

Liberum Arbitrium - A Study on Martin Luther's Ontology of Freedom

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Introduction

Since arriving in the United States some four years ago I have become quite familiar with the ways its citizens express that America in fact is a free country. While some feel it's appropriate to subtly stick in a "thank you note" as they address God in a communal setting, others wish merely to contrast America to the rest of the world. When I cruise the streets of Portland I enter into a bumper sticker culture that often conveys a similar message: "Freedom comes with a cost!" "Got freedom???" "My money and my freedom are the most safe when congress is in recess!" "I'll keep my GOD, Guns, Freedom, and Money! You can keep your 'CHANGE!'"

No doubt, patriotic expressions, relating to perceived freedom, have gained popularity in America since the tragic events of 9/11. I wonder, though, what is it that causes Americans to feel free? Part of the answer I suspect is that Western society, especially with the arrival of a consumer culture, freedom is commonly equated with the ability for individuals to choose and to enjoy individual rights. Today's consumers in a highly paced culture enjoy the "freedom" of getting what they want, when they want it, at the least perceived cost. Paul Metzger argues that

This doctrine of natural (or perhaps, unnatural) selection, the inalienable and God given freedom to choose freely from among a host of options, is not unique to the church. It is a doctrine held dear by a vast number of Americans — a sign of their enlightenment, of their coming of age, and of their assurance of their own secular salvation.¹

A common assumption, then, seems to be the more options we have the freer we are. In this Americans have truly become masters of their own domain. William Cavanaugh sheds light on this idea in his book *Theopolitical Imagination*. He argues that the main purpose of the state in Western society is to carve out space for individuals. The space created by the state separates individuals from one another and bestows upon them a "freedom" which is characterized by the ability to choose. This "enlightened" perception of freedom has also affected the way spirituality is approached. Instead of seeking to be relevant to God or religion, the consumer's mind is set on finding a relevant God or religion.

Are we really freer today than a hundred years ago just because we can consume 24/7 and go to church "from home"? Does this paradigm characterized by a deep interconnectedness between choice and liberty necessarily constitute a true definition for freedom?

¹ Paul Metzger, *Consuming Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2007), 48.

The nature of the questions being raised here are by no means new on the scene. Similarly, key to the protestant reformation was the opposing views of Martin Luther and Desiderius Erasmus, concerning free will, but on a slightly deeper level than what has been sketched above. Simply stated, can we get behind what we in fact choose, can we choose what to choose? Luther and Erasmus responded to this question in different ways. Luther insisted something or someone other binds the human will to do either good or evil. In opposition Erasmus maintained the human will independently contains the power to apply itself towards something other. With a Western definition of freedom in the back of one's head, at face value, Luther seems to be a supporter of downright slavery while Erasmus appears to be a defender of freedom. However, this condensed assessment fails to account for Luther's view of liberty. In this essay I will attempt to show that for Luther, the nature of freedom is not autonomous but always dependant on relationship to someone else. Luther grounds his views in a relational ontology inspired by the Triune God. As we shall see this ontology also has implication for the way he views the justification of man.

Building from the aforementioned argument, I will invite into this discussion two scholars whom each have done work on Luther in areas that relate to the argument of this paper. First, I will engage in Robert Jenson article "*An Ontology of Freedom in the De Servo Arbitrio of Luther.*"² My goal here is to highlight that Luther, especially in *The Bondage of the Will*, combated a perceived free will. Jenson argues that for Luther God is by definition free in that He is truly free within himself - "rapt by another without dependence on an other than God."³ Through participation in this free Triune God, humans move from perceived freedom towards true freedom, as they are rapt into actual free choice that subsequently causes action. For Luther, then, freedom is always communal (freedom towards the other) rather than individualistic (freedom from the other).

I will then turn to the Finnish school of Luther and specifically Tuomo Mannermaa's article "*Why is Luther so fascinating? Modern Finnish Luther Research.*"⁴ Here Mannermaa highlights that in the context of human freedom, Luther's emphasis is primarily union with Christ, who is present in faith. For, "the indwelling of Christ as grasped in the Lutheran tradition implies a real participation in God."⁵ This becomes especially clear in *The Freedom of a Christian*. Here we find that Luther emphasized ontologically relational categories of justification over forensic ones. Participation in God through union with Christ, then, signifies not a "change of substance" but a "communion of being."⁶

² Robert W. Jenson, 'An Ontology of Freedom in the De Servo Arbitrio of Luther', *Modern Theology* 10 (1994).

³ Jenson, 'An Ontology of Freedom in the De Servo Arbitrio of Luther', 250.

⁴ Carl E. Braaten (ed.), *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 12.

⁵ Tuomo Mannermaa. "Why is Luther so fascinating? Modern Finnish Luther Research." *In Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, Ed. Carl E. Braaten (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

Finally, as I conclude I will briefly follow the lead of Paul Metzger's "*Mystical Union with Christ: An Alternative to Blood Transfusions and Legal Fictions*."⁷ In this article Metzger draws attention to Luther's emphasis on the Holy Spirit, which Mannermaa seemingly fails to incorporate in his interpretation of Luther. Persons cannot have Christ without the Spirit's presence. For, "the good law and that in which one lives is the love of God spread abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit."⁸ Freedom, then, is a dynamic inclusion and personal participation in the life of the Trinity through the personal mediation of the Spirit who unites our hearts to Christ through faith. As the Father and the Son are freed in the Spirit, so too, we are freed in the Spirit.

An Ontology of Freedom: Participation in God's Own Triune Freedom

Luther and Erasmus ascribed to differing views of anthropology, which essentially were shaped by their differing views of the divine life. In the "*The Bondage of the Will*" Luther uncovers Erasmus' tendency to adopt at least certain aspects of Greek philosophy and Scholastic theology. Aristotle had argued that God essentially is an essence or an 'isolated, passionless monad.' In this view he perceived the human self as being "a monadic entity, a self-possessed, closed unit."⁹ Creatures, according to Aristotle, as their God, possess a self-moved will. Erasmus made the following remark in his correspondence with Luther: "Moreover I consider Free-will in this light: that it is a power in the human will, by which, a man may apply himself to those things which lead unto eternal salvation, or turn away from the same."¹⁰ It is worth noting that even the scholastic theologians, Luther reminded Erasmus, required an assisting work of the Spirit in their model of free will. For example, "Aquinas's view of grace combined human responsibility with divine enablement—the cooperative model of faith."¹¹ Here, God engages creatures via their faculties (substance). Grace works through nature rather than directly upon nature.¹² In this sense God enables humans through infused grace,¹³ the goal being to restore inability to reason, choose and act correctly.¹⁴ Basically, the individual's freedom lies in the

⁷ Paul Louis Metzger, "Luther and the Finnish School. *Mystical Union with Christ: An Alternative to Blood Transfusions and Legal Fictions*." *Westminster Theological Journal* 65 (2003): 201-13.

⁸ Martin Luther, "Disputation Against Scholastic Theology" In *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy F. Lull (Augsburg: Fortress, 2005), 38.

⁹ Ronald N. Frost, "Sin and Grace." In *Trinitarian Soundings in Systematic Theology*, ed. Paul Louis Metzger (London: T. & T. Clark International, 2006), 106.

¹⁰ Erasmus quoted in Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishing, 2008), 85.

¹¹ Ronald N. Frost, "Aristotle's Ethics: The Real Reason for Luther's Reformation?" In *TrinJ*, 18:2 (Fall 1997), 227.

¹² For Augustine sin was considered a privation or distortion of that which is good rather merely than an absence of good. Grace, then, is not that which stands in opposition to nature but is that which liberates/controls nature.

¹³ This is often seen as baptismal grace (the Catholic tradition) and/or by 'created' or 'effectual' grace that is infused before the act of faith.

¹⁴ We shall see what the implications are for such a view as I discuss Luther's ontology for justification.

opportunity for meritorious choice. God provides an assisting grace that enables, but does not compel the will. Culpability is then based on the failure to apply God's "gracious" enablement.

Armed with a feisty temper, Luther objected to Erasmus' ideas not with the explicit use of a Trinitarian argument, but one undergirded by a Trinitarian foundation. As described by Jenson his argument "hangs beautifully together said of the triune God and as part of one conceptual structure with propositions asserting his triunity, and if said of any other sort of God makes a mere collection of disparate debating points on free will."¹⁵ Luther's providential view of God definitely caused hesitancy in him to speak of free will outside of the Godhead. Thus, when he refers to free will in *The Bondage of the Will*, the reference is really God's freedom. Hence, Luther argues that

Free-will is plainly a divine term, and can be applicable to none but the divine Majesty only: for He alone "doth, (as the Psalm sings) what He will in Heaven and earth." (Ps. cxxxv. 6.) Whereas, if it be ascribed unto men, it is not more properly ascribed, than the divinity of God Himself would be ascribed unto them: which would be the greatest of all sacrilege.¹⁶

The Bondage of the Will primarily addresses two characteristics of God's freedom. First, directly related to free will, God's freedom consists in being able to make and keep promises. Luther's reasoning is quite straightforward. For someone to keep every promise that person must be sovereign over all circumstances. Second, God's freedom is "nonevident" in nature. Man, then, is confronted with God hidden both by His sovereignty, but also by "the free action of God...with God in the hiddenness of love."¹⁷ With this said, in order to understand more of God's freedom, we must again turn to Luther's anthropology.

Luther's argument with which he rejects human freedom apart from God can be divided into two groups. The first group can be characterized by the human lack of ability to step behind the performance of their choices. Human capacity consists only in doing what one has already decided to do. In other words, humans, have no will behind the will. Luther argues, "This is what we mean by the necessity of immutability: — that the will cannot change itself, nor give itself another bent; but rather the more it is resisted, the more it is irritated to crave; as is manifest from its indignation. This would not be the case if it were free, or had a "Free-will."¹⁸ God alone, on the other hand, enjoys the freedom to precede His own determined will, and as we shall see below this freedom manifests itself in a Trinitarian fashion.

In the second group of arguments we gather that the human will is rapt by another. For the reformer, freedom is a dispositional feature (even for God), and freedom is experienced only to the extent that someone is rapt into freedom by another. What follows is that rather than possessing freedom as a certain quality or substance, persons should be considered passive and

¹⁵ Robert W. Jenson, 'An Ontology of Freedom in the De Servo Arbitrio of Luther', 250.

¹⁶ Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, 64.

¹⁷ Robert Jenson, *An Ontology of Freedom in the De Servo Arbitrio of Luther*, 248.

¹⁸ Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, 51.

thus relational creatures. As a result, humans as actors set the stage for an epic battle between God and Satan. These actors will act “freely” and “willingly” according to whoever rules their hearts,

For if God be in us, Satan is from us, and it is present with us to will nothing but good. But if God be not in us, Satan is in us, and it is present with us to will evil only, Neither God nor Satan admit of a mere abstracted willing in us; but, as you yourself rightly said, when our liberty is lost we are compelled to serve sin: that is, we will sin and evil, we speak sin and evil, we do sin and evil.¹⁹

For humans, then, to enjoy true freedom constitutes to be rapt into God’s freedom, and God is by definition free. God has free will because he is “rapt into freedom without dependence on alien freedom.”²⁰ God is free because he himself “is the other by whom he is rapt into freedom.”²¹ Worth noting is that neither Satan, nor humans can be the “other” because they do not possess freedom. It is here that Luther is finally comfortable speaking of human freedom (free will), because here humans are “rapt” by a free God. Luther’s freedom is not causative but participatory. Thus, his thinking must be contrasted to Scholastic thought. The Royal liberty we enjoy in God involves a community of being. God does not work *through* our capacities. God works *upon* our faculties through His personal and relational presence.

This invitation to enjoy His freedom goes out from a God, whose self is neither a “monadic entity,” nor primarily from a God who is personal in that he is triune self-sufficient, but from a God who is personal in that he triune opens himself.²² Just as Adam and Even were wholly dependent on Him as unfallen creatures, His children continue to enjoy this freedom as relationally dependent on God’s continual presence. “Therefore when God ‘enraptures us’, he frees us by giving us his own freedom, his liberum arbitrium (free will). Human freedom, in the only sense Luther wants to talk about, is nothing less than participation in God's own triune rapture of freedom.”²³ We participate in His freedom when “we are His servants and captives (which is the royal liberty) that we may desire and do, willingly, what He wills.”²⁴ What follows is that, as God’s freedom fighters, we are called to share this relational freedom with others in community (we cannot give it, because we do not possess it). We freely continue to choose to open ourselves to others in love, as we rapt one another towards God, according to the freedom we have been given.

Justification: Christ as the Object and Subject in Faith

Above I hung a theological backdrop with Luther’s views on divine and human freedom.

¹⁹ Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, 96.

²⁰ Robert Jenson, *An Ontology of Freedom in the De Servo Arbitrio of Luther*, 249.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ronald N. Frost, “Sin and Grace.” In *Trinitarian Soundings in Systematic Theology*, 106.

²³ Robert Jenson, *An Ontology of Freedom in the De Servo Arbitrio of Luther*, 252.

²⁴ Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, 52

We now turn to Luther's doctrine of justification and specifically the way Christians have freedom through union with Christ. In the 1998 Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, *Union with Christ: the New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, edited by Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson, was presented as an important contribution to the ongoing theological discussion on the salvation of man. The contributor's study emerged out of a dialogue between them and Eastern Orthodox theologians. What can the New Finnish Interpretation of Luther contribute to the previous discussion of this paper? When Tuomo Mannermaa and his colleagues turned eastward to the Orthodox Church they discovered a relational ontology with a focus on union with God. This dialogue caused them to revisit their own Lutheran tradition. Seen in this new light, Luther's views on justification stand in stark contrast to both Roman Catholic and Protestant theology, because both these camps have embraced subtle deistic tendencies. For Roman Catholics, on the one hand, the doctrine of infused righteousness opens the door for autonomy from God. Here the believer possesses God's grace as a property or quality. On the other hand, the Protestants conception of imputation, when left in isolation or when given primacy in discussions of justification, allows for independence from a direct presence of God.²⁵

In other words, by turning eastward the ~~Fins~~^{Finns} were able to recover aspects of Luther's doctrine of righteousness commonly neglected in the Western Church. Central to their contribution is the claim that Luther emphasized mystical and ontological categories. These claims are relevant to the argument of this paper because they connect Luther's doctrine of justification with his relational ontology concerning divine and human freedom.

It will be helpful to briefly pause and note Stephen Strehle's assertion that the concept of imputation "was never accentuated in the theology of such pillars of the movement as Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin," but emerged in Melanchthon's *Römerbrief –Kommentar* of 1532 under the exegetical influence of the Catholic Erasmus and theological inspiration of Nominalism. According to Strehle, Melanchthon valued imputation or "acceptation" as a "legal fiction." Strehle later argues that, "Luther and his theology cannot be considered its primary inspiration, even if the doctrine comes to be interpreted within his thought."²⁶

Western theology at large, according to Mannermaa's reading of Luther, fails to adequately address, the ontological transformation that occurs in justification. For justification does not signify a change of substance. Instead, as we have seen above, we must speak of this doctrine within the context of a communion of being. Thus, Mannermaa argues that Luther's ontology should cause us to view justification primarily through a relational paradigm. When Luther speaks of "being" he means "standing in relationship." This is the "basis for

²⁵ See Paul Louis Metzger. "Luther and the Finnish School. Mystical Union with Christ: An Alternative to Blood Transfusions and Legal Fictions.", 207 for a more detailed discussion.

²⁶ I came across this helpful insight in Paul Louis Metzger. "Luther and the Finnish School. Mystical Union with Christ: An Alternative to Blood Transfusions and Legal Fictions.", 207 (this section is more or less taken straight out of Metzger's article).

understanding the being-present-of Christ in faith.”²⁷ This he believes to be the central thrust of Luther’s theology. He argues that

In Christ the inner-trinitarian Word, which is the being of God, becomes incarnate. The presence of Christ’s word and the word about Christ in faith are the presence of God himself...the act of knowing and the object of knowledge are identical. God who illuminates and the illuminated heart, the present God and the God seen by us, are identical. God is both the object and the subject, the actor and the act, of faith.²⁸

Furthermore, Mannermaa points us to Luther’s “Hebrew manner of speaking” of faith. In this way of speaking “the properties of God constitute the essence of God.”²⁹ “The righteousness of God” is the same as saying “God the righteous” and “The power of God” is identical to “God the power.” What Luther gets at, according to Mannermaa, is that all these properties are present in Christ. Christ, is God’s grace, and grace cannot be given unless Christ is present. Faith, justifies because it takes hold of and possesses this treasure, Christ present. Persons, then, are truly liberated relationally. This notion fits well with Luther’s idea of alien righteousness. Where Christ is not present there is no salvation. But when He is, through faith, persons participate in the divine life. According to Mannermaa’s reading of Luther this happens through theosis, which is summed up in the following passage:

Just as the word of God became flesh, so it is certainly also necessary that the flesh may become the word. In other words: God becomes man so that man may become God. Thus power becomes powerless so that weakness may become powerful. The Logos puts on our form and pattern, our image, its pattern, and its likeness, so that it may clothe us with its image, its pattern, and its likeness. This wisdom becomes foolish so that foolishness may become wisdom, and so it is in all other things he takes what is ours to himself in order to impart what is his to us.

Luther firmly places himself in the same tradition as Athanasius and Irenaeus who also spoke of union between “Logos and flesh”, of “Word and man”. At the same time he must be distinguished from scholastic theology and ironically also from Eastern Orthodox theology (!) in that “the right relationship of faith is not a striving, dynamic movement of love toward the transcendent (towards union).³⁰ Rather, he is “below in faith present in the sinful human.”³¹ In other words, we are not one flesh with Christ because we are righteous but we are righteous because we are one flesh with Christ. The Christian life starts with union rather than ends with it.

²⁷ Tuomo Mannermaa. “Why is Luther so fascinating? Modern Finnish Luther Research.” *In Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, 12.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁰ I wondered about this quite a bit as I put this paper together. Is not one of the characteristics of Eastern Orthodox Christianity that the Christian strives towards union?

³¹ Tuomo Mannermaa. “Why is Luther so fascinating? Modern Finnish Luther Research.” *In Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, 15.

The relational themes of freedom as discussed above become ever so clear with the marital language that Luther utilizes in his treatise *The Freedom of the Christian*. Through faith in Jesus Christ, Jesus takes us to Himself as His bride. “If he gives her his body and very self” in life and in death, “how shall he not give her all that is his? And if he takes the body of the bride, how shall he not take all that is hers?”³² Only through “the wedding ring of faith,” a sign of what already is, Christ marries the believer. They become one flesh through faith. The language used here alludes to the Song of Solomon. Luther writes,

Who then can fully appreciate what this royal marriage means? Who can understand the riches of the glory of this grace? The rich and divine bridegroom Christ marries this poor, wicked harlot, redeems her from all her evil, and adorns her with all his goodness. Her sins cannot now destroy her, since they are laid upon Christ and swallowed up by him. And she has that righteousness in Christ, her husband, of which she may boast as of her own and which she can confidently display alongside her sins in the face of death and hell and say, “If I have sinned, yet my Christ, in whom I believe, has not sinned, and all his is mine and all mine is his,” as the bride in the Song of Solomon (2:16) says, “My beloved is mine and I am his.”³³

The passage above should not be taken as a denial of imputed (forensic) righteousness. I made mention above of how the doctrine of imputed or alien righteousness serves to convey that we are not righteous on our own.

In this way the Finnish school reminds us that human freedom exclusively occurs when we are married to the second member of the trinity, who is present in faith. Through Christ presence we are rapt into participation in the life of the Triune God. Mannermaa writes that, “Faith means justification precisely on the basis of Christ’s person being present in it as favor and gift...in faith itself Christ is present and so the whole of salvation.”³⁴ The real transformation that occurs at salvation, then, is that persons are brought into a community of divine freedom characterized by participation and “towardness.” We arrive then at one beautiful, yet quite haunting truth. We are only righteous in relation to Christ, and we are “related” to Christ because the Holy Spirit unites us to the Him through faith.

The Holy Spirit: God’s bond of Love that Unites us to Christ through Faith

Finally, we shall turn to matters of pneumatology. I would briefly like to point us to the fact that the Finish school fails to incorporate the Spirit into their discussion on Luther’s view on justification. Paul Metzger puts it well when he says,

Without wishing to take away from the Christocentric focus of Mannermaa’s discussion of the

³² Martin Luther, “The Freedom of the Christian” In *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy F. Lull, 397.

³³ *Ibid.*, 398.

³⁴ Tuomo Mannermaa. “Why is Luther so fascinating? Modern Finnish Luther Research.” In *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, 14.

relation of “forgiveness (favor) justification and the real presence of God (donum) in faith,” is not the Spirit really the missing link between justification and presence, safeguarding against the danger of their separation “by the one-sidedly forensic doctrine of justification adopted by the Formula of Concord and by subsequent Lutheranism”³⁵

We cannot speak of freedom, justification or participation in the divine life without giving mention to the role of the Holy Spirit, for at least three reasons. First, the Spirit is in fact the person who liberates God within himself. For as Augustine once argued the Holy Spirit is the mutual love by which the Father and the Son love one another. This view safeguards against a substance metaphysics, where God is a singular essence with either three modes or three personal centers of expression. The Spirit, then, is truly the bond of love that unites the father and the son, so too, frees them to be Father and Son in perfect relationship *towards* one another.

Second, economically speaking, in light of what has just been argued, the Holy Spirit, the bond of love that liberates and unites the Father with the Son, also liberates us and unites us to Christ. The Holy Spirit is the means by which God pursues a fallen creation. He was given so that God might justify the ungodly. The Spirit woos man to himself through the outpouring of love into our hearts.³⁶ The transformation that takes place in the event of justification is as we have seen bound up in “being” rather “substance”. This theme relates also to the Spirit in that He transforms our affections for God. Augustine argues that, “the love which is of God and which is God is specifically the Holy Spirit; by him God’s love is diffused in our hearts, and by this love the whole Trinity indwells us.”³⁷ As Augustine once argued, the Holy Spirit’s gift is nothing other than the Holy Spirit.³⁸ Persons cannot encounter freedom apart from, but only in a relationship with the liberating Triune God, who pours out His love into our hearts through Christ by the Holy Spirit.³⁹

Third, For Luther the Spirit’s role is equally important in the event of justification and sanctification of a person. It is common to ascribe the work of Christ to the former event and the work of the Spirit to the latter. Luther makes no such distinction. He argues that, “it pleaseth God – not to give the Spirit without the word, but through the Word,⁴⁰ with the ultimate goal to prepare a bride for the his Son. Just as we have see the person is always in relationship and thus always dependent on another for ones own freedom. Without Christ’s presence, by the Spirit, a person is not free to participate in God’s freedom.

³⁵ Paul Louis Metzger. “Luther and the Finnish School. Mystical Union with Christ: An Alternative to Blood Transfusions and Legal Fictions.” *Westminster Theological Journal* 65 (2003): 208.

³⁶ Romans 5:5

³⁷ Augustine, *De trinitate*, 15.36; quoted in Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology* (vol. 1, *The Triune God*; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 148.

³⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, 96.

Conclusion

We have seen that through participation in the Triune life persons enjoy freedom *towards* God, who draws us to himself. Only a free God can rapt persons into free will. This freedom is ultimately participatory and flows from union with Christ, by the Holy Spirit through faith.

When we experience this freedom we are compelled by the Spirit to turn outwardly, as the Triune God, *towards* our neighbors. We understand that freedom is always experienced in relationship with others. The church must, therefore, challenge the individualistic approach that drives Western society (freedom from others) with one that somehow communicates communal participation and sharing in the triune life. Thus, for example, the fear of another 9/11 will not vanish by increasing the defense budget. Rather these efforts must be at least balanced with a dialogue of reconciliatory nature, in order to create freedom towards one another. Instead of killing for America we are free to die for America. Instead of “taking back” we are free to share our freedom with others.

Furthermore, when the Triune God raptures us into freedom, we are free to say no to the multitude of choices this consumerist society presents before us. Now, instead of letting our choices define us (cars, cell phones, careers, churches), we are free in that we have been chosen in Him by God and by His church.