

Abstract

Freedom of Conscience and Spirit of Christ – Fundamental Principle of Hussite Theology

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The dissertation topic is freedom of conscience in the Spirit of Christ as a specific expression of the essence of Christianity and the resulting Christian freedom in the concept of the theology of the Czechoslovak Hussite Church (CHC) – Hussite theology. Although freedom of conscience and the Spirit of Christ are two seemingly independent ideas, it is clear from the tradition of Hussite theology, including official doctrinal and legal documents, that they are connected. Zdeněk Trtík, the most important theologian for this concept, connects them later explicitly in the form mentioned above. The primary notion is the Spirit of Christ as the essence of Christianity. Freedom of conscience as a form of Christian freedom ensues from it due to accepting the authority of the Spirit of Christ, accepting Christ as the Lord, and becoming his disciples.

The concept of freedom of conscience in the Spirit of Christ has a crucial permanent place in the CHC tradition and has been present in it from the beginning to the present. But at the same time, this concept has undergone some evolution and changes, and therefore it must be considered in its essence, which is permanent. Thus, we are looking for the essence of essence or the intention of intention. In this work, we choose the method of three insights in some particular situations, in which we can observe this concept and compare with each other.

The first insight focusing on the problem of freedom of conscience is the question of the legitimacy of the continuity of the tradition of Hussite theology in this topic with the life and thinking of Master Jan Hus. Here it turned out to be justified, not only in its conceptuality but, above all in its essence. Because the freedom of conscience in Farský and Trtík, the key theologians for the whole thesis, which we have chosen for their most significant contribution to this topic, is understood as truly Christian freedom in terms of commitment and not license, in terms of responsibility resulting from accepting following Christ. It is not freedom from God but freedom for God against all that opposes His will. We find this concept clearly present in Hus, both in his theology and, above all, in his life testimony.

The next chapter – insight, examines our topic from the other side, namely from the concept of the Spirit of Christ in the relation of Karel Farský to George Tyrrell. We choose Tyrrell because Farský was inspired by the norm of the Spirit of Christ, most likely from him. Analysis of the crucial works of both authors, which deal with our topic, showed that it is really possible that Farský took over the norm of the Spirit of Christ from Tyrrell, although it cannot be said with certainty. More interesting, however, is the overlap of their mutual concepts – from the content, which for both of them is the Love of God, through the notional openness, which does not insist

only on the notion of the Spirit of Christ but also uses other notions. However, the essence of the message remains preserved, up to the metaphysical question, which in both authors recedes into the background, although from various motivations, and leaves the privileged place to practice, which is the decisive place where the Spirit of Christ manifests itself.

The last insight follows Zdeněk Trtík and the development of his concept of the Spirit of Christ, which takes place partly at the background of his turn to biblical personalism, but mainly due to his personal shift to the faith in reality of the resurrection. The overview of Emil Brunner's theological influence on this new Trtík's perspective is added in a short but not insignificant excursion. The observable feature is again the question of notional openness. In *The Comments on the Faith (Komentář k věrouce)*, we followed this Trtík's point of turn in experimental deliberate abandonment of both terms and the attempt to talk about them without their use, which in Trtík's case was probably due to a legitimate fear of their misuse. In the end, he did not stick to this approach. However, it opened up a new perspective of their content, especially concerning the link to acceptance of the norm of the Spirit of Christ, i.e., faith, which is already in itself realized salvation, from which grows out that saved freedom to live according to the gospel. This emphasis is related to Trtík's demand for unity of inner and outer faith as well as free decision for Christ, which grows out of the encounter with Him experienced as the transforming Truth. This is where the inspiration of Emil Brunner comes into play. We also encounter here the dispensability of metaphysics, the theme already mentioned in Tyrrell and Farský. Brunner, too, pushes it, from a strictly biblical point of view, beyond a mystery that we do not necessarily have to and perhaps do not even have to penetrate in order to live a full life of faith based on biblical revelation.

The intersection of all insights led us then to four key features of the concept under study, which, irrespective of the changes in the authors' perspectives and time evolution, remain permanent. These are: 1. The need to stick to the recognized Truth that grows out of the encounter with the Risen One; 2. The dispensability of metaphysics or the focus on practice; 3. Emphasis on personal experience with Christ through the grace of the Holy Spirit; 4. Notional openness. These are, so to say, correlates to the very essence, the message of which resides in the concept of the Spirit of Christ, which does not mean the literal text of the Bible itself, but a true living Word of God that has manifested itself in history in Jesus Christ. He is still alive and inspiring, not in biblical closedness, but in an open individual interpretation, which in our perspective evolves in time and space and which must be found again and again through encounters with the eternally Living One and not through repetition of old doctrinal formulas, pious phrases or biblical passages. The above mentioned specifications depict this fundamental nature of the Spirit of Christ in even more specific details. The Spirit of Christ in us increases the freedom of conscience – the conscience bound by the gospel, which is so free from the world and its false demands. It leads us to practical actions that are

transformed and new through Him, not only from ourselves but from the Spirit. He leads us to activities that do not run out in confessional affiliation, symbols, and slogans but which have a specific form of the practice of love and mercy following the example of Christ. This transforming experience with Christ must grow up in us by the grace of the Holy Spirit and cannot be automatically inserted into us from outside or by our own activity. Finally, we do not necessarily have to speak about the Spirit of Christ as the Spirit of Christ and about freedom of conscience as freedom of conscience. However, we must adhere to the essence of this message for the reasons already mentioned and because it is a matter of the very core and foundation of Christianity, which just cannot fit into two limited notions, whatever they may be.

It is a concept that does not just belong to the past, which seeks to proclaim the right to life only by confessional tradition, but it is still a current theological concept because here, theology does not end but begins. We see this in CHC's own tradition in the intentional-based concept of freedom of conscience in the Spirit of Christ by Zdeněk Kučera. In the ecumenical horizon, we encounter these concepts in the current texts of Tomáš Halík, who highlights and upholds them. The findings of the thesis are not only an insight into the core of theological thinking of the CHC, where they gradually developed into Kučera's "theology of simple life," but they are a stable element that finds its relevance also outside of the Hussite theology, where they may lead to a dialogue. For its timeliness, we should not be afraid to bring this still valid theological concept and our perspective, which does not necessarily have to be limited by specific notions but by its inner nature, into the light.