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DIVINE FREEDOM – THE BASIS OF THE REGENERATION OF HUMAN FREEDOM

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ABSTRACT

Recently, it has been noticed more and more clear that people are looking at any cost to prove that they have freedom. Freedom is inscribed, in fact, in the human being. Contemporary philosophers, contemporary writers speak in their works about human freedom. Moreover, there are also in our country certain journals which, in spite of the titles they carry, prove this fact. But, through these cultural means and mass media, as well as through many others, man seeks freedom apart from God. Our freedom consists in no longer being slaves to sin, to passions.

Keywords: freedom; depression; passion; torment; healing.

INTRODUCTION

In the current context, in which, contrary to divine Revelation, culture, philosophy, ideologies, science and even some theologies separate the unseen from the seen, spirit from matter, soul from body, grace from God and at the same time from man, God Himself from man, man from his fellow man by promoting individualism instead of communion and deal with the issue of human freedom ignoring its connection with God, it is natural and necessary to emphasize the union willed by God between man and the cosmos, between man and God, between man and his fellow men and between the parts of man himself.

This union on all planes, as a convergent order of creation, was designed with the capacity for dialogue in its bosom and with God and it is sustained by God through grace; however, it is man who chooses whether to accept or reject God's call. Adam and Eve misunderstood freedom and lost grace and with it they lost the possibility of experiencing true freedom. Death is nothing but the consequence of man's separation from God, a separation which in turn produced ruptures at all levels of existence. In man himself, these separations generated divergent tendencies between soul and body, and the rupture between them materialized through biological death. By breaking his unity and communion with God and fellow humans and the harmony with creatures and created things, man depersonalized himself. Incapable of personal relationships, man has lost grace, that is, the source of his living relationship with God.

The people in heaven - Adam and Eve - had the original state, without sin and with almost complete freedom, like God's complete and natural freedom, only with the requirement to fulfill His will. And after He built "all good", we learn that "God rested on the 7th day" (Genesis 20, 11), while the Holy Apostle Paul, referring to man's rest in "God's rest", i.e. quiet man in communion with God, asks man "to enter into the rest of God"

(Hebrews, chapter 4). The apostle reasons that the man who, no longer free - in the sense that he is no longer in the right freedom, that of good and the relationship with the Creator - commits many sins, many unnatural deeds, accepts and even accomplishes much evil, and then he can no longer be into "God's rest" nor "shall enter into God's rest" neither here nor in eternity.

As the fall affected the human nature hypostasized in Adam, so the healing of the nature had to be done in a person, since not the nature, but the person is the bearer of self-consciousness and the responsible subject. Since the sin committed by the human person affected the human nature, depersonalizing it, its actualization and personalization had to be accomplished also in a person. This time, however, an eternal and universal person was needed, a person who is both man and God. These qualities are not met by any historical person except for Christ. The actualization and personalization of the human nature in Christ consists in His nearness to God through His union with the divine nature in the Person of the incarnate Son of God; they consist in elevating human nature to the deified state of nature, in restoring its content by imprinting in it the aspiration towards God and openness to fellow human beings and in the activation of all valences and creative capacities placed in it, together with the creation of man. Human nature was personalized in Christ as a result of the fact that its bearer is One of the supreme Persons, Who made the human model of existence a way of personal manifestation, in which the supreme free will of God was imposed. One of the consequences of the hypostatic union in the Person of Christ is that the regeneration of human freedom was achieved on the basis of divine freedom. Jesus Christ was not a simple example of holiness like the righteous and prophets of the Old Testament, but He offered human nature a "spotless" hypostasis, in which the human will was not closed to the divine will, but helped by it, followed it freely as the baby obeys the mother "knowing" that everything she wants is for his own good.

The deliverance from death was due to the sanctity that Christ's human nature reached, as well as the fact that Christ was not a mere man, but man and true God. Thus, as God, the Savior defeated the devil, the cause of Adam's fall. However, this victory was not achieved brutally, but according to God's wisdom. God defeated him without suspending his freedom, therefore, without contradicting Himself in His goodness, but achieved this victory over sin through the holiness which entered His human nature united with the divine in the unique Hypostasis (divine) of the Logos.

1. DIVINE FREEDOM

We say about God that He is free because He identifies Himself with freedom or because He contains it in Himself as in a spring. We also affirm that God is free because he does good from eternity, according to his good will¹, so He does not act under the constraint of a necessity of His nature (in a negative sense²) or external to Him.

¹ Luigi Pareyson, *Ontologia libertății. Răul și suferința*, translated by Ștefania Mincu, Editura Pontica, Constanța, 2005, p. 62: "To say <<God exists>> means to say: <<good was chosen>>, good was chosen ab aeterno, evil was defeated ab aeterno . God is nothing but the choice of good, the choice of good is the very existence of God".

² God does not act in contradiction with His being, but at the foundation of the Godhead there is a Person (the Father), whom we think of as inseparable from the Son and the Holy Spirit. By this we do not introduce a separation between being and person, but only distinguish them from each other. They are two realities that cannot be understood separately from each other, because by definition the being is the ontological content of the person, and the person is the concrete hypostasis of the common being of several individuals (see also Vladimir Lossky, *Teologia mistică a Bisericii de Răsărit* , trans. by Vasile Răducă, Editura Bonifaciu,

Divine freedom is also observed in what concerns the existence of God. Therefore, God is above it, because the Father always gives birth to the Son and gives birth to the Holy Spirit in an outpouring of love and absolute happiness. God does not receive existence as something foreign to Him from an impersonal substance, but existence is the power of eternal love between the Persons of the Holy Trinity. Moreover, God can dispose of existence according to the goodness of His own will. He shares it with those He wills (through creation) and those to whom He makes Himself known (existence as eternal life) (I Timotei 2, 4; Ioan 17, 3).

Therefore, freedom is a feature par excellence of the Trinity, without which God cannot be conceived. Freedom can be correlated especially with divine omnipotence, although the full and eternal way of manifesting divine freedom does not consist in the abuse of power, but in love, that is, in the self-giving of the Triune Persons to Each Other without quantitative or qualitative limitations³.

Another aspect of divine freedom is the conformity of the divine will with His being. Thus, God wills only that which reflects His unbroken and substantial loving relationship of the Father and of the Holy Spirit. Of this true love, of this absolute and continuous appreciation, by which the Persons of the Holy Trinity surround Each Other, or - better said - two to the third, God willed to be part of other existences as well (not through being, because only God is not created, but in gift, by grace), because in *this is the divine freedom: not to close oneself in selfish and all-protective boundaries, but to manifest in the world and in the relationship with man through uncreated energies*.

A freedom that is fenced off to preserve itself, so as not to be lost in favor of another person, is not a real freedom, but a burden and a passion. Divine freedom is that which divides infinitely, without diminishing, and fills those who receive it with the same altruistic and beneficent will as the Persons of the Holy Trinity.

It must be said that by God's will man receives life, and by His will man advances in existence. But, man must participate in the freedom of God through the freedom with which he was endowed in order to acquire communion with the Creator. Therefore, we can say that God wants man to want what He wants. The image of God planted in man from creation achieves the likeness by internalizing and experiencing God's will. Therefore, what He is by being, God wants man to achieve through will and reason.

For Father Stăniloae, man is a paradoxical being precisely because, being created from nothing, but in the image of God, he is called to infinite growth in the likeness of his Creator. God does not oblige him, but leaves him the freedom to accept or refuse the invitation. It is created free, but with the possibility of becoming even freer, or even less free. Freedom is the power with which the face opens up or not to likeness: "Man is created free, but he is also given the power to make himself more and more free, or less and less free, but, keeping the opinion that he is free, that is, to use changefully or not to use his freedom. For him, freedom is a power that he can preserve and develop, but he can also let it weaken, allowing himself to be controlled by the unilateral desires of his lower behaviors. Man is free, but he promotes his true freedom only by strengthening his being as an omnilateral unity of his contrasting components in God, from whom they all come...Through freedom,

București, 1998, p. 152). We find this idea in Vladimir Lossky expressed as follows: "*The idea of Person implies freedom from nature, the person is free from his nature, he is not determined by his nature*", p. 151.

³ Jurgen Moltmann, *Treimea și Împărăția lui Dumnezeu*, trans. by Daniel Munteanu, Editura Reintregirea, Alba-Iulia, 2007, p. 81.

man is called to raise his integral being in God more and more...Freedom makes him man, a being who is part in a special way with God, with the Absolute"⁴.

For Western theologians, the relationship between divine freedom and grace is non-existent, because their teaching is focused on created grace, the Persons of the Holy Trinity cannot manifest Their freedom in relation to humans, because created grace is not the means by which God can come into contact with His creatures. Moreover, Anselm of Canterbury supports the theory that the definition of freedom contains an impediment; the definition of freedom cannot be applied to God and good angels because neither God nor angels can sin like men and fallen angels. So, the definition of freedom, according to Anselm of Canterbury, in order to be able to embrace all its cases, must not include the power to sin. "Since it seems that free will is incompatible with God's grace, predestination, and foreknowledge, I wish to find out what freedom of choice itself is, and whether we always have it. For if the freedom of choice means being able to sin and "being able" not to sin, as some usually say, and if we always have it, why do we sometimes need grace? And if we don't always have it, why is sin imputed to us, if we sin without free will?"⁵

Another great Latin theologian, Blessed Augustine, has a similar theory in this regard. "Free will is constantly present (even after the fall), freedom cannot be acquired after the fall except under the empire of grace. Man is always free (in the minor sense), but once he has fallen he cannot be free (in the major sense) unless he is freed (by grace)⁶"⁷.

2. HUMAN FREEDOM

a) Edenic human freedom

At his origin, according to the testimonies of the writings of the Old Testament, man possessed freedom accompanied by a happy life. This freedom had the following characteristics: purity, light, altruism. It was pure freedom, because man, without sin, acted according to his nature and by consulting the divine will. It was also an enlightened freedom, since, in his decisions, man's reason was enlightened by the all-wise divine grace, choosing only what was good and useful for his spiritual growth. It was, finally, an altruistic freedom, because the options of the first people had in mind the good of the other, the harmony with God and the humanization of creation. Thus, even when Eve chose to eat from the forbidden tree, she did so in order to acquire something better (the likeness to God - that's right, in a competitive sense) and out of the altruistic desire to offer it to her husband, Adam, this unique "chance" (man's disobedience to the divine command to "not eat" from the forbidden tree⁸ had consequences at the antipode of the goal proposed by the protoparents at the devil's urging).

⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu*, Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, Craiova, 1987, pp. 50-51.

⁵ Anselm de Canterbury, *Despre libertatea alegerii*, trans. by Laura Maftei, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2006, pp. 10-11: „Quoniam liberum arbitrium videtur repugnare, et praedestinationi, et praescientiae Dei, ipsa libertas arbitrii quid sit nosse desidero, et utrum illam semper habeamus. Si enim libertas arbitrii est posse peccare et non peccare, sicut a quibusdam solet dici, et hoc semper habemus quomodo aliquando gratia indigemus? Si autem hoc non semper habemus, cur nobis imputatur peccatum, quando sine libero arbitrio peccamus?”

⁶ „There is a proper meaning and an improper meaning of grace. In an improper sense, it designates all the gifts of God; only in this sense is nature a grace. In its proper sense, grace represents "the ensemble of God's free gifts whose purpose is to make possible the salvation of man from the fallen state of nature" – Etienne Gilson, *Introduction a l' etude de Saint Augustin*, Publishing House Vrin, Paris, 1949, p. 198.

⁷ Augustin, *De libero arbitrio*, trans. Gheorghe I. Șerban, Publishing House Humanitas, București, 2003, p. 123.

⁸ Augustin, *Opera omnia*, volume II, *De libero arbitrio*, First book, XXXIV, p. 191: „Sin or iniquity is not the desire of bad natures, but the abandonment of good ones, as it is written in the Scriptures: All God's creation is

Although the first people (Adam and Eve) possessed freedom, i.e. the power not to sin, this was not a good acquired by them or for any merit of theirs, but was a perfectible given through their advancement in communion with God. Therefore, man's freedom in Heaven should be reported and understood in close connection with its source, with God, and with man's ultimate goal, perfection. Although the paradisiacal man possessed pure freedom, this gift was received by man from God through the act of creation and, although it was a beginning of perfection, it had to be appropriated by man, in order to become a "natural" fact (belonging to nature).

Edenic freedom was in fact a charisma that offered man the support to shape himself "in the direction he wanted" (that is, in a personal way; people did not have to progress according to a predetermined cliché), as well as the ability to expand his to infinity (maximum) the valuable potencies planted in human nature by the Creator. Therefore, not being a definitive (or imposed) given, but dependent on the will expressed personally by man (on his free choices), Edenic human freedom is corruptible, that is, it could be diverted (used badly) or even lost (as it happened, then when it was understood and desired in a selfish sense - "outside/without" God. This loss of the state of freedom, synonymous with the state of sin, had both spiritual consequences (slavery to sin, inclination to sin, spiritual death) and and physical (physical death), introducing irrationality into the human being, even if not to an irreversible extent.

b) Post-Edenic human freedom

The fall from man's freedom "is and will forever remain a mystery"⁹, although the reality of its consequences is undeniable. After the sin of the forefathers, along with the distortion of the image of God in man, the freedom of the human will was also perverted. Man no longer naturally tends to fulfill God's will, but his current "natural" is a state inclined against God, separated from God. Therefore, human freedom is no longer objective (illuminated by divine grace), but its degree of purity reflects the spiritual state of man, which differs from case to case. We can say that, while Edenic human freedom overlapped with free will, this time, in the post-Edenic state, free will is a corrupted state of freedom, in which man vacillates between good and evil.

This oscillation between choosing good and evil is not reduced to a state of indecision, but its seriousness is that man, by sinning, gave the devil the power to act on him more than God. In this way, we must understand why the salvation that humanity wanted could not come from men, because "all have gone astray, together they have become unworthy; there is no one who does kindness, not even one" (Psalm 13, 3; 52, 4).

However, before approaching the liberation of man from the bondage of evil, let us observe what transformations man as a person, in general, and human freedom, in particular, underwent through sin.

The human person is not a ready-made given, but it is a given that must be strengthened as man gets to know his Creator more and recognizes Him as protector, source of life and meaning of existence. Therefore, as an easily understandable consequence,

good (I Timothy 4, 7); and by this any tree that God planted in Paradise is, of course, good. Man, therefore, did not desire the evil nature when he touched the forbidden tree, but, leaving what was better, he himself committed the evil deed. Indeed, the Creator is better than any creature He has made: Whose commandment was not to be forsaken, that the forbidden might not be touched, however good, because, leaving the better, the good of the creature was desired, which was touched against the commandment of the Creator. And so, God did not plant an evil tree in Paradise, but He Himself was better, Who prevented that one from being touched".

⁹ Hristu Andrusos, *Simbolica*, trans. by Patriarhul Iustin, Editura Anastasia, București, 2003, p. 245.

through unbelief, violation of God's commandment and rebellion, man acted, in Heaven, exactly contrary to the natural logic (of his nature), separating himself from all good. This was possible because man had not yet acquired God's grace as a personal good, as an expression of his freedom of choice, but only as a gift from God. All this immediately fell upon man, who fell as a person, remaining only with the potential data, but lacking the power to appropriate this data, which came to him from God. Moreover, the given itself (the face) became something unclear, because man lost the meaning of life and was eager to make actual what had been offered to him as potency.

This chasm between God and man, the cause of which was man's unhealthy choice, must be understood spiritually. It is not a neutral state between good and evil, but, on the contrary, it is a state at the antipode of God, in which man retains from the Edenic state only the consciousness of dependence on someone stronger than him. For, "God has not given anyone the freedom to do evil, otherwise punishment is not justified"¹⁰.

The Fathers of the Church testify almost unanimously that the origin of evil must be sought in general, in *the freedom of the being who commits it*. "There is no evil, or more precisely, evil exists only when it is committed", writes Diadoch of Photiceia¹¹. Evil has no place among essences, but it is not just a lack either; there is activity in it. Evil is not a nature, but a state of nature. It appears as a disease, as a parasite that exists in the virtue of nature from which it feeds. More precisely, evil is a state of the will of this nature; it is the will of a fallen being towards God, and primarily, it is the spiritual sin of the angel¹². Therefore, evil has its origin in the world of angels who inoculated it in the world of men, as a morbid state of the nature of their will. Lucifer's attitude reveals to us the root of all sin: *pride as rebellion against God because he wanted to be himself, by himself, God*. We ask ourselves if the man who wants autonomy and emancipation, at any cost, before God, does not want the same thing? The Russian theologian, Vladimir Lossky, points out that the root of sin resides in „*Lucifer's thirst for self-deification and his hatred of grace*”¹³. Remaining dependent on God in his very being, for his being was created by God, the rebellious spirit acquires a hatred of being, a frenzy of destruction, a thirst for the impossible nothing, since only the earthly world remains open to him, he tries to destroy here the divine plan and failing in the attempt to destroy creation, tries to deform it on all levels through duplicitous, pluralistic and relativistic attitudes. The drama that began in heaven continues on earth, as the faithful angels close the gates of heaven, refusing to be swayed by the fallen angels¹⁴.

Freedom, meant to be a blessing for the "spiritual world" in heaven and on earth, through the misuse of the subjects in question, became a condemnation, a drama and even a tragedy. Both angels and men were created free and endowed with this great gift of freedom. Here is the greatness and the tragedy of man. From here comes the good and the bad in the world¹⁵.

¹⁰ Augustin, *De libero arbitrio*, p. 21.

¹¹ Cf. Vladimir Lossky, *Introducere în teologia ortodoxă*, trans. by Lidia and Remus Rus, Editura Sophia, București, 2006, p. 105.

¹² Ion Stoica, "Repere teologice și filosofice privind existența și lucrarea diavolului și a „răului” în om și în lume – eseu”, in *Almanah Bisericesc – Studii și articole de teologie, istorie și misiune creștină*, Editura Arhiepiscopiei Târgoviștei, 2010, p. 45.

¹³ Vladimir Lossky, *Introducere în teologia ortodoxă*, p. 106.

¹⁴ Ion Stoica, "Repere teologice și filosofice privind existența și lucrarea diavolului și a „răului” în om și în lume – eseu”, p. 46.

¹⁵ Ion Stoica, *Adevărul, lumea și omul*, Editura ASA, București, 2006, passim.

Historical experience shows us that everywhere and always the abuse of freedom gives rise to evil and suffering in the world. According to the Biblical Revelation, evil is sin and sin is the abuse of freedom. Here is the beginning of evil and the origin of suffering in the world, according to the Church Fathers and Christian philosophers. Freedom, when it degenerates into arbitrariness and anarchy, gives birth to evil and evil is pain, suffering, misery and death. But freedom is not only the origin of evil, but also of good. The personal relationship with God (grace), the Spirit of God and the Truth are the constituents of our Christian freedom and this means that our freedom is not absolute like God's, but is responsible, that is, a gift of God made to man to give quality to the relationship itself with Him. Where these are not, there is no true freedom and without it there is neither good nor bad. Good and evil have their beginning in the world, in the field of moral freedom, in the creative power of the free spirit, which preserves the relationship with God and does good or refuses this relationship and does evil¹⁶.

Evil itself does not exist with the title that Good exists as a principle in God. Evil is nothing but a bad use of good, meaning by this, what exists. It does not exist in itself as a principle of existence, but having grounds in the freedom with which angels and man were endowed, more correctly, in free will, it constantly tends to steal one or another concrete existence, in order to exist through it or more precisely, under its guise, as "someone". To the extent that it possesses it in order to exist, it destroys it, so that according to the divine reason, evil does not become existential¹⁷ and without limit¹⁸, but to remain only incidental, irrational and involuntary, as it penetrated and manifests itself in historical existence. Out of pride and disobedience or abuse of freedom. The luminary of the morning became Satan. He did not exist from the beginning, that is, from creation, but came "out of pride, bad will and bad use" of the gift of freedom. The abuse of freedom he exercised caused his downfall, but also limited the time and space of existential action. He was given "hell" as his abode, and "the world and history" as his sphere of action. Being a deceiver par excellence, Satan tries to make us believe that he too can create and that is why he maintains in us the illusion of an objective evil, of which he is the author. In fact, this is only a mirage of the demon, a protection of our errors. It is true that after many generations of sinners in history or sins in a life, evil will end up revealing a kind of apparent but active self-consistency, a counter-nature, but it has become a second nature that means nothing else than anti-nature or distortion. While we talk a lot about evil in general and often in impersonal language, Holy Scripture speaks less about evil in general than about the Evil One.¹⁹

Thus, in its post-Edenic state, the human will often choose contrary to nature and aims to satisfy the desires of the body, to the detriment of the needs of the soul. This reversal of roles between body and soul²⁰, caused by sin, affected to a significant extent the free will

¹⁶ Ion Stoica, "Repere teologice și filosofice privind existența și lucrarea diavolului și a „răului” în om și în lume – eseu”, p. 47.

¹⁷ That is, to hold on to God's creation.

¹⁸ Death appears as a limitation of evil. "...so that wickedness may not be deadly...". See the prayer of release at the funeral service from ***, *Molitfelnic*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1992, p. 234.

¹⁹ Ion Stoica, "Repere teologice și filosofice privind existența și lucrarea diavolului și a „răului” în om și în lume – eseu”, p. 54.

²⁰ Vladimir Lossky, *Teologia mistică a Bisericii de Răsărit*, p. 156: „The mind had to find its nourishment in God, it had to live in God, the soul had to be nourished by the mind; the body had to live from the soul - this was the order from the beginning of the immortal nature”.

of man ²¹. An unnatural disharmony has occurred between *libertas* and *liberum arbitrium*, which can justify us to say that man has lost his freedom, becoming a slave to irrational desires or a slave to sin. If man did not lose the faculty to choose, to position himself in favor or against an option, the same thing did not happen to the purity, rationality or sanctity of his will. In other words, he no longer desires the good as something according to his nature, but often prefers what is contrary to the good, from the fear of suffering and the insatiable desire for carnal pleasures²².

3. MAN'S LIFE AS AN EMPTY SHELL, AS A TORMENT. DEMONS IN OUR LIVES

Viktor Frankl, the great Viennese psychiatrist and philosopher, survivor of four Nazi camps, conveys in his writings such traumatic experiences, but finds to lay down an important Christian teaching to which we must relate even when the forces of evil act upon us: the manner in which we will react to everything that happens to us, even in the most difficult moments of life. In *Man's Search for the Meaning of Life*, Frankl appreciated that even in the hardest moments, "a man who has nothing left in this world can know happiness, if only for a moment, when he thinks of the person he loves"²³.

The preferred environment of evil influences is the human soul and if we allow evil to gain control over us it can produce brutal and direct havoc or it can manifest itself in the form of subtle aggressiveness; both in one case and in the other this association with evil, which we make room for in our mind and soul, leads to tragic and total alienation from everything that is life: from God, from love, from beauty and from meaning. Andrew Solomon, himself a depressed man, believes that the bad associations we face every day bring man closer to the edge of the "abyss of life", leading him to a continuous torment: "the rhythm of life, the endemic loneliness, the entanglement between people, the collapse of traditional family structures"²⁴ are the main factors leading to an increasing rate of depression. He also proposes means of healing when he says that we must seek faith in God, help the disenfranchised, but above all we must deal with love and teach others to do the same. In the Bible, there is the moment when Jesus goes to the land of the Gadarenes, from the region of De-capolis, where there was a majority non-Jewish population, and heals a man possessed by demons, who was badly tormented, living in the tombs on the outskirts of the city, being kept tied up because he was violent.

Such a tormented, dehumanized man lived not only in the torment of his life, but also tormented others because in the mind and attitude of such a man irrationality, disorder, tumult, impurity, fear and pain are sown. It is enough to be possessed by only one passion, and such a life becomes a torment for you and for those around you:

a) a man fallen into *the passion for alcohol* causes a lot of suffering to the whole family of

²¹ Jean-Claude Larchet, *Terapeutica bolilor spirituale*, trans. by Marilena Bojin, Editura Sophia, București, 2006, p. 229: „Through the sin that he commits with his will, man follows Adam, he becomes jointly responsible with that and with all the people who also commit the sin that lies in the fallen human nature, which is common to them. Only in this sense can we say that people are all guilty of Adam's sin”.

²² Vladimir Lossky, *Teologia mistică a Bisericii de Răsărit*, p. 159: „Întorcându-se de la Dumnezeu, mintea, în loc să comunice hrana sa sufletului, începe să trăiască pe socoteala sufletului, hrănindu-se din substanța sa (este ceea ce numim noi de obicei <<valori spirituale>>). Sufletul, la rândul său, începe să trăiască din viața trupului, aceasta este obârșia patimilor; în sfârșit, trupul fiind silit să-și caute hrana în afară, în material neînsuflețită, află până la urmă moartea. Compusul omenesc se destramă”.

²³ Viktor Frankl, *Omul în căutarea sensului vieții*, trans. Florin Tudose, Editura Vellant, București, 2018, p. 50.

²⁴ Andrew Solomon, *Demonul amiezii*, trans. by de Diana-Ligia Ilin, Editura Humanitas, București, 2014, p. 32.

which he is a part, becoming aggressive, no longer in control of his actions;

b) *the passion for fornication*; Saint John Chrysostom, in one of his homilies, likens the demonized man to the man possessed by passions and gives several such examples. The demoniac walked naked; so does he who is possessed by the passion of fornication. He may not be empty in body, but he is empty in soul; he may not hurt his body with stones, but he hurts his soul with sins. Who will stop or bind such a man because the graves where the demoniac lived are like the places of sin: they are full of rot and give off a terrible smell²⁵;

c) *the passion for the love of silver/money*; If in the case of the demonized, the demon in him immediately obeyed Christ's command and came out of that man, in the case of the silver/money lover things are more complicated. The latter does not listen to the Lord's command: "You cannot be slaves of God and Mammon" (Matthew 46, 24) and, even threatened with hell and endless punishments it does not go. And this is not because it is stronger than Christ, but because Christ does not want to make us virtuous without our will.

In the one enslaved by the passion of the love of silver and in the comparison that Saint John Chrysostom makes with the demonized from the land of the Ghergheses we find that just as the demonized is bound by many bonds, so is the lover of silver/money: he is bound with the disgrace of the world, with fear of court, with the threat of judges; sometimes he breaks these bonds and escapes. If anyone could take these bonds from the man possessed by this passion, he would clearly see that the demon inside him is much more fierce and hungry, much more eager than the one that came out of the demonized man. And when it comes to such a man, the moment his passion is revealed or discovered, people choose to leave him, to avoid him, especially since he is usually in the middle of the citadel (city) and not on the edge or in the wilderness.

Moreover, the lover of silver/money is so sick that he sees as an enemy even the one who has not wronged him in any way, threatening him with many evils, as the Greek Archimandrite Vasilios Bacoianis observes²⁶.

d) a man fallen into *the passion of vainglory (vanity)* who has the advanced form of pride or haughtiness has an obsession with the image, the desire to be placed at the top at any cost, becoming aggressive in his desire to seek something unnatural and, not being capable of what he wants, torments those around him especially by incapacity.; in fact, they are only people who hold on to everything that constitutes a source of material wealth, driving God, through their attitude, out from their lives, like the Gadarenes, who ask the Savior to leave their city, as soon as they saw that Jesus allowed the demons that possessed that man to enter a herd of swine that threw themselves off a cliff and drowned. The economic reason mattered more, than the joy of a healed man... The Gadarenes see a healed man, they saw God who brings freedom, but with all that they took Him out of their land. Metropolitan Antonie de Suroj describes such a community: „*In a false community, everyone protects themselves against everyone else. Each tries not to be known except in the ways in which he or she chooses to be known*”²⁷.

In the universal literature we find the case of father Serghi, who in his youth had been a prince, with the layman's name, Stepan Kasatski, and who, because of a

²⁵ Saint John Chrysostom, *Omilia la Evanghelia după Matei, Omilia a XXVIII-a*, in col. „P.S.B.”, vol 23, Editura IBMBOR, București 1994, pp. 357-361.

²⁶ Vasilios Bacoianis, *Taine și descoperiri în evangheliile duminicilor*, trans. by Șerban Tica, Editura de Suflet, București, 2016, p. 214.

²⁷ Antonie de Suroj, *Ești creștin sau ești bisericos? Cuvântări despre trăirea autentică a credinței*, trans. by Ioan-Lucian Radu, Editura Doxologia, Iași, 2020, p. 126.

disappointment in the relationship with the young woman he had chosen to be his bride, goes and becomes a monk. He does not find peace in that monastic community feeling too exposed to temptations and having to fight against them. Even Leo Tolstoy says through the mouth of the prince-turned-priest Serghi that „ *the sources of this struggle were two in number: doubt and fleshly lusts*”²⁸. After a while, on the advice of his priest and at the wish of the hierarch, Father Serghi moved to a monastery on the outskirts of the capital. But here the temptations become even greater, especially since many women came to this monastery. He asked to be moved to a secluded monastery and after a while he settled down as an ascetic in a cell that was a cave dug into the mountain. Here he lives in hardship for years, but he felt that "in him there was a spring of living water, although weak, flowing smoothly from my body, through my body", as he himself testified²⁹. There is a moment of temptation when a harlot comes to his cell trying to lure him into worldly pleasures; to curb his carnal desires the hermit Serghi cuts his finger with an axe. This moment meant not only the protection of carnal desires for Father Serghi, but also the conversion of the woman, who a year later became a monk, in turn, becoming Mother Agnia.

Finding out about the pure life that this hermit leads, a monastery was built near his cell and many people came here to receive blessings from Father Serghi. For a while he refused to give much advice to people who sought him or to offer prayers for people who came to receive healing through the father's prayers. From a certain moment he yielded to the entreaties and even healed many people through his prayers. Only he was not at all reconciled to his condition, considering that after the moment of the conversion of the one who was now called Mother Agnia, he "felt like a light burning torch, and the more this feeling grew, the more distinctly he felt that it was fading, that it was going out of the divine light of truth, which burned in his heart...she (n.n. mother Agnia) sipped from the living, clean water. But from then on, the water didn't collect well, because the thirsty ones came, pushing and shoving to get first. They have dried up the spring, all that is left is the mud"³⁰.

In a short time Father Serghi fell into the passion of carnal desires with a young woman who had been brought to him to heal her. He immediately left the monastery, in a peasant's house, saying nothing to anyone, leading a rough life. He has a dream in which he is shown a woman from his childhood, Pașenka, whom he seeks and finds in a city. She was a poor old woman who lived with her children and grandchildren, giving music lessons to support her family, but living according to God's teachings, helping and having mercy on people in need. The message of Tolstoy's story expressed through the mouth of father Serghi, now a layman eager to receive forgiveness for the bodily sin committed, through his efforts, but also for the fact that as long as he was a monk he sought and did not stop worldly fame: "So here it is what was the meaning of my dream. Pașenka is how I should have been and how I wasn't. I have lived for men, saying that I live for God; she lives for God, imagining that she lives for men. Yes, a single good deed, a cup of water given without thinking of reward does more than all the good deeds I have overwhelmed people with. But did I have the sincere desire to serve God? he asked himself and answered: Yes, but all this was smeared, smothered by worldly fame. *Yes, for a man who lived like me, for the sake of worldly fame, there is no God. I will look for him*"³¹.

²⁸ Lev Tolstoi, *Sonata Kreutzer. Părintele Serghi. Hagi Murad*, trans. by Cezar Petrescu, S. Recevschi, Ștefan Velisar Teodoreanu and Mihail Calmicu, Editura Minerva, București, 1971, p. 197.

²⁹ Lev Tolstoi, *Sonata Kreutzer*, p. 210.

³⁰ Lev Tolstoi, *Sonata Kreutzer*, pp. 209-210.

³¹ Lev Tolstoi, *Sonata Kreutzer*, p. 228.

Evagrius Ponticus speaks of the eight spirits of evil that assail man, making him a "closed universe": *the gluttony of the womb* (insatiable appetite to eat a lot), *fornication*, *love of silver/money* (greed), *sadness*, *anger* (irascibility, which leads to acute verbal and physical conflicts), *boredom* (the midday demon, who empties man of enthusiasm and the genuine joy of life), *vain glory* (vanity) and *pride* (haughtiness).³²

CONCLUSIONS

Our freedom consists in no longer being slaves to sin, to passions. We need freedom as long as we do the will of our Heavenly Father. In God's rest there is no sin, no sorrow, no trouble, but God Himself. What the Holy Apostle Paul explains in the same chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews: „*He who has entered God's rest has also rested from his things, just as God has rested from His.*”. It is what the Savior also says at one point: „*Learn from Me that I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls*” (Matthew 11, 29).

Against demons only God can act in a curative sense, because the only power recognized by the devil is divine. Therefore, when we talk about the demons in our life, the passions and the influence of evil in our actions, we are convinced that only God can annihilate this force, the divine power being the only one known in this sense: „*What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Highest God? Please don't torture me ...*” (Luke 8, 28). The nature of our attitude as humans is to pay attention to the one next to us and not torment; to succeed in "resting" a man who seeks our communion and interaction, to enjoy a man with whom we meet. Not paying attention to these things leads to a lack of harmony, a lack of communion because neither you nor the person next to you "rests". In order to be able to fight these evil spiritual forces, the Holy Apostle Paul also shows us what the Christian "weapons": *the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the gospel of peace, the breastplate of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God*. All this must be supported by *the secret power of the prayer* (Efeseni 6, 14-18).

³² Evagrie Ponticul, *În lupta cu gândurile. Despre cele opt gânduri ale răutății și replici împotriva lor*, translated by Ioan I. Ică jr., Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2006, pp. 45-60.

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