

**„OVIDIUS” UNIVERSITY CONSTANȚA
FACULTY OF ORTHODOX THEOLOGY**

DOCTORAL THESIS

**LIBERTY AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY IN A
CHRISTIAN’S LIFE**

SUMMARY

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Man was created in the image and likeness of God Himself, rational and free: Consciousness and freedom define the man as spirit¹. ("Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness ..." Genesis 1, 26). After falling into sin, the man kept his face, but lost the likeness of his Creator, i.e he just lost the opportunity to reach the union with Him according to his will. Along with the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, The immutable, The ineffable (and I might add many other appellations emphasizing its greatness!), the meaning for which we exist is that to increase in His Body, the Mystical Body which is the Church. The incarnation of our Saviour Jesus Christ "puts history under the reflection of the universal christification"². The Lord's Mystical Body is to this day the true subject of our existence and its growing is the only reason to be of a Christian. Under a diachronic view, the history begins with the first humans and evolves to the "recent man", as said by a contemporary writer.

From the Scripture's testimony we retain that our ancestors lived close to heaven with the Creator, being with Him in His love, built and called to fulfill in him. With the prospect of immortality and deification, realizing that they are creatures of God, whom they have seen, spoken with and advised with. For example, the words: "I heard thy voice ..." (Genesis 3, 10) is not a symbolic reference to the presence of God, but shows a clear situation of life in Eden, and as proof stands the preceding counsel when Adam gave names to all the "beasts of the field and every fowl of the air" brought to him "to see what he would name them" (Genesis 2, 19).

In the earthly existence it is embodied the special relationship, the dialogue of the man as a moral person both with God, who is a Trinity of Persons, as well as with other humans, near or far. Therefore man's existence on earth is an ongoing effort and synergy, an ascetical existential tension to rediscover and update the immortal image of God within man since his creation, darkened by the disobedience sin and to regain the similarity with Him, a possibility is offered by kenosis and the redemptive work of serving the Son of God, incarnated in history, Jesus Christ, the God-Man, of all people, in all times and places³.

After presenting issues related to God and creation, it is necessary to determine the individual freedom and human responsibility towards creation. The issue of freedom and responsibility must be seen in a different optic than the one which could limit us to a worldly perspective, i.e. through an approach that takes into account the perspective of eternity. It is often said that the man is locked in a tridimensional universe. Freedom can be defined as a fourth dimension, spatial and temporal simultaneously, symbolized by Jacob's ladder, built from earth and whose top reaches the heavens and on which the angels of God go up and down (Genesis 28, 12)⁴. Without proposing to introduce under all aspects, the multiplicity of

¹ Priest Prof. PhD. Dumitru Radu, Creation and Providence, in „Eclessiastic guide", no. VII, 1988 , Pub. House Buzau Episcopasy, p. 40.

² Paul Evdokimov, L'Orthodoxie , Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1979, p. 36.

³ Priest Prof. PhD. Dumitru Radu, Spirituality and ministration at the "Sfinții Trei Ierarhi" Cathedral, in S.T., (1974), no. 3-4, p. 183.

⁴ About these facts: Dominique Beaufils, Ta foi t'a sauvé», approche orthodoxe de la maladie et de la mort, préface d'Olivier Clément, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1996, p. 32. The author states that "the fourth dimension"

issues implied by the human freedom and responsibility within creation, we can still describe the relationship between them, to show the consequences they generate and analyze some aspects regarding the sin and deliverance from sin (salvation).

The modern man, contemporaneous or post-modern, however we like to define him, as a result of the liberalism and scientism of the nineteenth century, impressed by his inventions, overwhelmed by his technical "miracles", thought that he is self-sufficient, that all his claims are justified, that he does not have any restrictions⁵. Using science and technology, man can partially dominate the world, but "without God, he can not dominate himself losing the spiritual dimension of existence and becoming violent, wild and explosive ..."⁶ Due to empowering himself, man denies God by denying himself and committing self-destruction.⁷ Freedom, as understood in Christendom, first means liberation from sin, i.e. the leather garb transformation into the likeness of God, garb that "once transfigured will find its place in the kingdom of heaven."⁸ Another aspect of freedom, beyond terminology and social theological or any other kind of connotations is that it defines best when we relate to the sufferings of daily life.⁹ Freedom is real when it lies in the inner man, i.e. when it is directed towards God.¹⁰ The lack of inner freedom brings discontentment about everything around, inspires and entertains serious misconducts, and then the man becomes passionate in body and soul.¹¹ "Throughout the evil one, the human needs are insufficient and bring continuous dissatisfaction so the man remains hungry, divided between nostalgia for the past and future desires".

In the linguistic sense, the responsibility may be civil, criminal and moral. For all these aspects, certain conditions need to be fulfilled: existence of a social or moral law, a person in full command of mental faculties and obviously its freedom. Speaking from a Christian point of view, the icon of the human responsibility has three dimensions: the reference to God, to others and to himself. First is essential that in front of God every man should realize that he has a great responsibility, linked to both his soul and his body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 3, 16). Second, is also important the

is the seventh day, the day which takes us from the sixth to the eighth day. The sixth day belongs to the "fallibility's time" related with the location of the stars, one from each other, "the earthly cronos of necessity" in which "the world has been thrown due to the fall of man" (Constantin Andronikof, work cit., p. 28) and that man remains its servant and in which he even reaches to seek out his determinations excepting God, forgetting that he is the one who holds the stars: "Stay sun over Gibeon and you, moon, over the Aijalon valley" (Joshua 10, 12), and still, He is the One who gives greatness: "The greatness of the height is the purity of heaven, fully glorious appearing of the Lord ... According to the Holy Rule, they stay in their ordinance and don't get tired of their watch" (Wisdom of Jesus Sirach 43, 1 and 12).

⁵ Coriolan Ghetie, The Christian, in the magazine Theology and Life, no. 8-10/1992, p. 184; Petre Țutea, Age and other philosophical texts, Pub. House The Romanian future, Bucarest, 1992, p. 111.

⁶ Priest Prof. PhD. Dumitru Gh. Popescu, Theology and culture, Pub. House I.B.M.B.O.R., Bucarest, 1993, p. 74.

⁷ Panayotis Nellas, The man – deified animal, trans. Diac. Ioan I. Ică Jr., Pub. House Deisis, Sibiu, 1994, p. 23.

⁸ Olivier Clément, Questions sur l'homme, Stock, 1982, p. 206.

⁹ "Excessive consumption may be food in nature but can also be linked to the passions or, more precisely, to sex. It is amazing to note to what extent the food behavior has implications upon these passions or it is the one that proves them, as already pointed out rightly by the Fathers of the Church. Sex, in turn, as well as the food behavior, can be a compensatory equivalent of a mental problem. What we might call "sexual bulimia", it may well be a discharge of a deep mental depression but also a rejection of repentance. We have a very striking example of "sexual permissiveness" and pathological disastrous consequences, especially AIDS, to whom we are dealing with a categorical refusal of the behavior change" (Dominique Beaufils, work. cit., page 78).

¹⁰ Saint Macaire, Les Homélies spirituelles – Le Saint-Esprit et le chrétien, traduction française avec Introduction par le Père Placide Deseille, Spiritualité Orientale, no. 40, Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1984, p. 260.

¹¹ "The Belief in the good and merciful God, believing that He is above all, completely draws grace in the soul and then the sense of dependence no longer finds itself a place, because the soul loves God as his Father Himself and lives through him." (Archimandrite Sophronius, work. cit., p 4).

responsibility towards others, because the love of God becomes an expression by way of relating to those around us.

Responsibility is essentially "religious" because it is not a mere attitude. It can not be accepted the fact that the man does not know or recognize its divine origin, and does not know his own call and mission in the world, no matter how decayed he is. There is, indeed, a responsibility "upside down", i.e. what the Fathers of the Church called hostility towards God and towards good, expressed in Romanian by terms built with the negative prefix 'I': I-responsibility, I-maturity, and I-rational and others. There is therefore, from the creation, a direct link between God, man and the cosmos as a whole as well as reciprocity between man and creation, which makes him dependent on nature in the same way that nature depends on him. "The degradation of this reciprocal relationship between people on one hand and between them and creation on the other hand, we find in the case of certain diseases or infirmity and in the ecological consequences of this sinful will of nature domination about which we have shown the importance of its pathogenic power."

It can be concluded here that each of us is the recipient of a message of empowerment from God, which must be updated in every work of life, while blossoming and uttering each word, each thought.

Freedom and responsibility for any act committed by man are fulfilled through a full awareness of his condition before God. A key issue is the semantic location of the two analyzed words on the axis of the spiritual or worldly living. It is clear that freedom of expression, of movement correlated conditionally with the living in the world i.e. outside the authentic human being, is neither sufficient nor satisfactory. Physical freedom does not often means as well mental freedom, neither spiritual nor real freedom. In the same way, the mental freedom might be too often a citadel in a world of illusions, in the imaginary. The illusory closure can lead to psychological disorders such mendacity, when the human being is closed in an artificial universe. And perhaps, how many people are not satisfied with what they feel as everyday experience, without taking care for their true way of life? This situation is likely to get worse until it will become a true madness, and can induce serious mental disorders as the neurotic or psychotic type¹² and thus reach irresponsibility.

According to the biblical paper from Genesis 1, 26, man is created in God's image. Being created "in the image and likeness" with his heavenly Father, man or human nature can not be defined exhaustively and accurately, can not be closed nor limited. God is beyond any definition, He is the "sacrament of life" and so is the man who takes part to this divine sacrament." All the Holy Fathers recognized in the man's creation "in the image" of God its unique and ineffable greatness, seeing in it "a primary agreement between the human beings and the divine being."¹³ That is why St. Gregory Palama says, "only the man from of all the earthly and heavenly was built in the image of the Creator, to look to Him and love Him, and to have a deep insight into God and by faith, by inclination and love for God to maintain his beauty."¹⁴

The roman legal thinking has held this public availability of the term "person" and invested it with a peculiar sense, applying it first to the human individual, in various references the human individual exposes in various persons but in legal terms he is only a person holding legal rights and civil obligations (in the roman sense of the word "civil"). The

¹² "The neurosis is a mental disturbance caused by an inadequate living reality. Psychosis is indifferent to what is unreal or false. In simple words, we can say that the neurotic is disturbed by the fact that two and two make four, and the psychotic is the one who believes that two and two make five, and this remains indifferent". (Dominique Beaufils, work cit., p. 87).

¹³ Vladimir Losky, The mystical theology of the Eastern Church, trans.. Priest Prof. Vasile Răducă, Pub. House. Bonifaciu, Bucearest, 1998, p. 101.

¹⁴ Saint Grigorie Palama, About the natural knowledge..., in „Filocalia”, vol. VII, trans.cit. , p. 434

roman law gave the quality of being a person, under certain conditions, therefore the slaves - for example - did not enjoy it but only the citizen, the free man was born as a person, holding the legal capacity.

The modern times consider a person the individual human in the sense of a being endowed with reason and conscience and he, this man, can not be a person if it shows so many people. Psychoanalysis tries to take away the masks that have adopted and changed by the human individual, seeking to put him in front of his profound being, his genuine personality. In the positive law, the human individual is considered a person: physical in civil relations; criminal in the criminal reports; official - in administrative reports etc...

The person is made in freedom, it opens freely to which lies in secret upon every soul, without restraining it in any way. "The spirit does not create a will to oppose to it." "He transforms through deification only the one that he wants."¹⁵ The person may feel a great concern, but this comes from something arbitrary, because he can refuse life and say a no to the existence. Man fluctuates every moment, between the being of his own achievements and the return to nothingness from where he was brought to existence, between "to empty" or "to become": this is the greatest noble risk of any existence.

The Holy Scripture's texts indicate different responsibilities that God asserts to his people, but also special ways by which the people are aware of the responsibility that they have towards him, others and the world. Even since Adam, is discovered the truth that, although man sins and persists in a state of hatred, being sometimes overwhelmed and exceeded even by his own responsibility, he owns it as a gift waiting to be activated. We do not have here the fatality of a hopeless situation imposed by a deity but the humanity's awareness of its contribution to the entrance of evil in the world and the perpetuation of his presence and work of the creation. The Old Testament related texts indicate a permanent concern of God in teaching the people the sense of responsibility, revealing Himself as a true Father, through mentoring and "assisting" closely to his creatures, manifested by constant advices: "Do ..." "Do not ..." "Choose ..." and so on.¹⁶ Another means of raising awareness are the warnings, tests, sufferings, disasters, mostly used by prophets as argument to make the Hebrews assume their mistakes and their consequences for the entire social life. The idea itself of addressing a response to the human and, even more to God is associated with the responsibility implied when calling other people, manifested by its word or authority: "What we answer to ...?" (Genesis 44, 16, 45, 3), "If you will meet in peace ..." (Dot 20, 11). The person feels responsible to offer an appropriate response to God when He asked: "What will I do when the God will call me account? / Or, if will be a question, what will I respond ? "

Few theological questions has such a directly interest in the life of the ordinary believers as the one related to the relationship between grace and free will. In our capacity as Christians, we know that we must seek to please God and to obey His commandments; and yet we also believe that He helps us to such an extent that thinking that we please Him by our own efforts, without help from Him would be seen as an act of pride. It already exists, if not as an obvious contradiction, at least as a considerable tension between these two faiths. This tension is amplified further when we have the conviction, deeply rooted in Scripture, that salvation is, in a sense, the result of a divine election.¹⁷ Our Lord Jesus Christ says in the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John, that "all that Father gives me comes to me" (6, 37), and a few verses further: "No one can come to me, if it will not be attracted by the Father who sent

¹⁵ Filocalia, translation from Greek by Priest Prof. PhD Dumitru Stăniloae, 2nd edition, vol. III, Pub. House „Harisma”, Bucarest, 1994, p. 53

¹⁶ Vocabulary of Biblical Theology, Pub. House of the Romano- Catholic Archiepiscopacy of Bucarest, Bucarest, 2001, p. 634.

¹⁷ David Bradshaw, Saint Ioan Gură de Aur – About grace and freedom of will, trans. by Associate Professor Ph.D. Adrian Podaru, in the Study U.B.B. Orthodox Theology, no. 2, 2010, p. 247.

me "(6, 44). Taken together, these two statements seem to say that being called by the Father is a condition both necessary and sufficient to come to Christ (which, here, is equivalent to salvation). However, in the same chapter, Christ advises his listeners as if the choice would belong to them. He thus exhorts: "Do not labor for the food that perishes but for the food which remains in eternal life" (6, 27), and when they ask him what to do to celebrate the things of God, He says, "The work of God is this, to believe in Him whom He sent" (6, 29). Apparently, despite being chosen by God is both necessary and sufficient for salvation; this does not exclude the need of our own choices, even of our own "work." Very confusing, is not it? Apparently the Father's will is the only cause of our salvation, but we ourselves are also, its cause.¹⁸

We are here faced with two different but correlated questions. First, in what way can our efforts to please God be compatible with the fact that we are totally dependent on God? Second, how can our salvation be simultaneously determined by the choice of God and by our free response? Regarding the second question, the Scripture further complicates things, saying that God's choice was, in a sense, set in eternity. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, St. Paul says that God "hath chosen us in him [i.e. Christ] before the foundation of the world, so that throughout love we can be holy and blameless before him, and since the beginnings being ordered that, after the proper discernment of His will, to adopt us through Jesus Christ" (1, 4-6). Such teaching makes even more difficult the second question, because it excludes the possibility that God will fulfil His choice because of the evolution of some events.

The will is the ability of acting in a rational way in order to achieve certain elaborate purposes, mentally, in a preemptive way; it is a conscious act, more or less deliberate, performed in order to accomplish a purpose, whether simple or complex, close or distant. The act of will (the voluntary act) is for the socio-cultural life of the axiologically impregnated man, what instinct is for the purely biological life. In the balanced man, almost all psychological processes and personality features are made voluntarily, that is, they are subject to the conscious control, the principle of reality, the way Freud defines it.

Man's moving power is not to be seen only in the fact that man moves, which is something that animals also do, but in that he moves or may move differently from what his instincts, or certain various conditions – being they biological, social – determine him to do.

This is the reason why Saint Maxim the Confessor shows that, if all beings from the seen world are "carried" by God according to His schedule, the reason that He imprinted to them, then man "moves" the way he wants to.

In other words, man's will (Greek: *thelima* or *thelesis*) is free (Greek: *antexousion*). Man is the pure definition of liberty and that only because he carries personal features, the human soul and the entire man can exceed any conditioning¹⁹

The act of will consciously follows a purpose, a reason, distinguishing itself both from the instinctive act, which is native, not suggested in a certain way, but also from the spontaneous act which is performed without a stimulus.

To the extent that the will is decided in the performance of certain deeds, various voluntary acts are to be distinguished: 1) The necessary-free voluntary act; 2) The full-deficient voluntary act; 3) The direct-indirect voluntary act; 4) The positive-negative voluntary act; 5) The explicit-implicit voluntary act.

The will and liberty belong to the most problematic and mysterious aspect of personal life. This is why one cannot talk about will and freedom without taking into consideration the

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 248.

¹⁹ Jean – Pierre Longchamp, *Science and faith*, Desclee de Brouwer, 1992, page 149

²⁰ Metrop. Dr. Nicolae Mladin, Pr. Deacon Dr. Orest Burevski, Pr.Dr. C-tin Pavel, Prof.Deacon Dr. Ioan Zagreanu, *Moral Orthodox Theology*, vol. I, Reintregirea Publishing House, Alba-Iulia, 2003, page 254

²¹ Idem, *Moral Orthodox Theology*, vol. II. I.B.M.B.O.R. Publishing House, Bucharest, 1980, page 180

person in the entirety of his being. It cannot be perceived as a force separate, independent from the reflexive and most emotional aspects of the psychological activity, just as it cannot be separated from the motivations which it has from the environment. Psychological activities are conditioned, they inter-condition one another and condition others –in their turn. Man creates, or, out of the multitude of determinations, chooses his reasons depending on the one acting as intelligent and free being. The practical organ out of which the reasoning is realized in nature and in the human life is the will. Will, as superior form of our creative activity is “the psychological function through which we freely decide, based on a certain deliberation, to make or not make an action, or through which we choose one solution from more possible ones”²⁰.

Man does not act without a purpose, his will being his ability to achieve his goals, fighting the obstacles which might stay in the way of his achieving his goals. This ability represents a personality quality. If by intelligence man has a more receptive, informative attitude towards reality, an interpretative attitude, by will, his attitude becomes reactive. The will may be defined as the soul’s power to work consciously and freely. This is why, Descartes righteously said: “Intelligence and sensitivity are yours, but will is our ego itself”²¹.

Reasoning is necessary throughout the entire voluntary act. The will, taken alone, is a neutral power. Reason is the one which gives the will orientation principles, indicating it what to do, how to do it, why do it, what means should it use, what will the consequences, the obstacles be, and how will they be met, what unpredicted situations may interfere and many others. Thus, reason makes a judgment of value over the object of the action. Will must listen all the time to the light of reasoning, otherwise it might be the prey of instincts and passions. By this function, reasoning has a main role in life.

The quality of our deeds depends greatly also on the quality of knowledge, since reasoning is the eye of the moral life. “If your eye shall be clean, says the Redeemer, all your body will be enlightened; and if your eye shall be bad, all your body shall be in darkness (Mathew, 6, 22-23). Hence the Saint Paul, the Apostle’s advice, saying: Do not fit to this time, but pretend, by renewing your mind, so that you can know God’s good, pleasant and perfect will” (Epistle to Romans, 12;2)²⁰. If someone tried to express in a more concise way the human being characteristic note, they would be able to rightfully call it, “knowing being”. This expression shows, indeed, all that human being has more personal: “knowledge”, “the will of knowledge” and, implicitly, the three spiritual functions: the rational, the volitional and the affective one, which work is intertwined in an unitary way. Knowledge was and always will be for all time mankind – a privilege and a permanent call for new, unknown horizons, an inexhaustible factor of progress.

*“God, The one solely rich in mercy...You, who punish and again heal and punish people with kindness and love, not to lose the building of Your hands, but rather to stronger bring it to the first beauty and the first chosen state which we have lost by the weakness of mind and the advice of the enemy....”*²³ This quote reflects in a very good way

²² Mag. Hierodeacon Irineu Craciunas, „Will’s role in the moral life”, S.T., no 3-4, 1956, page 214

²³ „The prayer for the callin of God’s mercy in all Lithia and inability”, in the Holy Sacraments Book, comprising services, ordinances and prayers performed by the Priest in different christians’needs, printed with the approval of the Holy Synod, and with the blessing of His Holiness Priest TEOCTIST, Romanian Orthodox Church’s Patriarch, Fifth Edition, I.B.M.B.O.R. Publishing House, Bucharest, 1992, page 348

²⁴“Since we have also been once into the glory, then we used to spend time in Heaven, but then, because of the falling into sin, we lost the glory and became humble, „Our God is redeeming us”seeing the way we used to be and what we became. For this, He also looked for Adam with his merciful voice, saying [...]: „Where are you?”instead of: „look what ruin you turned yourself into, you, who used to be at such a height” (Saint Vasile The Great, Psalms Commentary, at the XCIV Psalm, translation by Pr.Dr. Dan N. Caciula, Theology Library Publishing House, Bucharest, 1939, page 306”

the nowadays man's state and the finality it should reach. Their closeness might be surprising, but the selection is not random, since I wanted to emphasize it, through/from different contexts, what this study is looking for: defining the good ordinance of Creation, generally and from the Christian's life, in particular, with the freedom and responsibility which are involved in and by this. The spiritual data is of the essence when it comes to the human being. The formation of will, affectivity and of any other aspect of the human structure has as substrate a spiritual component – the spiritual formation. This is the first level, the depth of the human structure one, while the others are overlapping this one.

The Holy Scripture mentions that God has created man with breath of life and with the skin cloth (the body). The vital breath which is talked about in the respective biblical essay is clearly associated with man's spiritual existence, since one knows that before falling into sin, Adam had been in total communion with God. Adam was made according to God's own appearance: reality or bodily existence, but also spiritual. Once with the falling into sin, Adam received "*the clothing*"... (Creation 3, 21) and fell into a "spiritual and bodily ruine"²⁴. It is important to emphasize that, ever since the creation, man has always had a spiritual existence, since it is from here that the main objective of his existence after the falling, results: restoration and spiritual formation as closeness or knowledge of God, acquiring of His spirit. Being called to spiritualization, man's living is a response given to God, a dialogue act in which the entire seen and unseen work of God is involved. Thus, human existence is performed in material and spiritual context, the spiritual reality being the edifying one, giving life sense and orientation.

This spiritual context represents the authentic substance of multiple life contexts of the human being. To that respect, one may talk about the macro-context, which is the one of the Christian as *son of the Church*. There are also micro-contexts: the main family context in which human being is born and raised, the educational-institutional context, the second family context in which the human being gives birth and raises in his turn, the professional context, etc.

These are steps and occasions of man's spiritual evolution and formation, but which he today no longer seizes as such, one sometimes talking about an intellectual and professional formation, exclusively. One forgets that in any life circumstance and regardless of the specific, material data which compose it, in man's heart, there is always that inner voice who shouts "Avva, Father!" The spiritual longing for God is actually the motor which mobilizes all human resources. Starting from this idea, we observe that all these contexts have as core – a double relation: vertical and horizontal, following the model of the Cross: the human being's connection to God and with the Creation. The quality level of the two relations is in close connection. The location in cosmos or in chaos actually *works together* for the spiritual formation of the man, the only true call and purpose in life.

In its merger with God through love, the soul finds its highest satisfaction and enjoys a true delight. By anchoring of the entire feeling in this relaxing and happy harbor, the soul comes out of the self-dissatisfaction state, which the psalmist expresses when "my soul sighs and longs for your yards"²⁵.

By living within the society, people must have connection between one another in order to help one another in all the moments of life, whether happy or sad. This connection between people is made by the virtue of love, which is for the society what the

²⁵ Pr. Dron-Vuescu-Gheorgjita, quoted work, page 50

²⁶ Pr. Dron-Vuescu-Gheorgjita, Christian Ethics, secondary 6th grade, the Cartea Romaneasca Publishing House, Bucharest, 1960, page 49, page 54.

²⁷ Cf. notes of Father Staniloae in PSB 15, no 40, page 103 and PSB 80, NO 84, PAGE 107

²⁸ Cf. Saint Maxim, Answers to Talasie, in Filocalia, volume III, Sibiu, 1948, page 12 and ibidem, Ambigua, 7h, page 89; 10, page 107; 22, page 122

principle of affinity and cohesion is for our physical bodies. Without this affinity our solid bodies would tear apart and would be destroyed, while the whole Universe would collapse in chaos.²⁶ In a similar way, in the society, without love, people would live worse than wild animals, isolated and cruel one to another.

Christianity is called the religion of love. The Christian must get to love God and his neighbor with all his being, as he loves himself, even if the neighbor would be his enemy. "Love your enemies, says Jesus Christ, bless the ones who curse you, be kind to those who hate you and pray for those who harm and persecute you"(Mathew 5, 44).

Self love is a more controversial aspect of love, since, wrongly understood, leads to selfishness, which is love's opposite pole. It is from this reason, it has not even been introduced in the Moral Theology manuals, because it wouldn't have proved itself of any use, a fact for which I intend to develop this subject in several pages. It is very important to remind ourselves the fact that the body is the temple of The Holy Spirit, just as Saint Paul, the Apostle says (1 Corinthians 3, 16) and then it goes without saying that we must take care of this body because it is together with it that we will answer on Judgment Day. The body is a condition for redemption. Without it, we cannot be saved, for it is the body which works together with the soul, supervised by reason, feeling and the will to acquire Salvation.

The Universe, without a knowing consciousness, would not have any sense. If the full existence has meaning, this is because man exists *qua* universe consciousness, says Father Staniloae, in a Christian formulation of the anthropogenic principle.²⁷ By being in accordance to God's own appearance, man is called to know the world with God's eyes²⁸, that is, to contemplate it in a spiritual way, to acknowledge the spiritual reasons which his entire being is built on. A such knowledge of beings means knowing *what*, *how* and *towards what* are they (Saint Maxim), that is, an acknowledgment of universe as being brought to existence for the everlasting and happy communion with God, to which it is addicted in order to achieve this goal.

Besides, says Saint Maxim, "the tree of knowing good and wrong is [exactly] the seen edifying". Man is called to be aware of the creation's iconic value, that is, to contemplate to God in it just like in a mirror, the realization of his existential entirety, his everlasting vocation being conditioned by the way and the relation with the world.

Knowing the world is seeing God, "Who is and shows Himself by all and in all things", since "we don't approach creation for getting rich, but for showing the supreme One in it"²² This is, at a more profound level, the motivation of asking Adam to give all creatures names (Genesis, 2, 19-20). At the same time, a contemplation exercise which implies a risk.

²⁹ St. Maxim, Ambigua, 13, page 113, Cf. St. Anastasie, „Treaty about the embodiment of the Word”, 42, pages 137-138

³⁰ Idem, „Answers to Talasie” pages 11-12

³¹ Emilian Vasilescu, „The problem of spiritual freedom in Bergson's philosophy in the volume „Religion psychology and human philosophy problems”” Pavel Suru Publishing House, Bucharest, 1942, pages 140-142

³² „What one feels like the freedom way, to other it may seem all the contrary. In the name of freedom, people are willing to do anything. Giving up on freedom by a free decision may be for some the supreme freedom”. See Karl Jaspers, quote, page 260

³³ Nicolae Arseniev, „The discovery of the peaceful life”, translation by Lidia and Remus Rus, Bucharest, I.B.M.B.O.R. Publishing House, Bucharest, 1991, page 125

³⁴ Vl. Lossky, „Introduction to Orthodox Theology” translation by Remus Rus, Ed. Enciclopedica, Bucharest, 1993.

³⁵ O. Clement, quote, page 106

³⁶ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Staniloae, „Orthodox Dogmatic Theology” I.B.M.B.O.R. Publishing House, volume I, Bucharest, 1997, page 337

The danger of natural contemplation is that its achievement in a superficial way may also be possible, analytically and esthetically speaking, not holistically / understandingly and spiritually.

“The building of the seen things – continues Saint Maxim – has been called the tree of knowing the good and the bad since it has spiritual reasons, which feed the mind, but also a natural force, which on one hand, delights the feeling, and on the other, perverts the mind. So, contemplated spiritually, it confers the knowledge of good, while taken bodily, offers the knowledge of bad. Since to those who bodily commune it, it becomes a guide for passions, making them forget the divine”. Man has chosen the easy way, which “blinding the human mind, but largely opening the senses, has totally estranged man from the knowledge of God and has filled him with the passionate knowledge of the things which are led by senses”³⁰

“Man is free from the very beginning” wrote Saint Irineu, since God is free and man is made according to His appearance. Man is free but responsible, the only one responsible for his facts; he is responsible for himself, for his conscience, for his neighbors and in front of God for his deeds. Sure, aspiring for freedom is an ontological custom for each human conscience ³¹, but, as for the content and methods of it updating, opinions are divided, and, most of the times, contradictory ³². This fact proves us that both freedom as well as its necessary corollary, responsibility, are spiritual realities which cannot be defined but in antinomic terms. St. Augustine sensed in a masterful way, the antinomic character of human freedom when he said: “Love and do what you want!” ³³. But the paradox is that, once man truly loves, he no longer does what he wants, according to his own will, but does whatever it takes to permanently remain within the mystic horizon of love. It is what Jesus Himself said: “The one who has My rules and respects them, that is the one who loves Me” (John XIV, 21).

Freedom comes from God; it is the seal of our common divine fellowship, the Creator’s work of art. ³⁴ Freedom’s target, as Saint Gregory of Nazianz says, is for the good to be able to truly belong to the one who chooses it. The Christian must therefore be a life-giving soul, a responsible and creator freedom ³⁵. Freedom implies responsibility, respect towards the others and towards the self.

Man, as a wreath of creation, was called to existence, loaded with responsibility towards the being and the form of the world and also loaded with responsibility for achieving the sense of the world. Yet, not every man had the power to achieve this responsibility, but only the man who remained integrated into God’s life, Whom he could take his entire life force from. This Adam could identify the sense of creation, assume it and achieve it. What Adam could not succeed, *we* have the duty to succeed, as people who are re-living into Christ. Within Orthodox perspective, God has created the world for a reason and with a purpose. This purpose gives sense and value to the world.³⁶

The reason of Creation, as the Saint Fathers say, is God’s kindness, not an internal or external necessity of His. While the purpose of Creation is the fellowship of other beings, their enjoying of His intra-Trinitarian love³⁷, God’s majesty and the happiness of these creatures. In the Orthodox spirituality this reality of creation has received the name of Divinization. Thus, the creation has been meant for divinization though its wreath, the man. The meaning of bringing the world and the man into existence is the divinization.

Freedom is a fundamental characteristic of man’s definition as a being created in accordance with the personal, free and sovereign God. Not with a lonely god, but with the Holy Trinity, “the structure of supreme love”³⁸. To that respect, freedom has as finality, the

³⁷ Idem, page 338

³⁸ Idem, „Orthodox Dogmatic Theology”, volume I, Bucharest, 1996, page 195

³⁹ Pr.Prof.Dr. Dumitru Radu, „Spirituality and ministering at the Three Saints Hierarchs” in S.T. (1974), no 3-4, page 183

communion of love with God and others. This is why, freedom in its most authentic nature is **freedom towards communion**. A such love is in accordance with the appearance of endless love, is the sign of our free participation to God, by grace (cf. Rm 8,35).

The Holy Trinity Personae are not free for they would be separated or would isolate one from the other, but on the contrary, since they are totally open, or transparent one from the other, and since they can comprise each other, keeping their own identity, all the while.

The secularization of the contemporary society, which manifests itself whether as hostility towards the Church, or by indifference towards the Gospel, obliges us to rediscover the profound sense of the freedom and to make Church be the promoter of true freedom, the one which builds the communion and works for reconciliation in a world marked by conflicts and scission.

In the earthly existence, the special, dialogic relation of man, as moral person, with God, as a Trinity of Persons – is being materialized. Also, the relationship with our fellows, being they close or distant, is being materialized. That is why man's existence on earth is a continuous, synergic effort, an ascetic – grace existential pressure for the rediscovery and updating of the immortal face of God from human to creation, darkened by the sin of disobedience and for man to be able to regain his resemblance to Him, a possibility which is offered by *the kenosis* and the redeemer ministering work of the Son of God, embodied into history, Jesus Christ, God-The Man, for all people, of all time and place³⁹.

