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Quests for Freedom

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3.4 The Innovative Concept of Freedom in Paul

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Nowhere in the New Testament are ‘freedom’ and ‘liberation’ spoken of so frequently and centrally as in Paul. Seven of the eleven New Testament occurrences of ἐλευθερία / ‘freedom’¹ are in Paul, fourteen of the twenty-three occurrences of ἐλεύθερος / ‘free’², five of the seven occurrences of ἐλευθερώω / ‘to free’, ‘set free’³ and, the sole occurrence in 1 Cor 7:22, of ἀπελευθερός / ‘freed person’.⁴ Apart from this, regarding the fateful claim to power by death, sin, and the law, Paul can say that the believers have ‘died’ in Christ.⁵ They have been ‘purchased’, that is, legally acquired⁶, and they have been ransomed out of slavery through Christ⁷. Through belonging to Christ believers are removed from the deadly reign of sin⁸ and its absolute power.⁹

In addition to the concept of ‘freedom’ itself, when one considers the

1 ἐλευθερία Rom 8:21; 1 Cor 10:29; 2 Cor 3:17; Gal 2:4; 5:1.13 (2x). Cf. Jas 1:25; 2:12; 1 Pet 2:16; 2 Pet 2:19. Accordingly, the term ‘freedom’ does not occur in the Gospels, in Acts or in any other of the longer non-pauline scriptures.

2 ἐλεύθερος Rom 6:20; 7:3; 1 Cor 7:21.22.39; 9:1.19; 12:13; Gal 3:28; 4:22.23.26.30.31.

3 ἐλευθερώω Rom 6:18.22; 8:2.21; Gal 5:1.

4 For the discussion see above all K. Niederwimmer, *Der Begriff der Freiheit im Neuen Testament*, Berlin 1966; *idem*, Art. ἐλεύθερος κτλ, EWNT I, Stuttgart 1980, 1052-1058; D. Nestle, *Eleutheria. Studien zum Wesen der Freiheit bei den Griechen und im Neuen Testament*, Tübingen 1967; *idem*, Art. Freiheit, RAC VIII, Stuttgart 1972, 269-306; H. Schlier, Art. ἐλεύθερος κτλ, ThWNT II, Stuttgart 1935, 484-500 (cf. Bd. X/2, 1073-1076); S. Vollenweider, *Freiheit als neue Schöpfung. Eine Untersuchung zur Eleutheria bei Paulus und in seiner Umwelt*, FRLANT 147, Göttingen 1989; *idem*, Art. ἐλεύθερος κτλ, TBLNT, rev. ed., Wuppertal 2005, 499-505; J.D.G. Dunn, *Christian Liberty. A New Testament Perspective*, Grand Rapids 1993.

5 ἀποθνήσκω with *Dat. incommodi*, cf. Rom 6:1-11; 7:4.6; Gal 2:19.

6 1 Cor 6:20; 7:23: ἀγοράζω with absolute τιμῆς [*Gen. pretii*].

7 ἐξαγοράζω Gal 3:13; 4:4f; cf. H.-J. Eckstein, *Verheißung und Gesetz. Eine exegetische Untersuchung zu Gal 2,15 – 4,7*, WUNT 86, Tübingen 1996, 55ff.153ff.237ff; *idem*, *Auferstehung und gegenwärtiges Leben nach Rom 6:1-11. Präsentische Eschatologie bei Paulus?*, in: *idem*, *Der aus Glauben Gerechte wird leben. Beiträge zur Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, BVB 5, 2nd ed., Münster etc. 2007, 36-54.

8 βασιλεύω Rom 5:14.17.21; 6:12.

9 κυριεύω Rom 6:9.14.

various instances of the motifs 'to free', 'to redeem'¹⁰, 'to save'¹¹, 'to die', 'to justify from'¹², it becomes increasingly clear how central in Pauline theology the motif 'freedom', 'to set free' is. This is true of Galatians, the 'Magna Carta of Christian freedom', as well as of Romans 5-8, the triumphal unfolding of the 'glorious liberty of the children of God'. And it is even more true of the various discussions in the earlier letters to the Corinthians.¹³

In this connection, Paul undoubtedly takes up *Greco-Roman* social, political and philosophical conceptions of 'freedom' and 'slavery'. As in general linguistic usage, the adjective ἐλεύθερος / 'free' refers first of all to the social status of the 'free person' as opposed to the δούλος / slave (1 Cor 7:21b.22a; 12:13; Gal 3:28; 4:22). When one thinks of the comprehensive rights of the free person as societal member and fellow citizen¹⁴ (in contrast to slaves or aliens), or when one considers the freedom of the Polis¹⁵, or has in view the freedom to exercise one's own will in everything he does¹⁶, or the inner freedom of the individual as regards social conventions, or freedom from one's own passions, it is no wonder that Paul assumes not only the denotation of the Greek concept of freedom, but at the same time also the connotations of his own Greco-Roman environment.

However, the 'apostle of freedom' did not need to adopt these concepts from the slogans of his opponents at Corinth; rather, he had already embraced them before his calling, in the context of the Greek-speaking synagogues of the Diaspora. Here, and due to his Jewish upbringing, Paul also got to know the *Old Testament-Jewish* tradi-

10 'redemption' / ἀπολύτρωσις Rom 3:24: δικαιοῦμενοι δωρεάν τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι διὰ τῆς ἀπολυτρώσεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. Rom 8:23: υἰοθεσίαν ἀπεκδεχόμενοι, τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν. 1 Cor 1:30: ὃς ἐγενήθη σοφία ἡμῖν ἀπὸ θεοῦ, δικαιοσύνη τε καὶ ἁγιασμὸς καὶ ἀπολύτρωσις.

11 ῥύομαι – The risen Son of God is awaited as the final savior from godlessness and its consequences 1 Thess 1:10: ὃν ἠγείρειν ἐκ [τῶν] νεκρῶν, Ἰησοῦν τὸν ῥυόμενον ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ὀργῆς τῆς ἐρχομένης. Rom 11:26: ἥξει ἐκ Σιών ὁ ῥυόμενος, ἀποστρέψει ἀσεβείας ἀπὸ Ἰακώβ. Cf. as an expression of desperation Rom 7:24: τίς με ῥύσεται ἐκ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ θανάτου τούτου;

12 δεδικαίωμα ἀπὸ, 'to be free from', 'to receive the final verdict of acquittal' Rom 6:7: ὁ γὰρ ἀποθανὼν δεδικαίωται ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας.

13 Cf. 1 Cor 7:17-24; 1 Cor 8-10 [esp. 9] and 2 Cor 3.

14 In this sense Paul speaks in Phil 3:20 and 1:27 of πολίτευμα – 'rights as citizen', 'community', 'home' – and of πολιτεύομαι – 'to live as a citizen'.

15 Cf. Gal 4:26 the introduction of the 'heavenly Jerusalem above' as description of 'the free', in contrast to 'the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children' (V. 25): ἡ δὲ ἄνω Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἐλευθέρα ἐστίν, ἥτις ἐστὶν μήτηρ ἡμῶν (V. 26).

16 Paul also uses as an expression of bondage and dominated status, the inability to do what one wills, as well as the compulsion to act against one's own will – Rom 7:15f: οὐ γὰρ ὃ θέλω τοῦτο πράσσω, ἀλλ' ὃ μισῶ τοῦτο ποιῶ. εἰ δὲ ὃ οὐ θέλω τοῦτο ποιῶ (cf. 7:19f); Gal 5:17: ἵνα μὴ ἃ ἐὰν θέλητε ταῦτα ποιῆτε.

tion which understood the designation ‘servant of God’ / δούλος θεοῦ as a title of *honour* of the prophets and of the people of Israel. In taking up this tradition, Paul too is able to understand himself proudly as δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, as ‘servant of Jesus Christ’ (Rom 1:1; Gal 1:10; Phil 1:1). Accordingly, in 1 Corinthians 7:22 Paul calls every believer a ‘slave of Jesus Christ’ even if his social status is that of a ‘free person’.

The decisive mark of Paul’s ideal of freedom, however, is primarily the orientation toward the Person and the way of the Lord, Jesus Christ—beginning with his incarnation and commission, continuing through his life of loving obedience right up to his death on the cross: ‘... who, though he was in the *form of God*, did not regard *equality with God* as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the *form of a slave*, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he *humbled himself* and *became obedient* to the point of death—even death on a cross’ (Phil 2:6-8). With reference to Christ as the ‘servant of the circumcision’, in Rom 15:3.7f Paul can challenge his congregation to mutual consideration and acceptance, ‘just as Christ has received, accepted and welcomed you, for the glory of God’ (V. 7)—‘for Christ did not please himself’ (V. 3).

This specific realization of one’s own sovereignty and freedom in voluntary self-sacrifice and serving care may have seemed particularly foolish or even offensive for the ancient thinking that maintained contrasts between God and humankind, freeman and slave, and freedom to decide and obedience: ‘but we proclaim Christ crucified (Χριστὸν ἐσταυρωμένον), a stumbling block (σκάνδαλον) to Jews and foolishness (μωρίαν) to Gentiles’ (1 Cor 1:23). However, for the apostle himself, as well as for his churches, the binding model of how to live before God and with one another is the Son of God who out of love has become a slave and servant.¹⁷

Presupposing *Hellenistic* usage and perception, Paul contrasts the social status of the ‘freeman’ / ἐλεύθερος with that of the slave / δούλος (cf. 1 Cor 7:21.22; 12:13; Gal 3:28; 4:22; cf. Phlm 16). Galatians 3:28: ‘... there is no longer *slave* or *free* ... for all of you are *one* in Christ Jesus’. On the basis of this new equality and unity in Christ, however, the ‘slave’ is comprehended precisely as ‘freedman of the Lord’ / ἀπελεύθερος κυρίου (1 Cor 7:22) who should no longer be concerned about his social status (V. 21). The addition ἀλλ’ εἰ καὶ δύνασαι ἐλεύθερος γενέσθαι, μᾶλλον χρῆσαι in 1 Cor 7:21b may be best understood as an encouragement to seize social *freedom* if possible, rather than remain in *slavery*.¹⁸ In as much as Paul, in the face of the present

17 1 Cor 9; cf. Rom 15:1ff.7f; 1 Cor 8:9-11; 2 Cor 8:7ff; 9:6ff; Phil 2:1ff.

18 Cf. W. Schrage, Der erste Brief an die Korinther (1Kor 6,12 – 11,16), EKK VII/2, Neukirchen-Vluyt u.a. 1995, 138-140; P. Stuhlmacher, Der Brief an Philemon,

political circumstances, is not in a position to request the social-political implementation of the fundamental equality in Christ, he nonetheless expects his churches to welcome one another in mutual love as ‘brothers and sisters’ (Phlm 16: οὐκέτι ὡς δοῦλον ἀλλ’ ὑπὲρ δοῦλον, ἀδελφὸν ἀγαπητόν, cf. Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 12:13). Paul’s respectful but firm pleading for the slave Onesimus with his Lord Philemon (Phlm 8ff) aims at the favourable reception of the offender as well as his commissioning as co-worker of Paul. For the social differences between ‘slaves’ and ‘free persons’—in the same way as those between ‘Jew’ and ‘Greek’ and ‘man’ and ‘woman’—are no longer a decisive factor owing to the reconciliation given by the cross of Christ and the life opened up by his resurrection (Gal 3:28).¹⁹

It is also in accordance with Greek usage when Paul in a transferred sense describes the ‘slavery’ of humankind under sin and death as ‘being unable to do what one wants’ (Rom 7:15: οὐ γὰρ ὃ θέλω τοῦτο πράσσω, Gal 5:17: ἵνα μὴ ἂ ἐὰν θέλητε ταῦτα ποιῆτε). However, for the apostle the reverse of this does not mean that the liberated person now ‘owns himself’ and ‘can do whatever he wants’. Rather, he should now belong to Christ as his Lord (Rom 7:4)²⁰, be led by his Spirit (Rom 7:6)²¹ and thus live for God (Gal 2:19). Consequently, for Paul, liberation from sin, from the condemnation by the law²² and from the impending death is not aimed at the absolute ‘autonomy’ and ‘self-sufficiency’ of the person. On the contrary, it is intended as an enabling for a life of *relationship*, that is of *community* and *mutual acceptance*.

At the same time, in the context of Old Testament-Jewish tradition it is highly remarkable that Paul applies the liberation in Christ not only to *sin*, but also to the *law*.²³ With regard to the Jewish and Gentile Christians of the Roman congregations, Paul offers this highly provocative formulation: ‘Sin will have no dominion over you, since you are *not under law* but under grace’ (Rom 6:14). — ‘You have *died to the law* through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God’ (Rom 7:4). Or to use Paul’s most pregnant and—for his Jew-

EKK XVIII, 3rd ed., Neukirchen-Vluyn u.a. 2004, 44-49; P. Lampe, Der Brief an Philemon, NTD 8/2, Göttingen 1998, 222.

19 Cf. 1 Cor 12:13; Col 3:11.

20 Cf. Rom 14:7f; 2 Cor 5:15; Gal 2:19f.

21 Cf. Rom 8:2.14; Gal 5:16-18.

22 On this topic, see further H.-J. Eckstein, Verheißung und Gesetz. Eine exegetische Untersuchung zu Gal 2,15 – 4,7, WUNT 86, Tübingen 1996; *idem*, Der aus Glauben Gerechte wird leben. Beiträge zur Theologie des Neuen Testaments, BVB 5, Münster etc. 2003, 3ff.36ff.55ff; *idem*, Gott ist es, der rechtfertigt. Rechtfertigungslehre als Zentrum paulinischer Theologie?, ZNT 14 (2004), 41-48.

23 Cf. Rom 6:14; 7:1-6; 10:4; 1 Cor 9:20f; 2 Cor 3:6; Gal 2:4.19; 3:25; 4:5; 5:1-4.18.

ish hearers, his most provocative—formulation: ‘For through the law I died to the law (ἐγὼ γὰρ διὰ νόμου νόμῳ ἀπέθανον), so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ’ (Gal 2:19).

For Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles²⁴ this is relevant with regard (1) to the legitimacy of the mission to the Gentiles (Gal 2:1-21), (2) to the justification of Jews and Gentiles by faith in Christ (Rom 3:21-4:25; Gal 2:15-4:31) and (3) to the ethical conduct of believers. As a Jewish Christian Paul naturally takes the divine origin of the law as his starting point (even in Gal 3:19) and finds within it as Scripture the Gospel already promised (Rom 1:2)²⁵. However, as an ἔννομος Χριστοῦ (1 Cor 9:21) the final binding authority is for Paul the orientation toward ‘God’s Gospel of his Son’ (Rom 1:1ff)²⁶ and the ‘law of Christ’ (Gal 6:2).

In order to categorize correctly the significance, relevance, and the limits of the law according to Paul, we doubtless require a clearer differentiation of the various uses of the term Law – νόμος – Torah. First, Paul uses the concept ‘law’ as *prima pars pro toto* in the broad sense of ‘scripture’ (γραφή), and under this rubric can include citations from the prophets and the Psalms.²⁷ Regarding the law as *Scripture*, the self-evident principle applies for him—as for all the authors of the New Testament writings: ‘Do we then overthrow and nullify the law (νόμον οὖν καταργοῦμεν) by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law (ἀλλὰ νόμον ἰστάνομεν)’ (Rom 3:31). In this connection the apostle develops in detail from the scripture (γραφή) the fact that Abraham and David were not justified on the basis of their Torah observance, but because of the promise and by grace through faith (Rom 4:1-25). Paul begins from the same continuity of promise and gospel when in the phrase ‘Law and Prophets’ he identifies the first part of the scripture, the Pentateuch, as ‘Law’.²⁸ Thus he can use the paradoxical formulation in Rom 3:21: ‘But now apart from the Law (χωρὶς νόμου) the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets (μαρτυρουμένη ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν)’.

When Paul speaks critically of the law he means the ‘Law of Moses’, the ‘Sinai Torah’ in the specifically theological sense of the legal requirement and the legal decree of God.²⁹ These meanings are articulat-

24 Cf. . Rom 1:5; 15:6; Gal 1:6; 2:7-9.

25 Cf. Rom 3:21.31 and 4:1ff; Gal 3:8.

26 Cf. Rom 1,9.16ff; Gal 1:6ff.

27 Cf. Rom 3:19a (citations from the Prophets and Psalms); 3:31 (see the following evidence in 4:1ff, above all 4:3a: γραφή); 1 Cor 14:21 (citing Is 28:11f); 14:34 (Gen 3:16); Gal 4:21b (Gen 16 and 21); cf. Joh 10:34; 12:34; 15:25.

28 Cf. Mt 5:17; 7:12; 11:13; 22:40; Lk 16:29-31; 24:27.

29 So in Rom 2:12-15.17f.20.23.25-27; 3:19b.20f.27a.28; 4:13-16; 5:13.20; 6:14f; 7:1-9.12.14.16.22.23b.25; 8:3f.7; 9:31; 10:4f; 13:8.10; 1 Cor 9:8f.20; 15:56; Gal 2:16.19.21;

ed, for example, in Lev 18:5 (Gal 3:12; Rom 10:5) and Dtn 27:26 (Gal 3:10): ‘He who does them shall live by them.’ — ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.’ As a result of his encounter with the crucified and risen Lord, the former Pharisee Paul came to the realization that, apart from faith in the Son of God there is no eschatological justification before God and therefore—apart from this faith—there can be no eternal life, not even for the Jews, and not through Torah observance. — Gal 2:16: ‘Yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law (οὐ δικαιοῦται ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἔργων νόμου) but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we [as Jews by birth, V. 15] believed on Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law: because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified’ (ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιοθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ) (Gal 2:16).³⁰

With ἔργα νόμου the apostle indicates neither only ‘legalistic works’, that is *depraved* and *perverted* performance of the law,³¹ nor merely the so-called ‘identity marker’ resp. ‘boundary marker’³² – like circumcision, food laws or Sabbath – of Diaspora Judaism, but in a broad and neutral sense, he means the fundamental affirmation and extensive obedience to the Torah which is made concrete by attitude and deed—‘Torah observance.’³³ In the retrospective of faith the apos-

3:2.5.10-13.17-19.21.23f; 4:4f.21a; 5:3f.14.18.23; Phil 3:5f.9 (Paul’s writings contain 120 [118] of the 195 New Testament references).

30 On Paul’s assertion of the impossibility of justification based on Torah observance, see Rom 3:20 (Ps 143:2); 3:28; 4:13f; 8:3a; Gal 2:16 (Ps 143:2); 2:21; 3:11f.21.

31 See G. Klein, Art. Gesetz III, TRE 13, Berlin 1984, 58-75, here: 67-71 („das Gesetz in dieser Perversionsform“, 67); cf. R. Bultmann, Röm 7 und die Anthropologie des Paulus, in: *idem*, Exegetica. Aufsätze zur Erforschung des Neuen Testaments, Tübingen 1967, 198-209, here 200: „Schon die Absicht, durch Gesetzeserfüllung vor Gott gerecht zu werden, ist die Sünde, die an den Übertretungen nur zu Tage kommt.“; *idem*, Christus ist des Gesetzes Ende, in: *idem*, Glauben und Verstehen, Bd. II, 5. Aufl., Tübingen 1968, 32-58, here 37ff.; H. Hübner, Das Gesetz bei Paulus. Ein Beitrag zum Werden der paulinischen Theologie, FRLANT 119, 2nd ed., Göttingen 1980, 28ff.

32 Cf. J.D.G. Dunn, Romans 1-8, WBC 38A, Dallas/Texas, LXXI.153f.185f; *idem*, The New Perspective on Paul, BJRL 65 (1983), 95-122. On this topic, see further C. Strecker, Paulus aus einer „neuen Perspektive“. Der Paradigmenwechsel in der jüngeren Paulusforschung, KuI 11, 1996, 3-18; M. Bachmann, J.D.G. Dunn und die Neue Paulusperspektive, ThZ 63, 2007, 25-43; C. Landmesser, Umstrittener Paulus. Die gegenwärtige Diskussion um die paulinische Theologie, ZThK 105 (2008), 387-410.

33 See note 22. On ‘Torah observance’ in the broad sense (hebr. מעשי תורה cf. 4 Q flor I,7; II,2) as the way to justification, that is, to salvation, see Gal 5:4: οἵτινες ἐν νόμῳ δικαιοῦσθε. Also in the expressions ἐξ ἔργων νόμου (Rom 3:20; Gal 2:16 [3x]; 3:2.5.10), in short: ἐξ ἔργων (Rom 4:2; 9:12.32; 11:6); χωρὶς ἔργων νόμου (Rom 3:28), in short: χωρὶς ἔργων (Rom 4:6); ἐν νόμῳ (Gal 3:11; 5:4; Phil 3:6); ἐκ [τοῦ] νόμου (Rom 10:5; Gal 3:21; Phil 3:9); διὰ νόμου (Gal 2:21).

tle realizes that, in truth, the law was not given by God as the way to life, but—in agreement with the court prophets of Israel—as the way to document, to unmask, and to condemn sin: ‘For through the law comes the *knowledge of sin*’ (διὰ γὰρ νόμου ἐπίγνωσις ἁμαρτίας Rom 3:20). — ‘For the law brings *wrath*’ (ὁ γὰρ νόμος ὄργην κατεργάζεται Rom 4:15). — ‘In order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure’ (ἵνα φανῆ ἁμαρτία, διὰ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ μοι κατεργαζομένη θάνατον, ἵνα γένηται καθ’ ὑπερβολὴν ἁμαρτωλὸς ἢ ἁμαρτία διὰ τῆς ἐντολῆς Rom 7:12).

With this assumption it becomes clear why those who wish to live by Torah observance—according to Paul—stand fundamentally under the legitimate indictment and condemnation of the law—that is, under the ‘curse’ (ὅσοι γὰρ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου εἰσίν, ὑπὸ κατάραν εἰσίν Gal 3:10).³⁴ According to the gospel, it is only the Spirit of the Lord—that is, of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 3:14.16.17)—which frees from the dominion of sin and death. Because of this, Paul can use an extremely provocative and pointed emphasis in his description of the ministry of the God-given law as a ministry of condemnation (ἡ διακονία τῆς κατακρίσεως 2 Cor 3:9), and even as the ministry of death (ἡ διακονία τοῦ θανάτου 2 Cor 3:7): τὸ γὰρ γράμμα ἀποκτείνει, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ζωοποιεῖ ... ὁ δὲ κύριος τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν· οὐδὲ τὸ πνεῦμα κυρίου, ἐλευθερία (2 Cor 3:6.17). In fact, enslavement under the dominion of sin (ὑφ’ ἁμαρτίαν εἶναι Gal 3:22; Rom 3:9; cf. 5:12; 7:14) corresponds to the existence under the inescapable condemnation of the law (ὑπὸ νόμον εἶναι): ‘Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law (ὑπὸ νόμον ἐφρουρούμεθα συγκλειόμενοι) until faith would be revealed... But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian (οὐκέτι ὑπὸ παιδαγωγόν ἐσμεν)’, Gal 3:23-26.

Finally, Paul can use the concept of ‘law’—in addition to (1) ‘scripture’ / Pentateuch and (2) ‘Law of Moses’ / ‘Sinai Torah’—also (3) in the *figurative sense* of ‘binding instruction’ (*bestimmende Weisung*) as well as ‘standard’, ‘lawfulness’ / ‘regularity’ (*Gesetzmäßigkeit*), ‘principle’: ‘On what *kind of law / principle* [is boasting excluded]? On the *law / principle* of works? No, but on the *law / principle* of faith’ (διὰ ποίου νόμου; τῶν ἔργων; οὐχί, ἀλλὰ διὰ νόμου πίστεως Rom 3:27). According to Wisdom of Solomon 2:11, in this figurative sense the godless can elevate themselves above the righteousness of God, with the words: ‘Let our might / strength be our *law / our norm* (NAB) / our *yardstick* (NJB) of right, for what is weak proves itself to be useless.’

In Rom 7:7-25 Paul describes the inability of human beings, of themselves, to fulfill God’s good and just commandment and his holy law (Rom 7:12.14). This is because in connection with Genesis 2 and 3,

34 On ὑπὸ νόμον εἶναι see also Gal 4:4f.21; 5:18; Rom 6:14f; cf. 1 Cor 9:20; Gal 3,23..

the human being reflects the situation of Adam, that is, 'of humankind'. In so doing Paul exposes the situation of humankind without Christ—*remoto Christo*. Paul himself only realized this situation in retrospect, that is *in Christo*, from the vantage point of faith. Accordingly, from the beginning 'humankind' has in fact not belonged to the life-fostering instruction of God according to Gen 2:17 / Rom 7:10,12, but has allowed itself to be seduced and deceived by the serpent's 'instruction' which brings death (Gen 3:13 / Rom 7:11: ἐξηπάτησέν με). Because of its disastrous effect Paul describes this 'instruction' of the serpent, as well as that of sin (Gen 3:1-5; Rom 7:8,11), as the 'law of sin' (Rom 7:23) and the 'law of sin and of death' (τῆς ἀμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου Rom 8:2).

According to Paul, while God's good commandment is not itself sin nor does it bring about death (Rom 7:7,13), neither is the Law of Moses able to free humankind from the dominion of sin which brings death (τὸ γὰρ ἀδύνατον τοῦ νόμου Rom 8:3). For since Adam there is found in the human being 'another law' (ἕτερος νόμος) which is in conflict with the law of God (ἀντιστρατεύομενον τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοός μου) and takes human beings prisoner under the dictate of sin (καὶ αἰχμαλωτίζοντά με ἐν τῷ νόμῳ τῆς ἀμαρτίας τῷ ὄντι ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου Rom 7:23). On the basis of Gen 3:6 and Ex 20:17 Paul defines this 'other law'—binding instruction / standard / principle—as 'sinful passions' (τὰ παθήματα τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν Rom 7:5), as 'covetousness' (ἐπιθυμία Rom 7:8) and as the human principle of the flesh (σάρξ Rom 7:25; 8:1-13).

Since his encounter with Christ, the apostle no longer finds in the mosaic law the answer to this desperate situation of fundamental bondage, imprisonment and enslavement of the human being, but rather he finds it in the 'law of the spirit that makes alive' which is effective in Christ Jesus (ὁ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ Rom 8:2) and the 'instruction', the 'standard', and the 'principle' of faith (νόμος πίστεως Rom 3:27). Faith in Christ—that is 'faith expressing itself in love' (πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη Gal 5:6)—and the Fruit of the Spirit (ὁ καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματος Gal 5:22) confirm and do not refute the good demand for righteousness by the law of God (τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου Rom 8:4), the Ten Commandments (Rom 13:8-10) or the commandment to Love Thy Neighbor (Gal 5:14; Rom 13:8,9)—'against such there is no law' (κατὰ τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος Gal 5:23b). But should these conflict, it is not the Law of Moses, but the instruction and Torah of Christ (νόμος τοῦ Χριστοῦ Gal 6:2) that is ultimately binding for the Apostle of the Gentiles (ἐθνῶν ἀπόστολος Rom 11:13). According to 1 Cor 9:20,21 the apostle no longer sees himself 'under the law' (μὴ ὡν αὐτὸς ὑπὸ νόμον), but 'under the law of Christ' (ἐν νόμῳ Χριστοῦ) — and precisely for this reason he is no longer 'lawless'

in relation to God (μὴ ὡν ἄνομος θεοῦ). Correspondingly, in each case Paul succeeds in basing the standards for his ethical instructions altogether concretely in the person, the way, and the instruction of the crucified and risen Lord.³⁵

Or, with Paul's own words from Rom 8:1-4, to summarize the entire theology of freedom from the powers that enslave human beings: 'There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death (ὁ γὰρ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἠλευθέρωσέν σε ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἀμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου). For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do and was powerless to do (τὸ γὰρ ἀδύνατον τοῦ νόμου): by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh (ἐν ὁμοιώματι σαρκὸς ἀμαρτίας καὶ περὶ ἀμαρτίας κατέκρινεν τὴν ἀμαρτίαν ἐν τῇ σαρκί), so that the just requirement of the law (τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου) might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.'

As we have seen above, such a liberation from sin, from the condemnation by the law and from impending death—such a liberation does not merely lead to an absolute 'autonomy' and 'self-sufficiency' of the person. On the contrary, it is intended to enable the believer for a life of *relationship* and mutual acceptance. However, it is possible to go a step further and state that the freedom of the 'liberated one' (Rom 6:18.22: ἐλευθερωθέντες, cf. Rom 7:3: ἐλευθέρα ἐστίν, 8:2: ἠλευθέρωσέν σε) exists precisely in *belonging to Christ* who, as the crucified and risen one, is himself free from sin and death (Rom 6:9f). Believers are not 'crucified' *per se*, but 'crucified' *with Christ* and hence 'dead' to sin and the law, i.e. liberated from their dominion (Rom 6:6f). Only 'in Christ'—i.e. on the basis of his substitution and in communion with him—are they set free from the dominance of the life-destroying separation from God (Rom 6:1ff; 8:1ff). The believer is not free and alive as an independent 'self' but only because—and insofar—the risen Christ 'lives in him' by his life-giving Spirit (Rom 8:9-11; Gal 2:19f).

For Paul, Christian freedom is not only focussed on 'relationship' with regard to *ethics*, but it is also grounded in it *soteriologically*. This relationship is not experienced as a *limitation* and *boundary* of freedom but as the *realm of its unfolding and development* (*Entfaltungsbereich*). Nor is it experienced as a *contrast* to freedom but as its *realization*. *Propositionally* speaking therefore, we can say that for Paul, freedom *from* sin and law does not exist *in and of itself*, but only as freedom *for* God. 'Freedom *from*' only exists as 'freedom *for*'. *Autonomy* over against God and his righteousness would inevitably lead to slavery un-

35 See Rom 14:15; 15:1-3.7; 1 Cor 8:11; 2 Cor 8:7-9; Phil 1:27 – 2:18.

der the life-denying forces. In accordance with the Old Testament-Jewish tradition, for Paul human beings never exist in and of themselves and without belonging. For him they always exist in relation to entities that govern and affect them.

Being created by God, human beings are always dependant on the loving care of their God and thus never live autonomously but always 'in relationship'. If a human being *is*, he is *in relationship*. If he turns away from his creator he inevitably makes himself a 'slave' to other influences which put himself, his life and his relationships in danger. It is only logical that the liberation from this slavery needs to be understood as a *change of lordship*. Romans 6:16-18: 'Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, and that you, having been set *free from sin*, have become *slaves of righteousness*.'

Nonetheless, it was the accusations of his opponents that prompted Paul to formulate this formal contrast of 'slaves of sin' vs. 'slaves or servants of righteousness'. His opponents insinuated that his proclamation of the surpassing grace and of the freedom from sin and the law would in effect advance the sway of sin (Rom 6:1.15; cf. 3:8; Gal 2:17: ἄρα Χριστὸς ἀμαρτίας διάκονος; μὴ γένοιτο.). By way of contrast, Paul employs in his own, positive exposition of the Spirit-determined life in Romans 8:1-39 the contrast of 'slavery' vs. 'sonship'/adoption': 'For you did not receive a spirit of *slavery* (δουλεία) to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of *adoption* (υἰοθεσία). When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are *children of God* (τέκνα θεοῦ)' (Rom 8:15f).

The relationship of the believers to God is fundamentally different from the former dependencies. Faith in the Father of Jesus Christ is not just a 'relationship of lordship' (*Herrschaftsbeziehung*) but a *positive, holistic and personal* relationship which is based on unconditional affection and unlimited care. For the mission of Christ, even to the point of giving his life on the cross, is seen as the unambiguous proof of the unconditional love of both the Father (Rom 5:8; 8:31f.38f; cf. Eph 2:4ff) and the Son (Rom 8:35; Gal 2:20; cf. Eph 5:2.25b). This *christologically* motivated combination of a *relational concept of freedom* with a thus positively determined *concept of God and man* surely is a fundamental characteristic of the innovative concept of freedom in Paul.

The 'glorious freedom of the children of God' (ἡ ἐλευθερία τῆς δόξης [*gen. qual.*] Rom 8:21) may still be limited with regard to physical salvation from persecution, decay and suffering (Rom 8:21-25). And those already appointed as children and heirs (Rom 8:17) may

presently together with the suffering creation still long for their salvation from the 'bondage to decay' (ἀπὸ τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς Rom 8:21). However, they are already now empowered to unfold their freedom in relation to God (Rom 8:28; 1 Cor 8:3) and to other people (Rom 12:9ff; 13:8-10; 14:1-15:7) as love.

In every situation—no matter whether it regards mutually accepting one another when debating the renunciation of meat and wine (Rom 14), or making allowances for former pagans in the context of eating 'idol meat' (1 Cor 8-10)—Paul expects that believers will not insist on their own freedom (ἡ ἐξουσία 1 Cor 8:9; 9:4ff) and knowledge (γνώσις 1 Cor 8:1ff) but demonstrate their freedom precisely in love and mutual consideration. For Paul, what applies in one's relationship to God also applies in one's interpersonal relationships: 'freedom *from*' always realizes itself as 'freedom *for*'; and on the basis of love this relationship is not experienced as *limitation* but as the *realm of the unfolding* (*Entfaltungsbereich*) of freedom: 'For though I am free with respect to all (ἐλεύθερος γὰρ ὢν ἐκ πάντων), I have made myself a slave to all (πάντων πᾶσιν ἑμαυτὸν ἐδούλωσα), so that I might win more of them' (1 Cor 9:19). – 'For you were called to *freedom*, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become *slaves to one another* (ἀλλὰ διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις)' (Gal 5:13).

In view of the Greco-Roman environment, the Innovative Concept of Freedom in Paul consists precisely in the definition of freedom as the ability for community and for service in reciprocal awareness and personal acceptance. Compared with its Jewish environment, the innovation and unprecedented nature lies in the fact that this freedom and redemption bear the name of a person and are identical with that name—the name of the crucified and risen Lord, Jesus Christ. For both groups—Greeks as well as Jews—it appears highly provocative and 'innovative' that the one who was in the form of God (ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων Phil 2:6), did not just speak to humankind or dwell above them, but he *humbled* and *emptied* himself and took the form of a *slave* (ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφὴν δούλου λαβῶν). He himself became a human being—that is, capable of suffering, mortal and obedient—in order that in this he might show himself sovereign, free, and worthy of honor: ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ... διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πάντων ὄνομα Ἀἰἰἰ (Phil 2:7ff).