



Conceptual key: Freedom/Liberation

Fragments of documents of Social Doctrine of the Church explaining the notion of freedom in the light of the Gospel

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In the Bible, the semantic field that encompasses this word is considerably broad. It can designate "freedom of" (autonomy or socioeconomic independence, unlike slavery; cf. P.E. is 21.2); the "Freedom of" (the capacity of choice, the free discretion which concerns above all a life more or less according to the divine desire; cf. P.E. Dt 30,15-20; Si 15,14-20); or "freedom to" (like that of the young husband dispensed from the military service to devote himself to the woman and the house; cf. Dt 24.5).

The liberty is anyhow always teo-centric: the author is God and guarantor of liberty. As a creator, He puts Man in a state of freedom and responsibility (Gn. 2,16-17), as a Redeemer (Go'el), He pounds his people from the oppression of Egyptian slavery or Babylonian exile (cf. e.g. Ex 3.8; Is 14.3). The liberating position of Yhwh towards his people was to provoke by the Israelites a liberating attitude towards the oppressed ones (cf. P.E. Jr 34.17). But the prophets herald a more radical liberation, the elimination of death (cf. is 25.8) and redemption for the dejected hearts (is 61,1-3).

In the NT Jesus Christ is the bearer of true freedom (cf. Lc 4.1-4). He manifests his supreme freedom through the authority (exousia) and frankness (parrhêsia) of his teaching (cf. Mc 1.22; 8.32), but above all, according to the fourth Gospel, in the free surrender to the death for the love of the Father and the men (cf. Jn 10.18). Jesus has the unique power to donate his life. In this is his liberty and majesty (cf. Mt 26.53; Jn 18.36). Such a prerogative Christological deepens its roots in the filial intimacy of Jesus with the Father, in the love in which he remains and from which he bears witness (cf. Jn 15.9-13). The faithful will also be able to partake of the divine freedom of love without conditions, in total gratuity (cf. Lc. 6, 32SS), after having been loved and forgiven first (1 Jn 4.10), liberated from sin and from fear of death (cf. Hb 2,14-15), filled by the Spirit of freedom (cf. 2 Tm 1.7).

The Church with its → social Doctrine teaches the value and the need for socio-political and economic freedom, but its message cannot be reduced to this type of liberation. "Freedom, brought by Christ in the Holy Spirit, has given us back the capacity, of which sin had deprived us, of loving God above all and of remaining in communion with him. We are free of the disordered love of ourselves, which is the source of the contempt of the neighbor and the relations of dominion among the men "(CDF, Libertatis conscientiae 53).