 'inspiredness' of the Jewish exegete, a similar tendency can be found in Paul. When he justifies his arguments with an appeal to either the Spirit or his apostolic authority,⁶⁷ both these appeals imply a claim to a privileged receiving of God's revelation. Paul could interpret the tradition with a 'vom Geist dynamisiertes Traditionsbewußtsein', ena-

⁶⁴ This view is well attested, in Philo (both writer and interpreter 'are seized with divine possession', Sowers), in the Qumran community (the interpreter is to invoke a 'new and deeper meaning', Bruce; Betz; Brownlee; Elliger), in rabbinic Judaism (whilst accepting Moore's opinion that Judaism 'conceived of itself as revealed religion', many groups saw the 'interpretive process itself as conducted under the direction of the Holy Spirit' and equal to the inspiration of the biblical writer), in orthodox Judaism (the *middoth* were ascribed an 'equally authoritative' tradition as that of Scripture, Doeve) and in Christian prophetic modes (Boring) (Hughes 1979:164, n68; cf Decock 1993:280).

⁶⁵ Cf Patte (1983:228ff) for the notion of Paul's ever expanding Scripture.

⁶⁶ The 'master hermeneutical trope' is Rom 10:5-10, in which is read 'the word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart'. This trope was not invented by Paul but derives from Deut 5 and 26 (Hays 1989:167).

⁶⁷ Cf Müller (1989:36). Paul's apostolic authority derives from the Damascus road encounter with Jesus, 'the most formative item in Paul's experience (1 Cor 9:1; 15:8)' (Roetzel 1982:19). Cf the recent collection of essays edited by RN Longenecker which teases out the implications of that encounter for many aspects of Pauline thought and practice (1997).

bling him to present Jewish and Jesus-traditions anew in his day. Tradition and Spirit functioned together in a 'Wirkungseinheit' and as 'Weg in die Freiheit des Herrn' (Müller 1989:58).

Stockhausen (1990:197-198) contends that Paul's interpretive approach to Scripture can at times be described as 'modeling'. In these instances his relationship to Scripture is 'immediate'. 'Paul's relationship to the Old Testament story is very close and entirely implicit'. Furthermore, Paul saw himself and his contemporaries as 'the primary recipients of the Word of God in Scripture'. Stockhausen (1990:201) writes that Paul's claim to having immediate access to divine revelation can be found in what she terms the 'deepest level of meaning, the one hidden in Scriptures for all time' and which she finds expressed in Paul's letter to the Corinthians in the following way

God has shone in our hearts, that we in turn might make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ (2 Cor 4:6; cf Hays 1989:154).

Paul indeed saw himself in line with the biblical prophets claiming to speak God's word for the present time.⁶⁸ In his writings, it is clear that Paul as prophet experienced no 'temporal estrangement from Bible time' (Hays 1989:171).

Paul could hold onto the immediate relevance of Scripture for his day, without negating the appropriateness of what is recounted for the original context. Without denying the first context of Scripture, Scripture addresses the new context without mediation. This naturally means that in Paul's view Scripture contained 'various levels of meaning', and further, that all of these are 'present at the same time through the power and benevolence of its divine author' (Stockhausen 1990:200).

Paul found himself in continuity with tradition, which he appropriated through 'a hermeneutic that reads Scripture primarily as a *narrative* of divine election and promise' (Hays 1989:157). For his reading of Scripture it meant that Law and gospel are viewed within a narrative unity,⁶⁹ with God's righteousness as the central theme to it and which did not lead to the superseding or nullifying of Torah, but rather its transformation into a witness of the Gospel. The important factor in all this is that Paul operated within a 'narrative framework of inter-

⁶⁸ This already indicates his detachment from the modern preoccupation with 'original' or 'historical' meaning. Cf the discussion below.

⁶⁹ Some recent studies on the role of narratives in Paul's thought and writings include e.g. Swartley (1994) and Witherington (1994).

pretation' which led to a relationship of continuity between Paul and Scripture⁷⁰ (Hays 1989:157).

In this regard, it is important to have a closer look at Paul's use of tradition. This use did not entail a mere repetition. Barr (1995:61) describes Paul's use of the traditions with which he was familiar, as 'imaginative, innovative, centrally concerned about ethics, blazing new trails and saying more than he intended to do'.⁷¹

Paul quotes from a wide spectrum of Scripture, predominantly Isaiah, Psalms, Genesis and Deuteronomy.⁷²

The predominant use of the *Isaiah* tradition can be explained as offering

the clearest expression in the Old Testament of a universalistic, eschatological vision in which the restoration of Israel in Zion is accompanied by an ingathering of Gentiles to worship the Lord; that is why this book is both statistically and substantively the most important scriptural source for Paul (Hays 1989:162).

When it is formulated in this way, it is clear in what way Paul could have associated him with this scriptural tradition and also how he could find value in quoting it in his letters (cf Dinter 1983:48-52).

The second most used set of traditions is the *Psalms*. These would be very familiar to Paul and his audiences through liturgical use in the synagogue and perhaps even the first gatherings of followers of Jesus. However, the particular Psalms referred to are those that exemplify the 'Isaianic theme of Gentile inclusion' or emphasise the 'righteous judgement of God' and Paul's use of these Psalmic passages was therefore intentional.⁷³

Paul's use of the *Genesis* quotations centers on the Abraham narrative, and is important to the extent that Paul used it as 'the paradigmatic prefiguration of God's calling of Jews and Gentiles alike to covenant relation through faith' (Hays 1989:162).

⁷⁰ The kind of discontinuity that Marks (1984) finds and describes so radically, is attributed by Hays (1989:158) to a number of factors: the tradition formed by Marcion, Harnack; the Bloomian tradition with its 'anxiety of influence' which dominates in Marks' evaluation of Pauline interpretation; and the existentialism of Bultmann prescribing the value of interpretation to reside in the 'act itself' and not so much in its conclusion or content. Hays notes also that (1) Paul's eschatological and apocalyptic concerns mitigate against lack of interest in 'the history of the nation and the world', (2) Paul's so-called concern with 'asserting his autonomy over Israel's traditions is a bizarre anachronism'.

⁷¹ Barr discusses the first Thessalonians letter, specifically Paul's use of the traditions about eschatology and even more specific Paul's contextualisation of *ἡμερὰ τοῦ κυρίου* (the day of the Lord) within that letter.

⁷² Cf Koch (1986:33) for a complete list of OT books from which Paul quotes, including the number of times he uses each of those. For Isaiah it is 28, Psalms 20, and Genesis and Deuteronomy 15 each. No other books are quoted more than five times.

⁷³ Hays (1989:163) refers to Paul's use of Ps 18:49 and 117:1 in Rom 15:9-11. In Rom 3:4 Paul cites Ps 51:4 and in Rom 11:9-10, Ps 69:22-23.

The most difficult to account for in Paul's use, is the *Deuteronomic* tradition. Hays (1989:163-164) admits that Paul's use of Deuteronomy is actually 'most surprising' as Deuteronomy⁷⁴ can be seen as the opposite of what Paul advocates: a 'performance-based religion'. But apart from Gal 3:10 and 13, Paul's use of Deuteronomy reflects nothing of the sort. Rather 'the words of Deuteronomy becomes the voice of The Righteousness from Faith' (Hays 1989:163).

Scott (1993:645-665) agrees with Hays regarding the importance of Deuteronomy for the thought of Paul,⁷⁵ but criticises him for not showing 'how Paul's use of Deuteronomy is mediated by OT/Jewish tradition'. Scott argues that to understand Paul's use of Deuteronomy it is not enough to simply assume a mutual recognition of the graciousness of God, or the shared 'theology of the word' (Via, quoted by Hays 1989:163).

Paul appropriates a pervasive OT/Jewish tradition which we may refer to as the Deuteronomic View of Israel's History ... Paul draws on this tradition as a salvation-historical framework to make several important statements about both his own people Israel and their past, present and future relationship to God vis-à-vis the law⁷⁶ (Scott 1993:665).

Braulik claims that it is possible to read Deuteronomy from the perspective of divine grace as the 'first word of God'.

The demanding will of God — that is, the law in the theological sense — is at the same time a pledge of grace — that is, gospel in its theological sense (Braulik 1984:5-6).

He insists that Deuteronomy deals primarily with Israel's justification and its righteousness, including Israel's pardon and its conversion.

1.5.3. Free and creative

It is in the hammering out of a basis for his theology of freedom that Paul is most creative ... It is primarily his reflection on the Hebrew Scriptures, illuminated by his view of Jesus and the

⁷⁴ Deuteronomy is a book of 'conditional blessing and curses'. Hays also refers to Von Rad who attempted to show upon continuity between Deuteronomy and the NT, but Hays (1989:163) argues that the problem in terms of Pauline theology remains one where Deuteronomy exemplifies 'a covenant that is rigorously conditional in character and that pronounces terrifying curses upon Israel for disobedience'.

⁷⁵ Indeed, important for the rest of Scripture and eventually for the whole Christian Bible: 'Deuteronomy was the germ out of which the whole canon eventually developed' (Frye 1982:201). Jeffrey (1996:35 n13) grants the validity of Frye's remark, but with some caution.

⁷⁶ This 'Deuteronomic View of Israel's History' (taken over from Steck's *das deuteronomistische Geschichtsbild*) was present in 'virtually all extant literature' of the 'Palestinian Judaism of about 200 BC to AD 100' and 'covered the whole history of Israel from initial election to ultimate salvation'. It comprised the following six elements: Israel has been persistently disobedient and rebellious; God constantly sent messengers to call his people to repentance; Israel refused to listen to the messenger and remained obdurate; the wrath of God was let loose on Israel resulting in exile; even during exile, Israel had the opportunity for repentance; God will restore the repentant people to the land and a new covenantal relationship with himself (Scott 1993b:645-650). Cf Scott (1993a:187-221; 1994:73-99, espec 89-93).

*implications of Jesus' death, that encouraged insights not imagined before*⁷⁷ (Richardson 1979:165).

Some of the texts are used by Paul in a 'straightforward way'.⁷⁸ The self-evident fashion in which Paul does this can be seen for example where it functions for illustrative purposes, for example Ex 32:6 in 1 Cor 10:7.

However, guided by the Jewish tradition-transmission context which encouraged a freedom and creativeness,⁷⁹ it is not surprising that in many other instances Paul seems to use the scriptural citations in a way such that it apparently goes against the grain of its original form or function. As Stockhausen (1990:200) puts it: 'At first glance it might seem that Paul is distorting the Scriptures'.

The Christ event remains the key to his creativeness. Noll (1993:780) speaks of Paul's 'exegetical virtuosity' when describing Paul's appropriation of Christ's death and resurrection.

Paul's hermeneutics can best be described as free and creative. As Hays (1989:153-155) argues, *ἐλευθερία* (freedom) is not only a central element for Paul's 'vision for the life of the people of God', but also shapes his hermeneutical practice. Believers in Christ are liberated from 'bondage to a circumscribed reading of the old covenant' and enters into freedom which also entails reading Scripture in a new way. Scripture takes on a metaphorical nature, containing the Gospel as 'hidden meaning' and allowing believers, through the illumination of the Spirit to find this meaning in 'Scripture's own indirect and allusive mode of revelation'. This freedom with which Paul reads Scripture, 'is grounded in a secure sense of the continuity of God's grace'.

Tuckett (1991:307-326) similarly contends that Paul interpreted the tradition 'freely'. But this also implies a critical attitude towards the received tradition — to the point of rejecting

⁷⁷ According to Richardson (1979:165) a second factor in Paul's creative theologising is 'his own spiritual experience' through which he became aware that 'God could do new things through his Spirit'. However, the Jesus traditions which Paul inherited could lead to 'tentative conclusions' on freedom, but provided no 'basis' for it.

⁷⁸ However, some scholars bemoan the fact that a tendency existed among NT scholars to use the OT quotations 'in ways different from their original intention' (Snodgrass 1991:414). This practice of NT authors was defended in a number of different ways: they were nearer to Christ (temporally if not spatially), they were living within the first century, etc. Snodgrass further notes that the traditional (Catholic) justification of this practice was to view the 'new reading' as *sensus plenior* or the *fuller meaning* — which was viewed by some as 'a solution' and by others as 'obfuscation'.

⁷⁹ To a certain extent: the reference is to the Jewish context of Paul's day, and also to the pharisaic influence which allowed for some measure of freedom in interpreting the Torah. During the earlier 'Old Testament' times, such interpretive freedom would have been 'unthinkable', but some interpretive freedom is exercised in the interpretation of the Torah as contained in the Writings. Cf Brueggemann (1982:9).

it — especially in two critical instances: the Jewish Law (in Romans, Corinthians and Galatians) and the Christian tradition (in 1 Cor 7). He argues that Paul interpreted these traditions according to the contingency of the situations, in order to emphasise freedom.⁸⁰ Freedom in Paul's understanding of the concept, rises above freedom from the law (a 'peripheral' issue, quoting Jones 1987). Tuckett (1991:319-320) concludes that '[w]hat Paul is vehemently opposed to is one set of traditions being forced upon other people'. However, Paul's interpretation was always done according to his principle of ἀγάπη or love, which implied maintaining and respecting 'the other person's freedom and integrity'.

Not all interpreters of Paul evaluate his freedom in interpretation in the same way. Marks (1984:71) is intent on showing that Paul's motives can be described as

motives governing a kind of creative interpretation whose source is the impulse toward imaginative autonomy, or, to use the language of the New Testament, toward *exousia* (power or freedom).

The possibility of viewing Paul's free interpretation as primarily self-serving elocution (as recently argued by Castelli 1991), seems provable in cases where he engages in polemic with his opponents or when he has to fend for his apostolic authority. As Paul consistently operates with a freedom of interpretation, this is not a convincing general description of Pauline hermeneutic.

The proposal that Paul's exegesis should be viewed as 'free, creative and loving' interpretation, requires further illumination. Pauline interpretive freedom has to be investigated on at least three further levels: (1) Process (how does this interpretation proceed?), (2) Motivation (why is it done?) and (3) Goal (what does it aim to achieve?). Important elements related to the first question are discussed in the following section, while the other two issues will be addressed in the next chapter.

1.5.3.1. Historical context, original meaning and purpose

The notion that Scripture has only one meaning is a fantastic idea and is certainly not advocated by the biblical writers themselves (Steinmetz 1980:32).

Although he [Paul, JP] may frequently quote from scripture, the interpretation he gives it often lies beyond the obvious meaning of the text (Hooker 1981:296).

Eschatological meaning subsumes original sense (Hays 1989:156).

⁸⁰ Tuckett (1991:318) sees in *freedom* 'an element of consistency and coherence to Paul's apparently divergent attitudes to different groups within his communities in relation to different aspects of his tradition'. For some scholars 'freedom' is also the key-word for explaining Pauline ethics — e.g. Lategan (1990); Richardson (1979); Tuckett (1991:322,324).

Paul was not 'careless' in quoting from Scripture. On the contrary, Paul's theology was constructed from and grafted onto a 'serious study of the OT that was both meticulous and comprehensive' (Silva 1993:641-642).

However, Paul reveals no intention of reading the scriptures of Israel in order to determine their original *intent and meaning*.⁸¹ Moreover, one never gains the impression that Paul attempts to establish an 'original or historical' meaning which might explain the use and applicability of the text for the first-century Pauline communities — a practice which was extended to the textual traditions used.⁸² This argument should not be construed to mean that Paul was uninterested in the meaning, or even the true or real meaning of a text, but rather that the truthfulness or reality of the meaning was not defined in terms of historical factuality or literalness. 'True reading ... depends on attentiveness to the prompting of the Spirit' (Hays 1989:156).⁸³

As Scripture in Judaism was read for what it might be interpreted to mean for the new context in which it was to function, Paul was equally interested in 'contemporising' or 'contextualising' the scriptures of Israel. In the words of Decock (1993:280), '[i]t was not a matter of going back to the origins, but of letting Scripture become part of the present life of the readers', constituting an 'updating' of Scripture because Paul, and the other New Testament authors 'believed that the scriptures contained God's will for his people here and now' (Brown 1984:30). Neither was Paul intent on gaining the 'original intention of the author', as this simply was not his primary hermeneutical concern (Hays 1989:156).

Paul was not bent on establishing the literal meaning of the texts he dealt with, and although he never accounts for his hermeneutical approach in a special section of his letters, certain explicit statements in Paul's letters could be understood as clues to his hermeneutics. For example, Paul contrasts the 'letter' and 'spirit' as two ways of reading, the former resulting in having 'a veil over the mind' as was the case with the Jews who failed to appreciate

⁸¹ This should not be seen as exceptional. Even in the case of the LXX translation, Müller argues that it 'did not owe its existence to "archaeological" ideals, but to the need to implement the actual meaning of the text'. The debate between whether the text should be read (historico-)critically or 'traditionally' is continuing. Cf the comments by Mejia (1987:22ff) on this debate at the turn of the century and many years later (1943 'Divino Afflante Spiritu') in the Roman Catholic Church. The debate is by no means restricted to either a specific Christian church or the Christian tradition!

⁸² As Müller (1989b:67) contends, the New Testament authors 'do not seem over-scrupulous when it came to loyalty to the text, as if their prime concern was to quote from and build on one specific "basic text"'.

⁸³ Although certainly not an exact parallel to this, for some resemblance see my earlier discussion on the interpreter as 'inspired' in the Jewish context.

Jesus as referent of Scripture. Young (1990:401) concludes on Paul's exposition: '[t]he law was never meant to be taken "literally", rather it had a spiritual meaning'.⁸⁴

Evans (1989:164) calls the practice of using a text in another situation and finding new meaning for it, *resignification*. Evans argues against Kaiser's argument that resignification was avoided by New Testament authors when they were 'engaged in serious exegesis'.

Although Paul never rested content in merely or only quoting Scripture within and according to its original *context*, his letters do give evidence of 'careful and thoughtful reflection on OT texts in their contexts' (Silva 1993:639). Silva refers to the use of Is 54:1 in Gal 4:27, which at first seems 'to violate' the text, but when read in conjunction with Gen 11:30 (Sarah's barrenness) and Is 52 — and even Is 53, framed by the other two chapters — provides some evidence of a wider context presupposed by Paul.⁸⁵ Hays (1989:155) contends in a slightly different way that (overt) citations can also become a way of 'troping' exactly by presupposing familiarity with a given 'original (historical) context'.⁸⁶

In similar way, Stockhausen (1990:198) refers to 2 Cor 3 and 4 where Paul interprets the second law-giving episode involving Moses on Mount Sinai as narrated in Ex 34 (especially 34:27-35) to demonstrate that Paul is not imprisoned in a historical reading of texts. By making use of the Jeremiah and Ezekiel prophecies, Paul goes beyond Exodus, '[f]or Paul the historical knowledge that the Book of Exodus gave him did not exhaust its meaning'.

Williams (1988:709-720) also attempts to explain Paul's interpretation of Scripture when he investigates the meaning of promise in Galatians. In his explanation of Paul's use of texts from Genesis, Williams (1988:716) states that 'Paul reads beyond the explicit words of scripture to the implicit meaning that for him they contain'.

⁸⁴ Young (1990:401) claims further that Paul dismissed the halakhic interpretation of the law as 'literal and unacceptable' because 'Christ was the 'end' of the Law'. The irony was that the Jews used all but literal methods in the halakhic interpretation of the Law. Hooker (1981:296) argues that it was especially in dealing with the Law, that Paul most clearly demonstrate his 'apparent ability to do what he will with scripture'. Cf the discussion by Tomson (1990) of Paul's letters from the perspective of Halakhah; Westerholm's (1984) contention, contrary to the above, that 2 Cor 3 concerns Pauline ethics, not hermeneutics.

⁸⁵ Whether one should refer to this as an indication that Paul was concerned about 'historical meaning' (Silva 1993:639) is doubtful. Silva is hard-pressed on this issue and actually admits that 'historical meaning sometimes recede into the background in the interests of contemporary needs'.

⁸⁶ Hays wants to argue that this troping can lead to 'the most significant elements of intertextual correspondence between old context and new be implicit rather than voiced'.

Paul's letters display instances of allegory.⁸⁷ Without repeating the arguments above, it has to be stressed that the freedom with which Paul interprets the text, without being bound to the 'original meaning' of the text, can also be explained by Paul's own understanding of being in possession of the Spirit and being called as an apostle with authority.⁸⁸ Paul's notion of the eschatological community gives him a hermeneutical warrant to reread Scripture within the community, leading to the dissolving of 'temporal boundaries' and creating 'time warps' where what has been said by Moses is spoken anew to the community, and the Gospel has been 'pre-preached to Abraham' by Scripture. Pauline typology⁸⁹ can be seen in the 'convergence of time upon' Paul's communities.

Thus: as far as it can be gleaned from his letters, Paul was not intent on discerning and/or communicating the original meaning of texts; in any case, Paul 'has different plans for the texts of Scripture'. On the other hand, one can hardly contend that the 'original meaning' was for Paul a non-entity.

The 'original' meaning of the scriptural text, then, by no means dictates Paul's interpretation, but it hovers in the background to provide a *cantus firmus* against which a *cantus figuratus* can be sung (Hays 1989:178).

1.5.3.2. Adapting the texts?

Respect, then, for the relative textual fluidity of the Hebrew Scriptures in the early Christian era can help us to understand the extent to which ... the church inherited an 'interpreted Bible' (Dinter 1983:51).

In many instances Paul's citations from the Old Testament create the impression that Paul adapted the received text itself for his particular purposes. This impression is not only due to the specific wording of the quotation when compared with textual traditions,⁹⁰ but also

⁸⁷ However, as this practice is not pervasive in Paul according to Hays, he concludes that it is not 'one of Paul's primary hermeneutical strategies'. He alludes to how Paul could have allegorised circumcision and *kashrut*, circumventing a lot of trouble these caused him (Hays 1989:166). Recently Boyarin (1994:96) has contended that Paul's theology is characterised by allegorical hermeneutics (and dualism — being the basis of the allegorisation). Paul is accused of spiritualising the (Jewish) particular, historical into 'an ahistorical, abstract, and universal human "truth", the very essence of allegory'. Boyarin refers to the following as instances of Pauline allegorisation: circumcision (Rom 2:25-29); Abrahamic lineage (Gal 4:21-31); 'Israel according to the flesh' (1 Cor 10:18); and, the Jewish interpretation of the scriptures (2 Cor 3), and of course 1 Cor 9:8-11 (Boyarin 1994:154-157). However, as Barclay (1996: espec 210) cogently argues, Paul's approach to the Jewish Law and circumcision in particular can hardly be called thoroughgoing allegorising: 'Paul was not reaching behind Jewish particulars to some abstract "essence" or disembodied "ideal"'. Paul was rather engaged in pegging out the perimeters of 'an alternative form of community which could bridge ethnic and cultural divisions by creating new patterns of common life'. Elsewhere, Boyarin argues that the Pauline letters 'contain much which is midrashic in hermeneutic structure' (1990:229 n26).

⁸⁸ Cf above; also Müller (1989:40) 'Ähnlich wie seine typologische Auslegung begründet Paulus die Anwendung der Allegorie ebenfalls aus der pneumatischen Kompetenz des Schriftauslegers und seiner Freiheit dem Text gegenüber, die sich als geistesgewirkt versteht'.

⁸⁹ As far as it exists, Pauline typology is neither in promotion of supercessionist hermeneutics, nor historical. 'Typology is a trope, an act of imaginative correlation between events in a narrative' (Hays 1993:44).

⁹⁰ E g Silva (1993:638) claiming that 'many of the OT citations are not verbally exact'.

involves the way in which Paul used the texts quoted. Silva (1993:633) argues that ‘the mere fact that they contain differences is not a clue to Paul’s hermeneutics’. He refers as an example of this to the common situation even today where an uncaredful rendering of someone’s message still expresses the same idea of the original.⁹¹

As in rabbinic tradition, Paul selected certain textual traditions which contained the themes which he reappropriated in his interpretations. Brown (1984:31-32) argues that New Testament authors ‘freely adapted’ the texts of Scripture, by both adapting the ‘Old Testament’ text to conform ‘to its “fulfillment” in the Christian narrative’, as well as adapting the Christian narrative to conform with the scriptures of Israel.

Koch (1986:346-347) maintains that Paul not only feels himself entitled to ‘change’ the text of Scripture, but does so ‘quite drastically’. The justification for Paul’s adaptations are the following:

he understands the texts as speaking to the present readers, in their eschatological context; he is not concerned about the message for the original readers in their original context (Decock 1993:275).

A very radical discontinuity is advocated by Marks (1984:71-72) who thinks that Paul — especially through typological exegesis as revision — subordinated the scriptures of Israel to ‘their “spiritual” understanding in order to achieve revisionary power realized in the process of overcoming a tyranny of predecession’.

While Hays (1989:157) admits that from a certain perspective, Paul’s hermeneutic is ‘flagrantly revisionary’,⁹² the apostle nonetheless recontextualised the texts within a hermeneutic of freedom, and still maintained continuity.

An attempt to provide a coherent and holistic explanation of the relatively free approach exhibited by Paul and other ancient authors is made by Stanley (1997b:25-26). He maintains

⁹¹ The exegetical significance of verbal differences cannot be discussed here. As one example though, cf Silva (1993:633) who argues that although Paul presumably had access to the LXX Is 40:13a which read *νοῦν* (‘mind’) *κυρίου* (a ‘clarifying interpretation’ by the LXX translator?) against the MT *רוח* (‘spirit’), he ‘could surely have changed’ it ‘if he wanted’. Silva views this choice of Paul as ‘probably intentional’ and as reflective of ‘the role played by the LXX in Paul’s theological reflection’. Silva argues that Paul ‘means’ with *νοῦν κυρίου* (‘mind of the Lord’) really ‘Spirit of Christ’ (cf 1 Cor 2:10-11 which stress the role of the Spirit in revealing God), and finally Silva assumes that such instances of the LXX’s renderings could probably be seen as ‘a source of development of Paul’s teaching’. The assumptions in this line of thinking are immense in number and nature! This naturally begs the question why Paul did not change the *νοῦς* of Is 40 to *πνεῦμα* (‘spirit’), as he changed so many LXX texts apparently to suit his argument (cf below). Silva’s explanation raises doubt whether his theology (pneumatology) is not determinative for his evaluation of Paul’s use of Is 40. Interestingly, the Afrikaans translation of 1983 also reads ‘Gees’ (capitalised) and not ‘gedagtes’ (as in verse 2a).

⁹² It is indeed the eschatological that provides the ‘hermeneutical warrant for major shifts and revisions in the reading of Scripture’ (Hays 1989:169).

that unlike the modern 'print-oriented' society⁹³ with its accompanying emphasis on literacy, no identical manuscripts were found in the ancient world.⁹⁴ The important reason for the 'free' use of texts was, according to Stanley, scribal activity. '[C]ontrolled freedom of textual variation' was

the result of a sincere attempt to understand the meaning of a particular passage within the context of the author's own culture and/or community (1997b:27).

However, Stanley insists that as much as Paul apparently deliberately adapted certain texts, his use of (some) original form of the text still amounted to an 'interpretive rendering' of the text.

It is clear, therefore, that Paul's 'freedom' in his use of Scripture did not amount to a careless or incompetent use of Scripture or 'surreptitious manipulation' of the original text(s). Paul's freedom with the texts he used, amounted to what today would be called 'contextualisation' of Scripture (cf chapter four).

1.5.3.3. Inner-biblical textual relations

Perhaps the whole question of Paul's re-visioning of Scripture can be dealt with from the perspective of the well-known Jewish practice of inner-biblical exegesis.⁹⁵ Sarna (1987:11) describes this as:

a dynamic process whereby a text, once it is recognized as being Scripture, necessarily and spontaneously generates interpretation and adaptation so that often the original text is transformed into a new and expanded text. Thus is created inner-biblical exegesis.⁹⁶

The continuing generation of interpretation was a consequence of the belief in the unity of Scripture (cf Meijia 1987:31).

⁹³ As well as the influence of 'the written language bias of linguistics and philosophy' on the notion that quotations 'strive for verbatim reproduction' (Wade and Clark, quoted in Stanley 1997a:50 n20).

⁹⁴ Although he refers to this, Stanley fails to take the presence and role of fluid, oral traditions as a serious factor in the 'fluidity' of the text.

⁹⁵ If not in intended result, in any case then in terms of procedure. Cf also Hays (1989:14). Jewish inner-biblical exegesis is a term which is more frequently used in association with the 'generation' process of the scriptures of Israel: 'the re-use, re-interpretation and re-application of earlier scriptural material within the OT itself', which happened mostly in one of four ways, through glosses; different arrangements of material; direct quotations; or, re-use of earlier themes and traditions (Mason 1990:313; Fishbane 1980, 1985). Paul used Scripture in a way quite similar to this. However, in Paul's day the traditions constituting the scriptures of Israel were virtually fixed. Still, although Paul indeed cites Scripture as an authoritative tradition, there are many examples in his letters that could be argued to constitute attempts to rewrite Scripture. Cf Marks (1984:77) who refers to the 'revisionary correspondences' present already in the prophets: Hosea interpreting Israel's sojourn in the wilderness foreshadowing God's union with Israel; Isaiah seeing the exodus from Egypt, the Noachide covenant and the foundation of Zion 'as types of Israel's ultimate redemption'. To this could be added, on a much larger scale, the Chronistic revision of Israel's history. Cf Hayward (1990:595-598) on the notion of 'rewritten Bible' as a description of post-biblical Jewish writings, e.g. Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sira), Jubilees, the Genesis Apocryphon, the Temple Scroll, and the Book of Biblical Antiquities. Even the Targums (as 'explanatory comments and edifying homiletic material are interwoven into their Aramaic translation') can be viewed as instances of the 'rewritten Bible'. Cf Loewe (1990:349).

⁹⁶ Cf also Kirchschräger (1987:39) for the dynamic character of the Bible — he argues for 'the operating of the divine spirit' as the 'dynamic behind' Scripture and locates the concept of 'inspiration' in this operating of the Spirit.

This practice was only possible because Paul's interpretive method did not restrict him to the confines of a particular pericope or passage, or even a specific biblical document. Indeed, the whole of Scripture became Paul's hunting ground for catching the elusive fox of meaning. Silva (1993:640) puts it well by stating that Paul's use of Scripture suggests that he is 'exploiting important associations present in the OT itself'.⁹⁷ The whole of Scripture constituted the context for the reading of any particular part of Scripture.

Because Paul accepts the unity of Scripture, he can actually utilise the whole of Israel's scriptures⁹⁸ (cf also Stockhausen 1990:198-201). Paul would search Scripture for texts to provide him with what he needed. He focused on specific words, which as part of a 'divine code', convey different levels of meaning at different times.

1.5.3.4. Rhetorical use

Finally, Paul's free appropriation of Scripture should also be considered from the perspective of pragmatic intentions. Paul often rearranges the word order of scriptural citations for rhetorical effect or for the sake of the argument (Koch 1986:104-110; cf Scott 1994:82 n36).

Silva (1993:640) argues that one of the reasons for what seems to be Paul's peculiar use of Scripture, is Paul's persuasive strategy. Nonetheless, the use of Scripture for rhetorical purposes does not reflect 'disrespect for the OT as source of doctrine nor lack of concern for its historical meaning'.

However, whether rhetorical purpose is a convincing explanation for Paul's creative, or merely 'selective' (Snodgrass 1991:411) use of Scripture in an eccentric and even esoteric way, remains to be seen. The tendency of New Testament authors to use scriptural quotations 'in ways different from their original intention' (Snodgrass 1991:414) is not sufficiently explained with reference to rhetoric only.

1.5.3.5. On Pauline 'methodology'⁹⁹

Attempting to describe the hermeneutic activities of Paul in terms of models or method is unsatisfactory, because '[h]e adheres neither to any single exegetical procedure, nor even to a

⁹⁷ Cf the section above on Is 54 in Gal 4.

⁹⁸ Assuming the unity of Scripture might explain the usage of many and diverse texts of Scripture to make a single point, but does this argument go a long way toward explaining the apparent 'misuse' (abuse?) of the single texts?

⁹⁹ See also above, section 1.2.3 on 'technique'.

readily specifiable inventory of procedures' (Hays 1989:160).¹⁰⁰ Paul's interpretive readings of Scripture resemble '[h]elter-skelter intuitive readings, unpredictable, ungeneralisable'. In general, these conclusions are valid, as much as Paul did not in any modern sense of the word attempt to exegete Scripture by means of a set method or system of interpretation.¹⁰¹

Hays (1989:9,160) contends that the Tradition-historical approach to Pauline interpretation has produced important insights:

Pauline quotations and allusions have been catalogued, their introductory formulas classified, their relation to various Old Testament text-traditions examined, their exegetical methods compared to the methods of other interpreters within ancient Christianity and Judaism.

Yet, the letters were not understood as hermeneutical events and

[t]he questions that scholars have traditionally asked about Paul's use of the Old Testament have either been answered in full or played out to a dead end.¹⁰²

Even the study of midrash¹⁰³ does not provide a convincing explanation. Other attempts at classifying Pauline exegesis, as the one by Longenecker (1975), are accused of 'ex post facto artificiality'.

Although Paul never explicitly propagates a particular interpretive method, it is possible to argue that traces of the contemporary methods are present in his labour. This certainly does not mean that Paul was a modern exegete, but merely that we retrospectively find evidence of Paul's use of certain traditions of interpretation. As argued above certain 'strains of thought' seem to have been dominant within Pauline interpretation: allegory, typology,¹⁰⁴ and others.

Thus, the task remains to get to grips with the real nature of Pauline interpretation, at least for two reasons: To avoid the danger of ascribing eccentric behavior to Paul (cf Hays); and, to take possible formative influences on Paul's hermeneutic into account (cf Scott).

1.5.4. *Some instances of cruces interpretum*¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Although Hays (1989:160-164) supports the idea that Paul had no 'hermeneutical method', he does accept that Paul read Scripture with certain 'constraints'.

¹⁰¹ Method as 'a systematic procedure that may be applied to a text to determine its meaning, in such a way that different readers using the same method will arrive at similar interpretations' (Hays 1989:224 n24).

¹⁰² Five sets of questions were traditionally asked, regarding textual criticism; incidence of quotation; sources and historical background; theological legitimacy; biblical inspiration and authority (Hays 1989:9-10).

¹⁰³ Traditionally midrash as explaining the exegesis of Paul has been employed in three ways: as form-critical 'map' (explaining Paul's formal structure of writing); as hermeneutical method (however, 'the interpreter holds the creative options'); or as license ('convenient cover for a multitude of exegetical sins') (Hays 1989:11-14). For the opposite view, cf Evans (1993:50) '[r]ecognizing the midrashic features of Paul's use of Scripture clarifies the apostle's technique and argument'.

¹⁰⁴ Even Hays (1989:161-162) is willing to concede to the importance of this in Pauline hermeneutics, although not as model but as 'framework of literary-historical sensibility'.

¹⁰⁵ The intention here is not to provide detailed exegetical comments on the chosen passages, but rather to ascertain to what extent and how the passages would indicate Paul's conscious concern with his 'hermeneutical' approach to scriptural traditions.

Paul's use of the scriptures of Israel is often considered to be unreflective (so Stanley 1997:27), and was seldom the focus of sustained investigation. Attempts to describe Pauline hermeneutics were generally restricted to a broader study of Paul's general use of Scripture, from which certain conclusions would be made. Such an inductive approach to Pauline hermeneutics should not be discounted for its value to offer illumination of Pauline interpretive practice. It seems, however, equally appropriate to consider the possibility that Paul wittingly operated from a certain hermeneutical stance, aspects of which might even be expressed in his letters.

A number of passages in the Pauline letters could be interpreted as though they contain some Pauline statement or even theoretical discussion of hermeneutics, for example 2 Cor 3:7-18; Rom 4:23-24, 15:4; and, 1 Cor 9:10, 10:11.¹⁰⁶ In light of these texts, it becomes necessary to scrutinise Paul's own writings for clues that can contribute to what his 'hermeneutical theory and practice' entailed.¹⁰⁷ Although it cannot be expected that such an interpretation will yield a comprehensive hermeneutical theory¹⁰⁸ or solve all problems, it can provide important insights for our purpose.

1.5.4.1. Rom 15:4 — On the continuing value of Scripture

(Rom 15:4) ὅσα γὰρ προεγράφη, εἰς τὴν ἡμετέραν διδασκαλίαν ἐγράφη, ἵνα διὰ τῆς ὑπομονῆς καὶ διὰ τῆς παρακλήσεως τῶν γραφῶν τὴν ἐλπίδα ἔχωμεν.

Scripture is rightly read as a word of address to the eschatological community of God's people. The mode of reading that they prescribe is in fact practiced by Paul in all his dealings with the scriptural texts (Hays 1989:166).

Paul's statement in Rom 15:4 can be understood as part of his rationale for using Scripture in his letters: his belief that the relevance and purpose of Scripture was not limited to its original audience, but extends also to the audience the apostle is addressing.¹⁰⁹ Stanley (1997b:18) argues that

¹⁰⁶ Other passages could also be included, but the emphasis here is on those texts where Paul seems to directly express some 'hermeneutical-methodological' concern. This is not to diminish attempts of others to relate Pauline texts to modern hermeneutical concerns; cf Jewett's (1994:98-111) attempt to relate Paul's 'mirror-metaphor' on truth (1 Cor 13:8-10,12) to modern perception theory, modern hermeneutic and scientific methods and even issues in modern higher education (in the USA).

¹⁰⁷ Naturally, the danger of imposing the reader's ideology on the text is ever looming, but not more acutely here than in other instances. Even with the increasing recognition of the reader's involvement in, and indeed contribution to, the meaning of texts, the danger of coopting a text in 'proof-text' fashion has in no way diminished.

¹⁰⁸ 'The term is an anachronism, of course, but the question is not' (Hays 1989:123).

¹⁰⁹ Similar sentiments are also expressed in Rom 4:23-24 Οὐκ ἐγράφη δὲ δι' αὐτὸν μόνον ... ἀλλὰ καὶ δι' ἡμᾶς 'But it was written not only for him but also for us'; 1 Cor 9:10 with ἡ δι' ἡμᾶς πάντως λέγει; 'or does he indeed say this for us?'

[o]f course, some passages proved more pliant than others to the rhetorical and practical interests of the nascent Christian community. In many cases the wording of the biblical text had to be altered to indicate the precise sense in which the author meant the verse to be understood and/or applied.

Stanley's reference to the 'changes' effected by Paul, has been dealt with above, but his opening statement can be applied also to the general concern of Paul to relate Scripture to the early Christian communities. Hays claims that in Rom 15:4 Paul transformed or 'generalised' this concern 'into a poignant pedagogical principle'. The conviction expressed in Rom 4:23-24, and repeated in Rom 15:4, is that Scripture should to all intents and purposes be understood to address 'the eschatological community of God's people' (1989:166), believers across temporal and spatial divides.

Paul thus envisaged a positive and continuing role for Scripture in the Christian communities.¹¹⁰ Tuckett (1991:308) sees in Rom 15:4, Paul's 'almost complete "take-over bid" for the Old Testament', claiming that Scripture is as pertinent to Gentile Christians as it was for non-Christian Jews, because it was written 'for our sake'.

In similar way, Hartman (1993:15) has expressed the view that not only was Paul's letters intended to be 'more than occasional writings', but that Paul himself had that intention. Ellis (1993:62) even argues that Paul kept copies of his letters. Wright (1991:17) is of the opinion that the biblical authors in general were aware that they 'write Scripture'.¹¹¹

On the other hand, the idea that Paul — who interpreted Scripture freely and creatively — would have seen his letters as portraying 'universal principles which would be treated as valid in all ages and in every circumstance', as Hooker (1981:308) suggests, is highly improbable. Therefore, Lapide (1984:35) rightfully bemoans the fact that Paul's contextual responses 'have been absolutized with complete disregard for their original intent, eternalized and universalized on all five continents by his disciples'.

Paul accepts with other New Testament authors that the scriptures of Israel have a lasting significance, also for the new Christian communities.

1.5.4.2. 1 Cor 15:3 — On tradition

(1 Cor 15:3) παρέδωκα γὰρ ὑμῖν ἐν πρώτοις, ὃ καὶ παρέλαβον, ὅτι Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν κατὰ τὰς γραφάς.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Contrary to this position, cf Grollenberg (1978:8) who states that if Paul had known his letters would still be read today, Paul would probably have added a final paragraph to each with the recommendation that they be destroyed after reading: 'Read this and burn it'.

¹¹¹ Cf also Decock (1993:274, quoting Koch); Hartman (1986:137-146).

¹¹² Παραδίδωμι and παραλαμβάνω are generally used as technical terms for the transmission — delivery and reception — of tradition, cf Winger (1994:66 n3); these words were used by rabbis to refer to their oral traditions (Wintle 1995:120). Paul's refers to the reception of the gospel also in Gal 1:9 and 1 Thess 2:13.

These words are often understood as a recognition by Paul that he was indeed indebted to earlier scriptural and/or 'Christian' traditions, and considered these important in his 'theology'. In the words of Brown (1984:32)

Paul declares that he himself had received the confessional affirmations which he delivered in turn to the Corinthians when he preached the Gospel to them.

This acknowledgement by Paul is backed up by the evidence that certain phrases and Greek verb forms are *hapax legomena* in the Pauline corpus, suggesting that Paul procured these words from prevailing tradition(s).¹¹³

Winger explains that the argument that Paul contradicts himself by affirming the role of tradition in 1 Cor 15:3, only to deny it in Gal 1:11-12,¹¹⁴ can be countered when attention is paid to the two different arguments he made in these two letters (1994:65-86). This apparent conflict is resolved when it is noticed that, in Gal 1 Paul recounts the effects produced by his preaching — the 'gospel' is spread by a 'calling' — while in 1 Cor 15 Paul is primarily¹¹⁵ concerned with the content of his preaching.¹¹⁶

The difference in Paul's attitude to the tradition in 1 Cor 15 and that in Gal 1 cannot be explained as the one being 'Christian' and the other 'Jewish'; affirming the former and denying the latter.¹¹⁷ Although Paul identifies tradition in Gal 1:13-14 pertinently as Jewish, *τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεων*, a similar Jewish tenor can be heard in 1 Cor 15, as well. Although Donaldson (1994:167) refers to 1 Cor 15 as a summary statement by Paul of his gospel preaching, he points out that in this text a certain 'Israel-centredness' emerges, as is evident in two 'anchor points' of which one is the emphasis on his gospel being 'in accordance with the scriptures'.

However, against Donaldson, who contends that the few references to Scripture (15:27, 32, 45, 52) were 'largely ornamental' as they gave 'no indication that the "scripture" being

¹¹³ Phrases like *τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ* 'on the third day', *οἱ δώδεκα* 'the Twelve'; verbs like *ἐγέρχεται* 'he was raised' and *ᾤφθη* 'he appeared'. Other examples of where Paul probably used traditional material, include Phil 2:6-11 as well as the use of certain titles for Jesus (Brown 1984:33). Cf also Barr (1995:59-61) on Paul's use of the 'oral tradition' in 1 Thessalonians.

¹¹⁴ Cf Chamblin (1986:1-6) and Wintle (1995:122-123) for an indication of some proposed solutions to this (apparent) contradiction.

¹¹⁵ Although not exclusively, cf 1 Cor 15:11.

¹¹⁶ With reference to Gal 1:13-14, '[t]radition is human by definition; it is delivered and received by humans, and that is why it is tradition, even though the tradition may be about God and perhaps even originate from God' (Winger 1994:74), whereas 'gospel' is for Paul an 'event'; preaching the gospel therefore cannot be equivalent to the passing on of words.

¹¹⁷ Related to this distinction, the position of Silva — the distinctive aspect of the Pauline gospel, namely circumcision not being necessary for inclusion in the 'church', was what 'could not have been received from human quarters' (1994:20-21) — raises a number of problems, about what the nature and 'content' of the Damascus-revelation was, but especially about — and in contradiction to — his earlier insistence on Paul ability to develop 'theological' positions (:6-12).

appealed to was fundamentally linked to a social entity — Israel', these references can be seen as integral to Paul's argument. But more important for the argument here, these scriptural citations provide solid evidence of the Jewish nature of Pauline tradition.

It is clear from 1 Cor 15:3 that Paul freely admitted to the role of tradition in the formulation of the good news he preached. This, and other passages can indeed be seen to indicate the 'rootedness' of the Pauline gospel in the traditions he 'received'. In the words of Chamblin (1986:14), it is necessary to note

the importance and indeed the necessity of *tradition* — both that of the Hebrew Bible and that of the first apostles — in the development of the content of the Pauline gospel.

1.5.4.3. 2 Cor 3:6 — On hermeneutics

(2 Cor 3:6) ὅς καὶ ἰκάνωσεν ἡμᾶς διακόνους καινῆς διαθήκης, οὐ γράμματος ἀλλὰ πνεύματος· τὸ γὰρ γράμμα ἀποκτείνει, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ζωοποιεῖ.

This story of biblical interpretation begins in the Bible, where the prophets rework the exodus narratives, the New Testament interprets the 'Old' (the construction of these categories was itself a major interpretive event), and Paul offers allusive remarks about the letter and the spirit that are to influence subsequent patristic principles of exegesis (Schwartz 1990:4).

2 Cor 3:6¹¹⁸ lends itself, at least on surface level — and especially when read from within the modern understanding of literal and allegorical as dichotomous — to be perceived as Paul's 'definite reflection' on his hermeneutical theory.¹¹⁹ In support of such a reading of 2 Cor 3:6, the 1971-study of Käsemann is often cited.¹²⁰ Koch (1986:331-341) reads this passage as exemplifying the hermeneutical stance of Paul, being his fundamental reflection about the

¹¹⁸ Cf Hafemann (1992:31-49) for a valuable summary of some recent attempts to interpret this passage; recently (1998:246-257) he himself opted to read this text according a prophecy-fulfillment scheme. Another novel way of interpreting this text, if not from direct quotation then indeed by allusion, is found in Von Harnack (1995:47) who claimed that 'Paul refuses indirectly (πνεύματος, οὐ γράμματος [spirit not letter]), a religion of the book, that is of the Old Testament'. As far as novel readings of 2 Cor 3:6 are concerned, cf Jobling (1993:455-456) who insists on reading it psychoanalytically, and concluding: 'So my reading is at odds with Paul — or, shall we say, on the Jewish as opposed to the Christian side'.

¹¹⁹ 2 Cor 3 has in any case been understood as a hermeneutical key to the understanding of Scripture in the early Christian church (Forde 1983:243). Cf Chau (1995) who traces the letter/spirit contrast in the hermeneutics of the early Christian church through to Luther. Houston (1996:166-167) stops short of advocating 2 Cor 3:6 as the basis for distinguishing 'different and deeper levels' of meaning in our contemporary exegetical efforts. Quite different, but equally insistent is Stockhausen (1993:143-164) that Paul is 'a man with methods', and she argues that 2 Cor 3 illustrates these method in a fine way as 'an exegetically centered passage', not because it has 'a specific hermeneutical intent'. Unfortunately, Stockhausen restricts her discussion to Paul's methods only, whereas 2 Cor 3 seems to point beyond that to the goal of Pauline hermeneutics as well. Cf also Blank (1991:275-278) on this text providing 'the most profoundest dimensions and ultimate presuppositions of "the hermeneutical business"'.

¹²⁰ Cf also Müller (1989:37); Steinmetz (1980:28-30), citing three conclusions from Paul's so-called distinction between 'the "story-book" or narrative level of the Bible and the deeper theological meaning or spiritual significance implicit within it': narratives do not necessarily — even if they claim to — reflect factuality; Paul needed to address the relationship between Israel and the Church and their respective 'traditions'; and, not all Scriptural narratives are 'edifying as they stand'.

understanding of Scripture 'in Christ'. There are two ways of reading Scripture, which are not only different from one another, but fundamentally opposed to one another.¹²¹

The reading of 2 Cor 3 as an argument wherein Paul reveals his interpretive stance, has been questioned by Westerholm (1984:229-248).¹²² Westerholm argues at length that in 2 Cor 3 Paul uses the letter-spirit antithesis to stress the nature of his ethics and not his hermeneutics. Γράμμα (letter) and πνεῦμα (Spirit) do not refer to different modalities of reading Scripture, as in literal and symbolical, but to the demands of Scripture. In a later study, Westerholm (1988:212-216) continues his argument that 'letter' and 'Spirit' refer to 'two different ways of rendering service'.¹²³ When he compares this text with Rom 2:27 and 7:6, Westerholm concludes that these texts all agree: 'letter' and 'Spirit' refer to 'the essence of service under the two covenants' — and perhaps even more, as suggested in the title of Westerholm's 1988 book, to *Israel's law and the Church's faith*.

Ebeling (1993:131,138-140) is also critical of such an interpretation and concurs with the early readings of Augustine and Luther: 2 Corinthians 3:6 does *not* deal with hermeneutics. The contrast between the 'letter which kills' and the 'spirit which gives life' deals primarily with the distinction between law and grace. However, Augustine is willing to accept that in a secondary way this passage can be read with relation to interpretive positions, but he fails to argue this in detail. It seems, however, that unlike the Origenist position of literal and allegorical senses, Augustine derived the hermeneutical value of the letter-spirit distinction from the ability to reread the 'Old Testament' in a christological, and thus 'life-giving' way. The theological and the hermeneutical therefore coincided in Augustine's appropriation of letter and spirit.¹²⁴

Hooker (1981:303) is of the opinion that one should read 2 Cor 3 in the first place as being concerned with the 'ministry of Moses', with reference to the contrast between the ministries of Moses and Paul, or old covenant and the new — and these are respectively described as γράμμα and πνεῦμα. This opposition of 'letter' and 'Spirit' does not refer to the contrast Law-Gospel, or Moses-Christ.

¹²¹ Decock (1993:275) concurs with this reading. The difference is not so much in content as in effect: the one kills, while the other gives life. It is reading, therefore, not only as human receptivity, but also as human activity.

¹²² And supported by Bandstra (1990:259); Watson (1991:311). Interestingly, the approaches of these authors seem to exhibit somewhat of a neo-Lutheran inclination in their approach to Paul. Further support for the 'ethical' reading of this passage comes from Tuckett (1991:311).

¹²³ The reference to the 'veil' when Jews read the Bible, 2 Cor 3:14-15, is seen as the concealment of the 'transitory nature of the old covenant' which explains their failure to perceive the abolishment of that covenant in Jesus Christ (Westerholm 1988:213 n36).

¹²⁴ For a sketch of other opposition to 2 Cor 3 as Pauline reflection of interpretive practice, cf Chau (1995:2-3); Hays (1989:123-124).

However, Hooker does find some information in this passage regarding Paul's view on the role of Scripture. Paul refers indeed to the reading of both the old covenant and Moses — and as in so many contexts these two may very well be synonyms. Scripture is not to be 'abolished', neither according to contemporary Jewish belief, nor according to Paul (Rom 3:31). For Paul Scripture is his first witness to Christ, and the role of Scripture is fundamental to both Moses and Paul in their ministries.

In his 'intertextual' study of Pauline interpretation of the scriptures of Israel, Hays (1989:122-153)¹²⁵ first accounts for divergent lines of interpretation of this passage — ranging from Käsemann's insistence to Westerholm's disavowal of this passage as a Pauline account of hermeneutical theory — and subsequently embarks on a study in which he attempts to illustrate that this passage is

neither a practical discussion of how to do exegesis nor a theological treatise on the problem of continuity and discontinuity between the testaments.

However, this passage is on the other hand not merely about an ethical principle or two, as

[t]he meaning of Scripture is enacted in the Christian community, and only those who participate in the enactment can understand the text. Consequently, the transformation of the community is not only the presupposition but also the result and proof of true interpretation.

Hays argues that 2 Cor 3 is more concerned, than other passages such as Rom 15:4 and 1 Cor 10:11 with the issue of 'continuity' or 'discontinuity' in the relationship between Scripture and the new Christian communities, initially, and later between the two 'testaments'. He understands 2 Cor 3:6 within its broader context (3:1-4:6) as part of Paul's defense of his apostolic authority.¹²⁶ Hays views Paul's references to Jer 38:33 (God writing upon the heart) and Ezek 36:26 (fleshy hearts replacing ones of stone) as determinative of Paul's salient point: 'in the new covenant incarnation eclipses inscription', or, the message of Jesus Christ will subsume 'itself into the life of the community, embodied without remainder'. This allows Hays to accommodate, besides hermeneutics, ethics¹²⁷ in particular, in the letter/spirit contrast: 'true reading produces the transformation of the readers. Consequently, there can be no dichotomy between hermeneutics and ethics' (Hays 1993a:45; cf 1989:152).

¹²⁵ Hays discusses at length the 'lifting of the veil' of Moses (2 Cor 3:12-4:4), a passage not without importance for the discussion here, but which for lack of space cannot be included in this study. Cf also Hafemann (1992:31-49) for a discussion of Paul's interpretation of Moses' veil and the meaning of *καταργέω* (to abolish; make powerless, idle, ineffective; to bring to an end; not however, to fade away) in the context of Ex 34:29-35; and the comprehensive study by Belleville (1991) on the Moses-Doxa tradition.

¹²⁶ Cf recently also Hafemann's (1998:246-257) claim on 2 Cor 2:14-7:6, 10:1-13:10 being Paul's most sustained defense of his apostolic ministry. Cf also Brown (1998:271-285) on Paul's defense in terms of the apocalyptically defined scheme of 'power-in-weakness'.

¹²⁷ Cf Boyarin's (1994:97) remark on 'hermeneutics as ethics'; Fowl and Jones (1991); Meeks (1986). Cf also chapters 4 and 5, below.

According to Hays, the contrast in letter/spirit refers not to the literal or material as opposed to the allegorical or spiritual, but rather to inscribed as opposed to living or embodied. This is an important conclusion for the purpose of this study.

The new covenant, he [Paul] insists, is marked and attested by God's writing on hearts, not in script: the ministry of the new covenant is attested by the formation of communities whose lives, transformed by the Holy Spirit, bear undeniable witness to the truth of God's work in their midst (Hays 1989:149-150).

In the ministry of the new covenant, the changing of people's lives matters more than a ministry of labouring over words. With the emphasis on the Spirit, it should be noted that Paul's rejection concerns the *γράμμα*, not the *γραφή*. Paul's letter/spirit contrast is not primarily, according to Hays, about hermeneutics but does indicate 'a radically new orientation toward Israel's Scripture', underlining Paul's ecclesiocentric hermeneutic.

The meaning of Scripture is enacted in the Christian community, and only those who participate in the enactment can understand the text. Consequently, the transformation of the community is not only the presupposition but also the result and proof of true interpretation (1989:152; cf Hafemann 1998:255).

2 Cor 3:6 therefore does contribute to the understanding of Pauline hermeneutics, even if it cannot be seen as a definite statement on either hermeneutical theory or practice. In short, this text indicates Paul's choice for an 'ecclesiocentric' hermeneutics, the further discussion of which will be continued below.

1.5.4.4. Gal 4:21-41 (espec v24) — On allegory¹²⁸

(Gal 4:24) ἡτινὰ ἐστὶν ἀλληγορούμενα· αὗται γὰρ εἰσιν δύο διαθήκαι, μία μὲν ἀπὸ ὄρους Σινῶ εἰς δουλείαν γεννώσα, ἥτις ἐστὶν Ἀγάρ.

Galatians is the only Pauline letter — and, the only book in the New Testament — in which ἀλληγορέω¹²⁹ occurs, although it is hardly the only instance of an allegorical reading of Scripture in the Pauline letters (cf note 87 above). This is the word Paul uses to refer to his description of the two covenants as two women, Hagar and Sarah.

Because of the negative associations of allegory as 'arbitrary eisegesis', some scholars have argued that Paul's understanding here in this passage is typological.¹³⁰ Barker (1994:193-209) posits that elements of both typology and allegory are present in this passage. In an essay

¹²⁸ Some scholars consider it not acceptable to refer to 'allegory' in Paul's writings, although others have no qualms in referring to Gal 4 as 'allegory'. Cf Evans (1989:168) referring to Gal 4:21-31 as an 'obvious example' of allegory. Admittedly, 'allegory' is a 'notoriously slippery' category to refer to a mode of text-production as well as reading strategy (Boyarín 1990:229 n26). For a fuller discussion of this passage, cf chapter Four below.

¹²⁹ This word never occurs in the LXX.

¹³⁰ Dunn (1993:124) refers to Hanson (1974) and Hansen (1989): the Genesis matter is interpreted as 'foreshadowing the eschatological fact of the Gentile mission'. Cf recently Perriman (1993:27-42).

on Gal 4:21-31, he attempts to show that ἀλληγορούμενα in verse 24 can be understood in more than one way.¹³¹ Two possible ways of translating ἀλληγορούμενα would be ‘to speak allegorically’ or ‘to interpret allegorically’, referring to either the nature of the Genesis account or Paul’s activity. Barker opts for the latter option, arguing also that “allegorical” belongs not only to the words and sentences of a narrative but also to its content’, which leads him to conclude that the use of Hagar and Sarah is typological.

In Gal 4 is found what Evans (1989:189) calls one of the examples of Paul’s ‘boldest exegesis’. Paul did not formally quote Scripture, as to do so, would have diverted the apparent objective of his argument. However this usage of Scripture accompanied by a selective use of the relevant Scriptural texts, does not constitute ‘a less serious level of exegesis’.¹³² To interpret this reading of Paul in light of modern exegetical norms, could mislead one to think otherwise.

In the end, however, the allegorical nature of Paul’s exegesis in Gal 4 cannot be denied. Lindars (1990:719) calls Paul’s interpretation in Gal 4 a ‘fine example’ of allegory, ‘along the lines of Jewish midrash’. Dunn (1993:124) asserts,

[i]t is difficult ... to deny a degree of arbitrariness in the exposition, particularly in the allegorical identification of Hagar (Abraham’s slave girl) with Mount Sinai (4.24), the interpretive move which enables Paul to turn the tables on the other missionaries.

Yet, the basic thrust of the exegesis is in line with the ‘basic contrasts’ of the Genesis story, including Abraham’s lack of faith leading to Ishmael’s birth from Hagar, and Isaac as promised child linked to ‘the promised Spirit’ received by all believers including Gentiles. Thus is found ‘a valid intermeshing of current and past experience of divine grace linked by divine promise’ (Dunn 1993:124).

However, and representative of many Pauline scholars, Dunn remains uncomfortable with Gal 4 and concludes that this interpretation of Paul should be seen as a

virtuoso performance by him, something of an afterthought to demonstrate how even the contrast between Isaac and Ishmael need not be counted in favour of the other missionaries’ message.¹³³

¹³¹ To lay the groundwork, as it were, Barker first elaborates on the way ἀλληγορούμενα was understood in patristic exegesis, particular by the Antiochenes Theodore of Mopsuestia, St John Chrysostom, and Theodoret of Cyrus, as well as by St Jerome of the Alexandrian school. Although in different and varying ways, Barker contends that these exegetes all found some historical integrity of the Genesis account preserved in Gal 4 and thus concludes that typology — which, in his opinion, was not and should not be equated with allegory — must have played a role.

¹³² And, argues Tuckett, Paul is known for his ability to ‘generalise one kind of freedom to another’, even it is not very clear how the Galatians’ freedom from the law ties in with the ‘different freedom’ of Sarah as a free woman (1991:318).

¹³³ On the idea of this passage as an, essentially unnecessary, ‘afterthought’, cf Scott (1993a:220) who calls it a ‘parting shot’: ‘the basic point of orientation in the allegory is exactly the same as in the previous context’.

This explanation implies that Paul did not attempt *to ground* his argument in Scripture, but rather to ‘illustrate a theology rooted elsewhere in scripture and experience’. It is an innovative use of Scripture, but exceptional at that, and certainly not to be used for ‘justification for more arbitrary allegorisations, especially if offered as substantive argument for a theological assertion’.

In the end — as will be argued in more detail in the next chapter — Paul’s use of Scripture in Galatians 4 clearly demonstrates Paul intentional and calculated use of allegory, conscious of the interpretive as well as theological prospects made available in this way.

1.5.5. Paul as heretic and apostate?

Paul of Tarsus was a controversial figure in early Christianity. The center of that controversy was constituted by Paul’s views about the relationship of the observance of the Mosaic Law to faith in Christ and the theological and social consequences of these views, which alienated Paul from a good part of the Jerusalem Christian community (Tobin 1993:298).

It is nothing new to note the first-century resistance to Pauline ideas which are even to be found in the New Testament itself (2 Pet 3:15-16 probably attests to this). Many studies have been devoted to this aspect of anti-Paulinism.¹³⁴ The reason for attending to this issue here, is not to discuss the opposition to Paul in the first century, but to ask in what way Paul’s use of Scripture should be viewed exclusive to him as ‘heretic’ only, and whether Paul’s use of Scripture could have contributed to the resistance against him.

Babcock (1990:xiii-xxviii) deplores the stereotypical way in which ‘Paul’s place and legacy’ is viewed in the early history of Christianity. It rests on four basic assumptions: Paul’s message only found favour amongst the ‘marginal or heretic’ groups; the eventual dominant patterns in Christianity disregarded Paul’s influence; only since Augustine’s appropriation of Paul the above started to change; and, ‘Greek Christian tradition’ never really appropriated Pauline thought (and thus operated with an insufficient soteriology).¹³⁵

Babcock argues that far from Paul¹³⁶ being a marginal figure in first-century Christianity, he was a ‘vast presence’ who had letters ascribed to him ‘circulated, collected,

¹³⁴ Cf e.g. Lüdemann (1983).

¹³⁵ As explained earlier, the Lutheran framework dominated the interpretation of Paul’s letters by guiding and restricting the reading of it in a particular way. Babcock (1990:xii,xiv) reasons that the above stereotyped view of Paul rests on two notions: the true center of Pauline theology lies in its emphasis on grace as justification by faith and not works, and early Christianity failed for centuries to recognise and appreciate that center.

¹³⁶ One will probably have to distinguish ‘which’ Paul one is speaking about: the Paul as authority figure that can be appealed to; Paul as author of some letters; or, Paul the theologian with particular views (Babcock 1990:xxvi). De Boer (1990:48-54) has also argued for the need, even if difficult, to identify the ‘historical epistolary Paul’ (cf Barclay 1995). For the early interpretation of Paul, cf Martyn (1988:1-15).

and finally canonized as one element in Christianity's authoritative scripture'. The fourteen essays in Babcock (1990) 'delineate a set of Pauline legacies that belong not on the margins but at the center of the Christianity that took form in late antiquity'. In his study on the portrayal of Paul in the Apostolic Fathers, Lindemann (1990:25-45) finds no trace of Paul being either ignored or suspiciously considered a disruptive or alien force.

Within Jewish circles, however, Dunn points out that Paul was probably regarded as a heretic of the first century (1987:55-64). The argument of Dunn is based on mainly three issues which Paul does not maintain after his Damascus experience: dietary laws, the Sabbath and circumcision. Failure to adhere to these basic and fundamental aspects of Jewish belief in God, would have branded one a heretic. Whereas Jesus only broke down 'boundaries between factions *within* the chosen people', Paul breaks down 'the boundaries *around* the chosen people'.¹³⁷ Going beyond Dunn, Barclay (1995) has recently argued that Paul's thought and ministry, and the first-century Christian communities were not seen by contemporaries as part of the 'broad stream' of pre-70 CE Judaism (Dunn). However, Dunn's is a 'theological' argument and not directly related to Paul's use of Scripture as heretical.¹³⁸

Hays (1989:223 n13) contends that Paul intentionally wanted to contrast his reading of Scripture with those of the Jews:

Paul is worried not so much about asserting his own personal autonomy against tradition as about asserting the nascent Christian community's hermeneutical autonomy from the conventions and institutions of Jewish scriptural interpretation.

This is not borne out by the evidence of Paul's use of Scripture, where Paul not only used conventional Jewish hermeneutical strategies, amongst others, but did so with success: Jewish hermeneutical strategies invited new interpretations!

Recently it has been suggested that Paul might not have been the 'bad boy' of first-century Christianity as he is so often portrayed. In the studies edited by Babcock (1990), many authors actually argue that in the early church no trace can be found that Paul was considered dangerous or heretical in his teachings, but on the contrary, was regarded as an important and authoritative voice.

A similar argument — albeit from the Jewish perspective — is to be found in Falk (1985:75), who argues that — as described in Acts 15 — the tensions between Paul and the

¹³⁷ Dunn (1987:64) argues that viewing Paul as a heretic ensures that one can 'highlight and maintain the character of God's revelation as "the living word"'.
¹³⁸ Aageson (1993:59) argues that 'Paul's theology and his interpretation of Scripture were considered offensive to most of his Jewish contemporaries'. But Aageson's argument, on Paul's interpretation of the Abraham narratives, is largely about Paul's theological position. Although Paul's theological stance and his use of Scripture were interconnected, as argued e.g. below in chapter 4, Paul's use of Scripture in the sense of his actual practice(s) was not the problem, only the 'results' it yielded (hinted at by Aageson himself, 1993:43).

'early Jewish-Christians in Jerusalem (the Minim)' were based on different views concerning whether Gentiles may be allowed to become full members of the 'Mother Church'. The dispute, Falk continues, was focussed on the different interpretations of two contemporary Rabbi's, Eliezer — whose views included that no salvation is possible for Gentiles, not even for those keeping the Noahide laws — and Joshua — who argued for the salvation of the Gentiles based on their keeping of the Noahide laws. Falk's thesis is related to his reading of Rabbi Jacob Emden, and is strengthened by his inability to find among 'the rabbis of the Talmud' any rejection of Paul (formerly a student of rabbi Gamaliel) as traitor to the rabbinical tradition. Falk argues that the rabbi's did not see Paul as an adverse influence on the Jews, and that the rabbi's were heartened by Paul's attempts to teach 'those outside Judaism ... of God and the Bible'.¹³⁹

Regarding the reception of Paul in his immediate Jewish as well as 'Christian' context (and not disregarding the serious differences of opinion Paul had with various figures and parties among the early followers of Jesus) there is nothing to suggest that Paul's reading of the scriptures of Israel was considered 'out of line' or heretical in the first century Church.

1.6. Summarising remarks

Paul's hermeneutics have been applauded by some and scorned by others. Whether it is renounced or acclaimed, it cannot be denied that Paul's appropriation of Scripture differs from hermeneutical practice in many respects. Indeed, as Dunn (1993:122) states, Paul's interpretations

raise the question as to how valid was Paul's use of scripture, and whether he treated it simply as a wax nose,¹⁴⁰ to be shaped to his own ends.

Sometimes Paul's use of Scripture is defended with reference to 'ancient interpretive traditions'. It is then claimed that in an oral culture like Paul's, the listeners of Paul would have been able to 'fill the logical gaps' which probably only exist for modern readers (Silva 1993:640).

Paul's interpretive practice is also defended by reference to rabbinic interpretations, which range from 'literal' to 'playful' exegesis. Especially the often 'fanciful' nature in rabbinic use of Scripture — to which Paul would have been exposed — is cited as common prac-

¹³⁹ The comment by Dunn (1987:56) 'Judaism would certainly regard him [Paul] as a heretic' is questionable in view of the above. Perhaps Dunn refers to modern Judaism! Perhaps Segal's (1990) and Barclay's (1995) term, viz 'apostate' is more applicable? Questions remain, however: e g, was Paul restricted to preach to Gentiles only? Was the synagogues indeed a starting place for his teaching?

¹⁴⁰ A phrase used by Luther, and probably originating with a pre-reformation preacher, Geiler of Kaisersberg (Goldingay 1982:36, also n3).

tice. It is sometimes argued that rabbinic interpretation was greatly compacted or 'compressed', where

two or three words might call to mind a whole passage of Scripture, plus other parallel passages, plus a tradition that linked those passages with the point being made.

The failure of modern scholars to recognise this practice in the letters of Paul, it is argued, is exactly that: Ignorance of early interpretive practice (Silva 1993:640).

Pauline interpretation of Scripture was, for all its so-called inconsistency and incongruity, never 'arbitrary and undisciplined' as was indeed the case with other forms of early — and even medieval — interpretation. As Steinmetz (1980:30) points out, unconcern with the 'literal' interpretation did not give 'free reign to the imagination of the exegete'. On the contrary,

[t]he literal sense of Scripture is basic to the spiritual and limits the range of possible allegorical meanings in those instances in which the literal meaning of a particular passage is absurd, undercuts the living relationship of the church to the Old Testament, or is spiritually barren.

The effort to understand Pauline hermeneutics and exegesis within the socio-cultural framework of the first century, is not worthless for explaining the 'how' of Pauline practice, as Hays (1989:9) suggested. If he had kept that background in mind, it might have prevented Hays from describing Paul's reading of Scripture as an individualistic and eccentric effort. Paul's interpretive strategy was apparently not conspicuous, as the creative and 'productive' reading and interpretation of tradition was a well-established practice. This freedom in dealing with the oral and/or written tradition¹⁴¹ demonstrated by Paul was very much in keeping with contemporary norms, albeit perhaps due to different reasons.

Before comprehensive attempts are made to reappropriate Pauline hermeneutics, it is of critical importance to evaluate Paul's exegetical practices within his own situation, and to compare these with modern practices. Much more time also needs to be devoted to the use of Scripture in a particular Pauline document, as suggested by Von Lips (1991:49)¹⁴² and practiced for example by Young & Ford (1987) on 2 Corinthians.

Finally, I would like to propose a three-fold framework of orientation for understanding Pauline thought, especially in light of his hermeneutics. For this purpose I distinguish between

¹⁴¹ Tradition should not exclusively be understood to mean 'written' tradition. The oral tradition existed alongside the written one. This again does not imply that the one was more significant than the other, or that the existence of one implies the absence of the other. Cf also Dunn (1990:43) who, with reference to the question of 'literary dependence between Matthew and Mark' calls the 'presumption' of mutual exclusion between written and oral tradition 'a ridiculous idea'.

¹⁴² Von Lips uses the case of Galatians which contains a high number of scriptural citations and allusions in chapters 3:1-4:31 (the 'probation' or 'argumentatio' section), but very few in chapters 1-2 ('narratio' and 'propositio') and 5-6 ('exhortatio').

Paul's letters, which are ecclesiocentric in that they address specific pastoral situations; Paul's broader theological framework as theocentric within the apocalyptic-eschatological scheme of thought; and his soteriological concerns as christocentric, being Paul's most profound conviction based on the cross.

2. Recasting Pauline hermeneutics: Intertextuality¹⁴³

2.1. Introduction

A significant issue raised for Pauline studies is whether Paul employed specific exegetical techniques or to what extent both Paul and the Qumran exegetes exhibit an 'intertextual' consciousness that allows them to make citations and allusions without recourse to a particular method of exegesis. In this respect the use of Scripture in the Qumran rules may represent the closest parallels to Paul's letters. The rules demonstrate an eclectic use of Scripture, including quotation, allusion and paraphrase in the context of pastoral exhortation (Noll 1993:779-780).

In a very general way, intertextual relationships have already been referred to, not only the way in which an early text is fitted into a newer text, but also the way in which Paul succeeded in relating different older texts to one another, which on the surface level seem to have no connection to one another. In this section the inter-relationship of texts will be briefly discussed according to a relatively new literary theory, Intertextuality. Not only has Intertextuality recently been used as a comprehensive approach to Paul's use of Scripture (e.g. Hays 1989), but as a post-Structuralist approach to literary texts it offers alternative ways for understanding relationships between texts. It seems appropriate therefore to briefly consider the value of Intertextuality for understanding the relationship between the Pauline letters and the scriptures of Israel, and his use of Scripture.

2.2. Forms of intertextuality

Intertextuality tolerates the existence of 'source-influence studies', and frequently employs the fruits of Source criticism in identifying the various layers in a text. But Intertextuality is not subsumed within a Source criticism-approach, as the former is not concerned merely with the 'bare fact of allusions to other texts within texts'. The goal of source-influence studies is to illustrate the use of source and thus the indebtedness of texts and authors to other texts (Vor-

¹⁴³ This term was coined by Julia Kristeva ('Word, dialogue and novel', later included in T. Moi, ed. 1986. *The Kristeva reader*. Oxford), *intertextualité*, although intertextual relations were always of interest to Literary Critics (Moysie 1994:137).

Even in Source criticism an intertextual element was already present, but cf. also Vorster (1989:20) who argues that the 'old' Source criticism concentrated more on the 'bare fact of allusions to other texts within texts'. In this context then, it is important to realise that Intertextuality is not a 'thing or object', but an 'activity or productivity' (Du Plooy 1990:6).

Without the capital, intertextuality is taken here to refer to the interrelatedness of texts. Capitalised, Intertextuality will be used when referring to a specific method of either reception or production of texts.

ster 1989:20; cf Thiselton 1992:504). According to Vorster (1992:20) the difference between source-influence studies and intertextuality resides in 'the way in which we regard these relationships' between a text and its precursor texts.

The major difference in the approaches is that, where the historical critic traditionally seeks genetic or causal explanations for specific texts, critics such as Kristeva and Barthes are interested in describing the system of codes or conventions that the texts manifest (Hays 1989:15).

Intertextuality can be juxtaposed to another 'traditional' mode of biblical criticism, namely Redaction criticism, which is

among other things, a study of the way the Bible uses the Bible, reinterprets the Bible, claims an old text and restates it in a new form for a new day (Brueggemann 1982:5).

In his discussion on the canon and canon criticism, Brueggemann argues that redaction-critical concerns are with both the 'old text' which is given due regard and respect, and the 'new expression' which is a dynamic and creative 'fresh articulation': stability and flexibility.¹⁴⁴ However, the perceived nature of the relationship between old and new also differs from what is found in Intertextuality. Furthermore, in the case of Redaction criticism the emphasis is more on the eventual shape of the redactional work than on the process of the redactional activity.¹⁴⁵

It is possible to make a simple yet important distinction between different notions of Intertextuality: author-oriented as opposed to reader-oriented Intertextuality.¹⁴⁶ When an author uses the text of a predecessor, the used text acquires a different identity. Worton and Still (1990:11) argues that

[i]nvariably a fragment and displacement, every quotation distorts and redefines the 'primary' utterance by relocating it within another linguistic and cultural context

And, the quotation fights back when it is repositioned in its new location, by reminding 'the reader that it once belonged to a different context' (Moyise 1994:138). In the words of Worton and Still (1990:11)

the quotation itself generates a tension between belief in both the original and originating integrity and in the possibility of (re)integration and an awareness of infinite deferral and dissemination of meaning. Quotation as fragmentation does indeed generate centrifugality in reading, but it also generates centripetality, focussing on the reader's attention on textual functioning rather than hermeneutics.

¹⁴⁴ This relationship between old and existing, and new and adaptive is difficult to express; however, common to virtually all discussions is the insistence on two elements which should be kept in dialogue, complementarity and tension: maintenance and restructuring, continuity and discontinuity, stability and flexibility.

¹⁴⁵ For a more detailed discussion — with reference to Vorster — on the differences between Intertextuality on the one hand, and Source and Redaction criticism on the other hand, cf Snyman (1996:427-449). It is perhaps important to note what else Intertextuality is not! It is neither 'inner-textuality' (cf Thiselton 1992:503 on M Fishbane), nor *intra-textuality* (cf Thiselton 1992:503 on Frei, Lindbeck and Thiemann, also Lindbeck (1986) on Barth).

¹⁴⁶ Cf also Van Zyl (1994:350-354) who distinguishes between a 'production-centred' and 'reader-centred' Intertextuality. Whereas Van Zyl describes the former as 'inner-biblical exegesis' (cf Fishbane), the latter borders on deconstruction.

In reader-oriented Intertextuality, the emphasis shifts from the text to the reader, in the sense that the reader construes the inter-textuality of the texts concerned. The emphasis is on the ability and activity of the reader not only in the detecting of textual 'echoes' but also in making them into 'meaning-full' relations. But the reader is also a text, not prescribing the meaning of the text but participating in the intertextual process (cf Voelz 1989:32-33). The reader is not only drawn into a process of dialogue and interaction with the text (Van Wolde 1989:46), but the reader is also responsible for perceiving and actualising the relations between all the texts concerned.

In conclusion, Van Zyl (1994:353; with reference to Schmitz 1987) insists that both the 'signals' and 'symptoms' found in texts should be appreciated without privileging the one above the other. 'Signals' are textual markers of reference to other texts (e.g. in the New Testament, 'as it is written'), whereas 'symptoms' are intertextual motifs, themes and so on — 'echoes' (Hollander) — intended, consciously or otherwise, by the author.¹⁴⁷

2.3. *Towards a working proposal on Intertextuality in Paul*

After his complaints about the inability of modern biblical scholarship to account for the quotations of Scripture in Paul, and their unwillingness to use intertextuality as a way of investigating 'how texts relate to their subtexts',¹⁴⁸ Moyise (1994:138) subsequently proposes to use Intertextuality to explain Pauline quotations. He concludes that Intertextuality has at least two significant ramifications: one, it relativises the statement that Paul quotes the scriptures of Israel out of context, as all quotations necessarily are out of context,¹⁴⁹ or relocated;¹⁵⁰ two,

¹⁴⁷ A related issue, not addressed here however, is the relationship between rabbinic midrash and Intertextuality (cf Boyarin 1990:214-230); in abbreviated form, 'the interconnecting of texts [is] a distinguishing feature of midrash' (Boyarin 1990:229 n23). Cf Hays (1989:14) 'Rabbinic midrash and the letters of Paul are natural analogues because both are paradigmatic instances of intertextual discourse, both wrestling with the same great precursor'.

¹⁴⁸ Although perhaps without employing Intertextuality *per se*, there are some earlier voices, intent on investigating this very matter, e.g. Martin (1981:4), 'for Paul as for the gospel writers their credal and confessional materials had a pre-history in the tradition of the church before them, and their use of such existing forms was not simply one of borrowing and use. They entered into active dialogue and debate with these statements, sometimes by a correction of them', and Wright (1980:22) '[t]he quotation from Genesis 15:6 in Galatians 3:6 is not an arbitrary proof-text or a subtle Rabbinic ploy: the whole chapter deals with the question as to who Abraham's children really are'.

¹⁴⁹ Or alternatively, all quotations are necessarily 'in context', as all texts are related to one another within a mesh of interrelatedness.

¹⁵⁰ 'Now since context is essential for meaning, there is in fact no possibility that a quotation can bear the same meaning in a new composition as it did in the old' (Moyise 1994:138).

For the role of 'context' in interpretation, many sources can be quoted. For some Southern African voices, cf Hunter (1991:362-372) for a strong opposition to the relevance or even need of context in interpreting texts for fear of obscuring interpretation; Loubser (1986:146-157), Botha (1994:291-307), Vorster (1994:127-145) for emphasis on the value of context in interpretation — 'context' is not understood in the same way by all. Elsewhere Botha (1992:191-193) also argues for holding on to context ('the interpretive community') in terms of an 'ethics of interpretation' approach.

finding quotations or allusions in Paul's writings complicates the exegesis thereof, because 'the clues that enable interpretation to take place are coming from two separate sources'. It eventually boils down to the emphasis on the importance of the 'new context' in which the quotations are used.

Intertextuality is not 'characteristic of some texts as opposed to others', as all texts exist as mosaics of conscious and unconscious citations of earlier discourse (Boyarin 1990:12,14). It is possible, however, to distinguish various levels on which authors used Intertextuality in the production of their texts. Concerning the reading of the New Testament authors and Paul respectively, Moyise (1994:138-141) and Hays (1989:178) both refer to Greene's¹⁵¹ four categories of describing the 'relation between a poet's work and its predecessors', the imitation of the text:¹⁵²

1) 'Reproductive' or 'sacramental': 'It is when a poet imitates a previous work with such precision that it is virtually a copy ... and the original is treated as a sacred object ...' Moyise finds no evidence of this among the New Testament authors; likewise, no-one would read Paul's letters in such a way (Hays 1989:174).

2) 'Eclectic' (or 'exploitive', cf Hays 1989:173): '... where the author draws on a wide range of sources, seemingly at random, without laying special emphasis on any one of them.' In a weak sense, this relationship between text and quotations is equal to plagiarism, but Moyise argues that it can also be seen as 'a vocabulary of a second and higher power, a second keyboard of richer harmonies'. It is often called 'prooftexting'. This practice is found frequently in the New Testament, e.g. in Matthew's use of Hos 11:1-2 in Mt 2:15. Examples in Paul's letters would include the use of Ps 19:4 in Rm 10:18, or 'threshing ox' in 1 Cor 9:8; this use of precursor texts would have some rhetorical force in the discourse: asserting by appealing to Scripture. However, to have this as Paul's predominant reading practice would devalue Paul's hermeneutic (Hays 1989:175).

3) 'Heuristic': '... where a new work seeks to define itself through the rewriting or modernising of a past text'. The new text does not imitate but succeeds the old text, by creating — simultaneously — a chasm between text and quotation and the bridge — *rite de passage* — between past and present. 'Heuristic imitation' is found in 'discursive passages where the author argues for a particular interpretation of Scripture'. A good example is the use of Gen

¹⁵¹ As explained in Greene, TM. 1982. *The light in Troy: imitation and discovery in Renaissance poetry*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

¹⁵² A writer-oriented notion of Intertextuality, cf Van Zyl (1994:352-353).

15:6 and Ps 32:1-2 in Rom 4.¹⁵³ Hays (1989:176) disagrees with the idea that Paul's letters¹⁵⁴ could be read in this — traditional — way, as it would assume that Paul's reading supercedes Scripture, consigning it to an old relic from the past, based on the distance created in such an understanding. The 'Old Testament' is not in an antithetical relationship to the 'New Testament'.

4) 'Dialectical imitation':¹⁵⁵ '... when the poem engages the precursor in such a way that neither is able to absorb or master the other'. Hays (1989:176-177) finds this approach the best way to describe Pauline intertextual reading of Scripture, viewing it not as a 'foil', 'primitive stage of religious development', or 'shadow of things to come'.¹⁵⁶

Finally, Moyise celebrates the 'anachronism' which is the result of 'a kind of struggle between texts and eras which cannot easily be resolved', an anachronism which now 'becomes a dynamic source of artistic power'. Moyise clearly operates with an 'author' or 'production' oriented view of Intertextuality.¹⁵⁷

2.4. 'Echoes of Scripture' (RB Hays)

In Paul we encounter a first-century Jewish thinker who, while undergoing a profound disjuncture with his own religious tradition, grappled his way through to a vigorous and theologically generative reappropriation of Israel's Scriptures (Hays 1989:2).

Probably the most sustained attempt to approach Paul's use of the scriptures of Israel with an intertextual reading can be found in the 1989-study of Richard B Hays. Without attempting to do justice to all of the detailed and complex analysis found in Hays' project, suffice it to say that his dominant concern is how Paul acted intertextually in appropriating Scripture: which parts of Scripture did Paul treat, why and what did Paul intend by using the texts in question — referring to Paul's 'actual citations of and allusions to specific texts' (1989:15)? He presents his intertextual study as all centered around Paul the author, interacting intertextually with Scripture.

¹⁵³ Jas 2:23f shows that another interpretation of Gen 15:6 is possible (Moyise 1994:140).

¹⁵⁴ Except for Galatians, although Hays (1989:176) contends that Paul is even in that situation uncomfortable with this approach (3:21; 5:6; 6:15).

¹⁵⁵ Cf also Bakhtin who stresses the 'dialogical' nature of Intertextuality. This is not a dialogue between author and text, but a 'polyphonic discourse in and around the text in which non-linguistic texts can cooperate towards meaning' (Du Plooy 1990:4,7). Nielsen (1990:91-92) also stresses the aspect of dialogue, between older and younger texts, insisting that this dialogue is not exhausted in either the author's deliberate or the reader's free choice of Intertextuality — cf the previous comments on 'signals' and 'symptoms'.

¹⁵⁶ Hays (1989:176-177) reminds readers that Greene's categories of 'heuristic' and 'dialectical' both implies 'friction' between pretext (subtext) and text (surface text), but the former seeks to overcome it by diachronical means, whereas the latter allows the tension to remain, achieving 'a fuller contemporaneity with the past'.

¹⁵⁷ Cf also recently the intertextual approach of Keesmaat (1996:133-168; 1997:300-333) to the Pauline letters. Her interest is primarily in Paul's use of the Exodus-traditions, and describes Paul's use of those traditions as 'transformation' (as distinguished from 'alienation' or 'conversion', and 'reversion' or 'entrenchment').

Hays makes his avowed attention to ‘diachronical details’ (Hays 1989:xii) very clear. He wants to ‘place him [Paul] firmly in historical context, as a first-century Jewish Christian seeking to come to terms hermeneutically with his Jewish heritage’, a statement he qualifies later, for pastoral reasons. Hays attempts to situate Paul in the ‘spectrum of emergent Jewish and Christian communities in the middle of the first-century’.

In appreciating Paul’s use of Scripture intertextually, Hays is at pains to point out Paul’s ‘ecclesiocentric hermeneutic’ and his ‘christological basis’ for this hermeneutic (:84-121). His intention is to show that Paul reveals how Jesus Christ is proclaimed in Scripture, and that there is no fundamental discontinuity for Paul between Scripture and his own letters. Paul is not introducing any new religion (:77). However, the new interpretation of Scripture is not found in contextuality (which was accepted practice!) but in content. In all, Hays emphasises the ‘hermeneutic of freedom’ found in Paul (:xiii). He calls this a ‘poetic freedom’ which underlies the apostle’s hermeneutic which was ‘functionally ecclesiocentric rather than christocentric’.

Hays’ intertextual approach to Paul’s letters has been criticised on a number of aspects. As far as methodology is concerned, Green (1993:58-63) castigates Hays for using a ‘minimalist notion¹⁵⁸ of intertextuality’ (:59), avoiding the ‘larger purpose’ of intertextuality, namely ‘the fluidity of meaning’ (:63); saying Hays’ book (*Echoes of Scripture*) ‘cannot but display the thoroughgoing extent to which intertextuality really is the reader’s work, not the writer’s’ (:61); and so accuses Hays of letting ‘method do[ing] the text’s work for it’, because Hays structures and places the texts in such a way to illustrate what the method aims to show (:63). In short, Hays is accused of using a ‘reader-oriented’ Intertextuality while claiming to use an ‘author-oriented’ Intertextuality.

Although Hays claims that the employment of the term ‘midrashic’ is not helpful (1989:10-12), Evans (1993:50) argues to the contrary that ‘[r]ecognizing the midrashic features of Paul’s use of Scripture clarifies the apostle’s technique and argument’. On the question whether Pauline thought is driven by an ecclesiocentric or christological hermeneutics, Sanders (1993:52-57) argues for a theocentric hermeneutics instead.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Porter (1997:84) has similar criticism for Hays’s failure to see in Intertextuality ‘a philosophically bolstered theory of language relations, distinguished from simpler concepts such as influence’. Such criticism is not reserved for Hays only, but extended to recent works by Brawley, Keesmaat, Kurz and O’Day (:85).

¹⁵⁹ Cf Beker (1980) and my arguments below for Paul’s *theocentric* theology, *ecclesiocentric* hermeneutic, and *christocentric* soteriology.

2.5. *Advantages and shortcomings of an intertextual approach*

In explaining the use of quotations in the New Testament writers, the *advantages* of Intertextuality are apparent and significant. In the first place, Intertextuality shifts the discussion from whether a text was quoted properly or not, to the 'far more productive' question of how the New Testament authors used the quoted text. It thus enables the understanding of 'how texts influence readers and readers influence texts'. Where the earlier approaches faltered on the realisation that quotations in the New Testament are used different from their 'original meaning', with the accompanying attempts to justify or abhor this different meaning attributed to the quoted text, Intertextuality *assumes* the different meaning of a quotation in its new setting, on the basis of the quoted text being 'relocated' (Moyise 1994:141).

Hays (1989:177) argues that Paul's allusive manner of referring to Scripture creates room for Scripture 'to answer back'. Paul's lack of running commentary on allusions, allows it to challenge readers as it stands, e g Rom 11:26 'all Israel will be saved'. Similarly, Moyise (1994:142) argues that 'the reader is asked to listen to a number of voices, which are themselves interacting with one another'. Although unable to explain exactly how it happens,

one might suggest that this is precisely how texts 'get under our skin' and become part of us. Just as we find ourselves humming tunes (even the ones we do not like!), so the Scriptures can become alive for us with songs new and old.

The juxtapositioning of texts creates in their mutual interaction both 'a puzzle to ponder' and 'a dynamic source of artistic power'.

It is, however, also evident that an intertextual reading of Paul has certain *limitations*. In general, Intertextuality has been criticised for confusing terminology, with no clear distinction in different approaches to it. In addition to terminological matters, Intertextuality is often assumed rather than defined, accompanied by a lack of critical discussion. Eventually Intertextually manifests itself in so many forms because no serious attempts at systemisation of Intertextually exists (Van Peer 1987:17-24, cf Van Zyl 1994:354). Van Zyl adds that the use of intertextual approaches often exhibits a facile and unchecked relativism and subjectivism.

Moyise (1994:142-143) argues that for all the positive aspects to Intertextuality as resource in the study of quotations in the New Testament authors, there are certain limitations as well. These limitations can be summarised under the heading of 'historical questions', which such an approach cannot resolve. For historical matter, another method should be looked for.

2.6. *Beyond Intertextuality*

The practice of intertextual interpretation is an attempt to struggle against both complicity and exclusion — perhaps something, some shifting of barriers, can thus be achieved even if, in gen-

Three: Pauline exegesis and hermeneutics

eral, none of our thinking can escape constructing identity against differences (Worton and Still 1990:33).

The study of Pauline use of Scripture according to the insights from Intertextuality has been very limited so far, although the latter has proved to be a valuable point of departure for such a study. On the other hand, significant contributions such as Hays' study (1989) which avail themselves of intertextual methodology, have shown the potential contribution of such an approach.

The major problem with the use of Intertextuality as a method for analysing Paul's use of Scripture, is probably theoretical. Like so many post-Structural literary theoretical models, Intertextuality is viewed and practiced in many different ways, that a simple explanation of the theory seems improbable. A valuable distinction, however, is between author -and reader-oriented intertextual approaches.

Although a thoroughgoing intertextual approach to the understanding of the Pauline letters is not advocated here, the intention was to illustrate the benefits which such studies offer. Some caution is also in order. The most important of which is that with Intertextuality's bias for the contemporary reader, it could easily happen that today's interpreters of Paul end up 'doing the text's work for it' (Green 1993). A perhaps even more serious consequence would be that Paul and his arguments are thoroughly decontextualised, making him appear 'idiosyncratic' and 'eccentric' (Scott 1993). Such negative spinoffs from an intertextual approach to Paul might be avoided by (re)constructing an adequate historical context of Pauline thought.

3. Conclusion

Thus, the ancient text were never dead letters. Always pregnant with meaning, the Scriptures served as a powerful force to legitimize the proclamation of the early church and to secure the gospel in the history of Israel (Roetzel 1982:17).

From the long and sometimes fruitless discussions on Pauline hermeneutics, this topic has emerged as an area of serious contestation in the understanding of Paul. Apart from some serious technical difficulties in dealing with Paul's use of the scriptures of Israel, some other major issues of controversy are related to any discussion of the interpretation of Scripture in the Pauline letters: the thrust of Paul's theological thought; the relationship between Paul and the Jewish communities, life and thought of the day; and so on.

Paul's interpretive strategy would not have been conspicuous, as the creative and 'productive' reading and interpretation of tradition was a well established and common

tendency. This freedom in dealing with the oral and/or written tradition demonstrated by Paul was very much in keeping with contemporary norms, albeit perhaps due to different reasons.

As argued above, the attempt to reappropriate Pauline hermeneutics, should be approached carefully, taking Paul's situation in consideration and evaluating his practices in comparison to contemporary ways of interpretation. It has to be accepted with Snodgrass (1988:96) 'that Paul never saw himself as rejecting or calling into question the Hebrew scriptures'.¹⁶⁰ With a more inductive approach to the use of Scripture in particular Pauline documents, it might be possible to account for Pauline hermeneutics in a broader way.

Given the increasing need for greater conceptual clarity, as well as the necessity to account for Paul's interpretation of Scripture, the relevance of Pauline practice for guiding contemporary exegesis, should be taken seriously. The alternative is also not acceptable — to appropriate Pauline hermeneutical practice uncritically, and to see that as the norm. Pauline hermeneutics is not to be merely reassigned a new lease of life, because interpretive theory and practice do change, hopefully also at times for the better. But even more importantly, the uncritical acceptance of Paul's practices, the fossilising of Paul's dynamic and creative hermeneutics into a few 'easy hermeneutical steps', would be running directly contrary to the apostle's intentions.

It can be argued that, based on Paul's use of Scripture and that in light of first-century interpretive practices — and in light of recent contributions by (post)modern literary theory and practices such as Intertextuality — the Bible should be for Christians the 'prototype' rather than the 'archetype'! Or to rephrase this: the Bible should perhaps not function so much as 'source' but rather as 'resource'.¹⁶¹

To close, two quotes from Hays (1989:10) — and a brief word of explanation — indicate how the consideration of Pauline hermeneutics is the pivotal aspect of this whole study: '[H]ow Paul read Scripture is of great importance for grasping the logic and purpose of his arguments' and 'Paul's grappling with known texts provides a potentially illuminating model for normative theological reflection on the task and methods of biblical hermeneutics'.

¹⁶⁰ It remains to be seen whether a consistent 'history-of-redemption' approach to the scriptures of Israel (e.g. Hafemann 1998:252), or especially the promise-fulfillment scheme, will not eventually mean the effective supersession of those scriptures, and their consignment to either mere historical import, in a worst case scenario, or to historical antecedents and 'prefigurations' of Christ, at best?

¹⁶¹ Cf Luz (1994:102) who is indebted to Schüssler-Fiorenza for the prototype-archetype juxtapositioning. Schüssler-Fiorenza (1983:33-34) sees an archetype as 'an ideal form that establishes an unchanging timeless pattern' whereas the prototype 'is critically open to the possibility of its own transformation'; cf Vorster (1988:45). Cf Aageson (1993:8) who argues that '[b]iblical texts do not simply contain meaning but perhaps even more importantly they contribute to the generation and formation of meaning.'

As was argued in the preceding chapters, the understanding of the Pauline letters not only rested on a very particular — Lutheran — interpretive framework, but that it predetermined — like all hermeneutical frameworks — the interpretation of Paul. Although the New Perspective on Paul has made a significant contribution to wrest Paul away from his Lutheran bonds, it cannot be claimed that the NPP has succeeded in reading the Pauline letters in a more adequate way — not only because the NPP has not yet presented a united front in Pauline interpretation, but also because its (various) interpretive starting point(s) often derive from external (to the Pauline letters) interpretive schemes.

Paul's use of the scriptures of Israel provides a key to grasp Pauline hermeneutics, and contributes immensely to the understanding of 'the logic and purpose' of Paul's arguments.

In the following two chapters these matters will be attended to, by first considering the Pauline letters, thought and practices in light of freedom,¹⁶² and subsequently drawing out some implications for the interpretation of Scripture today. The discussion on Pauline hermeneutical freedom will include a consideration of the 'motivation' and 'goal' of Pauline hermeneutics, focussing on the notions of 'contextuality' and 'ecclesiocentric hermeneutics'. In the ensuing discussion not only the value of early Christian interpretation of Scripture for contemporary hermeneutical practice will be considered, but a number of related matters, as well.

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¹⁶² In this way, this study then moves beyond the 'interpretive process that lies behind the present text' which Stanley (1997a:58) decries as typical of the 'one-sided' focus of recent studies of biblical interpretation. Not only will Paul's use of Scripture be investigated, but eventually the question of the contemporary value of Paul's practice, will be addressed.

CHAPTER FOUR

Paul liberated: Freedom and the apostle of freedom

1. Introduction

Freedom is the dominant motif in Christian theology today, as was revelation a generation ago (Keck 1974:71, cf Dyson 1985:55-56).

Freedom is outstanding among the theological motifs of the New Testament ... Nowhere in the New Testament is the theological motif of freedom so vividly pronounced as it is in the theology of the apostle Paul (Jones 1984:11-12).

It is certainly ironic that as far as theology in general and hermeneutics in particular are concerned, *the* particular corpus of books in the New Testament that emphasises freedom — the Pauline epistles — has been severely neglected in contemporary discussions of freedom and liberation.¹ This neglect and deliberate exclusion of the Pauline perspective is noticeable on many different levels and are probably due to a number of reasons. The antipathy towards ‘Pauline theology’ is particularly noticeable where theologians emphasised freedom from various kinds of economic and socio-political oppression, ranging from *apartheid* and racism in South Africa, through entrenched and latent patriarchalism the world over, to the reactions to social ostracising with the accompanying lack of self-esteem, and feelings of unworthiness as espoused in — amongst others — Liberation Theology, Black Theology, and Feminist Theology.

Far from being a mere twist of fate, it is a hermeneutical — in combination with the, as described above, theological — turn that effectively displaced Paul’s writings from recent deliberations on the contribution of the New Testament to the liberation of people. Jones (1984:17) laments that

[i]n these contemporary theologians’ attempts to capture and categorize Paul, it seems that his theme of liberation — particularly liberation from the kinds of bondage we face today — escapes them.

From his North-American — yet, *African-American* — context, Jones shows that Paul was not associated with freedom, but often seen as the supporter of the historical bondage, in the form of slavery, of African Americans. Paul is part of the problem, not of the ‘solution to the problem of bondage’. Even long after the abolishment of slavery,

black religious thinkers found it difficult to deal with Paul because of the opprobrious odium that had been placed on him by past generations of blacks (1984:17).

¹ As this is a discussion on freedom in its theological and hermeneutical appropriations, and particularly focused on the Pauline writings of the New Testament, no attempt will be made to deal extensively with current thought on freedom or liberty, and liberation. Suffice it to mention that since the Enlightenment, theologians have endeavoured to formulate acceptable notions of human autonomy, leading to a wide range and variety of different treatments of this idea. For fuller discussions of theological discussions on freedom, cf e.g. Brown (1981); Dyson (1985:56) who deals with the influence of Marx, Freud and Existentialism on the contemporary discussion on freedom.

As argued above, Paul's writings were read — ever since St Augustine's² but especially since the Lutheran tradition's appropriation thereof — as espousing primarily an individualistic, and 'spiritual' freedom (cf GRIC 1989:52), the ablatives of which are usually seen to consist in the triad of law, sin (or flesh) and death. This line of interpretation is conveniently referred to as a prominent aspect of the Lutheran captivity of Paul, as explained above.³

In formulating biblical perspectives on the liberation of people across the world from oppression, those which could be derived from the Pauline letters are, in fact, effectively absent. Recently, however, and although a decided minority, some biblical scholars have challenged the neglect of Paul on issues of freedom and have subsequently embarked upon a new reading of Paul.⁴

It can be argued that the Pauline writings contain some of the most profound contributions on the issue of freedom, on various levels of human existence, both 'spiritual' and 'material' — to use this traditional if contested contrast. But it needs to be stated that in order to appropriate Paul 'for all his worth', he needs to be liberated from the philosophical-

² This is admittedly only an aspect of Augustine's thinking regarding both the Pauline letters and the idea of freedom. Cf Dyson (1985:69-71) for a more balanced, although concise description of Augustine's explanation of freedom according to the distinction between *libertas minor* and *libertas major*. *Libertas minor* is the 'ground of the free will or liberty of choice', whereas the other refers to 'the liberty of fulfillment'. Because 'democratic' rights and freedoms imply a freedom *from*, *libertas minor* does not guarantee that a human being will indeed achieve his/her end in life. On the other hand, *libertas major* concerns people's 'freedom of being', 'the realisation of the perfection of their nature in God'.

Naturally, although *libertas major* is the freedom sought after in the end — the purpose of human life — *libertas minor* provides the 'necessary condition' for that purpose to be realised. Therefore the two 'liberties' could not be perceived the one without the other: *libertas minor* as subjective and individual freedom alone means to put oneself 'at the mercy of whatever secular forces happens to be dominant at the time'; *libertas major* without actual freedom of choice, 'becomes a theological, and then a socio-political, positivism and totalitarianism'.

In Luther's appropriation of Augustine, however, *libertas minor* becomes dominant and exclusive, and the ruler can no longer be opposed. Luther's dictum was: 'A Christian man [sic] is the most free Lord of all, and subject to none; a Christian man [sic] is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to everyone'.

Pannenberg's argument on freedom of choice and 'the full-fledged realization of human freedom' almost equals the Augustinian sentiments above (1981:293-294).

³ Cf chapter 1. Since Luther, so many developments in various areas of human understanding and knowledge impacted on the interpretation of the Pauline letters, that it must be stressed that the appropriateness of a term such as 'Lutheran legacy' is situated in its reference to the origin of this particular line of interpretation. However, it is interesting to note how Freud's psychology of religion with its emphasis on the 'disordered inner self' and subsequent individualism (cf Dyson 1985:58-59) provides many striking resemblances with the Lutheran reading of Paul.

The Lutheran framework does not only refer to Luther's interpretation of Paul, but also to the tradition which found its inception in Luther's thought. For example, Pannenberg (1981:292) argues that particularly on the notion of 'justification', Luther's immediate successors (by name e.g. Melancthon) transformed his 'profound insight' about faith and transformed 'justification' into 'a somewhat wooden, juridical matter, while in Luther's language it has a mystical flavour'.

⁴ One of the first was Segundo (1986); recently also e.g. Elliot (1994, 1997), Jones (1984), Lewis (1991), Tamez (1993) — cf the discussions in this, and the following chapters, and the bibliography.

theological bondage in which he has been kept for so long. True to the Pauline tradition, however, the interpretation of his letters needs not only to be freed *from* an all-dominant (Lutheran) perspective, but this freedom should be extended *to* a 'new perspective(s)' on Paul. Such a new hermeneutical perspective, it has been argued, depends heavily on Paul's own hermeneutics in his engagement with the scriptures of Israel. Indeed, concerns such as those raised by the virtual exclusion of Paul from theological positions on human freedom, requires first of all a new appreciation for Paul's hermeneutical freedom. The argument, therefore, needs to be extended to a consideration of how Paul's hermeneutics, which itself is an act of freedom, interacts with his notion of freedom in the theological and ethical senses of the word.

The importance of this chapter for the overall argument on Paul's bondage and liberation is situated in the need to consider his emphasis on the motif of freedom, in both formal and material senses. The traditional theological understanding of Paul's advocacy — or, his 'preponderant use' (Amos 1984:227 n3) — of freedom in the material sense of the word, will be investigated in order to delineate the perimeters of the context within which this freedom was and still often is interpreted. It will be argued that a particular theological understanding of Paul informed much of the debate on the significance of the Pauline letters for today.⁵ Even where attempts are made to understand Pauline thought on issues related to socio-political matters, the dominant theological interpretive paradigm still determines the discourse.

But even more importantly, it will be argued that the question of Pauline theology must be transformed into the question of the nature and aim of Pauline scriptural exegesis.⁶ Pauline theology can best be understood as a theology of freedom and liberation,⁷ and thus can be done effectively only when Paul's appropriation of the scriptures of Israel, and specifically his particular way of interpreting and using these texts and his reasons for using them, are made the point of departure. In short, Paul's hermeneutics informs his theology, and both are characterised by 'freedom'. In fact, the relationship between Paul's freedom-theology and his hermeneutics of freedom is of a reciprocal nature, as will be argued below.⁸

⁵ Cf for example Ricoeur's insistence that present theological concerns always influence biblical hermeneutical processes (1991:284-285).

⁶ A perhaps too deliberate adaptation of Ebeling's opening statement on Luther's hermeneutic, namely that Luther's theology can best be understood when his 'methods of scriptural exegesis' are studied (1993:129).

⁷ Along with 'liberty' (cf e.g. Dunn 1993a), these two terms will generally be used interchangeably, although it is recognised that for some (e.g. Sölle 1977:29) liberation is preferred to freedom, because of (1) the 'process character' of liberation, and (2) the societal dimension included in 'liberation'. It can be argued, however, that these 'meanings' have been bestowed on the word liberation, and thus can be carried over to the word freedom as well.

⁸ This is where this study deviates significantly from other studies on Pauline freedom, found e.g. in Jones (1987) and Vollenweider (1989), which are not discarded *in toto* but relativised in this study in accordance with the expressed goal!

In addition, before embarking upon a discussion of Paul's perspectives on human freedom and liberation, it is important to investigate the historical-philosophical context within which Paul found himself, of which he was indeed a constituent member, the 'world' in relation to which he often occupied both a dialectical and dialogical position. Such an effort is not inspired by a quest for the 'original meaning' of 'freedom', but rather by the acknowledgement of the polysemous nature of human communication and therefore of words and their meanings, as well as human 'situatedness' or contextuality.⁹ Admitting to the constructivist nature of all human interpretation, an investigation of the historical contexts contemporary to Paul within which freedom was used can provide a range of meanings of this concept which, again, could prove beneficial for modern understanding of Paul's usage of 'freedom'. But first, our attention will be directed at the 'traditional' way of understanding Pauline freedom.

2. Freedom in the New Testament: Theological appropriations

The liberation which the NT offers is primarily liberation from sin and its consequences, or, as we would more customarily put it, spiritual salvation (France 1986:21).

[T]heologically, and more fundamentally, it [sc freedom] is the quality of personal and social life, here and hereafter, which is given possession of those whom Christ has set free from human and sinful bondage (Falusi 1973:113).

Much has been written on the topic of freedom in the New Testament, particularly on freedom as seen from a theological perspective. The aim here is neither to present an exhaustive discussion of such contributions, nor to review all that has been written on the topic. As a more modest attempt, the immediate goal is to situate the discussion which follows in the rest of the chapter. For this purpose representative viewpoints of the main lines of the broader theological argument will be indicated, discussed, and finally, assessed.

Completing the full circle, it will be interesting to note how Paul's idea of freedom is understood as representative and as providing the building blocks for the theological concept of freedom — that is, freedom from the power of the law, sin and death. In this respect, the Pauline letters have often been used to forge a 'biblical theology' centered around 'freedom' (cf Gerhardsson n d:1).

2.1. The New Testament

As indicated above, freedom in Paul and for that matter in the New Testament is traditionally — informed largely by the TAP — understood as a spiritual, and individual at that, freedom.

⁹ Cf Kee (1989:7-31) on the socially conditioned, and socially determined nature of knowledge.

Freedom is 'strange freedom' in Christ. More concretely, the New Testament uses *eleutheria* for (1) freedom from sin (Rom 6:18-23; John 8:31-36), (2) from the Law (Rom 7:3f; 8:2; Gal 2:4; 4:21-31; 5: 1,13), and (3) from death (Rom 6:21f; 8:21) (Falusi 1973:116).¹⁰

Freedom from sin is generally described as that human condition — rendered by God through Jesus Christ and effected by the Holy Spirit¹¹ — where the will and inclination of human beings to indulge in sinful activities of whatever nature are curtailed and effectively broken. Freedom from the law refers to the position where religious law is seen to operate in a non-legalistic and non-salvatory way, as well as a position characterised by the absence of anomie. Freedom from death is traditionally taken to indicate that the lethal effect of sin, namely death, has been suspended;¹² this particular belief has been radicalised through the belief in the resurrection of Christ and through him the resurrection of all believers.

Freedom from sin is generally seen as the form of freedom advocated in the New Testament. Although various other forms, functions and situations of freedom can be identified, it is freedom from sin which is the basic objective of freedom according to the writings of the New Testament. This concept itself is often further categorised according to the derivative aspects of freedom from sin, and according to the different levels of freedom from sin. Such an effort is well stated by RT France in a recent study (1986).

2.1.1. 'Categories' of freedom

France identifies three categories of freedom in the New Testament, but never relinquishes the claim that all freedom is primarily freedom from sin and its consequences. He insists that the New Testament extolls other 'freedoms' based upon freedom from sin, which prompts him to elaborate other categories of freedom. In this way, he hopes to denounce the, what he calls, 'pietistic trap' of evangelical scholarship which only considered personal or individual freedom and liberation (1986:13,21).

In the first place, argues France, one finds *personal* liberation. Distinguishing between physical, as in illness, and spiritual oppression through sin — and the 'border-line' between these two spheres in demon-possession — personal liberation from sin is undoubtedly the main focus of the New Testament. For this, France suggests that the word 'salvation' is more

¹⁰ So also Abogunrin (1981:22-28); Falusi (1973:120-125); Schlier (1964:496-502). Cf Jones (1984:227 n3).

¹¹ The role of the Spirit in freedom is a topic of study on its own, and will not be dealt with here in detail; cf below for the relationship between the Spirit and Pauline hermeneutics. For a more comprehensive approach to the role of the Spirit in Pauline thought, cf recently Fee (1994).

¹² It is a reciprocal relationship; in the words of Falusi (1973:124), 'Given freedom from death, freedom from the world and its powers is also given'.

appropriate than 'liberation', because the latter is loaded with too many socio-political interests. Personal liberation therefore

is an all-round change affecting a man's [sic] total life and relationships, past, present and future, but it is focused in the restoration of a broken relationship with God, the cause to which NT thought traces our disorientation (1986:13).

This freedom is an 'ultimate freedom' of human beings before God, yet 'subject to the divine sovereignty' (Wilder 1961:413).

In the New Testament a second form of freedom can be described as *socio-economic* liberation. Bluntly stating that Jesus did not intend wealth-redistribution programmes or socio-economic reforms, France nevertheless insists that Jesus indeed had much to comment about 'social justice' and indeed had an 'interest in the economic facts of life'. With the 'radical undercutting of the world's value-system' through the new values espoused by the liberation from sin, the New Testament provides a basis or 'raw material' with which to address society's socio-economic plight (France 1986:13-17).

A third category of liberation derived from the liberation from sin, concerns *political* liberation. France insists that modern liberation movements cannot claim to find a parallel in Jesus' actions in the New Testament, as Jesus rejected a political role and repudiated hopes of Jewish nationalism.¹³ Other New Testament writings are in line with Jesus' approach in their insistence on obedience to the government.¹⁴ Thus, concludes France,

[n]ot only does it [sc the New Testament] refuse us direct sanction for political liberation in itself as a Christian ideal, but it makes it very clear that political insubordination is, for the Christian, wrong in itself.

With reference to David Bosch, France insists that the New Testament is concerned with the 'liberation of *people*' and not the 'liberation of *peoples*'; indeed, '*the people*' is something from which one should be liberated, given the 'supra-national character of Christianity' (1986:17-21). Therefore, Malina argues

in a NT context, to speak of a theology of liberation is rather presumptuous. What the NT does in fact demand is a theological morality of freedom, of slave-service to neighbor conditioned by one's charism (1978:74).

In conclusion: much of the emphasis in the study on freedom/liberation in the New Testament derives from the traditional theological paradigm, which achieved its particular form gradually since the sixteenth century and which relied heavily on a particular interpreta-

¹³ Although it has to be conceded that the political situation during the time of the New Testament was horrendous, France's conclusion that no attempts were made to change this was 'because their [sc followers of Christ] interest lay essentially elsewhere', is challenged by the historical events of 66-70 CE, and also in 132-135 CE, as well as many other revolts (cf e g Grabbe 1992:445-461; 566-605).

¹⁴ According to France (1986:19), only when a government makes claims reserved for God, is political action against that government advised and then Rom 13 is replaced by Rev 13.

tion of the Pauline epistles, as outlined in chapter one above. This theological tradition characterised by emphasis on the individual, yet extolling a disproportionate low anthropology,¹⁵ and on 'spiritualised' salvation, with a derived morality and value system,¹⁶ naturally does not favour a socio-economic or political reading of the New Testament, or the Pauline epistles in particular.

2.2. The Pauline letters

Paul, who develops the Christian idea of freedom, does not consider freedom in itself,¹⁷ but only the freedom of faith (and lack of freedom, as fallenness into sin and flesh) (Falusi 1973:115).

The apostle Paul is not infrequently accorded the honor of being the foremost exponent of freedom in the New Testament.¹⁸ The famous dictum by the fifth-century bishop of Hippo refers to Paul:

St Paul, writing from a background in which the requirements of holiness were set forth in legalistic detail, was able to say, 'All things are lawful for me...' Later, St Augustine understood this freedom in Christ so well that he could counsel his fellow Christians to love God and then do as they pleased. To know that God accepts us as we are is to be free indeed (Falusi 1973:127).

How decisive the influence of a particular — in this case the classic, traditional — theological paradigm of understanding can be, can be clearly observed in Malan (1990). He begins his discussion of Pauline freedom with referring to the Anselmian notion of vicarious grace¹⁹ which posits the death of Jesus as ransom for the forgiveness and grace bestowed on people. Yet, apart from a deutero-Pauline reference (1 Tim 2:5-6) to this effect, Malan nonetheless distinguishes four categories of liberation won by Jesus:

- forensic (liberation from guilt and punishment of sin);
- personal (liberation from lawlessness);

¹⁵ The emphasis on the individual while holding a low anthropology should not be considered contradictory, especially against the background of today's individuality accompanied by ability or competence, autonomy, independence, and assertiveness. For example, many years later in nineteenth century America individuality was also the norm, yet personal success was measured in terms of the ability to suppress over-ambitious aspirations rather than the ability to triumph over stumbling-blocks (cf Marsden 1990:76).

¹⁶ Christian morality and ethos is therefore often seen as secondary to 'orthodoxy' or belief, and thus easily neglected. The corresponding use of Paul's letters with his ascribed insistence on a similar contrast and ranking as expressed in the formula 'faith not works' or 'gospel not law' (Luther on Paul), is often noticed in theological argument.

¹⁷ Wilder (1961:415) refers to Müller, who 'stresses the absence of theoretic concern with the problem of freedom in Paul'. Cf also Dyson (1985:65).

¹⁸ In a recent survey of freedom/liberation in the New Testament, the discussion of Pauline views of freedom occupies half of the space (Alan 1990:49-69, the discussion of Paul ranges from 55-64; Cf Gerhardsson n.d.:9-18, with the Pauline section comprising 13-18) — this is already some indication of Paul's relatively greater concern with issues of freedom. For a more reliable statistical account, cf below. Some scholars, however, question the importance of 'freedom' in the Pauline writings, cf e.g. Conley (1977:19).

¹⁹ Cf Patte (1983:espec 306-310) on the illicit importation of this classical Christian doctrine into the Pauline epistles and thought. Patte argues convincingly that Paul's position on the nature of Jesus' death approximates 'paschal' rather than vicarious suffering.

- ideological (liberation from bondage to the basic principles of the world);
- and, spiritual (liberation from bondage to unseen spiritual forces).²⁰

The positive side of freedom espoused by Paul includes, according to Malan (1990:59-64), the following:

- freedom to be children of God;
- freedom from sin and thus to do right;
- freedom from death and thus open to future life;
- freedom from bondage to decay and thus to full liberty in fulfilling God's purpose;
- freedom from oppression and thus social liberty, including freedom from manipulation, slavery, sexual immorality, prejudice, national, religious, social, gender and racial differences.

It is not possible to argue the extent of the traditional understanding of Pauline freedom or, implicitly, the adequacy thereof, in this study, yet it is important to note the broad contours of the traditional argument. Following this, the theological understanding of Paul's emphasis on freedom will be investigated from the perspective of his hermeneutical freedom.

2.2.1. *The basis of Christian freedom: Jesus Christ*

The death and resurrection of Christ form the basis of Christian freedom (Abogunrin 1981:20).

The concept of being 'in Christ' dominates Paul's thought regarding liberty (Malan 1990:55).

It is beyond any doubt that the freedom advocated by Paul is a divine gift and, indissolubly connected to, and indeed, established by the Christ event.²¹ In the words of Gerhardsson (n.d:13)

[u]nlike other New Testament authors, Paul and his school interpreted salvation in Jesus Christ in *eleutheria*-terms and tried to clarify what 'the freedom which we have in Christ Jesus' (Gal.2:4) is.

Nothing less than a 'radical rethinking' was forced upon Paul the Pharisaic Jew by his new situation! Never denying the privileged Jewish tradition of its preferential relationship with God, he nonetheless had to reconsider what *υιοθεσία* (sonship) would mean in the dispensation following the incarnation and especially the death and resurrection of Christ. Sonship is now extended beyond the confines of 'historical' Israel.

As the freedom which Paul describes in his letters is unimaginable — and, according to Paul, simply does not exist — without Jesus Christ, 'Paul describes this freedom in Christ in

²⁰ Malan's analysis is complicated by his failure to distinguish between perspectives from Pauline and deuterio-Pauline writings. As Ogletree (1983:165) points out, '[w]hen we turn to the deuterio-Pauline literature, we see that Paul's grasp of cultural relativity has largely been displaced by a theological sanction for the patriarchal household (Col 3:18-4:1 and Eph 5:22-6:8)'.

²¹ So also e.g. Dyson (1985:62-63); Ogletree (1983:146-148); Packer (1982:695).

absolute terms' (Gerhardsson n d:14). It means, that for Paul the freedom of followers of Christ is made possible through, and only through union with Christ (Malan 1990:55). The freedom which Paul had in mind was not a modernist and individualist concern to be accountable to oneself only as completely and absolute independent human being. To the contrary

[f]or Paul, human existence and total human independence in the sense of being subject to no one are simply incompatible (Malina 1978:70).

Naturally, because Paul is regarded the author of it, freedom from law, sin and death are seen as important elements in his 'theology'. Abogunrin (1981:22-28) describes freedom from the law within the context of the 'new law' written on human hearts, and no longer set in stone (2 Cor 3); Christ as the end of legalism and thus the fulfillment of the law (Rom 10:4); freedom based on faith in the promises by God, especially to Abraham and thoroughly effected in Christ (Gal 3:16); the purpose of the Law as instrument to communicate life to humans failed and instead delivered humans to the power of sin, but the purpose also as παιδαγωγός (stern supervisor of a child), ἐπίτροπος (child's guardian) and οἰκονόμος (house steward) (Gal 3:19-4:7); and, the impossibility of the Law where freedom reigns (Gal 4:21-31).

2.2.2. Freedom and the Torah (Law)

Commentators on and scholars of the Pauline letters seldom pass the opportunity by to emphasise the close relationship between freedom and Christ (and the Spirit) in Paul's letters, and the corresponding — at least in terms of the Lutheran paradigm — sharp contrast between freedom and the law,²² as frameworks for human life and living. Apart from difficulties in translating the Hebrew תּוֹרָה (Torah) with 'law', fueled by the Septuagint's rendering of this word with νόμος,²³ modern understanding of both freedom and law sometimes cause great misunderstanding and subsequent misappropriations of these motifs in the Pauline letters.

Westerholm has recently (1988:205-209) formulated what the Christian freedom from the law would mean from a neo-Lutheran perspective. He argues a strong case that the Pauline phrase that Christians have 'died to the law' (Rom 7:4; cf Gal 2:19) includes release from the curse of the law, the use of the law for justification, from misunderstanding the law, but also

²² The continuing value of the law for Christian life is generally admitted, but only under specific conditions: the law is firstly seen to be 'transformed' in some way (e.g. eschatologically, so Stuhlmacher), and then it is ascribed two functions ('teacher of sin' and 'restraint on sin', so Luther) or even a third ('custodian to Christ' or revelation of God's will, so Calvin) (Bandstra 1990:249-250;260).

²³ For a fuller discussion on the translation of תּוֹרָה with νόμος, cf Westerholm (1988:136-140; arguing against Schechter and Dodd that the Greek term adequately translates the former as law) and especially Winger (1992; in an extensive treatment he argues against the equation of תּוֹרָה with νόμος, claiming that the latter is used in a variety of ways). The claim by Winger (1992:158) that Paul sees Jewish νόμος as 'the way of life of the Jewish people rather than the command of God', would probably need a rethinking of many of the traditional (Lutheran) but also some NPP arguments on Paul's thought on the law.

freedom from the law's demands. As to whether this freedom from the law implies release from its ceremonial or ritual but not moral obligations, Westerholm answers that as Paul saw the law as a unit, his plea for freedom should be taken in a comprehensive and all-inclusive way. This does not imply anomism for Christian life because Christians are still 'bound to do his [God's] will'. Despite the absence of formulae to encapsulate such moral behaviour, Paul nevertheless urges Christ's followers to discern the will of God and let their love grow 'in knowledge and discernment'.

Most importantly, however, according to the Lutheran tradition, Paul's foremost problem with the Law was its inability to provide 'righteousness and freedom', notions which are interpreted theologically as referring to both the legalistic and salvatory function of the Law. Gerhardsson (n d:15) puts it this way:

During his time as a Pharisee, Paul accepted a rich, holy heritage and could call it in its totality *Torah*, 'teaching', 'law' (*νόμος*). As a Christian he made — more clearly than before — a distinction between God's gifts and God's demands.

The Law had an interim task of custodianship to fulfill in the period between Moses and Christ. Conventionally, the traditional Paul is therefore found to put up a severe contrast between 'freedom' and 'law'.²⁴

2.2.3. Freedom and justification

Freedom as reflected in the Pauline letters is traditionally seen as tied in with the Pauline notion of 'justification':

freedom from sin and justification by faith, are linked together because freedom from sin is already realized in the 'righteousness of God' (Falusi 1973:121).

Paul does not consider 'freedom' on its own in formal or material terms — for example, the possibility to do whatever you want to do — but in relation to 'the concrete facts of sin and flesh and hence freedom from these powers' (Falusi 1973:116).

It follows from the above that when freedom from the Law is brought about by Christ, and since it is the Law which can — should? — be held accountable for awakening sin and its

²⁴ Gerhardsson (n d:16) finds this peculiar in comparison to contemporary practice where 'natural' and other kinds of law determined the perimeters of freedom. Cf below. However, Gerhardsson confuses the argument when he fails to acknowledge — although alluded to earlier in his study (:5-9) — that the Jewish law as such was also perceived as 'freedom' functioning within the confines of the theocracy. In addition, it is quite clear that for Paul the contrast is not between 'moral law' and 'freedom', but between 'freedom' and 'flesh', 'sin', and 'law' (the latter as instrument of aggrandisement and arrogance, cf chapter 2). Although he did not posit a particular codified 'law', it is quite clear that he described — and prescribed — Christian morality and ethos in a number of ways! Even in neo-Lutheran positions on Paul, the continuing *moral* value of the law is stressed (cf Bandstra 1990:259-261).

passions, humans beings are set free from sin as well. However, such discussions on Pauline freedom, as those referred to here, often proceed from an individualistic perspective.²⁵

2.2.4. Freedom, and love and hope

Paul can emphasise that freedom in Christ, as much as it means freedom from law and sin, also offers freedom from death (Abogunrin 1981:28). With the end of the Law as a precondition for life, and freedom of sin granted by God through Christ, and although freedom from physical death is still painfully present in this world, the triumph of Jesus' resurrection includes all believers in Christ. Physical death has become no more than 'sleep' (1 Thes 4:13ff).

A common theme in Paul is that the freedom wrought by Christ is not only a 'negative freedom', freedom *from* death, sin and flesh, and the law, but is also a 'positive' or constructive freedom: freedom *to* love, to hope to be of service to one's neighbour as much as one is subject to Christ.²⁶ As Malina (1978:70) claims

baptism (or faith) alone does not make a Christian. The goal for which the Christian is set free is subjection to God in Christ.

This is indeed why Paul can offer 'slavery' as a predetermined choice for a follower of Christ. To be a slave of Christ or a slave of obedience implies a 'religious act or decision'.

Malina finds the origin of the idea of becoming a slave for God, of rendering service to God in the LXX.

In the LXX 'to serve God' normally does not mean to fulfill individual commands of God, but rather refers to the sense of total dependence and submission toward God deriving from his relationship with men [sic] (e.g. cf Judg 10,13.16; Ps 2,11; 99,2; 101,23) (Malina 1978:72).

Slave service to God entails three matters: it is rooted in justice, peace and joy in the Spirit but does not consist in these qualities; it is directed to Christ; and, it consists essentially in treating one's neighbour according to the demands of *agape* (Malina 1978:72).²⁷

In order to place the Pauline concept of freedom in context, it will be necessary to briefly consider the use of 'freedom' in the world contemporary to Paul.

²⁵ Cf Falusi (1973:113-128) who refers to the third person, singular and male virtually throughout his article.

²⁶ Wilder calls the 'pressure of Christian freedom' the imperative on love and suffering (1961:415-416). Conley (1977:21), however, argues that the idea of 'freedom to' is a relatively recent concern of philosophers; 'freedom from' is more 'classical'.

²⁷ Malina's tacit acceptance of the TAP emerges occasionally, e.g. in his claim that Christian service, unlike the Torah, demands *agape* as its necessary condition (1978:73). However, cf Brooks (1990) on 'the spirit of the Ten Commandments' and chapter 2 above.

3. The meaning of freedom: A historical survey²⁸

The bigger the words, the more easily an alien element are able to hide in them. This particularly is the case with freedom (Bauckham 1989:103-104, quoting Ernst Bloch).

3.1. General

'Freedom/liberation' is used in a variety of contexts with an accompanying wide range of meanings. Put in a different way, the word 'freedom' has as many possible meanings as that which people attribute to it — it is an 'elastic word' (France 1986:12).²⁹ Different people understand different things to be referred to, signified, or meant by the concept. For those who find themselves being oppressed, liberation might mean political liberation, or religious freedom for those caught up in (legalised, informal, and so on) persecution, or a free-market system for hot-blooded capitalists or for the psychologist freedom for (to) self-actualization — the possibilities are as numerous as the identification of the situation of 'un-freedom'. As Felder (1989:103) puts it

[f]reedom is one of those abstract words that everyone seems to use rather blithely, as if its meaning were self-evident.³⁰

It would therefore be important to delineate the perimeters within which the concept was used in Paul's world and which shaped our way of understanding it, both in the biblical and contemporary contexts. A good starting point would be an investigation of the context contemporary to Paul, as one can accept with Abogunrin (1977:28),

[i]n putting across the meaning of Christian freedom, Paul employed ideas that were similar to those already known in Hellenism and Judaism.

That Paul shared the use of words for freedom with his contemporaries, does not necessarily imply either that he relied upon others for his ideas concerning freedom, or that he and his texts offer the same perspectives on freedom as those of others.

A warranted first step would be to investigate the use of *ἐλευθερία* and its Ionic variant *ἐλευθερίη* in classical Greek. Liddell & Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon* (1968:582) and the *Supplement*³¹ defines *ἐλευθερία* in the following way:

²⁸ Although such a survey should not merely turn out into a history of ideas-approach (cf Wuellner's criticism of Betz, 1977:26), the ideas as expressed in a wide variety of texts seem to offer themselves as a good starting point. The life-settings of these texts should, however, also be addressed.

²⁹ Malina (1978:62) suggests that 'freedom' (and its cognates) should rather be seen as a 'metaphor': 'a fused, hazy, ambiguous sign conveying meaning and embodying feeling. The problem with symbols is that they can be used by competing, even contradictory, individuals and groups in diametrically opposed senses and still be "true".'

³⁰ Cf Gerhardsson (n.d.3): 'We all love freedom, but when we say this we can mean different things. It is possible to connect almost everything we consider good with the word "freedom"'. Cf also Dyson (1985:55) on the use of freedom in arbitrary and a wide variety of ways, freedom 'has become the slogan of competing power structures'.

³¹ Edited by EA Barber. Cf *Supplement* (:52).

- I. 1. a. freedom, liberty
 - b. manumission
 - c. manumission document³²
2. licence
3. (later variant ἐλευθεριότης)

These usages of ἐλευθερία were mostly to be found in Classical Greek.³³ Although Paul writes in Greek, the background of his use of freedom is to be found in the Old Testament.

3.2. Old Testament times

The biblical idea of liberty (freedom) has as its background the thought of imprisonment or slavery ... When the Bible speaks of liberty, a prior bondage or incarceration is always implied (Packer 1982:694, emphasis in original).

Even before the dawn of the Classical Age, slavery was a prominent part of the Jewish society and other contemporary societies:³⁴ ‘a normal social institution and economic fact of life’ (Dunn 1993:7).³⁵ According to Falusi (1973:113), freedom in the Old Testament is generally understood as ‘the condition of those set free from slavery, or of those exempted of forced labour’. The later Old Testament writers refer to slavery in early Greece and its neighbouring states.³⁶ Falusi adds that the relatively more humane treatment of slaves among Israel was due to the religious morals of the people of Israel, and finds the origin of the ‘religious idea of liberty’ here.

The typical view of a ‘free³⁷ person’ in the Old Testament is often located in the words of Gen 1:26-28, a passage which is linked to the human faculty of intelligence, rationality and powers of communication (Falusi 1973:114). With the fall of the first humans into sin as depicted in Gen 3 the very notion of freedom becomes contested, with the fall being described as ‘a reversal of the relational condition of human life’.

From the Jewish traditions it is clear that Yahweh was known as a God who sets people free as exemplified in the extremely important exodus-tradition (cf also Gerhardsson n d:5-6).

³² An addition to be found in the *Supplement*.

³³ Cf Liddell et al (1968:x, xi): ‘Liddell and Scott, though they originally intended their work to be a Lexicon of Classical Greek, admitted a number of words from Ecclesiastical and Byzantine writers...’. Cf below for the range of meanings of ἐλευθερία during the time of the New Testament.

³⁴ Gerhardsson (n d:6) argues that it was only since the time of the Jews in Canaan that slavery was found among them, and then still it was less prevalent as among the Greeks.

³⁵ As Dunn (1993a:7) argues, although slavery was considered a misfortune, it was not seen ‘as a wrong in itself’. Within Israel, a strict distinction was made between a foreign and Jewish/Hebrew slave (Gerhardsson n d:6; Osiek 1992:175).

³⁶ ‘Ezekiel at least mentions slaves as a typical Greek commodity’ (Murray 1980:74). For the Phoenicians, cf Ez 27:2-36 (espec v. 13).

³⁷ No Hebrew word for ‘freedom’ is found in the scriptures of Israel, although the adjective ‘free’ as opposed to enslaved, and verbs for ‘to set free’ are found referring to civil freedom (Gerhardsson n d:5).

The freedom from Egyptian bondage takes place, however, within a covenantal context and depended on the pious obedience to God on all levels of life: social, political and otherwise. Freedom in the Old Testament is a 'covenant blessing' and Yahweh is frequently depicted as the *לְבַרְכָּא* (redeemer) of Israel.

After Israel's return from exile,³⁸ the quest for liberation from foreign powers became more pronounced. With it developed the belief in a messiah who would institute the freedom longed for. It was often believed that the appearance of the Messiah and the resultant freedom would be accelerated by Israel's continued and dedicated piety (Abogunrin 1977:33-36).

Within a theocratic worldview, political, civil and 'spiritual' freedom are found in a synergy with the former as the dominant element. However, Gerhardsson (n d:7-9) argues that in addition to the political or nationalist dimensions of freedom in the Old Testament, it is possible to detect the development of an independent notion of spiritual freedom as well. After the experience of exile by the Jewish people, they developed a sense of spiritual freedom which is not necessarily informed by political events:

the exile made the Israelites aware of the fact that they could have a spiritual (religious) freedom without having national independence ... Thinking men [sic] focused their reflection on a freedom independent of national freedom and civil freedom (:7).

The discovery of spiritual freedom was probably stimulated by the increasing influence of Hellenistic tendencies in Palestine since the time of Alexander, as evidenced in the writings of Philo.

Although Scripture kept the goal of national and political freedom alive for the Jews — as revealed in the actions of groups like the Zealots — the dominant line of thought among the Pharisees seemed to be that 'Israel could serve God in (spiritual) freedom even if the people had to endure the supremacy of foreign rulers' (Gerhardsson n d:9).

It seems fair to conclude that the notion of 'freedom' as known by the ancient Greeks as well as in our modern world, was not the notion held by the people of Israel, at least as reflected in their texts or Scripture. The important distinction was the particular political dispensation, with the first hints of democratisation becoming visible in the Greek world, whereas the people of Israel considered themselves the people of God and thus ruled by God. With theocracy firmly entrenched among the Jews during the time of the Old Testament, there was no room for an absolutised or autonomous sense of freedom. Freedom for the Jewish people meant allegiance to their God and his Law, which was not perceived as bondage or enslave-

³⁸ Together with the exodus-tradition, the return from exile and subsequent 'restoration' narratives, form the basis of much of the Old Testament and later Jewish thoughts on the relationship between Israel and its God. Cf Dunn (1993a:3).

ment. To the contrary, the Law of God became the bestower of life, because it ensured the proper conditions of life before God and therefore true freedom only existed in relation to and in dependence on the Law.

3.3. Antiquity³⁹

To be free is to be at one's own disposal (Aristotle, Pseudo-Plato's *Definitiones*, 415a; emphasis added).

This underlying formal sense of independence of others persisted in the Greek world (Schlier 1964:487; emphasis added)

Freedom in the ancient world is often defined as the opposite of Aristotle's famous definition of slavery,⁴⁰ namely, to belong to someone else by nature. According to Schlier (1964:487-492) *ἐλευθερία* was an important concept in the socio-political sphere of the ancient world. He holds that it is possible to distinguish between the political and philosophical interpretations of *ἐλευθερία*.⁴¹

Regarding the political meaning of *ἐλευθερία*, Schlier refers briefly to the following important facets:

- the contrast with the bondage of a slave,⁴²
- the idea of democracy (free from tyranny, despotism), and
- independence of the state (free from external foes; foreigners).

There was then basically two dimensions⁴³ at stake: individual freedom, but also a constitutional or political freedom, that is civil and national freedom (Gerhardsson n d:3-4). The constitutional aspect includes both the internal as well as external condition of the state.

It should, however, also be remembered that much of the idealism regarding freedom suffered a serious setback because of various events during the classical ages, as these events rather emphasised the inability of people to effect lasting freedom for all. Indeed, as Kolenkow stresses, the belief in freedom became 'an old dream; men [sic] actually believed in fatalism'.

³⁹ The classical age, i.e. the (middle of the) seventh century to the time of Alexander's conquests in the latter part of the fourth century.

⁴⁰ For some recent studies on slavery in Antiquity and early Christianity, cf e.g. De Ste Croix (1989); Kyrtatas (1987); Martin (1990); Osiek (1992:174-179).

⁴¹ Used the first time in the writings of Homer, according to Gerhardsson (n d:3). Anderson contends that *ἐλευθερία* 'has a very limited political meaning until rather late in the development of Classical Greek politics; and it seems to have gotten its start as a propaganda term' (1977:14).

⁴² Cf also Falusi (1973:113) who defines freedom as 'primarily the state of those who are not slaves', following the line of thought established by Aristotle (cf above).

⁴³ There were also basically two kinds of slavery: agricultural, industrial and penal on the one hand, and urban household, business and imperial slavery. The second group were not only 'performers of menial tasks' but functioned and were treated differently from the former (Osiek 1992:175).

Some of the philosophical moralists did conjure up some perceptions of humans being capable of turning this around: Seneca's portrayal of Hercules, Plutarch's description of Alexander, and Tacitus' encomium on Agricola are examples of the possibility to triumph over fate and misfortune. These images, nevertheless, rather confirm the need to counter the all too pervasive mood of fatalism (1977:23).

3.3.1. Freedom/liberation and enslavement⁴⁴

[T]his [sc the ancient world] was a world in which slavery, in some form or another, was universal (Andrewes 1964:156).

On an *individual* level the concept of freedom/liberation existed in contrast with the position of the slave. Not only was this contrast the primary way for ancient Greeks distinguishing themselves from the barbarians,⁴⁵ but it also dominated the fibre of socio-political life in the ancient Greek world,⁴⁶ because of the very strong undergirding of the community by the political situation at hand.⁴⁷

The acceptance of the institution of the *δοῦλος* and therefore of the *ἐλεύθερος* is a symptom of the fact that the horizon of Greek life and thought was determined by political reality (Schlier 1964:488).

Nevertheless, Mastronarde (1977:24-25) argues that 'the anthropological theory of the natural freedom of all men [sic]' is sometimes too easily applied to the classical context, as the political doctrine of equal rights was probably more compelling in the classical age.

Slavery and bondage were seen to be much more than simply unfortunate circumstances which should be endured patiently. People's very lives and their ability to live as human beings *to the full* was at stake. As Kitto puts it, 'slavery and despotism are things that maim the soul'. He then quotes Homer in saying, 'Zeus takes away from a man half of his manhood if the day of enslavement lays hold of him' (1957:10).

⁴⁴ The argument on the rights and wrongs (justifiability) of slavery is not so much at issue here and will surface in the discussion only when and where relevant. It is also important to note that in the seventh century a new, organised (i.e. institutionalised) slave-system was started (Bury & Meiggs 1975:87).

⁴⁵ Cf Demosthenes (quoted in Kitto 1957:9): 'The barbarians are slaves; we Hellenes are free men [sic]'. This also serves to explain why enslavement of barbarians and foreigners was preferable to that of fellow Greeks. Cf Kitto (1957:100), Robinson (1933:87) and Snodgrass (1980:95). On the term 'barbarian' cf Kitto (1957:7): 'It simply means people who make noises like 'bar-bar' instead of talking Greek', i.e. 'non-Greeks'; for a similar distinction (although on different grounds, viz racial and religious) amongst the Hebrews, cf Kitto (1957:8).

⁴⁶ Although slavery was always part of Greek life in one way or another, 'the new organised slave-system...began in the seventh century' (Bury and Meiggs 1975:87).

⁴⁷ This political situation in the classical age, was the (free) city-state and was viewed as a considerable achievement. 'This certainly is what an ancient Greek would put first among his countrymen's discoveries, that they found out the best way to live' (Kitto 1957:11). Cf Dunn (1993a:7) who posits the free cities of ancient Greece as the root of 'the Western idea of liberty'.

Often distorted attempts are made to present slavery either as a necessary and more humane institution than what it was⁴⁸ or as the basis of the whole ancient world.⁴⁹ The issue at stake, however, was not the nature or extent of slavery, but simply the basic distinction between freedom/liberation and slavery. One could either be a free person or an enslaved person.

A person could, therefore, only be truly human in the absence of slavery and bondage. It was not simply a matter of over-zealous and self-conceited pride, but a belief in the dignity and humanity of people. The belief was that only as a *free* person, somebody could fully partake in society (i.e. come to full actualisation), not only on the physical level — that is, politically, economically, culturally; or broadly sociologically sense — but also on a mental or psychological level — that is, of self-conception, or self-esteem and self-image.

It was natural that in this context people would start to ask questions about slavery. Slavery as institution was queried from the time of Socrates. It was, nevertheless, only isolated voices⁵⁰ that stressed the equality of all people and that slavery was against nature. Thus, any full-scale organized protest against slavery was lacking,⁵¹ resulting in the successful continuation of slavery throughout the classical period.

⁴⁸ Slaves experienced different conditions in different parts of the world in any case. The contrast between the 'liberal slave regime' of Crete and the 'system of chattel slavery' in Athens is a case in point. 'But at best the relationship was bound to have unhappy elements' including physical punishment (Andrewes 1964:154-155). Cf also Robinson (1933:87-89). One prominent example of just how bad the situation and harsh the lives of slaves could become, was the circumstances at the silver mines of Laurium. The extreme conditions probably were the reason for the desertion of so many slaves during the Peloponnesian War (413 BCE), that the mines had to be closed. Cf Andrewes (1964:149,152); Bowra (1966:94-95); Bury & Meiggs (1975:266,305); Kitto (1957:132); Robinson (1933:89); Starr (1971:12); Van Rooy (1980:375,388); and, Woodhouse (1958:235).

⁴⁹ Cf Andrewes (1967:146-156). A prominent Marxist perception consists in regarding slavery as the basis of ancient Greco-Roman civilization. Although slaves formed about two thirds of the population (Abogunrin 1977:38) and were 'indispensable', and slavery was 'the fundamental institution of society' (cf Bury & Meiggs 1975:87), it was the basis only in the broad sense that it 'would have dislocated the whole society and done away with the leisure of the upper classes of Athens and Sparta' (Andrewes 1964:146) but 'to suggest that it [sc slavery] was the mainstay of Athenian economy is a serious exaggeration' (Kitto 1957:133).

⁵⁰ E.g. of the Greek dramatist, Euripides:

*'Slavery,
That thing of evil, by its nature evil,
Forcing submission from man to what
No man should yield to.'*
(as quoted in Bowra 1966:95)

The majority of people, however, did not speak out against it, even if they did not approve of it. To the contrary, some tried to justify slavery. Aristotle for example attempted to justify it by claiming a natural disposition in some people to be servile (Bowra 1966:95), whereas the Stoics refused this idea (Abogunrin 1977:31) — contrary to this, Osiek (1992:174, quoting Watson) argues that there were 'no necessary assumption of natural inferiority' of slaves. Aristotle further apparently believed that gross manumission of slaves would destabilise the fabric of society (cf Abogunrin 1977:28).

⁵¹ Various reasons for the reluctance to abolish slavery can be offered, but this lies beyond the scope of the discussion. However, cf Andrewes (1967:156).

3.3.2. Freedom/liberation and tyranny/subjugation

[T]he inhabitants of the smaller cities, democrats and oligarchs alike, would have preferred to settle their own affairs in that complete independence which all Greeks so passionately desired (Andrewes 1967:71, emphasis added).

Ἐλευθερία is one of the essentials of a state (Schlier 1964:488, quoting Aristotle).

As was remarked above, the Greeks during the classical period prouided themselves on the idea of the city-state, as the best way to live in society. The city-state was not merely seen as a good political option but particularly as a desired arrangement which would lead to the development of equality and freedom/liberation.⁵² Important to all of this is that the concept of democracy was seen as the backbone of the city-state organisational pattern. The reverse was also true in as far as the city-state was seen by some as the embodiment of democracy.⁵³

Acknowledging all the dangers it entails,⁵⁴ one could perhaps describe the early Greek society, prior to the second half of the seventh century BCE, as one characterized by the notion of autonomous aristocracy.⁵⁵ This entailed initially a hereditary royal house (complete with kings, princes and the like) and at a later stage, tyrants.⁵⁶ Eventually this aristocracy was (at least to a certain extent) replaced⁵⁷ in many of the city-states with democracy.⁵⁸

The foundation of democracy⁵⁹ (in however limited sense) is to be found in Athens during the first half of the sixth century.⁶⁰ The law-giver and tyrant Solon provided the constitutional framework in which democracy could grow.⁶¹ In this conception of and adherence to

⁵² According to Aristotle democracy 'contributes to a general system of *liberty based on equality*' (my emphasis). Cf Aristot.*Pol.*, VI, 4, p. 1317b, 17ff.

⁵³ 'The claim of democracy is that it can best realise this kind of freedom', i.e. 'alternating self-government' (Schlier 1964:489).

⁵⁴ Especially in describing archaic Greece: e.g. 'the true archaic state is a mass of contradictions' (Murray 1980:172).

⁵⁵ However, '[e]arly Greek society was not feudal: there was no class owing obligations to an aristocracy in return for land' (Murray 1980:49).

⁵⁶ Tyrant from *τύραννος* or absolute sovereign and not necessarily implying cruel or overbearing conduct. Cf Solon being described as 'no tyrannical tyrant' (Burn 1965:124).

⁵⁷ For want of a better word, because certain 'democratic' elements were present throughout the history of the Greek city-state (Murray 1980:58).

⁵⁸ The democracy to which oligarchic Sparta, one of the most important centers of Mycenaean Greece, stayed an notable exception (Andrewes 1967:70; Bury & Meiggs 1975:90-91).

⁵⁹ The democracy that was generally practiced in the Greek city-states, was not the same as that which is nowadays called 'Western democracy'. Cf Burn (1965:157).

Perhaps it would be better to rather speak of 'representative government' as does Andrewes (1967:81). Kitto (1957:9) should have the last word in claiming that whether or not it was a democracy, a [free] Greek [man] was 'at least a 'member' [of the government, JP], not a subject'.

⁶⁰ Mastronarde (1977:24) opposes the generalisation of Athenian democracy to the whole of Greek experience, as such unity of experience did not exist. Differences existed in thought in practice between the fifth-century Athenian and Greeks of other states and in earlier times, and from time to time philosophers produced different definitions of freedom.

⁶¹ The emphasis is on the codification of the laws in writing. Cf Murray (1980:98).

democracy, the Greeks saw themselves as qualitatively different from others, with the difference lying in ἐλευθερία.⁶²

The independence, albeit relative, of the city-state was seen as something to be guarded against tyranny in own midst and foreign attempts at subjugation. Both these dangers frequently lurked inside and around the city-states and posed a threat to the highly valued freedom. This freedom was often referred to as ἰσονομία (or 'equal rights' as in modern parlance) and αὐτονομία (self-rule) (Anderson 1977:14).

The continued independence and well-being of the Greeks were threatened by foreign powers, especially by the continuous peril of the mighty Persian Empire of the classical period.⁶³ This threat was only put to rest with the peace with Persia in 449 BCE.

In the internal situation of the broader Greek and Aegean region, aristocracies bowed out towards the end of the seventh century. This was, however, not the end of internal strife but the onset of the age of factions. In this regard, Andrewes (1967:82) refers to the 'spirit of faction'. Amongst the city-states themselves a continuing tug-of-war for supremacy developed.

Internal conflict and strife continued throughout the classical period. It was helped along in various city-states, including Athens, by frequent attempts at oligarchy⁶⁴ and hegemony,⁶⁵ trying to replace democracy and vice versa. Some were more successful than others.

Athens established the Delian League⁶⁶ for her own imperialistic endeavours, which eventually led to clashes with the Peloponnesian League.⁶⁷ These two confederacies finally ended up in the, in more than one way devastating — especially to Athens — Peloponnesian War(s) of 431-404 BCE (cf e.g. Andrewes (1967:72-73). The strife among the city-states continued after these wars, with Sparta, Thebes and various others taking the lead. These conflicts ended only with Macedon's dominance as from 328 BCE.

⁶² 'The barbarians are slaves; we Hellenes are free men [sic]'. Cf note above.

⁶³ Ever since the invasion of Xerxes in 480 BCE. Andrewes (1967:74-75) views the subsequent defeat as the end to westward expansion by the Persians. He is careful though to stress their continuing influence on Greek affairs, due to manpower and wealthy monetary resources.

⁶⁴ E.g. the rule of the Thirty in Athens (404-403 BCE) but especially Sparta during the whole period and thereafter.

⁶⁵ E.g. the Theban hegemony in the first half of the second century.

⁶⁶ It was established by the Greek states to resist the Persians. In 454 BCE. the treasury was transferred from Delos to Athens, signifying the Confederacy of Delos becoming an Athenian Empire. Cf Bury and Meiggs (1975:208-212).

⁶⁷ Founded in the mid-sixth century by Sparta. On the ideological component of the conflict between the two Leagues, i.e. between oligarchy and democracy, cf Andrewes (1967:72).

In the classical age the Greeks tried to protect their freedom on both an individual and corporate or national level. On a national level the choice was between either democracy or oligarchy, both of which warranted protection from the other. Regardless of the choice, Greeks perceived themselves to be free.⁶⁸ This freedom could, however, only exist insofar as the Greeks could fend off unwanted political systems, both from foreigners and fellow-Greeks.

Even during this period the Greeks fully realised that a particular kind of freedom/liberation can be harmful to both the state and its members. The danger for the citizens was situated in the possibility that degenerate freedom/liberation might lead to the imposition of tyranny, 'which means the rule, not of the νόμος but of the whim of the individual' (Schlier 1964:491).

Much more important, though, was that democracy in any case carried within itself elements contributing to its own deterioration. The degeneration consisted therein that in the same measure that democracy enhanced the lives of citizens, it threatened the common good of all by the promoting of the individual, and perhaps leading to the characteristic 'individualism' of Hellenism.

In conclusion, it can be remarked that although numerous inferences can be made from the usage of ἐλευθερία and related terms in the classical period, a very central idea seemed to have persisted throughout. This is the way in which ἐλευθερία was defined in negation and was primarily understood by way of contrast: freedom existed only because of the *absence or abolition of bondage*.⁶⁹

This freedom/liberation both on an individual and corporate/ constitutional level was a concrete *political concept*, not some free-floating state of affairs. It was neither a mental nor existential attitude — some *nirvana* to be reached. Simply put: freedom/liberation was not so much being *in* a certain (political) position than *not* being in another (enslaved).

3.3.3. 'Spiritual' freedom

Gerhardsson argues that subsequent to Alexander's conquests, philosophical discussion tended to include the consideration of matters both universal and individual,

⁶⁸ I e free from tyranny and free from external foes. Cf Schlier (1964:488-492).

⁶⁹ A probable shift in meaning is perhaps to be found where ἐλευθερία was used for denoting the existence of a state (πολιτεία) and was especially in the post-404 BCE era commonly linked to αὐτονομία (Schlier 1964:492). However, given the context it also implied a gained freedom/liberation as basis for this autonomous existence.

to broaden their perspectives in the universal and cosmopolite direction and deepen their reflections about the individual ... Philosophers started an existential reflection on the nature of freedom (n d:4).

In their endeavour to describe and offer their disciples true freedom, Cynic and Stoic philosophers, in particular, defined freedom in negative terms: human freedom is determined to the extent to which a person is capable to disinvest him/herself from what is of no concern or irrelevant to him/her. This requires one to be clear on what *is* of concern for one's particular, individual circumstances.

Only if I liberate myself from false imaginations, learn to let everything irrelevant be irrelevant and to control that which is truly my own, only then am I free. The wise and good man [sic] experiences the true freedom in his complete self-discipline and tranquility of mind (*ἀπάθεια, ἀταραξία*) (n d:5; cf Banks 1994:21-23)

The philosophers' concern with 'passionlessness' was neither the advocacy of licentiousness — at least in Roman thought: only fools, says Tacitus, confuse *libertas* with *licentia* (Betz 1977:3) — nor complete worldly detachment. The search for inner calm and freedom was considered within the confines of 'natural law'. The true freedom of every individual depends on his/her ability to discern this natural law and its influence on one's life. Resignation to the natural law in life did not mean surrender, but acceptance of the inevitable. However, the 'inner being, the life of my soul (*τὰ ἔσω*)' was considered the realm of individual control and in need of resisting any form of enslavement (Gerhardsson n d:4-5).

3.4. The Hellenistic age⁷⁰

It is sensed that there is a much more radical freedom, namely, that of the individual set apart (Schlier 1964:493; emphasis added).

The factions among the various city-states contributed to an ever deepening confusion and the eventual loss of their independence with the accompanying consequences.

With the eventual fall of Athens to Philip at the battle of Chaironeia in 338 BCE, Macedon won primacy amongst the Greek city-states. For many Greek states this implied subjugation, as Macedon was considered to be an outsider⁷¹ in Hellas. The feelings against Macedon were so strong that the Greeks viewed this Macedonian supremacy as a much worse enslavement than the way in which subjection to a sovereign Athens or Sparta might have been perceived (Bury & Meiggs 1975:440-441).

⁷⁰ From Alexander to Cleopatra (338-30 BCE.)

⁷¹ Two important reasons can be offered: the locality of Macedon placed it effectively outside Hellenistic politics, and the very fact that Macedon was an absolute monarchy, in contrast with the Greek free commonwealths (Bury & Meiggs 1975:441).

With the onset of Macedonian rule, the Greek states finally lost their hard fought battle for independence and thus their *ἐλευθερία*. This continued under Roman rule, with Greece being taken up into the Empire as provinces. In this political situation which provided no opportunity of getting rid of the yoke of subjugation, it should not be surprising that *ἐλευθερία* took on new meaning.⁷² As Schlier (1964:493) puts it

[i]f the new concept of freedom is attained in opposition to the political, this is simply proof that the concept lives on and that it is now involved in new problems.

For Schlier (1964:493-496) the basic formal meaning of *ἐλευθερία* stays the same, namely, independent self-determination. When someone wants to promote freedom/liberation, it implies an enquiry into what makes people free and self-determining. This question then becomes a matter of self-knowledge, rational insight into the individual's existence, knowledge of life. From experience it is clear that external things (e g body and possessions) cannot be controlled, but it is possible with that which is inward, namely, the soul. Condemnation of this reevaluation of freedom as internalisation should be withheld when the tremendous and detrimental transitions brought about by Alexander, the Diadochi and the Romans are considered. In the case of the Romans, the

authoritarian and oppressive character of the *Pax Romana*, the growing misery of the masses, the political and economic instabilities, the widespread and shallow materialism and opportunism

provided the social environment for the fermentation of the idea of freedom (Betz 1977:4-5).

By the time of Paul, the philosophical schools had developed methods for attaining internal freedom, so that the maxim 'to live as one wishes'⁷³ became radically dualistic and individualistic. For example, *αὐτάρκεια* (self-sufficiency) and freedom became virtually synonymous.

To attain freedom/liberation would thus entail knowledge of what can be controlled and what cannot be controlled. This knowledge must be worked out and maintained, both in a theoretical and practical way. In an attempt to obtain this basic insight, it implies at least three areas in which the individual should practically withdraw from human life around him or her:

- from desires,
- in committal to God, and
- from *πάθη*.

The real test of the classical claim to freedom, however, was seen in terms of a person's relationship with death, with real freedom manifesting itself in an absence of fear of death. Practically it meant, especially for the Stoics a readiness to commit suicide (Betz 1977:5). These

⁷² And thus 'the extolling of freedom not only does not cease but actually increases', especially in the Cynic-Stoic philosophy (Schlier 1964:493).

⁷³ Betz (1977:4) argues that there is an 'intriguing connection' between this maxim and the Corinthian slogan *πάντα μοι ἔξουσιν* (1 Cor 6:12, 10:23).

perceptions also gave rise to self-sacrifice becoming more than merely a virtue; it constituted ultimate freedom (Mastronarde 1977:24). This perspective on freedom would later enable Paul to offer a similar two-fold freedom: freedom both as manumission (freedom from) and freedom as self-sacrifice (freedom to).⁷⁴

The consequence of these developments was that the connection between the freed person and the community of free people was lost, with the only remnants found in small philosophical groups and some mystery religions. The latter included, according to Betz (1977:4-5), Hellenistic Judaism and the early Christian Church.

Given the options, the freedom to withdraw from the world into one's self or into the small circle of like-minded friends quite understandably became the last and highest of human values. It must have been this ideological constellation and historical situation that caused Paul to employ the concept of freedom in order to describe what he considered to be Christian freedom (Betz 1977:5).

3.5. New Testament times

Slavery was not foreign to the New Testament authors, as the frequent occurrence of *δουλεία*⁷⁵ (slavery) proves. Many names of slaves are mentioned: Onesimus, Erastus, Prisca and Aquila, and so on. It is not surprising when Arndt and Gingrich — in their lexicon of the early Christian period — see the essence of freedom/liberation to lie in the contrast with a state of bondage, namely 'opp[osite of] *δουλεία*'.⁷⁶ They identify this bondage as being situated in the first place in the Torah,

[e]specially of the freedom which stands in contrast to the constraint of the Mosaic law, looked upon as slavery Gal 2:4; 5:1 (Arndt and Gingrich 1979:250).

Under the lexical entry of the verb *ἐλευθερόω* Arndt and Gingrich again refer to the dative of advantage (*τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ*) in Galatians 5:1. The meaning 'for freedom' is offered and in brackets this freedom is further qualified as 'fr[om] the Mosaic law'.

Louw and Nida (1988:472, 488, 489) place *ἐλευθερία* into the semantic domain of 'Control, Rule'. This is part of the broader category of words describing events.⁷⁷ The

⁷⁴ Betz explain this as his reason for emphasising *ἐλευθερία* in stead of *ἀπολύτρωσις*: the idea of manumission 'just does not cover everything' Paul says about freedom and its implications. The same argument goes for other cultic and philosophic terms such as *ἀντάρκεα*, *ἀντάρκης* and *ισότης*. Betz insists that no other term conveys the 'same poignant connotation' of freedom as *ἐλευθερία* (Colloquy 1977:32-34). At a later stage Betz argues that the 'freedom from'/'freedom to'-categories provide a model which is too simple, especially as he contends that the 'freedom to'-aspect was the 'original concept' (Colloquy 1977:41).

⁷⁵ With *δοῦλος* sometimes translated covertly as *inter alia* 'servant' and 'steward', rather than 'slave' (Osiek 1992:177).

⁷⁶ So also e.g. Packer (1982:694) 'When the Bible speaks of liberty, a prior bondage or incarceration is always implied'.

⁷⁷ As distinguished from those words (lexical items) describing or designating either 'objects' or 'abstracts'. Cf. Louw and Nida (1988:vi).

semantic subdomain in which *ἐλευθερία* and its derivatives are to be found is labelled 'Release, Set Free'. Louw and Nida provide the following as the meaning of *ἐλευθερία*: 'the state of being free - "to be free, freedom"'.⁷⁸

Second Temple Judaism and early Rabbinism:

Bokser (1977:16-18) argues that in earliest rabbinic circles sin was not seen as inevitable, and neither that an individual's input is insignificant — two ideas which complement one another. The role of the actions and will of the individual received emphasis in early Rabbinic circles, which also probably contributed to the scaling down of the — earlier much emphasised — apocalyptic and active messianism. The responsibility of the individual is found in Jewish circles as early as the concerns in the book of Ezekiel with the individual and his/her responsibility, highlighting the notion of 'intent'.

Wuellner (Colloquy 1977:43-43) finds in Pharasaic Judaism a reaction against the priestly cultic notion of freedom as 'a private, individual cultic act'. In the Pharasaic tradition freedom is 'applied to a wider, more inclusive communal realization of freedom'. Like other Jewish groups, Pharisaism defined freedom in relation to service to God and others, and this was inscribed and centered on 'a codified religious and moral way of life' (Banks 1994:20-21).

3.6. Parallels in Paul?

Erst bei Paulus ist ein Begriff der Freiheit entwickelt. Wir sind damit auf den doppelten Hintergrund der Vorstellung im Alten Testament und im Hellenismus verwiesen (Bartsch et al 1983:506).

It would be very difficult to deny that Paul was influenced by the earlier and contemporary philosophical, religious and other ideas and practices of freedom in his own thinking. It is clear from even a superficial comparison that certain lines of thought regarding freedom manifest themselves in both Paul and his contemporaries. However, as difficult as disavowing 'outside' influences on Paul, it is impossible to ascertain exactly which, and to what extent, certain contemporary notions and beliefs guided Paul's own development and use of the concept of freedom. It is nevertheless argued by some that Paul made certain changes in his understanding of freedom between the earlier Galatian and Corinthian letters, and the later Romans letter.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ It is interesting to note that Louw and Nida, apart from supplying the above translation, stress the phenomenon that a number of languages express the concept freedom/liberation as 'a negation of control or domination' (Louw and Nida 1968:488).

⁷⁹ Wuellner (1977:27) for example, but he insists that Betz's argument that the changes can be ascribed to anti-Pauline propaganda, is difficult to substantiate given the lack of any evidence in this regard. Cf also the Colloquy (1977:46-47) on the differences between Romans and the earlier letters, generally ascribed to the different contexts Paul addresses and especially to the fact that Paul's letter to the Romans is addressed to a congregation he never met before.

On the other hand, Betz (1977:1-4) expressed his perplexity with the prominence given by Paul to the concept of freedom. He contends that by the time of Paul, the 'classical Greek notion of freedom had largely been reduced to an old dream'; yet, it is one of the major features of Paul's doctrine of freedom. Betz does admit that notwithstanding the changes this concept underwent with the Romans rise to power, the attraction of the idea of freedom remained, although from that stage the emphasis shifted to the individualist aspects. To this, Anderson (1977:14) adds that Paul does not have so much the political notion of freedom in mind as *ἐλευθερία* in a legal sense. The Romans were in all probability concerned about the *licentia* of the Athenian and other democracies, which gave individuals a right to participate in the decision-making processes of the community — a right which was based not a perceived natural freedom, but rather on 'the consciousness of the individual worth within his own community of each man [sic]' (Mastronarde 1977:25).

With especially the 'communal' responsibility of the freedom advocated by Paul in mind, Wuellner (1977:27-28) argues that Paul's ideas on political philosophy and freedom were drawn from Hellenised Judaism, particularly in its Pharisaic version.

Abogunrin identifies a number of parallel conceptions of freedom in Paul and his contemporaries, including certain historical practices. Firstly, Paul does not present freedom as anomism, but similar to the situation in classical society, freedom is properly constituted by law:⁸⁰ '[T]he Law determines the limit within which freedom is to be sought and given' (1977:29). Paul presents freedom not as license (e.g. Malina 1978:70) because this would entail further bondage to the human will and urges, leading to sin. Paul, however, does not allow for people being given to slavery by nature. This notion reflects more of the Roman idea of freedom than that of the Greek idea (cf Betz's contribution in the Colloquy 1977:38). For the Greeks freedom related to the external and internal freedom of the *polis*, built on the fundamental assumption that all people were born free. During the Hellenistic and early Roman period the understanding of freedom changes from the innate faculty or right of a person to the 'sum of civic rights granted by the laws of Rome'.⁸¹

On the other hand, although Paul did not share the negative or pessimistic view of the world (the 'cosmic fatalism') of the time, he was pessimistic about human beings' ability to ensure their own freedom (Betz 1977:8). Paul's disavowal of an overwhelmingly negative

⁸⁰ It is doubtful whether Malina (1978:63) is correct in contending that the extreme view of freedom as the position of being able to choose anything 'once was a serious position in Greek philosophy'.

⁸¹ Paul presents freedom to the Romans, with their often noted disgust for what they perceived as the anarchistic and irresponsible nature of freedom advocated by the Greeks, in relation to the law, as freedom within the law (cf the strong emphasis in e.g. Rom 3:31) (Colloquy 1977:45-46).

view of and escapist notions regarding the world, did not mean that he had an optimistic view of the inherent abilities of humans concerning freedom.

Paul's presentation of the gospel message apparently carried the seeds of 'moral and communal anarchy' in it, as demonstrated by his reactions in the Corinthian correspondence. According to Betz this causes Paul to react like a Roman, denying the Greek notion of freedom, and insisting on the communal and ethical responsibility of Christian freedom (1977:11). Wuellner (1977:27), however, insists that the communal nature of freedom in ancient times should not be understood in any monolithic way, and refers to a number of historical crises to illustrate his point.

Another problem deriving from the ancient traditions that law and freedom run together and that freedom is properly constituted by law, is that this really played into the hands of Paul's 'judaising' opponents. Betz argues that the — programmatic and anti-Pauline — notion of a 'law of freedom' found in the New Testament (for example in Jas 1:22, 2:12) was present in Jewish Christianity from the beginning. This meant that

Paul's argument for freedom from the Jewish Torah would have occurred in the context of alternative solutions which conceived of the Torah as the basis and protector of freedom⁸² (Betz 1977:11).

A second parallel is suggested in Paul's and the Stoics' emphases on the personal character of freedom. Betz argues that as the Greek idea of freedom turned out to be impractical politically, it was resuscitated as an individual concept. However, whereas for Paul freedom remains a gift of God given to people because of Christ, the Stoics claimed freedom as 'educated moral autonomy'. Although the importance of human freedom is stressed by Paul and Stoics alike, the 'basis and tenor' of this freedom differ — which is perhaps best illustrated by the difference in how Paul and the Stoics proposed to cope with life's problems. Stoics saw suicide as a legitimate, indeed preferred, way to avoid baseness of the soul, whereas Paul transforms humiliating situations and circumstances through God's power into an opportunity to serve and glorify God (1977:29-32). However, Paul seems 'remarkably open to forms of suicide', especially in the form of voluntary self-sacrifice (cf Rom 9:3, 15:30f; 1 Cor 4:9, 13; 2 Cor 4:12; and elsewhere). Fear of death is 'incompatible with the Christian faith', and his is a practical reason for rejecting this option: the need within the church for his work (Betz 1977:11-12).

⁸² Wuellner challenges the scholarly 'consensus' — except for, at that stage, Stendahl — on the dichotomy between the Christian-Paul and his Jewish-Christian opponents, with reference to the continuing Torah observance as an 'ethnic-cultural vestige' among Christians, including some in the close circle around Paul, e.g. Silas, Barnabas, Prisca and Aquila (1977:29).

In older Greek religious traditions the association between the realisation of freedom and voluntary human self-sacrifice is well attested. Greek authors such as Euripides, and especially the example of Socrates' death, made the contention that self-sacrifice ensures liberation, popular.⁸³ Betz (1977:9) argues, however, that there is no evidence to suggest that Paul — except in the case of Jesus Christ — argues for the 'heroic act of self-sacrifice', regardless of its potency, which will ensure the participation of people in freedom. Indeed, people need to have this freedom 'injected into them', through the Holy Spirit, which as ecstatic experience augers in the transformation process of a person towards existing in and the maintenance of freedom.

Paul's insistence that followers of Christ are as free as they are 'slaves to Christ', suggest to Abogunrin a third parallel to contemporary practice, namely the manumission of slaves.⁸⁴ Ancient practice prescribed that a slave buying back his/her freedom, needs to deposit the money in a temple of a god who plays a mediatory role in the manumission process. When the owner collects the money from the temple, the slave is perceived as having been sold to the god;⁸⁵ but socially, the slave is considered free and heavy penalties could be instituted against the former owner of a slave who attempted to re-enslave such a freed person.⁸⁶ The issue which distinguishes Paul's version of freedom is to be found in the action of the Christian God: he pays on the cross not only in appearance but in reality, as emphasised in Paul insistence in for example 1 Cor 6:20 and 7:23 *ἡγοράσθητε τιμῆς* (He, *sc* God, paid the price) (1977:32-33).⁸⁷

On the other hand, it needs to be emphasised that some of the notions which operated very strong in Stoic and Gnostic circles, for example individualism and a-historicism are

⁸³ However, cf the later Colloquy where various scholars argued that the Stoics would not see Socrates' death as a (self-) sacrifice — it was, to the contrary, portrayed as an execution — and that even his voluntary submission rather affirmed the law of the state than it offered an example of self-sacrifice: his death had more to do with the fact that he was *ἐκὼν* (willing) than that he was *ἐλεύθερος* (free) (1977:44).

⁸⁴ In ancient practice there were four formal means of manumission (enrollment on the list of citizens; a legal claim of wrongful enslavement; by testament; and, by adoption by a citizen), and three informal ways (declaration of intent in writing; oral submission before peer witnesses; and, (since Constantine) a declaration before church officials (Osiek (1992:176-177). Hamerton-Kelly (Colloquy 1977:32) holds that manumission by adoption was not legally allowed in Greek and Roman law, but only occurred in the ancient Near East. Cf Anderson (1977:15) on various ways slaves could obtain their freedom; he also refers to the 'fairy-tale' version of that time, elements of which he finds in Paul; this story had a beautiful young girl, initially presented as a slave, turned out to be the long lost daughter of wealthy free citizen in Athens, and so 'becomes magically a freeborn citizen, heir or heiress of a large fortune, eligible for marriage and happiness "ever after"').

⁸⁵ Cf Conley (1977:20-21) who refers also to Josephus and Philo who saw 'freedom' paradoxically as 'slavery to God, and not the senses'.

⁸⁶ Cf Malina who, in referring to Daube, observes of the biblical exodus-tradition that it 'was not so much a liberation as an acquisition by a new owner who now exercised new dominion' (1978:67,70).

⁸⁷ E.g. Gal 3:13, *Χριστὸς ἡμᾶς ἐξηγόρασεν ἐκ τῆς κατάρacts τοῦ νόμου* (Christ has set us free from the curse of the Law), with *ἐξαγοράζω* a technical term for the manumission of slaves (cf Bartsch 1983:510).

absent in the New Testament (Wilder 1961:415), only to be incorporated into the later Christian theological tradition.

4. Paul and freedom/liberation

It is very important for the whole argument of this study, to keep in mind that the concept or 'idea' of freedom/liberation cannot be limited to only one signifier, namely *ἐλευθερία* and its cognates. Especially in the case where freedom/liberation is understood theologically, all other signifiers of this concept will have to be taken into consideration. This will include a whole array of terms, from the broader ones like 'salvation' to the more technically used terms, e.g. *ἀπολύτρωσις* as well as images, symbols and metaphors.⁸⁸

Betz stresses that the emphasis put on freedom by Paul is remarkable for many reasons. The apostle not only shares the pessimistic outlook of his time, but radicalises this to include the whole world in 'a state of unfreedom'. Nevertheless, his letters often contain statements on freedom, and this concept certainly seems to qualify his 'doctrine of salvation'. Paul does not entertain the possibility of an inherent human freedom, that is, a freedom derived from human nature (*ἡ ἀνθρωπίνη φύσις*). His anthropology⁸⁹ differs from the contemporary Greek-philosophical position of an 'unchangeable physical/metaphysical state of being' in consisting of the result of 'mythico-historical events', aspects of which emerge in his letters as for example in Romans 5 (1977:6).

Paul therefore develops his own conception of human freedom as a response to his view of the human predicament, and in the process refuted many of the contemporary conceptions of freedom. Paul rejects the possibility of withdrawal from the world, as much as he advocates the freedom of the individual *only* within and in relation to the community and its concerns. In the third place, Paul 'indirectly rejects' the idea that freedom can be achieved through withdrawal into one's soul. According to Betz, Paul even avoids the use of soul and argues in Rom 7 for example, that withdrawal into one's self merely underlines one's imprisonment and incapacitation through the body (Betz 1977:6-7).

It is ironical that while the Reformation-tradition enslaved Paul to individualistic and spiritualistic oblivion, Pannenberg writes with reference to Luther:

⁸⁸ For a broader list of terms used to express 'freedom/liberation' cf e.g. France (1986:9-12); Malan (1990:67-68).

⁸⁹ Cf also Pannenberg (1981:287-297) who argues for differentiation when anthropological perspectives in the first — and sixteenth — and the twentieth centuries are compared, resting in a public consciousness which on the one hand stressed on the total depravity, sinfulness and guilt of human beings. In the modern context, however, human beings see themselves generally more positively if not optimistically: every person has certain inalienable rights and the possibility to do whatever is considered necessary to achieve his/her full potential.

[o]ne of the most important of these basic Protestant concerns is Luther's discovery and reinterpretation of the Christian idea of freedom (1981:288).

Pannenberg laments that while the theme of freedom was a high priority in particularly the writings of John and Paul in the New Testament, 'freedom' came to mean something else: the right to choose and act when and how the individual him/herself decides.

4.1. The 'traditional' (theological) view: a summary and evaluation

Even more important than considering the variety of words, concepts, metaphors and phrases to express freedom/liberation, will be to show that freedom in the Pauline letters refers to more than just any one aspect or sphere of human life, such as politics, religion or spiritual matters. Traditionally, with Weiss and Bultmann arguably the most important proponents of this view, freedom in Paul was seen to refer to freedom from the law, sin and death (Jones 1987:11-24). Most students of Paul today will agree that the emphasis should be on understanding freedom/liberation in a holistic way. It seems particularly important at this stage of my argument not to insist on too sharp a distinction between the traditional view of Paul's insistence on freedom on the one hand, and Paul's interpretive freedom on the other. Indeed, these two motifs which one can call the theological and hermeneutical dimensions of Pauline freedom, are best described in a reciprocal relationship where each dimension is reliant upon the other for the ability to function properly on its own.

In order to pursue the notion of interpretive freedom in Paul, no large scale effort will be undertaken here to explore the various notions of freedom found in Paul and elaborated in theological writings. Suffice it to say that many of these categories of Pauline freedom seem to be informed rather by theological tradition often based on a Lutheran reading of the texts which inevitably guides the understanding of the Pauline notion(s) of freedom.

Any brief attempt to summarise decades of theological and ecclesiological thinking on Paul's notion of freedom, is bound to suffer from the effects of generalisation and, possibly, oversimplification. However, it does seem possible to draw the broad perimeters of the argument as well as the context within which Pauline freedom has traditionally been understood.

A helpful attempt to elaborate on the traditional understanding of Pauline freedom is to be found in a study of Bruce Malina in which he identifies three 'levels of meaning' of freedom in Paul: freedom as the ability to choose, freedom as the effective removal of (external and internal) obstacles, and freedom as the pursuit and attainment of a specific goal (1978:62-64). In terms of these categories, Malina then argues that the 'good news' of the New Testament offered humans the ability to choose, with the emphasis on the goal or 'end-value of human existence' which consisted in fellowship with God and good relationships with other

humans based on this fellowship. To reach this 'end-value', the removal of obstacles was imperative. Since the 'vocabulary of freedom is almost exclusively found' in the Pauline epistles, Malina finds these texts as the best or 'readiest reference' for discerning the meaning of freedom as depicted in the New Testament.

Malina approaches freedom in Paul from the perspective of slavery, the discussion of which he considers the most important context for the deliberations on freedom by Paul. Basing his argument on Paul's letter to the Galatians, Malina notes that Paul emphasises the need for freedom because of human enslavement to 'the elements of the world' (*τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου*, Gal 4:3). These 'elements' were, for the Greeks 'bondage to things that by nature are not gods' (*ἐδουλεύσατε τοῖς φύσει μὴ οὖσιν θεοῖς*, Gal 4:8), and for the Jews legalistic religious observance which eventually replaces God himself (*ἡμέρας παραρηρεῖσθε καὶ μῆνας καὶ καιροὺς καὶ ἐνιαυτούς*, Gal 4:10). The 'elements of the world' therefore 'describes the state of man's [sic] radical alienation from God', and Paul uses certain interrelated terms to express this alienation: flesh, sin, law, death. Malina argues that the widespread existence of slavery as social institution in Paul's day lent itself as an appropriate and immediate analogy⁹⁰ to describe the 'condition of all men [sic] before Christ's coming' (1978:67-70).

When Pannenberg (1981:288-291) argues that the importance of freedom as espoused in the New Testament especially by the Johannine and Pauline writings, declined almost into oblivion when it became synonymous with 'the capacity to choose and to act as one wants', he clearly has a broader view of freedom in mind. His contention is that Luther opposed such an interpretation of freedom, because 'the profound notion of freedom' as found in the New Testament was 'at the very heart of the gospel' as Luther understood it. Although Pannenberg indicates a willingness to conceive of Pauline (among other) freedom in wider ranging fashion, freedom remains very much a theological category, with the emphasis on freedom as achieved by Christ, as opposed to freedom as 'natural claim' by humans.

Betz presents Paul's views on freedom as theological matter from a historical perspective, claiming that Paul's point of departure was the enslavement of humanity through the transgression of Adam. The restoration — not reversal or acquittal — of humankind is achieved on God's initiative and through Jesus Christ (1977:7-8).

⁹⁰ Martin (1990) argues that the 'positive' use of the slavery metaphor would have been understood equally well in the first Century if the distinction — which held true for slaves as well — between status (as social concepts) and class (as indication of one's control of the means of economic production) is kept in mind. His argument is based on the relatively powerful economic positions (e.g. estate managers with control over food production) sometimes occupied by slaves.

4.2. Paul's theology of freedom/liberation

I am inclined to think that the notion of a theology of freedom is rather modern (Conley 1977:22)

If I myself were an American citizen [read: citizen of the 20th century world, JPJ] and a Christian and a theologian, then I would try to elaborate a theology of freedom (Karl Barth, quoted from a lecture in the 1960's by Felder 1991:104).

4.2.1. Introduction

It is not without reason that freedom is often identified as a fundamental value (so Verhey 1984:107-108) in the Pauline epistles. The frequency with which the concept freedom occurs in these writings is easily recognisable. Freedom informs Paul's thinking in all respects — this is especially true of his hermeneutics, but also for his theology as a whole, which can well be described as a theology of freedom — even a theology of liberation.

The use of the word 'liberation' (rather than freedom) in this context is deliberate.⁹¹ For many, liberation is not associated with Paul. In fact, he symbolises quite the opposite — his writings are perceived as the thesis for their ecclesial and socio-political 'enslavement' and oppression. Women, marginalised and oppressed groups have experienced how these texts have been used to perpetuate a situation of inequality and oppression.

It is therefore necessary to take our investigation further by exploring the relationship between freedom and liberation. This means that the narrow confines of an individualised freedom must be crossed to consider also the socio-cultural and political dimensions of Paul's concepts of freedom. Verhey (1984) talks in this regard of a 'new discernment',⁹² of a freedom which extends beyond the narrowly defined theological center of the apostle's thinking. A new discernment of the liberating potential of these texts might lead to a new understanding of Paul's hermeneutics and theology — an understanding which might make him an ally, rather than opponent in the struggle for freedom.

4.2.2. The statistical argument

⁹¹ These terms will be used interchangeably, although the prerogative accorded 'liberation' by Sölle (cf below) is noted. Jüngel (1991:303) argues that the 'Pauline doctrine of justification' is 'the fundamental paradigm in which theology is most strictly and most radically understood as, and challenged to be, a *theology of liberation*': from the power of sin, liberation of theology from 'ecclesiastical institutions and tradition', and 'liberation of worldly responsibility of clerical, theocratic tutelage'.

⁹² Or, as Ogletree refers to Paul's account of Christian freedom: 'revisioning the bases of human life' (1983:135-173).

Peter Richardson illustrates by means of a statistical comparison that *ἐλευθερία* (freedom)⁹³ and its derivatives occur far more frequently in Paul's writings than in any other single writing, group of writings or the rest of the New Testament *in toto*.⁹⁴ Although Paul's letters account for only a quarter of the New Testament, the word *ἐλευθερία* and its cognates — *ἐλευθερόω*, *ἐλεύθερος* — is found 26⁹⁵ of the 41 times it is used in the New Testament (Richardson 1979:164).

Paul is the only New Testament author using the word *ἐλευθερία* with an amount of frequency.⁹⁶ More specifically, the word *ἐλευθερία* features predominantly (almost exclusively) in the seven authentic Pauline letters, while retaining some — but not fundamental — importance in the subsequent tradition. Significantly, Richardson (1979:164) indicates that 'it is the Paul of the earlier and middle period, rather than the later,⁹⁷ who is characterised by the idea of freedom'.

These observations on Paul's use of *ἐλευθερία* lead Richardson to conclude that it is possible to speak of Paul's 'theology of freedom'. Within the theology of freedom there is a further dimension of theological freedom, that is in the theologising process. This creativity is especially noticeable in the way Paul goes about constructing his theology of freedom/liberation (Richardson 1979:165).

4.2.3. Ethics based on freedom

Traditionally freedom in Paul came under discussion as part of his ethics. In what remains one of the most impressive and comprehensive attempts to account for Pauline thought, Ridderbos discusses freedom under the rubric of 'The New Obedience', his chapter on Pauline ethical material (1975:253-326, chapter VII). Notwithstanding the general acceptance that Paul's ethi-

⁹³ The drawback of statistical surveys such as these is obvious. Furthermore it is a survey of a word, not of the freedom/liberation-concept. Words like *ἀπολύω*, *ἄφεσις*, etc are not included. Cf e.g. Tuckett's (1991:319) reference to Paul's use of *ἐξουσία* in 1 Cor 8 when he speaks of 'the "freedom" to eat meat'. Still, the statistical figures do give some indication of a writer's penchant for the use of a specific idea — and does illustrate an important aspect of the writer's thought.

Interestingly, the use of the *ἐλευθερία*-wordgroup seems to indicate a specific concern(s), as other 'freedoms', as for example from sicknesses, are often described differently. *Ἐλευθερία* seems to have been reserved to refer to the individual's position in society, the position of one society in relation to another, and the individual's position in a 'universal society' (human existence in general) (Gerhardsson n.d.:19).

⁹⁴ Even with the Apostolic Fathers' writings included in the survey, Paul is still the writer employing *ἐλευθερία*-concepts more than any other writer.

⁹⁵ 28 if the Deutero-Pauline letters are taken into consideration. Computations differ among scholars, but never greatly. Cf Gerhardsson (n.d.:9) who find 27 instances of the *ἐλευθερόω*-lemma in the Pauline letters.

⁹⁶ Interestingly, *ἐλευθερία* (noun) is not found *at all* in the gospels; in the synoptics, *ἐλεύθερος* (adjective) is found once, but *ἐλευθερόω* (verb) is absent. In John's gospel, the adjective and verb are used twice each, but in one section of 10 verses only (8:31-40) (Gerhardsson n.d.:9).

⁹⁷ The deutero-Pauline or 'inauthentic' letters.

cal considerations are closely linked to his theological convictions, as for example observed by Ridderbos (1975:293), '[l]iberty given in Christ therefore is in the conscience...as freedom of guilt before God', it is to be lamented that too often too broad a rift opens up between the consideration of Pauline theology on the one hand, and his ethical injunctions on the other. Freedom is also seen in regard to ecclesiastical order and discipline (Ridderbos 1975:467-480).⁹⁸

The investigation of the nature of Pauline ethics has lead some scholars to describe Pauline ethics as characterised by freedom. It has been shown, conclusively by Lategan (1990:318-328) that the nature and style of Pauline ethics — in Galatians at least — adheres most closely to the fabric of freedom and (creative) participation.

Many investigators of the Pauline ethic have noticed freedom to be at the core of Paul's deliberations on ethics, and indicated how Paul enticed his readers to become part of this creative process of ethical decision-making. Few scholars, however, have indicated a similar interest in Pauline theology,⁹⁹ although from the argument above the 'free' nature of Paul's theological reflection is arguably plain to see.

4.2.4. *Theology of freedom/liberation, and its endangerment*

It was already pointed out that Paul's freedom cannot be restricted to a spiritual freedom. In order to appreciate Pauline theology to the fullest, the appropriate point of departure should not be 'spiritual' but hermeneutical freedom. Hermeneutical freedom, however, should not be understood either as a basically a-theological endeavour in the line of some post-structuralist textual strategies of reading which celebrate relativism and radical deconstruction. Pauline hermeneutical freedom should on the other hand not be used merely as a tool for formulating appropriate or contextual theological concerns and thoughts.

The deutero-Pauline books, later New Testament writings as well as other church documents, attest to the subsequent domestication of the Pauline message. Not only did much of the Pauline material pose a challenge to theological thinking as well as socio-political practices, even to the degree of becoming subversive, it was a cause of upset in the early church to the extent of endangering the emerging and often struggling 'Christian' communities.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Perhaps Ridderbos does intuitively sense the broader scope of freedom in Paul, when he refers (albeit once only) to freedom in his discussion on sonship (*υιοθεσία*). 'This liberty ... is ... a very comprehensive concept. It consists in freedom from the law ... At the same time ... as the liberty worked and maintained by the Spirit, it has a much more inclusive sense, particularly in the last chapters of Galatians, where liberty is described as the power and principle of the whole Christian life ...' (in contrast with life under the Law) (Ridderbos 1975:202).

⁹⁹ Those scholars who do refer to the Pauline theology as being free, do so by way of afterthought. Cf Richardson (1979:164-166).

¹⁰⁰ Giving rise, perhaps, to the (in)famous quip by 2 Pet 3:16 on 'some difficult to understand things' in Paul's writings.

Paul seems to have been quite aware of the fragility of his concept of freedom. Especially his letter to the Galatians shows that in his view not even membership in the church is a guarantee of freedom. Participation in the possibility of freedom is intrinsically voluntary and cannot be a matter of compulsion (Betz 1977:10).

By focussing on the social dimension of Pauline freedom or liberation, the significance of freedom for his theology will emerge more clearly. Furthermore, the dangers perceived by his opponents to be inherent in Paul's insistence on freedom, will also stand out.

4.3. The social dimension of Pauline freedom

So what we have today is a Paul who is trapped. On the one hand he is misrepresented, perverted, corrupted, and misused by the white church to perpetuate institutional racism. On the other hand black theologians castigate and disparage Paul for his seemingly proslavery position (Jones 1984:31).

Politically, Paul's views seem to represent rather the Roman than the Greek view, discouraging insurrection (as in e.g. Rom 13)¹⁰¹ and even political activism (cf 1 Thes 4:11) as means of achieving freedom. However, Betz argues also that the apostle's political ideas have not been explained to any 'satisfactory degree' (1977:7, cf 32,39).

It is possible to trace the failure of the majority of New Testament, and in particular Pauline scholars,¹⁰² to recognise the social concerns in the Pauline writings, to the influence of the TAP on the interpretation of these writings. It was, after all, this understanding which embodied the only 'proper' approach to Paul, which demanded not only a very individualistic but also an almost exclusively spiritualistic approach to understanding the Pauline documents. As long as the opinion prevails that 'the real opponent of Paul is the pious Jew' (Käsemann, quoted in Elliott 1994:227), it is difficult to reimagine the Pauline letters within its broader socio-historical context.

4.3.1. Against Paul's sense of social freedom

It is lamentable that the perspectives on freedom in the social and political sense of the word have traditionally been appended to discussions of the theme of 'spiritual' freedom in Paul.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ However, cf also Elliott (1994:214-226) who reads Rom 13:1-7 as an exhortation against rivalry, and juxtaposes it with Rom 13:11-14 with its apocalyptic-prophetic emphasis on God's imminent 'redispotion of powers'.

¹⁰² A few exceptions would include e.g. Dunn (e.g. 1993); Elliott (1994; 1997); and, Georgi (1991a; 1991b; 1992).

¹⁰³ Cf e.g. Falusi (1973:125-126) who refers after elaborate discussions on freedom from the law, sin, and death, briefly to 'the ethical dimension of freedom'. Similarly, Abogunrin (1977:28-40) elaborates on freedom and emphasises that Paul's concern in this regard was spiritual, only to contradict himself a few lines from the end of his article, claiming that 'Paul was intensely interested in the Empire, its spiritual and social life' (:40).

This approach follows the traditional view that the New Testament authors, perceived as following Jesus Christ, were not interested in what is called nowadays 'political' or 'national' freedom. Indeed, Gerhardsson (n d:10) argues that it is only in Paul's letters and the ensuing Pauline tradition that any concern with 'civil' freedom is found, 'but then only briefly and in a way that is very revealing'.

Gerhardsson (n d:17-18) depicts the Pauline presentation of 'civil freedom' in an almost eschatological-escapist way:

The freedom in Christ lies on a plane where social differences becomes unessential — and national and social differences as well (Gal 3:28, Col 3:11).

Gerhardsson, however, confuses cause and effect in his analysis of Pauline thought. It is not so much a matter of social and other differences being inconsequential to Christian freedom, as the opposite: freedom in Christ leads to the abolishment of a series of different social and cultural and political (nationalist) distinctions. Gerhardsson's failure to acknowledge the origin of his claim that instead of urging slaves to obtain their freedom, Paul encourages slaves to become more obedient to their masters, comes from the deuterio-Pauline tradition with its avowed attempts at domesticating Pauline radicality: Col 3:22-4:1; Eph 6:5-6; 1 Tim 6:1-2; Tit 2:9-10.¹⁰⁴ The most Gerhardsson is willing to concede is that Paul's declarations regarding social relationships are relativising to an extent, but 'they also mean that the social order is allowed to go on as it is'.¹⁰⁵ He concludes by arguing

[i]t is striking that Paul does not use his view of spiritual freedom in Christ to motivate a struggle for civil freedom (:18).

Gerhardsson summarises his argument on what can be called Paul's ineffective socio-political liberation programme, with reference to three arguments or reasons for this emasculated approach: eschatological (the end of time is near!), tactical (provoking the authorities might bring more hardship), and common-sense (his readers-listeners were not in position of power, capable of effecting changes corresponding to his message of freedom). He does, however, encourage twentieth-century Christians to follow a different course of action, given the landmark changes especially in the socio-political status and power of many Christians which renders the second and third reasons inappropriate.

¹⁰⁴ Gerhardsson's interpretation of Philem 8-21 and 1 Cor 7:21 as Paul encouraging good slavery attitudes, stands in stark contrast with recent studies finding Paul promoting emancipation. Cf e.g. Petersen (1985) on Philemon; on 1 Cor 7:21, e.g. Bartch et al (1983:509); Dawes (1990:681-697) from the perspective of a rhetorical analysis; Osiek (1992:177-178). France (1986:17) concedes that Paul's advice in 1 Cor 7:21 advocates that slaves accept emancipation when offered, but that his concern is with 'the individual's choice, not with the disruption of the system'. It is not clear how he reaches this conclusion!

¹⁰⁵ A slightly different emphasis is found in France (1986:16-17) when he suggests that Paul 'envisages a situation where there will continue to be masters and slaves, and gives practical guidance on the proper Christian attitude in those states' and he refers then to Eph 6:5-9 and Col 3:22-4:1. However, Paul's insistence on spiritual freedom 'makes men [sic] equal' and therefore Paul 'undercuts the value-system of a slave-owning society'.

Falusi (1973:117) claims that it was not 'political freedom' that was at issue between 'Jews and Christians' in New Testament times.

The issue is between that freedom of service to God which the Jews claimed because they were the physical descendants of Abraham, and the liberty which belonged to Christians who had passed from sin to righteousness, from slavery to freedom, because they had been born by God by faith in Jesus.

For all the theological language used above, the underlying political issue cannot be hidden: the very notion of an exclusive entitlement to God and his promises as expressed by the Jewish sentiment, and this being under threat from a 'Christian' perspective which could erode the nationalistic implications of the former.

The relevance of Pauline thought, including his thoughts on freedom, is often questioned with regard to Paul's emphasis on apocalyptic-eschatological matters. However, as Wilder (1961:415) rightly argues, the eschatological and existential freedom 'implies and carries with it an active expression of freedom in the historical public area'. Therefore 'Paul's *eleutheria* is an eschatological freedom operating *in the world*. The eschatological notion is not one of postponement, but one of grounding' (emphasis added).

4.3.2. Paul on freedom in society

The sweep of Paul's thought is much broader than is sometimes thought to be the case, especially in some parts of evangelical Protestantism. There are dimensions that certainly include the personal, but are large enough to be described as embracing the cosmos and its future, the church as a world-wide family, and the network of social relationships in which men and women stand (Martin 1981:3).

It is indeed an ironic state of affairs that although biblical scholars overwhelmingly point out the socio-economic slavery of the contemporary situation as the context of Paul's insistence on freedom, very few of these scholars manage to offer an interpretation of Pauline freedom which refer to anything else but 'spiritual' freedom.¹⁰⁶

Although Paul agreed with the Jewish notion that freedom is a gift of grace from God, he never conceived of Christ as *λυτρωτής* (redeemer) but as the *λύτρωσις* (redemption) of God. Whereas the Law was perceived in the various forms of Judaism as a covenantal requirement (covenantal nomism à la Sanders), Paul perceived of it as devisive and potentially restrictive.

With the revelation of Christ man is no longer related to God through the Law but by the faith of Christ.

¹⁰⁶ The neglect of the social aspects of Paul's gospel includes also the disregard for the social dimension of 'justification'. Recently, however, scholars like Dahl; Dunn; and, Georgi have addressed this deficiency, which arguably boils down to the translation of *δικαιοσύνη* in all its derivatives, as a forensic term. Cf above in chapter 2 for more detail.

Also, although it is probably correct to argue that God's redemption was no longer seen as a political event which will bring the long sought after freedom to the people of Israel, it is debatable whether 'Paul does not speak of freedom in political terms, but of bondage to the Law of sin and death'¹⁰⁷ (Abogunrin 1977:36).

Following the initiatives of, among others, the New Perspective on Paul, New Testament scholars had other avenues to explore with regard to the Pauline material. Paul is no longer perceived as devastatingly afflicted with a guilt-ridden conscience, or overcome by the gravity of this predicament and thus concerned with finding a gracious God, but rather as a pastor who had to cope with tensions among Jewish and Gentile Christians in newly-found congregations on the issue of the 'how' of salvation, and the formation of the community subsequent to salvation. Add to this theology's need to address the changing world scene since the 1960's, and it becomes clearer how it happened that the social aspect of the Pauline concept of freedom came to the fore. However interesting the reasons for the newly devoted attention to the other than spiritual aspects of freedom are, the concern here will be with the nature and contents of that discovery.

Tambasco argues that Liberation Theology took the early twentieth-century criticism of an ideal and over-optimistic humanity further with its attempt to uncover and stress the influence of socio-economic dimensions of our historicity on our consciousness and understanding. Tambasco faults the 'introspective conscience of the West' (Stendahl) within the theological tradition, and biblical sciences in particular, for failing to relate Paul's notion of 'justice' to faith not only to, but also beyond, the individual and personal level.

When we bring a new set of questions to Paul, we find that the justice of God embodies not only God's gratuitous gift of redemption to the sinner, but great power working in the entire world to regain it under divine sovereignty¹⁰⁸ (1982:126).

Tambasco therefore concludes that Paul is not only concerned with the individual, and his or her salvation but — not regardless of but exactly *because* the correlate of justice is 'faith' — 'a walking in trust that God is at work in history through Jesus'. The instructions directed at the communities receiving the Pauline letters, the insistence on avoiding matters pertaining to 'the flesh',¹⁰⁹ and Paul's advocacy of peace — embracing 'corporate and social well-being and not just individual welfare' — all point toward Paul's concern with social matters of this world (1982:125-127).

¹⁰⁷ Cf the last section of this chapter where an attempt is made, with reference to other studies, of how Paul's notion of freedom did indeed extend to the socio-political and economic realms of life as well!

¹⁰⁸ Cf Georgi's study of the Pauline letters from the perspective of 'theocracy', claiming that this was Paul's ultimate vision for the world (1991b). Hengel argues that Paul's thought should be understood in terms of pre-70 CE Pharisaism with, among other emphases, its strong theocratic-political concern (1991:51).

¹⁰⁹ Tambasco argues that 'the flesh' can refer to at least four matters: sins of sensuality, of heathen religion, of community conflicts, and of intemperance. The third of these could indicate 'structural sin' (1982:126).

Paul's directives on freedom as such, can be understood in ways going beyond the reformational triad of law, sin and death. Tuckett argues that Paul's insistence on freedom concerns his 'vehement opposition' to have one set of traditions forced onto other people (1991:319-320). Paul's freedom is only limited by ἀγάπη, which shows up his understanding of freedom as a relational concept in the first place, and not as a 'private matter' (cf Tuckett 1991:321, quoting Friedrich; Vollenweider 1989:229-232). Freedom for Paul is not 'total licence', and although it is always 'freedom from' something it also 'involves some kind of obligation'.

Freedom for the other is what Christian ἀγάπη works to establish. But freedom for oneself is limited by Christian ἀγάπη for others. Similarly, Christian freedom is limited by attachment to Christ (1991:33).

It is with the realisation that Paul builds his notion of freedom on the 'objective situation of the Christian in the world', which has its basis in the eschatological redemption wrought by Jesus and that which is still to come, that Wilder criticises the Lutheran and wider Reformation view on freedom. The reformationists founded Christian freedom in faith, 'on subjective belief' or 'spiritual inwardness', which was precipitated by their insistence on 'justification doctrine'. However, with Paul's emphasis on the 'eschatological and cosmic aspect' of freedom, he is capable of directing the focus of freedom as much on cultural matters as on 'spiritual issues' (Wilder 1961:416).

A study of political freedom in Paul reveals that it incorporates both strategic and material connotations. Paul's missionary efforts took place within the perimeters of the early Christian mission, which tied in with the Hellenistic Jewish proselyte movement. The very fact that there is a strong communal dimension to freedom in Paul's usage of the term, implies political connotations. As much as the communal implications of 'freedom' threatened the established order and its power structure, and not merely posited a neutral alternative, Paul's freedom is not only a 'social' matter but quite pointedly has strong political implications¹¹⁰ (Colloquy 1977:36-37).

As such, Paul's goal too, was politically not accidental but strategic: As a religious missionary, he had political ideas and ambitions as well — what Betz called a 'definite plan' or 'political strategy' (Colloquy 1977:47). Paul's strategy as 'calculated, strategic, political moves to change the present order' is not in tension with the missionary impetus of the impending eschatological reality, the imminent end and the inclusion of the Gentiles. In the case of Romans, Paul had to secure a foothold in order 'to bring the Gentiles in'. As such,

¹¹⁰ Betz even argues that Paul 'stops just short of being an instigator to disobedience' (Colloquy 1977:37).

Paul found himself addressing both political and ideological issues, as often happens in missionary and revolutionary movements (Colloquy 1977:47).

In his attempts at reorganising the world — on behalf of God — Paul ‘turned the world upside down’ (οἱ τὴν οἰκουμένην ἀναστατώσαντες, Acts 17:6), a reversal sometimes referred to as the ‘divine comedy’ (Anderson 1977:15; Colloquy 1977:47). Betz therefore argues that Paul had a

well worked-out theory of *how* the community can be free, given the circumstances of this world. He had, I think, a theology of freedom, a very elaborate theoretical explanation of how it was possible. *That* convinced people and explains at least part of Christianity’s missionary success (Colloquy 1977:48, emphasis in the original).

Paul’s use of ἐλευθερία was deliberate, as a concept people would understand, and which would entice them to accept his message about Christ. But, moreover, ἐλευθερία described the content of the message of Christ: freedom for all people who put their faith in Christ.

So Paul’s theology, *essentially relational and concerned with the well-being of persons*, took its starting point in what God had done and was still doing in the lives of his people (Martin 1981:47; emphasis added).

4.3.3. Paul’s ‘apocalyptic’ challenge to the imperial order

The most significant way in which a postcolonial reading of Paul disrupts the standard essentialist, individualist and depoliticized Augustinian-Lutheran Paul, consists in the rediscovery of the anti-imperial stance and program evident in his letters (Horsley 1998:167-168).

Sugirtharajah (1998:17) refers in a recent study to the earlier work of Roy Sano on the value of apocalyptic texts for immigrants and communities in diaspora. Sano’s argument is that prophetic writings were often used by ‘white theologians’ as both groups operated within ‘an established nation-state, and have access to power’.

The apocalyptic literature, on the other hand, is suited to immigrants, because this genre emerged at a time in Israel’s history when she had lost her sovereignty. More importantly, the apocalyptic writings envisage a total social and political discontinuity and a reversal of roles rather than piecemeal changes.

Horsley has recently (1995; 1998) strongly argued for the recognition of not only the apocalyptic strand running through the Pauline letters, but also for the challenge posed by such apocalyptic thought to the existing socio-political order. Indeed, many of the key words often seen as mere theological terms in Paul’s letters, such as ‘euangelion’, ‘soter’, ‘pistis’, ‘dikaiosune’ and ‘ekklēsia’ all carried political overtones. These terms, argue Horsley (1995:1157) ‘stand pointedly in opposition to the imperial religion of the *pax Romana*’.

In the baptismal formula of Gal 3:28 he proclaims that the principal institutional bases of the political-economic order in classical antiquity, slavery and patriarchal marriage-family ... are transcended and replaced in the new assembly(ies).

Not only does Paul use the language typical of Jewish apocalypticism, but Paul ‘writes from both the perspective and agenda found in such literature’.

Hengel insists that Pauline thought should be understood in relation to pre-70 CE Pharisaism, and here the relevance of this would be the pharisaic emphasis on political theocracy¹¹¹ (1991:51).

4.3.4. Paul and freedom in today's polity

Especially in a day in which the poorest and most vulnerable of our neighbours, in our nation and around the globe — the hungry, the indigent, those driven from their homes and lands by poverty and war — are systematically deprived of the economic and political means of life by people of privilege acting in the name of 'Christianity', Paul's message may be heard today as 'theology of and for the world in its pain and longing for justice' (Elliott 1997:384-385, quoting Wright in the last phrase).

The difficulty in relating Pauline notions to contemporary societal practice is often characterised by the vastly different social universes which are in play. This is well illustrated by the contrast between slavery during the time of the New Testament and later slavery, as in 'slave-based economies' found in colonial Brazil, the Caribbean and antebellum southern USA:¹¹² temporary versus permanent, hereditary slavery; plural origins versus racial (racist)-based slavery; possible different class as distinct from slavery-status versus joined low status/class; and so on.

After summarising his argument on what can be called Paul's ineffective socio-political liberation programme — with reference to three arguments or reasons for this emasculated approach: eschatological, tactical, and common-sense — Gerhardsson, however, encourages twentieth-century Christians to follow a different course of action. Given the landmark changes especially in the socio-political status and power of many Christians which renders the second and third reasons inappropriate, the 'delayed' eschaton should encourage Christians to engage the social reality.

What I mean is that we must draw keener conclusions from 'the freedom we have in Christ' than Paul did in his situation (:21).

It is clear from the New Testament that very often the followers of Christ merely attempted — as Israel did in the Old Testament — to humanise the slave-master relationship without calling the institution and practice of slavery into question.

¹¹¹ For theocracy in Pauline thought, cf also Georgi (1991b).

¹¹² Referring to Carney, Osiek (1992:178) finds the decline of slavery not in moral objections, but in economic reasons: slavery was inefficient. The reasons for this were the cost-intensive method of production; an economic system based on power and coercion rather than motivation to achieve maximal profit; requiring a large capital outlay whilst returns are low and slow; no incentive to technologise; reinforcement of class prejudices and disdain of manual labour; an ethos of 'conspicuous consumption'; and, the impoverishment of the rural lower free classes — as much as the main reason for the *original* establishment of the institution of slavery was economic in nature (Witvliet 1985:spec 49)!

Mistreatment in both Roman and Jewish moral ideology indicated weakness of character on the part of the one in power. Restraint, discipline, and evenness were the ideal (Osiek 1992:178).

And among the Stoic philosophers

the slowly growing perception of moral equality among 'brothers' and 'sisters' [was] already pondered ... was beginning to create cultural complications in a society in which status depended upon birth, class, and the status of one's patron (Osiek 1992:178).

It becomes clear in Elliott's treatment of Romans 9-11 (1997:371-389) how much a particular interpretive tradition can influence the reading of specific Pauline documents or parts thereof. Although not the major emphasis of his study, Elliott also manages to point out how the traditional approach to Paul — and to some extent the NPP as well — undergirded by the Baurian opposition between exclusivist Judaism and universalist Christianity, has contributed to a reading of Romans as a charter of a Pauline 'law-free' mission. Taking his cue from Paul's 'apocalyptic theology of liberation', which requires of Christians the renunciation of supersessionist claims over-against Judaism',

for Christians of the First World, it also means relinquishing the ideology of privilege over-against the mass of the world's poor (Elliott 1997:385).

And therefore, a new understanding of Romans is required:

The Letter to the Romans is an assault against a false theology of privilege on the part of a triumphant Christian majority that vaunts to have supplanted its progenitors and the dispossessed in its midst¹¹³ (1997:384).

4.4. *Hermeneutical freedom in Paul?*

[Freedom is] kept alive through language, through rhetorical forms, travelling through human traditions and history (Betz, in the Colloquy 1977:42).

Of all the discussions on 'freedom' in Paul, and for all the importance attached to it, not much appreciation has been recorded for what can be called Paul's 'hermeneutical freedom'. Although Paul's hermeneutical freedom undergirds and informs his strong concerns with what can be termed 'theological', 'ethical' and 'socio-political' freedom, the consideration of Paul's hermeneutical practice — for all the (post)modern concern with hermeneutics — seems to have been put on the shelf of the theological storeroom.

However, Pauline hermeneutical freedom should be accorded pride of place when considering the vast importance of Paul's realisation of the import of freedom wrought by Christ for human lives. Even a seemingly innocuous statement such as, '[t]he scriptures and traditions of Judaism played a major part in the beliefs and practices of Pauline Christianity' (Meeks

¹¹³ Meyer (1997:350) argues: 'Such triumphalism among Christians is not only the soil on which a patronizing view of Judaism grows (and worse, where Christendom dominates, a questioning of the Jew's right to existence); it is irreconcilable with Paul's understanding of justification'. For the 'isolationist and triumphalist position' found in Orthodox Judaism with regard to the 'Judeo-Christian encounter', cf Neusner (1989:30 n19).

1985:108), has to be unpacked, for it suggests the need to account for not only the role played by Jewish scriptures and traditions, but also for the way it is incorporated into Pauline Christianity. Was it not for Paul's appropriation of Scripture, what is known today as Christianity would have had a different face.¹¹⁴

It has been argued in chapter three that Paul interpreted the scriptures of Israel with considerable freedom, even when measured against the hermeneutical norms and practices of today. What remains to be explored further in this chapter, is the use(s) to which Paul put this freedom. The impression should not be created that Paul's interpretive practice was isolated from his theology.

To the contrary — and this is the crucial point — the interpretive freedom found in Paul is not an end in itself, but is of vital importance for the construction of his theological thought as a whole. In order to appreciate Paul's concern for freedom in his theology, it is necessary to see it in relationship with his hermeneutical freedom. Indeed, the nature of Pauline hermeneutical freedom also inscribes his concern with 'theological freedom' — to constitute a reciprocal relationship between hermeneutical and theological freedom.

In the following sections, it is argued that the motivation for Paul's hermeneutical practices resides in the idea of 'contextuality', as much as his goal in this regard can be identified as an ecclesiological concern. Before arguing these two matters, however, it is necessary to concentrate on the relationship between Paul's hermeneutical freedom and his theological freedom. This is a complex relationship although the ties that bind Paul hermeneutical freedom to his theological concerns are very strong.

Hermeneutical freedom in the Pauline letters is both a formal and a material matter, that is, it concerns the nature and style of Pauline appropriation of the scriptures of Israel as well as the particular 'meaning' or 'interpretation' accorded to these texts. A consideration of the formal and material aspects of hermeneutical freedom in Paul, illustrated by a short exegetical study, will take our discussion to Paul's motivation and aim with his hermeneutical freedom.

4.4.1. Pauline hermeneutical freedom formally

Paul approached the scriptures of Israel with hermeneutics which can be described in many different ways, by referring to previous and contemporary hermeneutical approaches and whose intentions and strategies can be defined in a variety of ways, but in the end it is difficult

¹¹⁴ Cf Cameron's (1991:42) argument that 'the successful formation of a religious discourse was one of early Christianity's greatest strengths. This is precisely what both Paul and Augustine recognized'.

to deny that Pauline hermeneutics is essentially a hermeneutics of freedom. The nature of Paul's appropriation of the scriptures of Israel is set in freedom, and his interpretive style can best be described as free.

Without repeating the arguments of preceding chapters, it is necessary to once more stress the importance of Paul's hermeneutics of freedom in a formal sense of the word, to facilitate an investigation of its relationship with other aspects of freedom in Paul's thought and practice.

In addition to Paul's formal hermeneutical strategies for reappropriating Scripture, his 'tendency to use concentrated and abbreviated language' (Lategan 1990:326), also contributes to the hermeneutical freedom of his letters. As much as it requires also the participation of his readers in the interpretive process, such abbreviated language is characteristic of hermeneutical freedom preached by Paul. He could hardly have expected his readers to participate in contextualising Scripture, if he had not set the example!¹¹⁵

An important consideration should be given to the role Paul envisaged for the Spirit in his ministry.¹¹⁶ For Paul the Spirit constituted the 'presence and power of God active in the life of the believing community and the lives of those who are a part of it' (Furnish 1985:23). In the words of Hays,

Scripture must not be read slavishly according to the *gramma*. It must be read ... under the guidance of the Spirit as a witness to the gospel (1989:149).

This changes the nature of Scripture from a collection of texts, to that of a 'trope' or 'metaphor' that signifies and illuminates the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Although Hays fails to understand Pauline exegesis in light of the first-century acceptance of an 'inspired exegete',¹¹⁷ he rightly perceives the 'hermeneutical priority of Spirit-experience'.

This choice leads him, to be sure, not to a rejection of Scripture but to a charismatic rereading, whose persuasive power will rest precariously on his ability to demonstrate a congruence between the scriptural text and the community summoned and shaped by his proclamation (1989:108).

Hays therefore identifies in Paul's use of Scripture a hermeneutical function for the Spirit, creating or generating an inspired reading (:110-111).

¹¹⁵ Cf also Lategan (1987:47-59; 1989b:171-184) on the 'clues' provided in the text to the readers of Galatians.

¹¹⁶ 'Spirit is not an essence or an abstract theological concept. It is the daily experienced mode of God's powerful presence in the community of faith' (Hays 1989:150), and exactly because of the vividness of this presence, Paul can treat 'the Spirit as a datum of experience that can be used as a decisive warrant for theological inferences' (:222 n76).

¹¹⁷ Leading Hays to refer to Paul's freedom in exegesis with terms such as 'with characteristicchutzpah' (1989:105).

Although Furnish (1985:23-26) points out the importance of the Spirit in Pauline ethics — the presence and power of God active in the life of the believing community and it the lives of those who are part of it — he fails to suggest how the Spirit might be seen to be ‘operational’ in the community. Lategan, however, argues convincingly that Paul’s insistence on an ethics of responsibility and (creative) participation is, at least in part, supported by Paul’s command to ‘walk in the Spirit’ (1990:321-322). In an analogical way, the significance of the Spirit for Pauline hermeneutics should not be underestimated.

Paul’s insistence on guidance of the Spirit should not be regarded as idiosyncratic or eccentric, as the notion that Paul presented himself as an ‘inspired exegete’¹¹⁸ would hardly have raised eyebrows within the first-century world. Paul takes the issue further, however, by insisting not only that all participants in the new covenant should ‘embody’ Scripture, but that it is patently impossible to ‘read’ Scripture in any other way.¹¹⁹

The early Christian communities which started out as churches of the ‘divine spirit’, would towards the end of the first century change and become communities ‘underwritten’ by written texts. This was a development in response to the perceived need to provide some order and discipline in these communities, accompanied by the increasing need to justify the formation of a single, unified Church, with all the politics involved in such matters (Koester 1991:353-372; cf Young 1995:105-106).

4.4.2. *Pauline hermeneutical freedom in a material sense*

It is often debated as to what precisely should be understood to constitute Paul’s hermeneutical freedom. Certain passages are important in this regard, some of which were discussed in chapter three and others which will be considered below.

From a general intertextual appreciation of Paul’s letters, Keesmaat (1996:133-168; 1997:300-333) describes Paul’s response to his traditions as ‘transformation’.¹²⁰ Referring to

¹¹⁸ Cf chapter 3 above.

¹¹⁹ The spirit-based hermeneutics of Paul and its freedom (Beker 1980:33-34) should not be seen as necessarily in contrast to Beker’s (1989:353) notion of constraints imposed on Paul ‘by the [early church] tradition in which he stands and which he interprets’. Beker is, however, sensitive to the question of whether Paul’s ‘personal charismatic authority’ (occasionally claimed by him in terms of his apostolic office) or ‘the communal authority of the church’ where the presence of the Spirit is to be found, presents the warrant for Pauline hermeneutics (1989:602). Cf Kee (1992:241-254) for the change in leadership style in the early church, moving ‘from the spontaneity and the improvisatory mood of eschatological expectancy that prevailed in the early decades of its existence to the era shaped by necessities for order and internal discipline a century later’.

¹²⁰ To be distinguished from ‘alienation’ (a contradiction of tradition) and ‘reversion’ (restating or reinforcement of tradition) (Keesmaat 1997:316-317).

Fishbane, Keesmaat suggests that Paul's transformation of tradition led to a vibrant tradition, because he 'offers a relationship to tradition which neither abandons nor blindly accepts what has been passed on'. In this way a new tradition is shaped out of the old, through a selective, but not arbitrary, use of a 'core tradition'. Keesmaat further insists that Paul's use of Scripture was not based on motifs and themes but upon a story.¹²¹

There are certainly grounds for insisting that Paul did not unwittingly appropriate the hermeneutical patterns which were found in the first-century Mediterranean world. Although it has to be granted that Paul nowhere embarks on a full and detailed account of his hermeneutical presuppositions, practices or 'methodologies',¹²² there is certainly reason to believe that Paul operated with some form of hermeneutical 'framework'. Signs of this framework emerge regularly in his letters.

In 2 Cor 3 Paul emphasised the distinction between the 'letter' (of the law) and the 'spirit' (of freedom). Paul's insistence on reading Scripture according to the 'Spirit', not as 'letter', implies that for him Scripture actualises the gospel of Christ, signifying and illuminating the message. Moreover, as much as the reading of Scripture is no longer a matter of 'inscription' but rather 'enfleshment', his hermeneutics can aptly be described as an 'embodied hermeneutic': 'the community of the church becomes the place where the meaning of Israel's Scripture is enfleshed' (Hays 1989:149). In short, Scripture is read ecclesiocentrically by Paul: both in the prefiguring of the eschatological community in Scripture, and in reading Scripture for the establishment of the community of believers.

4.4.3. *Linking Paul's hermeneutical and theological freedom*

It has already become clear in the preceding paragraphs that Paul's use of freedom in a theological sense is dependent upon his ability to exercise hermeneutical freedom in appropriating the scriptures of Israel. It is equally apparent from the discussion so far that Paul's theological thought informs his hermeneutical freedom in more than one way. In a somewhat different yet related context,¹²³ Beker (1991:177) argues that it is not legitimate to separate Paul's method and his message.

¹²¹ Paul's intertextual matrix 'is actually a larger story, told and retold in past remembrance and future hope to shape Israel's identity and future expectation' (Keesmaat 1997:319).

¹²² Cf Hays (1989:161) who refers to Paul's 'intuitive apprehensions of the meaning of texts without the aid or encumbrance of systematic reflection about his hermeneutics'. Against Hays, cf Stockhausen (1993:143-164). For that matter, neither did Paul take the trouble to provide his reader with a systematic explanation of his theology, nor of his ethics, in the way it would be expected of modern writers to do. It is a most unreasonable, if understandable in the (post)modern world, expectation that Paul should have more self-consciously accounted for his theological programme.

¹²³ Concerning the difficulty of — yet, need to effect the — adaptation of Paul's gospel in the early Christian and today's churches.

Indeed, the integral relation of Paul's method to the particularity of his message forbids us to limit our adaptation of his gospel exclusively to his method.

Beker simply argues that Paul's method and message are mutually informing to such an extent that to deal with only the one and not the other, is bound to render inadequate results.

Similarly, the question about the relationship between Paul's advocacy of freedom in his theology and ethics, and his hermeneutical freedom is vital, as this reciprocal relationship allows for a new appreciation of the nature and style of Paul's theological programme and ministry. Not only does Paul's avowal of the freedom achieved by Christ necessitate and inform Pauline hermeneutics, but likewise does his hermeneutics of freedom allow and direct the use and interpretation of Scripture in formulating his theology of freedom. In short, Paul's hermeneutical freedom and his theological freedom are mutually dependent: Paul's creative use of Scripture corresponds with his insight that Christ inaugurated a 'new dimension' for human beings in their relationship with God.¹²⁴

The consistent emphasis on freedom would hardly be sustainable without a hermeneutical basis, equally steeped in freedom. In so far as Paul was able to reread and re-vision Scripture, he could critically revisit his own traditions in the light of the death and resurrection of Christ. The ability to view Scripture as not only his 'sacred' and thus normative text, but also as a 'living' text continually addressing the ever-changing world, and especially his position as 'inspired exegete' made the contextualising of Scripture possible.

As argued earlier, the relationship between Paul's theology and ethics has been demonstrated by a number of scholars (cf Furnish 1985:11-14). Dealing with the nature and style of Pauline ethics, Lategan (1990:321) insists that Paul's new style of ethics in Galatians with its emphasis on the responsibility, participation and creativeness of the community of believers rests on two pivotal theological concerns, expressed as commands to the Galatians: to stand firm in the freedom achieved for all by Christ (5:1,13) and to walk in (or through) the Spirit (5:16,25). Moreover, Lategan argues that the 'indicative/imperative sequence' so often described in Paul's letters, becomes clear in his emphasis that Christ's achievement of freedom implies the need that believers should utilise it, as much as living in the Spirit entails 'walking' in the Spirit. These charges form the 'backbone of the ethical instructions of the last two chapters [of Galatians] and provides insight into the way Paul's ethics functions'.

But Galatians is not only important for coming to grips with Paul's reappropriation of Scripture and the resultant different footing provided for as well as different nature and style of

¹²⁴ The significance of Paul's 'participationist theology' (Snodgrass 1988:98,107), i.e., participation in Christ, for his hermeneutical efforts should also be considered.

the ethical concerns advocated by Paul. In Galatians the relationship and interaction between Paul's theological and hermeneutical practices are very instructive for our purposes.

5. Galatians: Connecting Pauline 'freedoms'

It is possible to illustrate the interconnectedness of Paul's emphasis on what is essentially a theology of freedom and a hermeneutics of freedom, on the basis of Galatians 4:21-5:1.¹²⁵ The aim of this section is to show exegetically that the study of Pauline freedom provides optimal benefits when these two aspects of freedom are both kept in mind and treated in relation to each other. This reciprocal relationship concerning different conceptions of freedom is furthermore intimately bound up with Paul's motivation (contextuality) and aim (ecclesiocentric) with his letters.

Among Paul's letters, Galatians is known as the document constituting the 'freedom charter' of Christianity (Johnson 1986:302). The overriding concern with 'freedom' is apparent in Galatians. Not wanting to exclude the use of Galatians to support the Christian notion of salvation, Galatians lends itself to be read in another and — I would argue — more adequate way.

In what follows, an attempt will be made to show exegetically how Paul's freedom on a theological level as well as on a hermeneutical level, interacts with one another to provide a new reading of the well-known Jewish tale about the two wives of Abraham.¹²⁶

5.1. Towards freedom in Galatians

In moving beyond the Lutheran reading of freedom in Galatians as individual, spiritual salvation, some scholars have tried to reread this letter. Cain Hope Felder (1989:102-117) devotes a whole chapter in his book on 'some sorely needed correctives regarding the Bible in relation to ancient Africa and Black people today', to a discussion on the social aspects of Paul's idea of freedom (Felder 1989:xi).

¹²⁵ Space constraints do not allow for either a full-blown exegetical study of this pericope, or to consider the whole of the Galatians letter; the many commentaries on Galatians will provide more exegetical detail. For a similar — that is, exegetical — study of Paul on freedom, cf e.g. Amos (1984:27-68) on 1 Cor 7:20-24.

¹²⁶ The Abraham narratives could have been an important issue in the Galatian dispute, especially the claim to descendancy from Abraham (Lategan 1992:262-263). Barrett (1982:154-170) concurs, with Hays arguing that Paul 'not only deflects the force of the charge but also turns it to his advantage' (1989:112). Cf Fowl (1994:82 n10).

Regardless of the many points of criticism¹²⁷ that could be brought against Felder, it is a praiseworthy effort to both delineate the socio-political aspects of Paul's idea of freedom and an attempt to contextualise it in his (Felder's) context. A prominent commentator on the Epistle to the Galatians merely refers to freedom in a socio-political sense in passing.¹²⁸ Felder (1989:106) realises the need for a more inclusive approach to understanding freedom (in Paul and specifically in Galatians) in a 'comprehensive or holistic manner'. He finds support for this holistic interpretation in the 'free spirit' that 'inescapably guides the body toward freedom'. Felder's reading of Pauline freedom thus centers on the 'spiritual aspect' of freedom and following the implications of that far enough, it forms the *crux* of his understanding of what freedom entails. This, however, still seems to eliminate important aspects contained in Galatians.

Attention to not only the content, but also the form of Gal 4:21-5:1 is needed. But, first the passage needs to be placed in context.

5.2. The historical situation

Space does not permit a comprehensive discussion of the historical or argumentative¹²⁹ situation of Galatians. Taking his cue from rhetorical studies, Lategan (1992a:257-270) contends that the audience¹³⁰ in Galatians is of a 'complex nature', which means that 'Paul argues his case from all possible perspectives and in the process assumes different and even contrasting positions'. The identity of the opponents and their position remain a mystery — as Paul is not intent on identifying them — while Paul attacks them with a variety of arguments.

¹²⁷ E.g. Felder advocates the traditional structure of Galatians (i.e. 1-2, 3-4, 5-6 where the final two chapters are supposed to contain the parenthesis and so losing the prominence of 5:1-12 as to be 'merely' ethical in nature); does not read from the 'new perspective' on Paul (thus losing out on an important aspect in the background of Paul's letter: Paul not so much 'had to clarify the limits of Jewish *cultic* (Felder's emphasis) law' as he had to content with what may have amounted to 'Jewish nationalism'); is given to speculation (e.g. the Galatians being 'merely simple folks' and afraid of freedom because it required 'too much courage, courage to discover the creative individuality known only by one who is called to freedom by God' — a sentiment more indicative of a modern-Western individualistic attitude); and, limits himself to using a Marxist reading (the usage of which creates no problem as such, but the isolated use can tend to present a distorted view, cf the numerous referrals to 'class consciousness' and 'class conflict'. It is, in any case, a question whether the conflict between Paul and the 'self-aggrandizing Judaizers' should be seen to lie primarily in a class conflict) (Felder 1989:107,111-113,116).

¹²⁸ Cf the commentary by Betz on Galatians (1979:256).

¹²⁹ Unlike with the rhetorical situation where the emphasis is on the '*strategies* used by the writer to effect persuasion', in the argumentative situation 'the emphasis is on the *issue* regarding which persuasion is attempted' (Lategan 1992:258).

¹³⁰ The first-century audience of Galatians probably consisted mostly of 'listeners' and not readers. The comments (quoting Kermode) of Dewey on Mark's Gospel holds true for Paul's letters as well: 'It is perfectly legitimate for us to approach the Gospel with all our sophisticated tools and theories of literary analysis, provided we remember that these are our interpretations, not first-century understandings of the Gospel'. Because '[a]s long as the Gospel of Mark [read, Paul's letters] matters to us, the need for interpretation continues' (Dewey 1991:53).

To summarise the situation in Galatians,¹³¹ this much can be said: Paul encountered some very effective opponents in Galatia, who were able to convince the Galatians that belief in Christ is not sufficient on its own, but that the proper way to translate that into action is by embracing the Jewish law.¹³² Paul was evidently perceived to have given the Galatians not enough guidelines for their daily life, which was especially problematical to the Gentile believers who, apart from accepting a new faith with an accompanying 'reorientation of their value system and life style', did not share in the Jewish heritage of their Jewish believer-counterparts. The persuasiveness of the Galatian Judaisers was evidently related to the time-tested quality of the Jewish traditions, as well as its practical nature in providing moral (and more?) guidance.

[A]t its root the controversy is about how the Galatian Christians are to live in continuity with those who look to the God of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob and Jesus as their God (Fowl 1994:82).

Paul's reaction to the situation, as well described by Lategan (1990:38-328; 1992a:264-269), was not to provide a set course of action, a checklist for ethical behaviour. Paul opted, rather, for a 'responsible and participatory ethic', requiring the involvement of the believers in working out their own moral way. Lategan sees this as emanating from two theological concerns: freedom from the law, and the emphasis on the role of the Spirit in the new community of believers. In this way, believers could no longer be spectators, but indeed had to become participants in the Christian way of life, empowered through participation.

So far Lategan.¹³³ What can be added is that Paul's emphasis on the 'engagement' of the believers in their new faith, did not stop in the ethical sphere. With Paul's radical reinterpretation of the Jewish tradition and beliefs he reached a new understanding of freedom, while paradoxically claiming those very traditions in support of his newly forged position. In short, Paul exercised his hermeneutical freedom, characterised by a creative and dynamic reinterpretation of certain 'fundamental' Jewish beliefs.¹³⁴ The implications of this reinterpretation can be summarised in one word, freedom — which operates on two levels, hermeneutical as well as theological.

¹³¹ On the dangers inherent to such 'mirror-reading' of polemical writings such as Galatians in particular, cf Barclay (1987:73-93).

¹³² Dunn refers to the Galatians letter as evidence of 'intra-Jewish' conflict, not of that between Gentiles and Jews (1993b:459-477).

¹³³ Although he hints in the direction taken here: 'The development of a responsible and functional ethical approach therefore not only requires from Paul a careful sifting of available material, but also that he should consider its compatibility with his theological principles. One of these principles, as we have seen, is that of the freedom to make responsible choices and to consider all traditions' (Lategan 1992a:267). Lategan, however, works this idea out with reference to Paul 'christianising' of available Hellenistic moral traditions.

¹³⁴ Betz (1979:241) states that 4:21-31 'is doctrinal in nature'.

5.3. Gal 4:21-5:1: Freedom practiced and explained

The traditional understanding of freedom in Galatians emphasised liberation from the power of the law, sin and death — all of which correlates with the Lutheran preoccupation of justification by faith alone as opposed to justification by works of the law.

The Christian, Jew or Gentile, Paul maintained, is free from all need to perform works of law for acceptance ... There is no need why a Gentile convert should burden himself with Mosaic ceremonies ... The Christian is free from the need to work for his [sic] salvation (Packer 1982:696).

Bartsch (1983:510) sees the Hagar-Sara allegory as criticism of Paul on the 'Versklavung unter das Kultgesetz', and that Paul is not commenting on slavery as such but only wanted to consider freedom from all the requirements of the Law. The purpose of the allegory is the 'Negation jeder Heteronomie'.

In terms of Malina's classification, Paul is concerned with all three categories of the meaning of 'freedom' simultaneously, especially in 4:21-31 with the allegory on Abraham's wives (and children): the freedom to choose (between slavery and freedom), the freedom from obstacles (from the Law as epitomised in circumcision, 5:2ff), and the freedom to attain a specific goal (not enslavement to the Law) (1978:68-69).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, an attempt will be made to go beyond the traditional problematising of 'allegory' in Paul's letters. It is contended that the Hagar-Sarah allegory provides a good example of the different ways in which Paul used freedom, and acted accordingly. This illustrates the reciprocal relationship between Paul's hermeneutical and theological freedom. Indeed, Paul's use of Scripture in Galatians 4 can be said to demonstrate Paul's intentional and calculated use of allegory, conscious of the interpretive as well as theological effects achieved in this way.

5.3.1. Paul's argument on freedom

Paul's reading of the Genesis patriarchal narratives makes good sense when read in a self-contained way. It should be noted though that Paul 'colours' the story to make the themes important to him more apparent. Abraham had one son from each of his two wives, Sarah¹³⁵ and Hagar. With Sarah, Abraham had a son born ἐκ τῆς ἐλευθέρως (from a free, *sc* women), while with Hagar, Abraham's other son was born from a slave-woman (ἐκ τῆς παιδίσκης).¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Her name, however, is not mentioned at all in Galatians and in the Pauline letters only twice (Rom 4:19 and 9:9) and elsewhere in the New Testament only twice more (Heb 11:11, 1 Pet 3:6). The contexts within which these references are found, emphasise aspects of the following: Sarah's barrenness; God's promise of a son for Sarah; her faith regarding falling pregnant; and, Sarah's obedience to Abraham.

¹³⁶ Abraham's other children are not mentioned, cf Gen 25:1-6.

Paul is clearly emphasising the status of the two sons, the enslavement of Ishmael as much as the freedom of Isaac, both of whom are not initially mentioned by name. Isaac is mentioned towards the end of the allegory, 4:28. The emphasis on the freedom of Sarah, is a Pauline import as she is not described as such in Genesis. The strategy is continued in not naming the children by name, but as the progeny of the slave and free woman (Hays 1989:113).

However, in his argument Paul makes it particularly clear that the status of the sons is directly dependent on the status of their respective mothers. Similarly, he argues that these women point to two 'covenants', the respective adherents of which are τέκνα or children of either the free or slave.

Although both children had the same father in Abraham, their mothers and specifically their mothers' status determined the status of the sons. The patriarch himself, Abraham, was not capable of changing the status of his slave-son. This constitutes a somewhat peculiar situation, as the influence and importance of men far outranked that of women in these times. It is important to note, however, that in this way Paul succeeds to claim descent from Abraham for both the 'Judaising' and the non-Judaising groups in Galatians. By way of the allegory, however, Abraham and Moses are contrasted to one another. The Judaisers are associated with Moses and the law and thus slavery.¹³⁷

Regarding Sarah's child, an important qualification is added with the statement that he was born not only from a free woman (ἐκ τῆς ἐλευθέρης), but 'through or as a result of a promise', δι' ἐπαγγελίας.¹³⁸

Paul's argument up to this stage is clear and unconvoluted, and can be correlated to the events as portrayed in Genesis. One has to add that Paul is selective in how he relates the events, omitting various details contained in the Genesis narrative.

Paul argues that these events can and should be understood allegorically (ἅτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα, 4:24).¹³⁹ He thereupon proceeds to recast the various elements to form

¹³⁷ Hays (1989:114) notes, however, that the Abrahamic covenant was traditionally seen as 'anticipatory' of the Sinai covenant.

¹³⁸ For a more detailed study of the prominence of 'promise' in Paul's letters, cf Williams (1988:709-720).

¹³⁹ Like Barker (1994:193-209), Perriman (1993:27-42) and others, Hays (1989:116-117) argues that Paul is constructing a 'typology' not an 'allegory' — adding that Paul would not have known to make this distinction, and that the former is a species of the latter. Typology is also a 'trope, an act of imaginative correlation' (:100), but it deals not with a material-spiritual correlation, but with a chronological preliminary-ultimate correlation (:215 n87). He fumbles therefore, with explaining 'the Jerusalem above' (:118-119). Dawson (1992:3-11) describes allegory as counter-conventional readings of a text, character of event. Fowl adds that allegorical readings are therefore 'parasitic', in presupposing a 'conventional reading' and in the undermining

another narrative, a narrative on freedom understood in an encompassing way. Using allegory, Paul is able to ascribe a 'deeper meaning' to certain elements in the Genesis narrative. Two 'covenants' or 'testaments' (*δύο διαθήκαι*)¹⁴⁰ are represented by the two women, Hagar and Sarah. This association of the women with two covenants would have been palatable for first-century Jews, according to Hays (1989:114), but not the 'shocking reversal' of associating the 'Hagar-Ishmael-slavery complex with Sinai and the Law' and not with the Gentiles.¹⁴¹

Hagar symbolises Mount Sinai,¹⁴² the origin of the Torah according to Jewish belief and thus the origin of the Jewish religion centered around the Law. Hagar concurrently represents the (historical) city of Jerusalem, which is firmly associated with first-century Judaism, as well as with the first Christian community. Jerusalem, with all her children, are enslaved.

Sarah is the symbol of the 'heavenly Jerusalem', *ἡ ἄνω Ἱερουσαλήμ*. This Jerusalem is not only free (*ἐλευθέρα*) but also 'our mother' (*μήτηρ ἡμῶν*). Citing Isaiah 54:1 in connection with the 'heavenly Jerusalem' (Isa 54:1 actually refers to the 'earthly Jerusalem' awaiting the return of her exiled citizens) the emphasis is put on the reversal of roles: Jerusalem is the childless woman who eventually has a plentitude of children, more than the woman 'whose husband never deserted her'.¹⁴³

The Galatian followers of Jesus, claims Paul, are as much children of the promise (*ὁμοῖς ... ἐπαγγελίας τέκνα ἐστέ*) as Isaac was a child of the promise. The promise made to Sarah can be claimed by the Galatians as well, as they are heirs to the promise made to Abraham (Gal 3:26,29; 4:7; 4:31).

A more difficult development in Paul's allegory concerns his statement that the son which was born *κατὰ σάρκα*, Ishmael, persecuted (*ἐδίωκεν*) the son who was born *κατὰ πνεῦμα*, with Gen 21:9 hardly allowing for such a reading.¹⁴⁴ It is interesting to note that Paul

thereof. It is counter-productive to divorce typology from allegory as they are essentially the same species, with the former promoted as 'non-allegorical' for theological and rhetorical reasons (Dawson 1992:16).

¹⁴⁰ The word generally translated for covenant, *διαθήκη*, is used elsewhere in its more common meaning of 'testament' or 'will', Gal 3:15 and 17. Here it probably translates the Hebrew *בְּרִית* (covenant) (Betz 1979:244).

¹⁴¹ In addition, Janzen (1991:1-22) argues that to a certain extent Hagar embodies Paul's argument regarding freedom and bondage.

¹⁴² For the exegetical difficulty surrounding *ἐν τῇ Ἀραβίᾳ*, cf Betz (1979:244-245).

¹⁴³ Jobes (1993:317) argues that Isa 54:1 is understood by Paul in light of Christ's resurrection, and logically produces the allegorical assignment of Hagar with the 'present Jerusalem' and Sarah with the 'Jerusalem above'.

¹⁴⁴ Cf Hays (1989:117-118) who argues that in light of the Genesis narratives such a reading is implausible. However, Paul's 'allegorical reading of the text is shaped significantly by the empirical situation of the church in his own time'. Cf below, on the motivation of Paul's hermeneutics as 'contextuality'. On the other hand, Betz (1979:249-250) refers to traces of a tradition recounting Ishmael's persecuting of Isaac in Jewish hag-gadah.

does not use the names of Ishmael (ὁ κατὰ σάρκα) and Isaac (τὸν κατὰ πνεῦμα), but refers to types. The contrast between flesh and spirit is often used by Paul to express a variety of dichotomies (cf Barclay 1988:198-215).

Paul quotes from the story of Isaac and Ishmael (Gen 21:10) to show that the slave-son has to be driven out. The reason is that the inheritance is reserved for the child(ren) of the 'free woman'; τῆς ἐλευθέρως was probably Paul's clarifying addition to the LXX Gen 21:10.

He concludes his argument by claiming that this allegory shows that the followers of Christ do not have their origin in slavery, but in freedom. This conclusion clearly issues forth the call that the Galatian followers of Christ should not forsake their freedom to take up slavery (5:1).

5.3.2. Paul's use of the scriptures of Israel: Hermeneutical freedom

Paul makes it clear to his Galatians readers that as much as they 'want to be under the law'¹⁴⁵ (οἱ ὑπο νόμον θέλοντες εἶναι), they have to listen (ἀκούετε) to the law. He then proceeds to explain how they ought to understand it. Paul's explanation entails rereading of the Sarah-Hagar and Isaac-Ishmael narrative in Genesis 16 (and also Gen 17 and 21). This narrative cannot be understood on face value, but needs to be read within the ambit of their new faith, in Christ. Essentially, not the need 'to believe' is what has changed, but the 'object' of their belief.

Paul sets up a clear contrast between two 'covenants' or ways of believing in God: the one is tied to Hagar, the slave-woman, contemporary Jerusalem and slavery. The other is connected to Sarah, the free woman, the eschatological Jerusalem and freedom. Isa 54:1 occupied an important place in Jewish eschatological expectation (Betz 1979:248). The Judaisers are enslaved, as are those who act according to their ways and instructions.¹⁴⁶

Paul's use of allegory thus forms an important aspect of his hermeneutical freedom, even if the latter entails much more than just allegory, as will be shown below. Paul's invoking of

¹⁴⁵ Betz's argument (1979:241) that Paul used νόμος 'ambiguously' to refer to, first, the 'Jewish Torah' and in the second instance to 'Scripture' in a general sense is debatable and presupposes a distinction made by Paul which difficult to sustain — perhaps it is more reflective of Betz's own concerns.

¹⁴⁶ Whether this conflict should be posed in terms of a 'Jewish-Christian opposition', or described as 'one of Paul's sharpest attacks upon the Jews', using 'the self-understanding of the Jews to reject it' (so Betz 1979:246), seems unlikely. Paul's criticism of the Judaisers and their insistence on the law, seems to be the matter of concern. Cf also Stockhausen's (1993:160-161) suggestion that the two covenants may refer to the two covenants made with Abraham in the Genesis narratives (Gen 15 and 17) — this would explain Paul's choice of the Abraham narratives even better, particularly the contrast between 'promise' and 'circumcision'.

allegory underlines his free and creative approach to Scripture, allowing him to interpret the 'sacred text' with all its implications of divine sanction, as a 'living text', that is, not only available for reinterpretation but also to be searched for its relevancy for contemporary use.¹⁴⁷ But, Paul's hermeneutical freedom is also situated in his particular hermeneutics, his concern for the community on behalf of which he is 'searching Scripture'.

Paul's ability to read Scripture with hermeneutical freedom finds its warrant in the Spirit. It is important to note that the Galatian believers' experience of the Spirit guides the interpretation of Scripture and not the other way round¹⁴⁸ (Fowl 1994:83). Paul also uses the Galatians' experience of the Spirit as the basis for his argument that they should not accept the law. With his emphasis on the Spirit, Paul re-asserts the hermeneutical priority of the Spirit (1994:89).

According to Hays (1989:120), Paul's hermeneutical use of the allegory goes somewhat beyond the expectations of those with a Judaising orientation, who might accord a different value to Sinai as place of origin of the law, as well as Jerusalem where the temple and cultic 'headquarters' of Judaism were situated. But his reading also goes beyond what the non-Judaising followers of Jesus might have expected, namely some sort of prefiguration of Jesus (as hinted at in Gal 3:16). On the other hand, the 'Christian experience in the church' clearly forms the interpretive framework for his reading of Scripture:

That is why Paul's hermeneutic must be called ecclesiocentric: he makes the biblical text pass through the filter of his experience of God's action of forming the church (1989:102).

For Hays the particular aspect of Paul's ecclesiocentric hermeneutic highlighted in Galatians 4 is the persecution of the non-Judaising believers, prefigured in the text.¹⁴⁹

Paul's freedom of interpretation is embedded in both his methodological approach to the use of Scripture,¹⁵⁰ as well as in the thrust or goal of his hermeneutics, which can be described as 'ecclesiocentric'. Gal 4:21-5:1 forms the conclusion to the foregoing argument, which proved a radical reinterpretation of Jewish traditions in the light of Christ as well as the belief demonstrated by other (or Gentile) believers in Christ.

¹⁴⁷ As far as the Genesis narratives are concerned, the only direct citation is from Gen 21:9, which contains Sarah's attempt to safeguard her own son's legal position by demanding that Abraham send Ishmael away. Isa 54:1 is a text referring to Jerusalem awaiting the return of the Israelites from their Babylonian exile.

¹⁴⁸ Contra Hansen (1989:99) who argues that Paul used Scripture and this allegory to substantiate the validity and authority of the revelation he received.

¹⁴⁹ He notes, of course, that there is no evidence in the Genesis narratives of such persecution of Isaac by Ishmael (:117); he fails to note that there is neither evidence for such persecution in the Galatian community!

¹⁵⁰ Fowl, in his failure to allow for the first-century notion of 'inspired exegete', ascribes too much of Paul's interpretive power to his presumed claims to 'personal integrity and the recognition that God has worked in his life' (1994:91).

This requires Paul's readers to read Gal 4 in conjunction with Gal 5 and 6, and not (only) the other way round, as is often the case. Gal 5 and 6 emphasises two aspects, the 'freedom' brought about by Christ and the 'living in the Spirit', which only becomes possible in light of the argument as concluded in Gal 4:21-5:1. Ethical freedom is made possible by the conjunction of hermeneutical and theological freedom.

5.3.3. *An allegory: Juxtaposing theological and hermeneutical freedom*¹⁵¹

This anti-structure of the real family of God is continued with logical consistency in the allegory of Hagar and Sarah, which eventually leads to the freedom motif being announced as the topos of the last two chapters (5-6, cf 4:31). Paul's strategy is to develop new self-understanding in the minds of his readers (Lategan 1992:263).

Gal 4:21-5:1 is, then, generally described by biblical commentators as an allegory of the (first) two wives — and their sons — of Abraham. Its purpose is to offer the 'Christians' in Galatians an offer which they cannot refuse, an option for either slavery or freedom, an option repeated in Gal 5:1 (Malina 1978:68).

The connection between Paul's hermeneutical freedom and his ethics is often accepted by commentators, but without making clear how Paul's freedom on a theological level ties in with his hermeneutical freedom. For example, Hays (1989:104) argues that

[w]hat he [Paul] does do is to use Christian experience in the church as a hermeneutical paradigm for reading Scripture, from which he is then able to draw material for the guidance of his community. This necessarily circular procedure is authorized by his conviction that his churches, in which Jews and Gentiles together offer up praise to the God of Israel, are an eschatological sign and fulfillment of promises woven into the fabric of Israel's history and enunciated in the word of Scripture.

Hansen (1997:219) argues that the Hagar-Sarah allegory is used by Paul to set up the freedom/slavery and spirit/flesh antitheses that provide the basic framework for his ethics in the next section of the Galatian letter. Although probably not intended by Hansen in this way, his conclusion can be seen as unwittingly portraying how Paul's hermeneutical freedom interacts with his statements on theological and ethical aspects of freedom.

As much as Gal 4:31-5:1 brings the argumentative section of Galatians to a close, this allegory summarises and enforces Paul's theological position.¹⁵² And this theological position

¹⁵¹ Boyarin's (1994:156-157; cf 1993:69-70) arguments on the political nature of Paul's allegory fall beyond the scope of this argument. Boyarin sees the Hagar and Sarah allegory as 'perhaps the biblical text that most explicitly thematized exclusion'. This is in line with Boyarin's argument that Paul saw in 'human sameness' the 'only possibility for human equality' as '[d]ifference was the threat'. Paul wanted to 'allegorise' Jewish difference, indeed all human difference out of existence: allegory is therefore 'essentially, paradigmatically, imbricated in these cultural politics'.

¹⁵² In rhetorical terms, it serves as the *recapitulatio*; for a discussion of the rhetorical structure, cf Smit (1986:113-144) and Betz (1979). The difference between these two scholars is that the former identifies Galatians as 'deliberative' rhetoric, while Betz sees it as 'judicial'.

is also characterised by freedom: both freedom in approach (his reworking, reinterpretation or re-visioning of his religious belief) and in content (based on the death and resurrection of Christ). These two aspects stand in a reciprocal relationship. Paul's reconstructed theological position was not a superficial adaptation of what he believed before his Damascus-road experience. By insisting on the importance of faith in Christ, Paul relinquishes the Jewish law. Indeed, as Boyarin (1994:152-157) shows, Paul essentially succeeds in the 'allegorization of the Torah'. Without discussing the nature and content of Paul's reconstructed theology, and without comparing that with his previously held position, this does constitute a major theological shift.

To complete the argument on Paul's freedom, it is important to note that Paul considers the employment of an allegory (hermeneutical freedom) as the best way to prove his (theological) point: true freedom follows from faith in Christ, whereas the law leads to enslavement. Paul's hermeneutical and theological freedom stands in a reciprocal relationship: his free and creative hermeneutics allows for a radical reinterpretation of Scripture, as much as his freedom in reconstructing his theological position gives rise to the use of hermeneutical freedom in rereading Scripture.¹⁵³ As much as a different theological stance would have led his free hermeneutics to different conclusions, a hermeneutic tied to midrashic middoth (for example) would not have allowed Paul to argue for belief in Christ as the new covenant.¹⁵⁴

6. Hermeneutical freedom in Paul: The challenge

The argument offered here is that although the traditional notion of freedom can, to be sure, find a basis in Paul's letters, his concerns run wider than these matters. Most important of all, it is Paul's free hermeneutics that is largely responsible for his 'theological freedom' in the sense of his (re)construction of the meaning of faith in God in view of Christ. But, and no less important, Paul's hermeneutical freedom also underwrites his views and beliefs regarding socio-ethical freedom.

It has been argued in this study that the discussion on Paul's notion of freedom should take its point of departure in his free and creative use of Scripture and tradition in his letters. As established in the preceding chapters, Paul can longer be subjugated to a particular

¹⁵³ Paul's theological point of departure is important: Hays notes that the 'conventional Jewish interpretation' of the Hagar-Sarah story in Jubilees is also allegorical (1989:113).

¹⁵⁴ For an important discussion on Paul's theology of freedom, cf Barrett (1985:17-52) who refers e.g. to Paul's 'controversial' and 'critical' theology, in which he felt free to 'modify and expand' 'conventional formulas'. Barrett argues that Paul's theology of freedom was characterised by three aspects: freedom, obligation and 'Christ alone'. Therefore, 'Paul was free to think; yet under an obligation to an authority greater than his own, willing even to contemplate the possibility that he might himself diverge from the true gospel and so incur his own anathema (1.8; cf 1 Cor 9.27)' (1985:52).

theological tradition but has to be wrested free from the TAP. Far from being merely a theological tradition, the TAP has established a vicious circle which imposed upon the Pauline letters a certain framework both for understanding these writings, the rest of the Bible and the religious setting contemporary to the Bible. But the TAP furthermore required of the Pauline literature to be supportive of its particular agendas, and the texts were thus used to legitimate the Lutheran quest. With the continuing and increasing influence of the NPP a different Paul emerges, especially when attention is given to Paul's use of the scriptures of Israel.

The argument of this study and particularly of this chapter culminates in the not only double-sided but also mutually informing and supporting claim: by taking Paul's hermeneutical freedom serious it is possible to understand his views on freedom in a different light. In other words, if Paul's letters have a different motivation and aim than what is presupposed by the Lutheran framework, the traditional understanding of how Paul's advocacy of freedom can be interpreted, will also change.

It is therefore important, first, to explain how the motivation of Paul can be described as pastoral or contextual in nature, and secondly how his aim can be described as essentially ecclesiocentric.

6.1. Motivation for Pauline interpretation: Contextuality

Paul reads the scriptures of Israel in a context typified by a double paradox of unbelieving Jews and believing Gentiles: a context that severely taxed Paul's hermeneutical skills. Not only does he have to contend with this paradox, but he finds himself compelled to offer advice to communities where believers from Jewish and Gentile origin experience problems in their mutual relationship. Because of Paul's inability to visit these communities regularly, he had to write letters which were pastoral in nature, as reflected in the intention *and* content of the letters.

6.1.1. The polemical use of Scripture

Already at the beginning of this century, Von Harnack declared that Paul's use of the 'Old Testament' constituted a counterpoint of his own central belief, namely that

he [*sc.* Paul] based his mission and teaching *wholly and completely* on the gospel and expects edification to come exclusively from it and from the Spirit accompanying the gospel ... [t]he edification of his churches in outline and in detail should come through the Spirit from the gospel (1995:44-45, emphasis added).

According to Von Harnack, the 'gospel' of Paul consisted in the belief in the crucified and risen Christ, and this gospel was enacted through the Spirit which was sent by the Father (1995:27-28).

Von Harnack insisted that the scriptures of Israel played no serious role in the formation of Paul's beliefs, but is, however, willing to concede that Paul did derive some of his 'powers', his 'inner life and growth' from the

holy Scripture, the Old Testament Scripture of God which he now read with reference to Christ and understood in this fashion (1995:28).

The 'edifying power' of Scripture was maintained by Paul, especially since — but also *only* in as far as — the full meaning of it emerged in the Christ-event.

In his attempts to distanciate the Pauline letters from the scriptures of Israel, and to establish the latter as a secondary source for the Pauline letters, a number of Von Harnack's motives for his position emerge. It is only fair to notice that Von Harnack finds the primacy of gospel — Jesus Christ crucified and risen — the dominant concern of Paul in his letters. Secondly, Von Harnack claims (1995:48-49) that Paul had no intention to establish a religion of the book, and that in as far as the Church achieved this, it was contrary to Paul's intentions. However, from the beginning the followers of Christ in Palestine and the Diaspora focussed strongly not only on the gospel but also on the 'Holy Book'. In the third place, and following in the footsteps of Marcion, Von Harnack affirms the notion that the 'Old Testament' is secondary — 'not the book of edification for Christians' — and potentially dangerous.¹⁵⁵ Paul's explicit claim that Scripture δι' ἡμᾶς ἐγράφη (was written for us, 1 Cor 9:10) is explained by Von Harnack as a comment 'in passing', which would not have been heard by the Corinthians in a 'definite way' (1995:45).

Fourthly, and of considerable importance for the argument here, is that Von Harnack's indebtedness to the Lutheran framework predetermines his reading of Paul's use of the 'Old Testament'. Von Harnack reads the Bible in terms of the Lutheran emphasis on the contrast law-gospel, and equates the 'Old' and 'New Testaments' with this difference. The 'Old Testament' consists of law, the works which are performed by people, and the 'New Testament' rests firmly on grace, the merciful acts of God towards people. This theological distinction, and finally separation, between the two parts of the Bible is in the end taken to imply that the 'Old Testament' has little to offer law-free Christians. Clearly, with such a perspective as point of departure, it is very difficult to find a positive role for Scripture in Paul's letters, except maybe in a secondary and supportive capacity.

As to the question regarding Paul's use of the Old Testament in his letters, Von Harnack's position can be summarised in the thesis that Paul used these texts in order to sub-

¹⁵⁵ Von Harnack not only sympathises with Marcion's notion of two disparate theologies in the two 'testaments', but argues emphatically that for the position that the Old Testament is not for Christian edification, 'no correction whatever is needed' (1995:33 n5; 45 n18). Cf Rosner's comments on Marcion's influence on the thought of Von Harnack (1995:6-7).

stantiate his arguments in polemical contexts and when his opponents claimed justification for their arguments from Scripture.¹⁵⁶ Paul's use of the Old Testament is thus viewed as proof-texts, limited to 'stop-gap measures', for want of better, more suitable measures.

Although the influence of their perception of the Old Testament on Pauline scholars has earlier been pointed out as an important factor in their evaluation of Paul's use of Scripture, it bears repeating here that Von Harnack's Marcionite stance predisposes him to deny the importance of Scripture for Pauline theology. In addition, Koch (1986:257; cf Rosner 1995:8) has recently argued that Paul's polemical use of Scripture, especially when the very meaning of Scripture is at stake, accounts for the major part of Paul's utilization of the scriptures of Israel. Some years ago, Stendahl (1976: espec 129-133) accounted for Paul's use of Scripture, claiming that it was not motivated primarily by polemics, neither by a struggle against 'Judaistic interpretation of the Law'. Paul's aim was to include and defend the right of non-Jewish believers to be included in the household of God on equal terms.

6.1.2. *The 'practical' use of Scripture*

[I]t is a fallacy to consider that simply by counting quotations one can gauge the influence of Scripture upon Paul's teaching (Rosner 1995:8).

As much as Paul had a very practical purpose in mind for his letters, his use of Scripture had an equally 'practical' purpose. Paul's practice constituted an effort 'to relate the authoritative words of Scripture to the needs of a later audience' (Stanley 1997:27). With reference to Paul's — among other ancient authors' — 'free' use of other texts in his own arguments, Stanley refers to Paul's need to contextualise Scripture for the Pauline communities. This was 'a sincere attempt to understand the meaning of a particular passage within the context of the author's own culture and/or community' (1997b:27).

In an attempt to address the new situations he encountered and its accompanying problems, Paul read Scripture with an 'intensely practical' purpose in mind. However, this also implies a 'shift in the meaning' of the texts (Silva 1993:639).¹⁵⁷ Silva (1993:640) maintains that Paul sometimes favours the contemporary understanding of Scripture above the historical meaning of it.

It is therefore appropriate to see to the immediate motivation, if not the ultimate goal, of the use of Scripture in the Pauline letters, as his concern to make Scripture applicable to the

¹⁵⁶ Von Harnack isolates the four 'main letters' of Paul from the other six — excluding the Pastoral Epistles — and describes the large number of quotations from Scripture in the four letters as compared with the relatively absence of (direct) quotations in the other six (1995:28-44).

¹⁵⁷ Silva (1993:639) argues that 'how much' and 'in what way' shifting in meaning takes place, is 'perhaps the fundamental problem in the field of hermeneutics'.

communities he was involved in. In the language of the twentieth century, Paul deliberately 'contextualised' Scripture for the sake of his readers.¹⁵⁸

6.2. The ecclesiocentric aim of Pauline interpretation

Paul's ecclesiocentric hermeneutic claims and reconstrues the scriptural text in a manner that would confound a Torah-centered Jewish reader and elude a Christian reader searching for christological prooftexts (Hays 1989:120).

It is often assumed — perhaps not always wittingly — that Paul's aim with appropriating the scriptures of Israel is 'doctrinal', i.e. Paul is intent on furthering a 'theological-philosophical' argument,¹⁵⁹ which is perhaps a legacy of a 'history of ideas' approach to the Pauline letters. Very often these letters, including his hermeneutical strategies, are labelled 'christocentric':¹⁶⁰ this does not only aim to account for the christological nature of Paul's reasoning,¹⁶¹ but frequently implies that the aim of Paul's letters was conversion and/or the emphasising of 'sola fide et gratia' (cf Müller 1989:35).

Such a conclusion can perhaps be best understood in light of the influence of the TAP which prescribed an almost exclusively 'pedagogical' role to Paul. He is assumed to constantly clarify the identity of Christ and his new covenant within a Law-Gospel antithesis. However, this perception can rightly be challenged in light of the NPP on Paul. If the recipients of Paul's letters did not have to be persuaded first and foremost that the merciful God will justify them through underserved grace, Paul could indeed assume a more pastoral role.¹⁶²

Although serious scholars of Paul no longer entertain the view that Paul's letters should be viewed as final (in the absolutist sense of the word) 'doctrinal documents',¹⁶³ but rather as

¹⁵⁸ Cf also below in chapter 5 on Paul as 'contextual theologian/pastor'.

¹⁵⁹ The doctrinal content differs: e.g. Fitzmeyer (1967:6) 'the unity of God's actions in both dispensations'.

¹⁶⁰ Cf Müller (1989:36-38). It cannot be denied that Paul was the first of the 'großen Interpreten des Christusgeschehens', writings years before the Synoptics and without the benefit of 'Christian' writings: NT, canon, etc (Müller 1989:32). Even typology in Paul is then assumed to show upon Jesus' 'antitypical fulfillment of Scripture', whereas the emphasis is rather on the 'people of God as the culmination of God's redemptive activity' (Hays 1989:84-87; 161-162). However, Hays claims that 'Gal 3:29 unlocks the riddle of the relation between Paul's ecclesiocentric hermeneutic and his christological convictions': they are complementary!

¹⁶¹ One thinks of interpretive strategies such the 'promise and fulfillment'-scheme or the 'salvation historical'-approach.

¹⁶² Cf also Hays' arguments (1989:84-87) on the marginal use of Scripture in a christological way. Bypassing this argument, is to insist that Paul's use of Scripture (Juel insists, 'Old Testament', with Levenson) is only 'normative' in his christological appreciation, elsewhere it is a 'nuisance' (Juel 1992:181-189).

¹⁶³ Cf Grollenberg (1978:8) who states that if Paul had known his letters would still be read today, Paul would probably have added a final paragraph to each with the recommendation that they be destroyed after reading: 'Read this and burn it'. However, Hartman (1993:15) has expressed the view that not only was Paul's letters intended to be 'more than occasional writings', but Paul himself had that intention, to which Ellis' contention (1993:62) can be added that Paul kept copies of his letters; Wright (1991b:17) holds that the biblical authors were aware that they 'write Scripture'. Cf also Decock (1993:274, quoting Koch); Hartman (1986:137-146); Segal (1995:29 'Reading Paul is not reading other people's mail. It is reading mail meant for all of us, however we may construe Paul's message'); and perhaps, Paul himself in 1 Cor 10:11. However, Lapide (1984:35) bemoans the

occasional writings addressing particular problems, there is still a strong tendency to view these documents doctrinally¹⁶⁴ — attempting to convert would-be believers. In contrast, it can be argued that Paul's first concern was not as much doctrinal or pedagogical as it was pastoral or ecclesiological. Paul 'was confronted most urgently by questions of communal self-definition' (Hays 1989:162), or, a 'new self-understanding' (Lategan 1992a:263). Indeed, Wuellner argues that as much as Paul was unconcerned with 'doctrine' before the Damascus road-experience, he was unconcerned with it afterwards. His letters and his concept of freedom was

generated by a desire or necessity to establish the communal 'Israel of God' by rejecting the two conventional alternatives to freedom: libertinism/anarchism or insurrection/civil disobedience (1977:27).

Houlden (1990:109) argues that the 'earliest conceptual task' of the first followers of Jesus Christ was their 'articulation' of their convictions about Christ and his relationship to 'the imminent fulfillment of God's purposes'. However, this task was not addressed with reference to a 'Jewish-Christian' dialectic which would have presupposed the idea of 'two religions or even of church and synagogue as two clearly distinct institutions'. The task consisted of two issues:

the proper qualifications for membership of God's people and ... the role of Jesus in the realization of Israel's destiny.

Houlden (1990:109) argues that as much as Paul can be held accountable for giving the marching orders for 'Christianity's' move out of 'Judaism', Paul was

fervent and ingenious in demonstrating that the ultimate purpose of all he had done and stood for was the realization of a grand vision of 'Israel' where Jews and Gentiles, all children of Adam would be at one.

To be sure, the church was viewed by Paul as the 'new covenant community', or as the 'eschatological community',¹⁶⁵ into which the Gentiles who inexplicably accepted the God of Israel, were incorporated — a 'mystery' revealed in the coming of Christ. This conception of the early Christian church constituted another premise or focal point of Paul's use of Scripture. Although the 'covenant community' was a common idea among first-century Jews, the inclusion of Gentiles — on equal terms, and without preconditions — therein definitely was not.¹⁶⁶

fact that Paul's contextual responses 'have been absolutized with complete disregard for their original intent, eternalized and universalized on all five continents by his disciples'. Indeed, the idea that Paul — who interpreted Scripture freely and creatively — would have seen his letters as portraying 'universal principles which would be treated as valid in all ages and in every circumstance' is highly improbable, as Hooker (1981:308; cf Furnish 1985:11-14) suggests.

¹⁶⁴ As 'evangelistic' or 'apologetic treatises', rather than as 'pastoral letters' (Hays 1989:86).

¹⁶⁵ Cf e.g. Gerhardsson (n.d:17); Hays (1989:166-168).

¹⁶⁶ Cf Noll (1993:780) who argues for a similar notion that 'Scripture forms the way of life of a covenant community' in both the Essenes' and Paul's thought; however, the major difference lies in Paul's inclusion of the Gentiles. Of course, Paul was also hard-pressed to portray his views on the inclusion of Gentiles from Scripture as justified and accountable.

However, Scott (1993a, 1993b, 1994) argues extensively that the SER (sin-exile-restoration) paradigm was pervasive also during the first century Judaism — also in Paul's letters — within which room was made for the inclusion of the Gentiles when Israel is restored to her land and covenant relationship with God. Even more important, Scott (1994:92) argues that Paul

view[s] his Gentile mission as a *cataclyst* to the present salvation of a remnant from Israel, he also views it as an essential *precursor* to the eventual salvation of Israel.¹⁶⁷

It will be a grave mistake not to notice Paul's concern that Scripture includes the salvation of the Jews. Paul was at great pains to show that God has neither forgotten the people of Israel, nor rejected them for their unwillingness to accept the gospel of Jesus Christ. This concern, of vital importance in a situation where the 'negative Jewish response' threatens the validity of the Christian message, probably explains the extensive use of Scripture, and especially Isaiah (Silva 1993:639).

We have already referred to the description of Hays (1989:84-121) of Paul's reading of Scripture as an 'ecclesiocentric hermeneutic'.¹⁶⁸ Paul's aim with his letters to fledgling churches was a pastoral or ecclesiological one, which also determined his reading of Scripture. From a totally different starting point — Paul's Damascus road-experience as an experiential-subjective religious event of conversion — Segal (1990:117-149) argues that Paul's mystical experience transformed the goal of his interpretation of Scripture. 'Paul does not forget his Jewish past, rather he bends his Pharisaic exegesis to new ends' (Segal 1990:117; cf Newman 1992:65) so that his call/conversion becomes visible also in the way he used Scripture. As Paul has changed from one (Pharisaic) community to another (the followers of Christ), so his perspective on the meaning of Scripture changed.

Segal argues that Paul's rereading of Scripture, albeit with Pharisaic 'acumen', leads him to identify un-Pharisaic 'problems' — such as a perceived tension between faith and works — because Paul's concern is with a 'new definition of community in which the performance of the special laws of Judaims does not figure' (1990:124).

¹⁶⁷ Cf Rom 11:25-26; and Paul's 'driving passion' to extend the Gospel to all Gentiles as quickly as possible, Rom 15:18-29 (Scott 1994:92).

¹⁶⁸ Scripture 'as prefiguration of the ongoing life of the people of God in history' (Hays 1993:46), although this could properly be broadened with the 'Christian community' not only as the hermeneutical key but also *goal* of Pauline hermeneutics. Paul is not only convinced that Scripture 'points to the church as its essential meaning' (:111), but Paul indeed focuses and moulds his reading of Scripture in light of the pressing needs and problems of the communities he addresses.

Sanders (1993:53-54) disagrees with the idea of an ecclesiocentric hermeneutic, and calls Paul's hermeneutics 'theocentric': 'there is indeed but one God at work throughout Scripture'.

This attempt is to enfranchise the community in which he lives, the community in which he learned the value and meaning of his religious conversion.

Paul has to reread Scripture and especially scriptural pronouncements on the law, as the 'vexing issue' was the 'ritual status of the gentiles', not their salvation or issues such as particularism versus universalism or works-righteousness. As ritual was determinative, 'symbolic of the deepest commitments because it was characteristically and unambiguously Jewish', Paul had to reinterpret Scripture to include gentiles.

Paul's major emphasis was on the equality of believers within their community, on trying to express a new unifying factor apart from the traditional ritual of Judaism (1990:133).

Paul found this unifying image in baptism, an image which 'retained a strong sense of the present ideal: it identified a new moral community' (:137).¹⁶⁹ Paul's emphasis in his reading of Scripture was the creation of a new community,¹⁷⁰ 'a single community in which everyone shares in faith' (:141).

On a more methodological note but also illustrating Paul's ecclesiocentric hermeneutic, Stanley (1997a:55-56) argues with reference to the 'demonstration theory' of Clark and Gerrig, that direct quotations have (among others)¹⁷¹ the purpose to 'create a sense of solidarity between speaker and audience'. Especially when both author and audience are familiar with the quoted source, quotations can 'dispose the audience to respond more favourably to the speaker's message'. The value of Clark and Gerrig's proposals are that they support the argument that quotations can help to firm the bond which Paul aims to establish between him and his communities. Direct quotations used by Paul fits in well with his ecclesiocentric hermeneutics as essentially intended for the edification of the community.

Pauline ecclesiocentric hermeneutics was continued in the early Christian church. In discussing important elements in *patristic* exegesis, Kannengieser (1991:30-32) refers to Scripture being 'ecclesiastical', which implies for him that 'scripture makes sense only when interpreted *in and for* the church'. The early church's understanding of Christ necessitated a christological interpretation of the scriptures of Israel. In the late second century the Bible, as we more or less know it today, became the 'innermost treasure of the church, her heart and soul'. As much as Scripture was given to the church by God, it also formed the message proclaimed by the church on her part. As such Scripture became 'ecclesiastical', because

¹⁶⁹ As Meeks pointed out, a new social unity arose as a result of the practice of baptism in the early Church (1984:87; cf Segal 1990:138).

¹⁷⁰ Lest the impression be created that Paul discarded his Jewish heritage, Segal argues that '[a]lthough Paul left Pharisaism behind, he did not intend to deny his Judaism, since he was discussing *a whole new community within Judaism*' (1990:144, emphasis added). Cf Howell (1993:317) who argues that '[w]hile Paul's thinking was transformed at his conversion, he never renounced his Jewish identity'

¹⁷¹ *Viz*, the ability of quotations to 'lend vividness and drama to the discourse', and to enable the quoting author to establish a sense of distance from the original author or work (Stanley 1997a:54-55).

Scripture made sense in Christian terms, *because* it was proper to nascent Christianity, not *in order to* contribute to it.¹⁷²

And further

the Bible was not so much *in* the earliest church as it was allowing the church to *exist*, and to become aware of its proper nature (Kannengieser 1991:33).

The church and Scripture did not exist independently from one another, but the one implied the other: the way in which the New Testament authors, including Paul, interpreted the scriptures of Israel and closely followed by patristic exegetes 'entailed the very genesis of the Christian movement'.

In order to discuss the ecclesiocentric aim of Pauline hermeneutics in somewhat more detail, the following aspects are of importance:

6.2.1. *Freedom and the individual*

It is often argued that despite the strong communal emphasis in the Pauline letters which stress the importance of individuals belonging to the community of believers,

Paul is eager to stress that the individual must preserve an inner freedom and control of his own, an individual responsibility and authority (Gerhardsson n d:17).

According to Gerhardsson, Paul foresees the possibility of followers of Christ falling back into slavery of various kinds, and that the defense against backsliding is situated in individual freedom and responsibility.¹⁷³

Individual freedom, however, comes to full bloom within the community. Indeed, when Paul is put before the choice of the freedom of individuals or the freedom of the community (1 Cor 8-10), the communal seems to receive priority.¹⁷⁴

The 'world' which is real for the new person in Christ is a communal world, not merely an individualistic one (Schütz 1976:291).

6.2.2. *Freedom and community*

All he [sc Paul] does is defend the right of non-Jewish believers to be members of the household of faith, with Jews and Gentiles alike and jointly facing the communal responsibilities of freedom (Wuellner 1977:27).

¹⁷² In this regard, Kannengieser (1991:31-32) also points out that early Christianity had no 'circle of experts' studying Scripture scientifically. Another result of the ecclesiastical interpretation of Scripture, was that '[n]o interest was developed in Hebrew scripture as proper to Judaism, nor was the Old Testament scrutinized independently from the New.'

¹⁷³ On Galatians, cf e g Furnish (1985:21): 'What matters most, he [Paul, JP] insists, is faith enacted in love (see Gal 5:6), and by this he means (as the context of Galatians 5-6 clearly shows), in the present life of the believer and of the believing community'.

¹⁷⁴ Paul should not be seen as the exception regarding this matter: Martin (1994:117-140) argues that, contrary to popular belief, the Hellenistic world was 'anti-individualistic'. The interesting parallels found in traditional African communities, will not be addressed here; cf however e g Bujo (1989:211-215).

It can be expected that with the strong ecclesiocentric emphasis in his letters, freedom of the followers of Christ will be closely linked to the community by Paul; indeed, that Paul's notion of freedom will presuppose a relationship to the community. The follower(s) of Christ is 'not thought of as an isolated individual' but as people who as a community of believers form the church as the one 'body of Christ'¹⁷⁵ (Gerhardsson n d:17).

McDonald (1997:15) argues that the role of the community was of fundamental importance to Paul as his Pharasaic, rather than monastic, notion of righteousness required the creation of genuine community, an 'organic relationship' or 'relational unity'. This community of the covenant people of God which has been renewed in Jesus Christ, with its continuing 'inner dynamic as the Spirit of God', provided the other leg of the dialectic with his received traditions, the dialectic which moulded his teaching.

For Paul, effective freedom is only possible within the confines of the community, as demonstrated by his consistent preference for the community when it came down to a choice between community and individual.¹⁷⁶

6.2.3. 'A hermeneutic of social embodiment'

It is time that we took seriously the well-known fact that most of the New Testament documents, including the Pauline Epistles that have provided the central motifs of Protestant theology, were immediately addressed to problems of behavior within the communities, of moral formation and what a sociologist could only call the institutionalization of the new sect (Meeks 1986:185).

In an important study following upon George Lindbeck's proposal that a cultural-linguist model of religion be applied in understanding religion, Meeks (1986) proposes that the biblical interpreter should practice a 'hermeneutics of social embodiment':

The goal of a theological hermeneutics on the cultural-linguist model is not belief in objectively true propositions taught by the text nor the adoption by individuals of an authentic self-understanding evoked by the text's symbols, but the formation of a community whose forms of life correspond to the symbolic universe rendered or signaled by the text (1986:184-185).

In eschewing the 'cognitivist' and 'symbolic-expressivist' models — as referred to respectively in the quote directly above — Lindbeck made a serious attempt to understand religion as a social entity,¹⁷⁷ 'as comprehensive interpretive schemes, usually embodied in myths or narra-

¹⁷⁵ Cf texts like Phil 2:1-11; Gal 5:13-26.

¹⁷⁶ Paul's predilection for the community and his reluctance to side with the individual even when agreeing with the latter, can be observed well in various places in Paul's letters. The first letter to the Corinthians, for the practical way it addresses the priority of the community, is perhaps one of the best examples. Cf Johnson (1986:277-283).

¹⁷⁷ Following the work of Marx, Durkheim, Weber and Wittgenstein, as well as the more contemporary Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann and Clifford Geertz (Meeks 1986:177-178).

tives and heavily ritualized, which structure human experience and understanding of self and world'.

Meeks argues at length that the seeming incompatibility of the 'intratextuality' of Lindbeck's cultural-linguist model of religion, with the concern of the social historians of early Christianity for the 'web of meaningful designs, actions and relationships' of the time, is more illusionary than real.

An intratextual reading tries to derive the interpretive framework that designates the theologically controlling sense from *the literary structure of the text itself* (Lindbeck, quoted in Meeks 1986:181).

An intratextual reading therefore suggests a synchronic, literary approach to the text with little use for 'historical exegesis'. However, as much as the cultural-linguist is trying to eschew 'referential' or reconstructive hermeneutics, Meeks argues that social historians share this stance in their attempt to understand the role of the text in the social web of meaning.¹⁷⁸

It is therefore possible to explain the role of the Christian canon as more than mere texts with self-contained meaning, but to rather view Scripture pragmatically: these texts 'mean insofar as they function intelligibly within specific cultures or subcultures'. This means that 'a hermeneutical strategy entails a social strategy'. '[T]o understand the text is ... to be competent to *use* the text in an appropriate way'. Until the text is socially embodied, the interpretation of the text has not reached an adequate or final stage.

The ecclesiocentric goal of the appropriation of the scriptures of Israel in the letters of Paul suggests that his hermeneutics can also be described as one of 'social embodiment'. Pauline hermeneutics did not aim at winning the theological/doctrinal — in as far as they existed — argument (so Von Harnack) or the promotion of an individualist and existentialist self-identity (so Bultmann). Rather, Paul's appropriation of Scripture is employed in situations where the community needed to be directed to or maintained on the right course. Indeed, Paul's liberationist hermeneutics which is best described as ecclesiocentric, was clearly 'a hermeneutic of social embodiment'.

As much as the goal of Pauline hermeneutics is 'social embodiment', the community which is established in the name of Christ exists in the freedom won by the redeemer Christ. 'The members of this community are the "embodiment" of the freedom established by Christ' (Betz 1977:10). The hermeneutic of social embodiment should be expanded in the case of Paul to the hermeneutic of social embodiment in freedom.

¹⁷⁸ This task is complicated, according to Meeks, by the vast number of social or societal factors which describe the different ways in which the early Christians and contemporary readers of the Bible inhabit their symbolic universes: e.g. unlike what was the case in the first century, we today have a 'New Testament' (1986:181).

7. Conclusion

It is once more an ironic twist of the history of interpretation, that the writings of the apostle of freedom were incarcerated in a particular hermeneutic during the Reformation, a time which is often referred to as the period of the 'discovery (or rediscovery) of Christian freedom' (Witvliet 1985:13). On the other hand, the writings of Paul clearly were instrumental in the Reformation churches' ability to liberate themselves from the oppressive and hegemonic theological traditions which reigned during those times.

The progressive loosening of the Lutheran tethers, allows for a different and broader understanding of Paul's concern with 'freedom'. As Jones (1987) has recently argued,¹⁷⁹ Pauline freedom covers a wide spectrum of different ideas, with 'freedom from the law' as a rather peripheral aspect.¹⁸⁰ Tuckett (1991:318-319) maintains that 'Paul himself seems capable of generalising from one kind of a freedom to another', with a wide variety of analogies.

The main concern of this chapter, however, was to make the case for Paul's hermeneutical freedom. It is important to understand this sense of freedom against the background of corresponding notions of freedom in the first century CE, as well as against other dimensions of freedom in the Pauline letters. Paul's hermeneutical freedom interacts with his notions of theological and ethical freedom, but in the end his freedom in interpreting the Scripture remains the primary issue.

Concurring with Jones (1987:141) 'daß "Freiheit vom Gesetz" den Ursprung des paulinischen Freiheitsgedankens nicht darstellt', but contra his notion that 'freedom' is not *at all* determinative or essential in Pauline thought, the claim is made here that Paul's hermeneutical freedom establishes the base of his operations. Paul's hermeneutical freedom was found not only in his use of Scripture to provide the most important parameters of his theology, but also in his ability to, in a creative and dynamic way, construct his theology. This was not an irresponsible approach to freedom, characterised by eccentricity or idiosyncrasy, but with the community of Christ in mind, thus: an ecclesiocentric hermeneutic.

¹⁷⁹ Not without opposition, illustrated for example by Dunn (1989:432). '[T]he attempt to push the idea of "freedom from the law" to a late and peripheral stage in Paul's thinking is made at too great a cost to exegetical fidelity'. However, as is clear from chapter 2, Dunn has an important stake in maintaining the central role of the law in Paul's theology, as this is the basis of much of his reading of Paul.

¹⁸⁰ Jones, of course, goes further and argues that freedom plays neither a central or decisive, nor an essential role in Paul's thinking. As would have been clear from the arguments above, this is clearly difficult to maintain, especially when one moves beyond texts in the Pauline letters containing the word *ἐλευθερία*.

The concern with freedom in the New Testament, particularly in the Pauline writings, is therefore much more than a mere modernist preoccupation. Conley's (1977:19) argument

[i]ndeed, both the theological question and the sense of 'freedom' seem to be outgrowths of a concern over a conundrum peculiar to relatively modern times, begotten of Luther by Kant, of Kant by Hegel, of Hegel by Bultmann, with the midwife Existentialism attending,

seems to be very one-sided. In contrast, from *Rezeptionsgeschichtliche* perspective, Jones observes that far from inhibiting human freedom, these texts initiated and contributed to the establishment of freedom and liberation on a wide range of fronts.

History belies any notion that Paul has been ineffective for the cause of freedom. A careful perusal of history will disclose not only that Paul came through as a revolutionary for freedom in his own world but also that he provided the theological matrix upon which the church through the centuries could build a dynamic revolutionary movement for freedom. The fact is, the greatest revolutionary moments in the history of the church have been those moments when Paul's theology of freedom has been discovered and has been permitted to come alive (Jones 1984:23-24).

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CHAPTER FIVE

Paul for today! — Paul, freedom and contextualisation

1. Introduction

[T]here is no such thing in the New Testament as an absolute and unchanging form of the gospel which is independent of circumstance and occasion (Dunn 1987:17).

The traditional approach to Paul (TAP) has for many centuries been the dominant framework into which Paul, his theology and Judaism has been set, accompanied by the moulding of these elements to fit the Lutheran grid. Although, the Lutheran interpretation of Paul in the sixteenth century can be described as one of the most pervasive exercises in contextualising the gospel message, specifically the gospel according to Paul,¹ it meant the incarceration of Pauline thought to a specific and limited interpretation.

Ironically, the ‘contextual’ appropriation of the Lutheran reading of Paul in the post-Reformation church(es), and especially in scholarly circles,² led to the petrifying of a contextual interpretive enterprise as the generalisation of the ‘Pauline message’.³ This fossilising implied a non-contextual, or perhaps even an anti-contextual, reading of Paul. Pauline thought was not only divorced from temporal and spatial concerns of the first century, but also from the many problems and issues of modern times. Indeed, the sixteenth-century approach to and understanding of Paul were presented — not as one option of understanding Paul but — as the only acceptable hermeneutical paradigm.

✓ In this study it has been argued that the recognition of the dominance of the traditional approach in Pauline interpretation will not be sufficient to render the Pauline epistles optimally contextual and relevant for the present — it is, however, an important first step. It has already been proposed in the previous chapter that the Pauline letters should be read from the perspective of freedom, functioning on a religious-theological level, in terms of a thoroughgoing freedom which is not only proclaimed but also operational in Paul’s letters. In particular it was argued that Paul’s hermeneutical freedom deserves consideration, as this enabled him to interpret Scripture anew for the early communities of believers.

While the emphasis in the previous chapter rested upon Paul’s freedom primarily as it concerned his motives and aims with his letters, incorporating both elements of proclaimed and

¹ Paul’s ‘contextualising’ of the significance of Jesus Christ is one of many found in the New Testament, and the antecedent of its own contextualising. Cf e.g. Babcock (1990); Beker (1991).

² See chapter 2 above.

³ Although the ‘Lutheran Paul’ was arguably contextualised to some extent — particularly in the existentialist period — Paul’s Lutheran jacket was hardly ever removed, even on the hottest theological summer’s day!

practiced freedom, this chapter takes a further step by investigating the implications of Paul's thought and practice. In the first place, an attempt will be made to re-describe Pauline thought with reference to his emphasis on freedom, concluding that his theology can properly be called contextual and pastoral. But the following question, often approached with fear and dread, cannot be avoided either: Are Paul's notions of hermeneutical freedom normative for Christian practice today? The chapter concludes with a brief reference to the nature of the continuing hermeneutical approach(es) found in the early Christian churches.

2. Pauline thought

Paul as a theologian, then, is Paul drawing from the well of his thought-out worldview and belief-structure that which is needed to persuade this or that church to maintain and further its own vocation, against the pressures from one side or another. He is no less a theologian for being a tactician, a pragmatist, a rhetorician malgré soi ('I am no orator, as Brutus is'). Theology is what makes him all of these, and what makes all of these serve his vocation (Wright 1991:263).

2.1. Introduction

Before dealing with the question regarding the normativity of early Christian, and in particular Pauline, hermeneutics, it would serve the discussion well to elaborate briefly on Pauline thought.⁴

It is not an easy task to define Pauline thought, not even to describe it in broad and general terms. Not only is the thought of 'the' Pauline theology sharply contested by some scholars, but certain statements by Paul in his letters have even led to accusations of Paul being a 'muddle-head', and admittedly, the highly contextual nature of the Pauline letters does not mean that a synthesis of Pauline thought is easily come by.⁵ Something of this conflict in determining the nature or style of Pauline thought is clearly to be observed in a recent study on the Pauline legacy by Beker (1991). In an attempt to qualify Pauline thought as coherent, he dismisses claim that Paul is a 'storyteller',⁶ arguing rather that Paul's thoughts are argumentative and construed according to 'concepts' — Paul is 'the man of apodictic-performative speech' (:27). However, towards the end of his study, Beker does an almost about turn in

⁴ Or alternatively, Pauline theology. Cf Dunn (1994b:407-432) on the necessary or required 'prolegomena' to such a theology; Furnish (1990:19-34; 1994:3-17). Cf also the SBL-initiated project on Pauline theology, the results of which were published in a first volume edited by Bassler (1991) and containing a number of essays on important methodological issues regarding Pauline theology. The matter of the definition of 'theology' in Paul is important. This study assumes Pauline theology to refer to Paul's self-conscious, even critical, reflection on the meaning of God's relationship with people through the centuries, and in particular in God's self-presentation in Christ.

⁵ Add to that, the deutero-Pauline letters in the New Testament which claim Pauline authorship, and the Acts-presentation of Paul, and it is rather difficult to come up with a 'systemised Paul' (cf Keck 1989:341-351).

⁶ However, cf recently e.g. Keesmaat (1997:316-321) and Witherington (1994) who insist on the narrative structure of Pauline thought, in particular from the perspective of 'narrative' coherency. Cf also Hauerwas and others in Hauerwas, Murphy and Nation (1994) on 'narrative theology'.

showing allegiance to the views of Boring by eventually claiming that Pauline thought is 'metaphorical' (:123).⁷

Although it is important to describe Pauline thought in a more comprehensive and constructive way, what should also be considered is the formative role of Scripture and tradition in Paul's thinking.⁸ The emphasis on the importance of Paul's use of Scripture in the composition and writing of his letters raises the question about the role Scripture played in the construction of his thought. It is, however, a most serious neglect in many efforts to produce an integrated approach to Paul's theology, that the role of Scripture in the construction of Pauline thought is either neglected or minimised to the extent of virtual unimportance.

This section deals with Paul's thought in a rather directed way, namely to show how Pauline 'theology' and 'hermeneutics' are not only intertwined, but also, in support of the arguments in the previous chapters, that there is a reciprocal relationship between Paul's thought and use of Scripture. Indeed — and as described here, without all the ideological baggage often accompanying this description — as Wright (1991:263-266) contends, Paul was a self-conscious 'biblical theologian'.

2.2. Contextualisation of Pauline thought

It has some merit in claiming that all theological and religious thinking — and all thinking in the end! — is contextual. Contextualisation seems to be a word suitable to describe the nature of all theological thought, namely that the attempts to express the relationship between human beings and their God through human language and thought are always done from a certain perspective and takes place in a specific context. In addition, the very use of human instruments such as language and culture to formulate and express theological thought inevitably results in the contextual nature of theology. Language and culture shape theological thought through its very expression, and are no mere conduits for ethereal and free-floating ideas.

Without addressing the fears related to the recognition of the contextual nature of theology, suffice it to state here that it is perhaps not always so unreasonable, if the claims regarding the metaphysical or transcendent are taken into account.

Of central importance to the contextualisation argument is that the context in which theology is done, is not merely the setting for such theological musings. To the contrary, con-

⁷ Perhaps it will serve Pauline studies well to heed the warning issued by Sampley (1991:3-14) and addressed by Getty (1987:92-97) on the dangers inherent to the 'synthesising' of Pauline thought.

⁸ Dunn (1994:427-428) identifies the need to investigate Paul's use of 'his ancestral religion' as one of the four important levels in construing a profile of Pauline theology.

textualisation implies that the context plays an active role in the formation and development of such thought. The context is not a mere medium for thought, but has a definite role in shaping such thought. After briefly considering some approaches to and attempts at describing Pauline theology, important aspects of Paul's theology will be alluded to, with particular emphasis on the role and influence of Scripture in Pauline thought.

2.2.1. *The conservative view*

Osborne (1993:396) affirms the contextualisation of Paul by taking his cue from the apostle himself,

Paul consciously contextualized the Jewish-Christian gospel of the primitive church for his Gentile mission on the basis of the principle of 'all things to all people' (1 Cor 9:23).

However, Osborne views contextualisation according to the dichotomy form/content and claims that Paul did not 'violate' the content of the gospel, but merely adapted its form to the contingent and specific need(s) of communities. This same *modus operandi* is judged to be normative for Christians today.

Referring to Nida and Taber's translation technique in their *The theory and practice of translation* (1974), Osborne argues for a 'back-transforming' (in order to discover the universal, atemporal truth) and a 'forward-transforming' (for applying the universal truth to contemporary parallel situations) approach. Practically, Osborne opts for a 'meant-means' approach, à la Stendahl. This approach entails six consecutive steps equally divided into the categories of 'meant' and 'means'. To get to what a text meant, implies grammatico-historical exegesis, identifying the 'deep structure' and studying the background situation. The contemporary meaning is arrived at by recognizing a parallel contemporary situation, and deciding whether the application of the meaning is in terms of principle only or specifically according to the issue at hand (1993:388-397).

2.2.2. *Structuralist approaches*

In what can be described as a consistent structuralist approach, Patte (1983:87-121) argues that Pauline thought should be understood according to the convictional pattern of Paul's (former) Pharisaic faith, for the description of which he proceeds along the lines of EP Sanders. Patte refers to overlapping systems in Paul's faith, arguing that 'Judaism', despite its notion of the dynamic ever-unfolding Torah, harboured a convictional pattern which was static. That is, the revelation of God was seen to be enclosed within the confines of Torah, although new situations demanded different applications.

The major difference between 'Judaism' and 'Christianity' is situated in the ability of 'Christianity' to establish a new dynamic convictional pattern in which sacred history is

reopened in Christ, and subsequently in the believers in Christ. Thus, Paul describes not so much a new covenant, but a dynamic symbolism of a footprint, which involves a meta-system of convictions expecting new revelations. Countering accusations of incoherency in Pauline thought, Patte can argue that although a dynamic system of convictions are operative in Paul, it is not erratic, but follows a pattern established by his meta-system. The convictional pattern of Paul's faith included the following elements: charismatic, eschatological and typological. Patte concludes that Paul's faith is a 'dynamic' system.

Patte's description of Paul is helpful in as far as it allows for a coherent and consistent (read, contextual) portrayal of Pauline thought to emerge. It is, however, not clear whether the coherence ascribed to Paul are inherent to Paul, or derives from the structuralist approach applied to Paul. Criticism leveled against Patte's structuralist approach includes the close relationship between his point of departure and those of Bultmann: the centrality of the relationship between beliefs/convictions and theology, with the former being the constant and theology the variable. In reality the difficulty to distinguish between Paul's convictional pattern and his theological argumentation is much greater than Patte is willing to acknowledge (Vos 1989:39).

2.2.3. *Contingent-coherency*

In the traditional approaches to Pauline theology,⁹ the discussion takes place according to credal or confessional lines.¹⁰ Traditionally the contextual nature of Pauline theology was regarded (at most) to be of importance in settling questions of 'introduction' (date, authorship, and so on). Pauline theology was simply understood within, or indeed, placed within, the standard sections of the articles of faith.¹¹

These traditional approaches meant casting the highly contingent theological expressions contained within the letters of Paul, in an atomistic way in traditional credal categories. The content of Paul's letters was, often without regard for the historical context, fitted into the rigid straight-jacket of dogma. A double obscuration thus occurs. Paul is not only interpreted in terms of these credal positions, but his contextual statements are used to underwrite and underscore dogmatic positions. A circular argument thus develops whereby Paul's letters are argued to espouse the theological categories in terms of which the letters are read.

⁹ Cf Ladd (1974:359-568) as an example of this approach within a description of New Testament theology, and, of course, the classic statement in Ridderbos (1975; cf on Ridderbos and others, Furnish 1990:21).

¹⁰ The point is not that Paul's theology is in contrast with (certain) articles of faith. The issue is about the point of departure and method of approach used to read and interpret the Pauline writings. To attempt a systematic approach (fraught with difficulties as in all attempts at systemisation) of Paul's theology is unavoidable for the believing Christian, but constitutes step two, and should always be acknowledged as such. The emphasis on dialogue — with other systematic approaches to Paul — now becomes an imperative!

¹¹ Sin - Justification or Redemption - Gratitude or Ethics - Church - Eschatology. Cf e.g. Ridderbos (1975).

This traditional approach of forcing Paul to speak as a medieval Reformer meant a denial of the contextual or contingent nature of his letters. Naturally, this traditional approach implied also the generalisation of the Pauline message, with the absolutising tendency following in its wake.

JC Beker, in his well known monograph and subsequent work,¹² distinguishes between two aspects of Paul's thought, ministry and practice, namely coherence and contingency. In explaining this scheme, Beker goes to great lengths to explain that he is not intent on rekindling the (search-) fire to find a coherent center in Paul's writings. Criticism of Beker's model includes the accusation that it is too easy to explain textual difficulties and contradictions by simply appealing to the contingent character of the texts, while similarities and continuation are explained in terms of coherence. As Keck (1993:28) states, this dialectic 'helps little to grasp the author's thinking behind the arguments in the letters'.

Another, and more appropriate, way to deal with the contingency of the Pauline writings, particularly when their interpretation is considered, would be to refer to the power and productivity of these texts. The Pauline texts in a certain sense resulted from the power and productivity of the scriptures of Israel, and subsequently lend itself to discerning their own power and productivity (cf further Luz 1994:17-22).

2.3. Theocentric

Paul's experience of Christ crucified and raised never replaces the one God of Israel as the source and object of his faith, but is, rather, incorporated into it in ways that most of his successors are unable to manage (Johnson 1997:368).

Paul is very often read and interpreted as though his thought exhibits a christocentric, or at least christological, focus. This way of looking at Paul was brought about by at least two factors:

- The Reformational emphasis on justification by faith¹³ necessitated more than a christological line¹⁴ within Paul. Justification by faith and the whole argument on the

¹² Paul, the apostle. *The triumph of God in life and thought* (1980). Cf also the abridged version *The triumph of God. The essence of Paul's thought* (1990). Beker defended this scheme at the SBL meeting in 1986 and used the scheme also in his 1988 and 1989 articles (cf Bibliography).

¹³ The pervasive influence of *sola fide* is clear in what Paul Tillich called the Protestant Principle (see above). The explicit dependence on this dogma can be seen most clearly in the Lutheran tradition, 'the article by which the church stands or falls', the sub-title of Braaten's (1990) study on justification.

¹⁴ Cf Braaten (1990:12) in response to the existentialist approach to Paul: 'Christology (cross and resurrection) and not anthropology (conscience and conversion) is of primary interest to Paul'.

faith of Jesus (e.g. Johnson 1986:323-342) made the centrality of Christ of vital importance: Christ as the exemplar of faith, and worker or creator of faith in humans.

- The perceived radical break with Judaism (because of the apparent rejection of the validity of Christ within Judaism) led followers of Christ to understand the 'Old Testament' christologically rather than the 'New Testament' theocentrically.

In the christological approach, the Christ event becomes the most important pivotal point within the Pauline corpus. This is seen especially within the *Heilsgeschichtliche* line of interpretation,¹⁵ demonstrated for example in the promise-fulfillment scheme.

However, without denying the centrality of Christ, often expressed through reference to 'cross' and 'resurrection', Pauline thought can best be described as theocentric.¹⁶ His theocentric focus emerges very strongly when he is read within his own perimeters, namely as an apocalyptic thinker from Jewish background. In the theocentric approach God occupies center-stage, God operates, God is moving the world towards his (God's) triumph. Naturally, God chose to operate through his Son and this explains the christological concern of Paul.

It is especially Beker (1980:176-181; 1990:113-116) who insists that Pauline theology should be understood as theocentric. His insistence derives from what he calls Paul's theocentric apocalypticism. 'Paul is an apocalyptic theologian with a theocentric outlook' (Beker 1980:362).

The theocentric thrust in Paul's theology emerges clearly when his use of Scripture is considered. Sanders (1987:41-60) for example in his essay 'Torah and Christ', argues persuasively that '[t]he NT ... presents not so much a christocentric theology as a theocentric Christology' — and, he adds, this is particularly noticeable in the Pauline writings. Indeed, Sanders argues that notably on ecclesial level, the theocentric emphasis of the Pauline letters serves the purpose of viewing God's work in Christ in a universal light to provide for the inclusion of Gentiles into God's covenant of grace. A new Israel is called into being (Sanders 1987:41-42). Paul's theocentric concern should thus be related to the pastoral line which is so pervasive in, and characteristic of, his letters (cf below).

Similarly, Hafemann (1998:254) refers to Paul's use of Scripture in 2 Corinthians, and concludes:

¹⁵ Cf Ridderbos (1975:44). Ridderbos (1975:258) does refer to the Pauline paraenesis as theocentric, especially with regard to Romans 6 (servants of God): a 'new directedness of servitude'.

¹⁶ For the pervasive 'theocentric character of biblical faith', cf Gardner (1995:29-53).

In the end, the foundation and goal of Paul's apologetic, derived as it is from the biblical framework of the history of redemption,¹⁷ is consequently his radically theocentric perspective'.

2.4. Apocalyptic

The finding of apocalyptic elements in Pauline thought dates back to the work of Schweitzer, notably in his attempt to understand Paul in terms of his Jewish background. As was mentioned above, most recently JC Beker has consistently argued for an interpretation in terms of 'Jewish apocalypticism'. He has done so in a number of writings, with his 1980-work probably being the clearest and most comprehensive argument of his case (espec chapter 8).¹⁸

Some Pauline scholars, for example Ridderbos (1975), has argued that Paul's thought is 'structured around the topic of eschatology', but the emphasis on apocalyptic goes beyond that. Whether one accepts with Beker that Jewish apocalyptic is characterised by the four elements of vindication, universalism, dualism and imminence, and whether these elements can all be traced in Paul's letters, is a matter for another discussion. However, as Horsley (1995:1157) states, although Paul may not be using much of the typical Jewish apocalyptic language, 'he writes from the perspective and agenda found in such literature'.

Already in the eschatological notions of Paul's arguments its implications for his theology emerge. Hafemann (1993:674,677) argues for reading Paul within the eschatological context that Paul sees himself in. It is 'against this backdrop that the question of the exact locus of the "problem" with the Law as it functioned under the old covenant, as well as its role in the new, must be raised'. The impact of Paul's eschatology on his view of the Law needs to be noticed.

But Paul's apocalyptic thought should equally not be seen as an attempt to side-step this world and its burning issues. Wright (1992:280-337; espec 280-299) argues strongly for apocalyptic as very much a 'this-worldly perspective'. Indeed, attention to the apocalyptic tenor in Paul's writings requires attention to the social implications of apocalyptic. As was argued above, the apocalyptic train of thought issued a challenge to the existing order and power relations.

¹⁷ As hinted at elsewhere, the notion of a continuing line of salvation history, read into Paul's thought, is arguably not the most profitable way of reading Paul, or his reading of Scripture. Cf Keck (1993:33): 'Nowhere is Paul interested in the *storyline* of Israel's history as something that reaches its fulfillment in Christ'. The importance of the scriptural narratives for in Paul's thought is, nevertheless, not in dispute, neither Paul's reading of Scripture as 'prophecy', but then in a qualified way (cf Hays 1989; Keesmaat 1997:322-325; Wright 1991:264-265).

¹⁸ Beker is by no means the only scholar to argue for apocalyptic as a key element in Pauline thought. Cf also Soards (1987: espec 37ff).

The emphasis on Paul's gospel as apocalyptic has met with some criticism. Deidun (1986:238-239) criticises Beker's emphasis on the apocalyptic in Paul, arguing that Beker himself admits that it is perhaps not so pervasive or at least not the 'coherent core' in Paul's letters.¹⁹ Deidun also takes issue with Beker's definition of apocalyptic, questioning whether the traits as listed by Beker would be 'essential to Jewish apocalypses', and whether all these elements appear in Paul's letters, in any case.²⁰ Deidun argues that Paul's use of apocalyptic did not rule out the use of other contemporary traditions, and that all the borrowed material was at any rate reworked — 'to a large extent transformed and redefined' — by Paul in light of his understanding of Jesus Christ, and his death and resurrection.

Nevertheless, to echo Horsley, apocalyptic is characteristic of Pauline thought, going beyond his use of such terminology and language.

2.5. Ecclesiocentric

It was claimed above that Pauline hermeneutics can best be described as ecclesiocentric. That is, Paul read Scripture as a prefiguring of the early church and in addition, with the aim of edifying of these communities. Similarly, it is contended that Pauline theology is characterised by a strong sense of pastoral concern.

Considering the nature of Pauline ethics, Tuckett contends that Paul's point of departure is the actual situation he addresses, not some abstract theological dogma.

Concern for the well-being of other Christians, concern to respect the consciences (albeit weak) of other members of the body of Christ, is more important for Paul in determining practical ethics than abstract theology (1991:316).

It will serve us well to describe Pauline ethics as 'ecclesiocentric', as ethics concerned with and directed to the edification of the Pauline communities.

In addition to what can be called Paul's 'ecclesiocentric ethics', however, the formulation of Pauline theology is as consciously done from the perspective of and intending to address the unique communities in which Paul found himself. Indeed, going probably somewhat further than intended by Tuckett (1991:316), in Paul '[s]ystematic theology is subservient to ἀγάπη', in the sense that Pauline theology is founded on Paul's understanding of the Christ

¹⁹ Beker admits that Galatians focuses on the 'eschatological present' and does not really exhibit a 'futurist, apocalyptic' perspective (1980:58; cf Deidun 1986:238).

²⁰ Keck's argument is that Paul's theology is apocalyptic, not because it adheres to the traits as outlined by Beker and others, but in so far as it displays a 'perspective of discontinuity' (1984:229-241).

event, mediated by the traditions of which he was very much a part,²¹ in view of the concerns of the communities under his direction.

2.6. Paul: A theologian?²²

Paul seems more interested in persuasion, emotional appeal and moral exhortation in his letters than in the academic pursuit of coherence and consistency of thought (Beker 1986:597).

To summarise, can Paul be called a 'theologian'? On the back cover of a recent book on Paul, Ed P Sanders is very clear about his views on Paul as theologian:

Following his conversion from persecutor of the Christian movement to apostle, Paul began preaching a simple missionary gospel. As problems arose out of his message, he provided impassioned and vigorous answers, but these do not make up a single system in which each argument is methodologically related to others (Sanders 1991).

A discussion of the hermeneutics of Paul in his letters cannot but lead to a consideration of Paul's position vis-à-vis this 'theology'. What was Paul's aim with his letters: theological, pastoral, ideological-political? And what was Paul's own position in relation to his writings? Does expressing 'theological' ideas, perhaps even within a coherent pattern of thinking, make one a theologian? The range of answers to these questions is so wide as the defense of each position has been vociferous. An attempt has been made to provide a few pointers concerning Pauline theology, in relation to his hermeneutics.

Perhaps the most obvious way in which Paul can be described as a theologian, is that he was 'at least the first to write down his reflections about the meaning of the risen Christ' (Tambasco 1991:2). But such statements do more to highlight the impreciseness of the category 'theologian' and its use.²³

Paul can indeed be described — defended? — as a theologian, and in the following way. Paul's letters create the impression that, far from being a 'muddle-head', he was

a careful and disciplined thinker. His arguments make sense. He is even able to unpack abstract concepts. To be sure, because he is always dealing with people who are going through concrete

²¹ But even these traditions, as was argued, were appropriated by what can be described adequately with the term, 'ecclesiocentric hermeneutics'.

²² Paul has also been called a scholar; Ferguson (1986:134) referring to Origen says, 'excluding Paul, he is in many ways the church's finest scholar'.

²³ Silva explains what Paul's status as 'theologian' should *not* be taken to mean: Paul did not produce 'handbooks of systematic theology; he was not 'formally consistent all of the time'; he did not work out a 'full theological system'; and, he did not necessarily formulate a 'clear center' in his thinking, and tried to formulate his theology accordingly (1994:6-12). However, Mauser, referring to the Jewish theologian Tsevat, argues that Paul is indeed a 'systematic theologian of the Old Testament' (1989:90-92); similarly, Blank argues that Paul, in support of his 'new paradigm' of righteousness by faith, 'behaved as a "systematic theologian" in his use of Scripture' (1991:274). To the contrary, claiming theological status for Paul because of his writing activity, which Paul embarked upon in service of the communities he attended to and not to provide clear and concise theological advice, begs the, often asked and legitimate question, whether Paul is best seen as theologian or pastor?

and urgent problems, he must be pastoral. His writing, therefore, is neither academic in style nor artificially logical. He is quite ready to use emotive language and hyperbole (Silva 1994:9).

In addition, Paul's thinking can be described as 'coherent', in the sense that his arguments not only 'hang together', but also 'fit with each other and support each other'.²⁴

Betz argued already in 1977 that although Paul changed his opinion from time to time — compare Galatians and Romans on freedom for example — it does not make him inconsistent. To the contrary,

he [sc Paul] was forced to reconsider his position and to reformulate it anew after the Galatian and the Corinthian debates and in view of the anti-Pauline propaganda in Rome (:12).

The debate on whether Paul was consistent or inconsistent, coherent or incoherent, or a combination of these in his letters was not addressed exhaustively here.²⁵ The salient point is that, for all the dangers involved with such characterisation, it does seem to serve a heuristic purpose to refer to Paul as theologian. The only remains from which to construct his theology, however, are to be found in his contingent and highly context-specific letters; the very notion of which almost inevitably implies that inconsistencies between letters will be found.²⁶

2.6.1. Contextual theologian and/or pastor

His [Paul's] teaching was therefore shaped in the dialectic between the tradition he had received and the empirical reality that confronted him (McDonald 1997:15).

The highly contextual theology of Paul is not often denied, if typically left unaccounted. Frequently, when the contextual nature of Pauline theology is taken serious, a different understanding of Paul and his letters become possible. Such a reconceptualising of Pauline theology is commonly, at least in part, attributed to the origin of Paul's career. For example, Georgi (1991b:19-25) argues that Paul was not intent on creating a new religion, but rather contextualising the existing 'biblical Judaism', so as to open it up for all people. The result

²⁴ Against the charge of Paul's apparent incoherency, Silva pleads for what Malina (e.g. 1991:16) in another context has called, a 'considerate reader'. As another reason for viewing Paul as a theologian, Silva suggests that Paul gives 'attention to foundational categories' (1994:11), certain topics considered central: e.g. justification, eschatology, etc. However, such categories generally seem to clarify the interpreter's theology more than that of Paul!

²⁵ For a recent, brief overview of positions, cf Reid (1995:19-20). Reid also points out the attempt of many scholars to find in the concept of 'story' a new overarching framework within which to understand the Pauline letter; cf note 6 above.

²⁶ Perhaps some Pauline 'inconsistencies' can be explained in this way, e.g. Tuckett's problem (1991:315-316) with Paul's attitude to food laws in 1 Corinthians 8-10 and Romans 14 (to observe Jewish food laws to avoid giving offense to the reservations of others) as compared to his statements on the unacceptability of circumcision in Galatians, disregarding the sentiments of others. Tuckett, however, finds Paul's consistency to be situated in his 'vehement opposition' to 'one set of traditions being forced upon other people' (:319-320).

was that Paul succeeded in creating a new worldview, in which God is given back the rule of the world, or theocracy.²⁷

Segal (1990:143) is perhaps the foremost proponent of Paul's Damascus road-experience as the foundational element in Pauline theology, but adds that Paul's exposure afterwards in the community of believers, contributed to his theology.

Besides reflecting on his own personal conversion experience, then, Paul is reflecting on his postconversion experience in the gentile community and his career in converting gentiles. *These experiences form the basis of his theology* (emphasis added).²⁸

Although aspects of Segal's thesis on the time spent and the effect of Paul's experience in the 'Damascus-community' have been questioned, Paul's thought was evidently influenced by his relationship with and ministry in these early 'Christian' communities.²⁹

It is difficult to discuss Pauline thought outside of community: Paul's letters all originate from within a specific community, addressing specific concerns of the particular community. The result was a theology with a distinct contingent nature — which need not be described as 'unsystematic' (Sanders) or even 'incoherent' (Räsänen). Apart from the situatedness of the Pauline correspondence,³⁰ the role of the community in the Pauline letters reaches further ahead. The communal emphasis in Pauline thought is clear from his concern for an inclusive community of people being 'in Christ', through *ὑποθεσία* (cf e.g. Banks 1994). The community was perceived by Paul in terms of the 'covenant people' or 'the people of God' metaphors, with the formation of genuine community as a critical component. Community in Paul's book meant an 'organic relationship' which consisted of God and his people — and even the rest of creation — in a 'relational unity' (McDonald 1997:15).

Describing Pauline theology as pastoral might not cover all the aspects of his theological thinking, but nevertheless goes far in accounting for his letters.³¹ His letters are directed at problems in congregations, and do not contain mere abstract theologising. Paul as a creative,

²⁷ Georgi ascribes this to Paul's 'conversion': this was no *metanoia*, but a radical questioning and rethinking of God's grace for all people, in all aspects of life (including social, political and economic spheres).

²⁸ Beker adds that 'Paul is essentially an *interpreter* of the gospel', which for him refers to 'the tradition which he inherited from the church at Antioch after his conversion and call to the apostolate' (1989:353).

²⁹ Keck argues (1993:27-38) that Paul is best described as an 'ex post facto-thinker', with the event being the resurrection of Christ; this does not necessarily exclude the importance of Paul's reinterpretation of Scripture. It relates more to the debate between e.g. Stockhausen and Hays on the relation between 'event and experience', and Scripture: Hays argues that Scripture forms Paul's point of departure in his hermeneutics, and Stockhausen rather that Scripture exercises some influence and direction on it (Stockhausen 1993:144 n4). Keck's insistence, however, on Pauline thought not being 'shaped by previous thinking' does seem to suggest that he moulds Paul's reading into a (Christian) peculiarity (cf 1993:28-34).

³⁰ As rightly pointed out by Botha (1990:44-45) and others, Paul's 'inconsistencies' also have to be understood in the 'oral-aural mindset' of his time.

³¹ Schillebeeckx (1983:13-16) refers to Paul's missionary activities in terms of his 'pastoral strategy'. Malherbe (1986:3-13) argues that Paul's method of pastoral care was 'at once Christian and Hellenist'.

contextual theologian was 'searching the scriptures' in the very circumstances which he was trying to address. Morgan and Barton (1988:29) put Paul — and, Augustine and Luther — in the same category as today's 'thoughtful Christians' by stressing the reciprocal nature of their experience-tradition relationship: the tradition is considered in terms of the particular person's and the community's experience. In turn the particular experience is reflected upon in light of the tradition. Cousar (1990:178) quite aptly calls Paul a 'pastor-theologian'.

In his discussion on Paul's freedom in his use of the traditions he received, Tuckett's (1991:324) claim that,

freedom in relation to ethics and behaviour has to be distinguished sharply from freedom in relation to doctrinal and soteriological matters for Paul: ethical freedom is not allowed to prejudice in any way belief in the full saving work of Christ and the implications of this (cf Gal 2:20),

seems to be contradicted when he insists on Paul being 'highly critical of his traditions to the point of rejecting them altogether' (:324), and with his insistence that Paul's theological method was characterised by a readiness 'to change and adapt' (:325; cf Keesmaat 1997:324).³²

Pauline thought exhibits a strong element of discontinuity, and this can be seen in his use of tradition as well. The discontinuity can be explained with reference to the 'disjunction between Paul's way of life in the customs of his fathers and his new life in Christ'. But, Paul's interpretation of Scripture intensified this disjunction by his tendency 'to locate and exegetically reconcile passages in his traditional Scriptures which express that disjunction' (Stockhausen 1993:145). In this regard, Dahl (1977:159-177) went further in arguing that Paul's reinterpretation of Scripture, which sometimes in his view amounted to 'contradictions', was directed (also) at the relationship between 'Jews and Gentiles in the church'.³³

Pauline freedom was activated and motivated by the apostle's concern for the communities toward which he was directing his letters. This means that Paul's insistence on freedom should not be divorced from his pastoral concerns.³⁴

2.6.2. *Pauline theology and hermeneutics: Towards liberation*³⁵

³² Beker's notion of Paul's theology as essentially an interplay between 'coherence' and 'contingency' sees Paul also as interpreter 'who both in his exegesis of the Old Testament and in his appropriation of Christian tradition adapts and reformulates previous interpretation in a distinctive and innovative manner' (1986:596).

³³ Cf also chapter 2 on the social dimensions of justification and Paul's concern with the life in and unity of the communities to which he was related, in particular his concern for the 'Jew-Gentile problem'.

³⁴ Neither should these 'pastoral' concerns be narrowed down to contemporary perceptions of the 'minister down the road'. Wuellner (1986:49-77) describes Paul's pastoral activity in 1 Corinthians with regard to his use of rhetorical questions, and ultimately describes Paul's pastoral role as being one of rhetorician, educator and politician.

³⁵ Perhaps 'liberation' rather than 'liberty' or 'freedom', because of the 'process nature' of freedom as advocated by Paul — the process which will only reach its conclusion in the apocalyptic triumph of God.

There have been numerous attempts to synthesize the theology derived from the Pauline epistles into a monochromatic, self-contained theological system: 'Paul's theology', or 'Pauline theology'. The abstraction of a theology from Paul does not pose a problem in principle, and the necessity thereof can apparently be argued, but to synthesize Paul's pastoral addressing of contingent situations into 'doctrinaire theology' and then ascribe it to Paul³⁶ is highly problematic.

The attempt to develop a systematic Pauline theology was very often accompanied by the endeavour to find within the New Testament, and for that matter within the Bible, a *Leitmotiv* (leading concept) or *Mitte* (central theme) and has occupied much of New Testament scholarship.³⁷ This search for the one single motif with which to unlock, explain and systemize the New Testament (and together with the Old Testament, the Bible) was intensified with a renewed interest in Biblical Theology.³⁸

The unachievable goal of finding *the* theme with which to unlock the New Testament is illustrated by the diversity of Pauline literature. Regarding this difficulty, Hasel (1978:216) states that '[t]he key of Pauline theology is not easy to come by'. To assume that this difficulty would prove a deterrent, would be naive. Furnish (1989:333-336) recently devoted a substantial part of his review of Pauline scholarship to this matter. It arguably serves to indicate the tenacity of such a search for the Pauline center of thought.³⁹ In short, Hasel (1978:216) notes that

[s]ince no single theme, scheme, or motif is sufficiently comprehensive to include within it all varieties of NT viewpoints,⁴⁰ one must refrain from using a particular concept, formula, basic idea, etc, as the center of the NT whereby a systemization of the manifold variegated NT testimonies is achieved.

More importantly, a study of the different views on Pauline theology as it is related to different 'centers' within it, shows that in the many cases Paul's theological statements were

³⁶ Ridderbos' *Paulus. Ontwerp van zijn theologie* (1966) (ET *Paul. An outline of his theology*, 1977) remains the best example of this superimposing of a current 'mainline' and dogmatic, Christian theology on Paul's thought.

³⁷ Hasel (1978:140-170) provides a short overview of a variety of different proposals for such a center (which should then result in demonstrating the unity of the New Testament). A short evaluation of this search for a central aspect of unity is also provided by Hasel.

³⁸ Cf for instance Martin (1981:3).

³⁹ Cf recently also attempts by Beker (1989) and Boers (1994) to identify the 'coherent center' of Pauline thought.

⁴⁰ This precludes the postulating of 'Christ' as the center of the New Testament, as 'God' is the center of the Old Testament. The discovery of the respective pervasive influences of Christ and God in the New and Old Testament is a truism (Martin 1981:1). For the theocentric nature of Pauline theology, cf above.

discussed within the confines of modern credal and confessional positions.⁴¹ Lately, some scholars have tried to move away from imposing external theological categories on Paul and to search for a framework for interpreting Paul within his specific time and historical context, taking especially the dialogical nature of Paul's letters into consideration (cf Furnish 1989:335-336).⁴²

With the advent of post-Structuralist and post-Modern tendencies in New Testament scholarship the emphasis shifted from the whole to the part(s). Not so important anymore is the synthesis as it is essential to stress the difference of aspects within the whole. 'Loss of centre' although characteristic of post-Modern thought, however, cannot be the final word in the search to appropriate the meaning of Pauline theology in a systematic and coherent way.⁴³

This study is not intended as a 'new quest' for the center of the New Testament or the Pauline letters, nor does it presuppose that such a center do or do not exist. The aim here is merely to insist on the predominance of 'freedom' in Paul's letters and its aptness for describing both Pauline hermeneutics and theology. The need for an interpretive framework for the letters of Paul does exist. The still reigning framework of Luther cannot be maintained in this century, and has become increasingly unable to respond to global issues.⁴⁴ Substituting the TAP with its emphasis on soteriology for a framework of freedom/liberty stressing ecclesiology, might prove to be fruitful.

2.6.3. Pauline freedom: Ethics and theology

The fundamental shift from the dominance of the law was, for Paul, an experience of liberation. And this liberation, at the same time, became the hallmark of a new existence in faith — an existence in which also the ethical conduct of the believer could be understood in terms of freedom (Lategan 1990:323).

Scholars are increasingly recognizing that Paul's ethical instructions are closely connected and related to the specific contingencies he addressed, a practice which would probably be called

⁴¹ Furnish (1989:333,335) refers to the attempts to find the center in 'some particular theological doctrine', claiming that there is an increasing realisation of the impossibility of imposing 'standard doctrinal headings of systematic theology'. However, many examples of both can be offered, for the former, e.g. Martin (1981); and for the latter, e.g. Ridderbos (1975).

⁴² E.g. Beker (1980). After questions were asked as to whether this constitutes a renewed attempt for a *Mitte*, Beker denied and (not very convincingly) differentiated between 'coherent theme' and 'coherent stratum' (cf e.g. 1986:597). Cf Boers (1994:22-26) for a discussion of Beker and the possibility of an 'unifying center', and also his suggestion of a 'macro-structure'.

⁴³ Whether this necessarily 'does not mean that the quest for the theological center of Paul's thought must be given up, only that it must be pursued in new ways and with revised perspectives' (Furnish 1989:336 on Beker), is debatable.

⁴⁴ Cf the virtual silence of Paul in Liberation theology; Morgan and Barton (1988:104) refers to the Pauline and Lutheran theology as 'kerygmatic' (according to Bultmann) which 'sounds rather narrow in a socially engaged church'.

contextualisation today. By contextualisation is meant an ethics that derives to a certain extent from a specific historical context.⁴⁵ On the other hand, there is also an increasing awareness of Paul's indebtedness to his (in particular, Jewish) tradition⁴⁶ and Scripture. As Holtz (1995:51ff; cf Rosner 1995:10) argues, '[f]or my part, the Biblical/Jewish origin of Paul's ethics is crucial to assessing its shape, logic and foundations and to recognising its continuing relevance'.

Attention to the structure or 'logic' (Rosner 1995:17-20) of Pauline ethics clearly exhibits what has been described as an indicative-imperative scheme.⁴⁷ This pattern is characteristic of Paul's ethics which, again, is an 'integral part of his theology'. It has a 'strong and almost overwhelming theological basis' and '*is a consequence of his theology*' (Lategan 1990:318-319,322, emphasis added; cf Rosner 1995:20).

Understanding the close link between Pauline theology and ethics contributes to the appreciation of the historical situatedness of both.

Paul's ethical admonitions are closely and significantly related to his preaching of the gospel, and thus to his fundamental theological convictions⁴⁸ (Furnish 1985:21).

As far as the indicative-imperative scheme is concerned, it can be asserted, however, that the same logic can be found in the 'Old Testament'. In Lev 20:7-8 the imperative to be holy is derived from the indicative that God is holy (Rosner 1995:20).⁴⁹ The refrain which is often heard throughout the scriptures of Israel, 'I will be your God, and you will be my people' strongly emphasises the nature — and basis — of 'Old Testament'-ethics.⁵⁰ Dunn and Suggate (1993:17-22) argue for the 'scriptural' (that is, 'Old Testament') basis of Paul's insistence on the primacy of grace and human responsibility or obligatory aspects following as response to grace as embodied in covenant and Torah. Rosner concludes that the origin of Pauline ethics — especially then in terms of the indicative-imperative scheme — is clearly to be found in its scriptural roots (1995:19).

⁴⁵ Such a contextualisation of ethics would differ from 'situation ethics' in the sense that the former proceeds consciously from a certain tradition — often set within a specific community — whereas in the case of the latter, the 'moral agent' would carry the sole responsibility for ethical decision making. Recently a number of scholars have argued for the constitutive influence of the community on Pauline ethics (Fowl and Jones 1991; McDonald 1997:15-19).

⁴⁶ Paul, however, made use of various other traditions as well, including the Jesus-tradition and Hellenistic material. For the latter, cf e g Lategan (1990:325).

⁴⁷ So also various other scholars, e g Lategan (1984:323-324; 1990:321-323); Schrage (1982:155-161); Verhey (1984:104-105).

⁴⁸ Furnish's argument cuts both ways: he attempted to indicate that the ethical sections of Paul's letters 'are not loosely tacked on to the weightier, theological parts'. At stake here is, however, rather the similar (i e contextual) nature of both theology and ethics in Paul's letters.

⁴⁹ The danger of the TAP's lopsidedness is prevalent also in the evaluation of the levels of Paul's dependency on Scripture, cf Rosner (1995:7) and the previous chapter on the *motivation* of Paul's use of Scripture.

⁵⁰ Cf the good summary of this reciprocity in Gardner (1995:30-41).

However, perhaps most characteristic of Pauline ethics is what Verhey (1984:106-112) calls Paul's 'new discernment'. It is the same notion which Lategan (1990:318-328) describes — if more from the perspective of Galatians — as Paul's ethics of shared responsibility, a 'participating and creative' ethics. The 'new' in Paul's ethical discernment refers according to Verhey to the dawning of the 'new age', inaugurated by Jesus Christ. Participation in this new age demands a 'renewed mind' (Rom 12:2). The 'new discernment' does not imply the renouncement of those earlier aspects of moral decision making, integral to the process:

the self-understanding of the moral agent, the perspective on the situation at hand, and certain principles to help one discern and to defend one's discernment (Verhey 1984:106).

Such elements present in all ethical discernment are not simply replaced, but Paul calls for them to be 'affected' or transformed by the renewal of minds and by participation in Christ.

Lategan argues for an ethics characterised by a different discernment — 'a new understanding of what ethical responsibility entails' — and demonstrates his theory with reference to Paul's ethical instructions in Galatians. With regard to the 'nature' of his ethics, he refers to Paul's emphasis on the responsibility of the members of the Galatian church 'for independent and founded decision making'. The style of Paul's instructions in Galatians is characterised by 'the ideal of a participating and creative ethics' (1990:318).

Following from the discussion it will be fair to describe Pauline ethics as characterised by freedom, in content as well as in form — that is, nature and style. Indeed, it is argued, in conjunction with the previous chapter that Paul's theology as *a whole* can be aptly described as free.

2.7. Summarising remarks: Pauline freedom

Paul uses the Old Testament models to draw the circle of world-wide failure and world-wide promise. As the horizon within which the eschatologically new act of God in Christ takes place as a new creation, this is evidence of very conscious systematizing [sic] theology which interprets Old Testament texts daringly and in freely conceived transformation of meaning (Mausser 1989:90).

Freedom is a governing concern in the Pauline letters, and touches on all aspects of Pauline thought and ministry. Not only does his theology stand in the full light of freedom, but it reaches even further. Within Paul's theology, freedom is an important concept or content, with its origin traced back to Paul's understanding of the events surrounding Christ. In his approach to the idea of freedom wrought by Christ, Paul exercised freedom. Not only the content but also Paul's theological 'programme' or approach itself are properly described in terms of freedom.

Freedom, it was argued, describes Pauline hermeneutics the best. Dynamic, creative and other adjectives help to portray this interpretive freedom. But Paul's theology stands also in the

full glare of the implications of 'You have been set free' (Gal 5:1), described and discussed with a variety of different possible ablatives ('from's') and directives ('to's').⁵¹

3. Paul's normative hermeneutic

[T]hose who would study interpretation with Paul are faced with two options: they can apprehend and vindicate his readings, or they can emulate his method (Marks 1984:88).

Paul's use of the Bible cannot be judged by the standards established for modern interpretive methodology. Neither can modern interpreters be expected to conform to Paul's use of biblical texts. In both cases, this would be a hermeneutical anachronism (Ageson 1993:16).

3.1. Introduction

Paul ... established the precedent that Christianity was to be a matter of articulation and interpretation. Its subsequent history was as much about words and their interpretation as it was about belief or practice (Cameron 1991:11-12).

The inevitable question concerns the implications of Pauline freedom, specifically his hermeneutical freedom for his interpreters today: Are Paul's readers to treat him hermeneutically in the way he demonstrated through his reading of Scripture? In short, is Pauline hermeneutics normative for us? Is Pauline hermeneutics, as much as he based it on the 'Spirit', normative for us, who have become 'people' or 'believers of the book'?

Clines has recently argued that the reason that the church is often troubled with the way in which the 'Old Testament' is used in the New, is because it has also accepted the ideals of post-Enlightenment, "objective" academic scholarship' (1997:98). However, one of the most often asked questions regarding Paul's method of interpretation of the scriptures of Israel is: should we today follow Paul's pattern of interpretation?⁵² The answer to this question is complicated by the fact that Paul never spelled out his exegetical or hermeneutical considerations in any great detail and in no self-contained or comprehensive way. Silva (1993:639) even goes so far as to argue that Paul never engages in a 'sustained interpretation' of any particular passage which might serve as a case-study. He never even directly attempts to delineate the specific meaning of a text, he never considers alternate possibilities in using the texts he used, and seems to use Scripture only in as far as it facilitates his arguments by 'heightening the emotive thrust of his words'.⁵³

⁵¹ Some of these would include freedom 'from' on the terrains of: (a certain) morality and ethics; theology and religion; social life and politics; exegesis and hermeneutics. Such freedom would often refer to freedom from the Law, the 'symbolic world of Judaism' (cf Sanders), the 'powers of universe', etc. Freedom 'to' would also function on those terrains and include the freedom to expect and experience new revelations and manifestations of Christ (cf Patte), to become part of these manifestations ('living freedom'). Cf Lategan (1991:91-92) for a contextualising of these motifs in post-Apartheid SA.

⁵² Cf Silva (1993:630,639).

⁵³ However, characterising Pauline interpretation thus, Silva is probably exposing more of his own hermeneutical assumptions than of Paul's! But the uneasiness felt by Silva in appropriating Pauline hermeneutics today, is shared by many scholars.

The matter is further complicated by the difference in setting. It is very seldom today that the same person embodies 'scholarly interest and preacher's concern' (Young 1995:107). Of course this is not to imply that the Bible should only be read and studied in and for the church. The Bible is indeed also a 'classic' (Young 1995:104). But, it is important to account for the influence of 'our present intellectual environment' (Modernity) on our understanding of Scripture and its interpretation (cf Schüssler Fiorenza 1990). So even if 'normative' elements in Paul's interpretive practice are identified, twentieth-century, professional biblical scholars — especially those without any particular ecclesial attachment — need to stay aware of the different setting, and that their level of commitment might differ from that of Paul.

It is also quite often noted that Paul's interpretive stance differed from the modern inclination. Stockhausen (1990:202) argues that Paul 'telescoped' exegesis and hermeneutic into one another, because his culture did not prescribe certain 'research tools and methods', and did not presuppose 'a historical distance from the text'. Still, Stockhausen argues that Paul did 'not bring his own meaning *to* the text. As he saw it, he drew God's meaning *out*' (emphasis in the original).

The question on the value of Paul's interpretive practice for today has elicited basically two responses. Scholars that argue for and against the normativity of the Pauline hermeneutic. For example, Marks (1984) bluntly states that Paul's 'letters contain examples and directives for a way of reading Scripture ... that cannot be comfortably reconciled with any normative mode of interpretation (:71).

On the other hand Keck (1993:37) argues that '[t]o think with Paul is not simply to paraphrase him but to learn to think like him'. Hays (1989:183) suggests on a more practical note that 'Paul's readings are materially normative (in a sense to be specified carefully) for Christian theology and his interpretive methods are paradigmatic for Christian hermeneutics'.⁵⁴

It is remarkable how often modern literary analysis of the biblical text matches ancient and mediaeval interpretations, especially in Jewish studies, since Jewish scholars tend to be better acquainted with their rabbinic and mediaeval sources than Christians with theirs (Sawyer 1990:317).

⁵⁴ Silva (1993:640-641) defends Paul's use of faith (i.e. according to Silva's view) as opposed to 'works' as medium of salvation, when quoting LXX Hab 2:4 who uses 'faith' and not 'faithfulness' as in the MT. The defense is necessary as it seems as if Paul is abusing this verse to support a 'distinctively Pauline doctrine' and as if Paul is quoting the prophet as supporting the opposite of what Hab intended to support. Silva builds his defense on three notions: Hab refers to Gen 15:6 where Abraham's faith is highlighted, Paul often used Abraham as example in his writing, and the inseparability of faith and faithfulness (obedience) in Habakkuk. For a strong position against the value of interpretive methods used in the NT for contemporary hermeneutics, cf Van Zyl (1986:37-77).

The question regarding the normativity of Pauline hermeneutics for contemporary interpretive practice needs some attention, and can properly be addressed with reference to the following matters.

3.2. *'Written for our sake'*

Without repeating the argument in a previous chapter (on the understanding of Rom 15:4), it is important to account for Paul concern for the value of other, earlier traditions.

Tuckett (1991:307-325) concludes his study on Paul's sense of freedom with regard to his received traditions by stating that one option with Paul's theology is 'to leave it where it is', that is, to consign it to the first century. He argues, however

in one way we can only fully grasp what Paul is on about precisely insofar as we ourselves are involved in not dissimilar debates about our traditions, about our behaviour and how we ourselves might do our theology (Tuckett 1991:324).

Without privileging the consideration of Paul's hermeneutics above his theology, it is more important for biblical scholars today to investigate the former,⁵⁵ which will as a result also inform studies on Pauline theology.

It was argued that in Paul's letters some indications can be found that these occasional writings were written not only with their initial or original audiences in mind. For example, Koch (1986:322-326) refers to two texts in the Pauline letters which seems to indicate a concern that later readers should also attribute his writings for their day, namely 1 Cor 9:10 and Rom 4:23f — and Decock (1993:274) adds yet another text: Rom 15:4.

One distinction that is commonly referred to in biblical scholarship regarding Paul's use of Scripture is the one between 'liberals' and 'conservatives'. The former argues that Paul's reading of Scripture was time-conditioned (first century) and one should not feel obliged to repeat it, whereas the conservatives attempt to explain Pauline interpretation by means of modern methods.

Aageson (1993:3) suggests that the problem which confronted Paul, was — although perhaps different in range — not unlike the one that confronts the readers of the Bible in the present: in order to appropriate Scripture, one has to bridge a huge divide.

Many scholars who not only defend Pauline interpretation but also advocate the normative value thereof, distinguish between Paul's hermeneutical 'theory' on the one hand, and on

⁵⁵ The existence and nature of various hermeneutical debates ranging across the globe, but in particular also in SA, attest to this (Punt 1997, 1998b).

the other hand, his 'technique' (Aageson 1993:17). Pauline methodology should not be reappropriated because

our context is different. Our sense of appropriate and acceptable interpretation is different. The state of our knowledge and our traditions of interpretation are not those of Paul's day. Moreover, our modern views of the world are in many ways peculiar to our own circumstance in time and place (Aageson 1993:5).

Yet, Aageson (1993:7ff;133-135) argues that Paul's 'theory of interpretation' should be emulated by modern bible readers. This theory is one that accepts the integrity of the text (by valuing the text's context)⁵⁶ and the context of the interpreter (by not ignoring the 'creative human contribution to the art of textual understanding'), resulting in a dialogue. It is accepted by Aageson that the interpretive process implies interaction between text and reader, one of 'give and take', of 'talk and listen'. The most important aspect of his theory, is for Aageson to argue that the text has to be seen as 'subject' and not (only?) as an innate object.⁵⁷

Paul is an example for the modern church. He moves beyond his own sectarianism to bring the universal message of Christ to a world that in many ways is alien to it. He cannot simply be a transmitter of tradition. He must formulate, indeed create, a theology and a religious posture that can communicate to people in the Roman world of his time.

Paul's example has to be emulated by the church today:

The church today is confronted with issues that require it also to be more than a conduit for the received tradition. The church is called upon to explore unexplored theological issues and problems. It is required to do theology afresh and not merely repeat the well-worn theological maxims of the past (Aageson 1993:133).

This is nowhere more true and applicable than in post-colonial Africa!

Morna Hooker (1981:307) also denies the possibility of the use 'of Paul's first-century methods of exegesis', because we do not live in the first century. However, the value of investigating Pauline hermeneutics is located in the dialogical nature of first-century exegesis: 'scripture exercises this function of standing over against us, representing the givenness of the past, the otherness of God'.

The reappropriation of earlier tradition is echoed by (Keesmaat 1997:326) and supported by Reid (1995:22): 'if we were to read and interpret Scripture the way Paul does, we would be involved in tellings of the story that transform the tradition in some way'. But such retellings would not be mere repetition of Paul's story or of the story Paul interpreted. 'Telling the story in a way that is alive and powerful today means telling anew what it means for God to save in this century, in this post-modern world, in this context'.

⁵⁶ Aageson (1993:5) argues that the relationship between a text and its context, is 'at the heart of the hermeneutical problem'.

⁵⁷ According to Aageson (1993:13-14) the advantages are numerous: it prevents predetermined conclusions; encourages serious listening to the text; stresses that the text and interpreter are not identical; has the potential of preventing absolute relativism in interpretation; can compel the reader to change previously held positions; provides a platform for interpreters operating with different 'circles of plausibility'.

3.3. A legacy of hermeneutical freedom

A theology which is true to Paul must thus always be a critical theology, ready to change and to adapt, ready to maintain the principle of freedom in love, if necessary in spite of its traditions, however venerable (Tuckett 1991:325).

After affirming the different position in which biblical interpreters today find themselves compared to that of the readers of the Old Testament in the first century,⁵⁸ Snodgrass (1991:427) argues that twentieth-century interpreters of sacred Scripture cannot grant themselves the same hermeneutic freedom as was the case with their first-century counterparts.⁵⁹ Interpreters today have to be guided by the 'author's intentions',⁶⁰ and have to read the scriptures of Israel christologically⁶¹ and typologically. For Snodgrass this implies a reading of Holy Scripture which look

for patterns of God's working in the Hebrew Scriptures, in the life of Jesus, and in their own lives. Our reading of Scripture should do no less.

Snodgrass strongly eschews any notion of allegorical reading and labels it as 'abusive interpretation'.⁶² He strongly advises modern readers to — as in the case of the New Testament writers — use the scriptures as 'tools for thinking'.

However, the scene of biblical interpretation is characterised by interpretive pluralism. This pluralism, as Aageson (1993:14) rightly argues, is evidence of the 'richness of the biblical texts and to the inherent diversity of the Bible' as stressed by Young (1995)⁶³ and others, and is induced by the pluralist world in which we live. The interpretive pluralism of our day is paralleled by the first-century situation when Scripture was also read in many and diverse ways — which was reflected in the church and to which the 'New Testament' is a living monument. The interpretation of the Bible will never end, but the question asked today is where are the *limits* of the interpretation of the biblical texts?

⁵⁸ The difference is situated in the 'proximity of the apostles to the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus' which 'places them in a unique category', and 'the eschatological significance of Jesus' ministry and his identity'.

⁵⁹ Although, confusingly, he stresses that he does not want to argue that 'the apostles could be creative because of their context, but that we are confined to more mundane methods' (Snodgrass 1991:427).

⁶⁰ Although Snodgrass (1991:410-411, espec 414) agrees that the NT writers used the scriptures 'different to their original intention'.

⁶¹ Cf Van Zyl (1986:37-77). However, not giving all 'OT' texts a 'christological conclusion', but reading them 'in light of the work and person of Christ'. This approach should not 'impose Christian theology on the OT', neither should this lead to the allegorising of the OT (Snodgrass 1991:427) — Snodgrass seems to want to have his cake and eat it!

⁶² By exchanging 'typology' with 'correspondence in history' Snodgrass at least shows his awareness of the equally abusive possibilities inherent in typological readings. Whether, however, typology and allegory differ either in terms of presupposing a 'hidden meaning' or in the *arbitrary* nature of supplying a referent for the hidden meaning — only because typology emphasise historical progression in a linear way (another questionable assumption!) — remains a question. Cf Dawson (1992) and Fowl (1994).

⁶³ Her particular emphasis is on the role played by 'interpretive genres' (e.g., use of the Bible in academic departments, as opposed to in sermons, homilies, church reports, etc).

Indeed, the Pauline legacy is built on hermeneutical freedom. What such hermeneutical freedom could possibly entail, can be considered by studying the following matters while evaluating the possible positive and continuing role of first-century exegesis, and its Pauline version in particular, for contemporary exegetical practice.

3.3.1. *The role of tradition*

After many years of negative attitude to tradition, in some quarters Protestantism is coming to a new realisation of its positive value Of course tradition can be misleading; it can have been wrong for its day or irrelevant for ours (Goldingay 1982:41).

It is generally known that Roman Catholic exegesis attaches more value to tradition than Protestant exegesis, especially as far as it concerns the positive value of tradition in guiding the interpretation of the Bible.⁶⁴ This difference in perception on the importance of tradition is probably due to a number of factors. The historical development in the Protestant churches was one that predominantly emphasised the role of Scripture as sole *norma normans*, dating back to the sixteenth-century Reformation. The attitude of the Roman Catholic church as reflected in papal letters,⁶⁵ was until fairly recently critical of and even negative towards the scientific study of the Bible. However, Mejia (1987:21-35)⁶⁶ argues at length for both a critical reading of Scripture as well as for revalidating the role of tradition in interpretation.

We are not to feel that ... what was done before, in the long history of Christian (and, of course, Jewish) exegesis, is altogether expendable (Mejia 1987:24).

Mejia (1987:25) regards it as impossible to exhaust the sense of the text as such, that is, without its historical trimmings and linings. In the first place, it was composed by another human being, the thought(s) of whom are not simply fathomable by other people, and secondly, written texts acquire a life of their own.⁶⁷ This leads him to conclude that our difficulty in interpreting a text lies not in the historical embeddedness of the text, but in the text itself. However, 'that which helps toward the adequate reading of the text ... is the living history of the text'.

⁶⁴ For a brief theological argument on the role of tradition and its 'revelatory' significance, cf Kirchschräger (1987:36-46, espec 39-42). He, unfortunately, restricts his argument to the — Tracian public of the — church. On Scripture and tradition, cf also Beker (1990:9); Childs (1995:9-11); Gilbert (1987:63-77); Schneiders (1991:64-93). Cf also chapter 1.

⁶⁵ Cf some of the 1907 letters and decrees, referred to in Mejia (1987:22,32 n2).

⁶⁶ Cf his chapter on the role of tradition in interpretation, which consists really of an attempt to balance historico-critical methods of interpretive inquiry with the normative role of tradition in interpretation, couched in terms of the debate in the Catholic church. Mejia (1987:31) claims a chasm exists between 'religious Bible study' and critical methods in present day Judaism (perhaps one should include the dichotomous relationship between academic and religious reading of the Bible throughout Bible reading communities here, too). Much can be learned from Mejia's debate with himself, Scripture and the church!

⁶⁷ Cf Schneiders (1991:142-144), relying on the insights of Ricoeur, on the distanciation that occurs when inscription takes place. Mejia (1987:34 n14) argues that the emphasis on the 'intention of the author' has done much to 'obscure the unique importance of the text as such'.

With the recent emphasis on the formative role of the community in Pauline ethics — formative both in the sense of what Paul gains from the community in formulating his ethical notions as well as what Paul expects from the community in terms of their creative participating (Lategan) in his ethics — questions have been raised as to the role and influence of the received traditions in relation to the community of the day, and its problems. McDonald for instance has argued that Paul's 'teaching was shaped in the dialectic⁶⁸ between the tradition he had received and the empirical reality that confronted him' (1997:15). The fact that the letters of Paul, as the rest of the New Testament, are permeated by tradition has been pointed out long ago by Semler and Baur (Beker 1990:10). Perhaps even more than his ethics, Pauline theology also found its inception and development in the creative dialectic between received tradition and a particular community.

The importance of the role of the reader in interpretation has been much discussed lately. It is, however, in this regard not only important to identify the interactive or dialogical nature of interpretation, and the creative function of the reader in the process of attaining meaning. It is of essential importance to identify readers, their presuppositions and their 'tools'.⁶⁹ Van Beeck (1990:265-266), therefore, insists on the need for theologians to be aware of their 'partiality' and therefore the need to 'adopt, fearlessly, a consistently hermeneutical attitude' towards received traditions.

The importance of accounting for the interpreter's tradition can also be viewed in conjunction with what is called the *ethics of interpretation*.⁷⁰ The role of tradition in interpretation contributes to the current emphasis on being aware of presuppositions and assumptions in interpretation.⁷¹ Van Beeck (1990:266-267) argues that

[a] responsive style of interpreting the great Tradition is very much like reading a great story ... to others, with interpretive commentary added to the reading.

Unfortunately, the historical consciousness of modern readers seems to dominate in the reading of the Bible, with an emphasis on, à la Stendahl, 'what it meant'. It can justifiably be asked whether contemporary readers of the Bible should not read it — like Paul! — in an eschatological way: not as past history, but as present fulfillment.

⁶⁸ He names a dozen such instances which will not be attended to here, cf McDonald (1997:15-18).

⁶⁹ Critical methods of biblical interpretation are guided and 'governed by the presuppositions of Enlightenment, the university, the West, the males' (Aageson 1993:9; cf Barr 1995:2-3). It should thus be realised that these tools are not value-neutral, and this realisation should be accounted for in interpretation. Cf also the arguments in Punt (1998b).

⁷⁰ Including both an ethics of reading or interpretation, as well as an ethics of accountability (Schüssler Fiorenza 1988; cf Punt 1998b:128-131).

⁷¹ Cf Botha, Schüssler-Fiorenza, etc referred to in Punt (1998b). The link between tradition and presuppositions is emphasised in Mejia (1987:26).

The importance of reception studies in the interpretation of the Bible has been argued at length earlier in this study. Attention to the role of tradition in the interpretation of texts sheds light not only on the particular interpretations made previously and its continuing influence, but also how certain methodological choices developed over time. In this sense, it functions as a source of influence on contemporary interpreters.⁷²

It is interesting to note how Luther, despite his imposing of a specific framework of thought on the Pauline writings, practiced a hermeneutics which approaches that of Paul in certain instances. Luther contended for example that a text is never finally interpreted, but always stands in need to be interpreted anew every time the text is dealt with. Luther also assumed the interpreter's active involvement with the text as an aid to understanding (cf social embodiment, below), while on the other hand understanding that its meaning would (should?) influence the interpreter's life and that of the contemporary church. In the third place, Luther recognised the situational and cultural relativity of the biblical texts, making it unnecessary to urge the imitation of all biblical acts or obeying all its commands.

It is in the framework of Paul's relationship to the tradition(s) in which he shared, that the claim uttered by Wrede and often repeated ever since, can be addressed. Paul was not the 'second founder' of Christianity, with a stronger if not the better influence on the development of Christianity.

Paul was converted by and into a Christian movement that already had a rich theological tradition and that had already been nurtured by various religious and cultural sources (Furnish 1985:12).

Aageson (1993:134) adds that we need to acquaint ourselves today with the 'church's heritage so that we can use it constructively in forging the theologies of the future'. As Blank (1991:266-268) contends, for Paul tradition implied two elements: the reception, as well as the further transmission of the gospel.

3.3.2. *Fluidity of 'the text'*

A fixed canon of texts with authoritative status in the church was not something known to Paul, as he dealt with the scriptures of Israel. If one looks toward Paul and his hermeneutical practice for deriving some normative guidelines for contemporary interpretive methodology, the question can arise whether modern readers should accept the textual tradition as normative and fixed or whether the text (and its boundaries) should still be considered 'fluid'. It is not

⁷² Brett (1995:81ff) argues that 'tradition' should in any case never be seen as homogenous, as it is always socially embodied and a historically extended argument — tradition is always open to deconstruction.

uncommon to hear contemporary calls for 'rewriting the Bible' (Banana), with the argument that the precedent for this was established in early Jewish scriptural practice.⁷³

Parker (1991:14-15) claims that even in the second century and later, there still existed a 'free text form' as far as the New Testament is concerned. By means of a textual critical study of Codex Bezae,⁷⁴ he reasons that historically speaking the 'free text form' meant that certain sayings of Jesus were altered. The theological point he makes is that the early followers of Christ not so much had to be 'able' to convey the tradition as that they had to 'chose' to do so. '[T]o at least some early Christians, it was more important to hand on the spirit of Jesus' teaching than to remember the letter'. As there was no need for a 'literally correct' version of the tradition regarding Jesus, it was preserved in an 'interpretive rather than in an exact fashion'. Among other conclusions based on his study of a particular manuscript, Parker (1991:16) stresses the importance of the

continuing interplay between the Scripture — the text copied — and the tradition — the person engaged in the process of copying in and for the church,

leading him to content in the end, that in a certain sense there is 'no such a thing as the New Testament'. Based as they are on different manuscripts and fragments of manuscripts, the texts we today call Scripture simply 'convey tradition', as they are 'transmitted by tradition', which means 'Scripture is tradition'.

The problems related to the original setting of the canon as a cultural product, as a 'sacred text', as well as to the inscripturalising of various ideologies in the text, might be best addressed with a reformulation of the role of the Bible in the Christian community. This has implications for the understanding of the notion of the 'authority' of the Bible (cf my Conclusion).

3.3.3. *Multiple meanings*

In the midst of the methodological — may I add epistemological — logjam of today, there are often attempts to seize upon the notion of 'literal' meaning as the really sought after prize. However, it has been shown that first-century interpreters of Jewish or Christian or any other texts were not primarily concerned with finding the 'original' or 'literal' meaning of texts in Scripture. The modernist preoccupation with a text's literal meaning derives from primarily two events, according to Young (1990:401,420). The sixteenth-century Reformation emphasised the role of Scripture as the authority above all else, tradition and pope included, which

⁷³ Referring to the notions of 'inner-biblical exegesis' and of 'rewriting', evidence of which can be found in the scriptures of Israel (cf Fishbane).

⁷⁴ Contra Aland and Aland's dating of the third or fourth century CE, Parker dates this codex 'as old as the second century' (1991:13).

led to the quest for the 'plain meaning' of Scripture. This quest was boosted by the 'humanist revival of the literary and linguistic studies in the sixteenth century'.

The second development was to a certain extent a result of the first, because the emphasis for the 'true meaning' of Scripture inevitably led interpreters to ask for its 'original' meaning, which led to the 'development of a sense of history' and eventually to the search for the meaning of the text in terms of its historical setting: 'the history behind the text'.⁷⁵ Young (1990:402) posits that 'literalism' with a perceived interest in only 'historical reference' clouds the 'hermeneutical complexities' of interpretation, whereas the 'anti-literalism' of the early church was built upon the 'awareness of the subtleties of language'. This awareness is also required today, 'whatever may be our reservations about the resulting allegorism'.

Perhaps a renewed study and appreciation of allegorical interpretation of Scripture might contribute towards enabling us to appreciate the Bible as the Word of God for today. However, a number of negative perceptions regarding the use of allegorising Scripture exist, including notions of arbitrariness and interpretive license. But perhaps the single most important force in modern reading of the Scripture, ever since the Reformation, Enlightenment and the inception of Biblical Science, is the preoccupation of interpreters to establish the original meaning of the text.

This preoccupation did not exist in Paul's exposition and use of the scriptures of Israel. On the contrary, Paul's exegesis is characterised by attempts to let the texts address particular contemporary situations. To achieve this goal he uses a number of — what we would call today — techniques or methodologies including allegory. However, Childs (1990:3-9) argues that modern biblical scholarship differs from ancient allegory precisely in the sense that the former realises the hermeneutical difficulty of 'meaning' — based on a different view of the revelatory aspect, or referentiality of the Bible — and therefore should employ its 'historical tools' and avoid allegory.⁷⁶ As will be argued below in conjunction with Barr, all biblical interpretation operates along allegorical lines.

⁷⁵ Young (1990:402) argues that, due to the interaction of an essential Protestant preoccupation with the biblical text and the challenges of science and archaeology to it, a 'reactive conservatism' regarding the Bible was put into place, claiming to accept the Bible 'literally', i.e. accepting the historicity of the events portrayed. But, Young argues, the 'historicity ... was never a matter of overt concern as long as it went unchallenged'; significance rather than factuality mattered in earlier biblical interpretation. Young also argues that insistence on 'literal' meaning narrows and impoverishes biblical interpretation 'by making the historical reference the primary concern'.

⁷⁶ Childs (1990) does find an 'analogy between the work of post-critical' biblical scholars and traditional allegory.

To take leave of the notion of a 'original' or 'literal' or even 'historical' meaning of the text as absolute and final,⁷⁷ as well as to accept the ability of a text to speak to new contexts and situations in new ways, is to allow for *multiple meanings* of the text. It also implies the need to take leave of modernist assumptions of the interpreter as the 'super-subject', of 'unfettered' historicism, and of a grand and final objectivity.

3.3.4. *Return to pre-critical exegesis*

Sometimes postmodern criticism can be presented in such a way that a return to pre-critical exegesis seems to be offered as the only 'viable' option. The reevaluation of pre-critical interpretation of texts is, however, not restricted to a certain section or group of scholars within the fold of biblical criticism.

An increasing number of scholars — as well as ordinary readers of the Bible who came into contact with this approach — are finding the historical approach to Scripture restrained and irrelevant for contemporary life.⁷⁸ Regardless of many developments, both in theory and practice, the search for the original intention of the author of the text in order to find the meaning of the text is still on. The original or literal — in the grammatico-historical sense of the word — meaning of the text is still considered to be the only meaning, or at least the most valuable and (only) valid meaning. Boldly Steinmetz (1980:28) proclaims that this approach to texts is 'demonstrably false'.

Some scholars,⁷⁹ including Barr (1989), have argued that even modern biblical or critical scholarship — specifically with its emphasis on historical — should not so much be persuaded to adopt an allegorical approach, as modern scholars should be made aware that they already stand firmly in the allegorical tradition as practitioners thereof. Barr reasons that the supposed emphasis on attaining the 'original' meaning of the text through historical study does not relate to the actual practice of the scholars: they might use the literal sense in their arguments, but the meaning or truth of the Bible is 'not universally' located in the historical.⁸⁰ The 'real meaning' of the Bible is seen to lie in its 'theological sense', which is achieved through —

⁷⁷ History does have an elucidating and even informative function in terms of the interpretation of texts. However, when 'historical meaning' is equated with 'literal meaning', history loses its clarifying function and adopts a prescriptive and absolutist function.

⁷⁸ Cf in the concluding chapter, the remarks of Segovia (1995:276-298) regarding the undoing of historical-critical exegesis, from inside and outside!

⁷⁹ Cf also the important studies of Brett (1995:67-85) and Young (1994:29-48) on the contemporary value of allegory.

⁸⁰ In a certain sense, then, also nullifying the accusation of 'historicism' leveled against modern biblical scholarship.

what Barr prefers not to call allegory outright, but rather⁸¹ — ‘theological exegesis of a text which is itself allegorical’.

Barr (1989:13-14) distinguishes between ancient (and medieval) allegory and modern scholarly ‘allegory’ on two grounds as follows: one, whereas

the older allegory was allegorization of a literal text, I am talking of theological understanding of a text that already in itself has some sort of allegorical character

and, two

ancient and medieval allegory is, in a very large measure, *decontextualising*, and in two ways: ... it works from small pieces of text ..., secondly, it uproots them from their culture in which they have meaning,⁸²

nevertheless,

[a]llegorical interpretation of scripture, then, is not only something permissible within modern scholarship, but is something that is already going on. But it has a condition: it has to be (1) contextually defensible and (2) culturally appropriate (Barr 1989:15).⁸³

Bjørndalen (1990:14-15) contends that in order to understand and appreciate allegory one needs ‘a satisfactory theory of metaphor’ because allegory is something which functions on *metaphorical* lines. He argues that a metaphor can only be understood as such within a particular context and not as a single word or utterance, and that the meaning of a word comprises ‘a complex of distinct semantic features or components’. Because the ‘number of applicable semantic components ... appear indefinite’ this leads to the ‘inexhaustibility of the metaphor’. A renewed appropriation of allegory in modern reading of the Bible, should not lead to interpretive arbitrariness or licence, because

the allegorical character of a text and the semantic interpretation of its metaphors can only properly be established in accordance with the relevant indications from the text itself.

Childs (1990:3-9) argues in response to the study of Barr referred to above,⁸⁴ that the major difference between ancient interpreters of Scripture and modern — since the Enlighten-

⁸¹ Barr’s reluctance to call the ‘theological exegesis’ of Scripture allegorising, can possibly be explained in different ways: the stigma often attached to allegorising, the ‘critical’ notions inherent to modern exegesis, etc. In the final analysis, Barr’s distinction falters in that the aim of ancient allegory was exactly ‘theological exegesis’.

⁸² Barr (1989:14) also contends that the modern realisation of the ‘difficulty of defining what the hidden meaning was’ of a particular text, distinguishes modern theological exegesis from ancient allegory. It remains a question whether ancient interpreters failed to realise this difficulty, even if their interpretive context (community) necessitated a specific interpretation.

⁸³ Recent advocates of, to be sure, the Medieval ‘four-fold exegesis’ includes Houtepen (1997:107-126) and Wainwright (1995:639-662).

⁸⁴ Childs’ argument is mainly directed at what he perceives to be Barr’s ‘blurring of the distinctions’ between a historical and allegorical approach to Scripture, with Barr ‘underestimating the lasting effect of the historical critical approach to the Bible’. However, Childs fails to appreciate that Barr (1989:14-15) argues not against the relevance of history for interpretation, but argues that even within the historical critical approach the ‘historical’ meaning was seen as a ‘(exegetical) means to a (theological) end’. Childs is also concerned about Barr’s approval of interpreters’ concern with the ‘theological’ meaning of the Bible — as opposed to the historical — and criticises Barr for (thus) failing to contribute to Biblical Theology! Room does not allow for a discussion on Childs’ particular views on Biblical Theology (however, for some brief notes in this regard, cf chapter 1).

ment — biblical scholars resides in their conception of the Bible as ‘medium of revelation’, or ‘referentiality’. Early exegesis assumed a divine author of the text, with an ‘immediate and truthful’ mode of revelation. Post-Enlightenment exegesis views the Bible as ‘a product of human culture’ with the texts exhibiting the ‘historical conditioned perspectives and personal ideology’ of each author. In Childs’ view, the latter conviction rules out allegory.

This conclusion, however, should not go unchallenged. The perception of the text as inspired or sacred was not the predominant factor in ‘pre-critical’ interpretation, but rather the need to contextualise an ancient text or tradition for and within a new situation — with ‘inspiration’ perhaps providing the ‘theological’ justification. Secondly, it might be possible to reinvest the notion of ‘inspiration’ with some meaningful content, by discarding the modernist, rationalist and positivist notions on meaning and truth⁸⁵ and by accepting a postmodern disposition which values the relative nature of truth.⁸⁶

Recently Lindbeck (1989:96 n9) with his emphasis on the textuality of Christian experience concluded:

In summary, premodern Bible reading shares with deconstructionism the refusal to make primary such derivatives from the text as doctrines (understood, e g, as universal propositional truths about reality), historical reconstructions, or existential descriptions of the human conditions (each of which, if thought to catch the deeper meaning of the text, involves a kind of ‘ontotheology’). It also shares with deconstructionism the emphasis on close reading and multiple meanings.

The main difference, however, concerns the status of the text: ‘for premodern Jews and Christians, unlike modern deconstructionists, [there existed] a privileged text and privileged mode of interpretation’. Lindbeck concludes with arguing that ‘within the indicated limitations, modern literary approaches with their emphasis on textuality increase the possibility of a retrieval of classic hermeneutics’.

3.3.5. *Constraints on freedom*

With the increasing pluralist character of interpretive practice, different constraints on ‘unacceptable’ or ‘wrong(?)’ interpretations have been suggested. The question ‘does a text mean whatever the individual interpreter wants it to mean?’ is answered by Aageson (1993:9-12). With reference to the text furnishing certain constraints in the interpretive process, he

⁸⁵ Which is primarily subject-oriented: the all-knowing subject studying the removed object — including also notions of verifiability, one-on-one referentiality, historicism, absoluteness, a general-to-particular (deductive) approach, etc.

⁸⁶ One can take the human nature of the Bible serious without investing it with logocentric and positivist thought, and subject-object epistemology — which was in any case foreign to the first century authors and interpreters. Indeed, the human nature of the Bible does not ‘specify’ the issue of interpretation (now we can really know what a text means) but rather ‘relativise’ meaning (humans mean more than they say or express, according to specific contexts and for particular reasons, and texts become ‘distanced’ from their authors).

talks of 'a circle of plausibility'. However, Aageson allows for two more constraints, firstly, 'orthodoxy' or that the parameters are determined by communities and their traditions, and secondly, the tradition of interpretation of the biblical texts.⁸⁷

A number of dangerous readings can be identified, of which so-called 'interesting readings' are probably the gravest in the long run: dangerous (on different levels) to society, church and academy at large. 'Interesting readings' are readings which have no intent or purpose to appropriate the 'normative text' of Scripture for contemporary readers, apart from experiencing the 'pleasure' of the text. Such readings can often be intent merely on illustrating the 'playful' nature of life in general and texts in particular.⁸⁸ It remains a question whether such readings really appropriate the nature of the biblical text for what itself purports to be.

Indeed, contemporary debunking of the author and the author's explicit intentions has proceeded at such a pace that it seems at times as if literary criticism has become a jolly game of ripping out an author's shirt-tail and setting fire to it (Steinmetz 1980:37).

Moreover, 'interesting' readings function not only aesthetically in emphasising the playfulness character of interpretation, but accordingly deprive all spheres of life of the powerfulness of the biblical message and meaning — especially in the academy 'where the question of truth can endlessly be deferred'. Kannengieser (1991:35-36) contrasts patristic exegesis — which 'assumes a faithful dedication to the church' and has a doctrinal and apologetic motivation — with modern, post-Enlightenment exegesis — as 'professional exercise ... which dispenses the interpreters from being Christian believers ... In short, it is a form of exegesis without scripture'.

As mentioned, Steinmetz (1980:30) strongly advocates a return to pre-critical — read 'allegorical' — exegesis and even regards exegesis of this nature to be superior to modern, grammatico-historical exegesis. Nevertheless, he argues that his views should not be interpreted as one which denies a role to the 'literal' meaning of the text. Indeed, in earlier exegesis the literal sense of Scripture functioned as a constraint or 'range'⁸⁹ within which the possible meanings of a particular Scriptural passage should be located.

As much as the notion that a text has to mean what it originally meant to the author who wrote it or to the audience that first heard it, must be rejected, the opinion that a text can mean anything should be rejected.

⁸⁷ In the latter case, 'the parameters of biblical interpretation are drawn only in retrospect' (Aageson 1993:11).

⁸⁸ This contrast calls to the fore the distinction between Paul's use of his interpretive freedom compared with other contemporary interpreters, from other traditions (cf chapter 3).

⁸⁹ Bardski (1998:1-4) stresses the importance of appreciating patristic exegesis anew, especially in view of modern *synchronic* biblical exegetical methods. He fails, however, to move beyond such an advocacy stance to argue what would constitute a proper use of such 'patristic methods' today, except for his insistence on the primacy of the text.

The language of the Bible opens up a field of possible meanings. Any interpretation which falls within that field is valid exegesis of the text, even though it was not intended by the author. Any interpretation which falls outside the limits of that field of possible meanings is probably eisegesis and should be rejected as unacceptable (Steinmetz 1980:32).

What are the criteria for being inside or outside the limits?

The much neglected tradition and history of interpretation of texts can act as a kind of constraint when reading Scripture. Steinmetz (1980:37) finds in the history of interpretation another constraint against the possible meanings being 'dragged by the hair, willy-nilly, into the text'. Referring to the 'allegorical' interpretations of the medieval exegetes, Steinmetz argues that their interpretation were limited because they 'belonged to the life of the Bible in the encounter between author and reader'. Aageson (1993:10-12) sees also in the 'tradition of biblical interpretation' a possible constraint on interpretive freedom, in which case 'the parameters of biblical interpretation are drawn only in retrospect'. The use of the tradition of interpretation entails moving out of the 'circle of plausibility' as created within a particular community and similarly being at odds with the interpretation of the text in — and prescribed by — orthodoxy.⁹⁰

Another constraint is indicated by Young (1995:93-110), in her insistence on attention to genres in interpretation. Depending on the particular use the Bible is being put to, different readings and interpretive results are to be expected. To force the one onto the other will lead to the obscuring of the text for its readers.

3.4. A hermeneutic of social embodiment

Paul 'reads' this canon in such a way that it provides the community he is addressing with an understanding of how they are to live in their present situation. His reading aims not only to change the community's understanding, but to have its members embody this notion of dying to sin and walking in newness of life (Fowl and Jones 1991:59).

The motivational power exerted by the community and Paul's concern for the community and its well-being is clear from his letters. And today this ecclesiocentric concern needs to be rediscovered and re-employed in biblical interpretation. As Green (1995b:426-427) argues, the practice of reading the Bible reaches beyond an identification and exploration of its content or 'message', extending to 'how it engages in cultural and moral discourse'. Referring to McClendon, Green suggests that Scripture is best understood not as an autonomous entity, but in relation to the particular community 'whose life is normed by it'. Therefore

the NT is not the Christian message in frozen form. Rather, the NT provides hermeneutical coordinates for the ongoing engagement of church and world.

⁹⁰ Aageson (1993:11) refers to how Paul and 'orthodox Judaism'[sic], the Protestant Reformers and the 'orthodox church', Barth and 'orthodox biblical scholars' came to stand at odds with one another.

Although Green mentions other examples,⁹¹ the interpretation of the scriptures of Israel by Paul is a good example of how support for ongoing hermeneutical reflection can be derived from the New Testament. The community that reads the Bible, in the end gets more than it 'bargained for': not only a message but an ethos, not merely a virtual final-form meaning but a continuous norming of community life (cf also Fowl and Jones 1991:38).

3.4.1. *Social embodiment as goal*

The other challenge facing those who read Paul as Scripture is that of discerning how the story itself, the story of exodus and new exodus, speaks to the crises of our time. The power of a story to create a world and shape a reality for people is clear (Keesmaat 1997:326).

It is, then, fitting to think of Pauline hermeneutics and theological discernment along the lines of what Meeks (1986) called a 'hermeneutics of social embodiment'. The goal of such a hermeneutic is not necessarily the most logical and rational expression of theological thought, neither an attempt to evoke 'authentic self-understanding' through symbols such as words, but 'the formation of a community whose forms of life correspond to the symbolic universe rendered or signalled by the text' (:185).

Paul's hermeneutics is applied to Scripture not to formulate intricate theological and doctrinal detail, neither to engage in defensive action against opponents of and detractors from his gospel message. Indeed, much more mundane but therefore in the end also much more practical and significant, Paul's hermeneutics had the community and its well-being in mind.

It is not only in his hermeneutics, but also in his use of apocalyptic language and motifs, that Paul conveys a sense of concern with the 'social fabric of the Pauline communities: utopian movements reduce the tension between religious belief and harsh reality ("cognitive dissonance")' (Deidun 1986:239). It is clear from a number of studies by Meeks (1983a; 1983b) that 'apocalyptic language' had a distinct social function.

Nicholas Lash (1986:37-46; echoed in Fowl 1995:399-409) argues that the 'fundamental form' of the Christian interpretation of Scripture is 'the life, activity and organization of the believing community'. Although Scripture can and indeed is read by those outside the Christian community 'with profit', the primary form of reading Scripture is to be found within the Christian community in its attempts to live as such a community. The second aspect of reading Scripture which Lash emphasises is that

Christian practice, as interpretive action, consists in the *performance* of texts which are construed 'rendering', bearing witness to, one whose words and deeds, discourse and suffering, 'rendered' the truth of God in human history (:42; emphasis in original).

⁹¹ E.g. the presence of four gospels in the NT; the translation of the message about Jesus from rural to urban context (Green 1995:426).

Offering a variety of analogies, including the performance of a musical score, a drama script and even the American constitution,⁹² Lash points out that these ‘texts’ all have as their fundamental form of interpretation, *performance*.

3.4.2. *Social embodiment as origin and nature*

An element lacking in Meeks’s proposal is that Paul’s hermeneutic is a hermeneutic of social embodiment not only in aim (the (re)formation of community), but also in origin and nature, as emphasised by Hays (1989). The Pauline hermeneutic of liberation is not only concerned with the effective interpretive strategies leading to the establishment of communities of faith. It is also dedicated to and dependent on this community of faith to provide the parameters of Paul’s hermeneutical exploration.

Stephen Barton has recently argued that Paul’s concern with the community did not amount to abstract musings about this concept, but rather ‘about how Jews and Gentiles, men and women, slaves and freeborn can embody and celebrate the eschatological life of the Kingdom of God’. Claiming that Paul’s concern with ‘community’ was not directed towards ‘social engineering in the quest of the “ideal community”’, Barton contends that community was for Paul ‘a matter of participation in divine love in the power of the Spirit and testifying of that love and power to others’ (1997:15).

The Pauline text came into being, and was further developed and nurtured within the community and in interaction or discourse with the community.⁹³ It means therefore, that it is possible to view the relationship between the Pauline letters and the communities to which it were directed, as being mutually dependent — the one is unthinkable without the other. Before considering Pauline hermeneutics for today, it might be valuable to briefly turn our attention to the appropriation of Paul in the early church. The same dualistic perspective as employed until now will again be used: How did the church read Paul, and how can these perspectives benefit contemporary readers?

⁹² Lash addresses the fictional vs historical nature of his examples by claiming that as long as people ‘believe in’ texts, they are performed (which explains why *King Lear* is still performed and why some people have given up ‘the practice of Christianity’); and, that the New Testament texts not only make a textual (‘symbolic, narrative’) contribution to what it means to be human, but ‘they also express their author’s confidence in one man’.

⁹³ Cf Segal’s insistence (1990:320ff), although he might be overstating his case, that Paul’s distinctive ‘Christian theology’ originated in and was moulded by his participation in the ‘Damascus’ community; indeed (and herein lies perhaps the overstatement), that only within this community Paul could interpret and come to an understanding of the christophany on his way to Damascus.

4. The early church and Paul

*It is evident that the earliest church regarded neither its theological, nor its ethical traditions as a sacred cow*⁹⁴ (Furnish 1985:17).

As a final section in this chapter, a brief glance will be cast on the early church which, although not necessarily situated in the extension of Pauline hermeneutics, had to deal in addition to the scriptures of Israel, in an increasing way with the growing corpus of early Christian literature. Even within the New Testament itself, it is clear that various writers often interpreted the existing traditions in different ways.⁹⁵ Some of the most interesting contextualisations of the writings of Paul is to be found in the New Testament itself. Lincoln and Wedderburn (1993:142, also 142 n1), for example, in referring to Ephesians' relationship to Paul's writing, talk of the 'skillful and creative appropriation of earlier tradition for its own time and setting', and 'Ephesians' creative adaptation of Paul'.

Although initially the early church did not insist on certain 'fundamentals', several reasons can be offered for the termination of the early church's free and dynamic interaction with its traditions. The church as institution had to distill its tradition and beliefs into a comprehensible whole — the institutional reason. The church had to fend off the attacks of what was believed to be heretical groupings and protect its beliefs and teachings — the apologetic reason. The church as socio-political power had to harmonise its beliefs to accommodate the current ideologies and worldviews — the ideological (political) reason. The church had to formulate a functional code for itself — the ecclesiastical reason. The church had to satisfy the daily needs and expectations of its members (especially those with the most influence?!) — the socio-economic reason.

Whatever the reasons that led to the consolidation and fixation of doctrine, it is clear that within the early church 'the theological and ethical traditions ... remained ever alive and growing' (Furnish 1985:18). Furnish therefore warns against the danger of making Paul's ethical teaching into a 'sacred cow', of 'embalming the traditions' of the early church:

we are embalming the tradition rather than receiving it as a vital and revitalizing force — free to grow, free to develop and change, free to adapt itself to 'new occasions and new duties' (Furnish 1985:18).

This warning applies to the whole theological enterprise. The old and all too human quest for the final solution, the ultimate true answer to everything virtually demands the embalming of

⁹⁴ '[S]cripture is the written deposit of God's Truth, mediated through inspired writers in centuries past, but valid in both general and specific ways for all times and places. This may be called the sacred cow view of the Bible' (Furnish 1985:13-14).

⁹⁵ As amply illustrated in exegetical methodologies such as Tradition and Redaction criticism, with adequate attestation, and not argued here.

the wider biblical tradition. This entails the casting of the tradition into rigid slots for eternal safe-keeping and protection.⁹⁶

A fundamental flaw that is not always recognised, is that these traditions are merely that, namely human interpretations. These embalmed traditions, although entertained as eternally valid and divinely provided, are very clearly human productions or creations.

The biblical texts themselves are the result of a history of effects because they are not the ultimate point of departure nor the ultimate authority but products of human reception, human experiences, and human history (Luz 1994:23).

This is not to deny the theological value of these traditions or its divine origin(s), in whatever an (indirect) way it was and still is perceived to have been influenced. It is necessary, however, to recognize the anthropological nature of tradition.

4.1. Writings and 'spirit'

It is important to recognise that in the very early stages of Christianity the emphasis was on 'spirit' and not on 'letter'. The primacy of religious experience, which included the use Scripture, did not lie with the letter of the text — although 'because of the importance of scripture to Christianity the church could never be wholly indifferent to literacy' (Gamble 1995:9). Koester (1991:353-372) has written an illuminating article on the sources of authority in the early church, describing how written texts gradually came to assume a greater political role.⁹⁷

Koester finds the genesis of the literal emphasis in early Christianity in the realisation that written texts could provide not only a source for the daily and structural organisation and regulation of a community,⁹⁸ but also assumed the authority with which to agitate for and claim the need for unification of all the Christian communities within a single, ecumenical church, *καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία*.⁹⁹ This was an essentially political role and function,¹⁰⁰ performed by written texts as documents of authority (1991:364-369).

⁹⁶ The embalming of biblical tradition seems to be an especially attractive option in the case of Paul, perhaps because the dominant hierarchal and patriarchal values of Paul's world suit the powerful and privileged groups, and also perhaps because we have become so used to a specific interpretation of Paul's gospel that we tend to think of him as a contemporary of our local minister of religion, and perhaps because Paul has been domesticated into a typical American-European, white middle-class male sharing the concerns so often found among others of similar description.

⁹⁷ Cf also in this regard Kee on the changing leadership roles in the early church (1992:241-254), which moved away from the more 'spirit-based' leadership style.

⁹⁸ Koester argues that the 'ultimate criterion' for including writings in the 'New Testament canon' was their effectiveness 'in the building and organization of communities from the beginning' (1991:370).

⁹⁹ Koester prefers to avoid the, what he calls prejudiced, terms 'orthodoxy' and '(early) Catholicism' in favour of 'the development of Panchristianity' (1991:369).

¹⁰⁰ Indeed, this was a matter of ecclesiastical authority and its increasing 'nonspiritual justification' was carried out by the instrument or 'medium of writing' (Koester 1991:355).

Even more important, though, was that the increasingly high profile and status given to the early Christian documents themselves — from the Gospel genre, and the Pauline letters — led to a redefinition of what constituted a document as ‘inspired’, and its corollary, namely which authors could be viewed as ‘inspired’ themselves. An ‘inspired’ document was no longer one seen as ‘prophetic’, but one ‘that contained deep wisdom that could be unlocked and thus convey a significant saving message’.¹⁰¹ This development had a profound implication for early Christian ‘canon’:

All these writings [the Gospel and the letters of Paul] now became bearers of religious truths that were mysteriously hidden in the words of these writings and accessible only to the inspired interpreter. This implied that the apostles who had produced these writings were themselves inspired; they were no longer witnesses of the most important moment in the history of salvation but communicators of deep religious wisdom and doctrine (Koester 1991:372).

Although not the only factor, the move towards inscription in early Christianity necessarily increased and intensified the need for hermeneutics.¹⁰² The first century context, though largely an ‘oral-aural’ setting, gradually changed into an increasing literate society.¹⁰³

4.2. The classical hermeneutics of the church

[T]he hermeneutics of the fathers is, in many respects, closer to the New Testament texts than that of modern historical-critical interpretation (Luz 1994:35).

It can be argued that classical patristic hermeneutics had its inception in Origen, whose subscription to Platonist thought led him to conceive of a differentiated interpretation. Interpretation deals with two realms, the historical or fleshly interpretation which was the ‘letter’ of Scripture, and the spiritual interpretation which was the ‘spirit’ of Scripture, a formulation which reminds of — and probably refers to — a Pauline distinction in this regard (as expressed

¹⁰¹ This is in contrast, according to Koester, to their original role as ‘political instruments designed to organize and maintain the social fabric and financial affairs’ of the Christian communities, and to contribute to their unification; Koester refers in passing to Paul often including his title of office, ‘apostle’, in his letter openings. This conceptualisation of the role and function of the letters, has, of course, some implications for the letters’ content: ‘the theological arguments of Paul’s letters do not intend to serve any explicit spiritual or religious purposes but to bolster the persuasive undergirding of the advice communicated in the letters’ (Koester 1991:356-358). This argument might leave the simple fact of out consideration, namely that the communities were ‘intentional’ and religious, as was the advice given; the pastoral-instructional nature of Paul’s letters are not denied, but similarly the religious-theological dimension may not be excluded!

¹⁰² Schneiders (1991:144, 153) values the ‘inscription’ of texts very highly - ‘the effect of inscription is to cut written discourse loose from the constraints of its originating situation’ (:153). ‘In short, distanciation as Ricoeur describes it not only establishes a profound difference between oral and written discourse but it potentially enriches a text by enabling it to transcend the coordinates of its production and function in very different later situations’ (:144).

¹⁰³ For some recent discussion on texts, reading and the oral nature of the first-century world, in its relationship to the earliest years of church, cf Achtemeier (1990:3-27); Botha (1990:35-47); Cameron (1991); Gamble (1995); Gilliard (1993:689-696); Perrot (1988:137-159); Yaghjian (1996:206-230; with an important bibliography).

in 2 Cor 3). For Origen the primacy and truth of the spiritual sense of Scripture was evident, as much as the derived — from the spiritual — historical meaning was a ‘shadow or symbol’ of the former¹⁰⁴ (Luz 1994:35). Consequently, allegorical interpretation was seen as the appropriate way to read Scripture, and to delineate its spiritual sense.

Origen’s emphasis on the spiritual sense and his employment of allegorical reading to discern the spiritual was not only derived from Platonist thought or a Gnostic devaluation of the natural, physical world.

Rather, it corresponds to Christ himself, the eternal, invisible Logos who became flesh. For Origen, interpreting a text meant to help ensure ‘that the Logos takes shape in the church and in every Christian’.

The christological basis of patristic hermeneutics was an attempt to ensure that the church will continually experience the presence and relevance of Christ in their lives. The historical aspect of Scripture and interpretation was not denied, but considered of less importance than the spiritual.

The correspondence of the historical or literal and symbolic or spiritual with the development of the ‘two natures’ of Christ-doctrine contributed not only to this distinction, but also ensured the greater appreciation of the spiritual (cf Luz 1994:35). Although the christological basis of hermeneutics was interpreted in different ways during the early times of the church, it remained intact as the basis for its hermeneutics.

The possibility of two basic meanings of Scripture, the historical and the pneumatic, ‘transfers the mystery of Christ to biblical hermeneutics’ (Luz 1994:36, quoting Panagopulos).

4.3. ‘Original’ meaning and allegory

That other cultures, including the Greco-Roman world in which Christianity was born, would regard this equating of fact with truth incredibly reductionistic is generally ignored in modern society — as is the constant empirical evidence that different people have great difficulty agreeing on what the observable ‘facts’ are (Tolbert 1995:341).

It was argued above that the historical or literal interpretation, with reference to the ‘original meaning’ of Scripture was never denied or even diminished in the hermeneutics of the early church. However, it is also true that the overwhelming importance accorded to the ‘original meaning’ of Scripture is a fairly recent development, when considered in relation to the two millennia long history of the interpretation of Scripture. It is only with the advent of the seveneenth and eighteenth century Enlightenment with its emphasis on human reason, history and objectivity that a primacy is accorded to the historical meaning of Scripture above the spiritual.

¹⁰⁴ Cf the comprehensive study by Chau (1995) on the ‘letter/spirit antithesis’ as the theological and hermeneutical presupposition of the tradition up to Luther.

In the early church the historical meaning was not only not discarded, but actually co-existed with the spiritual meaning.

Thus, for the church father and the Reformers, to 'understand' a biblical text was primarily an act of faith and not merely an act of reason or criticism (Luz 1994:84).

The emphasis in reading the text was to be found in the imperative to 'embody' the texts, not merely rational comprehension, and in any case not a dual (dichotomous?) movement from the 'meant' to the 'mean' of the text. This is not to deny that early Christian interpretation displayed an analogical understanding of Scripture, but this was not conceived of as two separate and effectively disconnected activities.

Recent readerly approaches to the biblical texts stress both the openness of the texts, inviting interpretation and the production of meaning, and the polysemous or multivalent nature of texts, allowing a variety of readings. According to Luz this has precedents in the classical hermeneutics of the church, with reference to allegorical interpretation or the fourfold sense of Scripture. These different senses — literal (historical), allegorical (spiritual), tropological (ethical), and anagogical (eschatological) — were not seen in the early and later church as conflicting or mutually exclusive readings, but were allowed to stand next to one another. Luz hastens to add that the allegorical approach to texts not only corresponds to modern insights regarding the surplus of meaning of and 'blanks' or 'gaps' contained within texts, but also with the biblical texts themselves.

Origen for example, justified his use of allegory on two grounds. In the first place, he appealed to the argument that the Bible is inspired and intended to instruct all people in timeless truths. And secondly, Origen invoked authority, which was 'essentially an appeal to the example of Paul, in whose writings Origen found instances of the allegorical approach', for example the relating of baptism to the Israelites crossing of the Red Sea (1 Cor 10), as well as the Hagar and Ishmael story (Gal 4). 'From these instances, Origen draws the somewhat sweeping conclusion that a mystical meaning must have been intended throughout the whole of Scripture' (Ferguson 1986:145-146).

The exegesis and broader hermeneutical activity of the early church was not concerned in the first place with delineating the most precise historical or literal meaning possible of Scripture.

Finally the exegetes of the church are concerned about the presence of Christ, his activity in the history of the universe, and about a living encounter with his whole person (Panagopoulos, quoted in Luz 1994:36).

4.4. The early church's hermeneutic today

George Lindbeck has recently (1994:101-106) noted that there are a number of scholars with the conviction that the future of the church depends on its 'postcritical reappropriation' of the early church's 'precritical hermeneutical strategies'. Lindbeck argues that this conviction is often accompanied by the belief that a 'theologically-oriented history of Christian scriptural interpretation' is required in contemporary hermeneutical practices.¹⁰⁵

It is clear that the interpretation of Scripture in the early church did not differ significantly from the reinterpretation of the scriptures of Israel in terms of the Jesus-traditions in the New Testament.¹⁰⁶ Luz pleads that patristic allegorical exegesis should not summarily be dismissed because of a modernist emphasis on the original, literal or historical meaning of texts. To the contrary, the appeal of Luz is that the 'basic truth' behind the many christological allegories of ecclesiastical exegesis should be recognised: an attempt to relate the living Christ to the contemporary readers.¹⁰⁷ Yeago (1997:88) has gone so far as to argue that

exegesis underlying classical Christian doctrines is in certain crucial respects methodologically superior to the 'critical' exegesis which has claimed to invalidate it.

Bardski (1998:1-4) has recently concluded from his research on patristic hermeneutics, that both biblical and patristic scholars stand accused for their respective failures to go beyond the historical-critical method which discredited patristic exegesis, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the virtual disinterest in synchronic methods. In his argument that patristic exegesis is 'in many points close' to modern synchronic hermeneutical approaches used in biblical interpretation, Bardski claims a central role for the 'intention of the text' (à la Ricoeur) in patristic exegesis. Although he rightfully stresses the importance of the canonical embeddedness of the various biblical documents and the need to move beyond the hegemony of historical-critical approaches in order to appreciate the church fathers and their exegetical efforts — accompanied by a plea for the 'integration' of twenty centuries' exegetical efforts — Bardski unfortunately neglects¹⁰⁸ to indicate *how* this understanding of patristic, synchronic exegetical approaches will function in modern hermeneutical practice.

¹⁰⁵ Cf recently Ochs (1993; 1994-5:437-453).

¹⁰⁶ Cf the chapters above on the reinterpretation of Israel's scriptures in Paul; Luz (1994:37) argues that the Gospels' reinterpretation of the Jesus traditions is taken up by the christological interpretation of the early church.

¹⁰⁷ Cf also Charry (1993:265-284) on the Athanasian christology in particular.

¹⁰⁸ Even when it is granted that Bardski is not first and foremost intent on providing an agenda for reactivating patristic exegesis, his strong insistence on taking it serious would require more than insisting on the appreciation of the three aspects he mentions: symbolism, the canonical (con)text, and 'peritextual activity' (associations with the text which contributes to the meaning of the text) (1994:3-4).

On the other hand, his illustration of the patristic notion of the meaning of the biblical text engaged in a 'process of growing', giving rise 'to varied interpretive traditions', demonstrates well how patristic exegesis was a creative and dynamic process (1998:2-3).

However, both the New Testament and the early church's hermeneutics are vastly different from modern interpretive practice and theory, and although it can be accepted with Luz (1994:37) that the early interpretive practices cannot be imitated today, the question regarding its possible value for modern hermeneutics remains. The challenge which Luz (1994:37-38) sees issuing forth from the patristic model of exegesis is to develop an appropriate christological hermeneutic:

Our principal hermeneutical problem will be to relate our modern understanding of history as a unique and unrepeatable past with the living Jesus Christ, who is the same throughout history and who would live anew through our interpretations and applications of the biblical texts.

It is, however, possible to find a starting point for incorporating patristic exegetical concerns in modern hermeneutical theory, and it is proposed that Pauline hermeneutics provides such a point of departure. This brings us back to a final consideration of the possible value of Paul and New Testament hermeneutics for contemporary biblical interpretation.

5. The New Testament, Paul and biblical interpretation

[T]he New Testament achieves what is, arguably, the most momentous act of appropriation in human history primarily by means of introducing a new critical theory, which, in effect insists on a new way of reading all previous writings (Prickett 1991:4).

The appropriation of the scriptures of Israel by the authors of the New Testament meant that a number of existing and operative approaches to the interpretation of texts were deemed fit and taken over for use: from Babylon, from Greece, and those interpretive measures employed in Scripture itself. This meant that within the New Testament a variety of different interpretive strategies were forged together, including allegory, midrash, and so on.¹⁰⁹

5.1. The value of early Christian hermeneutics

Luz (1994:12) argues for comparable historical circumstances between the time of the New Testament and — at least in certain parts of — the world today, as far as the breakdown of certainty and the distrust of various kinds of hegemonies are concerned. The erosion of the classical Greek polis-system,

characterised by pessimism, distrust of reason, new age visions, withdrawal from the political to the individual world, a longing for lasting values and authority, and susceptibility to various kinds of religions and superstitions

can be likened to the modernist yearning for 'hope in a hopeless world'. In today's world many people express the need to feel that they belong, for certainty, even for some form of

¹⁰⁹ Boyarin (1990:224; 229 n26) argues that (rabbinic) midrash and (Origen's) allegory should be distinguished from one another: whereas allegorical reading moves from the concrete to the abstract, midrash moves from the abstract to the concrete. Or, 'allegorical reading involves the projection of the syntagmatic plane (metonymy) of the text onto the paradigmatic plane of meaning, while midrash projects paradigms (metaphor) into a syntagmatic plane of narrative-history'.

authority to provide them with guidance in their daily lives. Despairing of the ability of historical-critical approaches to the Bible to accomplish an interpretation which can adequately address these needs and concerns, Luz appropriately refers to 'the hermeneutical crisis' we observe today. Indeed, argues Ricoeur (1991:286), 'the predicament of our modern situation' is part of our 'search for the meaning of the text'. To alleviate this hermeneutical crisis issued in by modernist approaches to textual interpretation, Luz refers to two characteristics of traditional biblical interpretation: 'the holistic character of the understanding of biblical texts' and, 'the power and productivity of biblical texts'.¹¹⁰

The holistic character of the texts refers to their 'secondary nature' as they represent the preservation of 'biblical history', and these texts only become meaningful in as far as they succeed in becoming part of their readers' lives. These texts testify to Jesus Christ and 'the life situation that was shaped by him'. Luz reacts strongly to an understanding of the texts which would imply mere or only intellectual knowledge, and quoting Fuchs, refers to understanding as an event.¹¹¹ It is as impossible to interpret the biblical texts without consideration for the interpreter's world, as it is to disregard the worlds of the texts and their interpretation. Quoting Bonino, Luz insists that 'truth does not exist apart from its historical concreteness'. The interpretation of the Bible is thus not only its verbal legacy, but also its contribution to ecclesiastical practices (1994:13-17).

The second implicit characteristic is according to Luz that the biblical texts have power and productivity, that is, power to produce meaning. Arguing against the idea that the texts have meaning, Luz states that they are capable of producing meaning. Up to the second century this led to the texts continually being 'rewritten', and from that period on — that is, after the completion of the canonising process — the texts were reinterpreted. The freedom leading to new texts and new interpretations are ascribed by Luz to three 'linguistic points' — the polysemy, distanciation, and textual blanks of written documents — as well as two 'theological reasons' — the texts claim witness to the divine which constitutes an authority which transcends historical contexts; and, the texts contain not so much 'revealed morality' as 'revealed reality'¹¹² (Luz 1994:17-22).

¹¹⁰ Luz (1994:12) further argues that certain 'concepts of understanding' can be found in the biblical texts, which, he claims, are not 'immediately authoritative for our hermeneutics. That would be a kind of hermeneutical biblicism or a new form of sacred hermeneutics'. He continues to assert that all texts do suggest some interpretive handles, for example in terms of their genres. Therefore, '[h]ermeneutics of the biblical texts cannot be developed except in dialogue with the biblical texts' (:13).

¹¹¹ Perhaps, in analogy to Pauline hermeneutics, the role of the Spirit in this event needs to be rediscovered; cf Blank (1991:277) on the value of the Spirit for a self-critical and self-corrective stance in biblical hermeneutics.

¹¹² On this distinction, cf also Fletcher (1992:114); Gustafson (1970:439-447).

Instead of ascribing stable and definite meaning to biblical texts, Luz argues that these texts have power: with the help of the texts, interpreters can — not reproduce but — produce meaning. The potential of meaning stored up in the text is likened by Luz not to a cistern or reservoir, but rather a water source, ‘where water emerges from the same place’. This implies that the interpretation and effects produced as a result of interaction with the texts, are not alien to the texts. ‘The many-voiced echo of centuries ... belongs to the Bible as part of itself’ (Schindler, quoted in Luz 1994:20).¹¹³ The power of the texts implies a continuous producing of meaning, creating history, and therefore always containing an element of ‘newness’.¹¹⁴

5.2. Some (post)modern hermeneutical concerns

It is often argued in the attempt to establish some criteria for evaluating the meaning of texts, that the ‘*original meaning*’ of the texts is the starting point or at least a constraint against irresponsible interpretative practice.¹¹⁵ Insistence on the ‘original meaning’ sometimes fails to consider that a range of different interpretations of the same text has always accompanied any text: which of these readings will be privileged as *the* interpretation? In addition, these interpretations are all the result of the interaction between the text and its reader(s), and the ‘original meaning’ can therefore not be offered as a context-less, archimedean point of reference in determining the validity of the result of interpretative efforts. On the other hand, the time is ripe to appreciate (again) the value and importance of the ‘history’ or ‘tradition of interpretation’ for delineating a range of interpretive possibilities; not as straitjacket demanding compliance or even duplication of meaning, keeping the harmful nature of some historical interpretations in mind!

In her consideration of the ethics of interpretation, Tolbert (1995b:341) argues persuasively against the modernist equation of truth with the ability to ‘objectively’ and scientifically reconstruct the original setting — author, circumstances, readers, and so on — of the text. Indeed, the notion that a ‘correct’, ‘valid’, ‘legitimate’, ‘right’ or ‘true’ reading of a text is constituted as far as it can claim direct correlation with the supposed historical reconstruction of the text, is a legacy of the modernist era issued in by the Enlightenment, with its emphasis on the ‘priority of reason, the valorizing of history, and the assertion of objectivity’ (1995a:340).

¹¹³ Cf also Ricoeur (1991:285), insisting that the ‘history of effects’ is part of the meaning of the text.

¹¹⁴ Luz understands the meaning of biblical texts therefore as the ‘interaction of a “kernel of meaning”, which corresponds to the given structures of a text, and a “directional meaning”, which gives a present direction to the readers on their way to new lands’ (1994:20).

¹¹⁵ Cf e.g. Lash (1986:44), who argues what the text ‘originally meant’ serves as constraint for ‘the range of appropriate interpretations’.

Within a postmodern setting, the emphasis is less on establishing 'the truth' and the urge is rather to be content with truths and truthfulness (McKnight 1992:276).¹¹⁶ While the preoccupation with epistemology is a decidedly modern one (McCallum 1992:235; McKnight 1992:274-277), some postmodern literary theorists are willing to allow not only for the value of epistemology, but even for a role for the cognitive within epistemology. However, the acceptance of the full implications of the hermeneutical circle prompts McKnight (1992:276) to call for a 'circular epistemology' which would allow for the cognitive while incorporating the affective and volitional.¹¹⁷

With the increasing realisation of the difficulties involved with a sense of the 'determinate' meaning of the text, the notion of 'indeterminate meaning' is much discussed (cf Clines 1997:92). Robinson has recently argued that there is 'no single and unequivocal answer to the question whether the text is determinate or not'.

In some contexts, in which the communicative function of the text is paramount and strict, reproducible validation important for the task the text is called upon to fulfill, the text will be considered determinate. From another context, that determinacy may appear an illusion, but it is an essential illusion. In other contexts in which the text is not regarded as communication of a message but as the stimulus for creative response, the text will be considered indeterminate (1995:16).

This debate will probably need some attention in the years ahead,¹¹⁸ as much as the question on the 'origin' of the meaning of texts.¹¹⁹

To close with a word from Westerholm on the value of casting an eye on the past, in order to look more focussedly at the future:

Yet apologists of the modern age who see history as a one-way street of unimpeded progress are fewer today than they were scant decades ago. Realistic scorecards pitting the contemporary scene against that of bygone eras now show losses as well as gains; and so they must, if we are not to forget entire dimensions of the human experience (1997:xii).

6. Conclusion: Towards an ecclesiocentric hermeneutic

They [the readers of Paul's writings] are God's eschatological people who, in receiving the grace of God through Jesus Christ, become a living sign, a privileged clue to the meaning of God's word in Scripture (Hays 1989:121).

¹¹⁶ On the 'truth-question' in hermeneutics, cf recently e.g. Reid (1995:210-224).

¹¹⁷ Perhaps, in the end, a postcolonial reading of Scripture might be more fitting and beneficial than a postmodern one, in particular in SA today. Cf the concluding chapter.

¹¹⁸ Cf also Westphal (1997:57-66) on the 'underdetermined' meaning of the biblical texts; and in a related way, Lategan (1992a:268, and elsewhere) with reference to Iser on 'intentional gaps' in texts to be filled by readers/listeners.

¹¹⁹ Do texts or readers provide meaning? Or do texts *and* readers equal meaning? Or is the text simply a 'pretext' for the reader's 'interest' (Fowl)? Do we simply have to accept with Clines (1997:92, with reference to Fish) that readers create meaning?

Segal (1990b:68-70) reminds us that Paul interpreted Scripture in light of his experiences, but that Paul 'never prided himself by saying that he had found a single, unalterable interpretation'. To the contrary, Paul often suggested several different interpretations, because Paul

understood as well as anyone before or after that the truths inherent in the biblical text are manifold, complex and sometimes opposing. Scripture is a gem that gives a different glint each time it is turned in the light of analysis. It is time for us to realize the same. *Perhaps no single point of view can do Scripture justice* (emphasis added).

In a recent attempt to account for the role of the Bible in, amongst others, the church, Clines (1997:98) pleads for hermeneutical honesty by asking a question which implies more than what initially seems to be the case:

Why not say that the church has never been interested in objective exegesis of the scriptures, but always in how the congregations can benefit from the scriptures.

Indeed, contends Clines, the appeal to the Bible as Word of God¹²⁰ had (and has) precisely this aim in mind, namely to make the voice of God present and heard for the congregation of the day, and its concerns. Such concerns lead Clines to opt for an 'end-user theory' of biblical interpretation, which deserves more discussion (cf Punt 1998a:136-137). However, Clines' insistence on the need for biblical interpretation to be done with the church — admittedly, among others — explicitly in mind needs to be noted.

Luz (1994:13-17) argues persuasively for establishing the holistic character of understanding biblical texts. His plea is that the emphasis should be not so much a matter of determining the original meaning, or even *the* meaning as such. A more important concern of biblical interpretation is to discern the effectiveness of the texts: they are the result of the effects of faith and, similarly, produced certain effects. It is therefore impossible to maintain a stance of objectivity, not only philosophically, but primarily in terms of these texts which expect its readers to participate in the creation of meaning: grasping its effects and 'contextualising' it for their lives within their circumstances

The biblical texts do not stimulate so much a 'history of (verbal) interpretation' as a history of 'fruits' or a 'history of effects' (Luz 1994:17)

The best way to give credence to an ecclesiocentric reading of Scripture today, will be to embark upon a theological reading.

For whether we like it or not, the Bible is largely read not as literature for enjoyment, entertainment or escapism, or for its deep interest as *mimesis* of human life in all its dilemmas, ambiguities and tragedies. The Bible is read much more for the lessons it teaches and the beliefs it inspires (Young 1995:104).

¹²⁰ Cf Punt (1998c) on the status of the Bible, particularly in Africa, and how the notion of the Bible as 'Word of God' is both abhorred and eschewed, as well as treasured and advocated. Clines has argued earlier that the 'Word of God' is not 'itself a biblical idea', but 'the invention of fallible human men [sic]' (1997:89).

While a theological reading is not offered as the only, the true or even the superior reading, a theological reading is extremely appropriate for employing the Bible, its interpretation and the results of its scholarly study in the Christian community.

The challenge facing Christians as they seek to read Scripture theologically is to work to establish a communal context in which Christians can humbly correct and be corrected by one another (Fowl 1995:408).

In this way, 'both Paul's theology and Paul's hermeneutic lead not to a cul-de-sac but to a life-giving path' (Keesmaat 1997:328).

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Conclusion

Paul, freedom and implications for hermeneutics and theology: Scripture and contextualisation.

Theology is...a second step and every theology, including the so-called classical theology, is contextual (Pobee 1991:40).

Our [evangelical, JP] emphasis upon the authority of Scripture has also led us to a fear for contextualization. But our experience of faith within the context of our South African situation has enabled progressive evangelicals to recognize that contextual concerns do not undermine the authority of scripture, they strengthen it (Molebatsi 1992:17).

1. Introduction

The accusation of a dichotomous approach in the professional study of theology is often heard, and not without reason. The dichotomy is seen to exist particularly in the sharp distinction typically made between 'theological studies', on the one hand and 'biblical studies' on the other.¹ Whereas the former is believed to address the systematic construal of theology and ethics (with the accompanying danger of developing it in total separation from Scripture, even while claiming to 'base' it on the Bible), 'biblical studies' comprise of the 'raw data': (historical) theological and ethical emphases detected in the various books of the Bible. Although the decidedly positivist and modernist aspects of a means-meant project have been largely discredited, there is still considerable pressure on biblical scholars to function according to this *schema*, which expects of them to concentrate on matters textual and historical.

One of the secondary aims of this study was to offer suggestions with which to bridge the chasm which has developed between 'theological studies' and 'biblical studies'. Perhaps no more needs to be argued than to merely observe that in the global village with its super-highways of communication in our (post)modern day, what biblical scholars are up to will affect and influence other theological disciplines, and vice versa. Segovia (1998:51), for example, feels compelled to refer to himself, a biblical scholar, as a constructive theologian as well as a cultural critic.²

¹ The accusation amounts to no less than the discovery (or re-invention?) of a Stendahl's 'meant-means' segregation, which goes all the way back to Philip Gabel's distinction between 'descriptive' and 'prescriptive' theology (Boers 1979:23-38). Cf e.g. Segovia (1998) and in SA e.g. Combrink (1986; 1996), Lategan (1996) and Smit (1994b) on the negative results of the radical division, and ultimately separation of different aspects within the study of theology into 'distinct' disciplines.

² He argues that this broadening of perspective resulted from the disintegration or 'collapse' of the traditional distinction between 'critic' and 'theologian', and a conscious attempt to interpret the Bible from a specific (his own!) 'social context' (Segovia 1998:51 n2).

Such concerns are important for the conclusion of this study, as the arguments found here eventually touches upon more than merely a delutheranisation of Paul, or a subsequent strict statistical and methodological account of Paul's use of the scriptures of Israel. Then again, the argument in this study has not been a foundationalist one of 'let's do what Paul did', and it should not mistakenly create the impression of trying to once again impose an interpretive straitjacket on Pauline thought and practice. Because, as Horsley argues, as

[a] little sociology of contemporary academic and ecclesial knowledge suggest that the Paul constructed in standard New Testament studies is likely to prevail, at least for the foreseeable future (1995:1158),

this study *is* rather an attempt to provide the reasons as well as 'tools' to *reread* the Pauline literature, but then not in a coercive or hegemonic way. Therefore, in reflecting on what can be called Paul's hermeneutics, it has been argued that aspects of his interpretive activity are of significant concern for contemporary hermeneutical practice. Again, no claims to final interpretations of Paul, his particular approach to and way of using Scripture are offered. But, it is argued, the specific approach of Paul may be of help to us particularly in the radicalised environment of Postmodernity.

Again, one prominent danger is the attempt to encapsulate a certain (contextual) formulation or conceptualisation into a fixed format, which then becomes authoritative. The danger of the fixation of symbols and concepts into dogma is well illustrated in the quote by the Romantic, Ralph Waldo Emerson:

For all symbols are fluxional; all language is vehicular and transitive, and is good, as ferries and horses are, for conveyance, not as farms and houses are, for homestead (Lundin 1993:121).

In as far as theological language is metaphorical language³ and also symbolic in nature, trying to describe the Undescribable, one should be careful of the fixation of theological expressions within contingent situations.

The aim of this concluding chapter is therefore to summarise the conclusions of the study and to draw out the implications for theology in general and hermeneutics in particular.

2. Contextual theology and the Bible

[F]or as we attempt to contextualize and formulate our faith in a way that is intellectually responsible ... we are doing nothing but to build on what the Apostle to the Gentiles accomplished under the divine guidance of the Holy Spirit (Silva 1994:26).

In evaluating (some of) the hermeneutical presuppositions of Liberation Theology, Pettegrew indicates 'a certain biblical justification' for reading the Bible contextually. He defends this position as follows

³ Cf e g McFague (1987: espec 29-57); Smit (1991:1-16).

[t]he New Testament writers interpreted Old Testament texts within the culture of events contemporary to them. This is not to say that their exegesis was arbitrary or out of context, but it does mean that their reading of Old Testament Scripture was applied, fulfilled, and understood within the framework of their contemporary developments (Pettegrew 1991:283).⁴

According to Pettegrew, however, the situation has changed because of

the appearance of Jesus Christ on the scene to fulfill, interpret, and apply the Old Testament. Second, the apostles were given a special, *miraculous* guidance of the Holy Spirit to enable them to write the New Testament documents and to explain accurately the Old Testament Scriptures for the church (Pettegrew 1991:283, emphasis added).

Therefore 'evangelicals', as Pettegrew refers to them (including himself) retreat to safe ground by denouncing (among other issues) the contextual approach of Liberation Theology. The implication of this for biblical interpretation and theology at large, is a reverting back to the old paradigm of '*an application*⁵ of the passage to the interpreter's world' (Pettegrew 1991:287). But such an approach to the contextualisation of the biblical message, fails to deal with many issues, among others the question whether we have the true words of Jesus Christ in the Gospels, or whether it fell prey to the gospel writers' redaction and theological purposes.⁶ It further implies that only the apostles were privy to the 'special and miraculous guidance of the Holy Spirit' and in effect, that the Holy Spirit is incapable of the same influence in modern times. At the most such an 'evangelical' paradigm is willing to concede to 'contextual application' that

[s]tudents of the Bible must interpret the Scriptures with a view toward the real world in which they live and in fulfillment of Christ's commission to all believers (Pettegrew 1991:286).

This study has been conducted against the background of its own situatedness in a twofold sense. It not only investigated the way in which the contextual nature of the Pauline letters have been both neglected and deliberately suppressed, but it also discussed ways of reassessing the contextual nature of Pauline thought and practice. All theology is contextual, and although the danger of such absolute statements is obvious,⁷ theology as human activity is exposed to the same contingencies as all human expressions.

⁴ Cf also Thiselton (1980:18).

⁵ Emphasis added. Cf also Bonino (1986:345-346) vehemently attacking this 'classical conception of truth and practice'. It presupposes according to Bonino that '[t]ruth is therefore preexistent to and independent of historical effectiveness'. Quoting H. Assmann (rejecting 'any logos which is not the logos of a praxis') and Gutiérrez (writing on the 'epistemological split'), Bonino affirms 'that there is no truth outside or beyond the concrete historical events in which men [sic] are involved as agents'.

⁶ *Ipsissima vox* (way of speaking preferred by Jesus) and *ipsissima verba* (Jesus' genuine words). Cf Jeremias (1971:1-37) who ends his thorough discussion with a very tentative remark: 'In the synoptic tradition it is the inauthenticity, and not the authenticity, of the saying of Jesus that must be demonstrated'. Cf Botha's (1990:47) reference to the impossibility of finding the 'original words' in an oral-aural society. The 'Quests' (Old, New, No and Third) for the Historical Jesus underscore and explicate many of the impossibilities and improbabilities of a naive 'logical, positivist' approach for establishing a universal and transcultural Jesus of history. Cf Van Aarde (1994:235-251).

⁷ The claim that theology equals contextuality often becomes a claim to its universality, and ironically, introduces the end of or at least the failure to appreciate its contextuality. Although it could be argued that the universalising of contextuality is typical modernist — and thus 'contextual' — the argument can become self-defeating.

In this regard, König argues that contextuality is a characteristic of theology 'as such'. Moreover, all theology *should* be contextual, because the Gospel is contextual. The crucial aspect of theology is not its contextuality, then, but the identification of the constituted context (1981:37-43). Bevans (1985:185-202) provides a listing of six various 'models' of contextualisation, showing clearly that the privileging of a specific component or components, leads to a different result in each case.⁸

The changing landscape of South Africa and the world on the eve of the Third Millennium, in combination with the increasing popularisation of the Bible, as well as the increasing recognition of the religious pluralism — including scriptural pluralism (different uses of, senses of authority) and a plurality of scriptures (Qur'an, Bagavhat Gita, and so on) — challenge biblical interpreters to reflect on their theories and practices anew.

3. Authority of the Bible⁹

There was another consequence of this investment in the authority of Scripture: it inevitably produced a new crisis over the text itself (Schwartz 1990:7).

The sole authority of the text can be a threat to the very order and authority that text is supposed to provide (Boone 1990:65).

The discussion of Paul's hermeneutics of freedom allows for a reappropriation of the value of the Bible for Christian theology and practice today. It is, however, no longer possible to reinfuse categories of 'biblical authority' with traditionalist interpretations. Our study has made it very clear that Pauline hermeneutics requires modern Christians to reconceptualise the role of Scripture.

In a recent article, Childs expresses a view representative of many conservative, evangelical scholars and ordinary Bible-readers alike, in pleading for the restoration of the authority of the Bible (1997:200-211). Only by means of a renewed appreciation for the Bible as 'a voice of the present' rather than descriptions of 'the religion of some ancient, curious culture' in the past, will the Bible retain its formative influence today.

⁸ Bevans (1985:186) argues that in all theology the following elements are present: the spirit and message of the gospel; the tradition of the Christian people; the culture of a particular nation or region; and, social changes in that culture, due both to technological advances on the one hand and struggles for justice and liberation on the other. The following models of contextual theology are the result, with the element which are emphasised in brackets: anthropological (culture); translation (gospel); praxis (social change); synthetic (all three the already named elements); semiotic (culture in a semiotic grid); transcendental (focussing on subjective authenticity).

⁹ Cf also the brief discussions in Punt (1998a:1-36, espec 14-16); and, for the Bible in a multicultural context, cf Punt (1998c:1-32, espec 25-27).

Pettegrew (1991:284-287) argues that the problem with regard to contextualisation seems to be fear of the loss of scriptural authority. Such authority of Scripture is traditionally defended on 'inspirational' grounds,¹⁰ an understanding of the Bible which often entails understanding it as an objectivistic, positivistic, gnostic source of information. In this regard then, and ever since the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation the Bible has been discussed in terms such as the 'perspicuity' of Scripture, or the 'spiritual illumination' of the Bible. Very often the notion existed that the Bible provided information which only had to be selected and drawn from as needed and then 'applied'. Many of these ideas are important within sections of Christianity such as the fundamentalist approach to Bible (cf Boone 1989).

Goldingay for example explains how since Luther and the Reformation, Protestantism linked questions of authorship with questions of authority, adding that

it is doubtful whether such considerations lay at the heart of the process whereby documents such as the gospels originally commended themselves to churches (1982:45).

In a recent article on the importance of the biblical canon, Deist (1994:253-263)¹¹ described its status as a functional construct, not a 'pristine source of information' in a foundationalist sense. Deist urged his readers to move away from the epistemology of the Reformation which he typified as foundationalist, with its insistence on certitude, fixed truths, clarity, stability and reason above all.¹² Deist proposed that the foundationalist epistemology be replaced with that of Post-Modernity [sic], which emphasises rehumanisation, contextuality, relativity and perspectivity (the vantage point determine view/results) (cf Smith 1993).

It is important to acknowledge that the authority of the Bible is attributed by the community of faith. Jodock therefore argues that the mistake of assuming that scriptural exposition always precedes theological thought, isolates biblical study and divorces it from everyday issues, expectations and problems.

In our day acceptance of the Bible thus cannot really be the starting point for either religious life or theological reflection. Exposure to the Bible accompanies a person's involvement in the community of faith and its traditions, and those in the community already have absorbed a theology which shapes their understanding of the Bible. *Respect for the Bible is not the basis for but part of this theology* (1990:377, emphasis added).

¹⁰ Furnish (1985:15) argues that inanimate objects can hardly be inspired, as it is people who are inspired and states that those who interpret the 'inspired' Bible to denote it as 'historically accurate, "inerrant", or the like, are imposing their own ideas upon the text'. 2 Tim 3:16, in any case, emphasises the 'profitability for teaching' (*ὡφελιμος πρὸς διδασκαλίαν*) if the *καὶ* is read adverbially, or not at all (as *καὶ* does not appear in some manuscripts).

¹¹ Cf Punt (1998a:4-6) on the biblical 'canon' as a designation, not a description; and 'canon' as an instrument of power.

¹² Cf also Bosch (1995:15-25). On 'non-foundationalist theology' cf recently Hauerwas, Murphy and Nation (1994). On whether Postmodernism are necessarily non-foundationalism, cf Van Huyssteen (1993:372-286).

Jodock concludes his article with the, by now (in?)famous words of Barth that the Bible not only takes on authority but 'even becomes the Word of God for today' in as far as it acts as full partner in theological reflection and other tasks of the church.

3.1. The Bible as 'foundational document'

But perhaps Christianity has arrived at the stage where the foundational nature of the Bible deserves more attention than the authoritarian notions¹³ of describing it as, for example, the 'Word of God' and 'the Bible as (special) revelation'.¹⁴ In this regard (if for different reasons) a valuable proposal was put forward by Scroggs (1995:17-28), namely to view the role of the Bible in Christianity as that of a foundational document.¹⁵ Taking his leave of the *authority* of the Bible (:28) — a legal authority, with the 'statements of the texts, both ethical and theological, binding on believers of all times' (:28 n2) — the Bible as foundational document will

put the biblical texts in their proper place ... they are those documents that have elicited, set the basic agenda for, and defined what Christianity means as a *historical reality* (1995:23, emphasis in original)

As foundational document, the Bible will be allowed to function in this threefold role, which incorporates some of the notions hitherto expressed with its ascribed 'authority',¹⁶ but without

¹³ As much as the systems of power operative in interpretive patterns are recognised for, among others, its ability to include and exclude interpretations, to allow and prohibit certain understandings (cf e.g. Moore 1989:549, and Punt 1998b), the consideration of the role of power regarding the notion of the 'authority' of the Bible, is becoming increasingly important. For an earlier argument against the Bible as 'authoritative' today, cf Barr (1990:23-30).

¹⁴ On an apologetic — and perhaps metacritical — note, it should be added that this whole argument is not so much a questioning of the 'authority' of Scripture, as an acknowledgement thereof as well as an attempt to reinscribe it (cf Schwartz 1990:12). And in any case, receiving the Bible authoritatively depends on our 'view of authority that we bring to the text', which if we accept such authority, is furthermore not to be confused with 'the Bible itself' (Walsh 1997:209), nor (ultimately) with God to which the Bible is a testimony.

¹⁵ This suggestion has obvious parallels with the proposal of Walsh to reimagine its authority by viewing the Bible 'as a worldview text proffering a comprehensive vision of and for life', communicated through the biblical narratives and so invoking the communal or 'corporate memory' and allowing the community to maintain its identity and vitality (1997:212). Gottwald also refers to the Bible as 'nurturer' of worldviews, offering an alternative reality (1994:313-327); cf Wimbush below (1993:138-139). Aageson (1993:132-133), too, proposes to see the Bible as foundational document, but with its basis being authoritative, to which communities of believers 'are compelled to return to [it] again and again to discover its word of divine address' — cf further below.

¹⁶ Scroggs (1995:28 n2) admits that other understandings of biblical authority — e.g. its 'evocative and persuasive power' — is also possible, and that some of these notions approach his proposal of 'foundational document'. Wood (1996:189-191) refers to the similarity between Scroggs' proposal — bestowing 'creative' and 'definitional' roles on Scripture — and Protestant Orthodoxy's 'causitive authority' (the Bible as source of understanding) and 'normative/canonical authority' (the Bible as norm to judge faith and conduct). The Bible as creator of faith corresponds well with the notion of 'causitive authority', whereas the 'definitional' role and that of 'agenda setter' — which are connected, as the 'basic questions and answers' of the biblical agenda may not be ignored on danger of retreating from Christianity (Scroggs 1995:24; Wood 1996:190 n5) — approximate 'normative authority', i.e. the regulative function of the Bible.

the 'authoritarianness' or 'theological' — and may I add, hermeneutical — 'imperialism' implied in the term 'authority'.¹⁷

Aageson (1993:132) also proposes to view the Bible as foundational document, but then in a way somewhat different from Scroggs. For Aageson the Bible is foundational not only because it is considered by the believing community to provide 'guidance, nourishment and instruction', but also because it is deemed 'authoritative'. Expanding the idea that the Christian community develops its theology and liturgical life through conversation with Scripture, he argues that 'Pauline [read, biblical] texts become meaningful when the modern reader's world begins to overlap the world of the text or is brought into some kind of juxtaposition with it' (:133).

Along similar lines, if again for different reasons and purposes, Schüssler Fiorenza has argued at various occasions (e.g. 1984:10) for viewing the Bible

as a mythical archetype rather than as a historical prototype ... As mythical archetype the Bible can either be accepted or rejected, but not critically evaluated. A mythical archetype takes historically limited experiences and texts and posits them as universals.

This means that the Bible comes to function for Schüssler Fiorenza as a resource, a 'formative root-model' (1992:143), rather than as a source,¹⁸ which still allows her to use the Bible as 'model for Christian life and community' and which necessitates the exploration of all the 'dimensions' of the biblical texts, as well as its traditions and contemporary functions (1984:14).¹⁹

The reappraisal of the Bible as prototype, resource or foundational document, has not found general acceptance among biblical scholars. For example, Beker (1991:121-122)

¹⁷ Wood accuses Scroggs of slipping authority in by the theological back door, because 'foundational document(s)' is an ambiguous term: more than mere founding documents (but therefore restricted in time and space), it can also mean normative texts, which Scroggs seems to affirm, but without stating 'the character and ground' of that normativity or authority (1996:191-192). In Wood's plea to retain but redefine 'authority' (à la De George), he essentially condones the traditional notions contained in Protestant Orthodoxy in two types of authority: 'executive' and 'nonexecutive'. The former comprises authority of knowledge, of competence, of example and of authenticity, and corresponds with 'normative authority'; the latter authority to command, to perform actions, and it can be specified according to context — it parallels 'causative authority' (1996:193-195, 199-204). Cf Walsh (1997:209-210) on the 'multidimensional' character of authority.

¹⁸ Cf Luz (1994:102). The more traditional use of source/resource-terminology is found in Boone (1990:18) who quotes Fackre on classical Christianity as characterised by the following: 'The Scriptures constitute the source, the church the resource, and the world the setting for theological assertions'.

¹⁹ Francis Schüssler Fiorenza (1990:365) argues for understanding the role of the Bible as 'constitutional', in an attempt to combine the 'canonical' (emphasising the reciprocal nature of communal identity and scriptural or canonical formation) and 'functional' (as a 'classic', having a role in the formation of present ecclesial identity) models of understanding Scripture. In a 'constitutional' view of Scripture, it has 'primacy as the beginning of the Christian community and as constitutive for the identity of the Christian community'. Cf Lash (1986:43) on the constitutional nature of the Bible for the Christian community; Smit (1994b:318).

criticises Schüssler Fiorenza²⁰ for her insistence on regarding the Bible as 'resource' rather than 'source' because he feels the former characterisation offends the authority and normative nature of the Bible. However, Beker eventually concludes his book on the 'adaptation' or contextualisation of Paul with a plea for 'imaginative' and 'creative' interpretation of the Pauline letters (:128). He uses the example of a music composer who adapts themes from earlier eras for the 'musical idiom' of his or her own day; 'the challenge and mandate to the church today is to engage in a similar creative act'. Beker, however, can be criticised on at least two scores: firstly, 'archetype' refers not only to authority but can also be understood as an inflexible and restrictive, timeless and thus unchanging text²¹ — a view which in the case of Paul's letters and their use of Scripture and especially the Pauline tradition's interpretation of the 'authentic' letters (about which Beker's investigation is all about) is hardly possible to maintain (cf Punt 1996:377-425). In the second place, authority is in any case bestowed on and/or claimed for the text rather than inherent to the text.²² And then one can add as a third point of criticism, that the more apt analogy for describing Pauline hermeneutics would probably be the interpretation of a musical score by different musicians in different ways and with different accompaniment, instruments, and so on. This leaves in its wake new musical scores, and is a result of faithfully (that is, to the score and the contemporary audience) 'translating' or 'interpreting' the original score.²³

²⁰ Among others, cf also Cormie's criticism (1991:187,343 n39) on Schüssler Fiorenza's failure to account for the role of traditions in mediating one's experience of the Bible, and her use of an external criterion (i.e. women's experience of oppression) to interpret the Bible; Kwok (1995:40-43) who argues that Schüssler Fiorenza's 'historical prototype' with its emphasis on historical reconstruction fails to deal adequately with the oppressed voices contained within the Bible; Kwok advocates that the Bible be viewed as a 'talking book', which will allow not only for the oral and written dimensions of Scripture to emerge more clearly, but argues that this model highlights the subversive and imaginative use of Scripture by subjugated people.

²¹ The apologetic use of the Bible and the 'defense' of the historical traditions and customs in which the Bible is enfolded, gives good evidence of the treatment of the Bible as 'sacred text' and thus 'divine revelation' with accompanying ideas of eternal, a-contextual truth embodied in the text. As one example, cf Stone (1997:36-41) on the interpretation of biblical sentiments re gays and homosexuality, and how the defence of the biblical text with historically unsupported theories regarding homosexual practices leads to the condonation of worse evils: equating the 'enemy' with what was considered at the time, deviant sexual practices. The point is, however, that Stone's argument presupposes a different view of the Bible as document!

²² Beker claims that 'the normative character of the Bible is eroded' when it is viewed as prototype rather than archetype because for him it implies 'the elimination and dismissal of the original claim of the tradition' (1991:122). But this glaringly disregards the community's interaction with the text in favour of an almost 'deification' of the text. Whether the patriarchal elements of the biblical texts as criticised by Schüssler Fiorenza are all part and parcel of the 'original claim of the tradition' is doubtful, and best belongs to that range of elements which can and should be recontextualised for today! As Brett argues with reference to Schneiders, there is a 'surplus of meaning' in texts which allows it to 'elude the grasp of the social prejudices that produced it' (1995:74).

²³ This expresses the continual movement between stability and adaptability/flexibility, fidelity and creativity, continuity and actuality, or consistency and innovation found both in the biblical canon and its interpretation (Walsh 1997:216-217; cf Loonstra 1997: espec 146). The metaphor of an 'unfinished drama' has also been used to explain the relationship between canonical stability and flexibility, cf Walsh (1997:215-216 n37); Wright (1991:7-32).

As a related matter, attention to the relationship between the 'Old' and 'New' Testaments not primarily according to theological paradigms, might go a long way towards resolving not only that 'intertestamental' relationship, but will also accord the Bible a status in the Christian church *and* the global society which will render the Book more accessible to its readers while assigning it the respect it deserves.²⁴

Wimbush (1993:138-139) argues that within the history of African American appropriation of the Bible, the text as something 'out there', with a separate existence and 'assumed universal authority' is changed into 'a language and image world'. The Bible is no longer a 'text', a 'static source of eternal truth' that required a certain authority to be engaged, but a 'language world' that could easily, freely, with much creative play, be engaged 'from below', or 'from the margins' (:139). Because African Americans were reading the text through the world (of slavery and oppression), they founded, Wimbush argues, a hermeneutic in which the world (of everyday life) is read through the text — which has now become a world too, a language world. The primacy is now not the meaning of texts, but the interpretation of the socio-political and cultural events of every day. For this the texts supplied rhetorics and images (:139).

Finally, Jodock explains the relationship of the Bible and theology in the following, stimulating way:

The Scriptures are a *valuable — indeed, indispensable — resource* for theological thinking. Yet the Scriptures have no ready-made solutions or directives to offer the present; their meaning for today must be discovered through *interaction and embodiment*. The Bible is neither the overlord of the community nor its underling but a partner in its religious mission. The Bible's influence is felt as it serves theological reflection and the several other tasks of the church. In its serving it takes on authority — indeed it '*becomes*' the *Word of God for today* (1990:382, emphasis added).

3.2. Scripture as activity

Scripture is a human activity ... Scripture are not texts (Smith 1993:18-19).

Smith concludes in his comparative study of Scripture in religion that Scripture is a human activity, not only in the privileging of certain texts into a 'canon'. This is only a preliminary and 'superficial' view of the total activity which constitutes Scripture: Scripture 'begins with people's awareness of involvement in transcendence', an awareness which is then '*reduced* to speech or writing'²⁵ (1993:231, emphasis in the original). Scripture therefore exists in a

²⁴ Cf Van Zyl (1997:92) who argues that in the Zionist Christian Church — as in other AICs — in South Africa, the Old Testament plays an important role in church life and functions by no means as mere appendix to the New Testament.

²⁵ The emphasis on scripture as *written* text rather than *oral* 'recital', 'proclamation', 'performance' or 'recital' is a Western preoccupation — the result of which is the failure to recognise the experiential dimension of scripture (Smith 1993:7-10; cf Rogers 1997:29 n6).

trilateral relationship, consisting of the relationship or 'engagement' between 'text', the self (and his/her world) and the transcendent (:239).

Rogers (1997:28-43) draws out the implications of Scripture as human activity, by attempting to list and describe various types of activity which inherited texts received at a formative stage in Christianity. Rogers adds, however, that such activities — in 'multifaceted and varied' form — continue to 'extend across divisions within and between scripturalizing communities and religions' (:43). It is in worship and the liturgical use of Scripture in scripturalising communities that Scripture's role of 'a people's symbolizing of the transcendent within and among and around them'²⁶ emerges, as one form of such symbolising. But, the most important of Rogers' conclusions for this study would be his argument, that

[i]t is people's understanding of themselves and the transcendent in the world that is at issue in divergences of or over Scriptures (:43).

That is, Scripture is very much about people and identity, their individual and communal identity (cf Punt 1998d).

Although Rogers does not in particular argue the case, the importance of Scripture in moulding or at least contributing to identity emerges in especially two of his characterisations of 'scripturalising activity'. As far as the 'scripturalist' acts as a 'codifier devising a rule for faith and practice'

this creative manner of scripturalising is crucial for establishing and maintaining the identity of a community whose faith and practice are grounded in its inherited texts (:37-38).

Similarly, when the role of the 'scripturalist' takes the shape of 'a commentator gazing in a mirror on the present'

[t]he world reflected in Scripture is the world of the commentator, and Scripture makes it possible to understand the world and one's place in it (:39,41).

Within communities which attach such considerable importance to Scripture, it becomes possible to argue a case for the 'enscripturalised' identity of the community and individuals, as a self-consciousness (largely) provided, described and moulded by Scripture (Punt 1998d).

3.3. The Bible in today's 'multiscriptural' context²⁷

Facing the twenty-first century, Christians need to learn that the Bible is not meant simply for Christians but also for the global community ... Christian scholars must open up their religious resources for the use of all humankind. The question shifts from how the Bible can be normative for the Christian community to how it can bear meaning for the survival of human beings and the planet (Kwok 1995:23).

²⁶ The name מִקְרָא, translated as scripture, is used not so much for a form of written text (which would be the Tenak), but 'the correct reading of the sacred words' (Mulder 1988:xxiii), or 'a (liturgical) oral form' (Smith 1993:244 n6).

²⁷ Cf also Punt (1998c:25-26) for an earlier and broader discussion on this issue.

The more difficult question whether the Bible has a role at all to play in the *interfaith and/or interreligious* debate as well, remains.²⁸ Given for example the universalising tendencies in the Pauline writings,²⁹ it is not unfounded to assume that the Bible has a contribution to make in the sphere of interreligious dialogue as well. Again however, the sad and ironic history around the use of the Bible is that it has been one of many dividing factors in Christian-Jewish relationships. But, by avoiding an overemphasis on the 'paschal' reading of Old Testament (that is, through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection), and a reappropriation of those documents in their own right, it could reposition the Old Testament and show the roots of the New Testament more clearly³⁰ — and could have positive results for Jewish-Christian dialogue and relationships. Or would that be too high a price to pay? The question then is how to employ Christian Scripture to the advantage of all the peoples of this earth, and for the integrity of creation itself. This moves the debate beyond generalisations and the distilling of abstract principles (Kwok 1995:23).

From the context of Asian Christianity, Samartha pleads for a 'relational hermeneutics in a multiscriptural context' (1994:362)³¹ — as opposed to an 'over against hermeneutics' (:343) — while claiming that the 'Bible remains normative for all Christians at all times in their life of witness and service in the world' (1994:350). Yet, although he insists that the relational aspect is interpersonal, it seems as if he has an interscriptural relationship in mind as well (356-362). This would imply more than the mere acknowledgement of the Scriptures of other communities of faith. His plea is not to impose one's own Scripture on other religious communities; not to denigrate other Scriptures. His plea is for tolerance for the sake of local and global harmony and peace between different people. The question is whether 'peace' is possible only when all concerned accept one another's Scripture as more or less equal to one's own together with (the promotion of) some cross-fertilisation?³² Would the openness of biblical authors to incorporate sentiments from other cultures, traditions and religions in their own

²⁸ Cf e.g. Räisänen (1990:141); Rogerson and Jeanrond (1992:443) and their references to Knitter and Küng; also, the stimulating if idealistic comments by Nthamburi and Waruta (1997:49) on the Bible as document [partly, JP] shared by Jews and Christians, and even, to some extent, Muslims, and in this way addresses half of the world's population. They add that the Bible is even considered important by those 'with little religious inclinations', for its 'existential reflection on life and the human condition'.

²⁹ Cf Paul's Damascus-road call as an antecedent for the Bible in a multi-faith context (Sugirtharajah 1991a:352ff). For Paul's Damascus-road experience, cf above chapter 2.

³⁰ The notion by Wright (1991:19-20) on the essentially restricted value of the Old Testament for Christianity, cuts another way by allowing for a 'non-Christian' (not 'anti'- or even 'a-Christian') reading of the first Testament.

³¹ Such attempts have been, at least, fourfold: interpreting the exclusive claims in the Bible as historically dependent; highlighting the 'more open texts'; emphasising the polyvalency of the biblical texts; and, stressing the influence of other cultures, traditions and religions on certain traditions in the Bible (Samartha 1994:350-356).

³² The question is asked also in view of Smith's (1993:238) remark that the issue of 'scripture' is not 'a central issue in the welter of the world's present problems'.

writings, suggest that we today appreciate and accept the Scriptures of other religions on equal footing?³³

This study cannot pronounce on the status of the Bible in view of the multiscriptural world of today, as this was not the main focus of the investigation. But perhaps one may start thinking along the lines of the comparative approach to religious Scripture by Smith (1993). This would suggest that Christians appreciate their Bible, too, as Scripture in the way Smith proposes, namely as 'a human activity'. And therefore view their Bible as a 'foundational document', not so much in a 'dogmatic' or confessional sense but perhaps in a more existential sense, that is, more as documents describing and inscribing human life.

4. The role of the community (of faith)

It is the believing community that provides a truly adequate context for interpreting canonical texts (Pontifical Biblical Commission 1995:28).

If a theology has to be authentic and relevant it must be the visible fruit of a community of faith as it struggles with the praxis of the liberating gospel. In other words, it must be a theology whose criteria are determined by that community (Goba 1988:94).

The question can very well be asked whether the current decline in the membership, and especially in commitment of members of the institutional churches cannot also be attributed to an a-contextual or contextless theology.³⁴ Comments in this regard point to a huge discrepancy between the theology operative in the church and the experience and existence of the community. In some churches, members express an uneasiness with what happens in the liturgy and fail to understand the kerugmatic content of it. Does it not perhaps happen today that some churches (through their representative bodies) have decided on interpreting the Christ-event in a way that is experienced as making Christ irrelevant for contemporary life? Have many churches not simply become dogma-bound, intent on 'protecting' what is perceived to be *the* only valid and legitimate theology and way of theologising?

It could easily happen in our scientific and technological orientated society — our 'technocracy' (Bosch 1995:2-3) — that theology, as scientific endeavour, becomes an end in

³³ Samartha's (1994:354) reference to the argument of Kwok (1991:311-313) concerning the richness of the Bible and its many traditions, can have some value for discussions on the place of Christian scripture among others: however, when Kwok cautions not to make a 'distinctive emphasis into an exclusive principle', her remark is about the traditions contained in the Bible and thus presupposes a common overarching set of convictions, which is not the case with the majority of scriptures from different religions — unless of course, one defines that set of convictions very broadly.

³⁴ This is a generalisation, but daily experience would bear me out. By no means should this, however, be seen as the only reason for a rapid decrease in commitment in the mainline churches. Many other factors do play a role, e.g. secularization, rapid and vast changes in science and technology and its implications, personal differences and conflicts, different 'spiritual' expectations, etc.

itself.³⁵ Such an understanding of theology would be contrary to understanding its task as one of serving the community of faith, that is, the ministry of the people of God, and on a wider level the whole of society and creation. In this regard, the task of theological education

is not primarily to train ministers of religion; it is rather to train people to dialogue with the world, with culture, with other religions, with science and technology, etc (Pobee 1991:41).

Within the Christian theological vocation, the role of Scripture is considered one of central importance, and here again the danger exists that biblical studies can become divorced from the community of believers, and even from the rest of the theological enterprise.

Both in theological and biblical studies then, the need to seriously evaluate the role of the community is of great importance. With the emphasis in this study on biblical hermeneutics, it has been argued that the community has a constitutive role to play in the interpretation of Scripture, as it was argued in the previous chapter that the aim of Pauline hermeneutics can be most aptly described as ecclesiocentric.

Generally there is increasing acknowledgement that the Enlightenment-based picture of the biblical reader or interpreter as an individual in isolation from others, somewhere in silence studying the Bible, is not in step with what emerges from Scripture and scriptural precedents itself. This individualist perspective goes back even earlier:

From the Middle Ages to the middle of the twentieth century, theology was strongly influenced by St Augustine, focusing on the problem of faith and grace in a particularly individual perspective (GRIC 1989:52).

A movement away from an individualist approach to a 'communal' biblical hermeneutics would seriously question the ability of individuals working in isolation on the interpretation of Scripture, to produce results whose adequacy are ultimately determined only by assessment and in discussion with the whole church.³⁶ The community of faith and not methodological rigour, academic institutions or biblical-scientific schools alone are perceived as stake-holders in proper biblical hermeneutics. The nature of the relationship between professional biblical scholars and the church is still in need of discussion.³⁷

A danger, however, to be avoided when Scripture and its interpretation are accorded pride of place — as is the case in most post-Reformation Protestant churches — is to establish Scripture as authoritarian instrument. Although the authority of Scripture has always been acknowledged in all segments of the Christian church, it should be distinguished from biblical authoritarianism. Both in the process of collecting and collating the documents to form the canon and in its use, the Scriptures were accorded authority as a 'by-product' of its perceived

³⁵ Cf Pobee's warning in this regard (1991:40).

³⁶ However, the shift in interest from individualist soteriology to ecclesiology, says Braaten (1990:10), should not be the exchange of one form of narcissism for another.

³⁷ Cf Clines on this relationship (1997: espec 91-95).

helpfulness. Therefore, the authority of the Bible needs to be asserted within a 'non-authoritarian understanding of authority'.

Once the two ideas — that scriptural study and theological reflection are carried out by individuals in isolation and that the Scriptures 'lord it over' the church — have been set aside, we come back to the original assertion: Scriptural study and theological reflection are both activities of the community. *The interpretation of the Scriptures needs to be hammered out by the community* (Jodock 1990:373-375, emphasis added).

Although the constitutive role of the community in biblical interpretation cannot be denied, the accompanying danger is that the Bible might be made to conform to the community's 'world view or codified experience' and in the process can lose 'its integrity and its ability to challenge and confront our present priorities'. The 'otherness' of the text needs to be respected in order to fully appreciate and use the text in theological reflection and religious life.

Especially as far as theological reflection on the Bible is concerned, a very strong imperative exists in the world today for Christian interpreters of the Bible to take the nature of the biblical material seriously, and to read the Bible accordingly. This realisation has given rise to calls for a 'theological' reading of the Bible (e.g. Fowl 1995, 1997; Punt 1998b:128-131).

Unfortunately, the importance and positive effects of communal readings of the Bible are often ignored.

We need to recover those contexts in which we learn to become Christians with well-formed character if we are going to understand adequately and perform the Scriptures for Christian ethics. That is, we need to recover a common life among disciples of Christ. By that we do not simply want to point to ecumenical conversations and agreements, though overcoming ecclesial divisions is an important task for the witness of the Church's unity. But, more generally, we want to point towards the recovery of Christian communities, some of which will be ecclesially specified and others which will not, in which people's characters can be formed into the likeness of Christ (Fowl and Jones 1991:65).

Fowl and Jones' plea then is for a reviving of communal reading, a reading 'over-against ourselves' and not only 'for ourselves', and an embodied hermeneutic: to practice what you preach!

5. Theology in Africa: Towards the future

Western Christianity's cooptation of Paul is surely European Christianity's and established biblical studies' paradigmatic essentialization, individualization and depoliticization of the Bible (Horsley 1998:162).

A number of issues need to be put on the table for further exploration, before writing the final words in this project. Suffice it to conclude then with some comments on a broader approach to Paul, his letters and theology, a reference to hermeneutical practice, and the pointing out of two burning issues in biblical, hermeneutical and theological discourse.

5.1. A soteriological vs sociological or ecclesiological framework

[T]he language of the doctrine of justification no longer seems to answer the spiritual need of our time. It may still be a correct doctrine, but it does not speak to the human heart, unless special individual conditions or special instructions are given (Pannenberg 1981:290).

One of the conclusions which Martin Niemöller arrived at after his liberation from the concentration camp [sic after World War 2] was that he did not want to preach, 'How do I get a merciful God?' any more. That was Luther's question on his way to the monastery. In Protestantism that often became the egotistical question regarding only the personal salvation of a person. Niemöller resolved to preach for the rest of his life, 'How do I get a merciful neighbour?'³⁸ (Stöhr 1996:26).

The importance of justification by faith in the Pauline letters has been interpreted for the greatest part in the history of the Christian church as a doctrine to provide solace from the tormenting question, 'where/how can I find a gracious God'? Stendahl — although by no means the only, or even the first, scholar — has argued convincingly that such a soteriological interpretation was introduced in the Augustinian-Lutheran tradition and was designed to meet the needs of the times: the search for inner certainty. Towards the end of the twentieth century and standing at the brink of the third millennium, the emphasis has shifted to the social aspects of the Pauline letters, and the times in all probability demand a sociological approach to these documents.³⁹ Would such an approach be an ethical and responsible reading of Paul? What would be the implications of such an approach?

Accepting the notion of Pannenberg that the central doctrine of the Reformation should be seen as liberty rather than justification, that these are indeed two words for the same thing, it is already clear that one can address the community of believers in different ways. Pannenberg goes further to contend that the different anthropological models of the medieval and post-Enlightenment times reveals a fundamental contrast, with the former exhibiting a belief that humans are inherently bad and predisposed to fail, while the latter holds that all people are equal, also in their ability to choose — with no inherent compulsion either way — between good or bad (1981:288-293).

While modern society has been built on the assumption that all human beings are equally free by nature, the authentic view of the Lutheran Reformation is that persons are neither free nor equal by nature, but only by destiny (1981:293).

Although it will not be argued further here, this 'negative' anthropology derives from Augustine's fourth-century theological framework.

³⁸ Cf also Jobling's argument that the biblical imperative should be seen less in terms of 'the ends of the earth' and more in terms of a 'preferential option for the poor' (1993:101).

³⁹ Cf e.g. Segal (1990b:68-69) who argues that we live in a different world from Paul's: while we are facing global destruction by our own hands and not by God's, we live amidst a 'Christian unity [which] has been achieved, after some fashion'. 'What is really called for now is the recognition that all peoples of faith share a community, no matter how different that faith might look externally'.

In his argument in favour of 'theocentric ethics' and its implications, Gustafson (1991:87-113; 327-342) contends that the salvation emphasis in much of Christian theology often betrays an egoistic attempt to manipulate God, by ascribing to God the primary function of seeing to the salvation of people. Even within what can be called '*sola gratia*-thought' with God as the sole initiative and activity of salvation, the divine is still defined in terms of the human, and the God is therefore still understood in anthropocentric terms!⁴⁰

The dominant way of reading the Bible today in Christian communities in South Africa and elsewhere in Africa, is by means of an what can be called an individualistic, spiritualistic hermeneutic — the emphasis is on a soteriological approach. The origin of this strong 'salvation'-emphasis in the church can probably be ascribed to the influence of missionary activity.⁴¹

Newbigin (1989:213-215) sees the emphasis on the individual as an important stimulus for Existentialism in the Post-Enlightenment age. It was in this worldview of Enlightenment that the individual was 'discovered', that the actualisation of the individual became all important.⁴² It would be possible to turn cause and effect around and argue for Existentialism influencing this particular hermeneutic. However, it is probably rather a case of mutual influence.

Very important to consider in this respect is: Who is doing the reading? Who determines the meaning of the text? The answer almost inevitably is: 'Western', white, heterosexual middle-class males - firmly entrenched in and protected by a system of which they are as much part of as they are reason for its specific constitution. In this regard the call for a different reading of the Bible seems inevitable, and a plea is therefore often made for a 'sociological' reading of the Bible.⁴³

⁴⁰ In Christian theological ethics the attempt to account for the Other can very often become just another exercise in 'egotistic self-constitution' as happens in Tillich's work on 'participation' in 'personal encounters' (Ogletree 1985:39-45).

⁴¹ Cf Mushete (1994:13-14) on 'Mission Theology' with its concern for the 'salvation of souls'.

⁴² This did not mean all people! The post-Enlightenment age was also the one ushering in some of the worst possible suffering, accompanied as it was with the Industrial Revolution among others. Politics was neatly separated from religion, however, which meant that there was an increased vigour to 'christianise' individuals.

⁴³ Cf e.g. Glebe-Möller (1989:2). A serious consideration of the reader's ideological setting still does not seem to come into play in many theological discussions. An interesting contemporary example is perhaps the South African Old Testament scholar J.L. Helberg's recent study on the very contentious (especially in SA!) issue of land (*Die Verbondsvolk se verhouding tot sy land*, 1990), without once referring to ideological positions. The undeniable presence of such presuppositions manifests itself in different ways, e.g.: 'ons [staan] voor die harde weerbarstige werklikheid dat die ideaal van territoriale skeiding nie meer haalbaar is nie' (Helberg 1990:137; my emphasis); and, 'Vir Suid-Afrika... behels dit dat...landverdeling as 'n prinsipiële noodwendigheid, uitgesluit is' (Helberg 1990:137,144).

Such a sociological or ecclesiocentric reading of Scripture should not be viewed as an attempt to eschew theological concerns in the hermeneutical process.⁴⁴ To the contrary, it allows for a theological reading of Scripture.⁴⁵ A theological interpretation of Scripture is, according to Fowl (1997:xvi), decidedly non-modern in the following ways:

- it appreciates the value of premodern biblical interpretation,
- it will shape and is shaped by the concerns of Christian communities,
- it rejects and resists the fragmentation of theology, and
- it is pluralistic in its interpretive methods.

On the other hand, concern with a theological reading of the Bible should not imply a 'churchly' reading, neither a reading for and on behalf of the church only, or, even worse, a narrow denominationalist interpretation. Räisänen (1990:137-141) rightly cautions against a 'theologising' of the Bible and the notion of a (the?) theology 'of' the Bible, admitting however that a theology 'about' the Bible is to be appreciated. The canon, argues Räisänen, cannot be the starting point of exegesis which is directed towards the society and its concerns.⁴⁶ Following the well-established trend since Wrede, Räisänen argues for a consistent programme of historical — as opposed to theological — exegesis. Such a proposal, however, introduces more problems than it solves.

It is becoming increasingly difficult for professional biblical scholars to restrict their efforts to the Stendahl's 'meant' — as opposed to the 'means' — of the text. Segovia has recently (1998:51 n2) stressed that he can no longer envisage his academic efforts as biblical critic as merely that of textual exegesis and historical study of texts, when he finds himself increasingly having to operate as a constructive theologian as well as cultural critic.⁴⁷ Biblical

⁴⁴ Boyarin (1996:197) insists that Paul's concern for the unification of Jews and Gentiles should not be relegated to a *mere* sociological matter, as it was very much a theological concern for Paul. Perhaps one should not rather blithely disjoin the theological and the sociological on the assumption that one is dealing with two different human modes: the theological and the sociological can often be mutually informing, as would seem to be the case in, for example, Pauline practice, as well.

⁴⁵ Not to be confused with Biblical Theology, which 'is, in large part, a child of modernity and subject to the limits modernity attempted to set on intellectual activity more generally and theology in particular'. Biblical Theology tends to exhibit within itself two broad streams: producing readings of the Bible shaped and driven by commitments to philosophical systems (following in the footsteps of Gabler), and — following Wrede — giving 'historical reports' of the religion of the early Israelites or first Christians (Fowl 1997:xvi). For criticism of the biblical theology-project in general, cf e.g. Räisänen (1990).

⁴⁶ Räisänen (1990:138) acknowledges that a theological approach to the Bible does not need to exclude 'the broad societal and global point of view', but laments that as soon as theologians' context or point of departure is the church, the danger of a 'narrow ecclesial' approach to exegesis is almost unavoidable. Cf my argument elsewhere on the need to account for church, academy and society at large, in biblical hermeneutical efforts; with special reference to the SA situation (1998b:123-152).

⁴⁷ Segovia addresses the compartmentalisation of academic theological and biblical studies in particular. On the need for a more integrating approach in what is fragmented religious and theological studies, cf Horsley (1995:1140); for the SA argument on the need for fuller inter-disciplinary awareness and cooperation between theology, and human and social sciences, cf e.g. Combrink (1986:9-17; 1996:301); Lategan (1996:139-148); and, Smit (1994b:277-283).

critics today has little choice but to engage in 'academic border crossings'. In his distinctive style, Clines (1997) argues that the task of reading the Bible 'in the modern world' implies more than a concern for historical-exegetical matters.

Also, rather than eschewing the importance of 'justification by faith' in the Pauline letters as 'secondary'⁴⁸ (Wanamaker 1983:48), its importance in Paul's ecclesiocentric hermeneutic is evident. It is indeed God's act of justification which 'levels the playing fields', the divine grace bestowed upon all which heads Paul's attempt to bring together in one church all believers. But, and here Wanamaker is correct, one needs to move *beyond* justification and this would indeed imply the development of other important aspects of the Pauline letters in conjunction with contemporary concerns. Indeed, as Silva argues

systematic theology is, to a large extent, the attempt to reformulate the teaching of Scripture in ways that are meaningful and understandable to us in our present context (1994:23).

But this necessarily implies that such 'scripturally based' systematic theology is not cast in stone, but requires continued re-formulation and articulation. Such constant reformulation is required of even those systematic theological constructs 'discovered in' or built upon the interpretation of Paul's letters, regardless of the ability of such constructs to have come to occupy theological imagination to such an extent that the constructs themselves attain a life of their own, the questioning of which may be perceived as sacrilege.

5.1.1. *Ethnic identity and values*

At the time of writing, a number of 'ethnic wars' are taking place around the globe, but it characterises the African continent in particular. The Rwandan genocide is still fresh in the memory of all the inhabitants of Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo and various other countries are fighting wars without end — wars based on centuries-long notions of ethnic identity, constructed (by colonial powers and ideology) and assumed (by humankind's quest for power as expressed in land, wealth and otherwise).⁴⁹

But it is in South Africa in particular, slowly emerging from its Apartheid past, where ethnic identities are stirring amidst appeals for a common or shared 'African Renaissance'.

Against this readerly background, Paul can be, and *is*, encountered as a 'cultural critic' — to use Boyarin's, and recently, Segovia's term — intent on persuading the communities to

⁴⁸ Wanamaker, following Beker's structuralist approach, argues that new 'secondary symbolic structures' are necessary to communicate the 'primary symbolic structure of 'God's saving act in Jesus Christ'.

⁴⁹ Cf also Marty (1996:15-31) on the role of religion in the promotion and justification of war; Volf (1998:1) on the difficulty to understand the Rwandan genocide, as 'Rwanda is without doubt one of Africa's most evangelized nations' with 80% of the population claiming to be Christians!

which he wrote to accept each other with a sense of a new identity, 'in Christ'. In addition, Paul also insists on the 'relative' identity of 'Jew' and 'Greek' within the broader 'divine plan'.⁵⁰ However, as Stanley notes, it is a question

whether Paul really understood the power of ethnic identity to shape the attitudes and actions of both groups and individuals (1996:124).

And this has been realised and observed in our very recent global and in particular African, history — the Rwandan population is predominantly Christian!

Our own century bears painful witness to the deep-seated power of racial and ethnic prejudice in the Christian church, even after centuries of rehearsing Paul's appeals for love and self-sacrifice within the body of Christ (Stanley 1996:124).

When one thinks of the wider, global and religious, picture of a highly agonistic world, competing amidst strong trends of globalisation in ever-increasing polarities and inequalities, the task of uniting humankind seems almost impossible.

Understanding Paul as a 'cultural critic' has enormous potential in situations of conflict. The relevance of a contextual interpretation of his ideas cannot be overemphasised. It could be a valuable resource for addressing a very pressing global, human problem. But, this would introduce the important, and in this study rather central, concern with 'hermeneutics': how *do* we interpret Paul?

5.2. *Hermeneutical approaches*

The question of how to read the Bible is one that will always be with us, and no matter how many attempts are made to offer the final or 'mother of all methods', each generation of Bible-readers will have to wrestle with this problem.

Semler is often perceived as the founder of a historical-critical approach to the Bible. According to Kümmel (quoted in Silva 1994:13 n22), Semler no longer took the Bible as 'inspired' and concluded that it can therefore 'be viewed impartially with the eyes of the historical investigator'. This was done without 'endangering the Word of God, which he [Semler] wishes at all costs to guard'. But the historical-critical method moved beyond those notions, and became not only the dominant interpretive framework in biblical studies, but acquired some, often unaccounted for, baggage. Biblical interpreters today are still very much subscribed to the historical-critical methodology, with its emphasis on objective truths. It has, however, become more and more under fire for its inability to take textuality and reader-perspectives seriously.

⁵⁰ Matlock (1998:449) argues that '[M]uch of *identity*, Jewish and Christian alike, is bound up in this interpretive debate over Paul' (emphasis in the original).

5.2.1. *In search of adequate hermeneutical methods*

Although the historical context of texts are not inconsequential to their value for modern, contemporary readers, the emphasis has shifted from the world behind the text to the world in front of the text. The reasons for this is succinctly explained by Segovia (1995c:276-298) and summarised in his claim about the 'long dominance and swift demise of the historical critical model of interpretation' (1995c:277).

Segovia points out the six 'underlying principles' of the historical critical model of biblical interpretation. Firstly, it approached the biblical text as historical evidence from and for the time of composition. Secondly, it has little regard for the text as artistic, strategic and ideological whole. In the third place, it has a strong positivistic foundation and orientation (its claim to the objectivity of its results). Fourthly, it presupposed a universal and informed critic, yet neutral and impartial. Fifthly, it operated from a strong underlying theological stance that Christian doctrine and life were subject to the guidance and judgement of the Word of God.⁵¹ In the sixth place, it presupposed a very specific and universal pedagogical model: methodological rigour alone — notwithstanding the theological and sociological 'moorings' of readers — would ensure that all readers become such informed and universal readers (1995c:278-280).⁵²

The emphasis on methodological expertise had, however, a number of salient weaknesses. In the first place, with all the emphasis on the historical dimension, biblical scholars received hardly any training in literary criticism. Secondly, the ancient world was usually studied without recourse to sociological or anthropological models. Thirdly, with the overriding concern for the theological content and message of the texts, the results were a provincial and idealistic approach to the texts with early Christianity correspondingly been seen almost exclusively in terms of theological positions, conflicts and developments.

In addition, the call for and negation of the partiality of biblical critics was more apparent than real. In the first place, the model revealed a serious tension between aim and

⁵¹ A further and more radical consequence of this stance was the dissociation between biblical interpretation and theological studies. Cf e g Fowl (1997:xiii), who argues that other factors contributed to the split between biblical and theological studies: the fragmentation of the academic theological discipline into 'a variety of discrete activities'; the professionalisation of both biblical studies and theology, 'institutionalising' the separation between the two.

⁵² All of these hinged on the understanding of textual meaning: this was perceived as something static, locked up in the intention of the author as a historical fact and therefore not susceptible to change. Textual meaning was to be 'discovered', exposed and any readerly contribution to it was summarily discarded as *eisegesis* or reading into the text (what is not there!).

praxis: no univocal or objective meaning(s) were rendered. Secondly, the model was exceedingly naive: personal and social constructions regarding the texts were often presented as scholarly retrievals and reconstructions. Thirdly, the model was inherently colonialist and imperialist: the bracketed, male-Eurocentric identity was unreflectively universalised.

The historical critical method is in a state of collapse, because of, in the end, two sets of reasons. Internally, its own methodological development could no longer effectively address emerging new questions, concerns and challenges. And externally, there is the recognition that any theory is a perspective with its own ideological and social foundations — factors (Segovia 1995c:281-285).

5.2.2. *Towards indigenous or cultural hermeneutics*

An authentic, indigenous and relevant hermeneutic is a prerequisite of sound biblical and contextual theology ... the truth and authenticity of any piece of theology may be discovered by participating in and living it (Pobee 1991:40).

Segovia intends taking the reader seriously not as a unique and independent individual but as a member of a distinct and identifiable social configuration, from a social location.

The irruption of contextuality I see not as a harbinger of anarchy and tribalism, as many who insist on impartiality and objectivity often claim, but rather of justice and liberation, of resistance and struggle against a subtle authoritarianism and covert tribalism of its own (Segovia 1995c:285).

Arguing from his Hispanic-American location for a model of biblical interpretation to which he refers as Cultural studies, Segovia (1995c:294ff) describes the three basic dimensions of it as follows. First, the text is regarded, like any contemporary social group, as a socially and culturally conditioned 'other' — 'no text is atemporal, asocial, ahistorical, speaking uniformly across time and culture'. Second, the reader is equally regarded as socially and culturally conditioned, an 'other' to the text and other readers. Third, the interaction between the text and reader cannot be taken as a neutral encounter, but as the 'filtering' of the text through (the world of) the reader. Added to the otherness of the reader and text, the interaction between the text and reader (reading) should be understood in terms of both construction and engagement. All attempts at reconstructing the text — regardless of how well-informed or self-conscious it may be — even as the 'other', are nothing else but construction.⁵³ And, as far as engagement with the text is concerned, perceiving the text as 'other' requires *critical* engagement with it, with 'liberation' as goal. In addition, engagement with the text as 'other' requires the effort to understand how the text has been interpreted by others (1995c:297-298).

As much as it is true of ethics that

⁵³ As Wimbush argues, the 'cultural worlds of readers' determine which texts are to be read, how they are to be read, what they mean — even the meaning of 'text' itself (1993:129).

[i]t is only by finding oneself embedded in a particular historically embodied tradition of convictions and practices that one can begin to address how one ought to live in any particular situation (Fowl 1995:395),

it also holds that hermeneutical activity never takes places in abstract, in theory alone — some claims to this effect emanating from the academy, to the contrary. The interpretation of the Bible is always done perspectively, whether the particular perspective or ideology is admitted or unconsciously subscribed to. The Bible is never interpreted *tabula rasa*, as much as people do not live or exist with ‘empty minds’. An important implication of such views, is that biblical interpretation therefore necessarily concerns very much the identification of the hermeneutical location. Secondly, the influence of the hermeneutical location on the resultant interpretation(s) has to be accounted for and analysed (cf Punt 1998c:123-152).

On the other hand, Boyarin (1994:32, cf 9-10, 290 n10) has criticised what he perceives as Paul’s attempt at cultural accommodation in his letters.⁵⁴ Boyarin argues that such accommodation is functional only when matters often called ‘cultural’ are deemed peripheral and mutable, but not when the supposedly cultural are integrated with the religious conscience.

[Boyarin] rightly suggests that the very ‘tolerance’ of cultural difference turns out to be subtly intolerant of those for whom the maintenance of their cultural traditions cannot be a matter of taste, but is the very core of their identity (Barclay 1996:212).

This issue is of importance for doing theology in Africa and has given rise in the past to misunderstanding and even conflict. Should African customs be required to simply change or adapt in order to facilitate the transferring of certain (Western culturally-endowed) theological concerns?

[I]t is better that we create possibilities for community on some common ground than that we tear the fabric of societies whose cultural threads are already too interwoven to be simply unraveled. A cautious use of our Pauline heritage could equip us to undertake that long and difficult search for a polity which both respects ineradicable difference and enables meaningful community (Barclay 1996:214).

5.2.3. *Hermeneutical freedom today*

McCallum (1992:233-254) argues that the foundationalist ‘Theory of the Reader’ which is elaborated upon from different — phenomenological, psychological, historical and sociological — perspectives and with a variety of methodologies, can only be overcome by means of a pragmatist approach to reading. The Theory of the Reader is from whichever angle in the end only an attempt to secure objectivity in the process of establishing meaning, either through claiming a stable text or by relying on the neutral reader, or even by reifying the reading event into a fixed point. But more debilitating in the Theory of the Reader is that, for all its efforts

⁵⁴ ‘Boyarin takes up the challenge of Paul’s universalizing critique of the divisive effects of “racial identity” and argues, in the end, that Paul’s critique hit the wrong target: it is not identity based on genealogy, but on autochthony, that is to be opposed’ (Matlock 1998:457 referring to Boyarin 1994:253).

to ensure the reader's interpretive freedom, it only succeeds in achieving the illusion of freedom as 'its real concern is with reifying the reader in order to transform him [sic] into an analysable object' (McCallum 1992:236).

For pragmatists the reader and the role of language are markedly different, stressing especially the functional as opposed to the representative role of language. According to McCallum a pragmatic reading is capable of doing justice both to concerns for the freedom of the reader as well as the emphasis on constraints in reading — and the solution for achieving both ends, lies in the role of the interpretive community.

It is particularly in the emphasis on the interpretive community that modern literary theory and the Pauline letters can be brought into dialogue with one another. The importance of realising the tremendous influence of the community and its concerns for Paul in his letters has been stressed many times in this study: Paul wrote with an ecclesiological purpose. In colloquial terms, Paul wrote his letters with the churches and their problems in mind, and his goal was primarily to edify and sustain these communities. Although the concerns of modern literary theory and those of Paul can hardly be claimed to be on par, it can be claimed that in both literary theory and in Paul the epistemological point of departure, is the community.

In pragmatist literary theory the postulation of an interpretive community allows for a less rigid understanding of the text and its meaning, 'without at the same time collapsing it into a solipsistic or relativistic universe' (McCallum 1992:236). For pragmatist reading, 'the centrality of belief and the establishment of consensus', 'the mobilization of rhetorical strategies of persuasion' and 'the authority of interpretive communities' are of central concern. Naturally, dangers are also present in this reading strategy, of which the possibility of reifying — or deifying — the 'collective subject' and bestowing it with *absolute* authority, and reveling in the ethnocentric implications of such a position, remains ever present. McCallum thus insists that 'the only way out' of the trap of reified interpretive communities, lies in the 'commitment to self-revision' (1992:252).

My claim here is not that Paul was a pseudo-pragmatist or the ultimate forerunner and/or prophet of modern literary theory! However, it does seem very important to ask about the implications of a Pauline ecclesiocentric theology for interpreting the Bible, including Paul's letters, today. Does admitting to a Pauline ecclesiocentric aim not require a different approach from the traditional foundationalist readings of his letters? In short, does the nature and purpose of the Pauline letters not suggest that the pragmatist reading of it is more suitable?

5.3. Paul in postcolonial-Africa

Recently developed postcolonial theories increasingly question the coopting of the Pauline letters for colonial, imperial and other hegemonic use, while searching these documents for 'the gaps, absences and ellipses, the silences and closures, and so facilitate the recovery of history or narrative that has been suppressed or distorted' as urged by Said (Sugirtharajah 1998:18). In this way, postcolonial reading allows one to search for

alternative hermeneutics while thus overturning and dismantling colonial perspectives. What postcolonialism does is to enable us to question the totalizing tendencies of European reading practices and interpret the texts on our own terms and read them from our own specific locations (Sugirtharajah 1998:16).

Segovia (1998:51 n2) stresses that while a postcolonial reading attempts to deconstruct the colonial interpretation and simultaneously to forge an alternative approach to texts, it remains ever alert of the 'continuing, even if transformed, power' of colonialism and imperialism, and their strategies and tactics.

Another, ever present danger which a postcolonial 'optic', like all other hermeneutical strategies, needs to avoid is to become yet another totalising discourse (cf Segovia 1998:64). In an ironic way, postcolonialism can become imperialist and hegemonic in its very efforts to privilege the nationalistic, the neglected, and the peripheral. Such practices derive from postcolonial comparativist strategies which sometimes neglect the 'very real differences between cultures and kinds of imperialist oppressions' (Tiffin 1991:xii).

It has been argued that postmodernism and postcolonialism are two sides of the same coin. Boer (1998:25) argues, however, that postmodernism is properly seen as both cultural phenomenon and socio-economic development ('late capitalism'), and postmodernism therefore can be understood as 'an intense dialectical opposition between globalization and disintegration'. Postcolonialism however, does not only exhibit the same dialectical opposition, but is actually 'constitutive of the postmodern moment in the first place' (:26).

In other words, the intense dialectical opposition of globalization and disintegration shows up most sharply in postcolonialism, leading to the suggestion that this opposition is a determinative feature of postcolonialism as such.

However, a number of criticisms against the postmodern project have been leveled from postcolonial critics. For example, postmodernists tends to posit another 'grand narrative' in the most absolute sense ever, itself; postmodernism is often nothing else but (cultural and intellectual) neocolonialism — a 'Euro-American western hegemony'; postmodernism's largely unconcerned attitude to politics limits its effectiveness; postmodernism is often as much a rejection of modernism while it subtly reinscribes modernism (cf Bosch 1995:15-25); postmodernism 'fetishes' 'difference' and 'otherness'; postmodernism is 'marketed' as 'a general movement which addresses global concerns' and is therefore limited in its ability to address

local issues; postmodernism's antipathy towards 'representation' disallows the much needed postcolonialist post-naïve realism; and so on (Tiffin 1997:vii-xv).

It is therefore proper to suggest that a postcolonialist reading of Paul in Africa today may show up sides of the apostle never allowed before.

5.4. *Paul and women: Gender issues*

Oduyoye (1995:5) rightly complains of the sexist attitudes of leading figures in the church, who ascribed roles to women which contributed to women's gender oppression.

It was a 'church father' (Augustine of Hippo, a city in ancient Africa), who declared that a woman apart from a man is not made in the image of God, whereas a man apart from a woman is. Furthermore, it was a 'protesting' monk, pastor, and theologian, Martin Luther, who declared that women were fit only to go to church, to work in kitchens, and to bear children.

These views of Augustine and Luther leads Oduyoye to ask: 'Who defines the humanity of woman? Is it the male or is it God?' This very important question regarding the relation of power between the sexes, introduces numerous other political, social, cultural and theological issues as well. Another and related important question, as this study centers on the tradition of interpretation of the biblical texts, is in what way Augustine and Luther in particular read the Pauline writings from such a patriarchal perspective?

It will be important to consider in what ways in matters relating to the role and position of the woman in society and the church, the dominant interpretive pattern concerning Paul's letters — the traditional approach to Paul — was both justified by such patriarchalism, and contributed to the legitimation of female oppression by claiming Pauline 'prooftexts' in support of patriarchy. These are burning questions and although they are introduced by the arguments of this study, their discussion falls beyond its scope.

6. Conclusion

The postmodern project would seem to be a reaction to the modern attempt to domesticate meaning, the failure to recognise the dynamic nature of meaning and signification (McKnight 1992:277).

Paul's whole struggle was to proclaim and preserve what he valued as freedom in Christ (Betz 1977:12).

Wright has recently argued that of all the abuse Paul has suffered — including threats, attacks, misunderstanding, criticism, mocking, belittling, ridicule, stoning, beatings, abuse, and insult — the 'unkindest cut' of all was the canonising of his letters! The canonising of the Pauline letters by the later church allowed, according to Wright, later readers the opportunity to accuse Paul of 'posturing to gain power'. Although Wright intends to clear Paul of accusations that he

'went it on his own', in the sense of deliberately trying to establish *the* Christian church — the notion of Paul as the second, or real founder of Christianity — Wright's insistence on the misrepresentation of Paul cannot be ignored:

Nobody who wants to think about Christianity can ignore him; but they can, and do, abuse him, misunderstand him, impose their own categories on him, come to him with the wrong questions and wonder why he doesn't give a clear answer, and shamelessly borrow material from him to fit into other schemes of which he would not have approved (1997:11).

Although mentioned, Paul's importance for Christianity and Christian theology in particular is arguably not adequately emphasised in this statement. It is, indeed, because of the strong influence of Paul on Christian theology and the church, that a rereading of Paul is required.⁵⁵ Such a rereading is suggested by Paul himself:

A theology which is true to Paul must thus always be a critical theology, ready to change and to adapt, ready to maintain the principle of freedom in love, if necessary in spite of its traditions, however venerable (Tuckett 1991:325).

This study addressed a two-fold problem, which academic integrity demands that they are addressed as related issues: On the one hand, an illumination of the formative influence of Luther and those following in his footsteps, on the interpretation of the Pauline epistles, and on the other hand, the hermeneutical approach of Paul himself, in his appropriation of the scriptures of Israel, which can be described in modern terms as 'hermeneutical freedom'. Because of its focus on Paul and interpretive freedom, this study in the process concerned itself with a range of issues important to the discussion of this matter — from the (mis-)interpretation of the Pauline letters through a particular interpretive pattern, through a study of Pauline hermeneutics, to the Pauline notion of freedom and its contemporary relevance. Far from being an exhaustive attempt⁵⁶ to examine all these and related matters, this study traced the singular importance of hermeneutical freedom in the Pauline writings and subsequent interpretation thereof.

As explained in this chapter, a number of important conclusions have emerged from the central concern with Paul's hermeneutical freedom. And, to some extent all these conclusions orbit around the seemingly obvious statement that

[t]he rise and development of early Christian thought has to be described as an interplay between tradition, experience and interpretation (Räsänen 1990:121).

⁵⁵ Wright puts forward a strong argument against what he sees as various improper ways of interpreting Paul, with special criticism allowed for the recent work of AN Wilson (1997). Wright himself, however, does not reveal any conscious reflection about his own embeddedness to theological patterns of understanding, methodological concerns and activities (if not methodologies), and his particular theological-ideological interest for his particular reading of the apostle. This lack of self-consciousness in his programme on Paul eventually constitutes nothing less than an attempt at usurping the power to determine 'the real Paul'.

⁵⁶ Another caveat, however, exists in the sense that the historical overviews offered in this study, did not intend to be complete in dealing with all the historical eras concerned, neither comprehensive in the selection made, namely the Lutheran framework.

To conclude: It is no longer possible to claim that any one ecclesiological or hermeneutical tradition provides the ultimate approach to the interpretation of the Bible.⁵⁷ It is possible to claim that at a given moment and in a given situation, a particular interpretive approach produces hermeneutical results which are, relatively speaking, more adequate to address a certain matter or issue. But such an evaluation carries within itself the seeds of its own undoing: precisely that very adequate approach and interpretation of a biblical texts might be turned upside down with changes in time and location.

It is, therefore, becoming increasingly important to situate interpretive positions and hermeneutical approaches *Rezeptionsgeschichtlich*, that is, according to their place in history. The failure to keep the reception and effective histories of a document such as the Bible with its extensive influence on the human life and experience for many centuries in mind, will blind us to the hermeneutical compulsions under which we live. The much flaunted ‘freedom of exegesis’ — which refers to the Reformation’s emphasis on Scripture being its own interpreter, secondly, that all scriptural interpretation should be in conformity to the *analogia fidei* (the uniform teaching of Scripture itself), and finally, that Scripture has one certain and simple meaning, namely the literal sense⁵⁸ — claimed particularly for Protestant hermeneutics, fails in one important respect: Acknowledging that biblical interpreters for all their scientific skill, devoted piety, and religious commitment cannot rid themselves from the ‘world in front of the text’.

If there really exists a ‘freedom of exegesis’ — which even Fryer for all his insistence on the ‘grammatico-historical’ or ‘conservative-evangelical approach’, seems to doubt (1984:265) — it is certainly clear that this freedom is not found in a supposed freedom ‘from authority external to Scripture itself, be it Church, or tradition, or dogma’. The freedom sought for biblical interpretation is also not to be found in the aversion in, if not avoidance of, the Enlightenment’s rationalistic emphasis — the autonomous reason of the human being — as espoused in the interpretation of the Bible in the form of Historical criticism particularly.

⁵⁷ E.g. Fryer’s claim that ‘the conservative evangelical [*sc* the grammatico-historical] approach to Scripture is the only one which is truly in harmony with the self-testimony of the Bible’ neglects to account for the solipsistic argument in which it is embedded: the scriptural ‘self-testimony’ is determined according to the ‘conservative evangelical approach’ (1984:268-269). Fryer’s warning that presuppositionless exegesis is impossible (1984:265-267), at least at formal/objective level (*re* the exegete’s individuality) if not at material/subjective level (*re* the exegete’s *a priori* positions on the Bible’s ‘inspiration and authority’), goes largely unheeded by himself.

⁵⁸ Cf. Fryer’s endorsement of the view that the reformational notion of *sola scriptura* introduced the unshackling of biblical interpretation from the imprisonment of the authority of the Church and the Church Fathers, as well as from the licentiousness of arbitrary allegorical exegesis. The Reformers initiated the freedom of exegesis, consisting in adherence to the literal or natural sense of Scripture, as well as in independence of all authority external to Scripture itself (1984:262-263).

As far as the Bible is concerned, freedom of interpretation was in recent centuries a concern which originated in polemic contexts, predominantly namely in the medieval church and its practices and in the rationalism of Enlightenment biblical studies. The shared and singular point of contention was defined in terms of orthodoxy or dogma, and therefore translates into the question of 'how should the Bible be read in order to substantiate the orthodoxy?'⁵⁹ Although a concern to take seriously, the matter of the relationship between the Bible, or its interpretation, and orthodox belief was not primary in this study. More to the point, the freedom of interpretation, and the lack of freedom in interpretation was juxtaposed to the church as organism — as opposed to institution.

It has been argued and, hopefully persuasively, shown that the freedom of the interpretation of the Bible is an ecclesiological matter. The freedom which Paul employed in his interpretation of the scriptures of Israel had as its aim the edification of the community. Although it can be granted that Paul's use of Scripture can also be appreciated as an attempt to ground and explain his faith in Christ, or the modification of his inherited faith and/or religion in terms of Christ, it should be noted that such concerns were secondary to the primary purpose of keeping the body of Christ intact while ensuring its growth. Paul's hermeneutic of freedom is therefore simultaneously an ecclesiocentric hermeneutic: Paul read what he read, cited what he cited, and interpreted what he interpreted for the sake of the community of Christ.

In light of the recent scholarly interest in the social aspects of Paul's theology, it is important to note in the post-South African society with its many problems and challenges, that

[t]he successors of Paul today are the theologian-activists, Christian thinkers-and-doers who call the affluent church to live truly in the service of the crucified, who is present in the persons of the struggling poor, the marginalized and oppressed, the sinned against and erased from history, non-persons (1 Cor 1:28-29) (Cook 181:495).

These sentiments are echoed by Murphy-O'Connor (1989:10) in his insistence that interpreters of Paul cannot eschew the commitment to change 'the structures in society which are the instruments of oppression'.

Thus: a more adequate way of reading the Pauline letters today will be one which takes Paul's own, demonstrated and lived hermeneutical freedom serious! It is my contention that this is most likely to happen where the reader of today approaches the Pauline texts from a

⁵⁹ The continuous redefinition(s) of orthodoxy naturally contributed to the repeated questioning of the boundaries of interpretive freedom. This matter, however, cannot be dealt with here!

post-foundationalist or postmodern or even better, postcolonial perspective.⁶⁰ As much as Foucault (1976:196-197, quoted in McKnight 1992:276) insists that human discourse is determined and contextualised by 'rules that are always subject to historical transformations', I claim no less that historical embeddedness for my views as expressed here, as anticipated in the introductory chapter. My views on what Paul's freedom means for us today, do not intend to provide closure, although the criticism expressed towards other interpretive patterns are offered as valid criticism — not only, but especially, as Pauline interpretive patterns of the past have insisted on claiming closure, even if it failed in providing it. The enduring illusion of providing the ultimate interpretation is quite obvious in the relationship of the TAP. The insistence, however, on Paul's ecclesiocentric and free hermeneutic is not the final word. But it is an appropriate approach to the reading, interpretation and study of the Pauline epistles at the end of the twentieth century.

In a new situation, Paul's work ... in trying to unite different communities must be carried on critically. His views must be treated selectively; they must be adapted and enhanced. As a man of his time who asked some of the deepest questions, Paul, too, could be seen as a man for all times and places (Räsänen 1995:761).

Failure to appreciate the freedom and creative use of Scripture as exemplified in Paul, amounts to no less than the domestication of Scripture, the church and eventually God as well.

The Apostle responds in Romans 9-11 by calling the Bible as witness to God's consistently innovative actions throughout history (Johnson 1997:369).

The Pauline call to reread the Bible for today, to experience the Bible as Scripture, as an engagement with the transcendent, needs to be heard anew on the eve of the Third Millennium.

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⁶⁰ This can be qualified, by adding a constructive or affirmative postmodern approach as opposed to a negative postmodernism: whereas the latter 'advocates an 'anything' goes approach with regard to the interpretation of signs and absolutises the strategy of irony to such an extreme that taking up a position and acting on one's insights are disqualified', the former 'reminds us of the provisional nature of our insights but encourages us not only to produce interpretations, but to take responsibility for our production of meaning and for the action that flows from that insight, reminding us all the time that, since we lack the luxury of a privileged position, we have to involve ourselves in the agonistics of the network of signs' (Degenaar 1997:41). Cf also the criticism against the postmodern project from postcolonial critics (Tiffin 1997:vii-xv).

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