

Self-Sufficiency versus Theosufficiency

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Abstract

This article entitled: ‘self-sufficiency versus theosufficiency analyzes the notion of self-sufficiency. Notion which has become so valued to our economies, churches and to communities. This concept, although functionally attractive, does not do justice to the nature of the church which far from being an *autonomia* is a *koinomia* and *theonomia*. The article proposes a semantic reappropriation of the nature of the expression in relation to the ontological reality of the body of Christ. The autonomy or self-sufficiency in question in this study refers to the interdependence between a lower structure and another higher one which serves as supervision. This work which compares two concepts and which attempts to situate self-sufficiency in an ecclesiological and theological context will have allowed us to highlight two types of self-sufficiency. Firstly, anthropocentric self-sufficiency: This is what we can call atheistic economics; a kind of humanism centered on the search for vital balance by oneself and secondly theocentric self-sufficiency : where it is God who dictates the attitude to follow and ensures the vital balance “autarkeia” which would therefore be assimilated to a form of Theo-dependence dear to church theocentrism.

Keywords: *self-sufficiency, theosufficiency, autonomia and koinomia*

Introduction

It is no longer surprising these days to hear the speech on the autonomy of our institutions. If on a secular level this notion does not pose a problem, associated with the nature of theistic Christianity it seems strongly antithetical to the *koinomia* nature of the church and its strong dependence on divine solidarity. One of the key elements of church success is to promote higher levels of self-sufficiency for organizations. Leaders believe that promoting higher levels of self-sufficiency will enable a greater focus on mission, as entities can live within their means and the resources they receive can be focused on a particular region.¹

Methodology

This study compares while analysing the concepts of self-sufficiency synonymous with autonomy and that of theosufficiency synonymous with dependence in the ecclesiological and theological context. Linguistic approach is also used.

¹ Marcos Paseggi, *Report of the Treasurer of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists* |, Accessed October 2022, Adventist Review and DIA. <https://actualites.adventiste.org/rapport-du-tresorier-de-la-conference-generale-des-adventistes-du-septieme-jour/>.

Result and Discussion

Self-sufficiency

Self-sufficiency understood in a broad sense generally refers to man's sole search for well-being (happiness). As such, self-sufficiency appears to be an expression antithetical to biblical theocentrism. Etymologically: In Latin *auto*, oneself and *sufficere*, to put in place of; self-sufficiency means: “to operate within self”; it is therefore an anthropocentric concept. Its conception in the scriptures of the Greek *αυτο* self and *ικανός*² expression generally used as a referent to the sufficiency which comes from God³; and its sister phrase *autarkeia*⁴ is defined as a perfect condition of life in which no help or support is necessary. Self-sufficiency in general is linked to the mastery of two important elements: On the one hand, production and on the other, expenditure: that is, how to produce (create), and on the other, how to spend (manage). It is the balance of these two elements that nourishes our self-sufficiency.

Let's turn to the confusion of self-support with self-sufficiency. Self-support is different from self-sufficiency. The various occurrences of the concept of self-support join the concept of creative adjustment. It always refers to entities awareness of their needs, and the means they have at their disposal to respond to the situation. It involves offering in the sense of giving a gift of my need, of my desire to the other. It is a posture of maturity in which the person can move away from omnipotence and move into a relationship of dependency.⁵ Self-support therefore has no connection with support for oneself.

In this strict sense, self-sufficiency means not depending on the values of others, nor on their decisions, nor on their actions, even less on their means; in this perspective it is assimilated to omnipotence (or *pantokrator*) which itself supposes self-existence and in this restricted sense only God is capable of being self-sufficient. So what does it mean to be self-sufficient in current ecclesiology jargon? To answer this question we will explore the concept of theosufficiency.

Concept of Theosufficiency

² Of the 39 uses of “*ikanos*” in the NT, the largest number is found in Luke (9) and Acts (18). Matthew and Mark, on the other hand, have only 3 occurrences each, while Paul has 5 (in 1-2 Corinthians, also Rom 15:23 v.l.) and the Pastorals one (2 Tim 2:2).

³ See, 2 Cor 3:5-6; The word is frequently used in Hellenistic literature and in the LXX (Ruth 1:20, 21) with wide usage: as in the divine name *shaddai*, meaning one who is sufficient in himself and provides full sufficiency. In domestic or national economics, reference to an entity whose needs are covered by its own production. Situation in which personal resources are equal to what is necessary to meet needs.

⁴ See, 2Cor 9:8; or 2) have all the necessities of life; or even put oneself in one's place (contentment: 3) a mind satisfied with one's fate.)

⁵ Tárrega Ximo, Michel Dominique, « De l'autosuffisance à l'interdépendance », *Cahiers de Gestalt-thérapie*, 2009/2 (n° 24), 83-110. DOI : 10.3917/cges.024.0083. URL : <https://www.cairn.info/revue-cahiers-de-gestalt-therapie-2009-2-page-83.htm>

To understand theosufficiency it is important to remember that there are two kinds of self-sufficiency. Firstly, anthropocentric self-sufficiency: This is what we can call atheistic economics; a kind of humanism centered on the search for vital balance by oneself and secondly theocentric self-sufficiency (where it is God who dictates the attitude to follow and ensures the vital balance «autarkeia») which would therefore be assimilated to a form of Theo-dependence.⁶

To better understand this truth we will appropriate the Johannine concept of prosperity in all respects. In 3 John 1:1-2 it is written: «The elder, to Gaius, the beloved, whom I love in truth. 2. Beloved, I wish you to prosper in all respects and be in good health, as the state of your soul prospers. »⁷ It would be preferable to emphasize from the outset that prosperity in all respects is different from prosperity without regard which it wants to be anti-axiological, antimonial without ethical reference, the very one which is self-sufficient par excellence. Prosperity without consideration is therefore castigated at length in the Holy Scriptures. For Theosufficiency there are two axes to follow: theostatic balance, ecclesiostatic balance.

Theostatic Balance

Theostatic balance is the member's relationship with God and encompasses several notions. From the vine-oath to the notion of verticality and horizontality induced.

a. The first idea is the «Ampelos-klema» this is the notion of the vine-oath. It necessarily involves the member's vital attachment to God, creator and source of all abundance. «I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me and in whom I abide bears much fruit, for without me you can do nothing. » (John. 15:5)

b. The second is the notion of God's grace: Finding grace in the eyes of God: Grace appears as the essential ingredient for theostatic balance, the source of this sufficiency. What the Christian needs most is the grace of God, it is this grace on which all the heroes of faith have nourished themselves. «And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness. » (2 Cor. 12:9) « By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me was not in vain; far from it, I have worked more than them all, not however I, but the grace of God which is with me. » (1 Cor. 15:10). « The Lord said to Moses, I will do as you ask me, for you have found favor in my eyes, and I know you by your name. » (Exod. 33:17; Job 10:12).

c. The third is the concept of faithfulness

« He who is faithful in the least things is also faithful in the great things, and he who is unjust in the least things is also faithful in the great things. » (Luke 16:10) «And his master said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a

⁶ We can also add to the list pneumo-dependence, Christo dependence biblio-dependence, rhemato-dependence.

⁷ All biblical references are from the KJV version unless otherwise noted.

few things, I will entrust you with many things; enter into the joy of your master. » (Matt. 25:21)

d. The fourth is the notion of blessing

It is the blessing of the Lord that makes rich, and he does not follow it with any sorrow. (Prov. 10:22) «Then there will be a place that the Lord your God will choose to make his name dwell there. There you shall offer all that I command you, your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, your firstfruits, and the chosen offerings which you shall make to the Lord in fulfillment of your vows. » (Deut. 12:11) «The firstfruits of all the fruits, and of all the heave offerings which you offer, shall belong to the priests; you shall give the first fruits of your dough to the priests, that the blessing may rest upon your house. » (Ezek. 44:30) «Bring into the storehouse all the tithes, that there may be food in my house; Test me in this way, says the Lord of hosts. And you will see if I do not open the windows of heaven for you, If I do not pour out blessings on you in abundance. » (Mal. 3:10)

e. The fifth concept is the one of vertical charity support of the poor

«He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, who will repay him according to his work. » (Prov. 19:17) «He who increases his wealth through interest and usury accumulates it for him who has pity on the poor. » (Prov. 28:8 NIV) «When Jesus heard this, he said to him, «One thing you still lack: sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me. » (Luke 18:22)

f. The sixth is a spirit of gratitude and adoration

In a partnership you have to know who you are dealing with; who we are doing business with. A mistake at this level is not tolerable and devitalizes the relationship. « Therefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us show our gratitude by worshiping God that is acceptable to Him, with godliness and fear. » (Heb. 12:28)

H. The seventh is the notion of verticality and horizontality induced

«Whatever you do, do it heartily, as for the Lord and not for men. » (Col. 3:23) God that is acceptable to Him, with godliness and fear. » (Heb. 12:28). We now turn to the second concept of theosufficiency, the ecclesiostatic balance.

Ecclesiostatic Balance

«And the Lord said unto him, I hear thy prayer and thy supplication which thou hast prayed unto me, and I sanctify this house which thou hast built to put my name there forever, and my eyes and my heart will be there always. » (1 Ki. 9:3) It includes the relationship of the limb to the body and the relationship of the body to the body.

a. Relationship of the Member to the body of Christ

A balanced life with the body of Christ This is where the notion of member Μέλος⁸ comes into play, widely used as part of the image of the unity of the body and the multiplicity of members in their various potential tasks. Each has its own function, thus giving richness to the body. The body in question here is the body of Christ. In addition to national, religious or social differences, there are functional differences according to charisms, but the creative Spirit permeates everything as life does the body and unites the different members, so that they suffer and rejoice together. (Rom. 12:4-5 and 1 Cor. 12:12.) A clear indication that self-sufficiency or self-static balance is only achieved when ecclesiostatic balance is achieved. “There were no destitute people among them. »⁹

Just like salvation, it can be considered in a mono-synergistic way, the prosperity desired for the Christian is in essence theoergomic, that is to say the action of the Eternal. She is theodos (from εὐοδόω to lead by a direct and easy path, to grant success, to make prosper, to be happy.) It is therefore the path that the lord traces the one that man listens to and follows for his happiness. This path is plural or rather multidimensional; it considers man in his entirety. Prosperity in all respects amounts to finding the right balance in the scale of human needs and leads to the relationship of the body with the body.

b. Relationship of the body with the body

This philosophy aims to keep resources in the community circuit as long as possible. It is also well known that a social group that does not have a close relationship does not prosper. The secret of the wealth of communities lies in their ability to find within their relationship all the structures necessary for their own development in order to keep the opportune ones in their circuit of activity¹⁰ for as long as possible. It's the notion of where in how to spend.

Every mission responds to a basic philosophy which induces current practices. A church that seeks some form of self-sufficiency¹¹ will therefore have to work on Spiritual Prosperity; church and program adapted to the context. The spiritual dimension of human therefore meets his needs in this area, investing in the spiritual domain mean to work Godly on the sector such has:

⁸ Μέλος appears in the NT 34 times, with its main emphasis in the Pauline letters (Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians; elsewhere only in Matt 5:29. James 3:5; 4:1. The meaning « song» does not not found in the NT. The LXX uses the term for members of the body (both human and animal, Job 9:28, Exodus 29:17), and also for songs or melodies (Ezekiel 2:10). Rabbinic theology refers to the 248 commandments of the law to the 248 members of the body (and 365 for 365 days of the year).

⁹ The whole body has an eternal destiny even if individual members perish (Mat 5:29-30).

¹⁰ *Read: How Blacks' Dollars Can Achieve Black Power by William Reed* “How long does money stay in the various communities?” A dollar circulates: 6 hours in the Black community; 17 days in the White community; 20 days in the Jewish community; 30 days in the Asian community

¹¹ “Evangelization through Vegetables” allows Tanzanian women to be trained for self-sufficiency, Accessed March 21, 2017 <https://www.interamerica.org/fr/2017/03/levangelisation-par-les-legumes-permet-aux-tanzaniennes-femmes-detre-formees-a-self-sufficiency/>. See also https://www.lesechos.fr/08/02/2002/LesEchos/18590-139-ECH_dieu--the-church-and-business.htm

- a. Education: all kinds of school: academic and professional; specialized. Create an educational framework favorable to your community.
- b. Health: public health/cleanliness; lifestyle.
- c. Nutrition: feed them yourself
- d. Clothing: defining your own label
- e. Housing: the implantation of the living environment by God to man is an example that challenges us to invest in real estate.
- f. Recreation: swimming pools; rides; games rooms; break; gymnasium; sports infrastructure reflecting not the coliseum but cohesion.
- g. Communication: let's not forget that we live in a world where people need to communicate and where information is master of the world.

Conclusion

The Christian cannot be, strictly speaking, self-sufficient, a notion that follows God more than man. He is rather theosufficient and it is within this framework that he can better accomplish his mission. To overcome the historical weight, it requires an ecclesiological reformatting of another way of looking at the missionary work of the church. We must therefore reformat, deconstruct and create a new paradigm. There must be a radical shift from *autonomia* to *koinomia* and from *autosufficiency* to *theosufficiency*. The first lesson to be taught is the lesson of dependence upon God. As a flower of the field has its root in the soil; as it must receive air, dew, showers, and sunshine, so must we receive from God that which ministers to the life of the soul.¹²

As it is written: « I recognized that whatever God does will last forever, that there is nothing to add to it and nothing to take away from it, and that God does this so that we fear him. » (Eccl. 3:14) «Whatever the Lord wills, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and in all deeps. » (Ps. 135:6) «Because whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and the victory that triumphs over the world is our faith. » (1 Jn. 5:4) «Now to him who is able to do, by the power that works in us, exceeding all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the church. and in Jesus Christ, in all generations, for ever and ever! Amen! » (Eph. 3:20-21).

¹² Ellen G White, *Our Father Cares*, https://whiteestate.org/devotional/ofc/01_09/#:~:text=The%20first%20lesson%20to%20be,is%20guaranteed%20to%20the%20Christian.

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