Michael Welker (Ed.)

Quests for Freedom

Biblical – Historical – Contemporary

Neukirchener Theologie

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über http://dnb.d-nb.de abrufbar.

Umschlaggestaltung: Andreas Sonnhüter, Niederkrüchten
DTP: Hajo Kenkel
Gesamtherstellung: Hubert & Co., Göttingen
Printed in Germany
ISBN 978–3–7887–2831–1 (Print)
ISBN 978–3–7887–2832–8 (E-Book-PDF)
www.neukirchener-verlage.de

Table of Contents

2.
SELF-DETERMINATION AND CONCEPTS OF FREEDOM

3.
FREEDOM AS GIVEN AND SHAPED BY GOD

2.

SELF-DETERMINATION AND CONCEPTS OF FREEDOM

Introduction

Peter Lampe

The essays explore various concepts of freedom from philosophical, systematic-theological as well as historical perspectives. From a philosophical perspective, *Rüdiger Bittner* attempts a definition of freedom by analyzing its relationship to terms such as unimpeded, unresisted, uncoerced, not enslaved, not subjected to norms or to the laws of nature, or having no master. He checks the compatibility of determinism and freedom, and discusses various other relationships, such as between freedom of action and freedom of the will, between freedom and Kantian autonomy as well as "ordinary" autonomy, between negative freedom ("free from") and positive freedom ("free to"), and between political and individual freedom. As nobody is free in the sense of "without barriers that make one's doing or becoming difficult or impossible," it makes sense to talk about different degrees of freedom that distinguish humans. The essay holds that freedom does not mean to be exempt from natural or moral laws. Furthermore, free will is irrelevant for freedom. Autonomy—no matter whether Kantian or "ordinary"—and freedom are not essentially connected, and no distinction should be made between negative and positive freedom.

Risto Saarinen in his essay on freedom, sin and evil discusses the Lutheran doctrine of *simul iustus et peccator,* its relationship to freedom and its potential connection with the anthropology of modern

evolutionary theory, linking Christian anthropology with the sciences and modern problems of evil. Contrary to the shift in Luther studies in the early 20th century, whereby *simul iustus et pecator* would mean a permanent failure to do good and a lack of freedom, the essay argues that this does not reflect Luther's own view. *Simul iustus et peccator* cannot be reduced to its 20th-century outlook that gave rise to exaggerated interpretations. The essay moves on by considering "righteous and sinner" and human freedom in view of modern anthropology. The modern dualism present in the distinction between genotype and individual phenotype bears some resemblance with the theological tradition, with the notion of "flesh" resembling the genotype and the phenotypic person being a parallel to the somatic *oikos* (*ego*). In this biological perspective, freedom is reflected in the fight against diseases, which is a permanent struggle. The article presents various strategies for coping with suffering. Whereas *simil iustus et peccator* expresses the permanent struggle of a Christian, the *simul* of "suffering and virtue" embodied in these strategies describes the existence of many people and their continuous struggle with suprapersonal forces. Such struggles testify to human freedom because an intentional effort is required when encountering adversity.

Friederike Nüssel discusses Protestant concepts of freedom and their biblical foundations. Following a brief overview of Luther's ideas, the freedom concepts in the theologies especially of Karl Barth and Wolfhart Pannenberg are addressed. While freedom plays a key role in Barth's theology, particularly in the doctrine of revelation (the sovereign God's revelation is the realization of divine freedom, which thereby enables human freedom; perfect freedom and love are the substrates of the biblical attributes of God), Pannenberg focuses on God's freedom particularly actualized within history. For his theology, freedom is less foundational, with solely love being the substrate of God's attributes. Both theologians also diverge in their assessment of Biblical interpretation. While for Pannenberg historical critical exegesis is substantial for his theology, Barth holds that the members of the Church exercise the freedom given to the Church in interpreting Scripture in a way that is determined by the flow of Scripture rather than general methods of interpretation. For Barth, human freedom occurs in the fellowship of the Church. Despite the divergences, Nüssel highlights the points on which the two approaches converge. The article holds that the exercise of human freedom involves an independent opinion on questions of faith through individual evaluation of Scripture, with the support of the Church. This requires adequate argumentation, without which simplistic biblical interpretation does not serve the freedom of faith.

Peter Lampe presents various concepts of freedom from Greco-Roman times. The expansion of the eastern powers of Lydia and Persia

in the 6th and early 5th centuries gave reason to conceptualize *external, political freedom* in classical Greek times, both collective (the independence of the polis) and individual political freedom, with the latter, however, being limited to the exclusive circle of free male citizens within the Greek polis. In Hellenistic and Roman times, the importance of the polis as frame of reference faded, the individual's inner self as one horizon of thought became important and correspondingly the concept of *internal freedom*, with the Cynics and Stoics being at the forefront of this line of thought. A third part of the essay focuses on *free will*, with the caveat, however, that in antiquity will and determination were closely connected to intellectual functions and not considered an independent function of the human psyche as in modern times. Freedom of choice and decision-making, based in rational thinking, and the corresponding responsibility for one's own acts, were widely accepted, even by deterministic Stoics—a tension they had to solve. In the last part, the essay comments on the historical material, not only on the discriminatory character of the concepts, but also on the potentials and downsides of the shift of emphasis from external to internal freedom. Furthermore, the idea of freedom of decision is confronted with modern neurobiological insights.

Cyril Hovorun explores concepts of freedom in the eastern patristic tradition, focusing on τὸ αὐτεξούσιον (self-control, allowing non-determined behavior) and ἐλευθερία. The former is innate to everybody's human nature, while ἐλευθερία, freedom from sin and death, is a gift of God that needs to be struggled for—by choosing good by means of the free will given to everybody together with the αὐτεξούσιον. Thus, αὐτεξούσιον and ἐλευθερία cannot be separated. The teleological purpose of αὐτεξούσιον is ἐλευθερία, which in turn is only possible because of the αὐτεξούσιον and the free choice to become free in Christ. At the same time, the two freedoms interact through the mediation of the will, whereby the decision to do good and achieve ἐλευθερία requires the assistance of God's grace. Such co-activity is crucial to the Eastern Fathers' understanding of salvation. Thus, human freedom plays a key role in the salvation process, being a partner of the Divine in this respect.

Contributors

Abraham, Susan is Assistant Professor of Theological Studies at Loyola Marymount University Los Angelos, USA.

Bittner, Rüdiger is Professor em. of Philosophy at the University in Bielefeld, Germany.

Eckstein, Hans-Joachim is Professor of New Testament Studies at the University of Tübingen, Germany.

Gaventa, Beverly Roberts is Distinguished Professor of New Testament in the Department of Religion at Baylor University, USA.

Gertz, Jan Christian is Professor of Old Testament Studies at the University of Heidelberg, Germany.

Halama, Jindřich is Professor of the Department of Theological Ethics at the University of Prague, Czech Republic.

Hovorun, Cyril is Lecturer at the faculty of the Theological Academy of Kiev, Ukraine, and visiting professor at Yale Divinity School.

Hurtado, Larry W. is Professor em. of New Testament Language, Literature and Theology at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland.

Lampe, Peter is Professor of New Testament Studies at the University of Heidelberg, Germany.

Miller, Patrick D. is Professor em. of Old Testament Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, USA.

Nüssel, Friederike is Professor of Systematic Theology at the Heidelberg University, Germany.

Oeming, Manfred is Professor of Old Testament Studies at the University in Heidelberg, Germany.

Saarinen, Risto is Professor of Ecumenical Theology at the University of Helsinki, Finland.

Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth is Professor of New Testament Studies at Harvard Divinity School in Cambride, USA.

Schüssler Fiorenza, Francis is Professor of Roman Catholic Theological Studies at Harvard Divinity School in Cambridge, USA.

Smit, Dirk J. is Professor for Systematic Theology at Stellenbosch University, South Africa.

Soodalter, Ron serves on the Board of Directors of the Abraham Lincoln Institute, Maryland, USA.

Van Oorschot, Jürgen is Professor of Old Testament Studies at the Friedrich-Alexander-University in Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany.

Von Kellenbach, Katharina is Professor of Religious Studies and former Chair of the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at St. Mary's College of Maryland, the Honors College of the State of Maryland, USA.

Welker, Michael is Senior Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Heidelberg, Germany.

Yu, Carver T. is President and Professor in Dogmatic Theology at the China Graduate School of Theology in Hong Kong.