



<https://doi.org/10.26520/mcdsare.2018.2.116-123>

MCDSARE: 2018
International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on the
Dialogue between Sciences & Arts, Religion & Education

FREEDOM AS A GIFT, THE MISSION AND THE
RESPONSIBILITY OF THE HUMAN BEING TOWARDS
HIMSELF, HIS KIND AND THE WORLD

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Abstract

This article presents the freedom concept in the Christian understanding. Freedom is a gift, a mission and a responsibility of the man towards himself, others and the world. As a person, the human is a being open to communion with God and his fellows. This community aspect of the human being has its foundation in the communion and relationship with God. As God's Image, the human being cannot find his fullness except in relation to the perfect model, after which he was created. Thus, freedom is manifested by releasing evil and identifying with the good (with the model). The greatest gift God gives to man is freedom and love. Freedom of will, together with reason, is the image of God in man. It is the foundation of our ability to achieve defining perfection in Christian terms through holiness. In this state of holiness man is truly free.

Keywords: Christian thinking; the concept of freedom; man; moral life; world;

1. INTRODUCTION

Christian teaching states that man is a rational, free and responsible being. Between the work of man and the work of God, the divine grace or the energy of the Divine Being comes into being, and through which the divinity can come closer to man. Divine grace is an uncreated divine energy if we compare it with the world, man and all that exists. Divine grace and human freedom are in a close and inseparable connection. Divine grace is the means of man's material and spiritual fulfillment. In the Christian orthodox theology, there is no separation between God and his creation, and especially between God and man, between the created nature and divine grace. Nor is it in the terms of pantheism about this divine presence in creation, because divine grace is at the same time transcendent and immanent. Spiritual elements, ontologically inserted into the human nature by God the Creator, discover this interpenetration

of nature with the spiritual, the soul with the body, that forms a unity but without confusion. In order to overcome this problem, the patristic thinking specific to the orthodox theology made a distinction between the presence and work of God entering eternity as the absolute being, in which the principle of causality does not apply and nothing is included outside the Absolute Being, and the presence and work of God ad extra, God in his capacity as Creator, Savior. The difficulty occurs when we seek to understand the relationship between transcendence and immanence, between supernatural and natural, between man and God, which implies the concept of Christian freedom and human responsibility.

On the one hand, God's being, transcendent, unseen, eternal, originating from Himself, Who has an ontological self-reliance, remains inaccessible, is beyond being and name. The perception of God as He is (I am the One Who is) and to the extent that He reveals himself is given to the saints. On the other hand, God is not an impersonal substance (theism). Although unknown in His being, God is not an anonymous. He is a personal Being Out of Himself, revealing the forces of origin of creation and the ultimate destiny of the world.

Thus, God created the visible world of angels and the seen universe from nothing. The created world (inert matter, psychic structure, biological reality) is not the reflex or manifestation of the divine being (nor the hypostases of the Holy Trinity, which are not creatures). God's extra work in time and space is through uncreated divine energies: The universe is the effect of these energies. Of course, there is an irreducible difference between created and uncreated, between divine and human. But God has put into the natural world through His energies a movement to supernatural, an impetus to ontological fulfillment, an aspiration to the resemblance to God.

The man is a symbiosis between spiritual and material, the soul is immortal because man was created in the Image of God as a person, as a personal, unique and unrepeatable being. But man and creation nevertheless did not reach its final fulfillment, because of the man who, through selfish autonomy, became destructive, broke the power of divine grace. Yet man has the consciousness of his failure and spiritual becoming. The state of fulfillment of man and of the world was accomplished by Jesus Christ.

2. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY

According to Christian teachings, the fundamental elements that characterize man are as follows:

1. The divine origin and ontological unity of human nature. Man was created by God through a special act, as to the other creations (earth, plants, animals, and the cosmos). Man is not the product of evolutionary matter as in cosmology, nor the same as the divine being as in mythology, but has a special status given by his ontological relationship with God and the world, through his dual nature, constituted simultaneously - mortal body and immortal soul (epis. Npheseh), through which man is.

2. Man is a personal and unique subject, created in the image of God in order to acquire His Likeness or the state of perfection (Genesis 1:26). The development of God's image is the personal center of the human being, and the ontological reality through which man's relationship with God is realized.

3. The actual restoration of the human nature and the recapitulation of humans is possible only in and through Christ, the Image of the Father, the paradigm by which man was made (John 1.1), the true Man or Son of Man (Romans 5:15), Who perfects and harmonizes all creation.

Taking into account the free and rational nature of man, the Sacred Scripture presents it in different states depending on how his relationship with God was or how much His Image was actualized in him. Thus, we had an incomplete positive state before the Fall; a negative state due to the altering of the Image after the Fall, and a positive state at the Eschaton, made through the Christian redemption in which humanity is renewed and given its proper dignity and value. Etymologically, the term "Image" comes from the Hebrew word *tem* – shadow, reflection, and from the Greek image designating a plastic image such as an effigy or a statue understood in the Old Orient as a manifestation of an incarnation of the represented one, as it is showed in the Wisdom of Solomon: "For all the idols of the Gentiles have counted them as gods ... he, the man being mortal, does a lifeless thing with his wicked hands, he cherishes more than his idols because he is alive those not at all ... "(15, 14-18). The Image of God is based on the entire human nature, being the natural thing that makes the soul rational through freedom,

discernment, will and action, meant to lead the impulses of the body. The dignity of the human person results precisely from the fact that man, by nature, is the master of himself and leads rationally the whole world.

The soul is defined as the center of the human being which, through reason and freedom, generates love or affection. Justin the Martyr and Philosopher, in order to prove freedom and free will specific to the humans seen as rational beings, especially to argue man's error or fall into sin, brings a lot of evidence from Holy Scripture, plus the famous quote from Plato: "Man's fault who chooses; God is without blame - the Republic of X, 617 "(Ioan Rămureanu, 1958, 42).

Origen defines the original state of the divine Image of man in Heaven, and of the human nature, as mind - $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$, sin has made souls - $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ - the present state of the Image. The way from the Image to the likeness would be defined by the following plan: mind - $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ - soul - $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ - mind - $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$. He says that "by departing from its state and its worth, the mind has changed and is now called the soul, but if it improves and becomes correct, then it becomes a new mind ..." (Origen, 1982, 158). Before the man fell into sin, the soul was identified with the mind, understood as divine reasoning, and after the fall, the mind became a soul. Origen's logic leads to the understanding that the mind and the soul are not two different human components, but one in two different stages. As far as the freedom of the will is concerned, he wrote about all of them in his Third Book of *De principiis*, where he shows that freedom is specific to the rational soul through which man lives spiritually.

In freedom the human being manifests his or her personal dignity, because he is a created subject, a dialogue partner to receive divine love. A free man fulfills the rationality of his nature, tending toward the Absolute Person, in which the soul lives his true life: "My soul desires and breaks after the courts of the Lord," says the psalmist, "my heart and my body have rejoiced with the living Lord "(Psalm 83: 2).

In the attempt to define man as the Image of God, some of the Fathers identify it by his soul in general and especially in his mind. Apostolic Fathers, apologetics, Origen, Blessed Augustine, and others regard human nature as the entire soul the Image of God. Fathers of Church see the Image of God manifesting itself in all the functions and aspects of the human being. Sometimes the Image of God is linked to any quality of the soul, its simplicity or its immortality, or it is identified with the soul's ability to know God, to live in communion with Him, in the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The human person, as the Image of God, gathers in itself virtually, with the possibility of manifestation, the qualities of its Creator. Reason, freedom and "sovereignty" define the "Image" of God in man because they relate not to the "spiritual" nature of his, but to the ways in which the person differs from nature and constitutes in itself a hypostasis of life, freed from all natural determinism. "Man is a rational, free being, master over creation, because it is a personal existence, not because it is spirit" (Christos Yannaras, 2004, 20). These qualities always reveal the uniqueness and specificity of the human person as rational and consciousness and differentiate it from the other created beings.

3. MAN, RATIONAL BEING, OPEN TO FREEDOM AND LOVE

The source of human freedom is in God, in His love for man, that is why in love I can free myself from all that is alien and hostile to me, obtaining the ultimate freedom. Thus, freedom is one of the central ideas of Christianity.

Sacred Scripture is explained by and in the spirit of freedom. Thus, "you will know the truth and the truth will make you free" (John 8, 31-32). "I do not call you slaves, because the servant does not know what the master does, I will call you friends because all I heard from the Father I have made known to you "(John 15:15). "Whoever will look into the perfect law, the law of liberty" (James 1: 25). "You have been redeemed with great prize, not becoming the servants of men at all" (1 Corinthians 7:23). "Where is the Spirit of the Lord, there is freedom" (II Corinthians 3:17). "You are no longer a slave, but a son" (Galatians 4: 7). "Brethren, you have been called to liberty." (Galatians 5:13) Indeed, God from the beginning called man to freedom by living his life in freedom (Jesus Syrah XV, 14-17), freedom being the essential principle of life as Nicolai Berdyaev says, "Christianity presupposes the spirit of liberty and freedom of spirit, without this atmosphere it cannot exist" (Nicolai Berdyaev, 2009, 140).

The philosophical thinking has defined man primarily as a rational existence, self-conscious, by the phrase "cogito ergo sum" (Socrates, Descartes), because he thinks. The act of thinking is specific to the human being, directed at himself (by introspection), so as an act of self-consciousness (Dumitru Stăniloae, 1991, 134). "In a classical definition, freedom is the ability to choose" (Paul Evdochimov, 2009, 132), but St. Maxim the Confessor says, "the need to choose is a weakness inherent in the fall into sin" (St. Maximus the Confessor, 1983, 344).

"Freedom does not bear its own reasons, but it also creates them. It rises where the freest acts are the only full acts" (St. Maximus the Confessor, 1983, 345). In the teachings of the Holy Fathers freedom is not a choice between good and evil, but true freedom means the exclusive choice of the good and the liberation from any uncertainty about this choice. Thus the Holy Fathers show that true freedom, perfect freedom, is the freedom from the period before the Fall.

Of this, St John of Damascus explicitly speaks when he says, "God made man by sinless, free will, and free will ... That is, the power to remain and to progress in good, being helped by the divine gift, as well as the power to turn from good to evil, which God allows for the reason that man was endowed with free will. There is no virtue what is done by force" (St. John Damascene, 1938, 99).

In Christian thinking, the patriarch Callistus of Constantinople (14th century) exclaimed: "I love, therefore exist," showing that in communion through love, and not through Descartes' selfish individualism, every person must live his existence. These considerations are accentuated in the 20th century by professor Dumitru Stăniloae, the Romanian theologian. Summing up these words "I think so exist" and "I love, so exist" are most accurately expressed by "I love those next to me and I am loved, so they exist." That is man's mission to love consciously, rationally and freely. Love is built on love. Of course, we are not talking about the perverted character of love, but about the real form in which man remains a person and not an object used and consumed.

Only in love the human being is truly free, and this state means the special relationship with God and especially with his fellow human beings in which God is present, because every man is created in the image of God. Therefore, the man created in the Image of God as a personal being due to intrinsically inexhaustible character, proves to be an endless existence, developed in social relations and especially with God. That is why interpersonal life receives and communicates new meanings, meanings and states of soul because it involves the relationship with divinity. Man in himself always lives in infinity, but in potency as a target to be achieved. In this state is active the divine image of man that generates tension to perfection. Life is a reality of love and freedom; it is a gift of God that makes man responsible.

The quality of the person of man implies freedom from human nature. Human person or hypostasis means quality and state of freedom and love. Speaking of the difference between "person" and "individual", father Stăniloae said that "compared to the individual, the person lives in communion with others in such a way that their lives are intertwined: the person does not know where his life begins and where it ends up the other ... as in a continuum" (Dumitru Stăniloae, 1993, 45).

Man cannot be, cannot exist without the one next to him, and the other cannot exist without it. There is no joy in an isolated and separate life of the fellow. No one can live alone. Neither the selfish, the individualist, the narcissist who feels good without the others; he must think about someone else that is inferior to him. "Happiness is in communion, knowing that you are not alone, that someone cares about you and that someone is interested and involved in your life" (Dumitru Stăniloae, 1993, 45).

Christian anthropological thought is centered on the notion of person. Man is a unique and personal being. Man is a being characterized by: a rational and free soul, a self-sustained and unique unity, a tendency towards communion, a value-bearing and open to values; we can define the person as a spiritual hypostasis, a bearer of values that tends to participate in the world of values through communion. "The question of freedom, says Nicolai Berdyaev, is actually the question of the fundamental principle of being and life, the understanding of being depends on the freedom that is before the being. Freedom is a spiritual and religious category" (Nicolai Berdyaev, 2009, 138).

Freedom of man is an inner attribute of the spirit. Human freedom must neither be confused with the divine freedom that is absolute, nor with absolute indeterminism. Our freedom is not an absolute freedom, but it is specific to us, as God's creatures, and it is concurrent in our psychophysical structure. It is capable of developing or shrinking.

4. FREEDOM AND LOVE THE FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY LIFE

The greatest gift God gives to man is active freedom through love. Freedom of will, together with reason and love, is the image of God in man. "The God of Revelation, the Christian God is love, namely love-agaph ... meaning love from the top to the bottom, descending" (Constantin Galeriu, 1991, 141). That is why love, which is not imposed on people by itself, has its beginning not in men, but in God, the source of absolute love that attracts those who love Him. Man cannot ascend to the all people loving God without growing and acquiring His love for men, he cannot complete himself in communion with God without making himself more of a gift towards others.

Therefore, the realization of communion cannot be done, as in the case of knowledge, only through love. This is the only and viable way of accomplishing communion, for there is nothing besides love. "The more people are united by love, the more they are more dear to each other, and in the case of human beings, the more they are united, the more mysterious one is. That's why a growing delicacy stops the person who loves to treat roughly the loved one. The more they unite, the more they marvel at each other and behave more with one another than each other" (Dumitru Stăniloae, 1991, 205).

The dialogue with people began God Himself when He created us creatures endowed with the capacity and duty to engage with Him and with us. Every need to communicate with each other, to talk to each other, to expect answers, originates in these gifts that we have received from our Creator. The basis for the dialogue between us is the need for dialogue with Him. We cannot be without others because we cannot be without God.

In order to be able to enter into a full communion with you "I need to communicate certain meanings to you, and if you listen carefully I gain myself a new understanding of them. I gain a deeper meaning, I become transparent as a subject through the fact that I enter in the depths of your subject, or through the fact that you open freely the depths of you subject. You are my hope and my strength, you strengthen yourself, and so do I, even through the fact that I know that I am your hope and strength. Your belonging and mine to a common us, makes things in such a way that when you cry out for my help, I feel that something in me that belongs to me is suffering too, and if I hit you, I deprive myself of something more essential than if I have lost an object that was exclusively mine ... No one can know how much he or she values for another, but he or she can know how much another person values for him" (Dumitru Stăniloae, 2002, 363). The dialogue between a person and another person is under the power of God, as the One who takes care of our people and has made us so important to each another and capable of helping us and enriching our existence one by one. The human word as a means of openness and conscious and free communication is a way of strengthening and developing our nature by realizing its closeness to the infinite divine nature. The Word unites and opens people through communion. It enlarges a person's universe, opening up his or her horizon, partly apart from another person. The Word opens people to others in the light of the infinite love of the One in whom there is supreme living and love.

Man is a relational existential fact towards communion. St. John the Damascene shows that God made man "without sin in his nature and with free will, but without sin not as inaccessible to sin, but as one who did not have in his nature the desire to sin, but had this possibility in free choice. That is, he was free to stand and progress in good, helped by divine grace, but so was he to deviate from good and be evil. God has allowed this for the sake of freedom, for what is done by force is not virtue" (St. John Damascene, 1993, 51). The same idea is highlighted by Diadochos of Photiki. He says freedom of will is given "in the will of the rational soul, who is ready to move both for good and for evil." Spiritual effort consists of the effort to determine freedom "to be ready for good only", thereby drawing the "remembrance" of evil in this way.

Climbing on the scale of maximal unity with God or deification through grace is a communion effort that strengthens man's sense of a responsible partner in communion and strengthens his freedom from depersonalizing and egocentric passions. Only in this intimacy of the longing for God, in the expanse towards the absolute personal, the human hypostasis can truly develop and put the seal of resemblance on its face. Without this launch of the human Eros to the divine Eros who meets his personal infinity, man's personal consciousness would reach its end "either by gradually immersing himself in a

desolate I deprived of all relations in the Platonic-Origenist sense, or Nirvanic, or by self-training in the dizzy vortex of passions, in which man forgets even about that I that has exist the communion"(Dumitru Stăniloae, 1978, 401). In Christ, God unites with the human nature, and communion is maximal and unique, for communion is the Word, and the one who encircles the human nature is the divine hypostasis.

By focusing on other people and the world as God's work, and purifying from passions by cultivating virtues, man develops true communion that allows him to understand the divine Absolute and to contemplate the depths of the people and the meanings of the world. Given that the love of persons and of God as a Person is the culmination of the cultivation of virtues, means that the one who wishes to attain the resemblance must be engaged in the ascending to the infinite light through the impulse of loving self-indulgence. "*Amo ergo sum* should be man's response to God is love. Between God and the human soul it cannot be anything bigger than to love and to be loved "(Paul Evdokimov, 1999, 64).

Through freedom, man has been given the ability to form himself, to choose his own ways, and to move on his own initiative, to the evermore complete realization of the good, which at the same time means his own perfection and supreme happiness. Man gains the perfect form of his life, realizes himself entirely, not by unconscious organic growth, but by the free decision of his will. This is the nobility of man: he is called to make his own life. "I say that man was created freely, but obeys to whom he likes," says Methodius of Olympus, adding that the freedom of the human being is a gift that man received from the Creator "in order to obtain gifts even more that is, to be worthy to receive from God something in addition to what he now has. "(Methodius of Olympus, 1984, 228).

"God, wishing to honor man, endowed him with the faculty of knowing the higher things and to do what he wants, then urged him to do good without lacking free will, but only by pointing it out" (Methodius of Olympus, 1984, 229).

So, the essence of freedom results from the ability to choose between more possibilities for achieving good. It is straightened from varn to good, functioning normally when it is decided for good. The choice of evil (transvestite for good) is not the essence of freedom, but is a deficiency, an imperfection, an abuse, by which the will (freedom) is perverted, being directed, by deception or not, in a direction opposite to the natural good development, after which it strikes all the human being (and therefore his will), but pointing all its faculties and impulses in a contradictory direction to its natural state. Self-determination for good is the normal exercise of freedom; it is fulfillment and happiness, while self-determination to evil is abnormal, ruining and unhappy exercise. Because of the first deficiency of freedom, the ancestral sin, the freedom of the adamic man who lives under the vision of history is no longer freedom for the better, but freedom that oscillates between good and evil, yet retaining its fundamental tendency for good.

"Will is a function of the flesh" (Paul Evdokimov, 1999, 59), which connects man with the needs of the world and of his nature, and only a renunciation of his own will leads to true freedom. The truly free person tends to contain all the human wires according to the model of the triumphal life, for Christianity is "an imitation of the nature of God" (Saint Gregory of Nyssa). Man is free because it is the image of divine freedom: "God honored man by giving him liberty, "that good belongs to him who chooses it, no less than he who laid the roots of good in the wings" (Paul Evdokimov, 1995, 52). Freedom is the metaphysical foundation of the will, and even when it is placed inside the "Opus Dei" it does not cease to be true freedom.

5. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MAN TO HIMSELF AND CREATION

Man is an existence in the face of a continual change, he must choose between what is good for himself or for others, and what impoverishes, narrows and twists his being. The first aspect is promoted by responsibility, and the second is the weakening of responsibility. Regarding the human action, the question of conscience is always raised, must I do that or not? There is a constant emphasis on a certain guidance of freedom, this being totally alien to dishonest beings. Human freedom must have a meaningful, continuous filling of the human being with the grace of the Holy Spirit, of directing all its energy toward the fulfillment of the will of God.

We cannot talk about responsibility without freedom. If man was not free, he would not be responsible, and if he were not a responsible person, he would not have been free. Freedom of man is often spoken of as an attitude unrelated to any condition as a purpose and not a precondition as a cause. Various theories have been promoted that consider that man frees himself from nothing or that it is a product of human freedom (Dumitru Stăniloae, 1995, 74).

Often, man refuses to bind his freedom to responsibility, for it seems to him a restriction or a diminution of freedom. Freedom without responsibility is only a pretext for switching from one passion to another. Regarding such freedom, Apostle Paul says: "You live as free men, but not as if you had the freedom as a covering of cunning, but as slaves of God" (1 Peter II, 16).

Man is a free and responsible being. There can be no responsibility for man without freedom and vice versa. On the one hand, freedom is a gift of God to man, and on the other hand, it is updated and strengthened by man. Today's philosophies and life ideas promoting freedom, human rights to exclusion and creation, exclude his moral responsibility and everything is subject to pleasure and consumption. But he is the freedman or rather the subject, ideologically and economically institutional. All these are an illusion of liberty that makes man a servant of corruption, for what overcomes you, that it rules you "(2 Peter 2:19). Freedom without Borders is in Christian life: "Stand firm in the liberty with which Christ has made us free, and do not get caught again in the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5: 1); "For ye, brethren, have been called to liberty; only to use freedom as an opportunity to serve the body, but to serve one another through love "(Galatians 5:13).

Responsibility cannot obtain the true dimension unless it is with God, and its efficiency, so understood, does not only concern the time of earthly life but extends into eternity. Responsibility to God is described very suggestively in Holy Scripture: "If ye shall obey the voice of the Lord your God, and do all his commandments, all the blessings shall come upon you ... and they shall be done upon you ..." (Deuteronomy 28 , 1-2). "And if you will not obey ... and you will not compel to fulfill all His commandments and judgments ... all the curses will come upon you and you will come ..." (Deuteronomy 28:15).

Human responsibility does not refer only to the human being or to others, but encompasses the cosmos between, because he is inseparable from it through his body. He maintains his body through matter or transforms matter of the cosmos into his body, consciously living in the soul through his senses. Thus, nature becomes the content of his soul life, not exclusively rejecting it.

6. CONCLUSION

Man, "the Image of God," is meant to realize the full resemblance with God, man being a rational and free being that is, endowed with reason, sentiment and free will, capable of communion with his Model, God. So, our being has the capacity to maintain itself, as it was made in God's Image, in a living relationship with Him, and this relationship is possible because God has made man from the beginning related to Himself, or better said in a conscious and free relationship with Himself through the breath of life, through the living soul (1 Corinthians 15, 45).

Freedom is not confused with free will. Free will is included in freedom or, more precisely, this is the first step in the acquisition of a full freedom. Free will is the power to choose between different purposes and means, motives and mobiles, good or bad. It is the essential function for a man to be the author of his conduct. All individuality and personality stand in free will. You have to choose the good but to do it. The foundation of Christian freedom is the person, and its true meaning is given by Orthodoxy. It consists of a perfect harmony between the work of grace and the work of man, the purpose being the perfection of the human being, its fulfillment in God, and its deification.

Man has, first of all, complete freedom of choice, to follow God or to deny him, to choose between good and evil, to choose between life and death.

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