

CONCLUSIONS

Much has been argued and many conclusions have been made in this dissertation, mostly at the end of the respective chapters and sections. At this point a *recapitulation* of some kind is probably in order to put everything in a nutshell. It will be done by way of a few statements by which I wish to briefly summarise my main arguments and add a logical sequence to both the arguments and the main conclusions.

i) *Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians as a matter of great urgency.*

Paul was made aware of the fact that believers in Galatia were being misled into thinking that law had some part to play in their lives. Whether one accepts that the Galatians were led to believe that law had a salvational role to play in a synergistical way; whether they were instructed that it had only an ethical role to play; or whether it was merely about identity markers, it seems that Paul's opponents advocated an ongoing function of some kind for circumcision and dietary and calendar laws. Paul was shocked. For him it was no trivial matter. As far as he was concerned, ascribing any function or importance to these matters, was tantamount to being severed from Christ (Gl. 5:4). Not only were these entities, carried over from the present evil age, misfits in the new creation, but destructive of the freedom believers have through Christ's deliverance. It would draw them back into the evil aeon dominated by flesh and devoid of deliverance and freedom.

The point of entry into the debate on freedom was the matter of reversion to law in some form. The latter at least included circumcision and laws regarding diet and calendar. Paul did not limit himself to the matter of law. For him it was about a much bigger issue. Circumcision and dietary and calendar laws were only the thin end of the wedge. He feared that they would ultimately revert to the old dispensation without Christ and his Spirit.

Therefore, he wrote the letter with the greatest sense of urgency. Paul's style and utterances are indicative of this urgency. There could be no doubt, to Paul's mind the gospel itself was at stake. The situation was critical. He wanted to unmask the foolishness of the so-called other gospel that assigned a role to law. The re-introduction of law would rob the gospel of its unique identity, namely its proclamation of deliverance in Christ, which he describes as freedom. If the letter should be dated shortly before the Jerusalem council, as argued in this dissertation, it enhances the urgency and emphasises the profundity of the letter in the development of Christianity. Equally, it presents itself as most relevant for the church today in its endeavour to remain true to the core of the gospel and the foundation of its faith, which Paul describes in Gl. 5:1 as: "For freedom Christ set us free!"

ii) *For Paul the situation was not about trivial ethical or identity matters, but about being and living in Christ or being severed from Him.*

Paul is extremely uncompromising in his letter to the Galatians. He is exceptionally outspoken and profoundly negative about law in Galatians. If he had it in the back of his mind that believers could or should accommodate law in

some form in their ethics, one would have expected him to state clearly in what form it was applicable, and according to what principle one was to decide on what continued to apply and what not. If he was merely concerned for the unity of the congregation and wished them to denounce their Jewish boundary markers, one would have expected him to be clear about this and indeed exhort them to follow the so-called moral law. Given the situation and his clear, unmitigated rejection of an ongoing function for law, if he was merely concerned about their attitude towards law, namely that they should not do it with the wrong intention, without love, void of faith and according to their own capabilities, one would have expected him to state this overtly and unequivocally. The same can be said regarding the notion that Paul was merely concerned about rejecting the cursing element of law.

Paul does nothing of the sort. Using circumcision as the ultimate or principle form of law observance, he clearly states that one's choice in this regard is between law observance and being delivered in Christ. Following law is equal to being severed from Christ. It is equal to choosing for the present evil age dominated by flesh and against new creation through Christ and his Spirit. It is equal to rejecting life and participation in God's kingdom. They were obviously misled. They did not fully understand that they had actually switched times or paradigms in the Christ event. This is what Paul had to contend with.

iii) *Paul used apocalyptic language to radically change the Galatians' mind-sets from that of the old paradigm of the evil age to that of new creation.*

Given the urgency and fundamental importance of the matter, Paul wished to emphasise the radical difference between the old and the new dispensations. Although he made use of salvation-historical elements in the build-up of his arguments (e.g., the Abraham tradition; the plight of the people of God in the OT calling for the solution provided in Christ; the notion of the new creation; the Israel of God metaphor; etc.), he makes abundant use of apocalyptic elements. For instance, he makes good use of the notion of disclosure or revelation by God to him or the Galatians, emphasising the divine initiative of breaking into the known paradigm of the present evil age from outside man's sphere of knowledge and capability. It was something entirely new to man, other-worldly, so to speak. It was something of which he was not capable on his own.

Throughout his letter he makes abundant use of terminology akin to apocalyptic, such as his effective use of antinomies, his references to deliverance, resurrection, new creation, (especially) the Spirit, the two Jerusalems, the kingdom of God, persecution, the Israel of God, etc. Importantly, his pre- and postscripts are used well in this regard. It is as if he envelopes his letter in apocalyptic. He most probably made use of the notion of apocalyptic to emphasise the disjunction between the old and the new dispensations. Something radically new had been introduced by God. True, salvation-historically it was expected. However, it was so different to anything they could have dreamt of that it was experienced

as totally new. The explanations of the old paradigm could no longer suffice. It had, in fact, been replaced by the new dispensation.

Paul, knowing that the old paradigm could not explain the new position, made use of apocalyptic to reframe the Galatians' symbolic universe. He wanted them to understand what time it was, salvation-historically. He wanted them to understand that their time of plight was over and that God had provided the solution in Christ. He wanted them to understand that in as much as their salvation was now orientated to the cross of Christ through the Spirit's existential quickening of their insight and motivation, it was also true of their ethics. They could no longer orientate their lives to law. Equally, their ethics would now be determined by their orientation to the cross of Christ and the quickening of the Spirit.

In terms of our subject, freedom, we cannot think merely in terms of freedom from law. The present evil age is about a total symbolic universe holding man captive to flesh with its bondage, slavery, tutelage and immaturity, as well as the accompanying enslaving effect of law and the elements of the world as *secundi* of flesh. Freedom is about being free from an entire earlier age, which was without Christ and his Spirit. It is about a life so absolutely different from the known that God had to reveal it into man's history. The impact was of such a kind that one could not merely make a few piecemeal changes. The old dispensation had to be totally abandoned. Its replacement could in no way be described in terms of the past. It was a new creation.

The freedom of the new creation was eschatological. It was the freedom of the time inaugurated by the advent of Christ and his Spirit. Paul had to reframe the Galatians' mindsets to understand that God's gracious plan for them in Jesus Christ was that they be freed from all bondage of the present evil age. They had to be convinced that they were living in the eschatologically promised time which was totally incomparable with anything they were familiar with in the old dispensation. The promise had become true. They were to understand that as eschatological people of God under the guidance of the Spirit, they could not live their lives in terms of the old paradigm. The new paradigm called for an equally new ethic, radically different from the one akin to the old dispensation.

iv) *The cross of Christ as apocalyptic time switch.*

Paul places an extremely strong emphasis on the cross of Christ. He continually draws the reader's attention back to the cross. Gl. 1:4 clearly refers to the cross event in Christ's giving up of Himself, describing it as the act of deliverance. In Gl. 2:20 Paul applies it to his own life. He himself was crucified with Christ, so that he was now dead to the law and Christ was living in him. Shortly after this (Gl. 3:1) he does the same regarding the Galatians. In Gl. 5:11 the cross is described as a stumbling block for some, whilst he himself wishes only to boast in the cross (Gl. 6:14). In the same way some avoided persecution for the cross (Gl. 6:12), whilst he bore "the marks of Jesus (Gl. 6:17). Clearly, the cross was the defining factor. How one positions oneself with regard to the cross determines on which side of the divide one finds oneself – whether the

paradigm switch has been flipped for the individual or not; whether he still finds himself in the old aeon of flesh and law or in the new creation of Spirit and faith; whether one is in God's will or contradicting it (Gl. 1:4).

- v) *The old dispensation, or present evil age, is a life under siege of flesh and its secundi, namely the elements of the world and law.*

In terms of Paul's apocalyptic allusion, *present evil age* refers to human life before and without Christ. It is about life in opposition to God and sold to flesh – a life of slavery and being consigned to sin. Therefore, it is a life under a curse, ultimately ending in death. We determined that the present evil age is characterised by living according to flesh. Man is frail, transitory, corruptible and corrupted. This is part and parcel of human life. He cannot change it. It is part of his facticity. In keeping with Bultmann we referred to this as life in the flesh, which is morally neutral. However, life in the present evil age is characterised by man living in accordance with these qualifications and disqualifications. Man turned into himself to such an extent that he could not deliver himself from this evil cycle. His life became one big plight from which he could only be delivered, freed, through God's intervention in Jesus Christ.

Galatians makes no provision for an anthropological dualism. We accepted that πνεῦμα and σάρξ (in the sense of life according to flesh) are not anthropological entities. Πνεῦμα refers to the Spirit of Christ and his sphere of influence and σάρξ primarily to the mode of living akin to the present evil age, namely a life of voluntary human submission to the influences of demonic powers acting against God and his will and living for one's own benefit. Importantly, σάρξ should not be viewed as an entity inherent to man. It is a mode of life under influence of sin. Since sin is not original to man's being, and since we rejected Bultmann's fully anthropological and existentialistic approach, it must be accepted that sin and its influence on man, flesh, has its origin outside man on a supra-human level in opposition to God, and therefore evil. However, having denounced any notion of an anthropological dualism, equally, any notion of an original cosmological, ontological or theological dualism must be rejected.

Although sin originates from outside man and influences him to sin, it does not render man blameless for having sinned. Man in his corruptibility allows himself to be influenced by powers and ideas that are not from God's Spirit. In Galatians Paul is concerned about the believers and uses the dichotomy to emphasise that the believer is actually in the sphere of the Spirit and should not allow flesh to influence him. Being in Christ, the believer must continually choose to align with the Spirit and not to allow flesh to have any influence on his life. In Christ and through the Spirit the believer has no reason to sin or even to feel pressurised to do so. The Spirit enables him to know and do God's will.

We concluded that flesh could be viewed from different angles. From an *anthropological angle* flesh refers to man's being merely human, i.e. frail, transi-

tory, corruptible, and corrupted. When man establishes his identity on this disposition and subsequently determines his ethical behaviour in terms of it, he lives according to flesh. From a *cosmological angle* flesh refers to man and mankind's alignment with the evil forces of the present evil age in opposition to God who operates through his Spirit. From a *redemptive-historical angle* flesh represents the old dispensation which has reached its demise in the advent of Christ and his Spirit.

Given man's plight of slavery to flesh in the present evil age and his need not to fall prey to flesh, God graciously provided Israel with law to guide them in his ways and to serve their fellowmen. Tragically, law could not do this, because it was unable to deal with the influence of sin itself. It could provide guidance, but it could not enable believers to act accordingly. Law could not break the power of sin and itself became slave to flesh, even increasing sin (Rm. 5:20; Gl. 3:22).

vi) *Law was the limited guiding principle that God gave to Israel according to which it had to live its life in the flesh.*

A heavy emphasis was laid on the plight of mankind, especially that of Israel, in contradiction to the so-called new perspective following the very influential model of E.P. Sanders, namely that Paul operated in terms of a movement from the solution in Christ back to the plight of Israel and mankind. This dissertation maintains that Paul's line of thought, in keeping with that of the OT and Second Temple Judaism, was from plight to solution. Although we accept Sanders' very important corrective, namely that OT covenant theology was not void of grace, but that the whole covenant was grounded in grace and that law was even given as an act of grace, it cannot be accepted that Israel so abounded in grace that the sacrificial system reduced their plight to non-existence.

It was argued that Paul regarded law as part and parcel of the present evil age. Paul was positive regarding law's divine origin. However, he viewed law positively only within certain limits. The metaphor of the pedagogue proved most helpful in this regard. Law was limited in terms of *time*, *scope* and *function*. Paul is very clear about law having been given for the period between Moses and Christ. Law would be fulfilled in Him. Not only does Paul state this very clearly in Gl. 3:17, but his very profound emphasis on the fulfilling of the time of the old dispensation in Christ's advent (Gl. 4:4) and his use of apocalyptic language (especially *present evil age* and *new creation*) cuts a clear line between the period of law's efficacy and its irrelevance. In Galatians Paul is very clear on the matter: law no longer has a role. Its *function* was equally limited. It was given to curb sin. It was not given because Israel reacted properly to God's grace via the covenant. It was given as a counter-measure for sin. It was given as a guide according to which Israel could glorify God. It could not infuse life and was not supposed to be regarded as a mediator between God and Israel, which it became in many circles. In terms of *scope*, I refer to the fact that it was not given as a super law for all mankind. It was God's special measure to

assist Israel, his chosen. It was for the sake of drawing the boundaries between them and those serving other gods.

The law was good for a specific time, place and function. It was given by God to assist Israel till the time of their plight was over. Sadly, it was not successful in dealing with flesh and became part of Israel's plight of the old dispensation.

vii) *Paul denounces a continued function for law in any form in the new dispensation since the advent of Christ.*

Paul does not distinguish between different categories of law. It is true that he specifically refers to circumcision and dietary and calendar laws. This does not, however, imply that he distinguishes between the laws so as to be negative regarding ceremonial laws and laws on Jewish identity, but still being positive about a distinguishable set of moral laws. In fact, given the contingency of the situation and the contentiousness of the subject, one would have expected Paul to make clear distinctions if he really had such distinctions in view. He simply speaks on law having come to an end. Very importantly, Paul was presented with a specific situation in which the abovementioned requirements were presented by his opponents as additional to the gospel. Paul took his much wider argument concerning deliverance from the present evil age and against law as a whole from the point at hand, namely the matters of circumcision, diet and calendar. Circumcision, especially, was a most prominent matter in Galatians' context. One should also remember that circumcision implied the other laws – the whole system so to speak! It is significant that he refers to circumcision only a third as often as law. He introduces circumcision in Gl. 2:3-9 and only returns to the subject in Gl. 5:2. On returning to the subject his language is very forceful. He moves from his former gentle introduction of circumcision to a passionate denouncement of it. Most significantly, almost 80% of his references to law (νόμος) occur between these two reference points on circumcision (Gl. 2:3-9 and 5:2). Law is enveloped, as it were, by circumcision. Paul rejects circumcision, because he has already rejected law as an entire entity.

The reintroduction of law as an external code of conduct for the Christian community does not originate with Paul. He clearly rejected it in his very first letter, Galatians. Those arguing that Paul denounced only part of law, a certain attitude towards law, or curse brought about by law, certainly cannot motivate it from the letter to the Galatians. It is only possible to arrive at such a conclusion if one follows a certain reading of Romans and Galatians and, subsequently accepts that Paul retracts from his Galatian position in the face of a lacking ethic when writing to the Romans. Together with this, one would have to accept that Romans has precedence over Galatians, so that the latter has to be understood in light of the former. I find no reason why it could not be the other way around, for that matter. One also wonders how the Galatians were to understand Paul's letter to them without having the letter to the Romans available. In fact, it was

not even written at that stage. This is especially applicable if one holds onto the point that Paul regarded the letter as most urgent.

viii) *The elements of the world are those principles and notions according to which man lives his life in the flesh.*

It was accepted that Paul's main bearing on *elements of the world* had something to do with the principles according to which man operates in the world. Although it could have a certain positive bearing in the sense of God's common grace towards all mankind, it has a more negative bearing in Galatians. Because Paul regards law as one of the elements of the world since the advent of Christ, one can accept that his reference to the *elements of the world* is the reality of life without Christ, God's provided salvation. To depend on any entity for salvation or meaning to life other than the Person of Christ, is equal to being enslaved to the *elements of the world*. Any reality excluded from the new salvational reality provided by God in Christ, is part of the elements of the world.

Paul could very well have argued without reference to these elements. Why did he? There are probably two reasons. *Firstly*, he wanted to send the point home that in the new dispensation since Christ' advent, law was as irrelevant to Christianity as the elements according to which the pagans ordered their lives. Law had no ethical priority for Christian life. *Secondly*, in view of our earlier position that Paul not only rejected law, but the whole dispensation with which it was associated, the rejection of the elements of the world broadens the picture to include any element to which man had become enslaved as part of that which he has left behind in becoming part of the new reality of freedom. Freedom indeed entails much more than being free from law. It is about being free from enslavement to any entity or notion outside the new creation of God in Christ Jesus and his Spirit.

ix) *For Paul freedom is a description of the christological-soteriological status of believers living in the new paradigm.*

Freedom in Galatians is often viewed with a limited scope. Because law and works of law occupy such a dominant position in Paul's arguments, freedom is often defined in terms of law. This view is also variegated. Some regard it as freedom from Mosaic law, others as freedom from only ceremonial law, and others even as freedom only from a certain attitude towards law. On the subject of law, many regard freedom as merely being free from the curse that law pronounces on sinners, because they do not live up to God's standard. Christ took that on Himself. In the same vein, it is also regarded as the new ability believers have, namely to be able to deal with flesh, but then, with a view to fulfilling the obligations of law. In short, freedom is sadly often wrongly bound up by many in some relation to law and, consequently, also practised in terms of law – be that as freedom from law, or as freedom to do law! Another angle on freedom is taken from the vantage point of guilt. The believer is free from guilt, be-

cause Christ has taken his sin, guilt and punishment upon Himself. Thus, the believer is relieved from his plight and despair. He can continue his life in hope of living a morally improved life, usually in terms of moral laws of some kind, but also comforted in the fact that there is forgiveness.

Although it is never put in clearly distinguishable categories, a distinction is often made between soteriological and ethical freedom. The intention is to distinguish between the fulfilled and abolished role of law regarding salvation, and law's so-called ongoing ethical function in daily life. With regard to the former it is accepted that the believer is free from law and lives only by faith in Christ. Regarding ethical life following on salvation, however, the believer is free to fulfil law as obedience to faith. This boils down to a duality, not only in terms of the function of law, but equally regarding freedom. This way, the believer is soteriologically free, but not ethically free.

Though there are some elements of truth in some of the above views, and although one respects the motives behind these views on freedom, it has been motivated, firstly, that freedom is about much more than freedom from law, and secondly, that the soteriological and ethical aspects of freedom cannot be separated so as to come to a soteriological notion on freedom that functions differently from an ethical notion on freedom. Paul refers to one, indivisible freedom which he applies to the one, indivisible life of the believer.

Fundamentally important, Paul introduces his letter (Gl. 1:4) with a reference to Christ "who gave Himself for our sins *to deliver us* (ὁπως ἐξέληται ἡμᾶς) from *the present evil age* (τοῦ ἐνεστώτος πονηροῦ)". *Firstly*, it was motivated that ἐξέληται is already the introduction of the freedom theme. Paul's statement: "For freedom Christ set us free" (Gl. 5:1), is perfectly in tune with his *prescriptio* in which deliverance is set as the purpose of Christ's mission. Freedom was not a coincidental by-product of Christ's redemptive work. It was the divinely set intention of his advent, cross and resurrection. One can safely assume that freedom is Paul's most prominent soteriological metaphor in Galatians. It is extremely significant, because he advances his ethical section and reasoning from this very metaphor in Gl. 5:1. It enhances the notion that Paul's ethics are founded on his soteriology and that the latter logically advances into the development of his ethics. Freedom is thus an extremely dynamic metaphor on which Paul hinges the movement from salvation to ethics as two sides of a coin.

Secondly, because of this close relation between salvation and ethics on the one hand, and Gl. 1:4 and Gl. 5:1 on the other, the entity from which the believer has been delivered is obviously also the entity from which the believer has been set free, namely the *present evil age* in its entirety. This implies that one cannot think in terms of salvation as deliverance from the entire present evil age and all it entails, but freedom being only from law and the elements of the world. This would be an unwarranted narrowing down of Paul's intention and an undermining of the impact of his notion on freedom. But, equally, espe-

cially against the apocalyptic allusions, it implies, if freedom on soteriological level includes freedom from the entire present evil age together with the elements of the world and unsuccessful law in order to partake in new creation through the Spirit, then that participation cannot include law or any other element as essential, or even only needful in the new dispensation.

The believer has been set free from the entire present evil age dominated by flesh and all the elements it employs to enslave man. This includes even the divinely given law in its entire scope and function, and the curse and guilt law imposes on man, accentuating his plight.

x) *For Paul freedom is equally a description of the pneumatological-ethical life of a believer living in the new paradigm.*

In his argumentative section (Gl. 2:15-4:31) Paul is extremely outspoken against law. To a certain extent one could argue, though wrongly, that Paul's arguments are mainly soteriological and that ethics does not feature strongly, resulting in the notion that Paul rejects law as soteriological entity, but that law still retains its ethical value; of course, minus the ceremonial and ethnic laws. However, this is not possible.

It has been argued that Gl. 5:1 is the hinge on which Paul moves from the soteriological to the ethical section. It concludes and summarises the soteriological arguments in terms of Christ having set the believer free. Equally, it introduces the ethical section as a life in freedom. Paul argued very strongly that the Galatians came to believe not through law, but by faith in Jesus Christ as opposed to the works of the law through which no one could be justified (Gl. 2:16-17). He adds that Christ's cross had made works of law null and void. If justification through law would now be reintroduced, it would render Christ's death null and void (Gl. 2:21). In the immediately following section (Gl. 3:1-5) he considers the same matter, but from the vantage point of the Spirit's advent in their lives. Once again, they experienced the Spirit and miracles not by law, but by faith. Paul goes even further. He makes a strong connection between the beginning of their life of faith, the revelation of Christ into their lives, and the reception of the Spirit. It is all one event. Faith, Christ and the Spirit are aligned against law and flesh. He does this even more pertinently in Gl. 5:4-5 where he opposes justification through works of law with hope of righteousness through the Spirit and faith, adding that faith should find its purpose in acts of love (Gl. 5:6).

He makes the profoundly important statement in Gl. 5:18: "But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law." He clearly moves from the soteriological to the ethical section without changing or even slightly adapting his alignments, culminating in the fruit of the Spirit (Gl.5:22-23). Once again, he points to law as having been denigrated to the status of a spectator applauding from the pavilion, but no longer being part of the believer's life.

The Spirit was given to believers to sensitise them regarding God's will and how He is to be glorified. But not only does He sensitise and guide believers, He also enables them to do that to which He sensitises them and in which He guides them. This is the point where law fell short. It could point out sin, sensitise and even guide to a certain extent, but with all its elaborate expansions up to the time of Second Temple Judaism, it could not enable believers to do the right thing, neither could it motivate believers to love from within. The Spirit would do this, as promised.

The christological-soteriological new life of freedom from all that the present evil age entails, including law, has as divinely intended flip-side, a pneumatological-ethical life of freedom in the new creation, equally devoid of law or any other notion reminding of the present evil age.

One should not take Paul's paradigm switch lightly. Everything changed radically in the advent of Christ and his Spirit. Soteriology could never again be viewed other than as a divine act through which Christ brought salvation, which the Spirit imparted to the believer's existence through faith, without law. Equally, ethics could never again be viewed other than as a life in the paradigm of Christ made possible in individual believers through his Spirit, through faith and without law.

xi) *Paul's christological-pneumatological ethic of freedom is anomistic.*

There are two very important matters underlining the description of Paul's ethic as anomistic, namely his use of the phrase *law of Christ* (Gl. 6:2) and the threefold reference of the believer's relationship with the Spirit as to *live by the Spirit* (εἰ ζῶμεν πνεύματι - Gl. 5:25), to *walk by the Spirit* (πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε - Gl. 5:16) and to *keep in step with the Spirit* (πνεύματι στοιχῶμεν - Gl. 5:25).

In view of Paul's use of apocalyptic to enhance the notion of a radical paradigm switch from an age dominated by flesh and its secundi (law and the elements of the world) to new creation characterised by life in the Spirit, Paul's very clear remark in Gl. 5:18 ("If you are led by the Spirit you are not under law") makes it impossible to qualify ethics in this new life with law. For instance, to refer to Paul's ethic of freedom as christological-pneumatological nomism, would be tantamount to employing Christ and his Spirit in service of law. This would make law paramount once more. It would also be un-Pauline to refer to his ethic of freedom as nomistic, christological-pneumatological ethics, as if law is indispensable and needed to support the Spirit or fulfil Christ's mission.

It is my contention that in the very contingent situation in Galatians, in which clear guidance was called for and aimed at by Paul, this very explicit remark by him should be taken at face-value and in no way be softened by interpreting "under law" as "under the curse of law", "under slavery of law", "under ceremonial law", or any such notion. Law as such had come to an end, together with its curse and bondage.

Law of Christ is not a clandestine phrase by which Paul wished to introduce some form of law or compelling system of ethics through the backdoor. It is intended to describe the bearing of the burdens of others as intrinsic to the new paradigm inaugurated by Christ and his Spirit. It was intended to characterise Christian action and ethics as in line with the cross of Jesus Christ. The cross of Christ was the bearing from which Christians had to determine their position and the direction in which they were to move ethically. Their decisions had to be taken in terms of the cross of Christ, even though it might at times be in contradiction to what the world and law expected – scandalous, as it were! Paul's use of the term "law" in this phrase is not indicative of moral law or externally compelling morality, but of how foundational the new dispensation is. It is absolutely fixed in Christ and cannot be undone. Equally, the life involved in this new dispensation is fundamentally different to the previous one. It is a profound way of stating that law as such was now part of a bygone age.

Law's demise did not leave an ethical void. The Spirit, who brought life to the Galatians by existentially imparting that which Christ did for them in their lives (soteriologically), was also the One who would guide and enable them ethically. He is not an ethical system, but the living Spirit of Christ who circumcises the heart of the believer, quickening him to know and do God's will. For this reason the believer's ethical life cannot be described in terms of works of external codices. It is much rather a fruit produced in his inner being by the quickening of the Spirit. This is even more convincing if one considers the promises of the OT that Israel would be endowed with the Spirit in the fullness of time. Thus, the believer was not called upon to learn and abide to a set of pre-determined rules and regulations, however well intended. His ethical choices would largely be determined by the interaction with the Spirit. This was his first responsibility. He was to live in and walk according to the Spirit's guidance. It was about an intimate relationship with the Spirit from which ethically correct action would stem like fruit from a tree. Although it would not be effortless, it would not be characterised by a never ending struggle moreover ending in defeat, guilt and curse. It would be more spontaneously born from the intimate relationship in which the Spirit helps the believer call to God: "αββα ὁ πατήρ" (Gl. 4:6).

In this regard one is once more reminded of Paul's profound emphasis on divine disclosure. Torah was originally and in its basic meaning and form about a revelation of God in answer to the individual's prayer for guidance. Similarly, Paul makes much of God's revelation of the salvation in Christ. He makes specific mention of God's revelation to the Galatians as if Christ were crucified in their very presence (Gl. 3:1).

In short, the advent of the Spirit had brought an element of immediacy into their ethical guidance and actions that lacked to a large extent in the previous dispensation in which law was prevalent. God's will was now pneumatologically revealed in their hearts, and law no longer had a role to play. They were free

from the flesh and law. The ethic of the new dispensation can therefore be described as an *anomistic christological-pneumatological ethic of freedom*.

xii) *The anomistic ethic of freedom involves obligatory obedience to God.*

Paul's rejection of law does not in any way imply that obedience to God's Spirit and his will is optional. The believer is obliged to live in obedience to the guidance of the Spirit. This can be illustrated by taking only a few key issues from Galatians. *Firstly*, there are the very closely related issues of the *law of Christ* and the *faithfulness of Christ*. It has been argued that although for modern ears the term "law" in the first phrase could sound like a reintroduction of some form of law related to Christ's teaching, it is not the case. In terms of Paul's argumentation in Galatians, it fits well to rather view it as a rhetorical mechanism. He aims at convincing the Galatians that one dispensation has been replaced by another. These two dispensations are totally different. The one is the fulfilment of the other. It is a dispensation operating in terms of the fulfilment of God's promises. Now, the first dispensation was characterised by a life according to flesh. In that dispensation, as a temporary measure till the fulfilment of the promise, law was given to direct man according to God's will. True, it was given within the parameters of God's gracious covenant, but, under duress of the flesh it became Israel's ethical, and in many cases, soteriological focus. In keeping with his aim of helping the Galatians to let go of the first dispensation and fully accept the new, he takes his departure from the well-known concept of domination in the old dispensation, i.e. law as characteristic feature of the old paradigm according to which they lived. He attaches the term to Christ as the One on whom the new dispensation or paradigm is founded. His aim is not to have them choose between two sets of laws. It is more profound than that and cuts much deeper. It is about a choice between being justified by and living according to law, or being justified by and living according to the faithfulness of Christ. It is about being ruled and driven from outside one's being like a slave, or being renewed, sensitised, guided and empowered from within by the Spirit of Christ who introduces one to an intimate relationship with God Himself, and through whom one calls "αββα ο πατήρ" (Gl. 4:6). Being part of this new dispensation and paradigm, the believer has no other option, but to live according to the Spirit. Although it is not forced on him and he does indeed make wrong choices, his obligation to God's will to love his neighbour comes from inside his being through the Spirit's mediation.

In tandem with this, one must take Paul's emphasis on the cross of Christ and one's own crucifixion very seriously. It was accepted that Paul's use of ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ in Gl. 2:16, and most instances in Gl. 3, should most probably be translated as a subjective rather than as an objective genitive. Thus, referring not to faith in Christ, but to the faithfulness or obedience of Christ. Although there are more than enough instances where faith in Christ as instrument of acceptance of God's grace is indicated, the essential meaning

of ἔκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ in Gl. 3-4 is indicative of Christ's faithfulness as foundation of the believer's life. This means that Christ's faithfulness even up to crucifixion, was the divinely appointed switch to bring about the paradigm switch. This having been existentially implemented in the life of the believer, it also implies that Christ's faithfulness becomes the paradigm according to which he designs his life and ethics. Christ's faithfulness and the believer's holding onto and focussing on his faithfulness, makes it impossible for the believer to regard a life of reciprocating faithfulness as optional. It is obligatory.

Secondly, and in keeping with the above, *living by and walking in step with the Spirit* is also indicative of a new life which cannot possibly shed itself from being renewed or from the responsibilities accompanying this new life. The Spirit is the one who created existential faith in Christ in the believer, renewing him to be a new creation. Equally, he sensitises, guides and empowers the believer. In as much as He was able to break down the believer's resistance in order to believe in Christ and accept his justification, He is also the One who convinces the believer to live a life in which he sows to the Spirit and bears his fruit instead of choosing the flesh. Thus, the Spirit of Christ in the believer convinces him to oblige to God's will.

Thirdly, Paul's use of the *metaphor of slavery* enhances the obligatory element of the Christian ethic of freedom. He refers to himself as a slave of Christ (Χριστοῦ δοῦλος - Gl. 1:10) while he had the term διάκονος available and indeed used it in Gl. 2:17, although in a different sense. He used δοῦλος to emphasise man's service as essential to his faith. Being in a relationship with God in Christ involves that the believer serves Him as a matter of necessity. Although the Owner of the slave is kind and merciful and no slave-driver, the believer is voluntarily a slave putting his own will on hold to serve the Master. Paul goes even further, calling on the Galatians to be slaves of one another through love (διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης δου-λεύετε ἀλλήλοις - Gl. 5:13). Once again, the love of the neighbour as ethical directive is not optional. It is all about a new disposition in which the believer finds himself because of his being in Christ and being led by his Spirit.

Fourthly, the *family metaphor* emphasises the obligation of the members of the household of God to do good (Gl. 6:10). The children in a family did not have the option of living the family ethos determined especially by the father. They were obliged to do what pleased him and reflected positively on the honour of the family. This was important regarding actions aimed at those outside the family as well as those in the family. Like the child is obliged to do what the father wills, the believers are obliged to do the will of the Father in the same way as Christ proved his obedience (Gl. 1:4).

Fifthly, those of faith in the cross have one overriding aim in life, namely *to glorify God*. It was illustrated that Paul places a very heavy emphasis on seeking God's glory. He begins and ends his letter with this theme. He wishes only to glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (Gl. 6:14).

It should be clear that a life of ethical high standard is not optional for the believer. Paul emphasises the absolute necessity for those of the new paradigm in Christ to live as faithfully as He did. However, Paul does not call on believers to do such with the help of law or ordinances from outside. It was about the Spirit moving man to call to God: “αββα ὁ πατήρ” and to live accordingly. The ethical obligation for which Paul advocated was not nomistic, but truly the anomic ethic of the free belonging to Christ through his Spirit.

xiii) *The ethic of freedom is about both individual and communal responsibility and accountability.*

It is only in being truly free from the present evil age and all it entails that one can really be fully responsible and accountable for one's deeds. As long as there is some form of external code according to which one must or should act, it robs one of a great deal of responsibility to figure out for oneself what God's will is in a given situation. The believer's ethical responsibility is not to a set of external codes. The believer should not be put in the position where he has to motivate or rationalise his actions in a given situation, only because it deviates from the set rules or predetermined norms. The believer is primarily responsible for doing God's will in every given situation. There might be guidelines of which he is aware or not. Whatever the guidelines, his responsibility is to love his neighbour and concretely prove it in every situation. Thus, the believer is called to be responsible on a vertical level (relationship with God), always finely tuned to the Spirit's walk, so that he can truly fulfil his horizontal responsibility to love his neighbour.

Obviously, being part of a community of faith, the believer is not an island and cannot claim to have all wisdom, or to be the only one guided by the Spirit. He is accountable to his community of faith for ethical decisions he makes. They do have the responsibility to measure the correctness of his actions. However, once again, their measuring stick cannot be an external code of conduct. This itself has to be responsibly scrutinised. Their ultimate norm must be, once again, whether God was served and his glory honoured by the love of the neighbour. Did the fellow believer act according to the guidance of the Spirit, or did he sow to the flesh?

Ultimately, the believer and the community of faith are not accountable to any mediating set of rules, but to God who proved his faithfulness in the obedience of Christ. This was something totally incomprehensible to those living in the old paradigm, but the only way of living for those of the new. To try to combine the two would be as disastrous as severing oneself from Christ (Gl. 5:4).

Obviously, as soon as one speaks of accountability to the community of faith and also of the community of faith's responsibility to assist its members to seek and do God's will, it becomes almost humanly impossible to operate without a set of guidelines. These guidelines usually have a history within a certain tradition. This in itself need not be a problem, if certain warnings are heeded. *Firstly*, the guidelines should never obtain the status of fixed, unchanging and inflexible laws applicable to

the same extent in each individual situation. Although certain guidelines are broadly defined and almost always applicable in unaltered form, it does not mean that its application is always obvious. There might be room for interpretation or even for a nuance. For instance, all Christian communities accept that murder is a grievous sin, but they do not always and in all circumstances agree on the definition of that sin. Some accept abortion and the death penalty in certain circumstances, whilst others regard it as organised murder. All regard theft as sin, but in certain circumstances some might accept a homeless person's theft of a loaf of bread as pardonable and even as a charge against society. The same can be said of telling a lie to save a life and so preventing a worse felony. In short, if ethical guidelines become unbending dictates excusing believers from the sometimes arduous task of seeking God's will for a certain situation, or excuses him from taking situational decisions in responsibility to the situation, those in it and the God he wishes to serve, they would be out of touch with Paul's view on freedom.

Secondly, ethical guidelines should themselves be subjected to responsible examination. If this is not done it leads to such guidelines obtaining divine status and even becoming mediatory of God's grace.

Thirdly, the fear of relativising ethics to the unacceptable level of doing merely what seems practical and practicable as if God's will is equal to the lowest ethical common denominator, is to deny the entire christological-pneumatological paradigm in which Paul's concept of freedom and his ethics and exhortations operate. The role of the Spirit in revealing God's will for every situation should be honoured. If this element is removed from ethical guidelines one falls prey to an ethic of the letter in distinction from an ethic of the Spirit.

Paul himself illustrates that his exhortations are not authoritarian. He leaves the responsibility of discernment in the hands of the believers. There must always be room for honest discussion, be that between contemporaries or even between present views and tradition. Under the guidance of the Spirit such open discussion of οἱ πνευματικοί leads to a fruitful ethos in responsibility and accountability to others and God.

Ultimately, believers are accountable to God Himself for their ethical decisions and actions. The touchstone always being whether the fruit of the Spirit had been concretised in its different shades of loving service.

xiv) *The ethic of freedom is situation-orientated, participationist and creative.*

This aspect has been touched on in the previous statement. The concern here is for intertextuality. Any ethical guideline, contemporary or inherited from tradition, should be regarded as a precious partner in a new dialogue under the guidance of the Spirit. Paul, making use of ethical maxims from contemporary pagan philosophy, illustrates that the community of faith is not an island. Much can be learnt from other traditions – even from secular communities. The origin of the maxim is not as important as the use it is put to under the Spirit's guid-

ance and the effect it has in a given community. How it is put to Christian use is absolutely dependent on how the Spirit guides the believing individual and community.

In this regard the Church in modern Western Civilisation should be wary of too easily imposing its ethical views onto other civilisations. A given ethos in a society in Africa, Asia or South America might seem unacceptable to traditional Western Christian ethics. However, although it might be unacceptable even to the Spirit, responsible ethical practice would probably be to enter into dialogue so as to allow those in the wrong to discover God's will through the Spirit in the Spirit's good time. Equally, dialogue might even have the effect that the Spirit guides along a way that the original bringer of the message did not expect to be taken.

The same is applicable to ethical dialogue between different denominations in the church. No single church can lay claim to the whole truth and consequently canonise its ethical views. By entering into dialogue they have much to offer one another from long and rich traditions of reflection. Examples abound regarding churches falling prey to certain ethical stances in support of an ideal, whilst other churches had a different view and even warned them. Churches in Germany and South Africa can testify to the disgraceful situation in which certain churches provided the respective regimes with theological-ethical foundation for their demagogic policies, whilst they encapsulated themselves from the influence of other churches to the contrary. An ecumenical approach to ethics therefore seems wise and in keeping with Paul's participationist approach.

The broad church should also be wary of playing the role of sole ethical guide to the world. From Paul we learn that there can be no compromise regarding the Christian indicative that God has provided a new paradigm to life in Christ and his Spirit. Man has been freed from the present evil age in order to live freely. This is what the church has to communicate fervently and without reserve. This is the unique message that only the church can convey to the world. The church should not compromise in any way when appealing to the world to accept this indicative as the only truth. This soteriological imperative is the gospel truth, and therefore the only truth! However, when it comes to the ethical imperative, the responsible way in terms of Paul, is not to proclaim an ethical tradition to be the gospel, but together to responsibly seek what the God of the gospel wishes for his church and believers in their given situations under the guidance of his Spirit.

xv) *The ethic of freedom is restorative rather than judgemental.*

Regarding the very real possibility of believers sinning, the matter was put forward as to how sin is identified as such without law, and how one should deal with the sinner in view of his being part of the new dispensation. It was acknowledged that Paul does not deal with the matter of how sin is identified, but

that there are enough indications of how Paul's ethics would probably have dealt with the matter. *Firstly*, action that is *out of step with the Spirit*. The Spirit is the One who guides the believer in the law or paradigm of Christ. Transgression is equal to being out of step with his guidance. This does not occur only when it is in a specific wrongdoing, but as early as when the believer ignores the guidance of the Spirit and in so doing creates disharmony between himself and the Spirit and follows the desires of the flesh.

Secondly, a transgression would be an action that is *incompatible with the fruit of the Spirit* (Gl. 5:22-23) and *in line with the works of the flesh* (Gl. 5:19-21). It was indicated that Paul emphasises the love of the neighbour as yardstick for measuring ethically good behaviour (Gl. 5:6 & 13-14). Equally important is Gl. 5:22-23 where Paul describes the fruit of the Spirit. He wraps the different qualities in ἀγάπη and ἐγκράτεια. All the qualities are included in the notion of love that is illustrated up to the point of sacrificing one's own pleasures and needs for the sake of others. In other words, being in step with the Spirit results in reflecting the love and faithfulness of Christ with which he initiated the new paradigm.

Thirdly, actions that cause *disharmony in the community of faith* are not in step with the above. The vices Paul mentions in Gl. 5:19-21 illustrate a large degree of disharmony in the faith community. Gl. 6:1-10 illustrates a very heavy emphasis on service in the community and community directedness in general.

Fourthly, and probably the overall measure of ethical behaviour in the community of faith, is that actions should *seek God's glory*. Pauline ethics is based fully on his theology and not on his anthropology. It always seeks God's glory in the way that Christ did it in his faithfulness.

Now, regarding how the community of faith was to deal with a transgressor in terms of the above touchstones. Because law was not involved, this would obviously be a completely different kind of action than that known from the old evil age. The emphasis would not be on the judgment, punishment or condemnation of the sinner, but on how he could be restored in his relationship with God, the believing community and other neighbours from the broader society. This is obviously in keeping with the paradigm in which the believers live, namely that Christ gave Himself for our sins, to deliver us from the present evil age. On the grounds of Christ's restoration of believers to the status of new creation, the community of faith had to seek the restoration of that sinner's status to its full glory. In keeping with Christ's faithfulness with a view to restoration, the community of faith had to be equally faithful in restoring the fellow believer. In fact, Paul even refers to it as the bearing of the sinner's burden. The sinner could never be written-off, as it were. He was the burden of the community in line with his being Christ's burden. In terms of the family imagery, it involved the community being collectively saddened and shamed, and collectively accepting some of the guilt. The overall intention of the restoration endeavour would be that God's glory be served.

xvi) *The ethic of freedom is longsuffering and persevering.*

The fact the Paul explains his ethic as the fruit of the Spirit, is indicative of the intimate relation between the indicative and imperative of faith and faithful living. Ethics is not the supplementary human effort after the initial action by God through Christ and the Spirit. The idea is to illustrate the “logical” and almost automatic following on of ethics to soteriology. However, Paul does not give the impression that it is fully effortless. The believer is in Christ and is guided by the Spirit, but he is not a programmed, unthinking, involuntary automat. Together with this, the believer still has to contend with flesh till the time of the *parousia*. It is a beaten foe, but has not yet been removed from the scene.

Therefore Paul admonishes the believers not to grow weary in well-doing (Gl. 6:9). Considering instances such as Gl. 1:6-10; 3:1 and Gl. 4:9; Paul’s mention of Peter’s “apostasy” (Gl. 2:11-14); the possibility of severance from Christ (Gl. 5:4); yielding to bad influences (Gl. 5:9); being hindered (Gl. 5:7); and even persecuted by those regarding the cross as a stumbling block (Gl. 5:11), life in the Spirit would never be plain sailing. There would be burdens to bear (Gl. 6:2, 5) and falling prey to sin would remain a possibility (Gl. 6:1, 4).

Walking in step with the Spirit is not a walk in the park, so to speak, but the taking up of one’s burden like Christ did when he introduced the new paradigm. Obedience and loving service, even to the point of persecution, was expected of believers. The good news was that it would never be a curse, because of the guidance and enablement of the Spirit. Thus, they were to bite the bullet!

* * * * *

In a final word, Paul did everything in his power to convince the Galatians, and for that matter all believers, that the advent of Christ and his Spirit had ended flesh’s reign in the *present evil age*, once and for all. A fundamentally new and totally different situation had arisen, so different that he describes it as new creation and does his best to impress how radically different it is from anything known to their symbolic universe till then.

In Christ’s advent and resurrection a new dispensation had arrived. The believer had been set free from the totality of the evil age and all it involved: flesh and its secundi. This freedom was not only freedom from law. It was one of Paul’s most dynamic and encompassing descriptions of redemption and salvation. Freedom is primarily freedom from the dispensation of flesh and sin – from evil itself!

Because law had been given as an interim measure till the advent of Christ and his Spirit, the Spirit had now made law totally irrelevant for the new dispensation. The Spirit would enable and guide the believer and the believing community inwardly. Whatever exhortation was needed within the community of faith, it would have to be true to the new paradigm, and therefore in accordance with

the Spirit's guidance. The community of faith would always have to guard against allowing its ethical patterns from becoming new systems of law replacing God's direct work through his Spirit.

As a community partaking in the freedom for which Christ set them free, the household of faith may never allow that it is robbed of its *freedom* and *responsibility* to act on the Spirit's guidance, however subtly. Ultimately, the household of faith is *accountable* to only one, Yahweh, who, since the advent of his Son, guides through his Spirit and is not in need of any form of law to convince man to serve in love. Believers are free from the old dispensation of flesh. They have been freed by the faithfulness of Christ to live faithfully according to the Spirit's guidance, and so, to glorify God.

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