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The concept of person understood as participation in the Love of the Holy Trinity. Orthodox Perspective

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Abstract. The concept of person is often defined from the perspective of how the humanities understand it. Interestingly, no science has succeeded in a complete definition of the person, precisely because of the complexity of the soul with which God endows man. Thus, if the sciences without reference to God transform the person into an individual, from a theological perspective the two terms have a completely different meaning. This results from the correct relationship of man to God, a relationship that has the effect of knowing the happiness of man, happiness to which he tends through creation.

Keywords. person, individual, happiness, philosophy, theology

Introduction

Man, a dichotomic being, made up of material body and spiritual soul, represents the crown of creation made by God out of love. Therefore, when the notion of person is questioned, it must be permanently related to God, without which it cannot be understood at its true value. Without this reporting, the dignity of the person is reduced to that of the individual, about which other baseless sciences in God speak.

According to Orthodox theology, the conception of the person is based on the idea of man's participation in God. Man cannot be correctly defined as an autonomous, self-sufficient being, because by his dichotomous nature, the correct definition can be made only by relating to God and grace, the latter giving man what is necessary in his development in God. The terms *nature* and *grace* have a dynamic character and express the clearest living relationship between God and man. Although different in nature, between the Personal God of Orthodox theology and man in his capacity as a person created in the image of God, an incomprehensible communion to the sciences is achieved through uncreated divine grace. From this communion also results the capacity of man to be "the center of creation, a microcosm through which free will defines the supreme destiny of the universe." ¹

I. Love of fellows - effect of man's relation to God

Through our fellows we define any person close to or far away whom we can help, thus proving our love for God. Every relation of man to his fellows must be based on love, for only through it can man enjoy the good of the other as his own good. Theology often states that it is

necessary for man to seek to stretch out his hands to the afflicted, for only in this way is the love of God proved by deeds. The perfection of the person can be accomplished only by the exercise of good works toward others and is based on the command of Christ the Savior, who says, "If you want to be perfect, go and sell your possessions and give them to the poor" (Matthew XIX, 21).

From here you can see the difference between the person that theology talks about and the individual that other sciences talk about. If the individual is the egocentric man who realizes inter-human relations that satisfy his own interest, the person about whom theology speaks is characterized by unconditional love for fellow human beings, love that is perfected in the love of God.

Love of God and fellowship is perfectly applicable in the Church of Christ, this being through excellency the environment in which love for God and love for others are fully manifested, bringing about the deification of the person. „Although the Church is a theandric existence of two natures of two wills inseparably united, namely the union between the creature and God obtained in the person of Christ, in the persons of the faithful, who represent the multiple hypostases of His nature, she reaches this perfection only virtually. However, the theandric nature of the Church facilitates the ascension towards perfection, hence reaching such a state depends heavily on a happy conjunction between the perseverance of the faithful in their work towards spiritual ascension and the help of God sent to them for this purpose”¹.

The relationship resulting from love for others and through them for God, ennobles the person, removes him from egocentrism, and presents him as the crown of all creation, as the biblical account beautifully points out. The collaboration of the person with the divine grace brings through the work of the virtues, the perfection, without which no one can define himself as a full person in harmony with the Creator and with his fellows. Altering the relationship between man and divine grace imperatively involves stagnating the process of ennobling man and destroying harmony with the others. When man voluntarily chose sin, although he knew that there would be consequences, he chose the way out of love and implicitly his gradual transformation from a person characterized by love into an individual immersed in egocentrism. The lack of divine grace, which man renounces by accepting sin, means closing the channel of communication with God which often means breaking the person of divine love and implicitly sinking into indifference towards others. This rupture has direct implications, not only in man's relationship with God, but also in his social relationships. Thus, “human dialogue is destroyed, it can no longer be a reflection of divine triology. What gives meaning to human communication and makes human dialogue fruitful, in the process of continuous deification, is man's uninterrupted communion with the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit.”².

A person's true dignity results from his correct relationship with God. Through the uncreated divine grace, man is in communion of love with God, this communion being the foundation of love for fellow human beings and implicitly the beginning of the deification of the person. In this context we can also say that man, by definition seeking absolute happiness, can taste it only by his correct relation to God and by the manifestation of love for others, it, happiness being an effect of love. “When Christ ordained this, He ordained because He wanted

¹ Petrov, G. D. (2021). The hypostatic union – the foundation of the theandry of the Church. *Technium Social Sciences Journal*, 22(1), 804–811. <https://doi.org/10.47577/tssj.v22i1.4364>

² John MEYENDORFF, *Teologia bizantină...*, p. 163.

to multiply love and by multiplying love to multiply happiness. The more we love more and more, the more love becomes our happiness”³.

II. Theological meaning of person dignity

The analysis of this dignity from a theological perspective shows that man cannot limit himself to the sensory ones, and the world cannot be enough for him. The world is only the environment in which man develops intellectually and spiritually for the encounter with God. Starting from the premise that man's goal is to reach the state of deification by grace, it follows that the created world is only the environment in which people can manifest their love for both God and fellow human beings.

From this we also understand that man is not the master of the world and that he has received it as a gift from God. Every person "rules the world only to the extent that his action on it can be regarded as part of the dialogue with God."⁴

Although he lives in the world, every person is capable of dialogue with God by experiencing living in His love from this life. „By living in God, man becomes aware of the infinity of His love on the one hand, and of the impossibility of expressing this infinity on the other. Man's rationality is overwhelmed by such an inexpressible infinity”⁵. In other words, the infinity of God overwhelms the rationality of the person, but man has the ability to feel the love of the Creator and implicitly to respond to this love. Moreover, being the crown of all creation, every person is indebted to the world for keeping it in harmony with its Creator.

The whole creation can be considered a plasticization of the love of the Holy Trinity, and the person has the ability to experience the richness of meaning that the love of God offers to creation in general and to man in particular. “The people and things of the world are God's gifts and words as expressions of His love for people and as appeals to their love. These gifts and words hide in them indefinite possibilities of change and multiplication, which awaits their actualization through people, while hiding countless meanings of gifts and expressions from them. From their primordial state, the things and persons of the world are our bridges to God and to our fellow men”⁶.

The person, by definition, is perfectible, and his movement in the world must always be related to God, because only in this way does man work virtue for his own salvation. As both man and the world are the work of God, it follows that the whole of creation is based on intra-Trinitarian love, for there can be no external principle that determines creation. Therefore, God out of love creates everything, including man, whom he places at the forefront of all creation, resulting in the dignity that the Creator gives him as a gift. Therefore, only through the correct relation to God, man can fully define himself, in his dignity as a person capable of dialogue and love both with God and with his fellow men.

The concept of happiness analyzed from a theological perspective presupposes man's harmony with God and with his fellow men. "Only God has existence through Himself, through His love sharing the existence of nothing, so that nothing can share through this existence with His too generous love."⁷.

³ John MEYNDORFF Hristos în gândirea creștină răsăriteană, trad. Pr. Prof. Nicolai Buga, Ed. IBMBOR, București, 1997, pp. 147-148;

⁴ John MEYNDORFF, Hristos în gândirea creștină răsăriteană, trad. Pr. Prof. Nicolai Buga, Ed. IBMBOR, București, 1997, p. 147.

⁵ Petrov, G. D. (2021). The apophatic knowledge in philosophy and theology. Emil Cioran Versus Dumitru Stăniloae. *Technium Social Sciences Journal*, 21(1), 840–845. <https://doi.org/10.47577/tssj.v21i1.3702>

⁶ Pr. Prof. D. STĂNILOAE, *Dinamica creației în Biserică*, în *Ortodoxia*, 1977, nr. 3-4, p. 285.

⁷ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Iisus Hristos sau Restaurarea omului*, ediția a II-a, Craiova 1993, p. 79;

By receiving the Image of God through creation, man is the only rational being capable of dialogue with its Creator. This relationship was established when God, through the breath of life, offered to man the living soul and implicitly the uncreated divine grace through which the relationship between the Divine and the human is realized.

By choosing sin as a result of temptation, the image of God was altered in him, but it was not lost forever. Even in the state of sin, devoid of grace, man is aware of his power to cooperate with divine grace in order to restore in himself the First Image and thus the communion with God. "The centrality of the soul in man iconically reflects the centrality of God in the soul, a fact discovered and fulfilled perfectly in the Hypostasis of the Incarnate Son."⁸.

From what is presented, we understand that the act by which man becomes a living being is a special one, through the breath of life that he received, becoming in fact the Image of the Image, therefore the image of Christ. Therefore, "in the structure of his being, the Christological imprint was implemented. In the reality of the divine paradox, the old Adam is created in the image of the new Adam, that is, of Christ."⁹.

Carrying the Image of God in itself, man understands absolute happiness only by relating to Him. Any other purely earthly happiness is ephemeral, relative, failing to satisfy the absolute desire of the human being. Only the obtaining of salvation by man has the effect of knowing absolute happiness, happiness which presupposes the living of the person in the love of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. The image of God in man represents the seal of his eternal existence, for man was not created to die, but to be alive forever through his soul which rises to the One from whom he received it, that is, to God.

III. Conclusions

The complexity of terms by which the concept of happiness can be defined, although immeasurable, can only satisfactorily define this concept from the perspective of theology, because, unlike other sciences, it relates man to the Source of happiness, that is, to God. Without this report, happiness cannot be absolute, it is ephemeral, transient. Because happiness belongs to the human soul, which is of immeasurable complexity, a definition in definitive terms is impossible. Happiness subject to the materiality of the world proves this by the fact that what means happiness for one person, for another means nothing. It follows that the absolute happiness to which each person aspires can be found only in the communion of love with God and with his fellow men.

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