

CHRISTIAN FREEDOM: CRISIS AND PROCESS

1. Introduction and Preface

The term 'Christian' freedom would seem to imply there is other freedom than Christian freedom. In fact a host of freedoms. It would also seem to imply that Christian freedom is a freedom connected with religion, or theology, and even faith, and that it is thus in this secluded area, and that it is not necessarily native to the true and universal order of things, especially as they relate to the purposes of God for His entire universe. In fact Christian freedom is the only true freedom. It is the freedom which is the universal order of things, especially as this is of the purpose of God for creation and history. It is true freedom. It is of the true order of things.

In dealing with this freedom we will have to consider the original order of things, as proceeding from the act of creation, and then the loss of freedom through the fall of man, as also a renewal in freedom through the redemptive act of God, and the ultimate freedom of man and the universe in what we can call the eternal or glorified state.

2. The Initial Freedom of Man and The Creation

The Biblical doctrine of creation assumes that the order of God's universe is harmoniously functional. Hence God's view of His own creation 'it is very good' pronounces it as a universe of freedom. By that we mean that the laws of its operation are harmonious and functional, and whilst operating within those laws the universe knows nothing of bondage. The principle 'everything created by God is good, and to be enjoyed' (I Tim. 4:4) accords with 'You have made everything appropriate (beautiful) in its own time' (Eccles. 3:11). Nothing is of itself wrong or evil.

This view is supported by the fact that the Father initiates the creation (I Peter 4:19), and the Son mediates its coming into being (Hebrew 1:2-3, Col. 1:15-17, John 1:1-3) and the true order of the creation relates to the Father and the Son (I Cor. 8:6), whilst the Spirit is the Agent of creation (Gen. 1: 2-3, Psalm 104:29-30), and is known as the Spirit of the Father and the Son (Gal. 4:6, Matt. 10:20).

The creation of man in the image of God supports the view that man was created after the innate freedom of the Godhead Himself. Man's freedom must have consisted in

- (a) His affinity with God,
- (b) His obedience to God, ie. his conformity to the will and purpose of God, and
- (c) He being truly man, and accepting his creaturely nature, as against the Creator nature of God. This would mean he would accept his filial nature in the context of God as Father, and his servant nature in the

context of God as King. Consequently he would relate to God, himself, his fellow-being, and the whole creation in its innate harmonious and functional operations and nature.

We are told, in a poetic passage that at creation ‘all the sons (angels) of God shouted for joy and sang together (Job 38:7), and this passage conveys the idea that creation was unmarred by evil. However man's primal temptation by the serpent (cf. Gen. 3:1, Rev. 12:10f.) was to refuse to accept his creature-hood as such, and discover his (imagined) innate godhead. The inference is clearly, ‘Live within the bounds God has given you, and you will not know perfect freedom. Go beyond those bounds, and be unbounded, and you will know true freedom. What you have got only appears to be freedom’.

Having eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam discovered, very quickly his loss of priceless innocence, and his fearful change of relationship with God (cf. Gen. 3:7ff.). He discovered his relationship with God was altered, if not totally changed. Also he now related in a different manner to his wife, himself, and his universe. Whether he knew it or not he had lost his freedom, and was now in the form of bondage.

3. The Bondage of Man

(i) Bondage Develops from Disobedience

Man had been told that his disobedience would bring death. Romans 5:12ff. is a graphic account of this. To speak of Adam's bondage as being sin and death is correct. To speak of this death as being ‘spiritual’ as against actual, biological, and so on, is to confuse the issues. His death was primarily one of relationships. This can be seen by reference to II Cor. 5: 14–15. Having died to God he became alive to himself and was consequently not truly free. To be free as a man is to (voluntarily) conform to the will of God.

Paul, in Romans 5:12ff. develops the thought that man's disobedience brings him under the tyrants of sin and death. He is no longer a free agent. He lives in terror of death (judgement: cf. Heb. 2:14–15), and is ruled by sin which has power by nature of death. In another passage Paul outlines the bondage of man. The passage is Romans 1:18 to 32. Some assume that this rejection of God is the Adamic rejection of God (as seen in Gen. 3:1–6, cf. Rom. 5:12ff.). Others see it as the rebellion of the Gentiles against God. Psalm 2:1f. also points to a concerted opposition to God. It does not greatly matter, for the rebellion is consonant with man's rebellion against God in Adam, and in any case history witnesses, from time to time, such rebellion, critically as well as habitually. We mean that from time to time the moral deterioration as shown in Romans 1:18–22 can be evidenced. It would be true to say that in western culture there is currently such an expression of rejection of God.

In Romans 5:12f. the principle is that ‘sin reigns through death’ (v.21) and death reigned from Adam...’ and ‘death reigned through that one man’ (vs. 14, 17). This is no mere abstraction: it is man's experience daily of the tyranny of death and sin. The forms of tyranny are seen in Romans 1: 19–32. They constitute

- (a) Idolatry (v.23),
- (b) Being given up to immorality (v. 24),

(c) Being given up to sexual perversion (v26), and

(d) Being given up to ‘a base mind and improper conduct’ (v28). This latter includes every kind of evil use of man's natural being, and his conscious loss of moral understanding. In this he abandons true relationships and is in conflict with the natural order of creation.

One of the keys to man's bondage is his rejection of the knowledge of God. To really know God is eternal life (John 17:3, I John 5:20, cf. Jer. 9:23–24). In fact it can be called ‘creational life’ – i.e. to know God. Life, then would be called ‘a matter of relationships’ and man would be free when he related fully, in the created order of things to God, himself, his fellow-being, and his universe. Not to do so is bondage.

(ii) Disobedience is Against the Authority Structures

‘Every authority is ordained of God’ is the thrust of Romans 13:1ff.¹ Authorities relate to the moral order of the universe, which, in fact, is the creational and (so) functional order. In this way refusal of God must be refusal of the innate nature of the creation. This includes the innate nature of man, for all creation, including man, is contingent upon God for its essential being. To refuse the natural order is to refuse God; to refuse God is to refuse the natural order. Hence, when one is out of alignment with the creational order one must suffer deeply from a sense of dissociation, awryness, dislocation, and existential guilt.

Some theologians (e.g. Paul Tillich) suggest that man is in anxiety because of his sense of finiteness. Death is a threat because it shows him, and keeps him in his finiteness. Finiteness, per se, is no real threat to man, because in fact his creature-hood is his true joy. There is no true life for man which is not at once creaturely, filial, and for service. The term finiteness is philosophical, for man's true being is one of contingency, and the question of being finite or infinite does not really arise. Only when a man sins does the question of finiteness arise, for now he is in competition with God. Being out of contingency is what really makes him anxious.

This anxiety – amongst many other things – is part of his bondage. That is why death is so much a threat because it is the ever-constant reminder to him that he is finite, and cannot control God, the universe or his fate. Were he not disobedient, and seeking autonomous living he would not fear God, the authorities or the universe. There would be no fate – only destiny.

If Romans 5:12ff. is read it will be seen that death and sin are the tyrants which rule him. In Romans 1:19f. the idols rule him, and then his own lusts. Out of a state of contingency upon God, he is left to make his own decisions, for he must have his guidance from himself, and so he is the slave of his own desires and decisions. Yet, even here, he must obey his idols.

In Galatians 5:19–21 man is seen as doing the works of the flesh. Those also control him more than he does them. They too are tyrants. Since they spring from the flesh, he is the slave of the flesh. The flesh is really man's created humanity as it has been affected by sin and sin's concomitants, and these we shall shortly see. However we still have to reckon with the fact that man must obey the functional principles of the universe, and these are

¹ See Living Faith Study No.5, ‘The Nature of Authority and Obedience’.

related directly to the ruling powers. Hence, if for example he is a glutton, then he has disobeyed the positive principle to eat for edification of his being, and in disobeying a physiological principle of human living,² he had rebelled against the laws of creation. Hence his modes of bondage are many, and take many forms.

What further confuses the issues is that many of the authorities themselves do not use their authority in an authentic manner. Hence they exercise an unlawful tyranny, which further complicates the whole issue of obedience.

(iii) The Tyrants Who Keep Man in Bondage

As we have seen, man is in bondage because of his own rebellion. Being made in the image of God he has been given total choice. As a moral being he can exercise choice of will. Since God's freedom of choice is total, so is man's freedom, as human freedom. Hence his wrong or evil choices are those for which he is entirely responsible. That is, his guilt for every sin is total. Nor can God be expected to ameliorate his guilt or its punishment. Add to this that every choice which is against God's choice is against the normal natural order of the created universe, and it can be seen that man is bound within the perimeter of his own being. Were there no personal demons, no personal powers of evil, man would be 'demonised' enough by the distortions of whole personality, and the conflicting forces within him, as a person. Being created for obedience, disobedience sets him not only at odds with creation which does not correspond to his life-style and mind-set, but also sets him at tortuous variation with his own essential being – which being he has hopelessly denied.

There are, however, personal forces of darkness, Satan and his evil powers. These powers are constituted of fallen angelic authorities, and demonic forms, malevolent personalised evil. We will examine them, in detail, but must recognise that they have a power over rebellious man. They also constitute a system which the Scriptures call 'the world', and it has its own ethos, its own moreism which are not those of the true essential creation of God. What is evil in this system has its counterpart in the 'flesh' of mankind. Sin and death are also allied to this evil-system, and in their presence the very moral law of God, becomes, for man, 'the law of sin and death'. Likewise to him the very judgements of the law, the wrath of God, and his own judicial conscience become his hated enemies, tyrants who rule him without pity.

This is the bondage of man.

In order to understand this bondage we will look at each tyrant particularly:

Satan³

Known variously as Satan, the Devil, the Destroyer, the Accuser, the God of this world, the prince of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the one who has the power (Gk. *kratos*) of death, the contender with God, with Michael, the one who goes about as a roaring lion, who can appear as an angel of light, who was called 'the light-bearer', 'that old serpent', and many other terms, it can be seen by these descriptions that he is wily, boastful, powerful, deceptive, destructive and so on. We are referred to closer study on this one who was originally given great power. Isaiah ch. 14 and Ezek.

² Cf. I Tim. 4:4, where Paul says everything created by God is good and to be enjoyed if it is received with thanksgiving, i.e. understood as God's gifts, and consequently, used correctly and beneficially

³ Cf. Cassette NS 22 and book 'The Dominion of Darkness and the Victory of God'.

ch. 28 – amongst others – give us a lead as to his nature and modes of operation. He is in competition with God, and seeks to usurp Him as the God of the universe. However it is where he holds man in bondage that we are concerned.

We are told that ‘the whole world lies in the Evil One’ (I John 5:19). Ephes. 2:1–3 shows us that sinful man is forced to live according to the dictates of Satan. The way in which the Devil dominates man is through human guilt. Man's rebellion against God places him in the whole kingdom of rebellion of which Satan is the leader. However it is deeper even than this. Satan is the Accuser, and whilst humanity is in actual guilt he accuses, contending that such belong to his power, and will meet death. Hence Hebrews 2:14-15 (cf. I John 4:18) shows that he keeps men and women in bondage through fear of death. Man fears to die primarily because he must face the judgement of death .

Were there no fear of death, there would be no power to Satan. It has been said, ‘Satan only tempts where there is innocence. Where there is guilt he has already gained control’. Jude 9 shows Michael contending with Satan for the body of Moses. That is, he is saying Moses cannot rise in the resurrection because of his guilt of sin. Compare this with Jesus' statement, ‘Satan comes and has nothing in me’, meaning that because he had not sinned, Satan has no power.

The World Powers

Revelation chapter twelve has a graphic account of Satan's rebellion within heaven, against God. The outcome was that he drew to himself a third of the stars of heaven, i.e. a third of the angels. These relate to him in his evil kingdom and operations. They are called ‘principalities and powers’ and have areas of dominion in the creation. Daniel chs. 10 and 11, suggest amongst other Scriptures, that angels control the national operations of the various peoples of the universe.

Such powers certainly have control over man, but primarily where there is guilt. Gal. 1:4 shows that where man's sins are destroyed these authorities have no control. Ephes. 6:10ff, Romans 8:37f. and other passages show that these powers are out to destroy man. It is clear that demonic powers seek to infest human personality and make it unclean and obscene. The Gospels show us persons who are inflicted with maladies and insanity, having been demonised from evil powers.

We should note, especially from Gal. 1:4 that these powers only have a hold over men by reason of man's guilts.

The World

We have already indicated that Satan is known as the god or prince of ‘this world’. This world is not the creation as such, but a system within that creation which is opposed to God. Satan and his powers draw men, by their disobedience, into their kingdom, and then Satan ruthlessly dominates man. He also blinds him to the truth (II Cor. 4:4) lest man be redeemed. This world system has its kind of ‘wisdom’ that is an ego-seeking, ego-extending wisdom which is foreign to the wisdom of submitting to God. It is fateful to think of this kingdom merely in superstitious awe, or think it relates only to the supernatural. This kingdom seeks to capture the creation for itself, and moves out into every detail of human existence.

Were man not guilty, and alienated from God it could have no power. Satan,

his angelic cohorts, and demonic forces are all debased forms of the original creation, and hence constitute creatures who have no power unless God Himself allowed it, and this in accordance with His own inscrutable purposes.

The Law

It does not seem fitting to think of man under the bondage of the law. However, because of his guilt the very law of God has become 'the law of sin and death' (Romans 8:2). Were there no law man would not be guilty, for where there is no law there can be no transgression and to break the law is to come under the curse of its judgements. See Romans 7:8–11, Gal. 3:10. Had man no guilt he would fear no judgement: evil powers could not threaten him, and he would face God fearlessly. In fact, where there is no guilt there is no real death, i.e. death with power and dread (cf. I Cor. 15:55–56).

The wrath of God

Redeemed man is spoken of as being 'delivered from the wrath to come' (cf. I Thess. 1:10 and Rom. 5:9f). Wrath then is a terrible tyrant, but it would have no terror, had man no guilt. In fact Paul shows in Romans 1:18–32 that God's wrath is giving man up to his sin, to let his sinful, guilty distorted state be the mode of God's anger upon him, anger that is 'felt in the conscience every day'. In addition to this there is a day of reckoning, the day of God's righteous wrath. cf. Romans 2:4–5, I Thess. 1: 10, II Thess. 1:8f. etc.

If man had no guilt, he would have no fear of wrath, and would not be under its bondage.

The Conscience

Hamlet's statement, 'Conscience doth make cowards of us all' recognises the universal principle of conscience – man is under its tyranny where he has actual guilts. The conscience is ruthless in that it will not clear its victim from accusation, for as Forsyth once said, 'It takes as much to satisfy the conscience of man as it does to satisfy the conscience of God'. Conscience serves to further etch the guilt of man to him, and man is driven by guilt to further actions of disobedience and sin.

Death

Death is the outcome of sin. In Romans 5:12ff. Paul makes it clear that death is a monster which has power by reason of sin, and sin is a monster which has power by reason of death. The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law (guilt). Hence Satan has power to keep man in bondage since he has 'the might of death'. In fact this means that man fears death, all his life, and hence Satan can manipulate him.

Had man no guilt, he would have no fear of death. Death is the outcome of sin.

Sin

'He who commits sin is the bond-slave of sin' Jesus said (John 8:31–36). He pictured true freedom being a son ranging the home of his father, but the slave having no essential part in this home. Man is a slave to sin. Sin constitutes the 'sting of death' and it has power by reason of the law. It is present, almost, as a personalised power. It even manipulates the law to deceive man and to bring him into deeper sin.

There are many Scriptures which refer to the binding elements of sin. Sin has the elements of pollution, power and penalty. They really form an unholy trinity, and dominate man, cruelly. Man is thus in a state of being both deprived and depraved. Hence statements such as ‘The heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately corrupt’ or ‘Every imagination of man's heart is evil only continually’, or Jesus' observation that the human heart was a cesspool of uncleanness which defiled man give a picture of man's shocking depravity. Created to be pure and in the image of God his deep inner dissociation must be a source of unbelievable bondage.

Our conclusion on this section is that man is in terrible bondage to the enemies of Satan, the world–powers, the world, the law, conscience wrath, death and sin. None of these enemies has any power except by reason of guilt. We mean by this that man has sinned, offended the law, and merited wrath and death. Were he able to be cleared of his guilt, he would be cleared of his enemies. Satan, the world, the world powers would still seek to enslave him, hut they would lack the necessary power. The law and conscience would no longer trouble him. In fact they would be on his side. They would help him in his true freedom. Death, even if it were to exist, would no longer threaten him. At most it would be a transition point into fuller life. It would have no sting whatsoever.

4. The Promise of Liberation

When we speak of guilt we do not primarily mean man's feelings of guilt. We mean his actual guilts. That is man is guilty before God for not being what he has been created to be. He is guilty for not doing what he has been created to do. He is guilty because of actual things he has done against the Person of God, that is by transgressing His law. These he sometimes feels and sometimes does not. His subjective feeling or non–feeling of guilt may or may not be commensurate with his actual guilt, but this is not the point. Whether he feel it or not, he is guilty.

Man is in a dilemma because he cannot effect the erasing of his guilt. God, for His part is under no obligation to forgive man. In fact He is under obligation by nature of His holiness and His law to judge and punish man. Even His mercy must not be in conflict with His righteousness. His love cannot overleap His justice. Nor may some curious gimmick be worked by which man is ‘let off the hook’. This is impossible.

However man is promised freedom. Jesus' great promise ‘If the Son shall make you free you shall be free indeed’ is total. I John 3:8 says, ‘For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil’. At the birth of John the Baptist, the Spirit–filled Zechariah prophesies that God has raised up ‘an horn of salvation’. He says that this deliverance of God's people has been promised by God's prophets which have been since the world began. He says that Abraham was told that God would ‘grant us, that we being delivered from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life’. (Luke 1:6875). The angel said to Joseph, of Jesus, ‘Call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins’. (Matt. 1:21). John the Baptist cried, ‘Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’ Jesus, having been baptised announced that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, ‘because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable (Jubilee, liberation) year of the Lord’. (Luke 4:18–19).

Jesus himself promised freedom from 'the strong man' (Luke 11:21f.) and said that Satan had been seen as cast down from heaven (Luke 10:18) and before going to the cross uttered the words 'Now is the judgement of this world, now is the prince of this world cast out' (John 12:31).

5. The Acts of Liberation

In Genesis 3:15 God had told the serpent that his head would be crushed by the seed of the woman, whilst the serpent, in return, would bruise the heel of that seed. In conformity with this Jesus, being baptised and anointed as Messiah, and affirmed by the Father as His Son, is immediately led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by Satan. He emerges from the ordeal, having defeated Satan's attempts to divert him from the course he is on, or to change his modes of action within that course. Satan retires 'for a season'.

Jesus then commences His ministry of teaching, and compassion. He heals, he forgives, he calms the storm, he takes away stresses of evil which are upon men and women. He sees Satanic activity within many sickness and states of being. In all of these he directly attacks the kingdom of Satan, and, at each point, defeats it.

However he has yet to make a principal defeat of Satan. As he is leaving the garden of Gethsemane he is met by the soldiers, and says to them, or their leaders, 'I taught daily in the temple, and no man laid a hand on me, but now is your hour and the authority of darkness.'

He had already said to his disciples, 'The prince of this world is coming and has nothing in me, but that the world may know that I love the Father, as the Father has given me commandment, so I do'. (John 14:30–31). He meant that there was an hour in history when evil would have authority to do what it was entitled to do – at the Cross. (cf. Luke 22:53). He was to become sin for man (II Cor. 5:21) and to bear the sins of the world (I Peter 2:24). In fact all accusation for all sin, for all time would fall upon him, and every power of evil would be there to lend its bitter accusation and vituperation.

Likewise the bearing of sins meant the bearing of guilt. He would now come under the power of Satan, the world-powers, the world, wrath, sin, death, the flesh, in fact of all evil. He would be the victim of the law, the object of God's holy wrath. The Cross was to be the judgement of all evil.

And so it was. We are told, variously, that in that Cross he was crucified to the world, and the world to him, (Gal. 6:14) that in that cross the flesh was crucified (Gal. 5:24 cf. 2:11, 15, Rom. 8:11), that our Adamic humanity was crucified (Rom. 6:6), that each person was personally crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20), and that he was lifted up as a serpent (all evil) John 3: 14. We are told that the guilt of the law was nailed to the cross – Col. 2: 14–15, and many other things beside.

What it amounted to was that every element of human guilt was borne in his body on the tree. The total demands of the law were fulfilled in his penal suffering, the complete outpouring of the wrath of God in his suffering (I John 4:9–10, I John 2:2, Romans 3:24ff, cf. Gal. 2:16–21). At the same time he fought the bitter battle against the accusing forces of evil, as death had dominion over him. The sting of death was thrust into him, the guilt of man burdening him. Yet he defeated death on the cross, by taking the death of all men into himself, and yet not dying (II Cor. 5:14, Rom. 6:10). When he died

he laid down his life, saying, 'Father into thy hands I commend my spirit'. Hence he triumphed over the principalities and powers (Col. 2:14–15). Thus the writer of Hebrews can say 'He through death destroyed him who has the power of death, even the devil'.

Psalm 22 and 69 vividly portray his sufferings as he fought the powers of darkness and endured the intolerable loneliness of separation from God, as he suffered – man for men.

The liberation, however was total. Jesus had said, 'If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed'. Well, now all men could be free. He said, 'Now is the judgement of this world, now is the prince of this world cast out', and so it was. The world was crucified, Satan's grip on man had been loosened. In fact humanity was free, and it was free in this way:- Christ had borne all its guilts. Hence Satan had no power to accuse, no basis for storing up the fear of penal judgement. He had no power to work upon guilty man and increase his fear, and hatred of God. Guilt triggers sin, but the guilt chain had been broken. No enemy or tyrant could now tyrannise man!

6. The Liberation of Man – The Crisis

The liberation of sinful man must be seen as the total act of (God. That is, it must be seen that God takes the initiative in redeeming man. However such redemption must be seen in the widest frame of reference, and it is this, that God had determined to redeem His elect from eternity. This is seen by such references as II Tim. 1:9–10, Ephes. 1:3–14, I Cor. 2:6f., Romans 8:28–30 amongst others. It must also be seen that God created with the sonship of His elect in mind (Ephes. 1:4–7). The Mediator both of creation and redemption is the Son, and what has been created through him, he will redeem, that is to say that which has been given to him (cf. John 6:39, 17:1–3). Likewise the Spirit is the Spirit of life, and He must participate in the work of redemption, as also in the work of sonship, or adoption.

We say 'this wider frame of reference' because often man's liberation is viewed only as the erasure of his guilt. A shallow view of guilt-erasure will only see man set free to begin a new round of human endeavours or to seek to be better than before or morally good. These are inadequate views.

We must see that the Cross accomplished the following:

- (a) It breaks the power of sin by justifying man (Rom. 6:7–14). This means that man is legally and actually freed from condemnation. He is justified once for all.
- (b) The transaction of forgiveness takes place. God says, 'Son, be of good cheer. Your sins are forgiven you'.
- (c) The fear or power of death is broken. 'O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?'
- (d) Satan, his powers, and the world have had their power broken, and, lacking the guilt of the person cannot effectively draw him into bondage. Whilst they may attempt to deceive there is no authentic basis upon which they can demand the bondage of man.

This complete freedom which Jesus had promised is effected by the cross and the resurrection. If Christ had not risen then it would have been evident, practically, that death was stronger than him, and so none could be forgiven

or justified. However, he did rise, and so Paul says, 'In that he died, he died unto sin, once. In that he lives, he lives unto God'. He then goes on to say, 'You see yourself in similar way - dead to sin, and alive to God, this act (for you) having happened once- for-all '.

(i) Receiving Liberation

Liberation is God's act, by nature of the case, for no man can free himself. At the same time repentance and faith are required of him. Even then, whilst man must go through these actions, repentance and faith are gifts of God (Acts 5:30-31, 11:18, Ephes. 2:8-10, Phil. 1:29). Repentance must relate to the totality of sin - man's condition, as well as his acts of sin. There must be the confession of the soul as to this state, and so the need to be covered by the work of the Cross and the Resurrection. It is well to see that the Holy Spirit is at work not only in giving repentance, but bringing man to exercise this gift for He convicts of sin, righteousness and judgement. If man views his experience of confession, and the acts of repentance and faith to be something of his own, then this will be the basis for later bondage when he will wonder whether he acted correctly or not.

Also it must be seen that the Holy Spirit effects the gift of liberation. Romans 8:1-3, I Cor. 6:9-11, and Titus 3:3-7 indicate that the Holy Spirit applies the work of the Cross and Resurrection to the heart of man so that he is not only forgiven, but cleansed, given a new heart (regenerated) and thus becomes a new creature (creation).

(ii) Liberation Not Only Justification

Liberation is not only from the powers of evil, but to a new relationship with God. Two terms are used (a) Adoption and (b) Regeneration. The first means that God makes one into a son, where one was not before. It also carries the idea of mature sonship. The second carries the idea of one's nature being changed, i.e. being renewed so that the Scripture talks of man being born of God (John 3:3⁴, I John 3:9-10 etc.). Paul, who mainly uses the term adoption has a reference to regeneration and adoption within the few verses of Romans 8:14-17. These two are virtually, although not totally, the one.

True liberation is the restoration to man of his true humanity, and also the fulfilment of God's plan to make man a son, not through Adam⁵, but through Christ (Ephes. 1:4-7). This also puts him into the context of the family of God, and many other functional elements which we will discuss later. It is God who effects the crisis of liberation, having made revelation of his grace, man having responded to this grace.

7. The True Freedom of Man : The Process

Liberation is the act which frees man from his bondage. Freedom is the life for which we have been freed: the life we are to live. In Gal. 5:1 Paul says 'Stand fast in the freedom for which Christ has made us free and do not come again under the yoke of bondage'. He means that whilst liberation is an act in the past, it is intended to lead to and be followed by a life of freedom. To stand fast in that liberty means to be aware of the totality of liberation, and to refuse to come again under bondage. Let us repeat: the liberation

⁴ Also John 1:12-13

⁵ Man may well be said to be originated as a son (cf. Luke 3:38, Acts 17:24-30) by creation, but God's intention was for him to be truly a son through redemption, i.e. through Christ.

is total, but it is seen as such by faith, and not by sight. The danger of being brought under some element of bondage will not be passed until the end-time, when there will be no need to be on the alert.

To truly understand freedom we must understand that man liberated is the man who has gone through the crisis of regeneration. Whilst there is no doubt that the crisis is total, and that in God's sight and action 'Whom He has called them He has also justified, and whom He has justified them He has glorified', and that men of faith have been 'washed, sanctified, and justified' (Romans 8:28–30, I Cor. 6:11), yet the believer lives in the realm of both faith and hope. Faith is in the work of God which redeems him, and equally in the God who redeems him, whilst hope is 'faith with a future look', i.e. it looks to the end when faith and hope, at least in this sense, will no longer be required.

We mean to say that the present freedom of the children of God is not exactly the same as 'the glorious liberty of the children of God' of which Paul speaks in Romans 8:18–25. He says that we groan for that day, albeit we have the marvellous first fruits of the Spirit. In Romans 7 he speaks about indwelling sin, from whose presence even the believer is not at present fully relieved. He looks to the day when redeemed man shall be delivered from 'the body of this death'.

Having gone through the crisis of initial regeneration man looks to the totality of ultimate regeneration, for in that day the entire freedom will be experienced, which issues from the totality of the redemptive work of the Triune God. Then man will be fully what God had foreordained he should be. Yet, knowing what man was in creation we must assume that in regeneration man is renewed in the image of God as given to him at creation. We repeat that this image cannot be operative without opposition from the enemies of Satan, the world, the world powers, the flesh, sin and death, yet because man is relieved of guilt they cannot, with any right or authority, dominate him.

This means we will have to trace the modes of freedom which the new man knows, in Christ, as he lives in the power of the Spirit.

(i) Various Aspects of Freedom

(a) Man is Free From the Guilt of Sin, Hence He is Free from Condemnation, and so From His Enemies.

This can be seen from the following references:

1. **Satan:**– Heb. 2:14–15, I John 3:8, John 12:31, 16:11, cf. Rev. 12: 10–11, link Jude 9 with John 14:30–31 (John 10:10). cf. Luke 11:21f.
2. **World Powers:**– Gal. 1:4, Col. 2:14–15, cf. Romans 8:37–39.
3. **The World:**– Gal. 1:4, 6:14.
4. **The Law:**– Romans 6:7, 14; 7:6, Gal. 2:16–21, Rom. 3:19–25, 8:1–3.
5. **The Wrath of God:**– 1 John 4:17–18, 1 John 2:2. Link with Matt. 26:31 = Zech. 13:7, and see Rom. 1:18ff, 5:9, 1 Thess. 1:10.
6. **The Conscience:**– Heb. 9:14cf. Titus 1:15, I Tim. 1:5 (Heb. 1:3) cf. Heb. 10:22.

7. **The Flesh:**– Romans 8:11, Gal. 5:24.
8. **Death:**– Romans 6:10, II Tim. 1:10, ICor. 5:55–56, Heb.2:14, I John 4:18.
9. **Sin:**– John 8:31–36, Matt. 1:21, Rom. 6:7, 12–17, II Cor. 5:21, I Pet. 2:24.

(b) Man, Becoming a Son of God, in Full Sense is Freed from Bondage.

Romans 8:14–17 makes it clear that man is a son of God and freely walks in the will of God by being led by the Spirit. He does not have the spirit of slavery, but the Spirit of freedom. His true humanity is fitted for sonship, and so he is, as a person now truly free, being what he is both created and redeemed to be. To be doing the will of God is the functional freedom which man can know.

Doing the will of God he does not feel guilty. He is free from anxiety, which always comes from the uneasiness bred by lack of union with God in His purposes. On the positive side he feels free doing the will of God, for God's essential 'freedom' is in fulfilling his own will.

(c) Man, Freed from the Trammels of Guilt is Now Relationally Free.

By this we mean that man's life consists in relationships – with God, himself, others, and his universe. We saw above that his bondage is in being against the functional, harmonious order of things as they really are. In aligning himself with God, his fellowman, himself, and the true order of the created universe he is in harmony, relationally and functionally. Hence he lives in freedom, however much that may be contested by the forces of evil and disharmony.

The positive side of relationships is the flow of love. He relates to God as Father, to the Son as both Lord and Brother. He relates to the brethren, in the warm encouragement of the true family of God. The conditions for freedom are well set.

(d) Obedience is the Way of Freedom.

In this section we are repeating ourselves with every aspect of freedom which we are naming. To obey God is to be free. To obey His law is to be free. The essence of all God's law is love (Rom. 13:8, Gal. 5:13), because it is 'the law of liberty' (James 1:22–25, 2:812).

We must understand that obedience is motivated and triggered off by love (cf. John 14:15, Luke 7:47, I John 4:10, 19). However true law–obedience is love (I John 5:3, cf. I John 2:3–6). Obedience is constrained by love (II Cor. 5:14–15), and obedience is love. To love is to be truly free.

Jer. 31:31–34, and Ezekiel 36:24–28 show that where there is cleansing and forgiveness, there will be the 'law written in the heart'. Hence Psalm 119:32 – 'I run the way of your commandments since you have set me free' (Jerusalem Bib.) whilst Psalm 119:45 says 'So, having sought your precepts, I shall walk in all freedom'. In v. 47 he says, 'Your commandments fill me with delight: I love them deeply'. We can then understand what James means when he says 'The perfect law of liberty'.

It means, then, that when we conform to God's law, and do this out of a heart motivated by freedom from guilt with consequent love and gratitude,

that we are really living freely. We must never think that obedience is the cost of freedom, but see it as the functional way or mode of freedom.

(e) Obedience is Related to the Nature and Plan of God.

True freedom is in doing the will of God. Much bondage comes from thinking that doing the will of God is mere moral conformism. That is that the form of morality is an end in itself. The nature of God's universe is dynamic. It cannot simply be analysed and categorised, not even its so-called innate dynamism. The universe is always in the process of God's purposive action. It is moving from its initial point of creation towards its true goal of consummation. Hence obedience to moral law does not simply keep a constant and static status quo, but obedience is love in its positive form, which is at the same time the ongoing will of God, relating to its ultimate intention. Hence all that we have said above about being triggered by the release from bondage, doing the will of God from love, and being free through the functional way of obedience must be understood in the wider frame of reference which is the on-moving will of God.

In practice this will be summed up in two great cries, from the heart in the New Testament. The first is 'Abba!' ('Father!') and the second, 'Jesus! Lord!' (See Gal. 4:6, I Cor. 12:3). Both of these cries are authentic only when they come through the revelation and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as they are said to do. When they are cried then man who cries them is in direct relational and functional modes of life. He is operative in obedience: he is free in that operation. We should see that this attitudinal approach corresponds with the true nature of 'things as they really are', i.e. the true authorities (and, authority) of the universe, as seen in I Cor. 8:6 – 'For us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we exist'. In history the Father and the Son (with the Spirit) work to accomplish their plan. Only he who is geared to this plan, and sharing in it is truly free.

(f) The Full Freedom of Love – Love that is Self-confining in its Acts.

We do not need to repeat that God's love for us is that which liberates us. Nor do we need to state again that when we are freed by love, we are now free to obey. That obedience, as we have seen is both motivated by love, and, in its actions, constitutes love itself. We have seen that the plan of God requires us to love Him, ourself, others and his creation, and to relate to them, in love. Even so we have not exhausted the extent of love. God's plan itself is the love-plan and we do not love unless we are fully sharing in it. All of this constitutes the freedom love: the freedom we know through love.

There is another aspect, and it is seen clearly in Romans 14 and I Cor. 8. These two passages teach us the following principle – 'You are not really free, until you are free not to do that which you are free to do'. This has to do with a strong conscience, and a strong faith. I Tim. 1:5 speaks of '...love that issues from a pure heart and good conscience and sincere faith,' meaning that the operation of love in its fullest form depends upon the cleansed heart, and good conscience and sincere faith. In Romans 14 and I Cor. 8, Paul speaks of people who still have problems with their conscience (cf. Heb. 10:22 where there is no problem.). He suggests that the freedom which a person exercises, and which is authentic freedom may be 'too much' for a believer whose faith and so conscience – is weak. He observes, 'If your brother is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love'. He exhorts, 'Let us then pursue what makes for peace and mutual upbuilding'. Love as we know does

that – it builds up. For this reason love will not insist on its freedom rights in this particular case.

To be this way, is to be really free. It can also be seen that love goes on building, and this kind of building relates to God's plan for His universe. Hence we can talk of 'Freedom upon Freedom!'

(ii) Application of Freedom

When we understand that created man, having fallen, is restored through the Gospel, then we understand that the true freedom of man is simply in being man. He does not burden himself with trying to be more than man. The new man, the re-born man, the redeemed regenerated man knows where his liberty lies. It lies in truly being himself, that is it lies in being a son of God, a creature of the Creator, and a servant of the King. It lies in recognising that God is good, that he need not fear anything from God. His old guilts of hating God are cleansed away, and now he loves in every sphere of his life. He is indwelt by the Son, led by the Spirit, and loved and aided by the Father. At the same time he is in the context of the family of God.

Having stated this we can see how he can apply freedom. Part of the obligation of freedom is to free others. That is he is to share the Gospel of freedom. This he may do in many ways, and according to those gifts which are particularly his. However his many relationships become his ministry. He must

(a) Live with people as true love demands, and (b) Aid, where it is necessary, those who are in need of freedom.

For a man this action of freedom may be in being truly a son to his father, a husband to his wife, a father to his children, and a friend to his neighbour. He, by forgiveness, has to free others from their guilts in regard to him, as he to receive their forgiveness where needed. Where he sees a man in bondage, as that one hates God, so he must seek to relate to him in such a way as to bring that person to peace with God, as well as with others.

All of this we can rightly call the application of freedom. The power lies in the Cross and Resurrection, and such power is released for action by the work of the Holy Spirit. Our whole point is that freedom is not for a man to hug to himself and not share with others. He who is free shares his freedom, and in this way his freedom remains a living thing.

8. Man's Ultimate Freedom

Jesus on the day of his resurrection was seen to have a true human body. He said, 'Flesh and bones'. He ate with his body, which also had powers which human bodies do not normally appear to possess. Doubtless in ascending to the Father his body was glorified. However it is not possible to say that prior to the ascension that it was not glorified. Paul says, in any case, that we wait for our Saviour to appear from heaven who will change this present body of our humiliation so that it will be like his body of glory. (Phil. 3:21).

What we do know is that we shall be like him (I John 3:1–3, Romans 8:30, cf. Col. 3:10). Likeness to him is not merely something we visualise, or symbolise by forms of radiance and light – although these may be so – but conformity is of nature, character, and person. We will be like him in the

way he is, and in what he does, and in the manner of living which is his.

II Cor. 3:18 and Col. 3:10 both suggest that we are at present experiencing a process of change or transformation. II Cor. 4:16–18 suggests that this transformation is related to suffering. Romans 8:18–30 also agrees with this. The ultimate glorification of man relates both to the redemptive suffering of Christ, and the suffering which the believer knows when sharing with Christ. Whilst this is for the most part a mystery, Paul is clear that true suffering leads to real glory.

Many passages in the Old Testament – e.g. Isaiah 11:6–9, 65:25, Hab. 2: 14 – suggest that ultimately this creation will be restored, or renewed. In the New Testament other passages agree with this such as Revelation chs. 21 and 22., II Peter ch. 3., amongst others. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. ‘We look for a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells only righteousness’. It is the passage of Romans 8:18–30 which tells us that the whole creation has been subjected to futility, and cannot fulfil its full function in its present state. In this state it knows ‘the bondage of corruption’. However it will be free from decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God’.

The liberty of the children of God will constitute total union with their God – ‘He will be their God, and they will be His people and His dwelling will be with them’. Cf. Ezekiel 37:27, Rev. 21:1–5, 22:3–4, Ephes. 2:21–22. At the same time the creation, being free, will also constitute part of the freedom of the children of God. The freedom of God's sons, or God's family, will be that there will no longer be conflict between good and evil. There will be no experience of evil temptation. There will be no indwelling. What was of faith will have been fulfilled in hope, and what was of hope will have been fulfilled in the promise. Hence man will be in total union with God, with himself, others, and the wonderful creation which will then be the new creation.

9. Conclusion On Christian Freedom: Crisis, Process, Climax

We have seen, then, that man having been creationally free, fell into bondage by choice of his own will, in acceding to the temptation to be ‘as God’. We have seen that God's redemptive purpose, from eternity, was to liberate the elect children of His family, and give them freedom. This he did through the Cross and Resurrection, and made such actual liberation effective by the Holy Spirit.

For freedom man was made free, but his freedom is constantly contested in a world where evil's power has been broken, but which still operates where faith is not present. Where faith is present there is still a battle – the battle of faith. However the child of God is free to obey, having been loosed from guilt. He delights in obedience, knowing that it is the true mode of freedom. Nevertheless the struggle of faith and hope makes him desire the consummation of God's plan in the coming of the new world, in which he will be totally free.

His struggle is not simply to maintain the faith of freedom (or, the freedom of faith), but to share it also with others, who themselves are in bondage, or who need to be taught the way of liberty. Hence the goal of God's plan is devoutly waited for, and the hope of it is a powerful dynamic to persist in freedom and not give way to the old patterns of ‘self-help’, trying to be free in autonomy of self rather than union with God.

We conclude, then, that freedom is available to all who will come to repentance and faith, receiving the gifts of forgiveness and the Spirit. It is available as a continuing experience to those who will go on in faith. Such are not only redeemed persons, but children of God relating to their Father and His family. Ultimately the entire family will be before the Father, and this climax will be the crisis leading through to an eternal and unchangeable freedom.

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APPENDIX

PRACTICAL NOTE ON FREEDOM AND LICENSE

Considerable confusion has come in Christian practice in failing to distinguish between 'law' and 'grace'. Without doubt freedom from law is implied in much of Paul's writings, e.g. Romans 6:7, 14, 7:3–6, Gal. 2:16–21. Hence people, in saying they are free from the law understand that there is no law they have to obey. This confusion arises because they do not understand that their freedom is not from law, but from the condemnation of law. Reference to Romans 13:10, Gal. 5:1, and similar passages will show that the believer is under obligation to obedience to all God's law.

When he is under the guilt of the law's condemnation, then he is powerless to obey out of the heart (cf. Romans 6:15–19). However the forgiveness of sins releases him from guilt, and as we have said he obeys from the heart. This is the thrust of Ezekiel 36:24–28 and Jer. 31:31–34. Forgiveness brings love (Luke 7:47) and love brings obedience (John 14:15, cf. I John 4:19, II Cor. 5:14).

Also the epistle to the Galatians shows that to begin in the Spirit is to be justified and forgiven, through the Cross (3:1–6, cf. 1:4, 2:19–21, 5:24, 6:14). Paul here shows that true obedience is the operation of 'faith-way' as over and against 'lawway'. Law way is seeking to be justified by working, or by observance of law. 'Faithway' is not seeking to be justified at all, but being obedient out of justification received.

In practice many persons become exhilarated by being free from the notion of law. They see much of their past activity as springing from 'law-way' and not 'faithway', so they react against the actions of the former 'law-way', such as prayer, Scripture study, tithing, and righteous actions. They scorn to do anything of this kind. This may prove to be temporary, and the reflex of love and gratitude will draw them afresh to such exercises, although with a different thrust or motive. They should come to understand that the Holy Spirit 'internalises' the true law, the law of love, the law of Christ, as it is enshrined in the moral law. In the New Testament there are even more commands than in the Old. Hence the fact of law cannot be said to be dissolved. Law is so much the very expression of the nature of God that we dare not go against it. Nevertheless, should we transgress or fail, then forgiveness is already there for the needy believer.

In II Peter 2:1–22 the writer has a strong passage on those who profess the faith, but do not evidence obedience to authorities or the law. V. 19 says that 'They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption: for whatever overcomes a man, to that he is enslaved'. The term

for 'law-way' is nomianism (law-observance) whilst the term for lawless operations is 'antinomianism'. Both are wrong. The true way is simply obedience which springs from the heart which has responded to the love of God.

Incidentally one must live continually in the 'good' of justification and forgiveness. This not only frees one from the entanglement of fresh guilts, but also vivifies the love that is within us, thus giving us a positive thrust for continuing obedience.

