

BECOMING SLAVES OF GOD. THE PAULINE SLAVERY METAPHOR IN LIGHT OF THE PAPHYROLOGICAL EVIDENCE

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Abstract. The various terms and representations around slavery and freedom in the letters of Paul are examined in this study against the background of the evidence in the documentary papyri. Thus, the perspective of the primary readers, who were acquainted with such practices from their everyday life, comes strongly to the fore. Especially the very common form of manumission by ransom could have served to some extent as a functional pattern of interpretation for the Pauline redemption theology. Given the important role of Christ's death in the liberation from sin, law and death, the connection between emancipation and the death of the testator in the testamentary manumissions is brought into discussion. In reference to the Pauline phrase Χριστοῦ δοῦλος, the role of the gods in slavery and emancipation is discussed in connection with the issues of the ἱερόδουλοι and the sacral manumission. No exclusive point of reference for the Pauline slavery metaphors can be determined, rather various terms and images from this broad thematic field are taken up to describe a completely new situation in the existence of individuals and of the world as a whole.

Keywords: slavery, documentary papyri, Paul's letters, Χριστοῦ δοῦλος, manumission, testaments.

The topic of slavery in the letters of Paul is a complex and often discussed subject.¹ The social reality of slavery served as a background for the formation of various metaphors and references that the primary readers could decode without any problems. The Pauline language on slavery and freedom has become so familiar to today's readers of the New Testament that it is easy to lose sight of the connection of the various terms to the actual reality of slavery in antiquity.

If we reverse the interpretive perspective and first try to understand the ancient situation from the perspective of everyday documents, we are in a better position to pose new questions to the Pauline texts. In what sense should we

¹ A valuable presentation of the research on the Pauline slavery metaphors can be found in BYRON, *Recent Research*, 67–91; see also GOODRICH, "From Slaves of Sin to Slaves of God", with an extensive discussion on the origins of the slavery metaphor in Paul's letters; for an overview of the slavery topic, cf. also HARRILL, "Paul and Slavery".

understand Jesus Christ as the liberator from the constraints of slavery? How should this emancipation be understood in light of the attested legal practices? How might this common knowledge be reflected in the letters of Paul? What role did the gods play in the practice of manumission, and what connections could be made with the terminology Paul uses referring to Christ?

In the present study, I use the rich papyrological evidence on slavery and emancipation as the basis for investigating the terminology and design of the Pauline metaphors. In his pioneering work on the importance of documentary papyri and ostraca for the understanding of the New Testament, A. DEISSMANN already pointed out the outstanding importance of this thematic field in the letters of Paul.² Despite some contributions in recent years, important aspects have not yet received the attention they deserve. I hope to be able to shed some additional light on the question with the help of the available papyrological material.³

1. The legal and religious context of the Pauline slavery metaphors

Paul was acquainted with the phenomenon of slavery in first-century Roman society. In his letters, he used specific terms and ideas related to slavery to develop his own theological concepts. We can mention first the verbs δουλόω (cf. 1 Cor 7:15; 9:19; Gal 4:3; Rom 6:18, 22); καταδουλόω (cf. 2 Cor 11:20; Gal 2:4) and δουλεύω (cf. 1 Thess 1:9; Phil 2:22; Gal 4:8, 9, 25; 5:13; Rom 6:6; 7:6, 25; 9:12; 12:11; 14:18; 16:18). The related nouns are δοῦλος (cf. Phm 16; Phil 2:7; 1 Cor 7:21–23; 12:13; 2 Cor 4:5; Gal 3:28; 4:1, 7; Rom 6:16, 17), παιδίσκη (cf. Gal 4:22, 23, 30², 31) or the abstract δουλεία (Gal 4:24; 5:1; Rom 8:15, 21).

Thanks to Christ, the yoke of slavery (cf. Gal 5:1) is a thing of the past, for in Christ there is neither slave nor free (cf. Gal 3:28) and all are called to freedom (cf. Gal 2:4; 5:1, 13²). But at the same time, Paul presents himself (cf. Gal. 1:10; Phil 1:1; Rom 1:1) or the other Christ-believers (cf. 1 Cor 7:22; Phil 1:1) as a slave of Christ and exhorts his addressees to become slaves to each other through love (cf. Gal 5:13). From this terminology alone it becomes clear that the Pauline use of the slavery metaphor is not a one-way street. Paradoxically, the Christ-believers are free people and slaves at the same time.

This density of terms and phrases poses a number of questions that can be examined briefly using the papyrological evidence. The occurrence of the various terms used by Paul will be investigated, but also broader topics such as the social status of slaves. It is impossible to give a complete overview of the research around

² DEISSMANN, *Light*, 319–330.

³ Papyri are abbreviated according to the “Checklist of Editions of Greek, Latin, Demotic and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca and Tablets” available at <https://papyri.info/docs/checklist>.

slavery in the papyri; but some fundamental studies are used as the basis of this investigation.⁴

1.1. Designating slavery: terms and contexts

In view of the way Paul uses the verbs καταδουλόω (“to enslave”) and δουλόω (“to enslave”),⁵ I will briefly address one of the ways a person could become a slave in antiquity, and how this form of enslavement is reflected in the documentary papyri.⁶ Very few cases of enslaved prisoners of war can be found in the documentary papyri. But it seems that at the beginning of the Ptolemaic period, prisoners of war played a more important role in the Egyptian market than later. R. TAUBENSCHLAG indicates the “capture in war” as the “principal and apparently oldest cause of slavery in Greek law”.⁷ We learn about the practice of taking prisoners of war as prey and enslaving them from the petition *SB* 28.16855 (3 Jul 167 CE). The soldier Herakleides complains to the *strategos* about the loss of his “prisoners of war” (l. 17: [αἰχμά]λωτα), which consisted of four girls given to him by his fellow soldiers. Generally, the soldiers had the option of keeping the prisoners of war, or selling and offering them for ransom to relatives.⁸ From the Roman period, only one papyrus is known so far that attests such practices – the copy of a Greek-influenced Roman slave sale contract *P.Hamb.* 1.63 with *BL* 1:63 (125/126 CE). It reports the selling of “two slaves captured in battle” (l. 9: [δο]υλικά σώματα δύο δορα[τόκτητα]).

As we learn from Gal 2:4, during the meeting in Jerusalem, the “false brothers” tried to establish the observance of the law, which Paul saw as an attempt to enslave (καταδουλώσουσιν) the Christ-believers. The theological confrontation appears as a kind of battle, ending up with the loss of freedom and self-determination.

⁴ For both the Roman and the Ptolemaic period it is worth mentioning in particular BIEŻUŃSKA-MAŁOWIST, *L’esclavage* I and II; for the Roman period only, see STRAUS, «L’esclavage», and IDEM, *L’achat*; special studies will be introduced occasionally. For an overview of the legal status of slaves in the light of the papyrological evidence cf. TAUBENSCHLAG, *Law*, 66–101.

⁵ The papyrological evidence for καταδουλόω is very scarce (cf. PREISIGKE, *Wörterbuch*, s.v. καταδουλόω and MOULTON/MILLIGAN, *Vocabulary*, s.v. καταδουλόω), while the simplex δουλόω is missing in the documentary papyri known so far. In his interpretation of the situation in the petitions *UPZ* 1.3 (cf. καταδ[ουλουμένην] in l. 11 with *BL* 5:149) and 1.4 (cf. καταδ[ουλωσαι] in ll. 14–15 with *BL* 5:149) (after 3 Oct–1 Nov 164? BCE), along with the occurrences of καταδουλόω in *P.Eleph.* 3.3 and 4.4 (19 Jun–17 Jul 283 BCE), R. SCHOLL argues in *C.Ptol.Sklav.* 1, p. 292–293 against previous opinions for the meaning “to re-enslave” or “to enslave again”.

⁶ The ways slaves could be procured are discussed in detail by BIEŻUŃSKA-MAŁOWIST, *L’esclavage* I, 18–58 and II, 13–42 for the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, respectively; for Roman Egypt, see also STRAUS, «L’esclavage», 852–866; and HARRIS, “Study”, 117–125.

⁷ TAUBENSCHLAG, *Law*, 71. For an extensive discussion on enslavement of prisoners of war in the Ptolemaic period see BIEŻUŃSKA-MAŁOWIST, *L’esclavage* I, 19–27.

⁸ Cf. R. SCHOLL in *C.Ptol.Sklav.* 1, p. 317.

Paul warns that freedom in Christ is threatened and must constantly be defended; otherwise, there is a real danger of re-enslavement. This semantic nuance is significant since Paul believed that both Jews and gentiles have been “enslaved” prior to their encounter with Jesus Christ – Jews were enslaved to the Law, and gentiles to the elements of the world. If they abandoned their freedom in Christ, they would thus be re-enslaved.

In the papyrological evidence, slaves can be referred to by various terms.⁹ Even Paul uses not only δούλος but also παιδίσκη.¹⁰ First, mention should be made of deeds of sale, in which the term δούλος (“slave”) and δούλη (“female slave”) often occur.¹¹ Census registrations,¹² petitions,¹³ or private letters¹⁴ can also be included as other types of texts that testify to the widespread use of slaves in both the private and public spheres. The other Pauline term παιδίσκη (“young female slave”) is also quite widespread.¹⁵ In the census declaration *BGU* 1.95 (24 Jul 147 CE), “the slave girl Tasoucharion” (l. 19: παιδίσκη δούλη Τασου[χάρ]ιον) is recorded; however, her social status is clear only because the term δούλη is appended. Slave girls are mentioned in the letter from Eudaimonis, the mother of the *strategos* Apollonios, to her daughter-in-law Aline *P.Brem.* 63 (16 Jul 116? CE); we can read in lines 9–11: Συνεργάζομαι | δὲ ταῖς παιδίσκαις σου κατὰ | τὸ δυνατόν (“I work together with your slave girls to the best of my ability”).

If δούλος/δούλη and ἀνδράποδον are among the typical slave terms, παιδίσκη and παῖς can also be used for non-slaves. This ambiguity also exists in the

⁹ In line 16 with *BL* 4:15 and 13:59 of the deed of sale *P.Cair.Zen.* 1.59003 (26 Apr–24 May 259 BCE) we read about a [παιδίσκην Σιδώ]νιον (“Sidonian slave girl”); in line 3 of *P.Mich.* 5.281 (I CE) the expression παιδίσκης δούλην (“female slave”) is used; in two deeds from Side, we first learn of a κοράσιον Ἀβασκαντίδα (“slave girl Abaskantis”) in *P.Turner* 22.16 and then again of a κοράσιον Σαμβατίδα (“slave girl Sambathis”) in *BGU* 3.887.3. There are already some special studies on the various labels for slaves in the documentary papyri: BIEŻUŃSKA-MAŁOWIST, *L’esclavage* I, 10–18, 59–65; II, 9–12; STRAUS, «La terminologie grecque»; and HEINEN, „Terminologie“.

¹⁰ An overview of the terms for slaves in the New Testament also with papyrological evidence can be found in SPICQ, «Le vocabulaire de l’esclavage»; on δούλος and παιδίσκη see esp. p. 204–214 and 220–224.

¹¹ As in *P.Mich.* 5.281.3 (I CE); 5.278.3 (ca. 30 CE); *P.Gen.* 1(2nd ed.).22.col2.2–3 (31 Jul or 10 Aug or 20 Aug 38 CE); *BGU* 3.987.4, 8, 15, 20 (26 Jan–24 Feb 19 or 45 CE); *P.Oxy.* 31.2582.6 (31 Jan 51 CE) and 2.263.9 (21 Apr 77 CE).

¹² Cf. *P.Messeri* 29.6–9 (first half I CE); *P.Oxy.* 12.1547.27 (23 Jan 119 CE); *P.Lond.* 3.901 (p. 23).15 (late I–early II CE); etc.

¹³ Cf. *P.Ryl.* 2.144.3 (28 May–24 Jun 38 CE); *P.Oxy.* 2.283.12, 17 (8 Aug 45 CE); *P.Fouad.* 28.8, 15 (after 27 Mar 59 CE); etc.

¹⁴ Cf. *SB* 6.9532.2 (8 May 66 or 30 Apr 37 or 27 Apr 15 BCE); *BGU* 4.1141.24, 26 (14/13? BCE); *BGU* 16.2630.3 (22 Dec 10 BCE); 16.2604.5 (28 Sep–27 Oct 7 BCE); *P.Oxy.* 22.2353.4 (4 Sep 32 CE); *P.Sarap.* 80.22 (90–133 CE) and *SB* 5.8947.4 (late I–early II CE).

¹⁵ Cf. PREISIGKE, *Wörterbuch*, s.v. παιδίσκη; MOULTON/MILLIGAN, *Vocabulary*, s.v. παιδίσκη.

case of οικήτης, παιδάριον, παιδίον or σῶμα.¹⁶ In the end, context determines whether expressions like παῖς/παιδίσκη denote free people or are to be understood in terms of real slavery.

Paul uses δουλεία in an abstract manner as a state of servility and a low social status. The earliest occurrences of the term in the documentary papyri are from the first century CE. The nurse contract *ZPE* 201 (2017), p. 229–231 (TM 23022; 21 May 26 CE) has been drawn up between two parties so that an exposed child can be reared and suckled by another woman. A certain Taseus, with her husband as guardian and surety, agrees to have received from a certain Paapis “the female child whom he picked up from a dunghill into slavery and to whom he has given the name Thermoutharion” (ll. 6–7: ὁ ἀνείρηται ἀπὸ κοπρίας εἰς δουλείαν θηλυκὸν | [σ]ωμάτιον ὃ[ι ἐ]πέθηκεν ὄνομ[α] Θερμουθάριον).¹⁷ More often, δουλεία denotes the concrete services a particular slave has to perform for the master. A notable example is the division of property in slaves between two brothers (*PSI* 8.903 [23 Feb 47 CE]); with regard to the mother, it is stipulated that she is entitled to “the service of the aforesaid slave Thermoutharion, bequeathed to her by the father of the acknowledging parties, as long as Taorseus survives” (ll. 15–17: τὴν διατεταγμένην ἀν[τ]ὴ ὑπὸ τοῦ τῶν ὁμολογουτῶν πατρὸς δουλίαν, ἐφ’ ὄν χρόνον περίεστιν ἢ Ταορσεῦς, τῆς προγεγραμμένης δουλήας Θερμουθαρίου).

Living as a slave means always being in the service of others, fulfilling various tasks and having an unfree status for one’s whole life. Previous research has already identified in the papyrological sources numerous areas in which slaves were employed.¹⁸ We find slaves in domestic service; in the household, the work is often performed by female slaves, while the services outdoors, e.g., as messengers, were entrusted exclusively to male slaves. In order to bring profit to the masters, the slaves often practiced various crafts. In particular, weaving figures prominently in a large number of papyri. Slaves could also work as stenographers, musicians, tutor for minors or in agriculture. Sometimes slaves could also perform administrative functions such as financial activities on behalf of their masters.

Total submission and subordination to a foreign goal (false gods, law, etc.) is in view when Paul uses the verb δουλεύω (“to serve as a slave”) in Rom 6:6; 7:6, 25; 16:18; Gal 4:8, 9 and 25. *SB* 3.6263 (second half II CE) contains letters from a certain Sempronius first to his mother Saturnila (ll. 1–17) and then to his brother Maximus (ll. 18–31). He seems to have been very concerned with how his younger

¹⁶ Cf. STRAUS, «La terminologie grecque», 385–386; HEINEN, „Terminologie“, 1289.

¹⁷ Similar contracts with the same formula εἰς δουλείαν are: *ZPE* 201 (2017), p. 219–223.7 (25/26 CE) and *SB* 16.12953.15 (27 Dec 70–25 Jan 71 CE).

¹⁸ For the Ptolemaic period, cf. BIEŻUŃSKA-MAŁOWIST, *L’esclavage* I, 59–83; the Roman period is addressed by BIEŻUŃSKA-MAŁOWIST, *L’esclavage* II, 73–108; and STRAUS, «L’esclavage», 867–876.

brothers treat their mother, writing in lines 20–22: μετέλαβον, ὅτι βαρέως δουλεύετε (read δουλεύετε) | τὴν κυρίαν ἡμῶν μητέρα (read μητέρα). ἐρωτηθεῖς, ἀδελφε γλυκύταται (read γλυκύτατε), ἐν μηδενί (read μηδενί) αὐτὴν λύπει (“I have been told that you serve our lady mother rude; you are asked, sweetest brother, do not grieve her in any way”).

Paul can employ the verb δουλεύω paradoxically to describe Christ-believers serving to each other (Gal 5:13), Christ (Rom 12:11; 14:18) or the true God (1 Thess 1:9). A revaluation of slave-language occurs when Christians themselves, although freed by Christ, are described as having a slave-like existence.

1.2. Hierodouloi and the slaves of Christ

Paul refers to himself as Χριστοῦ δοῦλος (cf. Gal 1:10; Rom 1:1; together with Timothy in Phil 1:1), a term that is somewhat surprising, given the way the slavery metaphors otherwise function. In 1 Cor 7:22 Paul asserts that a slave who is called by God actually experiences freedom. The freedom gained through Christ resembles an entry into a new form of slavery, the new master being Christ himself.¹⁹

For Paul, the idea of the people as slaves of God may have its roots in the Old Testament tradition.²⁰ But his letters address communities that were not shaped by this ideology and were more at home in Graeco-Roman culture and religion. The main interpretive challenge is trying to understand slave-language from the reader’s perspective. We know about the existence in antiquity of a category of slaves subordinated to a deity, the so called ἱερόδουλοι, a term often understood strictly in the sense of temple slavery or temple prostitution.²¹ The “sacred slaves” belong to the broad category of public slaves, who took on different roles serving the general public in the temples, or by working for the city magistrates or for colleges. This distinction between private/public slaves, often ignored by biblical commentators, might illuminate the Pauline understanding of Christians as servants in public ministry. The following examples will shed some light on the use of this expression in the papyri.

The sacred slaves of the Egyptian goddess Thoeris are the senders of a petition to the official Sonnophoris *P.Hib.* 1.35 with *BL* 1:194 (ca. 250 BCE), as we read in lines 2–5: Πετοσίρις Ποκωῦτος καὶ Ὀννώφιρις Πετήσιος ἱερόδουλοι Θυήριος μεγάλης καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ | ἱερόδουλοι (“Petosiris son of Pokous, Onnophris son of Petesis, sacred slaves of the great Thoeris, and the rest of the sacred slaves”).

¹⁹ On this Pauline expression, cf. the remarks by DEISSMANN, *Light*, 325–327, and esp. MARTIN, *Slavery*, 59–68; for the later Christian context, see HATTENHAUER, „Die Sklaven Gottes“.

²⁰ On slavery in ancient Israelite literary traditions, cf. BYRON, *Slavery Metaphors*, 37–59.

²¹ On this topic, cf. SCHOLL, „ἱερόδουλος“, 466–467; GRAF, „Hierodouloi“; on this topic see the overview by DEBORD, «L’esclavage sacré». On public slaves in the cultic area cf. WEISS, *Sklave der Stadt*, 135–158.

In contrast to the edition of this papyrus, which understood the *ιερόδουλοι* as “temple slaves” charged with the task of collecting revenues of the temple, it has been argued that we may be dealing with free Egyptian tenants or cultivators of the temple land who paid their dues and taxes to the temple.²² From the Roman period we can mention a Greek translation of the deed of renunciation of a house (*CPR* 15.1 [29 Aug–27 Sep 3 BCE]), in which the seller is a man referred to in line 2 as *[ι]ερόδουλος*.²³

We are not very well informed about the role and activities of sacred slaves in antiquity. It is controversial, for example, whether the *ιερόδουλοι* in Egypt were actually slaves in the service of a temple, or free persons who have voluntarily dedicated themselves for protection to a deity. R. SCHOLL concludes on the basis of a detailed analysis of papyrological and epigraphical evidence that the term *ιερόδουλος* does not denote a slave depending on a temple or on the priests, but free native Egyptians or free egyptianized Greeks or Romans who do not hold any duties in the cult service and live in a certain relationship to an Egyptian deity.²⁴ It is interesting to draw this conceptual parallel to the paradoxical Pauline statements on slavery, for Christ believers are also considered free people, called to freedom (cf. Gal 5:13), even though they thereby enter into a new form of servitude and, as slaves of Christ, acknowledge him as their master.

The magical papyri provide a view into this terminology from a different perspective. In an invocation while making the burnt offering to the god Eros (*Pap. Graec. Mag.* 2.12 [III CE]), favor and charm are demanded from all men and women in the world, so that, as we read in lines 70–72: *μοι ὅσι ὑποτεταγμένοι εἰς πάντα, | ὅσα ἐ[ὰν] θέλω, ὅτι δοῦλός εἰμι τοῦ ὑψίστου θε[ο]ῦ [τ]οῦ κατέχοντο[ς] τὸν κόσμον καὶ παντοκρ[ά]τορος* (“they may be obedient to me in everything, whatever I want, because I am the slave of the most high god who holds the world, the almighty”).²⁵

The importance and responsibilities of a slave depend on the social rank of his master. As we can see from this invocation, a slave of God stands in a position of power to demand obedience of others in the name of his master. The ministry of Christ brings about a new reality and a reversal of the status quo. For Paul, to be a slave of Christ means following him and serving people in love. This status actually breaks from inside the concept of slavery as a form of oppression and endangerment and grants a privileged relationship with God himself. In a paradoxical

²² Cf. SCHOLL, „*Ιερόδουλος*“, 472–473.

²³ Cf. SCHOLL, „*Ιερόδουλος*“, 480; the term is still used centuries after, as in *P. Oxy.* 3.519.13, 14 with *BL* 8:237 (II CE) or *P. Oxy.* 7.1050.21 (II–III CE), both accounts of public games.

²⁴ SCHOLL, „*Ιερόδουλος*“, 487.

²⁵ Cf. the translation in H.D. BETZ (ed.), *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation Including the Demotic Spells* (2nd ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 155.

way, the newly acquired status as free persons turns out to be a new form of slavery of a completely different kind.

2. Manumission of slaves as background for the Pauline redemption theology

Emancipation is the other important component of the Pauline slavery metaphors.²⁶ Apart from the verb ἐλευθερώω (“to set free”, “to release”), which occurs for the first time in Gal 5:1 and is often used in Rom,²⁷ the other related terms – ἐλευθερία (“freedom”, “manumission”; cf. 1 Cor 10:29; 2 Cor 3:17; Gal 2:4; 5:1, 13; Rom 8:21) and the adjective ἐλεύθερος (“free”; cf. 1 Cor 7:21–22, 39; 9:1, 19; 12:13; Gal 3:28; 4:22–23, 26, 30) appear also in earlier letters. A typical term for “freedman” in antiquity is taken up by Paul in 1 Cor 7:22 (ἀπελεύθερος). The legal term ἐλευθερία is frequently linked to the theme of slavery, though not exclusively. However, compared with the related adjective ἐλεύθερος, ἐλευθερία does not occur very often in the documentary papyri.²⁸

A remarkable example can be found in the letter of a freedman to his patron Erotos (*BGU* 4.1141 [14/13 BCE]), in which the sender defends himself against slander and unfair treatment. In some places the letter has apologetic tones, as in lines 24–25: ὡς δοῦλος ἐπ’ ἐλευθερία θέλει ἀρέσαι ὄψτω | κἀγὼ τῆ\|v/ φιλίαν σου [[θέλω{ι}]] \θέλων/ ἄμεμπτ[ον] ἔματόν (read ἔμαυτόν) ἐτήρησα (“as a slave wants to please with the view to freedom, I too, wanting your friendship, I conducted myself blamelessly”).²⁹ This statement illustrates that the good conduct of slaves could be mentioned sometimes as the reason for their emancipation: In *P.Oxy.* 3.494 (28 Oct–26 Nov 165 CE) “for their goodwill and affection” (l. 6: κατ’ εὖνοιαν καὶ φιλοστοργίαν). This phrase is a formula commonly used to express the motivation for emancipation.³⁰

The verb ἐλευθερώω denotes either the act of manumission or the condition of a freed slave. Thus we read in *P.Tebt.* 3.1.811 (18 Jul 165 BCE) about an emancipation by a certain Adrastos, possibly a member of the military, confirmed by

²⁶ Slavery and freedom correlate with each other in the Pauline discourse, so that slavery appears always as “the antithesis of freedom” (GOODRICH, “From Slaves of Sin to Slaves of God”, 526).

²⁷ Cf. Rom 6:18, 22; 8:2, 21.

²⁸ Cf. PAPATHOMAS, *Begriffe*, 160. For an overview of the Greek and Roman forms of emancipation found in the papyri, see TAUBENSCHLAG, *Law*, 96–101; CALDERINI, *Manomissione*, 158–164; BIEŻUŃSKA-MAŁOWIST, «Les affranchis», 435–436; BIEŻUŃSKA-MAŁOWIST, *L’esclavage* II, 115–119, 143–149. For the epigraphic evidence, see ZELNICK-ABRAMOVITZ, *Not Wholly Free*, 184–207; for a list of papyri mentioning emancipation, cf. pp. 169–170; STRAUS, «L’esclavage», 887–891. Manumission in the Roman legislation is discussed in BRADLEY, *Slaves*, 81–112.

²⁹ On this letter, see OLSSON, *Papyrusbriefe*, 44–53.

³⁰ Cf. KRELLER, *Erbrechtliche Untersuchungen*, 353; BIEŻUŃSKA-MAŁOWIST, *L’esclavage* II, 116–117; see also *P.Scholl* 5.3 (I–II CE) and *P.Tebt.* 2.407.6 (after 19 Jan 199? CE).

oath: “I set free the slave...” (ll. 20–21 with *BL* 13:257: [ἀπε]λευθερῶ παιδα[...]).³¹ Another soldier, a certain Gaius Iulius Saturnilos, being on active service, acts according to his testimony in the receipt for settlement of rent *P.Oxy.* 22.2349 (29 Aug–27 Sep 70 CE) through a representative, namely Dionysios alias Theopompos, “emancipated by him before his service in the army” (ll. 5–6: ἀπηλευθερωμέν[ο]ν ὑπ’ [αὐ]τοῦ πρὸ τῆς στρατείας).³²

Unlike slaves, who are constantly subordinated to their masters but strive for self-determination, Christians enjoy freedom through Christ, who released them all through his death and resurrection. Obviously, the practice of emancipating slaves in antiquity serves here as background imagery to vividly and comprehensibly illustrate the condition of the Christ-believers liberated by their master Jesus Christ. The role of Christ is thus ambivalent and equally implies the liberation of human beings from an oppressive and destructive slavery and their commitment to a new existence as servants of God.

2.1. Bought with a price

The following examples illustrate the different steps in the process of manumission by ransom before the public notary.³³ The author of the letter *P.Oxy.* 1.48 (16 Oct 86 CE), a certain Chairemon, was probably the contractor of the sales tax for the current year.³⁴ He confirms to the public notary that the required taxes and the ransom due for the manumission of a female slave have been paid. The payment of the taxes and the ransom preceded such a notification.³⁵ We read in lines 2–8 with *BL* 1:312: δὸς ἐλε[υ]θέρωσιν Εὐ|φοροσυνης (read Εὐ|φοροσύνη) δουλῆς (read δούλη) ὡς (ἐτῶν) λε, | οικογενῆ (read οικογενεῖ) ἐκ δούλης Δημη|τροῦτος, τῆ ἐλευθερουμένη | ὑπὸ Δία Γῆν Ἥλιον ἐπὶ λύτροι(ς) | ὑπὸ τῆς ἑαυτῆς δεσπότιδος | Ἀλοίνης (“grant freedom to Euphrosyne, a slave, aged about 35 years, born in the house by the slave Demetrous, set free under Zeus, Earth and

³¹ On this papyrus, see R. SCHOLL in *C.Ptol.Sklav.* 1, pp. 135–138.

³² Further occurrences of the verb ἐλευθερῶ can be found in different types of documents: e.g. in deeds of emancipation (*P.Turner* 19.7, 8, 12 [2 Feb 101 CE]; *P.Oslo* 3.129.9 [III CE]); *donatio mortis causa* (*P.Sijp.* 44.2 [ca. 130 CE]); wills (*P.Oxy.* 3.494.16 [28 Oct–26 Nov 165 CE]; *PSI* 12.1263.4 [166/167 CE]; 9.1040.16 [III CE]); private letter with notices of emancipation (*P.Tebt.* 2.407.24–25 [after 19 Jan 199? CE]) etc.

³³ Cf. MITTEIS, *Grundzüge*, 271–274; TAUBENSCHLAG, *Law*, 97–98; STRAUS, «L’esclavage», 888–889.

³⁴ Cf. TAUBENSCHLAG, *Law*, 97–98; see also J. PARTSCH in *P.Freib.* 2, p. 40. See also *P.Oxy.* 1.49 (28 Oct 100 CE).

³⁵ In *P.Oxy.* 1.50 (before 99 CE) we have the receipt showing that the required sums for the manumission of a slave have been paid; cf. *P.Oxy.* 45.3241 (11 Feb 163 CE); *P.Turner* 19 (2 Feb 101 CE) contains both, the manumission and the tax-receipt. On the different steps of a manumission, cf. T.C. SKEAT in *P.Turner*, p. 94.

Sun by ransom by her own mistress Aline”).³⁶ *P.Tebt.* 2.407 (after 19 Jan 199? CE) looks like a private letter but contains the firm intention of the ex-high-priest of the temple of Hadrian in Arsinoites addressed to his daughter and wife, regarding the emancipation of a number of slaves; first we read in line 5: τὰ μ[ἐ]ν σώματα ἐλεύθερα εἶναι (“the slaves should be free”) and then again in l. 18. At the same time, the addressees are also warned not to obstruct his plans; otherwise, he threatens them with leaving his inheritance not to his family but to the Temple of Serapis in Alexandria. We learn that he has already paid all “taxes for their emancipation” (l. 25: τὰ ὑ[π]έρ αὐτῶν τέλη τῆς ἐλευθερώσεως), but we cannot ascertain whether it is an emancipation before a public notary or a testamentary one.³⁷

Once the notary was informed, the formal act of manumission followed, exemplified here by the draft manumission *P.Oxy.* 38.2843 (24–28 Aug 86 CE).³⁸ By chance, this document deals with the same transaction as in *P.Oxy.* 1.48. Some details from the letter to the notary presented above are repeated; the formula of manumission is slightly different in line 5, using the adjective ἐλεύθερος: ἀφεινκεν ἐλευ[θ]έραν κτλ (“has set free...”).³⁹ We learn important supplementary information about a certain Theon, who as a free person assumes the role of handing over, on behalf of Euphrosyne, the money for her emancipation. Towards the end, a clause for her protection is also formulated: “neither Theon nor anyone else related to him has the right to demand back the ransom money from the emancipated Euphrosyne or from those related to her” (ll. 21–24: οὐκ αἰζόντος τῷ | Θεῶνι οὐδ’ ἄλλῳ οὐδενεὶ περὶ αὐτοῦ ἀπαίτ[η]σιν ποιεῖσθαι παρὰ τῆς ἐλευθερο[υ]μένης Εὐ[φ]ρο[σ]ύνης οὐδὲ τῶν παρ’ αὐτῆς τῶ[ν] λύτρων).

As some papyri attest, in keeping with ancient Greek law, at the end of the manumission procedure and with the consent of the former master, there occurs a “public announcement through the herald for emancipation and proclamation” (l. 7: ἀνακηρύξι πρὸς τὴν ἐλευθέρωσιν καὶ ἀνακήρυξιν) as reported in the deed of manumission *P.Freib.* 2.10 (12 Jun 196 CE). This public proclamation marked the final part of a completed procedure. This public announcement was not only for the

³⁶ With a similar content and purpose, cf. also *P.Oxy.* 1.49 (28 Oct 100 CE), with the verb ἤλευθ(ερωμένῳ) (“set free”) in l. 3. The expression ὑπὸ Δία Γῆν Ἥλιον (see also *P.Col.* 10.267.4–5 [180–192 CE]; *P.Mil.Vogl.* 4.235.5 [37–69 or 81–98 CE]; *P.Oxy.* 38.2843.5 [24–28 Aug 86 CE]; *SB* 1.5616.5 [I CE]; *P.Select.* 23.5 [end I CE]; *P.Oxy.* 1.49.8 [28 Oct 100 CE]; *P.Turner* 101.3 [2 Feb 101 CE]; *P.Oxy.* 4.722.6 [29 Aug 91 or 107 CE]; *P.Oxy.* 4.723.2 [138–161 CE]; *P.Stras.* 2.122.11 [161–168 CE]; *P.Oxy.* 3.494.6 [28 Oct–26 Nov 165 CE]; etc.) seems to be a formulaic phrase reminiscent of the ancient Greek practice of emancipation by sale to a god (cf. J. PARTSCH in *P.Freib.* 2, p. 39, and MITTEIS, *Grundzüge*, 271).

³⁷ Cf. KRELLER, *Erbrechtliche Untersuchungen*, 353, n. 38.

³⁸ Such other deeds are *P.Oxy.* 4.723 (138–161 CE); *P.Stras.* 4.238.11 (18 Dec 177 or 178 CE); *P.Turner* 26 (195–198); *P.Freib.* 2.10 (12 Jun 196 CE).

³⁹ On formulas of manumission, cf. ISTASSE, «La terminologie», 338–340.

purpose of publicizing the decision, but it was also an essential requirement of the legal proceeding.⁴⁰

Of particular note is the call to freedom from Gal 5:13 (ἐπ’ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἐκλήθητε), which reflects in my opinion the ancient Greek practice that persisted also in the Christian communities of publicly proclaiming the emancipation of slaves. In light of the papyrological and epigraphic evidence, I would assert that this is not at all a statement about striving for freedom in order to achieve that state through personal effort,⁴¹ but marks a final public act of a process that has already been completed. The freedom of the Christ-believers is not an expected good in the future, but is already available as a gift of God through Christ. The call to freedom assures and reinforces the addressees in what they have already gained not by themselves but through the death of Christ, who gave himself as ransom. This calling in Gal 5:13 is actually a proclamation.

The previous examples illustrate the emancipation of slaves by the payment of a price of release (ἐπὶ λύτροις)⁴² to the master, a sum usually accumulated by the slave himself. Normally, the amount was very close to the price of a slave, so that the master could possibly buy another slave.⁴³ Paul effectively uses the slave metaphor in relation to Christ, who is seen as the one who pays the ransom.⁴⁴ Λύτρον is a term found in the New Testament exclusively in the synoptic tradition (cf. Mk 10:45 // Mt 20:28; cf. 1 Tim 2:6), but the Pauline language suggests connections

⁴⁰ See also *P. Oslo* 3.129.9–10 (III CE). For a legal discussion and further development of this practice in the Christian era, cf. J. PARTSCH in *P. Freib.* 2, p. 41–45; see also TAUBENSCHLAG, *Law*, 97–98; STRAUS, «L’esclavage», 889. On public proclamations of manumissions with epigraphical evidence, see also CALDERINI, *Manomissione*, 129–131. Numerous Greek inscriptions with manumissions are collected by DARESTE, HAUSSOULLIER, and REINACH, *Recueil*, 233–318; we learn in an inscription from Mantinea, Arcadia (I BCE) on p. 305, no. 40 (col. 2.5–6) about the public proclamation of the emancipations: οἱ ἀποκαρυχθέντες ἐλεύθεροι (“the freed proclaimed by the herald”); see also on p. 301 the no. 36 (ll. 13–14) with the inscription from Calymna: τοῖδε | ἀνεκαρύχθησαν ἐπ’ ἐλευθερίᾳ (“these have been proclaimed free by the herald”).

⁴¹ MOULE, *Idiom-Book*, 50 translates: “you are called to (or with a view to) freedom”; cf. in the same direction MUSSNER, *Galater*, 367 (“die Freiheit selbst ist das Ziel der Berufung”).

⁴² On λύτρα in the documentary papyri, cf. STRAUS, «L’esclavage», 892; IDEM, «L’affranchissement», 237; BIEŻUŃSKA-MAŁOWIST, «Les affranchis», 440; for inscriptions, cf. ZELNICK-ABRAMOVITZ, *Not Wholly Free*, 198, 212. The possibility of slaves gathering money for their liberation is addressed by BRADLEY, *Slaves*, 108–112; on slaves and money, see also MARTIN, *Slavery*, 7–11.

⁴³ BIEŻUŃSKA-MAŁOWIST, *L’esclavage II*, 147; STRAUS, «L’affranchissement», 237.

⁴⁴ Cf. 1 Cor 6:20; 7:23 (τιμῆς ἠγοράσθητε: “you are bought with a price”); Gal 3:13 (Χριστὸς ἡμᾶς ἐξηγόρασεν: “Christ bought us up”); cf. Gal 4:5. The common meaning of (ἐξ)αγοράζω rather points to an ordinary purchase in the market and gets the familiar nuance “to ransom” in the New Testament; the only extra-biblical place where the verb has the meaning “to ransom” is given by HAUBECK, *Loskauf*, 153, n. 89: Diodorus Siculus 15.7 tells how the friends of Plato ransomed the philosopher from market when he was sold as a slave.

to the ancient practices of manumission by ransom (cf. ἀπολύτρωσις in Rom 3:24; 8:23; 1 Cor 1:30). Christ thus appears as the agent who, through his life, pays the price that releases humankind from slavery.

2.2. Sacral manumission as a special case

Since Christ was not seen as an ordinary person but also the Son of God, it seems appropriate to mention another special form of manumission in antiquity – consecration or a fictive sale to a deity.⁴⁵ As seen above, it was customary that the ransom was not paid to the master directly by the slave himself/herself, who amassed the money over time, but by a third *free* person.⁴⁶ In sacral manumission, it is a deity who plays this mediating role. The slave is considered to have been sold to a god who symbolically paid the ransom.⁴⁷

The origin of sacral manumissions and their various manifestations in the ancient world is still not fully understood. The documentary papyri contribute little to this scholarly discussion.⁴⁸ Some have disputed that Paul's teaching about liberation achieved through Christ's blood was influenced by this background. A. DEISSMANN has noted some similarities between Paul's vocabulary and certain elements of Delphic inscriptions in order to establish a direct connection between the ransom of Christ and the symbolic sale of slaves to Apollo.⁴⁹ But F. BÖMER has objected that on closer investigation of the existing sources such an assumption is not justified.⁵⁰ He does not deny that Paul may have known and even used some Hellenistic aspects of sacred manumission, but not necessarily those reflected in the Delphic inscriptions.⁵¹ BÖMER imagines instead an oriental substrate of the religious manumissions whose spreading and interaction with the Greek and Roman

⁴⁵ CALDERINI, *Manomissione*, 102–105; TAUBENSCHLAG, *Law*, 96–97; SAMUEL, “Role”, 268.

⁴⁶ Cf. STRAUS, «L'affranchissement», 237.

⁴⁷ There is scant evidence of this practice in Egypt. *BGU* 7.1564 (9 Sep 138 CE) is the only papyrus that contains an indirect reference to a person with this status. The document is a copy of a payment order issued by persones charged with requisitioning clothing for the army; the bank shall pay the weavers in advance for the garments to be manufactured, among others also to a certain “Dioskoros, freedman of the greatest god Sarapis” (ll. 2–3: Διοσκόρω ἀπελ(ευθέρω) | τοῦ με[γίστου θεο]ῦ Σαράπιδος); on the context and the content of this papyrus, see LEWIS, *Life*, 174–175.

⁴⁸ For a detailed account of the scholarly discussion, mostly as it relates to epigraphic sources, cf. ZELNICK-ABRAMOVITZ, *Not Wholly Free*, 86–99, 194–196.

⁴⁹ DEISSMANN, *Light*, 319–330; his thesis found support from WESTERMANN, “Freedmen”, 61–63.

⁵⁰ BÖMER, *Untersuchungen*, 133–141; for a summary of this debate with a criticism of Deissmann's thesis, cf. BARTCHY, *First-Century Slavery*, 121–125, and LLEWELYN, “Slave of God”, 75–76.

⁵¹ Cf. BÖMER, *Untersuchungen*, 140: “Die Worte Pauli bekommen eher einen Sinn, wenn man sie von der Belastung durch die derzeitigen delphischen Gewohnheiten befreit, die gerade um Christi Geburt besonders brutal geworden waren”; a description of the severe conditions of the Delphic manumissions is presented on pp. 37–41.

conceptions is difficult to trace. Despite the impossibility of attributing Paul's conceptions to a specific form of sacred manumission, no one doubts that he and his addressees in Corinth, Galatia or Rome had knowledge of liberation from slavery with the participation of a deity.

2.3. Death and emancipation

One of the most widespread legal forms of emancipation of slaves in antiquity was the so-called testamentary emancipation.⁵² Using some examples from wills on papyri, this practice will be briefly illustrated.⁵³ In the will *P.Petr.* 1(2nd ed.).3 (328/327 BCE), the testator stipulates in reference to his slave Melainis and her son Ammonios, whom he had fathered and raised, as follows: "I set free, if they stay with me in obedience as long as I live" (ll. 21–22: [ἀφίημι ἐλ]ευθέρους, ἐάμ μοι παραμείνω[σ]τιν ἕως ἂν ἐγὼ ζῶ ὑπήκοο[ι ὄ]ν[τες]); concerning a second slave, Semele, something similar is decided in ll. 46–47. In the fragment of a will *PSI* 12.1263 (166/167 CE), the mistress Sintheus commits her "freed" slave (l. 4: <ή> ἠλευθερουμένη) Stephanous to remain and serve her daughter as long as she lives, and decides with regard to two other slaves that they "shall become free" (l. 17: εἶναι ἐλευθέρως). The religious formula we encountered in the treatment of the emancipation before the public notary is used also in the will of a certain Akousilaos *P.Oxy.* 3.494 (28 Oct–26 Nov 165 CE) regarding the manumission of five slaves: "but if I will die with this will, I set free under Zeus, Earth and Sun, for their goodwill and affection my slaves..." (ll. 5–6: ἐὰν δὲ ἐπὶ ταύτη τῇ διαθήκῃ τελευτήσω ἐλεύθερα ἀφίημι ὑπὸ | Δία Γῆν Ἥλιον κατ' εὐνοίαν καὶ φιλοστοργίαν δοῦλά μου σώματα κτλ.). However, the emancipation, as in *P.Petr.* 1(2nd ed.).3 and *PSI* 12.1263 as well, is tied to a condition: The wife of the testator is endowed with the services and the contributions from those slaves who are set free (l. 16: ἐλευθερουμένων) after his death.⁵⁴

Another type of document with effect after the death of the testator is the so-called allotment after death, "an acknowledgement of an underlying arrangement

⁵² Cf. MITTEIS, *Grundzüge*, 239; KRELLER, *Erbrechtliche Untersuchungen*, 352–354; 387–388; BIEŻUŃSKA-MALOWIST, *L'esclavage* II, 115–119; STRAUS, «L'esclavage», 890–891.

⁵³ The testamentary manumission can be found also in *P.Col.* 10.267.4–5 (180–192 CE); *BGU* 1.326.col1.4–5, 17 (21 Feb 194 CE); *P.Select.* 14.3 (II CE); *P.Oxy.* 27.2474.28–29 (mid-late III CE); *PSI* 9.1040.9–17 with *BL* 8:405 (III CE); for further testaments mentioning manumissions, cf. MONTEVECCHI, *La papirologia*, 201; STRAUS, «L'affranchissement», 235, n. 10.

⁵⁴ With such a παραμονή-clause, the testator wanted to ensure that the gift of freedom would not be given to an unfaithful, perhaps fugitive slave (cf. KRELLER, *Erbrechtliche Untersuchungen*, 352–353); see on this topic SAMUEL, "Role", 248–249; on παραμονή in emancipations, cf. CALDERINI, *Manomissione*, 277–287; for a selection of inscriptions to manumissions with *paramone*, see SOSIN, "Manumission".

of allotment (μεμερικέναι) between the donor and beneficiaries”.⁵⁵ Such gifts after death (μετὰ τὴν τελευτήν), generally mentioned along with the Roman *donationes mortis causa*,⁵⁶ could also be employed to emancipate slaves, as seen in the following example.⁵⁷ The manumission *SB* 22.15345 (8 Mar 116 CE) contains some of the typical features of this type of document; first, it is formulated as an “agreement”, as we read in line 3: ὁμολογεῖ Πρωταροῦς Ὀρσενούφε[ως] κτλ (“Protarous, daughter of Orsenouphis agrees...”); the content of this agreement is then immediately rendered in lines 8–10 in a specific language: μετὰ τὴν ἑαυτῆς τελευτήν εἶναι πρὸ τῆ[ς τοῦ] | σώματος αὐτῆς ἐκφορᾶς ἐλεύθερον τὸν ὑπάρχ[ο]ν<τα> αὐτῆι Πρωταροῦτ[ι] | οἰκογενὴν δοῦλον Εὐπορον κτλ (“after her own death and before the carrying out of her body, her house-born slave Euporos, belonging to Protarous herself, is to be free...”).

Slaves were usually bequeathed to the heirs along with the other properties.⁵⁸ Even if the emancipation by will or allotments after death was not uncommon in antiquity, the testators or the donors of the gifts display by their act a special relationship to the slaves. The context is factually important for the exegetical discussion because in such cases the death of a person becomes the occasion of emancipation for his/her slaves. In view of the Pauline theology of the cross and the death of Christ (cf. Gal 3:13; Rom 6:6–7) as the foundation for the liberation of all humans from the slavery of sin, law and death,⁵⁹ such thematic associations of a shared knowledge by both sender and recipient are definitely possible.

3. Freed persons and masters: How does the Pauline slavery metaphor relate to social reality?

Paul used two terms to indicate the status of a freed person: ἐλεύθερος (cf. Gal 3:28; 4:22, 23, 26, 30) and ἀπελεύθερος (cf. 1 Cor 7:22). While the first term simply denotes a free person, the latter serves as a *terminus technicus* for a

⁵⁵ LLEWELYN, “Slave of God”, 38; for a discussion of this kind of document with examples, cf. KRELLER, *Erbrechtliche Untersuchungen*, 215–223, 239–245; see also MONTEVECCHI, *La papirologia*, 207–208; for a list of the *donationes mortis causa* published so far, cf. R.P. SALOMONS in *P.Sijp.* 44, p. 300–301.

⁵⁶ On the relationship between the Greek gifts after death and the Roman *donationes mortis causa*, cf. MEERSON, “Gifts”.

⁵⁷ See also *P.Sijp.* 44.2–3 (ca. 130 CE) and *P.Stras.* 2.122.11–12 *BL* 7:246 (161–168 CE).

⁵⁸ Cf. *P.Petr.* 1(2nd ed.).14.13 and 13.8–11 (both 238/237 BCE); *P.Dryton* 4.6, 13 (29 Jun 126 BCE); *SB* 18.13232.7 (1 CE); *P.Mich.* 9.549.7 (117/118 CE); *P.Oxy.* 3.491.5 (28 Aug 126 CE); 3.492.7 (22 Feb 130 CE); *BGU* 7.1654.10 (after 133 CE); *P.Oxy.* 3.494.12–13 (28 Oct–26 Nov 165 CE); *P.Ryl.* 2.153.32–33 (27 Mar 169 CE); etc.

⁵⁹ On the importance of the death for the Pauline slavery metaphor, cf. COMBES, *The Metaphor of Slavery*, 87–89.

freedman/woman.⁶⁰ Often we find the adjective ἐλεύθερος in the formulas of manumission, as already seen above in *P.Oxy.* 38.2843.5 (24–28 Aug 86 CE).⁶¹ It is worth considering briefly the position of the freedmen/women in society and the relation to their former masters.⁶² Subsequently, on the basis of the legal practices, as we have come to know in this brief presentation, we will look for the possible inferences regarding the Pauline metaphorical use of slavery and emancipation in the construction of his theology.

The *libertus*, although a free person, had obligations towards his former master. He still owed the master respect and obedience that a son owes to his father. After manumission, it was typical for masters to claim *operae*, a certain number of days of work each year that the freedman was obliged to perform. During the specified periods, the freedman was at the disposal of his master as though he were an ordinary slave. Especially in the first century CE, the contributions of rich freedmen led to a real economic boom.⁶³ G. ALFÖLDY regarded the practice of manumissions as a more ingenious form of exploitation, because the master as well as the state could profit greatly from it.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Cf. ISTATSE, «La terminologie», 333; ZELNICK-ABRAMOVITZ, *Not Wholly Free*, 126. Interesting in view of the Pauline formulation in 1 Cor 7:22 (ἀπελεύθερος κυρίου) is the fact that in the documentary sources, when the name of a freedman is mentioned, the name of the owner comes after ἀπελεύθερος (cf. BIEŻUŃSKA-MALOWIST, «Les affranchis», 439; for inscriptions cf. ZELNICK-ABRAMOVITZ, *Not Wholly Free*, 106); see some examples of papyri from the first century BCE and CE: *BGU* 4.1112.3–4 (after 26 Jan 4 BCE): παρὰ Μάρκου Ἰουλίου Φήλικος ἀπελ[ευ]θέρου τοῦ | πατρῶνος Γαίου Ἰουλίου Φήλικος (“from Marcus Iulius Felix, freedman of his patronus, Gaius Iulius Felix”); *BGU* 11.2047.3 with *BL* 6:20 (25 Jul–23 Aug 8 CE); *SB* 10.10221.col1.2–3 (16 May 18? CE), col2.2 (3 Jun 19 CE), col3.4–5 (26 Jun 19 CE); *P.Oxy.* 2.255.8–9 (28 Sep–27 Oct 48 CE); *P.Mich.* 5.246.15 with *BL* 12:120 (mid I CE). The term finds a special use in a phrase found repeatedly in census returns, which bears certain similarities to the Pauline enumeration in Gal 3:28; cf. *P.Oxy.* 74.4981.11 (26 Apr 34? CE); 74.4980.9 (7 Mar 34 CE); 2.255.21 with *BL* 10:138 (28 Sep–27 Oct 48 CE); *P.Köln* 13.529.fr2.11 (2 May 119 CE); *P.Oxy.* 3.480.13 (25 Nov 132 CE); *PSI* 1.53.20, 33, 61, 101, 137, 154, 191 (after 26 Dec 132 CE); and *SB* 22.15466.33 (20 Feb 147 CE).

⁶¹ See also *P.Petr.* 1(2nd. ed.)3.21, 22, 82 (238/237 BCE); *SB* 14.11998.4 (116–100 BCE); *P.Oxy.* 4.722.6 (29 Aug 91 or 107 CE); *P.Select.* 23.5 (end I CE); and *P.Turner* 19.3 (2 Feb 101 CE).

⁶² The papyri do not provide much information to help determine the relationship of slaves to their masters after manumission; cf. BIEŻUŃSKA-MALOWIST, «Les affranchis», 435, 441–442.

⁶³ Cf. ŁÓŚ, «La condition sociale», 1032; see also ALFÖLDY, „Freilassung“, 311–312. On the economic position and occupations of manumitted slaves, cf. ZELNICK-ABRAMOVITZ, *Not Wholly Free*, 180–183.

⁶⁴ ALFÖLDY, „Freilassung“, 312 (“eine raffiniertere Form der Ausbeutung”).

Κύριος as a title for Christ corresponds to the common designation of slave masters.⁶⁵ A coupling of this title with the slavery metaphors is inevitable. Given the dependency relationship between the freed persons and their patrons, we might ask if the addressees of Paul's letters could grasp their new situation as freed slaves who still owe respect and services to their master.⁶⁶ But the metaphor cannot be pressed too far. The Christians had not previously been under the authority of Jesus, but had just been liberated by him from an oppressive dependence of other 'masters' – sin, law and death. Moreover, they were completely redeemed, and their way of serving each other and God had nothing to do with the oppressive *operae* of the manumitted.

The legal procedures of emancipation could be more helpful in assessing the relationship between Christ as the master and the Christ-believers as the liberated slaves. Manumission by ransom seems to be an important aspect of the Pauline imagery. Christ steps into the role of a third person who 'pays' the price for the emancipation. As already seen, formally a free person paid the ransom on behalf of the slaves. Now Christ himself takes over this function and appears as the actual liberator. In basic terms, the manumission by ransom could have served to some extent as a model for Paul and as a functional pattern of understanding for his addressees. An expression like Χριστοῦ δοῦλος also suggests a possible association with the theme of sacral manumission, but this connection should not be pushed too far. The use of the κύριος title also fits well with the Paul's paradoxical understanding of slavery. Serving a God reevaluates the meaning of slavery, so that slavery can be seen as a form of "liberty."

A new element in Paul is the connection of death with the liberation of slaves. The Pauline imagery includes death as an essential part of his redemption theology. Death is an important moment in the framework of the testamentary manumission: The slaves were emancipated after the death of the testator. In the Pauline construction, emancipation by ransom seems to be expanded to include the role of death as a key element as was the case in testamentary manumission. Starting from the two most widespread forms of emancipation, the Pauline redemption theology appears as a combination of these two legal practices. We cannot know if this construction was the result of an intentional creative act of Paul. But we can assert with some plausibility that an average reader from the Mediterranean area, whether or not acquainted with the Jewish sacrifice tradition, was able to discern these aspects of Pauline preaching as elements of current legal practice.

⁶⁵ Paul uses the noun with this meaning in 1 Cor 7:22; cf. *UPZ* 1.79.9 (after 23 May 159 BCE): κύριος οὐκ ἀπολλύει τὸν αὐτ[ο]ῦ παῖδα ("a master doesn't ruin his own slave"); see also *P.Lille* 1.29.col1.4, 9, 30 (III BCE) and *BGU* 4.1125.16–34.34 (27 Mar–25 Apr 13 BCE).

⁶⁶ This has been suggested in relation to Gal 1:10 by TSANG, *From Slaves to Sons*, 70.

The different forms of emancipation (testamentary, by ransom, etc.) and the complexity and variability of the legal framework of slavery make direct and unambiguous links between the Pauline language and certain aspects of ancient slavery difficult. On the other side, his intention seems not to be at all the theological adaptation of a *particular* legal procedure.⁶⁷ Various terms and images from the same thematic field are taken up to describe a completely new situation in the existence of individuals and of the world as a whole. The examination of concrete practices can help to point out the articulations of this theological construction and to explore the possibilities of understanding from the perspective of the recipients of these letters. At the same time, this approach does not exclude the possibility that the Pauline metaphor may have been influenced by the Jewish tradition. In this essay, I have focused on the readers' perspective, and the probability that they would connect Paul's theological exposition of slavery and freedom with everyday legal practice in the Roman world.

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⁶⁷ As asserted by BYRON, *Recent Research*, 67: "The Pauline Epistles employ the slavery terminology more often in the construction of theology than in actual address of the institution of slavery".

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