# ROCZNIK TEOLOGII KATOLICKIEJ

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# Contents

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# The History of the Infertility Treatments in Medicine and Church Teaching

The Bible tells the story of Sarah and Abraham and their joy when, after many years of childlessness and despite Sarah's great age, she gave birth to a son, Isaac. God has given me cause to laugh, she said, and all who hear about this will laugh with me (Gen. 21:6). Today too there are many people who suffer because they cannot have children and who would be immensely grateful for a remedy. Modern medicine makes it possible to treat many types of infertility which could not have been treated in the past. Such progress in medicine is welcome, but only provided that the employed techniques respect human rights and do not infringe human dignity.

**Key words**: infertility, medicine, Church, treatment, diagnosis.

The Bible tells the story of Sarah and Abraham and their joy when, after many years of childlessness and despite Sarah's great age, she gave birth to a son, Isaac. God has given me cause to laugh, she said, and all who hear about this will laugh with me (Gen. 21:6). St Luke's Gospel tells of another mother, Elizabeth, who was overjoyed to find herself pregnant after many years of longing for a child. Today too there are many people who suffer because they cannot have children and who would be immensely grateful for a remedy. Modern medicine makes it possible to treat many types of infertility which could not have been treated in the past. Such progress in medicine is welcome, but only provided that the employed techniques respect human rights and do not infringe human dignity.

Infertility is defined as inability to have offspring in a natural way after one year of attempts. In modern terms infertility is not a disease but a symptom or a disorder preventing natural conception. Around

10-20% of married couples are unable to find the cause, in other couples the reason for it is the male factor (around 40%) or the female factor (around 30%) or there is a coexistence of conditions in both spouses (around 30%). The complex pathogenesis of infertility takes into account the hormonal factors, mechanic factors, immunological factors or genetic ones[1].

In 1987 the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a document known as *Donum Vitae* ("The Gift of Life"), which addressed the morality of many modern fertility procedures. The document did not judge the use of technology to overcome infertility as wrong in itself. It concluded that some methods are moral, while others-because they do harm to the dignity of the human person and to the institution of marriage-are immoral. *Donum Vitae* reaffirmed an obligation to protect all human life when married couples use various technologies to conceive children. Without questioning the motives of those using these techniques, *Donum Vitae* pointed out that people can do harm to themselves and to others even as they try to do what is good, that is, overcome infertility. The fundamental principle which the Church used to assess the morality of various means of overcoming infertility was a rather simple one, even if its application is sometimes difficult.

## Infertility

Epidemiological data indicate that infertility affects 14% of couples in the USA, 18,4% in France and 16,8% in Great Britain. In Poland such epidemiological research is not conducted but it is estimated that 18-20% of married couples have a problem with conceiving a child. However the third world countries are struggling with the phenomenon of secondary infertility, the causes of which are sexually transmitted diseases and surgical procedures carried out on postnatal women in conditions devoid of sanitary and epidemiological standards. Moreover, the access to professional medical assistance is limited by the economical factor[2]. Globally, the problem concerns 50-80 million infertile people. This phenomenon is developing further.

Each year the number of infertile couples is increasing by around 2 million. According to WHO such rate classifies infertility as a social

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[1]    Cf. B. Męczekalski, A. Warenik-Szymankiewicz, *Rola komórki jajowej w genetycznych uwarunkowaniach płodności i niepłodności*, "Endokrynologia Polska" 56 (2005), 3, pp. 356-58.

[2]    Cf. A. Drosdzol et al., *Standard postępowania diagnostycznego w niepłodności*, "Annales Academiae Medicae Silesiensis" 60/5 (2006), p. 434.

disease[3]. Infertility has been added to the International Classification of Diseases and divided into male infertility with causal extensions under numbers N 46.0 as infertility resulting from azoospermia; N 46.1 as infertility resulting from oligospermia; N 46.8 as infertility of other origins; N 46.9 as undefined male infertility and the female one with causal extensions under numbers N 97.0 as infertility associated with lack of ovulation; N 97.1 as infertility of fallopian tube origin; N 97.2 as infertility of uterus origin; N 97.3 as infertility of cervix origin; N 97.4 as infertility associated with male factors; N 97.8 as infertility of a different origin; N 97.9 as undefined female infertility[4].

The most important factor determining fertility is age. Its peak period falls between 20 and 25 years old after which it declines. A sharp decline is noticed after the age of 35 and after the age of 45 fertility declines to a point where the probability of conceiving a child is negligible. Other factors include social conditions, economic conditions and religious influences. An element that cannot be forgotten is lifestyle and the use of substances: alcohol, smoking, drugs and the excessive consumption of medicines.

The environment in which potential parents live also plays an important role. Heavy metal pollution of the environment, pesticides, ionising radiation all have an impact on the infertility phenomenon. Concomitant diseases mainly involving genital infections, most commonly caused by bacteria "Chlamydia trachomatis" and "Neisseria gonorrhoeae" together with other anaerobic bacteria contribute to infertility. The resulting infections in the woman's body cause postinflammatory obstruction of the fallopian tubes and intrauterine adhesions, while in men – the obstruction of the seminal ducts and deterioration of semen quality. Decreased fertility is significantly affected by thyroid disease, diabetes, immunological diseases[5]. Anatomical causes of infertility include abnormalities of the fertile organs: absence of vagina or uterus, double uterus with or without a double vagina,

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[3]    Cf. T. Opala et al., *Epidemiologia i metody diagnostyczne*, in: *Ginekologia. Podręcznik dla położnych, pielęgniarek i fizjoterapeutów*, ed. T. Opala, Warszawa 2006, p. 133.

[4]    Cf. J. Smyczyńska, *Diagnostyka i leczenie zaburzeń hormonalnych jako wyraz troski o zdrowie prokreacyjne i profilaktyka niepłodności. Czy metody rozpoznawania płodności mogą być pomocne?*, "Fides et Ratio" 39/3 (2019), p. 45; Cf. B. Graham, *Buck's 2020 ICD-10-CM for Hospital Edition*, Riverport Lane 2020, pp. 1107-1108, 1116.

[5]    Cf. T. Opala et al., *Epidemiologia i metody diagnostyczne*, pp. 133-134.

partially or completely partitioned uterus, bicornuate uterus, cervical agenesis, vaginal agenesis, partially or completely partitioned vagina[6].

Doctors are increasingly mindful that infertility is determined by several factors, e.g. obstructed fallopian tubes may coexist with non-ovulatory cycles. Therefore, lack of ovulation cannot be treated without checking the patency of the fallopian tubes. Intensive development of immunology is viewed with hope as it may contribute to the identification of hitherto unknown aetiological factors of infertility. Knowledge allows for analysis and then for practical action regarding the normal structure of the body and its functions, the origin of diseases and their causes, the recognition of diseases and their treatment, the maintenance of health conditions, overcoming the effects of diseases[7]. The combination of knowledge, experience and principles of good medical practice with the achievements of modern science is contributing to the enormous progress in the diagnosis and treatment of infertility.

## The history of procreative medicine

The development of knowledge about human fertility was very slow until a certain period. Fertility diagnosis was already carried out in ancient Egypt, India and Israel, but little is known about what methods were used. Mankind has always sought to extend the bloodline, with many motives for its actions. Jews strove to have as many offspring as possible in order to be victorious in the wars they waged. Every offspring was treated as a sign of fertility and a blessing from God. According to the knowledge possessed by the Israelites, a woman was in the best fertility period between the 12th and 15th day of her cycle. At the time, science had no evidence to support this information, and human intuition was the determining factor. In modern times, when medically developed fertility rates are available, it is awe-inspiring to see the awareness of the Jews of the time on this matter[8].

In ancient India, the procreative method used to select the sex of the child in order to recommend intercourse on even nights for the conception of a boy and on odd nights for the conception of a girl. Ancient Greece and ancient Rome do not have any remarkable medical and paramedical findings regarding the field of fertility. Soranuses of Ephesus observations played a crucial role in fields of women's diseases and obstetrics during the middle ages, he described the

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[6]    Cf. A. Drosdzol et al., *Standard postępowania diagnostycznego*, p. 435.

[7]    Cf. A. Nawrocka, *Etos w zawodach medycznych*, Kraków 2008, p. 23.

[8]    Cf. U. Dudziak, *Życie, rodzina, wychowanie*, Warszawa 2009, pp. 55-56.

instrumentation for obstetric procedures, the birthing chair, the basic principles of neonatal nursing and he had knowledge of the anatomy of the reproductive organs, physiology and pathology of pregnancy and childbirth. His views formed the basis for teaching about women's diseases, obstetrics, anatomy of the reproductive organs in medieval universities[9]. In 1513, the first book devoted entirely to obstetrics was published, the field of obstetrics was separated from surgery. The author of the *Der schwangeren Frauen und Hebammen Rosengarten* book was Eucharius Rösslin (1470-1526). Medical advances in the theoretical sciences have not been without impact on clinical medicine. The number of schools, institutes, laboratories has increased rapidly; gynaecology (gr. *gyne*, *gynajkos* – woman), which is the branch of medicine dealing with the process of conception, the course of pregnancy and birth, has developed. In the second half of the 19th century, its development was contributed to by the Freiburg professor Alfred Hegar (1830-1914), who identified the softening of the uterine neck at the junction of the uterus with the body as symptoms of pregnancy. In addition, he contributed to the development of instruments used in gynaecology and obstetrics[10].

In the 17th century, the Dutch anatomist Regnier de Graff (1641-1674) discovered follicles in the ovaries of mammals, known to this day as *Graff's follicles*. Graff surmised that the follicle hides the embryo of the future embryo, which develops exclusively from the materials of the egg. The sperm was only supposed to stimulate the egg to develop. Opponents of his "spermisti" theory argued that it was the sperm that was the main force responsible for the formation of the embryo. An even more surprising theory was propounded by the 'preformists' represented by the Dutch physician Jan Swammerdam (1637-1680), who argued that if an embryo is preformed, then one generation must be stuck in the other, like boxes of increasingly smaller size. This theory held that the embryos of all generations living on earth must have fit into the ovary of the pre-mother Eve. Attempts have been made to undertake the counting of these condensed "little men" in Eve's ovary, arriving at a figure of 200 million. The Polish scientist Jędrzej Śniadecki (1768-1838) argued against this theory, stating that no life is formed in the fertilised egg. This idea was also promoted by the anatomy and physiology professor Friedrich Kasper Wolff (1733-1794), who formulated the theory of epigenesis, according to which

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[9]    Cf. T. Brzeziński et al., *Historia medycyny*, Warszawa 2014, p. 149.

[10]   Cf. Z. Domasławski, *Wprowadzenie do medycyny. Podręcznik dla wyższych szkół zawodowych*, Jelenia Góra 2007, p. 56.

embryonic development begins with an amorphous unorganised mass in which currents of an undefined substance circulate, leading to the formation of various structures. This gives rise to organs that were never before present in either the sperm or the egg[11].

The well-known Italian physician Francis Scardona (1718-1800), dealing with women's diseases, claimed that female infertility was caused by witchcraft. The Dutch merchant Antonie van Leeuwenhoek (1632-1723), who was interested in glass grinding, constructing microscopes and making observations using them, isolated sperm cells from the observed material for the first time[12]. And in 1776, Italian biologist Lazzaro Spallanzani (1729-1799) noted that cooling sperm reduces sperm motility. In animal studies, he proved that male and female gametes are necessary in order for a woman to give birth to a new individual. While experimenting on them, he was the first to perform artificial insemination in frogs and dogs[13]. In 1826, the Russian biologist of German origin Karl Ernst von Baer (1792-1876) discovered the egg cell and a year later described the process of fertilisation[14].

After many years of development of gynaecology and obstetrics, procreative medicine is opening up newer and newer areas that need to be worked on. One such field is infertility. In the twentieth century, there has been a growing awareness of the diseases that accompany it. The causes of infertility are being attributed to incorrect diet or hormonal imbalances.

In 1901, Alfred Fröhlich (1871-1953), professor of pharmacology in Vienna, linked Adiposogenital dystrophy to pituitary dysfunction with which he paved the way for the search for causes of infertility in abnormal functioning of the endocrine glands. In 1905, English physiologist Ernest Starling (1866-1927) called the compounds produced by the endocrine glands hormones. In 1906, British gynaecologist and founder of the College for Obstetricians and Gynaecologists William Blair-Bell (1871-1936), together with Henry Dale discovered hormones in the posterior lobe of the pituitary gland that cause uterine contractions. In 1910, following the compilation of data by the Viennese physiologist and endocrinologist Arthur Biedl (1869-1933), the first monograph on endocrinology was published, in which the scientist

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[11]     Cf. B. Seyda, *Dzieje medycyny w zarysie*, Warszawa 1977[3], pp. 224-226.

[12]     Cf. *Antoni van Leeuwenhoek*, https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antoni_van_Leeuwenhoek (date of access: 24.02.2024).

[13]     Por. M. Bizdan, *Niepłodność w ujęciu bio-psycho-społecznym*, Kraków 2006, p. 161.

[14]     Cf. Z. Brzeziński, *Historia medycyny*, p. 149.

described the role of the pituitary gland in the secretion of hormones. The Parisian gynaecologist Selmar Ascheim (1878-1965) and the Berlin gynaecologist Bernard Zondek (1891-1966), achieved precocious sexual maturation in young mice in 1926, they used vaccination from the anterior pituitary lobe, and a year later in the urine of pregnant women they discovered *prolan A*, which stimulates the maturation of *graff follicles*, and *prolan B*, which influences the transformation of a ruptured *graff follicle* into a *corpus luteum.* This discovery led to the introduction of the pregnancy test in 1928. German biochemist Adolf Friedrich Johann Butenandt (1903-1995) isolated and determined the chemical nature of the corpus luteum hormone-progesterone-from the urine of pregnant women. Further research conducted in 1923 by the American biochemist Edward Adelbert Doisy (1893-1986) results in the isolation of the crystalline form of estrone, from which the actual ovarian hormone estradiol is derived[15].

The years 1923-1929 were marked in the field of procreation by the publication of many scientific papers. Dr Kyusaku Ognio (1882-1975), who specialised in obstetrics and gynaecology, published a study on the ovulation cycle in 1923, in which he set the date of ovulation as 12-16 days before menstruation. The Austrian gynaecologist and surgeon Hermann Knaus (1892-1970) extended the theory of Kyusaku Ognio[16]. The aforementioned Adolf Butenandt isolated the male hormone androsterone from urine in 1931, while the Dutch biochemist Ernest Laqueur (1880-1947) in 1935, confirmed that it was a breakdown product of the actual hormone produced by testicles testosterone[17].

Since 1930, methods of identifying female fertility based on basal body temperature have been being developed. The precursors of this method were the Dutch gynaecologist Theodor Hendrik van de Velde (1872-1937), who discovered the connection between ovulation and the phenomenon of an increase in a woman's body temperature in the middle of the menstrual cycle. His research formed the basis for the development of a thermal method for determining fertility[18].

Since 1930, the teaching of the natural regulation of conception based on basal body temperature began. The precursors of this method were Wilhelm Hillebrand, R.F. Vollmann, Gerhard Karl Döring, Jan Gerhart Holt[19]. The next phase of the research involved the discovery

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[15]     Cf. B. Seyda, *Dzieje medycyny w zarysie*, pp. 385-389.

[16]     Cf. U. Dudziak, *Życie, rodzina, wychowanie*, pp. 55-56.

[17]     Cf. B. Seyda, *Dzieje medycyny w zarysie*, p. 389.

[18]     Cf. U. Dudziak, *Życie, rodzina, wychowanie*, p. 56.

[19]     Ibidem, pp. 56-57.

of fertility indicators in cervical mucus. It was led by P. Bergman and John Billings. Bergman's monograph describing cervical mucus was published in 1950 in Norway. Billings who was an Australian medical counsellor helping couples who were using natural methods of procreation, undertook a medical search to find indicators that would guarantee efficiency and could help couples struggling to conceive.

Dr John Billings undertook a search for a method that would prove highly effective. While perusing the medical literature, he came across a documentation from 1855 in which his attention was drawn to a study of the mucus produced by the cervix during the ovulatory phase of the cycle. The physical and chemical properties of this secretion were described in great detail. Marion Sims in 1868 while performing a microscopic examination of the behaviour of sperm in cervical mucus taken from infertile woman, found the deleterious nature of the pH of the vaginal environment for sperm. Sperm residing in these conditions was quickly destroyed. The opposite behaviour of sperm was observed in an environment of alkaline pH of vaginal secretions, it was favourable in the transport and prolongation of sperm survival. In 1913, Max Huhner continued Sims' research. These researchers were unable to explain the phenomena they discovered. Subsequent studies on the secretory cycle of the cervical glands were carried out by Sśguy and Vimeux, who have developed the scientific field of sex hormonology, ovarian physiology, separation of sex hormones and described a day of ovulation in which the structure of the cervical discharge is light, transparent and fluid. The work of Sśguy and Simonnet established the dependence of changes in cervical mucus type based on estrogen[20]. The only thing missing from the study was an opinion regarding the occurrence of cervical mucus by the women themselves. Billings began his study by asking women about the appearance and sensation of mucus on the vulva. Although all participants confirmed its presence, they did not understand its significance.

In 1962, J. Billings approached Dr. James Brown, an endocrinologist at the University of Melboure, to conduct research that would establish a correlation between the characteristics of vaginal secretions and determinations of hormones secreted during the ovulatory phase[21]. Hormone action is involved in regulating the course: hypothalamus releasing gonadotropins (GnRH), pituitary hormones affecting gland

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[20]　Cf. *Czynności gruczołów szyjkowych*, http://www.bigmamashaus2.de/fizjopatologia-szyjki-macicy/czynnosci-gruczolow-szyjkowych (date of access: 20.02.2024).

[21]　Cf. K. Zając, B. Żak, *Miłość i płodność. Metoda owulacji naturalną metodą regulacji poczęć*, Kraków 2004, p. 93.

function (FSH, LH), prolactin, which is responsible for lactation, while exerting an inhibitory effect on the secretion of gonadotropins (PRL), ovarian hormones are involved in inducing or inhibiting ovulation (oestradiol, oestriol, oestrone, progesterone)[22].

In 1972, the American physician Thomas W. Hilgers (1943-) was introduced to the *Billings Ovulation Method*, after which he travelled to Australia in 1975 to learn the method directly from Dr. J. Billings and to take part in the ongoing studies. The cooperation between the aforementioned doctors lasted one year. In 1976, Dr Hilgers, as a lecturer in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Saint Luis Medical University, appoints a team of experts to independently conduct further research on the *Billings Ovulation Method*. The carried out work contributes to the standardisation of the method on the basis of which in 1978 the *Creighton Model* was created. The new method initially belongs to the *Creighton Model Natural Family Planning*, after which it becomes part of *Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System* [= CrMS][23]. In 1991, after many years of work *Medical Application of Natural Family Planning, a Physician's Guide to NaProTechnology.* book is released. This is when the word *NaProTechnology®* is first used and it means *Natural Procreative Technology*[24].

*NaProTechnology®* is a system of fertility care built on the concept of individual work of doctors and instructors with a couple struggling with infertility. During the first meeting, a so-called introductory session takes place, during which the anatomy and physiology of the reproductive system and how the CrMS system and the *Creighton Model* work are discussed. *NaProTechnology®*, durging the diagnosis takes into account the necessary information on how the observation is carried out, the assessment of biomarkers, how the information is recorded on the cycle observation card. At subsequent meetings, the couple learns how to determine the correct ovulation day, the right time for hormonal testing, the presence of cycle anomalies. After these meetings, the couple can begin to observe the monthly cycle and record and mark visible changes on a special cycle observation card, which will be described later in the doctorate. At each subsequent meeting all the data entered on the card are analysed with the instructor. The

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[22]   Cf. U. Dudziak, *Życie, rodzina, wychowanie*, p. 57.

[23]   Cf. T.W. Hilgers, *The Medical & Surgical Practice of NaProTECHNOLOGY*, Omaha 2004, pp. XXVII-XXVIII.

[24]   Idem and oth., *The Creighton Model FertilityCare System. A Standardized Case Management Approach to Teaching*, vol. I, *Basic Teaching Skills*, Omaha 2022, pp. XVII-XVIII.

instructor carefully checks the card to ensure that it has been correctly filled in. After three months of meetings with the instructor, in case of further fertility problems, the couple starts meeting with a medical consultant who, on the basis of the collected material, carries out a diagnosis of abnormalities of vaginal mucus, endocrine and hormonal disorders, abnormalities of the ovary, uterus, other organs of the body[25]. This guidance allows the diagnosis to be personalised and treatment to be tailored to the individual case.

Medical advances have brought new and better ways of diagnosis and treatment. The practice of gynaecology has seen the emergence of many new tests, techniques that have become standardised, becoming an aid to standardising the treatment of diseases, taking into account not only the object, but focusing particular attention on the subject, who is to be respected by virtue of being volitionally created by God in His image and likeness.

## Conclusion

Today, there are a variety of moral approaches to treat infertility. For example, learning how to pinpoint the fertile window to maximize the chance of conception with NFP use is very effective for some problems. And, some medical procedures or treatments such as hormonal medications, surgery to repair damaged or blocked Fallopian tubes, and other restorative treatments that "do not substitute for the married couple's act of loving union" can help husband and wife to conceive a baby.

Infertility diagnosis is not straightforward. In the treatment process medical knowledge regarding the correct structure of the body and its functions, the origin of diseases and their causes, the recognition of diseases and their treatment, the maintenance of health conditions, overcoming the effects of diseases is indispensable. This knowledge makes it possible to analyse and then, with the adequate tools, to take appropriate practical action[26]. It requires time, experience and the right approach to the patient, bearing in mind that they are the subject of all actions and should never be treated objectively or instrumentally and that the medical undertaken procedures serve them and correspond to their nature, goals, aspirations, capacities, values, observed rights. They concern the human being not only as an object

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[25]    Cf. T.W. Hilgers and oth., *Assignment Binder. Creighton Model Fertility Care Allied Health Program*, Omaha 2011-2012, pp. 2-3.

[26]    Cf. A. Nawrocka, *Etos w zawodach medycznych*, p. 23.

of the applied medical procedures, but also as a specific personality who reasons, feels and lives in a specific community and above all, lives in the hope of giving birth to a child.

Bioethics

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# The Identity and Ministry of the Catechist in the Light of Pope Francis' Apostolic Letter *Antiquum ministerium*

The purpose of the analyses carried out in this article is to present the new ministry of the catechist, which was established by Pope Francis on May 10, 2021 in the Motu proprio *Antiquum ministerium*. He referred to a practice that had been going on since apostolic times, when such a ministry was entrusted to laymen. Their establishment on the basis of a special rite should be motivated by the current needs of the parish community. Pope Francis locates their activity within the liturgy celebrated and in the other pastoral spaces of the Church. The task of the diocesan bishops, on the other hand, is to take care of the proper formation of the candidates, who should be characterised by their human and religious maturity and receive an adequate theological, biblical, pastoral and pedagogical preparation. To this end, schools of catechists must be established in dioceses. The main method of approaching this issue is through an analysis of the papal document establishing the ministry of catechist and the post-conciliar Church's teaching on the subject. This has made it possible to distinguish the essential elements of the new ministry and to indicate the possibilities of its adaptation to Polish conditions, where a lively discussion is currently taking place concerning the tasks of the catechist. The idea is to plan them in such a way as not to duplicate the activities of catechists with the canonical mission. Therefore, the problematic under analysis is original and expected in the catechetical environment. Addressing this problematic is intended more to start a substantive discussion than to show definitive solutions. The areas of practical activity of the catechist proposed in the article may become an inspiration for the implementation of the papal initiative in Polish conditions.

**Key words**: Pope Francis, catechist, ministry, *Antiquum ministerium*.

## Introduction

By means of an apostolic letter in the form of the motu proprio *Antiquum ministerium*, Pope Francis has established the ministry of a catechist throughout the Church[1]. He strongly suggested that it should be exercised only by lay people of deep faith and human maturity, according to the pastoral needs discerned by the bishop of the place. The Pope also recalled that the ministry of the catechist goes back to the beginnings of the Church, and that the example of the life of the first Christian communities, which were committed to the proclamation and development of the Gospel, "also today urges the Church to discern what new expressions of continuity with the Word of the Lord can be, in order to enable His Gospel to reach every creature"[2]. He also affirmed that the history of the work of evangelisation over two millennia shows the great effectiveness of the mission of lay catechists, through whom the faith has become an essential support for Christians. Pope Francis' decision is part of a theological narrative clearly evident since the Second Vatican Council, according to which there has been a systematically growing awareness of the significant role played by the catechist in the development of the Christian faith. This explains the fact why, even today, many apostolically committed lay people are undertaking this important mission. This article will take a closer look at the new ministry of the catechist based on the indications of Pope Francis in the document *Antiquum ministerium*. The analysis undertaken will concern the conditions for the establishment of the ministry of the catechist, the leading reasons, motives and criteria for undertaking it, as opposed to the tasks of the official catechist, and will conclude with an indication of possible areas of practical activity of the catechist in Polish conditions.

## Historical background to the establishment of the catechist's ministry

On January 10, 2021, Pope Francis promulgated the Motu proprio *Spiritus Domini*, in which he amended the provision of canon 230 §1 of the Code of Canon Law regarding the ministries of a lector and

Catechetics

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[1]     *Apostolic letter in the form of Pope Francis' Motu proprio "Antiquum Ministerium" in which he establishes the ministry of the catechist (10.05.2021)*, in: *Akta Konferencji Episkopatu Polski* 33 (2021), Warsaw 2022, pp. 20-23, https://episkopat.pl/files/24.bkt/04/04/242515_ut5m_33_Akta_KEP_2021.pdf (date of access: 15.12.2024).

[2]     Ibidem, p. 20.

an acolyte[3]. In another Motu proprio *Antiquum ministerium*, promulgated on 10 May 2021, the Pope established the ministry of a catechist[4]. In introducing it, he referred to the action of the Holy Spirit in the Church and stated: "The Spirit of the Lord Jesus, the eternal source of the life and mission of the Church, gives the members of the People of God gifts that allow each of them, in a different way, to contribute to the building up of the Church and the proclamation of the Gospel"[5]. At the same time, he stressed that awakening the personal enthusiasm of each baptised person and revitalising the awareness of being called to fulfill one's mission in the community "requires listening to the voice of the Spirit, Who does not leave us without his fruitful presence"[6]. He is also currently calling men and women to set out to meet those who are waiting to know the beauty, the goodness and the truth of the Christian faith.

The conditions for the establishment of the ministry required not only a prayerful environment, but also that members of the original community undertake the practice of fasting. Once these requirements were met, the action of the Holy Spirit began, Who called people to this ministry in a unique way as He personally spoke to those gathered (Acts 13.2.4). The Pope affirmed that this process is still ongoing because the Holy Spirit is constantly enriching the Church with various charismatic gifts, and His unique gift for our time is also the ministries of catechist, lector and acolyte. These will be available for the lay faithful to undertake, after their vocation has been discerned by the Church's shepherds. Bishops, including those in Poland, are to define the rules regarding the age and qualities of candidates for the ministries of catechist and lector and acolyte, as recommended by the Pope.

Today's societies with their complex structures, which allow different groups of people to function within them and which have different systems of beliefs and values, justify the decision to establish a new

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[3]     *Apostolic letter in the form of Motu proprio Spiritus Domini of the Holy Father Francis on the amendment of canon 230 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law on the admission of persons of the female sex to the official ministry of lectorate and acolyte* (10.01.2021), in: *Akta Konferencji Episkopatu Polski* 33(2021), Warsaw 2022, pp. 19-20, https://episkopat.pl/files/24.bkt/04/04/242515_ut5m_33_Akta_KEP_2021.pdf (date of access: 15.12.2024).

[4]     The term 'catechist' will be used in Poland to describe the new ministry introduced by Francis, as this was decided by the Polish Bishops' Conference at its plenary meeting in Warsaw on 14-15 March 2022.

[5]     *Apostolic letter in the form of the Motu proprio of Pope Francis Antiquum ministerium,* no. 2.

[6]     Ibidem, no. 2.

group of evangelisers for them. For there must be persons who will watch over the spiritual condition of believers in Christ. There is no longer any doubt that the Catholic Church must currently preach the same evangelical truth as it has done in past eras. This is needed because, after times of ideological polemics, the balance between temporal and spiritual matters has been upset among Christians[7]. Many believers have lost a secure point of reference for the faith they have hitherto professed, and they do not find the support they need in the catechesis currently being carried out. In order to counteract this, the Catholic Church initiated a strategy of spiritual renewal several years ago, starting with evangelising itself in order to become capable of witnessing to Jesus in the new areopaghi of the secularised world[8].

Catechetics

The matter of establishing the ministry of a catechist is the culmination of a process that has been ongoing for several decades[9]. Already in the decree *Ad gentes* of the Second Vatican Council, it was recorded that a group of great merit in the missionary work of the Church are "catechists, both men and women, who, filled with an apostolic spirit, amidst great hardships give special and necessary help in spreading the faith and the Church"[10]. In 1983, catechists were noted in a canon of the Code of Canon Law, where attention was drawn to their activity in mission countries[11]. In contrast to the official catechist, the plenary assembly of the Vatican missionary dicastery stated that a catechist is a lay person, obliged by the Church "to teach to know, love and follow Christ through all those who do not yet know Him and through believers"[12]. An important distinction between the terms catechist and catechist was made by John Paul II in his apostolic exhortation

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[7]   See *Francis, The oxygen of the Gospel is needed. Audience for the participants of the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelisation,* "L'Osservatore Romano" Polish edition 12 (2013), p. 18.

[8]   Cf. P. Mąkosa, *"Courtyard of the Gentiles" as a space of encounter and dialogue between believers and non-believers*, "Homiletic Review" 16 (2012), pp. 81-88.

[9]   Cf. S. Araszczuk, *The ministry of the catechist in the documents and practice of the church. Perspektywa polska*, "Legnickie Studia Teologiczno-Historyczne" XXIII (2024, 1), p. 7.

[10]  Decree on the missionary activity of the Church *Ad gentes divinitus* (7 December 1965), in *Vatican Council II. Constitutions. Decrees. Declarations*. Poznań 2002, 17.

[11]  *Code of Canon Law*, Poznań 1984, can. 785 § 1.

[12]  A. Seumois, *Missionary catechist*, in *Dictionary of Catechesis*, Polish edition, ed. J. Gevert, K. Misiaszek, Warsaw 2007, p. 463.

Catechetics

*Catechesi tradendae* and he stated: "The catechists working in mission territories bear the quite distinct name of 'catechists'"[13].

Up to now, the practice had become established that the term catechist was assigned to persons who were substantively prepared and who catechised on behalf of the Church on the basis of a canonical mission[14]. Catechists, on the other hand, having a comparable or specialised preparation, fulfilled their tasks in the mission territories[15]. A comprehensive explanation of the term "catechist" is provided by the Catholic Encyclopedia, where it is recorded that it is "a lay collaborator of missionaries, doing evangelising work, usually male, married, father of a family, coming from among the native population"[16]. In the past, the catechist fulfilled an important role in the initial preparation for the reception of the Gospel. Post-conciliar teaching defines the catechist "as a person with a specific vocation, chosen and authorised by the Church to carry out in missionary work a complementary function according to the needs of the local community"[17]. From these findings, it can be seen that a new ministry will be given in the territory to persons who will have to undertake other tasks. The local episcopate will assign new catechetical tasks to them after recognising previously non-existent catechetical needs. This will require a careful analysis of the socio-religious situation of believers and finding an adequate methodological instrumentarium for the catechist.

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[13]    John Paul II, *Post-synodal apostolic exhortation on catechization in our times Catechesi tradendae (16 X 1979)*, in: *Adhortacje Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II*, Kraków 1996, vol. 1, no. 66.

[14]    The need for a canonical mission imposes three obligations on church entities. Catechetical departments must search for qualified candidates to take on the job of religious teachers. The director of the institution then hires him or her, but only after receiving a referral from the ecclesiastical authority. Cf. Conference of the Polish Bishops, *Dyrektorium katechetyczne Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce* (*Catechetical Directory of the Catholic Church in Poland*) (20 June 2001), Kraków 2001, pp. 83-85.

[15]    Cf. W. Kluj, *Development of Polish missionary terminology on the example of the words "katecheci/catechists"*, "Collectanea Theologica" 75 (2005, 4), p. 208.

[16]    R. Dziura, *Catechist*, in: *Encyklopedia Katolicka*, ed. A. Szostek, B. Migut (and others), vol. VIII, Lublin 2000, k. 1034-1035.

[17]    Ibidem, p. 1035.

## Rationale, motives, criteria for establishing a new ministry

From the beginning of Her existence, the Church undertook the mission received from Christ to proclaim the Gospel to all mankind, resulting from the so-called Great Missionary Commandment (Mt 28,20). After the era of the early Church, the activity of evangelisation underwent numerous transformations and was carried out by different people, but it was always carried out in close dependence on the external and internal factors present in the development of Christianity[18]. It also depended on a variety of political, social and cultural situations, as well as on the formation of new missionary strategies emerging from theological centres around the world[19]. In spite of great substantive and organisational efforts, the process of evangelisation and catechisation has weakened its dynamism, which has led to a noticeable crisis in the catechetical activity of the Church in the present time. This is undoubtedly related to the process of digitalisation of contemporary culture and the search for a new model of communicating Gospel content[20].

However, in every era of the Church there have been men and women who have born witness to their faith by engaging in the catechetical mission. Even today, there are many forms of lay faithful participation in the proclamation of the Gospel, with catechists occupying a special place among them[21]. The possibility of appointing lay men to the ministries of lector and acolyte was introduced after the Second Vatican Council by Pope Paul VI in the Motu proprio *Ministeria quaedam*, promulgated on 15 August 1972. Pope Francis, in the above-cited Motu proprio *Antiquum ministerium*, opened the possibility for women to receive these ministries as well. This is because there is a great wealth of talents and charisms in the Church with which the faithful undertake a variety of tasks. These will be fulfilled both in the liturgy

Catechetics

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[18]    Cf. P. Mąkosa, *Między katechetyczny rzeczywistość a ewangelizacyjny oczekiwaniem*, in: *XXV lat nauczania religii w polskiej szkole. Between Hope and Reality*, ed. M. Zając. Lublin 2015, p. 120.

[19]    Cf. S. Kasprzak, *Missionality of the Universal Church in Historical and Legal Aspects – a Definition of the Mission "ad gentes"*, "Roczniki Nauk Prawnych" 2 (2000, 10), pp. 181-187.

[20]    Cf. J. Kloch, *The process of creating the Vatican's digital communication model*, in *Not serving the lost cause*, ed. P. Mąkosa, H. Słotwińska, Tarnów 2024, p. 362.

[21]    After the Second Vatican Council, documents were published on the mission of catechists and the fulfilment of their ministry. The most recent is the *Directory for Catechesis*, promulgated by the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelisation on 23 March 2020.

and in other places to which catechists will be sent. In introducing the new ministries, Pope Francis explained that the diversification of the forms of non-ordained ministries is not a simple consequence of the desire to adapt on a sociological level to the sensibilities or culture of the epochs and places, but is conditioned by the need to enable each local Church "to live the liturgical actions, the service of the poor and the proclamation of the Gospel in fidelity to the command of the Lord Jesus Christ"[22]. This is a clear indication of the space of activity for new catechists.

It is also worth pointing out that 'ministry', given to selected individuals, is more than a 'function' that all the baptised can perform. As a person matures, he can fulfil these functions more consciously and with fuller commitment. He can also receive the blessing of the Church strengthening him in this service. Certain men and women, actively involved in the life of the community and possessing the qualities defined by the relevant ecclesiastical authority, may be called to accept and fulfil the ministry of catechist. It is first and foremost a gift offered to a person in the rite of institution. In it, the bishop asks God for the graces needed by the lay faithful to fulfil the mission entrusted to them, and then sends them out to fulfil it. The gift confers on the person receiving it the dignity of a servant of God and of the Church, born of a vocation, an establishment for ministry and a sending to carry out a mission. Those who receive ministries become close collaborators of pastoral ministers[23].

Ministries will be given to selected men and women on a permanent basis[24]. Pope Francis explains that such decisions characterise the nature of the Church, which responds adequately to the challenges of each era. The exercise of ministry also has the character of a spiritual journey. One direction of the journey leads from the sources of life, present in the liturgy, to all areas of human existence. The other direction is the opposite, since it has its origin in the encounter with the

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[22]    *Apostolic letter in the form of Motu proprio Spiritus Domini*, p. 19.

[23]    The ministry of *catechist* should be conferred "by the diocesan bishop – or by a priest delegated by him – by means of the liturgical rite *De Institutione Cate-chistarum*, promulgated by the Holy See". *Letter of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments to the Presidents of the Bishops' Conferences on the rite for the institution of catechists* (3.12.2021), in *Acts of the Polish Bishops' Conference* 33 (2021), Warsaw 2022, p. 56, https://episkopat. pl/files/24.bkt/04/04/242515_ut5m_33_Akta_KEP_2021.pdf (date of access: 15.12.2024).

[24]    Ibidem, p. 53.

human being living away from God, and moves towards community and the encounter with Christ in the liturgical celebration.

## Directions for the catechist's practical activity

All ministry in the Church is a participation in the salvific mission of Christ, Who has filled the men sent by Himself with the Holy Spirit "so that they may proclaim this work of salvation, also to celebrate it through the Sacrifice and the sacraments, around which the whole liturgical life centres"[25]. The catechist should combine being a witness to the faith, a teacher and a companion on the journey towards God. He or she is called to put himself or herself at the service of the Gospel message, from the first proclamation, through preparation for the sacraments of Christian initiation, to ongoing formation. This is done through prayer, study and direct participation in the life of the community. Lay catechetical ministry is a particular expression of the missionary commitment proper to every baptised person and should be carried out in a completely lay form, without falling into any temptation of clericalisation[26].

The lay ministry of the catechist, as the fulfillment of a vocation in the Church, requires proper discernment on the part of the bishop and a special rite of institution, which the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has confirmed by issuing a relevant document[27]. Pope Francis points out that catechists should be men and women of deep faith and human maturity. It is necessary for them to participate actively in the life of the Christian community and to be people capable of hospitality, generosity and living in fraternal communion. Care should therefore be taken to form them biblically, theologically, pastorally and pedagogically[28]. They

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[25]     Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (4 December 1963), in *Vatican Council II. Constitutions. Decrees. Declarations*. Poznań 2002, no. 50.

[26]     Cf. H. Slawinski, *Promotion of the Lay Faithful to the Ministry of the Word in the Church*, "Polonia Sacra" 26 (2022, 3), p. 64.

[27]     Cf. Congregatio de Cultu Divino et Disciplina Sacramentorum, *Pontificale romanum ex decreto sacrosancti œcumenici Concilii Vaticani II instauratum auctoritate Pauli Pp. VI promulgatum Francisci pp. Cura recognitum. De institutione catechistarum*, Citta del Vaticano 2021, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20211203_decreto-rito-istituzione-catechisti_la.html (date of access: 14.12.2024).

[28]     Such formation is already taking place at the School for Catechists of the Archdiocese of Poznań. Cf. H. Pilarczyk, *Catechist – Witness, Evangelizer, Formator. Catechesis of Adults in the Context of Pastoral Care of Families in the Face of*

should systematically develop and enrich their previous catechetical experience. They should be expected to enter into collaboration with priests and deacons and be filled with genuine apostolic dynamism and enthusiasm.

The methodological instrumentarium, adequate to the current catechetical needs, should be similar to the repertoire of action developed and successfully used by the institution of the *New Evangelisation*. The use of modern multimedia seems to be necessary[29]. The directions of the catechist's practical activity may at first determine the tasks within the framework in the liturgy. Although the tasks from this ecclesial space are not explicitly mentioned in any of the documents of the Church cited earlier, it can be indirectly inferred that the catechist is called to be a minister of the word also in the liturgy[30]. He or she can therefore fulfil, as far as necessary and possible, those tasks which are entrusted to the lector. Among these tasks, we can single out the function of commentator. The catechist, as an expounder of the truths of the faith and the meaning of the liturgy in the life of believers, can prepare explanations of the rites of the Sacred Paschal Triduum, Christmas and other solemn liturgical celebrations in the parish.

However, it seems that his tasks outside the liturgy may be particularly valuable. It should be emphasised that some of the tasks entrusted to established catechists may overlap in practice with those entrusted to lectors and acolytes. They can bring help to the sick and the poor, preside at funeral ceremonies, lead the formation of other catechists, coordinate pastoral initiatives, support sacramental catechesis in the parish, promote the human person according to the indications of the social teaching of the Church[31].

At this stage of the analysis it should be noted: "The tasks of the catechist vary according to the continent, country, diocese and the degree of development of ecclesiastical structures in a particular local Church"[32]. Since, under the conditions of the local Church in Poland,

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*Postmodern Tendencies of the Modern World*, in: *Pastoral Care of Families in Theory and Practice*, ed. A. Pryba. Poznań 2015, pp. 234-249.

29    Cf. K. Klysiak, *Wiara w epoce cyfrowej rewolucji*, Lublin 2024, p. 17.

30    Cf. Z. Głowacki, *Catechist, Catechetist or Liturgical Mystagogue? Perspektywa teologiczna listy apostolskiego Antiquum ministerium*, "Roczniki Teologiczne" LXXI (2024, 3), p. 85.

31    Cf. *Letter from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments to the Presidents of the Bishops' Conferences on the Rite for the Institution of Catechists,* p. 53.

32    R. Hole, *Catechist*, k. 1035.

the status of the official catechist with a canonical mission is firmly established and the areas of his activity precisely delineated by the relevant national catechetical documents, other areas where the catechist can mark his activity should be indicated. Possible activities can be interpreted on the basis of current catechetical needs arising in the parish, which for various reasons cannot be met by the catechists working there. Catechists should bring a new quality to the space of catechesis in the Church. Pope Francis spoke of a new ecclesial reality in one of his homilies, assuring us that we are called "to dream of a Church that is the servant of all, the servant of the least. Of a Church that never demands to 'do well', but welcomes, serves, loves, forgives. Of a Church of open doors, which is *a port of* mercy"[33].

Catechetics

Therefore, the established catechist should firstly pay attention to those who do not believe in God or are on the periphery of faith and Christian morality. He or she can lead them to make the first contact with Jesus. It is possible for catechists to lead activities through multimedia, since in the modern world more and more people are using such means when seeking religious inspiration[34]. Catechists can lead musical ensembles promoting evangelistic repertoire, seek contacts with young people who have dropped out of school religion lessons, contact people who have formally left the Catholic Church, make contact with those living in non-sacramental and informal relationships, attempt at the religious formation of prisoners. Each of the ministries intended for the lay faithful, if fulfilled as a vocation, requires the full commitment of those to whom it is entrusted. However, final arrangements will be possible when the reform of religious instruction in Polish schools is completed and the discussion about the tasks of catechists in the Polish catechetical reality subsides.

## Conclusion

Pope Francis' initiative to find an evangelising space for the lay catechist stems from the fact that there is still interest in the search for a

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[33]　*Homily of Pope Francis at the Mass at the conclusion of the first session of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. St Peter's Basilica. 29 October 2023,* https://synod.org.pl/homilia-papieza-franciszka-podczas-mszy-na-zakonczenia-pierwszej-sesji-xvi-zwyczajnego-zgromadzenia-ogolnego-synodu-biskupow-29-10-2023r/ (date of access: 7.12.2024).

[34]　In the *Directory for Catechesis*, an unprecedented early statement on the use of the potential of cyberspace was written: «Digital culture appears as a set of beliefs with religious characteristics". Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelisation. *Directory for Catechesis*, no. 365.

Catechetics

personal God. Based on the carried out analyses, it can be concluded that the ministry of the catechist can be an adequate response to the religious creeds of the contemporary world. The detailed analyses provide a solid basis for several important findings. The ministry of the catechist is expected by the ecclesial community because there are many people who wish to develop their spirituality but do not find support in the available current catechetical proposal. The catechist can initiate his activity when he has a comprehensive knowledge of the problems of contemporary man, his fascinations and his spiritual needs. It follows from Pope Francis' teaching in *Antiquum ministerium* that catechisation inspired by the experience of the early Church cannot be mass, but rather individual or implemented in small groups. At the same time, the activity of the catechist should not lead only to the acceptance of a theoretical knowledge of Jesus, but to Eucharistic communion. The findings of the article justify the conclusion that catechetical activity in a secularised world is still possible and can be effective thanks to the involvement of lay women as well as men in this work. The presented assumptions regarding Pope Francis' establishment of the new ministry of the catechist, the proposed possible structures for his ongoing formation, and the proposals for locating his practical activity in the catechetical strategy of the Catholic Church, may prove to be a valuable proposal to dynamise the Church's action in a secularised environment.

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Catechetics

Catechetics

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# Pierre-Daniel Huet: between Scepticism and Fideism

Pierre-Daniel Huet was an eighteenth century distinguished Catholic theologian whose posthumously published treatise on the feebleness of the human reason branded him as a sceptic whose views undermined Catholic theology. However, this treatise was written decades before his publication and should be viewed in the context of Huet's works written and published before this treatise and after. When placed that way, his views on scepticism turn out to fit very well the Catholic dogmatics and have been meant to enhance it.

**Key words**: Pierre-Daniel Huet, faith, reason, scepticsm.

In 1723, a book came out, *Traité philosophique de la foiblesse de l'esprit humain*, which Richard Popkin, a historian of scepticism, enlisted among the landmarks of European scepticism in his many publications. Although the book did not reach the popularity of Pierre Bayle's books, particularly of his *Dictionaire historique et critique* (1697), it caused quite a stir particularly among the Catholics, but also among the Protestants. The book was penned by a highly respected scholar and polymath, Pierre-Daniel Huet (1630-1721), a member of the French Academy since 1674, an abbot of Aulnay since 1679, and the bishop of Avranches since 1685[1]. The book was highly criticized by many authors and some of them found it incredible that it was even written by Huet, an effective defender of Catholicism, not known for any attempts to introduce any novelty to the traditional dogmas. Even when his name was associated with the *Traité*, some considered that it was possibly a translation of some other work that did not reflect

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[1]     [P.-J.] d'Olivet, *Histoire de l'Académie françoise*, Paris 1729, vol. 2, pp. 349-369; F.-A. de Gournay, *Huet, évêque d'Avranches, sa vie et ses ouvrages*, Caen 1854.

Huet's own conservative views or even that it was a forgery[2]. The *Traité* is a book-long justification of the feebleness of the human mind, as announced prominently in the title, of the frailty and thus unreliability of the human reason in general and in theological matters in particular. However, because it was his last book that was published, in fact, posthumously, it has often been taken as Huet's last epistemological word.

## The *Traité* on reason

The tenor of the book is given at the very outset, when through an interlocutor, Huet announced that after scrutinizing the many philosophical systems he found the doctrine of Arcesilaus, Carneades, and Pyrrho to have been the strongest; they seem to have known the nature of the human mind better than others. These Sceptics and his own meditations led Huet to the realization that no person has a natural ability to discover the truth with full certainty and this inability of the human mind is the source of all human errors (T 8-9)[3]. Huet discussed thirteen arguments for why the human mind cannot be trusted. The human mind is an inborn principle or faculty that is moved and agitated to form ideas and thoughts by the reception and impression of images (*especes*) in the brain. These *especes* are not images stemming from objects, but traces imprinted on the brain by the motion of animal spirits and nerves agitated by the senses (13). Therefore, we cannot be sure that *especes* are really similar to the objects they represent (33, 34), since the mind cannot compare images with objects (35, 181). Also, images do not represent all the aspects and properties of objects. The environment through which *especes* pass can modify them (36). Senses may have introduced some changes to images (39), and so can the diverse agitations of the nerves and animal spirits (42). Also, the brain, "the citadel of the soul, the laboratory of reason, the worker of perception" may introduce distortions (46). Even if all

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[2]    C. Bartholmèss, *Huet, évêque d'Avranches, ou le scepticisme théologique*, Paris 1850, pp. 44-49, 144-166; [J.B.M.] Flottes, *Étude sur Daniel Huet, évêque d'Avranches*, Montpellier–Avignon 1857, pp. 265-294; A.M. Matytsin, *The specter of skepticism in the age of Enlightenment*, Baltimore 2016, pp. 99-109.

[3]    References to the following books of Huet are used:
A – *Alnetanae quaestiones de concordia rationis et fidei*, Francofurti et Lipsiae: apud haered[itatem] Iohannis Grossi 1719 [1690].
C – *Censura philosophiae cartesianae*, Parisiis: apud Joannem Anisson 1694 [1689].
D – *Demonstratio evangelica*, Parisiis: apud Danielem Hortemels 1690 [1679].
T – *Traité philosophique de la foiblesse de l'esprit humain*, Amsterdam: Henri du Sauzet 1723.

organs work perfectly, that does not tell us what is the mechanism of how the soul perceives *especes* imprinted on the brain, how it judges about objects, how material *especes* can be sensed by the immaterial soul (48). Perfect knowledge about anything is unattainable: things cannot be known with perfect certainty since they constantly change (59), because people are different and thus the scope of their knowledge varies from one person to another (63), because there is an infinity of causes affecting each aspect of reality, and obviously, infinity is beyond the human reach (65). There is no certain rule about the truth (69), a criterion allowing people to distinguish truth from falsehood (70), since a criterion would be needed to distinguish true criterion from a false one, which would require having a criterion..., etc., *ad infinitum* (73).

Dogmatic Theology

Most of the thirteen sceptical arguments go back to Pyrrho and Sextus Empiricus[4] and, when treated in all seriousness, they seem to completely disempower human reason leaving people on shaky ground in all matters, particularly in respect to religion. This is what troubled Huet's critics, and these criticisms often made an impression that this was the pinnacle of Huet's philosophical accomplishments. Huet undeniably treated seriously his sceptical pronouncements, however, he did not find them damning.

## The *Demonstratio evangelica*

The *Traité* came out posthumously, however, it was written a few decades before Huet's death. The first version of the *Traité* was written in 1680-1685 as the first part of the planned five-part *Quaestiones Alnetanea*. The second part was a critique of Descartes which was published separately as the *Censura philosophiae cartesianae* in 1689. The planned third part, on the agreement of faith and reason, the fourth part, a comparison of Christianity with other religions, and the fifth part, a comparison of Christian and pagan morals, appeared as parts 1-3 of the *Alnetanae quaestiones* in 1690. Huet revised the *Traité* at least three times and even prepared its Latin translation[5]. On the other hand, the *Traité* followed a massive and very popular apology work, the *Demonstratio evangelica* (1679). It seems that the *Traité* should be viewed as a conclusion of sorts of the *Demonstratio evangelica* and surely as an introduction to the *Alnetanae quaestiones*.

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[4]     Four of these thirteen arguments actually go back to Descartes, José R., Maia Neto, *Huet sceptique cartésien*, "Philosophiques" 35 (2008), pp. 231-234.

[5]     José R. Maia Neto, *Pierre-Daniel Huet (1630-1721) and the Skeptics of his Time*, Cham 2022, pp. 64-71.

The *Demonstratio evangelica* is an extensive and erudite defense of the authenticity of the Scriptures, which had been under attack at least since Spinoza. Having stated that "a genuine book is that which was written by that author, by whom it is said to have been written, and about the time at which it is said to have been written" (D 7) and that "every book is genuine/authentic, which has been regarded as genuine continuously by/in all the ages/times that have followed [since its publication]" (13), Huet said that, incontestably, all books of the Bible have been written by the authors whose names are associated with them[6]. Also, there had been many contestants for canonical books, however, they were not included in the canon since their authenticity had been contested from the beginning (27). Moreover, assuming that "a contemporary book is the one that was written about the time when the things/events written in it happened" (7), Huet showed that "the books of the NT are contemporary," that is, "they have been written around the times in which the things described in them happened" and the events they describe are true, which is confirmed by the fact that many of these events had also been described in contemporary pagan sources (28).

Huet made a rather original claim that all world mythologies can be traced back to the Books of Moses. In particular, all the important ancient divinities are but distorted images of Moses: "all the fictional gods are one and the same, namely Moses" (D 140) and Moses is found in Adonis, Mercury, Osiris, Serapis, Anubis, Zoroaster, Cadmus, Apollo and many others, and the goddesses – of his wife, Sephora (144) found in Juno, Minerva, Venus, and other goddesses. His is a very strong claim and yet not entirely defensible[7].

Writing under the assumption that "the Messiah is the one about whom all prophecies of the OT agree that he is the Messiah" (D 393), Huet proved that Jesus was the Messiah; he did it by listing 169 parallels between the OT prophecies about the Messiah and their fulfillments shown in the NT, and by providing 22 types or figures of Jesus in the OT, which confirms Augustine's statement that the OT is a concealed form of the NT (*De civ. Dei* 16.26), that is, that the NT is the revelation of the OT (395). All in all, Huet concluded that "Christian

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[6]    Incidentally, Huet agreed with a rather common view that the Epistle to the Hebrews was written by Paul (D 25).

[7]    Cf., for instance, [C.-F.] Houtteville, *La religion chrétienne prouvée par les faits*, Paris 1740 (1722), vol. 1, ccii-cciv; Huet himself also mentioned some criticisms (D preface [6-9]).

religion is true" and thus, "all religions, except for Christianity, are false and impious" (749).

All the claims are heavily documented by Huet and that was the main reason to write the book, namely to show by references to historical and linguistic sources that the position of the Scripture is unassailable. In the *Demonstratio evangelica* there are also some mentions of scepticism mixed with rather non-sceptical statements of the Cartesian coloring. So, Huet says that geometrical proof has no more authority than that of the principles on which it is based and the reliability of these principles "depends on their natural (*nativa*) evidence and clarity upon which our illuminated mind can easily rely on them." The source of our acceptance of these and of other principles is "the clarity (*perspicuitas*) by which their truth is known by itself and is open to our minds"; the inherent clarity that illuminates the human mind. They [these truths] are called principles in theoretical investigations, the rules (*dictata*) of nature in morality. Sceptics criticized even the principles of geometry, but the rules of morality were usually left intact. Such rules enable social life and, for Huet the more people accept them, the more clear and certain they are (D 3), but, still, we can know things using senses and reason, but this source of knowledge is a weak, uncertain, and deceptive means; however, we can know things by faith, which is clear, manifest, illuminating the soul (5); the lower status of reason is theologically justifiable, since God, Who wants our salvation to be the gift of His grace and the fruit of our faith, "has granted us the use of a blind and dull reason, lest, having obtained by reason a clear knowledge of the sacred mysteries, we should reject faith" (5). Interestingly, from a religious perspective, scepticism also has a very positive side: sceptics are closer to religion than it is usually assumed since they are free of prejudices and, guided by God, they more easily set aside obstacles to divine faith (5) and, therefore, some may want to bring non-believers from their dogmatism to scepticism to make them more amenable to religious persuasion (6).

The *Demonstratio evangelica* concentrated on the exploration of historical sources, only very fleetingly addressing the problem of methodology of science and of epistemology. However, very soon such issues became the center of Huet's attention, namely in the *Traité*, the *Censura*, and the first part of *Alnetanae quaestiones*.

Dogmatic Theology

## The *Censura*

In the *Censura philosophiae cartesianae*, Huet goes right to the heart of scepticism that constituted the starting point of Cartesianism since "Descartes erected the foundation of his entire philosophy on doubt" (C 9), the doubt that excludes the truth provided by natural light, such as that the whole is larger than the part (10).

**Dogmatic Theology**

> Descartes asserts that these are the causes of this precept: that we often experience that our senses are deceptive; that we seem to see in dream many things, which exist nowhere; nor can we distinguish what appears to us in dreams from what we sense in the waking state; that the human reason is obscure and deceitful; finally, that we do not know whether God willed to make us such that we should always be deceived, even in those things which seemed to us to be best known (11).

The foundation of his philosophy is the famous cogito-formula, quoted by Huet as *ego cogito, ergo sum*. Then, on dozens of pages Huet provides subtle, exhaustive, but also harsh[8] criticism which, basically aims at the problem, of how the Cartesian methodological scepticism can be reconciled with the certainty of the cogito-formula to build the whole of philosophical system on it.

While doubting everything, Descartes doubts whether he exists, but who/what is the ego in his cogito-statement? "Surely, it is something which already is/exists. He thus asks whether he is and yet he assumes that he is" (C 15). However, when doubting his own existence, Descartes should also doubt whether he thinks (18). Moreover, there is an inference problem: How is "I exist" derived from "I think" (20)? "What if we say that, even if it is given to be true that he is/exists who thinks, yet it is also possible for it to be true for him not exists who thinks?" (21). Descartes himself said that it is known by natural reason that *quidquid cogitat est*, "whatever thinks, is"; thus, this statement is not derived from these: *ego cogito* and *ergo sum* (25). Descartes started with sceptics, but abandoned doubting when it was most necessary to doubt by assuming as most certain the cogito-statement, which is as doubtful as any other principle. However, for the sceptics, the goal was tranquility in things that depend on opinion and perseverance in

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[8]    It was not beneath Huet to resort to name calling and even to rather underhanded satirizing as exhibited in his *Nouveaux mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du cartésianisme*, 1692, where he portrayed Descartes as hiding among Laplanders. On the other hand, "the discussion of philosophical topics in the *Censura*, which comprises most of the work, is even by modern standards of very high caliber", T.M. Lennon, *The Plain Truth: Descartes, Huet, and Skepticism*, Leiden 2008, p. 22

things that cannot be avoided; doubt was only a proximate goal (78). If everything is in doubt, then to clear everything, a rule of truth has to be known, that is, this rule has to be established first: what is truth, what is the mark/sign of truth, what character, what criterion distinguishes it from falsehood? (86). That is, every truth must be authenticated by a characteristic that distinguishes it from falsehood; this characteristic is also a truth with its own characteristic, which is another truth, etc. to infinity (88).

Dogmatic Theology

A positive input made by Huet in the *Censura* seems to miss the point of his own criticism: what is a criterion of truth? Huet only described a low level of the cognitive processes, so, we learn that the body senses, not the soul, since when the abstract mind is stirred (*revocatur*) by the sensory organs, so, it is necessary that the body feels/senses before the mind understands it (C 134). Somewhat strangely, the soul only bestows (*tribuere*) the body with the faculty of sensing and of knowing the impressions made on it and the affections/state of the senses (135). Platonic and Cartesian innate ideas are rejected. The idea of God is the faculty of thinking about God and thus does not differ from any idea that is not inborn (137; cf. T 195-197). The ideas of external things are formed by the soul after the soul is urged to do so by some corporeal motion and through the senses incited by external things and these corporeal motions impress a stroke or mark (*plagam sive notam*) on the brain. The soul detects this stroke and forms a new idea; at least, it presents this idea to itself and recognizes it as though it was there before. Universal ideas are derived (*exceptae*) from singular ideas (C 139). We know that God exists not from an inborn idea but we derive it from the agreement of all people, from the order of the world, from the existence and motion of things, and from other arguments (163). We know it also from faith (164). It does not result from the idea in us of an infinite and perfect being that an infinite perfect Being exists outside of our minds (166, 174). A distinction has to be made between existence only in the mind and the real existence outside the mind (167). Sensory experience and some mental processing appear to be Huet's answer. In a way, it brought Huet back to Descartes' starting point, the unreliability of sensory data and of rational constructs based on them. At that point, in his own mind, Huet may not have found it necessary to address this unreliability problem, since, he had already done it, at least to himself, in his as of that time yet unpublished *Traité*. Possibly the work on the *Censura* made him realize that the *Traité* is overly non-constructive and needed a better fine-tuning.

The main problem was, how to find the truth, which is not only a problem driven by mere curiosity, but it has eternal consequences if a person holds on to wrong religious beliefs. If reason in not an ultimate guide, what is? Huet provided some answers already in the *Traité*.

## The *Traité* on faith

**Dogmatic Theology**

The truth is known with certainty or uncertainty (T 16). People know by faith, with divine certainty, things revealed by God, since God is the Author of this certainty. With human certainty people know that the whole is greater than its part (17), by natural light they know with certainty that two plus two is four, from an authority or experience they know with certainty that there was a Roman emperor called Augustus (18). The certainty concerning geometrical axioms is inferior to that of faith which, in turn, is inferior to the celestial certainty of the blessed (cf. 1 Cor. 13:9, 12) (20), so human certainty is not the supreme or perfect certainty (21). The Bible clearly states that the human mind cannot attain perfect certainty (22), and so did Church Fathers (28-31), but faith can.

This appeal to faith is made in the *Traité* rather abruptly. Huet defined reason and ideas and briefly discussed them, but a rather sudden leap to faith seems to indicate that the idea of faith is non-controversial; also, the criteria of accepting something by faith are lacking, which was also indicated by Huet's critics[9].

Justified as such criticism is, the central point of the discussion can be missed, namely, scepticism is an avenue to faith: scepticism's proximate goal is "to avoid error, obstinacy, and arrogance" and the distant goal is "to prepare the Spirit to receive Faith." Since people were created to love and to serve God and to enjoy eternal happiness after death; thus, God instilled in people the desire of happiness (209) and because the knowledge of truth is part of happiness and people have a great desire to know it. Although true happiness in this life cannot be realized, and the ultimate truth cannot be known either, the inborn inclination to know it drives people to at least approach it. To that end, God put in the human mind the sparks of obscure knowledge of things insufficient to know the truth (210), but sufficient to guide us in this life (211). Faith is a heavenly gift to those who do not trust too much the powers of their nature, who do not assume too much about the penetrating power of their reason, and are not attached too

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[9]    See, e.g., [J.-P.] de Crousaz, *Examen du Pyrrhonisme ancien et moderne*, La Haye 1733, pp. 751-752, 768.

much to their own opinions (212). What is contrary to the revealed faith should not be accepted and people should hold on to what God marked/wrote in their souls through faith, the guide and mistress of reason (216). Faith has nothing to fear from reason since reason's own light is weak and obscure. Without resistance, people should submit themselves to the divine light which enlightens human understanding from the source that surpasses natural laws and when they receive faith, they are obligated to follow its precepts in their lives (273).

Dogmatic Theology

These are forceful statements, but there still remains the problem of the relation between reason and faith, the value of unreliable reason in the face of the reliability of faith, and since faith is the gift of God, can people count on receiving it? These problems have been addressed more carefully in the *Alnetanae quaestiones*.

## The *Alnetanae quaestiones*

Having defined reason as "the faculty of our mind, by which it tries to know the truth, either by reasoning or by simple perception" and faith as "a gift of God, so that after He has illuminated our mind with the light of heaven, and awakened the will with His inspiration, we may assent to those things which He proposed to us to believe" (A 6)[10], Huet repeats his conviction that the Scripture speaks about walking by faith not by sight (4) and that the Fathers of the Church also gave preference to faith (5), and this sentiment permeates this work.

Reason has its own light, which is dim and dubious (James 1:17) (A 8), but this obscurity does not condemn reason to uselessness and rejection:

> Reason has its own light, its own rays: they are indeed fallacious and ruinous, if one allows the sharpness of his mind to be blunted by them; on the other hand, they are useful for the preparation of the reception of Faith, and for strengthening the mind. (…) Human Reason, although lacks a clear, firm and constant view of truth, does not illuminate our minds with a light bright enough to look at it, it surely does provide weak and rather obscure lights, by which we either see, or think we see, the right way to the truth (9).

Reason's realization that it is inherently limited comes from the fact that there is an unbridgeable gap between ideas and objects of these

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[10]    According to the Doctors of the Church, faith is a gift of God by which we believe in revealed truths contained in the Scriptures and in the tradition and which are taught by the Church, abbé [A.] Hespelle, *La Théotrescie ou La seule véritable religion, démontrée contre les athées, les déistes et tous les sectaires*, Paris 1780 [1774], vol. 2, p. 196.

ideas and hence the adequacy of these ideas can never be tested: I cannot compare the idea of Peter with Peter himself, whereby the origin and similarity of the idea is uncertain, so, I will never know for sure that Peter is present (T 255). Now,

> since the truth is placed in the acknowledgment of judgment (*in confensione judicii*) which the mind makes from the observation of the ideas which are in us about external things, from which those ideas have proceeded, it thinks that there is some truth, and that its judgment agrees with external things.

Although reason understands that it is possible that those ideas did not come from external things, and even though they did, they may not be similar to them, yet it is inclined to accept them as such, so that it judges them to come from the outside and that they are consistent with their origin. But this is just a desirable assumption, a convenient supposition. Ultimately, the mind sees that it cannot reach external things from ideas, and thus, it cannot reach the truth through reason; however, it has an innate desire to reach it, so, it looks for another guide; thus, instructed by reason, we do not follow its own guidance and seek another guide to which we can unhesitatingly commit ourselves (A 11).

Reason, weak as it may be, is an indispensable element to know the truth even though only faith provides the perfect truth, "for to believe and not to know what is believed, is madness" (A 16), and this knowledge has to be filtered by reason. It appears that faith as the result of divine illumination has no reasoning powers; it accepts something or it does not. However, faith is not supposed to be a blind acceptance of any dogmas; therefore, it needs reason and its reasoning power to bring down to the human level as much as possible its dogmatic content. Faith by itself may be light, but this light is so bright that it is blinding, and thus, invisible by the human mind; therefore, faith, uses reason, as it were, as a subcontractor to make this light shine on the human level.

Huet agrees that faith is attainable through traditionally accepted means, miracles and prophecies. However,

> the miracles performed by Christ and the Apostles, the prophecies of the Prophets, the Tradition, and other external supports of the Faith, can be used in no other way than by Reason to prepare the souls to embrace the Faith. Therefore, the oracles of God revealed in the sacred books do not separate Reason from Faith in such a way that they command Faith to abstain altogether from the association with Reason;

on the contrary, they point [to reason] preceding Faith and preparing the way to it.

Consider the example of Virgin Mary, "by which is most clearly set forth the preparation used in the soul/mind through Reason to receive the Faith." The angel spoke to Mary about what would happen; she pondered on it in her mind and expressed her doubt raised by reason: how can that happen not knowing a man? Finally, she submitted herself to the will of God recognizing how fallible human reason is (A 17). However, this involvement of reason does not undermine the position of faith: "Reason is the instrument of Faith, not the cause of believing; [reason] precedes faith as a companion, as a forerunner, not as a leader; for the sake of service, not of dignity; as a warrior in battle, not as an emperor" (23, 50), so that when a city has been captured, the victorious king enters it, when the attendant defeated the enemy; indeed, the reason why the king entered the city was not the attendant, but the victory; the king only employed the service of the attendant, that he may use the opportunity of entering in victory. Faith is also accompanied by reason in the Councils, when decrees derived from the principles of faith are proposed. For example, when from the point of faith stating that Christ was truly God and truly man, the sixth Synod of Constantinople concluded by reason that Christ was endowed with two wills, divine and human; this became another point of faith; "between these two points of faith, reason carries itself in the middle, and connecting the one to the other, it is implicated in and connected to both." However, the second point requires the assent of faith just as much as the first (26). In fact, when rejecting reason and relying on faith alone, anything can be believed (42); the whole of theology would be nullified without the use of reason since "theology, which from the roots of the Faith brings forth and explains the offshoots of all the Christian doctrines, will be nothing at all, unless it advances the skill of Reason by clear consequences and manifest conclusions" (30). And so, "Faith, after it has settled in the mind, does not even then reject the aid of reason; on the contrary, it seeks strength and defense from it, and uses its support to shape the mores of people, and to amplify their piety" (27, 43).

In all this, the distinction between reason and faith has to be constantly kept in mind: reason is a natural endowment, faith is a gift from God, "an inner inspiration (*afflatus*) of God" (A 30). And so, even the sharpest reason and the most far-reaching reasoning powers cannot be the *cause* of faith. Reason can prepare the way to it or confirm the faith already accepted and Huet's own *Demonstratio evangelica* was

Dogmatic Theology

a book-long reasoning meant to introduce readers to Christian faith, to prepare their minds, with the hope that the faith would be infused in them by God. Therefore, although the direct, as it were, catechetical introduction of someone to Christian dogmas is not rejected, it is implicitly considered as not necessarily effective. Scepticism is proposed to be a more conducive introduction to the acceptance of faith since it possibly puts in doubt any counterarguments someone being introduced to faith may have.

Reason should take a stand in the case of religious controversies against the enemies of faith who must be confronted with the weapons that reason supplies. "Therefore, Faith is not ashamed to call upon Philosophy with its reasonings as a support either for the display of its power, or for its own defense, as if backed up by some auxiliaries" (A 30). This includes accusations that faith forces people to believe in what is contrary to reason. However, although faith does not always propose to believe in those things which are entirely in accordance with the common use of reason, it is never quite opposed to reason. Even in the case of the Trinity, reason can agree that three things can be one when the mind investigates its own nature to discover that it consists of memory, intellect, and will, three things are one; moreover, the mind, its self-knowledge, and its self-love are also one (36).

Importantly, reason has a great deal of autonomy.

> Faith does not reject the use of reason from itself, allowing to be adorned, fortified, and defended by it; nevertheless, it considers it beneath its dignity to interpose itself in matters of Reason which have nothing to do with it [Faith]. (...) And while it has Reason in its power, it [Faith] allows it [Reason] as its servant to have a domain separate from the things of the Lord, and it does not even consider to have the right to it.

All the disciplines which human reason has discovered by its own industry, especially philosophy, belong to this domain. However, some aspects which refer to faith are disputed in this domain, such as the existence of God, the distinction between the soul and body, or the freedom of the human will; therefore, in such inquiries reason must submit itself to the dictates of faith or remain altogether silent. This is because the truth is one and simple, and it belongs to faith; thus, whenever reason differs from faith, it must also differ from the truth. As for the rest of topics which are proper to its own domain, reason can make decisions as it pleases (A 57). More interestingly, "from this it follows that those who refer questions that have nothing to do with Faith to the judgment of Faith, and who seek to resolve purely

philosophical controversies by the sacred authority of the Scriptures, act perversely," where philosophical controversies should be understood broadly to include natural philosophy, that is, natural sciences. Therefore, for instance, those should not be accused of impiety who deny that the sky is bound together by solid spheres because the Bible states that the heavenly spheres are said to be *the most solid, as if cast from bronze* (Job 37:18) and that God made the firmament to divide waters above and below (Gen 1:7).

<div style="float:right">Dogmatic Theology</div>

> Outrageous are people who make the Holy Spirit the teacher of philosophy [and science] and who turn the Divine Word, which is the rule of faith and conduct, into unsuitable (*alienus*) and profane uses, by which people can neither become more faithful to God, nor better (58).

So, science should deal with natural causes and although God created the world with all its natural laws, He does not micromanage it; therefore, Huet considered it to be inadmissible "to invent miracles where nature does not depart from its usual course, and constantly maintains its course (*tenor*)." At best, God can be seen as the prime and indirect cause while acting through the means of natural laws. God is the universal cause of all things, but the reference to the universal cause in explaining phenomena is like saying that Troy is on earth. The sacred should not be mixed with the profane (59).

Actually, reason can have its own say in matters that touch upon faith if what is says does not undermine faith. Reason may try to explain some things of faith. For example,

> Faith teaches that in the most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ by mystical words, and that only the species of bread and wine remain. As to the true manner in which that miraculous change takes place, whether they are species, or accidents according to the Peripatetic doctrine, Reason has been allowed to argue back and forth. (...) Faith proposes something to be believed in general; it decides nothing about particulars (A 62).

Faith introduces the dogma of transubstantiation, without explaining its mechanism; reason makes philosophical attempts to provide some competing explanations, which may be just interesting and harmless efforts of the human mind if they do not undermine the core of the dogma.

However far-reaching reason can be on its own, Huet tried to show it in the second part of the *Alnetanae quaestiones* in which he performed a systematic, very detailed and learned comparison of Christianity with other religions. He showed that all the aspects of the Christian

religion can in some form be found in some other religions as well: the existence of God and His attributes, eschatology, sacraments, etc. Even elements which could be viewed as very specific to Christianity are also found elsewhere, for example, some doctrines include "the obscure and hidden mystery of the most holy Trinity, as if through clouds and mist, but that they nevertheless saw it with the help of Reason." For Huet, finding such elements was "the most certain proof of Christian truth" (A 92). It can be contested, for instance, whether the comparison of the Elysian Fields with the heavenly place for the blessed soul is justified. Certainly, not in respect to all details, however, the common theme is the interest in the afterlife, although the way of getting there can be completely different according to Christianity and other religions. However, all in all, such a comparison in Huet's mind points to the primacy of the Christian religion, although this may be a perilous sentiment since an unbeliever may retort, why believe in Christianity if its elements are spread across other religions?[11]

## Fideistic rationalism

The discussion of scepticism occupies a prominent place in Huet's writings; however, although he considered Pyrrhonism the best philosophy, this does not mean that he was a sceptic. Huet made a distinction between philosophy and theology, the former being based on reason, the latter on faith. Experience shows that human reason is fallible, thus, an attempt to reach the ultimate truth through reason alone is simply doomed to failure. The achievements of reason need to be treated with caution, with doubt, and considered to be at least tentative and probable and be used with circumspection. So, rational investigation itself points to doubt to be used in measuring its accomplishments. On the other hand, building a philosophical edifice on doubt alone by wobbly reason only is a wasted effort. This is what Descartes tried to do and Huet treated it as a testbed for the viability of doubt as a constructive philosophical tool. Not rejecting philosophical scepticism, Huet showed in the *Censura* that even a capable

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[11]    Cf. Houtteville, op. cit., p. ccvi-ccvii; Bartholmèss, op. cit., p. 30. In one of his letters, Arnauld expressed a concern that Huet's book was a "horrible matter suitable to inspire young libertines that one has to have a religion, but all of them are equally good and even Paganism can become comparable to Christianity," *Lettres de Messire Antoine Arnauld*, Paris: Sigismond d'Arnay 1775, vol. 3, pp. 400-401. Similar sentiments have been expressed by Jean Racine and by Jacques Bossuet, cf. G. Verron, *Pierre Daniel Huet, le "savant universel"*, Milon La Chapelle 2020, p. 324.

philosophical hand such as Descartes' it will not amount to anything since it quickly leads to contradictions or to a tacit suspension of doubt.

Unrestrained reason may bring error and harm, particularly in religious matters. Huet, first and foremost a clergyman, could not allow that to happen. When it comes to religious doctrines, reason must clearly be submitted to faith. Religious dogmas as considered to be of the divine provenance, cannot be contested by reason. Interestingly, however, the role of reason is not altogether excluded from religious matters; reason is only required not to contradict them. And thus, it may try to provide details to general doctrinal statements or support them philosophically. And hence, rational proofs of the existence of God are theologically permitted, even encouraged. In fact, Huet mentioned the Lateran Council under Leo X (A 38), the 8th session of which took held in 1513 declared that there is only the truth proclaimed by reason and urged philosophers to use their arguments to address such matters as the immortality of the soul. Huet mentioned, among others, the proofs of existence of God as safely belonging to rational investigation (57). Huet heeded that call since his major intellectual effort was to prove rationally by scrutinizing the history and mythology of various nations, using his expansive knowledge of philology, that all elements of Christianity are foreshadowed, sometimes in an obscure form, in the religious traditions of these nations.

Huet also recognized the autonomy of reason in its investigations of matters not related to faith; in these matters, reason has a free rein, even if it relies on fictions; for instance, the earth is treated in astronomy as a point (T 244), geometry speaks about points without parts and lines without breadth (D 9). Also, reason, and thus science, is free to investigate natural phenomena in its own way not necessarily holding on to the literal images of these phenomena presented in the Bible. And so, Copernicus is mentioned next to Tycho de Brahe without giving precedence to any of them (T 244).

The truth of faith was always of primary importance for Huet, a clergyman who was concerned about happiness of people in this world and in the next and he saw that by leading them to this truth he will bring such happiness into their lives. So, his pastoral concerns directed him to expose his readers to the way they should view the highest human faculty, their reason, as fallible and deceptive and yet by self-realization of this fallibility, it can become an excellent guide to faith which by divine inspiration removes all fallibility. Scepticism on its own right is a rather depressing endeavor, but, in the context of Christian life, it is an excellent tool to lead to the acceptance of faith. Scepticism on its

Dogmatic Theology

own right is also depressing since it nullifies any human effort to gain even partial truths about issues that are not directly related to human salvation. Huet would not have it, he opened before reason the entire nature, God's gift itself, to investigation to appreciate the wisdom in God's creation, but also to improve human lives – and Huet himself was involved in some purely naturalist enterprises. And so, to somehow summarize Huet's views, it can be said that he was a fideist, as it could be expected of a Christian theologian, but, to use a phrase with a somewhat oxymoronic ring, he was a fideistic rationalist: faith has clearly an upper hand over reason and any possible conflicts between the two are always resolved in favor of faith, but reason was necessary to lead to faith, to ground and justify it, and it had a great deal of autonomy in the domain not directly related with theological matters.

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# Theological and Empirical Cognition in Discovering the Living Eucharistic Presence. The Example of Sokółka[1]

Eucharist is the sacrament of the real presence of Christ in His essential sign among people. His mystical presence is confirmed with Eucharistic miracles. Miracles, however, require interpretation. And before the interpretation is introduced, the miracles require empirical confirmation. The Eucharistic miracle of Sokółka was confirmed by the research conducted by two pathologists who independently examined it and by the opinion of the a theological commission. As a consequence of the engagement of the scientists, the arguments of the empirical and theological sciences converged. The analyses contained in this article, which contribute to discovering God's presence among His people, describe the value of theological and empirical cognition.

**Key words**: miracle, empirical cognition, theological cognition, Sokółka, Eucharist.

Since the beginning of time, man has been wondering about the issue of cognition. Cognition has led and is still leading to acquiring

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[1] The Eucharistic miracle in Sokółka – it is a supernatural event which regards the transfiguration of a piece of the Host into a piece of the human heart. It took place in October 2008 and was made public by the then Archbishop Prof. Edward Ozorowski; it was announced to the public in October 2011. The fact of transfiguration was recognised by two professors – pathologists from the Medical University of Białystok who independently examined it and confirmed its material contents and issued a statement that "the given material (...) turns out to be the cardiac muscle tissue, or, at least among all the live tissue of the body, it resembles this tissue the most". In Sokółka there have been numerous physical and spiritual healings since that event. People believe that Eucharistic Jesus acts there in a miraculous way.

knowledge. Intuitive, intellectual, mystical cognition, as the process accompanying gaining information, improves the quality of knowledge and of convictions on a certain subject. The level of intellectual cognition enables elaboration on the content which regards the theological sciences. The interpretation of empirical content requires knowledge and experience. The verification of information on the basis of theological science requires different criteria than the information with regard to empirical science. However, the source of the research of the empirical and theological sciences lies in the mystery of the Eucharist. From the point of view of faith, the most important sacrament which regards the real presence of Christ, Who is present in the form of bread and wine, introduced in the dimension of the supernatural circumstances, in the face of the empirical science, is the sign confirmed by the physical reality.

The Eucharist, according to the Council of Trent and its *Decree Concerning The Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist* (1551), is: "the august sacrament of the holy Eucharist, after the consecration of the bread and wine, our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and man, is truly, really, and substantially contained under the species of those sensible things"[2]. Theological cognition contributes to the acceptance of this truth. It happens that this verification can be experienced in the "miraculous Eucharistic phenomena" which transgress the laws of nature and which become the determinant of the belief that the living presence of Christ in the Eucharist can also be confirmed materially.

At the beginning of 21st century in Poland, one of the places where a miraculous phenomenon took place, confirming the real presence of Christ's Body and Blood in the forms of bread and wine after the consecration of the Host, was Sokółka. The Eucharistic miracle revived the need for reflection on this relation: cognition – reality, as it concerns a life-giving sacrament in which God is present. The aim of this analysis is to familiarise with the arguments in favour of the Eucharistic, sacramental and material presence of Jesus Christ on the basis of the epistemological theological and empirical criteria on the example of the event in Sokółka.

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[2]   The Council of Trent, *Decree Concerning The Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist*, in: A. Baron, H. Pietras eds, *Dokumenty Soborów Powszechnych. Latin and Polish texts*, vol. IV, Kraków 2004, pp. 445-456, https://history.hanover.edu/texts/trent/ct13.html (date of access: 24.11.2024).

## The real sacramental presence

The Greek way of thinking in the first centuries of Christianity contributed to the formation of terminology which matches the ontological and sacred presence of Christ in the Eucharist. According to Aleksander Gerken: "the Liturgy of the Holy Eucharist is the presence of the Jesus's sacrifice of His life, which brings life to the world (John), expiation for our sins (synoptic Gospels), a new unattainable community between God and the people of the new covenant (Luke and Paul), condoning (Matthew)"[3]. It appeared as a historical act of God despite the fact that the Eucharistic presence is timeless. The common basic comments about the Eucharist in the New Testament contain information about the embodying of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. He chose such a way of permanent presence in the world in the mystery signs of the sacraments. Christ's embodying is possible only due to God's power which enables it. As the Church, as the sacrament of salvation, is present in the Holy Spirit as a community of salvation; the Eucharist, as the sacramental sign, unites with Christ Whose presence guarantees leading to the realization of salvation through the mystical uniting with Him in the Eucharist. The sacramental nature of the Eucharist enables the experience of closeness of God, which goes beyond the space and time. Through His Eucharistic presence, God partially saves each individual and does not let His power be limited to the historical boundaries of an era. The Eucharistic presence of Christ transgresses the temporal dimension of time and space and enables abiding in God to everyone who participates in the Eucharist and who receives this sacrament. Christ's presence in the bread and wine in the historical and salvific perspective means the personal union with Him. He is present here in the Eucharist but not fully present because His full presence will only be possible in the eschatological dimension. Christ's presence influences the ontological salvific dimension of everyone who receives the Holy Communion.

The Greek Fathers of the Church underlined the real and the hidden dimension of Christ's presence while the Latin Church Fathers, whose interests were more speculative, expressed this presence as a sign and a source of strength in the ethical life of a Christian as well as in the realization of the unity of the communities of the faithful meant as a community with Christ and the community of Christians[4].

Dogmatic Theology

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[3]     A. Gerken, *Teologia Eucharystii*, Warszawa 1977, p. 57.

[4]     Ibidem, p. 91.

Both ways of interpretation of Christ's presence in the Eucharist are present also in the contemporary mentality of man.

## Historical conditions

A miracle is a supernatural event of religious nature, which is the sign of God (transcendence), aimed at man (immanence). It means a factual action of God, through which God particularly realizes the history of salvation and announces His salvific will to man who is creating his own history of life and co-creating the history of the human community[5].

On October 12, 2008 the priest who was ministering the Holy Communion in the parish church of Saint Anthony in Sokółka dropped a piece of the Communicant from the pyx. He picked it up and placed it in the *vasculum* by the tabernacle. After the Holy Mass, he transferred the content of the *vasculum* to a vessel in the safe in the vestry. On October 19, 2008 after opening the safe, the submerged piece of the Communicant had a stain which looked like blood. Because it concerned the Holy Eucharist the metropolitan Archbishop of Białystok ordered to approach the matter with the utmost care, without making it public. After a few days, on October 29, 2008, the vessel with the piece of the Communicant was transferred to the tabernacle in the chapel in the parish. On the next day, October 30, the piece of the Communicant was taken out of water and placed on the corporal in the tabernacle[6].

In order to get to know the supernatural nature of the phenomenon, Bishop Ozorowski ordered to subject it to laboratory tests. On January 7, 2009 a sample was taken from the piece of the Communicant which was then independently examined by two professors specialists patologists from the Medical University of Białystok. The examination was commissioned to Prof. Maria Sobaniec-Łotowska from the Academic Centre for Pathomorphological and Genetic-Molecular Diagnostics at the University of Białystok; in January 2009 in the presence of, among others, the chancellor of the curia and the parish priest, she collected samples from the material embedded in the piece of the Communicant. The additional expertise was commissioned to Prof. Stanisław Sulkowski. At the end of January the expertises were ready and they were sent to the curia. The conclusions from the expertises

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5    R. Łukaszyk, *Cud*, in: R. Łukaszyk, L. Bieńkowski, F. Gryglewicz (ed.), *Encyklopedia katolicka*, vol. 3, Lublin 1979, pp. 642-643

6    A. Kakareko, *Komunikat Kurii Metropolitalnej Białostockiej w sprawie zjawisk eucharystycznych w Sokółce*, in: S. Urbański, S. Budzyński (ed.), *Sokółka i inne cuda eucharystyczne nie tylko w Polsce*, Warszawa 2013, pp. 27-28.

were consistent and very surprising – the structure of the examined piece of the Communicant turned out to be identical with the tissue of the human heart muscle of a man in agony; the structure of the muscle fibre and the structure of the bread were strongly connected in a way which precluded their connection due to any external act[7]. On March 30, 2009 an Ecclesial Committee was appointed to examine the "alleged Eucharistic miracle" in Sokółka and after completing the task, the committee issued an opinion with regard to the authenticity of the phenomenon. The Committee concluded that the piece of the Host, the sample of which was collected for the expertise, is the same piece which was transferred from the vestry to the tabernacle in the chapel in the parsonage. No external interference was found[8].

Dogmatic
Theology

On October 14, 2009 a formal notice was announced which was signed by the Chancellor of the Białystok Curia.

For three years the piece of the Communicant which we now call a Particle of the Body of the Lord could only be visited upon and adored by very few people, mainly priests. But with time Sokółka became more and more famous. Archbishop Ozorowski decided to expose this piece of the Sacramental Bread to the public. On Sunday October 2, 2011 a ceremonious Holy Mass took place at the end of which the Particle of the Body of the Lord was exhibited[9]. Then it was transferred with the Holy Sacrament to the Chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary in the Collegiate Church in Sokółka. Since then the faithful have been able to adore Lord Jesus also in this Eucharistic sign. Sokółka is visited by pilgrims from all continents, among them there are cardinals, bishops,

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[7]    A. Kakareko, *Komunikat Kurii Metropolitalnej Białostockiej w sprawie zjawisk eucharystycznych w Sokółce*, p. 28.

[8]    S. Budzyński, *Część I, Cud w Sokółce*, in: S. Urbański, S. Budzyński (ed.), *Sokółka i inne cuda eucharystyczne nie tylko w Polsce*, Warszawa 2013, p. 38.

[9]    In his homily recognising the miracle in Sokółka, the Metroplitan Archbishop of Białystok Edward Ozorowski taught: "The Western Church, in Her attempt to cognitively explain the fact that during the Holy Mass the bread transforms into the Body of Christ and the wine becomes His Blood, used the distinction into the substance and ephemera. (...) the Council of Trent solemnly announced that by the power of the words of Christ expressed by the priest over the bread, its substance is transformed but its ephemera remain unchanged. The Council called this transformation transfiguration which we translate into Polish as transubstantiation. The man sees bread and wine, while he confesses his faith into the Body and Blood of Christ. It is the mystery of the Christ's presence in the sacrament of the altar (...) However, it happened in the history that the substance of Christs Body or of His Blood was recognised by the human senses. Such was the case in Sokółka". E. Ozorowski, *Homilia uznająca cud w Sokółce*, in: S. Urbański, S. Budzyński (ed.), *Sokółka i inne cuda eucharystyczne nie tylko w Polsce*, Warszawa 2013, pp. 23-24.

priests and nuns as well as numerous laymen – there have been around a million pilgrims for the past few years.

Due to the fame gained by Sokółka as a place of the cult of the Eucharist, on Maundy Thursday 2009, Archbishop Ozorowski established the College of the Holy Sacrament and he elevated the church in Sokółka to the rank of the Collegiate Church. As the culmination of all these decisions, the Archbishop founded a sanctuary called the Sanctuary of the Holy Sacrament. It took place on the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord in 2017.

## Media repercussions

The message of the exceptional Eucharistic event which took place in October 2008 in St. Anthony's Church in Sokółka, was released to the press in 2009.

"Kurier Poranny" posted an article which informed: "the prosecutor is verifying the miracle in Sokółka. Where does the heart come from – does it come from a murder?[10]".

The newspaper "Super Express" published an article *Cud w Sokółce to oszustwo* [The Miracle in Sokółka Is a Fraud]. The article contained an interview with doctor Paweł Grześkowiak from Zakład Profilaktyki Zakażeń i Zakażeń Szpitalnych Narodowego Instytutu Leków [the Department of Prevention of Infections and Hospital Infections of the National Institute of Medicines]. "It is not a miracle, it is pure biology", indicated professor. He explained that the presence bacteria of *serratia marcescens* is the reason for the red colour of the piece of the Communicant[11].

The comments were also posted by Polskie Stowarzyszenie Racjonalistów [Polish Rationalists Association]. They posted on the forums: "As a live heart muscle tissue was found, it means that a murder must have been committed and it is necessary to immediately start to look for the body"[12]. They filed a report to the prosecutor. However, after some time

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[10]    A. Chomicz, *Prokurator sprawdza cud w Sokółce*, https://poranny.pl/prokurator-sprawdza-cud-w-sokolce-skad-wzielo-sie-serce-i-czy-nie-pochodzi-z-zabojstwa/ar/5251090 (date of access: 24.11.2024).

[11]    B. Stasiak, T. Matuszkiewicz, *Cud w Sokółce to oszustwo?*, https://www.se.pl/wiadomosci/polska/cud-w-sokoce-to-oszustwo-aa-G2o6-EMv7-X3ds.html (date of access: 24.11.2024).

[12]    Polskie Stowarzyszenie Racjonalistów, *Doniesienie do prokuratury w związku z tzw. cudem w Sokółce, Doniesienie do prokuratury w związku z tzw. cudem w Sokółce* – Racjonalista (date of access: 24.11.2024).

the District Prosecutor's Office in Sokółka remitted the investigation, announcing that no evidence had been found of committing murder.

The Head of the Department of Medical Patomorphology, Professor Lech Chyczewski also questioned the results presented in the report of the scientists, accusing his colleagues of "illegal procedures"[13].

In 2015 one of the journalists of "Gazeta Wyborcza" published his book called *Białystok Biała siła, czarna pamięć* [Białystok the White Power, the Black Memory]. The author presented the capital of Podlasie as a city inhabited by people with anti-Semitic views and hooligan behaviours and he devoted one of the chapters of his publication to the Eucharistic event in Sokółka. He ridiculed the reality of the phenomenon in the Sanctuary of Sokółka[14].

Father Benedykt J. Huculak OFM in his article in the magazine "Polonia Christiana" published an article called: *Cud w Sokółce – odpowiedź na znieważenie* [The Miracle in Sokółka – a Response to the Insult]. The theologian wrote that the miracle which took place in Sokółka was "a response to desecrating the Sacred Host by the local priest"[15]. According to him the desecration happened because of the priest's carelessness as he dropped the Communicant at the step of the altar. The dogmatist refers to the documents of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, and he indicates that the dropped piece of the Communicant should have been picked up with reverence and immediately consumed and not put into a vessel which serves to wash the fingers.

The author indicated two mistakes, the first one, according to him, was placing the piece of the Communicant into an improper vessel, and the second consisted in the fact that the piece of the Communicant was put into a vessel in order to dissolve and such a procedure can only be used in case of a piece of the Communicant which was poisoned and not one that was dropped. Especially that, strictly speaking, it was dropped at a step of the altar and not on the ground[16].

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[13]    The opinion of Prof. Lech Chyczewski was cited in the Polish press, cf. B. Stasiak, T. Matuszkiewicz, *Cud w Sokółce to oszustwo?*, https://www.se.pl/wiadomosci/polska/cud-w-sokoce-to-oszustwo-aa-G2o6-EMv7-X3ds.html (date of access: 24.11.2024), but also abroad. Cf. F. Serafini, *Sokółka (2008)*, in: F. Serafini, *Un cardiologo visita Gesù. I miracoli eucaristici alla prova della scienza*, Bologna 2018, p. 79.

[14]    Cf. M. Kącki, *Białystok. Biała siła, czarna pamięć*, Białystok 2015.

[15]    B.J. Huculak, *Cud w Sokółce to odpowiedź na znieważanie*, https://sacerdoshyacinthus.com/2016/02/17/o-dr-hab-benedykt-jacek-huculak-ofm-cud-w-sokolce-to-odpowiedz-na-zniewazenie/ (date of access: 24.11.2024).

[16]    Ibidem.

## Individual fruits

Since that time when the media informed about the Eucharistic event in Sokółka (October 2009) until now, the Church of Sokółka has witnessed the bodily healings often supported by medical records, and spiritual healings.

Krystyna Oloffson, a Polish woman who has lived in Sweden for 30 years, testified:

> In Spring 2009 I was diagnosed with a serious disease. It started with the pain near my pancreas, the pain increased, and since August the pain was so severe that I could not eat, it hurt a lot. This part of my body was so swollen and sore that I could not sleep at night. I hid the problem from my children because I thought it was pancreatic cancer, and, as I was already 68, I thought that the doctors would not be able to help me due to my age[17].

Further on she stated that she had been diagnosed with colorectal cancer. The doctors suggested a surgery in order to immediately remove the lump on the intestine. In May 2009, when Krystyna got to know about the unusual event in the sanctuary of Sokółka, she went on a pilgrimage, she commissioned a Holy Mass asking for the restoration of health. She was also praying to Jesus present in the Holy Sacrament in this intention. She described her emotions of that moment in the following way:

> I have never before prayed so fervently for myself. I was tired but I still trusted Christ, I fell asleep after midnight. When I woke up in the morning, I thanked God for that night. I felt such trust in Jesus Christ that I did not want to even think about the surgery. I thought to myself: let the will of God be done[18].

The further recounting of the story indicates that a few days after the night full of prayer and after the total submission to God's will, the pain subsided. She was subjected to further examination. It turned out that there was no lump on the intestine, there was only some calcification. She wrote: "I am fully convinced that it was miraculous healing. I can't express my gratitude to Jesus. I pray, I cry out of joy: Thank you Jesus Christ that I received such a great grace, me – so unworthy"[19].

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[17]    Apostołka Bożego Miłosierdzia, *Nigdy tak się nie modliłam*, in: S. Gniedziejko (ed.), *Świadectwa łask. Eucharystyczne wydarzenia w Sokółce 2*, Sokółka–Warszawa 2013, p. 8.

[18]    Ibidem, p. 9.

[19]    Ibidem.

In August 2011 in Karcze near Sokółka, there was a tragic accident in the landfill. One of the workers (a citizen of Sokółka) was pulled by a machine which compacted and pressed the garbage. "My brother was probably picked up by the loading machine with a pile of trash and was thrown into the separator. He was pulled along the whole separator. He was noticed on a conveyor belt which was transmitting the garbage for bailing" – this is the report of the brother of the victim – the garbage dump worker who had the accident[20]. His skull was crashed to a serious degree. When he was brought to hospital, the doctors thought he would not make it through. One day after the tragic event, a Mass was celebrated in the intention of the dying man, and his family was praying in the chapel at the rectory where there was a Piece of the Body of the Lord. The healing power of Jesus's love was instantaneous – a miracle happened: the patient with the crushed head was cured. A week after the accident the patient was awakened and he regained consciousness. The only remaining results of the accident were the loss of an eye and headaches. The medical documentation of this recovery is deposited in the archive of the parish. "My brother and our family have no doubts – the Piece of the Body of the Lord saved his life" – these are the words of testimony of the healed man's brother written down after this miraculous event[21].

A professor, conductor and choirmaster of the Podlasie Choir and Philharmonic testified that during the celebration of relocation of the Holy Sacrament she was miraculously healed. In June 2011 the growing pain of the stomach made her visit a doctor. After the necessary medical gastrological examination, the doctors diagnosed her with "stomach polyps, dispersal of over 100 active polyps..., possible neoplastic change, especially that it is hereditary"[22]. The doctors' reviews were divided. Some suggested cutting out a piece of the stomach, others – putting the surgery off as the surgery was the last resort. "Since that moment I started to fervently pray to God asking for health, apologising Him for all my weaknesses, sins and the lack of humility"[23].

Professor, apart from the professional preparation of the choir, was preparing herself spiritually: "I went to confession, I cleansed my conscience and my soul from sins (...). And then it happened... During a

<div style="margin-left:2em">Dogmatic Theology</div>

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[20]     *Pewność wiary*, in: S. Gniedziejko (ed.), *Świadectwa łask. Eucharystyczne wydarzenia w Sokółce 2*, Sokółka–Warszawa 2013, p. 10.

[21]     Ibidem, p. 11.

[22]     V. Bielecka, *Przebudzenie...powrót*, in: S. Gniedziejko (ed.), *Hostia pełna łask. Eucharystyczne wydarzenie w Sokółce 3*, Sokółka–Warszawa 2015, p. 17.

[23]     Ibidem.

solemn Mass, I was praying full of repent, with tears in my eyes, I was begging Jesus – real and present in the Holy Sacrament, for forgiveness of all of my infirmities, and I asked Him for the grace of healing. I trusted God[24]". During another visit to the doctor (on October 13, 2011) the doctor, while reading the test results, using the nonmedical terminology, addressed the patient: „Viola – it is a miracle...!". The pieces of polyps collected for testing revealed no sign of any neoplastic changes[25]. (The further examination conducted on January 31, 2013 confirmed the same). The patient sent the whole medical documentation with her testimony to the Collegiate Church in Sokółka.

Many married couples make pilgrimages to the Collegiate Church in Sokółka in order to ask for the gift of motherhood, gazing at the Piece of the Body of the. One of the pilgrimages was of a young married couple from Ełk, who had been unsuccessfully trying to conceive a child. The doctors were powerless, they were not able to help. The young couple decided to seek help in the Sokółka Sanctuary. Their trustfulness to God and their request for a child was heard. In Autumn of 2012 the woman conceived a child, however, their faith was put to the test because in December the child died in the mother's womb. The young couple did not lose their faith. "We entrusted our concerns to God and to the Mother of God... Once again we went on a pilgrimage to Sokółka" – wrote the mother of the lost child. The strong faith of the spouses brought the desired results. In September 2013 their second child was conceived. Again, it was a high-risk pregnancy, many difficulties and complications appeared. However, also this time, the faith of the future parents and of their friends who prayed for them, brought miraculous results. "I want to share the good news. On April 17, 2014 I gave birth to a healthy daughter– Lena. Lord Jesus and God's Mother can make wonders" – these words come from a letter written by the couple to the parson of the Collegiate Church in Sokółka.

## The transcendent nature of the empirical sign

Eucharist as a sacrament effectively implements and provides God's grace which it embodies. The transubstantiation of the Eucharist which takes place during the celebration is impossible to grasp with the senses. The senses can detect words and signs which indicate the transformation but the result of the transubstantiation remains beyond the sensory perception. The Sacrament of the Eucharist effectively

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[24]    V. Bielecka, *Przebudzenie...powrót*, 18.

[25]    Ibidem.

involves man into the communion with Christ and is an efficient tool which helps on the way to the realization of salvation[26].

Every Eucharist is a miracle, it is transcendent in nature and it is imposed to the sensory cognition. The miracle of the Eucharist is a particular type of a miracle which refers to the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist and treats Him as the transcendent and factitive reason in the materialised form. It reflects the scene when after Resurrection Jesus allows His Apostles to experience His presence, during the Eucharist He allows the faithful to see Him and to empirically experience His presence. In Sokółka we can macroscopically (without the use of any specialised tools) see the incredible phenomenon: the myocardial tissue which was inseparably combined with the remaining delicate edge of the piece of the white Sacramental Bread. The act of faith was confirmed by the sensory experience. The nature of this miracle was explained by Archbishop Edward Ozorowski in his homily delivered on October 2, 2011:

> Although in every place where the Holy Eucharist is celebrated, the Eucharistic miracle takes place, however, the miracle was doubled in Sokółka. The miracle of faith was strengthened by the empirical miracle. A new hope for the world is born in Sokółka. God is present among His people[27].

The Eucharistic miracle, through its literalness, helps us to more fully realize the realness and the meaning of the Sacramental transubstantiation which takes place at the altar during every consecration.

> The event from Sokółka does not contradict the faith of the Church but it confirms it. The Church professes that after the words of consecration, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the bread is transformed into the Body of Christ, and the wine into His Blood. What is more, it constitutes a challenge for the ministers of the Eucharist distributed the Body of the Lord with faith and mindfully and for the faithful – to receive the Body of the Lord reverently[28].

It is a necessary condition because the Church lives on the Eucharist. The Eucharist is Her source and aim. In the Eucharist Jesus gives

Dogmatic Theology

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[26]   E. Ozorowski, *Eucharystia w nauce i praktyce Kościoła Katolickiego*, Poznań 1990, p. 203.

[27]   E. Ozorowski, *Homilia uznająca cud w Sokółce*, in: S. Urbański, S. Budzyński (ed.), *Sokółka i inne cuda eucharystyczne nie tylko w Polsce*, Warszawa 2013, p. 25.

[28]   A. Kakareko, *Komunikat Kurii Metropolitalnej Białostockiej w sprawie zjawisk eucharystycznych w Sokółce*, in: S. Urbański, S. Budzyński (ed.), *Sokółka i inne cuda eucharystyczne nie tylko w Polsce*, Warszawa 2013, p. 28.

His Body to humanity as nourishment. We eat His Body and drink His Blood because Jesus Himself invites us for His feast and, what is more, He conditions our salvation on the participation in this feast. At the Last Supper He said: "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you" (J 6,53).

The Church has always encouraged the faithful to receive the Holy Communion. The Fathers of the Council of Trent from XVI century expressed their request for all the faithful to receive the Holy Communion at every Holy Mass in which they participate in not only the spiritual way through the desire to receive It but also in a physical act – sacramentally[29]. This practice was confirmed by the Congregation of the Council who in December 1905 ruled that

> the frequent and even everyday practice of receiving the Holy Communion, as the realization of Christ's and of the Church's desire, should be permitted for all the faithful of every status or profession to such an extent that the approach to the Lord's Table would never be forbidden to anyone who is in a state of sanctifying grace and who receives the Holy Communion with a simple and pious heart, that is with good intentions[30].

In Sokółka Christ Himself reminded that He is truly present in the Eucharist and He wants to be received.

> In the humble sign of bread and wine, transformed into His Body and His Blood, Christ is standing before us as our power and our viaticum, He feeds us with His Body enabling us to giving our testimony: "My Lord and my God"[31].

Even if the reason experiences its own limitation in the face of this Mystery, the heart enlightened by the grace from the Holy Spirit knows perfectly well what attitude to assume being immersed into the adoration of the endless Love.

Consequently, Archbishop Edward Ozorowski, the metropolitan bishop of Białystok, in his homily delivered in Sokółka during the ceremony of transferring of the Piece of the Lord's Body to the Chapel of exposure of the Blessed Sacrament, used the terms: "double Eucharistic miracle", "the miracle of faith" and "the empirical miracle". He said: "Although in every place where the Eucharist is celebrated,

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[29]   Por. *Uchwała św. Kongregacji Soboru Trydenckiego o codziennej Komunii św.*, http://msza.net/i/om11_6.html (date of access: 12.12.2024).

[30]   Ibidem.

[31]   John Paul II, *Encyklika Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, Rzym 14.07.2003, https://www.fronda.pl/a/jan-pawel-ii-o-eucharystii-to-skarb-kosciola,142502.html (date of access: 12.12.2024).

the Eucharistic miracle is taking place, the miracle in Sokółka was doubled. The miracle of faith was strengthened with the empirical miracle."[32]. Archbishop Edward Ozorowski uses the terms such as: "the Eucharistic miracle" although he also repeats such terms as: "the Eucharistic event" or "a Piece of the Lord's Body"[33]. His interpretation has become so common that if anyone mentions the event in Sokółka, they often use the terms: "the Eucharistic miracle", "the Eucharistic event" or "a Piece of the Lord's Body", repeating the phrases of the Archbishop theologian of Białystok. His interpretation is qualitative and not quantitative. A piece remains in relation to the whole but in its essence it is identical with the whole. Therefore, objections of theologians seem unjustified when they ask: How to understand the second term: as "a Piece of the Lord's Body" or as "a Holy Piece of Jesus's Body"? what does it mean "a Piece of the Sacramental Bread" if even the crumbs of the Eucharistic Bread are called by the Church "The Body of the Lord", and not "Pieces of the Body"[34] Pieces of the consecrated Host are the parts of the Lord's Body" in the partial sense, not in the essence.

Dogmatic Theology

In his teaching Archbishop Edward Ozorowski stressed that "it is a cult so the potential grace bestowed on the faithful will verify this supernatural phenomenon. If, thanks to the revelation the faith, the people will be strengthened and so will be the cult of the Blessed Sacrament, we will be able to regard it to be a real miracle. If these events change the hearts and souls of people, which as I hear, is already taking place, the decision of the Holy See will not be necessary"[35]. He also added: "There will be no need for the further scientific research. If we are dealing with a piece of the Body of Christ, it would not be proper to conduct any further research because of the worship which we should have for the Body"[36]. He also argues:

> I will remind of Moses who met God in a burning bush; God told him to take of his sandals because he was walking on the holy land. We as well in case of the Sacramental Bread from Sokółka are dealing with

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[32]   E. Ozorowski, *Homilia uznająca cud w Sokółce*, p. 25.

[33]   Ibidem, pp. 21-26.

[34]   K.Z. Wiśniewski, *Cuda eucharystyczne. Badanie teologiczne*, in: I. Chłopkowska (ed.), *Bóg przemówił w Legnicy*, Kraków 2017, p. 166.

[35]   E. Ozorowski, *Ten cud odmieni nasze życie*, https://www.fakt.pl/wydarzenia/polska/arcybiskup-ozorowski-ten-cud-odmieni-nasze-dusze/4f2cl30 (date of access: 12.12.2024).

[36]   Ibidem.

holiness which we must fully respect. It was, after all, consecrated Host[37].

Further on:

> The truth of the Eucharist is contained in believing Christ that what we see as the bread, is in fact His Body and what is contained in the chalice as the wine, is His Blood. It happened in history that *the substance of Christ's Body or of His Blood became available for the human senses*. So was the case in Sokółka[38].

The conclusion is as follows: "Therefore, what was Christ's Body in the event in Sokółka, still remains it now but in a different way"[39]. Archbishop Ozorowski effectively teaches:

> [The results of the examination] empirically confirm what we assume by evangelical faith. The experience of faith allows for the natural experience but is not reduced to it. A man who acknowledges the Eucharist addresses Christ: "I can only believe in Your teaching that You are present in the form of the bread". The identity of the body is not limited to the cells which it consists of. Otherwise the transplants would not be possible. It is the person who confirms the identity of the body. This was the case of Jesus when He appeared to His disciples after resurrection. They saw Him in His own body which was transformed and divinized, free from not subjected to physical laws. Deification does not abolish identity[40].

On December 25, 2013 a similar event took place in Legnica. And although the process was similar to the one in Białystok, new concepts appear to describe the miraculous Eucharistic sign. In Legnica on July 2, 2016 the Reliquaries of the Eucharistic miracle were exhibited and installed. In his book *Bóg przemówił w Legnicy* [God Spoke in Legnica] Rev. Krzysztof Zenon Wiśniewski – a theologian from Legnica wrote:

> For the faithful whose faith in the Eucharist is well-established, it is evident that the extraordinary events called miracles indicate only one chosen aspect of the mystery of the Eucharist, which, due to certain reasons which are known mainly to God, required highlighting. Miracles expose a certain important dimension of the mystery, but do

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[37]     Ibidem.

[38]     E. Ozorowski, *Homilia uznająca cud w Sokółce*, p. 24.

[39]     Ibidem, p. 25.

[40]     Ibidem, p. 24.

not contain the whole mystery. Whereas the sacrament reflects the whole mystery of Jesus Christ[41].

Further on:

> Being aware of the truth about the Eucharist, we notice essential differences between what we profess about the presence of the Lord's Body in the Sacred Host, and what we notice looking at the result of the supernatural transformation of the Lord's Body into a part of the human body. Realizing these differences helps us get to know and acknowledge the real meaning of this particular sign given by God[42].

Dogmatic
Theology

The distinction made by the theologian from Legnica contains the expression:

> (...) we cannot identify Lord's Body Which is indeed present in the Sacred Host with a piece of the human body which was miraculously created by God because of the need for a sign. A body which is created as a result of a miracle is not the same Body as the One substantially present in the Sacred Host. Imagining and holding on the belief that during the Holy Communion we receive what we saw in the supernatural phenomenon would result in the confusion in our faith. Therefore Eucharistic miracles should not be interpreted in the category "the appearance of the Lord's Body". That would be very confusing. It is necessary to seek to understand the miracle in the category "the sign", because indeed there is a lot of evidence that, God "significantly" interfered there[43].

And although the theologian from Legnica used a proper distinction between the Lord's Body present in the consecrated Host and the Eucharistic miracle, referring to it as "the relic of the Lord's Body" seems to be suggesting that we are dealing with the reality long gone which has left a sign while the miracle is an ongoing, dynamic reality. The man praying before the miraculous Eucharistic phenomenon, is standing in front of God as if he was praying in front of an icon which is the window to Him. Therefore, we can call it the mystical closeness.

An attempt to obtain theological confidence that the theologian from Legnica wrote about refers to the arguments *sub ratione homini* and not, as he indicated in his final conclusion *sub ratione Dei*.

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[41]    K.Z. Wiśniewski, *Cuda eucharystyczne w świetle wiary w Eucharystię*, in: I. Chłopkowska (ed.), *Bóg przemówił w Legnicy*, Kraków 2017, p. 136.

[42]    Ibidem, p. 137.

[43]    Ibidem, p. 139.

## Conclusion

Summarising the analysis on the Eucharistic miracle from Sokółka, we should remain aware of the fact of participation in the mystery of God's action among us. Both the empirical and theological cognition contribute to its apprehension. However, we must remember that a miracle is only partially the empirical reality. Its nature lies elsewhere. It is performed by the power of the free-will decision of God and, as a sign, it leads to the acquisition of the man's reasonable approval of the truth which He revealed to us through the miracle. Any possible man-made terminology created in the process of the miracle exploration does not exhaust its full meaning as the appearing reality transgresses the possibility of expression of the human language. Mainly, it is important that the theological cognition would lead to justification of the empirical cognition of a miracle because it is contained within the category of revelation and it results from it. It is also approved of in the light of faith although the external arguments in favour of its authenticity result from the empirical cognition, in this very case – from medical sciences. First and foremost, a miracle consists in transcendental quality with regard to the reality which is experienced through the senses.

Summing up, we are facing the necessity to understand and to translate into the concepts understandable for us the Mystery which cannot be fully grasped by means of human mind, neither to be properly expressed by means of the concepts available to us. The Eucharistic miracle leads man to the sphere of mysticism and the best possible attitude which we can assume is gratefulness for the gift and the humility for the Giver.

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Dogmatic Theology

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# Theology as Science

The article explores how theology functions within the scientific context. It begins by noting that Christian theology differs from the theology of other religions, as well as among its own branches, such as Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Protestantism. Theology, viewed as a systematic study of Christian revelation, has a long history dating back to the 2nd century AD and was regarded as a science for many centuries. Currently, questions arise about its place in the academic environment and its adherence to scientific criteria. The article suggests that theology must justify its value both internally, in terms of research and teaching, and externally, in relation to other fields. Critics point out differences in theological methods of knowledge acquisition and challenges in adapting to scientific discoveries. Various theological approaches are discussed, ranging from Origen to contemporary thinkers who emphasize the importance of critical and systematic methodologies in theology. The concluding section reflects on the potential role of theology as a science, highlighting its potential for critical analysis of ideological and scientific narratives.

**Key words**: theology, science, doctrine, studies, method, history of theology.

The subject is complex[1]: talking about theology as science means knowing what theology is and what science is.

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[1] For an introduction to the problem field, cfr. *Die Wissenschaftlichkeit der Theologie. 1. Historische und systematische Perspektiven*, B.P. Göcke (ed.) Münster 2018; *2. Katholische Disziplinen und ihre Wissenschaftstheorien*, B.P. Gücke, L.V. Ohler (eds), Münster 2019; *3. Theologie und Metaphysik*, B.P. Göcke, Ch. Pelz, Münster 2019. The relationship between theology, religion and science is the focus of increasing interest, as evidenced by the wealth of new publications in this area. For a quick survey of the main questions, cfr. for ex. *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Science*, J.W. Haas, G.R. Peterson, M.L. Spezio (eds), London 2012; *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, Oh. Clayton, Z. Simpson (ed.), Oxford 2006.

As far as theology is concerned, the first thing to decide is which theology to consider[2]. Other religions have also developed ways of organizing and expanding religious knowledge, but these differ from Christian theology because of the different worldviews they hold. Moreover, there are fundamental differences within Christian theology itself: Catholic and Orthodox theology have a relationship to the tradition of the Church and to magisterial authority that makes them radically different from Protestant theology. We shall take as the starting point the concept and practice of academic theology as it is commonly practiced today in Catholic theological faculties, however there may be similarities with the situation in other denominations.

Dogmatic Theology

It is perhaps even more difficult to define what science (*scientia*, Wissenschaft) is[3]. Throughout the history of Western culture, the charism of "scientificity" has been ascribed to practices that vary widely in their object, method and results. Today, quantum physics is considered a form of science. Feminist literary criticism is also seen as a form of science. But it is not easy to see what these two forms of science have in common. Therefore, we shall start here with an intuitive concept of science, i.e. as a form of knowledge that differs from everyday knowledge in that it is more systematic and critically aware[4].

However, the question of the scientific nature of theology is not only a theoretical one. On the contrary, in today's academic world it is a question of academic politics and resources, and therefore of politics tout court. Does theology, as a science, have the right to be in the universities, on an equal footing with the other sciences? Does theology, if it is indeed a science, have the right to intervene in the affairs of society on an equal footing with other forms of knowledge?

Without pretending to be able to answer all these questions, I would like to share some observations from my personal experience as a

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[2]     For an overview of the different understandings of theology, cfr. Ch. Schwöbel, Art. Theologie, in *Religion und Geschichte und Gegenwart. Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft*, vol. 8, Tübingen [4]2005, c. 255-306.

[3]     Cfr. S. Meier-Oser, H. Hühn, H. Pulte, Art. Wissenschaft, in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, 12, Darmstadt 2019, c. 902-948. For a different approach, cfr. S.O. Hansson, Art. Science and Pseudo-Science, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2021 Edition), E.N. Zalta (ed.), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2021/entries/pseudo-science.

[4]     The meaning of the word "science" in current ordinary English use has been restricted and is "often treated as synonymous with "Natural and Physical Science" (Art. Science, in *The Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. XIV, J.A. Simpson, E.S.C. Weiner (eds.), Oxford, [2]1989, 648-649). In this paper, the term science is obviously taken in its full historical sense, which corresponds to the usage in other major European languages.

theologian and administrator of an independent theological faculty. Firstly, the awareness of theology as a science in its own right will be reaffirmed, even if this is called into question. Secondly, an attempt will be made to outline the environments and contexts in which the question of the scientific nature of theology arises. This question can be answered negatively or positively. The third part will focus on the main types of negative answers, and the fourth part will consider some models of positive answers. Finally, some provocative recent thinking on the possible future role of theology as a science should be mentioned.

Dogmatic
Theology

## Theology is a science: a fact

It is a fact that theology is a science.

In most countries with a Christian tradition, it has been part of the university system for centuries. But even where it is not present in public universities, whether for ideological reasons, as in France or Italy, or for other historical reasons, it is cultivated in private universities and in seminaries for the training of clergy. Indeed, even in countries such as those in Eastern Europe, after the collapse of the communist system, there has been a return of theological faculties to public universities, or at least a public recognition of the institutions run by the Churches.

The need for a systematic and critical study of the content of Christian revelation is already expressed in the New Testament, where the Apostle exhorts the faithful to be ready to give an account of the hope that is in them (1 Peter 3:15-17). This did not immediately mean the establishment of theology as a science, but it is at the root of its later development. In this respect, the widespread view that theology was not fully established as a science until the 12th century, with the rediscovery in the West of all the philosophical works of Aristotle, does not do justice to historical reality.

Theology as a science has more distant roots. Already in the 2nd century *A.D.* it began to evolve from a simple reflection and testimony on the experience of faith into a more elaborate, critical and original form, inspired also by the various human sciences of the time: philosophy, philology, history, rhetoric and jurisprudence. The work of Irenaeus of Lyon, Theophilus of Antioch and the public schools of Christian philosophers, such as that of the martyr Saint Justin, can be considered as early examples. Theology reached full scientific maturity with the monumental work of Origen of Alexandria and was institutionalised in

the schools of Alexandria itself and then in the East, with Edessa and later Nisibis, the famous Persian school. The Christological debates of the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries further refined the method[5], which in turn influenced the way knowledge had to be produced, even in other disciplines[6]. Partly at the expense of the spiritual and sapiential dimension that had characterised patristic and monastic theology, the rediscovery of the whole of Aristotle's philosophy in the West in the twelfth century enabled theology to reach a peak of formal perfection and to be considered the queen of the sciences, queen because it deals with the supreme object, God Himself, and because it is its task to establish the hierarchy among the sciences[7]. The Protestant Reformation, which called for a return to biblical sources, geographical and astronomical discoveries that revolutionised the perception of the world, and the challenge to the Aristotelian philosophical framework posed by the spread of Kantian thought, all contributed to changing the hierarchy of value of the various forms of knowledge and to questioning the role of theology among the sciences. Thanks to its achievements, technical-scientific knowledge became an exemplary paradigm of how true science should function, greatly reducing the prestige of theological discourse. Other factors then contributed to the further decline and loss of social prestige of theology in the contemporary world. The Protestant Reformation rejected the traditional principles of theology, absolutizing Scripture as the sole witness to the Word of God but failing to draw consensual conclusions from it. The deistic or atheistic ideology of the Enlightenment put an end to the theological dominance of worldview and society. Historical-critical research threw the primacy of theology in the interpretation of its own biblical and historical sources into crisis. Psychology did the same in the field of conscience, and the various ideologies of society excluded it from the public sphere. Today, if theology wants to regain its right to be heard, it must adapt itself to the new demands and provocations and clarify its nature as a discourse on faith carried out with scientific procedures.

In other words, what has changed since the Middle Ages is not so much the scientific nature of theology per se, but the prestige and role

Dogmatic Theology

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[5]      Cfr. B. Studer, *Schola Christiana. Die Theologie zwischen Nicäa und Chalcedon*, Paderborn 1998.

[6]      Cfr. M. Letteney, *The Christianization of Knowledge in Late Antiquity. Intellectual and Material Transformations*, Cambridge 2023.

[7]      Cfr. U.G. Leinsle, Art. Scholastik. /Neuscholastik, in *Theologische Realencyklopädie* 30, Berlin 1999, pp. 361-366.

that society attaches to this form of science, particularly its claim to answer the question of the meaning of the whole.

## The contexts of the question

This situation gives rise to different tasks according to the contexts in which theology has to justify the validity of its contribution as a scientific discourse. The two spheres are the internal sphere, that is, theology as engaged in teaching and research, and the external sphere, that is, theology in the academy and, more generally, in society.

Ad intra, theology has a need for scientificity, which is first and foremost a need inherent to theology itself, and not with a view to a relationship with other sciences, be it intended as a constructive dialogue or polemic. It is therefore a need to organise the knowledge that comes from faith in a rational, argued and organic way[8]. Theology can also be done in other non-scientific ways. According to Seckler, scientificity would therefore depend on the mode[9]. This scientific form is of course useful, even necessary, for the transmission of theological knowledge itself; it can change in form, as a comparison of two 20th century theological manuals, *Sacrae Theologiae Summa*, by a group of Spanish Jesuits[10], and *Mysterium salutis*, edited by the Swiss J. Feiner and M. Löhrer[11], clearly shows. The need remains the same: to systematically organize theological knowledge in order to understand it better and to transmit it more effectively to others. The same methodological attention is then necessary for theological research. Indeed, it is not limited to organizing the accumulated knowledge according to changing criteria, but must also address new questions and problems that require the application of appropriate methods[12].

Ad extra, theology has to defend its claim to be scientific within the academic context. It is a question of justifying the presence of theology

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[8]    Cfr. M. Seckler, *Theologie als Glaubenswissenschaft*, in *Handbuch der Fundamentaltheologie 4. Traktat Theologische Erkenntnislehre mit Schlussteil Reflexion auf Fundamentaltheologie*, H.J. Pottmeyer, M. Seckler (eds.), Tübingen–Basel ²2000, pp. 131-184, in part. 141-142.

[9]    Cfr. Seckler, *Theologie als Glaubenswissenschaft*, pp. 158-159.

[10]   Cfr. Patres Societatis Iesu facultatum theologicarum in Hispania professores, *Sacrae Theologiae Summa* (4 vols.), Madrid 1950-1952 (with many more editions).

[11]   Cfr. M. Löhrer, J. Feiner (eds), *Mysterium Salutis : Die Grundlagen heilsgeschichtlicher Dogmatik* (7 vols.), Einsiedeln 1965-1976 (with many translations in other languages).

[12]   Cfr. J. Dupuis, *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, New York 1997, pp. 13-19.

in the concert of academic disciplines, which can be challenged for various reasons. There is an underlying prejudice against theology in some parts of the academy, but this can become more pronounced when, for example, decisions have to be made about the use and distribution of financial resources. There are contingent considerations added to this, such as the decline in student numbers that has been seen in recent years, which further challenge the space to be given to theology.

Dogmatic
Theology

In the public sphere, then, the scientific nature of theology is a prerequisite for its discourse to be heard in certain areas of social life. This ad extra aspect takes on different characteristics according to the concrete contexts of different countries. It seems to me that in the countries where theology is peacefully embedded in state universities, the problem is exacerbated by the collapse in the number of enrolled students. This fact is one dimension of the current crisis in the Church, but in the concrete context of the management of resources it becomes a reason to question the meaning of this discipline, which no longer seems to interest its own recipients. Hence the attempts to justify the importance of this discipline from a theoretical perspective, perhaps even by pointing out that the weakening and downsizing of the institutional churches does not mean the end of religion, which, on the contrary, enjoys a remarkable if varied comeback (Islam, Buddhism, new or old cults) and that its permanence is therefore in the general interest[13]. In the United States of America, the debate takes on very different connotations: the querelle between creationists and evolutionists is not only a debate about the scientificity of theology, but more generally about the interpretation of the role of the state in society and in the control of religion[14]. Elsewhere, where theology is practiced only in private faculties and seminaries, these questions may not constitute an existential issue, but remain at a theoretical level, responding to a need for inner clarity that has implications at most for one's own spiritual life or for the way one conceives apostolic work: does theology really have something to say not only about God and Jesus Christ, but also about the values that must underpin a society?

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[13]    Cfr. B.P. Göcke, *Katholische Theologie als Wissenschaft? Einwände und die Agenda der analytischen Theologie*, in *Die Wissenschaftlichkeit der Theologie 1*, B.P. Göcke (ed.), Münster 2018, pp. 145-164, in part. 145-146.

[14]    Th. Dixon, *Science and Religion. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford 2008.

## Positions denying the scientific nature of theology

Some answers to the question of whether theology is scientific are negative for different reasons. For some, theology is not a science because it is a primitive form of knowledge that does not meet the criteria of science. For others, on the other hand, true theology is not a science, because true theology actually transcends the level of knowledge that can be obtained in ways that are generically regarded as scientific. Here theology is a higher form of knowledge. Finally, for others, especially theologians, working in fields such as biblical exegesis, church history, history of doctrine, canon law, pastoral care or practical theology, the question seems to be avoidable, as their method comes close to almost identifying with that of the other human sciences.

Dogmatic Theology

## Theology as inferior to science

The denial of the scientificity of theology as a cognitively inferior form of discourse compared to the other sciences can have several reasons[15]. Firstly, the very existence of God and the possibility or verifiability of revelation can be questioned. In this case, theology would have no object of its own and thus its discourse would be inherently empty of cognitive scope. On the contrary, theology has historically shown enormous difficulty in accepting scientific truths that have been peacefully demonstrated, which further proves its inconsistency. Then, as far as Catholic theology is concerned, the role of the Church's Magisterium seems to radically deny the necessary academic freedom. Finally, a large part of theology, biblical, historical practical theology, derives so many elements from related disciplines, that it could easily dissolve into them, and indeed sometimes it seems to do so.

All these objections are easily answered by noting how they actually depend on the model of science chosen as the term of comparison. Bernhard Lonergan, the famous Jesuit dogmatist, summarized this procedure in his monumental book 'Method in Theology' as follows: 'They select the science of their time that appears most successful. They study its procedures. They formulate its precepts. In the end, they propose an analogy of science. Science proper is the successful science they have analyzed. Other disciplines are scientific to the extent that they conform to its procedures, and to the extent that they do not, they are something less than scientific. (...) today, the word 'science' means natural science. One descends one or more rungs of the ladder

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[15]    For this paragraph, cfr. Ch.G. Pelz, *Vernunft-Freiheit-Gott. Mit Origenes und Kant zur Theologie als Wissenschaft*, Münster 2023, pp. 478-481.

when it comes to the human or behavioral sciences. Theologians then have to be content if his discipline is included in a list not of sciences but of academic disciplines'[16].

## Theology dissolved into science

Although these objections are also important from an existential point of view and require the utmost attention especially for beginners, they do not normally affect theological work directly. They can, however, influence the course of theological work to such an extent that the "theologicality" is almost reduced to a minimum in those subjects which, by their nature, are closest to the other human sciences. I am thinking here of biblical studies, where the exclusive application of historical-critical methods can lead to forget the theological reason for which the Holy Scriptures are read, that is, as the Word of God, and thus to relegate the fundamental religious content to second place. The same is true of the writings of the Church Fathers, or more generally of Church history; or even of practical theology, where sociology and psychology sometimes seem to have crowded out the presence of the Holy Spirit. The question here is whether it is really possible to understand the religious experience lived by women and men who were clearly motivated primarily by religious motives, without taking these into due account, and without questioning the truthfulness of the religious discourses that guided their actions.

Dogmatic Theology

## Theology as superior to science

The other denial of the scientific nature of theology comes from the opposite approach, entirely internal to the experience of the Church's faith. Evagrius Ponticus said: 'if you are a theologian, you really pray; if you really pray, you are a theologian' [17]. What this position emphasises is that theology, that is, the true knowledge of God, takes place at a higher level than the kind of knowledge that can be achieved through the systematic progressive argumentative procedure typical of the

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[16]    B.J.F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, Toronto 1971, p. 3.

[17]    Cfr. Evagrius Ponticus, *De oratione*, 60. One way of taking account of the fact that God is above human science is what is known as apophatic theology, which says what God is not rather than what God is. One could argue that what is said in apophatism remains on a logical or scientific level, even though it is said in the form of negation, but it is true that the real point of apophatism is to hint at the mystery that is beyond human understanding, and in this sense apophatism implies that genuine theology is above science.

sciences in general. This form of science is also practised in theology, as we have seen in Origen. But true knowledge of God, that is, true science, would come by grace at a higher level, of dialogue with God and mystical experience. We can understand the importance of this statement in a context such as that in which the imperial Church found itself from the 4th century onwards, where theological debates on the mystery of the Trinity and the Incarnation deeply disturbed social peace and even became forms of legitimation for political opposition to central power. Evagrius' statement, however, does not in itself deny the usefulness, indeed the necessity, of scientific theology. In Maximus the Confessor we find a precise statement of the primacy of the pneumatic dimension for the true understanding of divine realities[18]. This, however, presupposes an intellect purified by the Spirit to such a degree of perfection that it cannot be taken for granted nor is it so easily attained. Knowledge, however elementary, acquired through the normal historical-philological argumentative systematic method remains an indispensable component of theological progress. Mystical union with God is indeed the ultimate goal, but it is not opposed to the 'scientific' approach; on the contrary, it presupposes it.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, criticisms of the scientific nature of theology seem to be due either to a different world view or to a different assessment of the cognitive capacities of man. They can therefore have a positive function for theology, forcing it to better clarify its assumptions and methodology. At the same time, however, it is the task of theology to identify the prejudices and a priori choices contained in these worldviews as well as the aporias to which they lead. In this sense, theology as science should recover its critical function with regard to ideological or scientistic narratives that claim to have exclusive rights to the truth.

## Theology as science: some models

In addition to those who deny the scientific character of theology, there are those who not only support it theoretically but also practise it professionally. They believe that theological research produces a real increase in knowledge, and that this increase is subject to the laws of scientific progress: arguable, verifiable and consensually acceptable. But what is the nature of progress in theological knowledge? In other

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[18]      Cfr. Maximus Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, 65.

words, what is the purpose of scientific theology and what does it seek to achieve? Since it is impossible to give here even a simple overview of the possible typologies, we will limit ourselves to a few illustrative cases which, by their originality and impact, are representative of different approaches to theological work: Origen of Alexandria, Immanuel Kant, Karl Rahner and Josef Ratzinger.

## Origen

Dogmatic Theology

Origen of Alexandria (ca. 180-252 A.D.) was perhaps the first to practise theological research in a systematic way, initiating research in all areas: scriptural exegesis, history and philology, ecclesiastical tradition, and systematics from dogmatics to spirituality. He inspired the Fathers of the following centuries, even though some of his positions, not always correctly interpreted, led to doubts about his orthodoxy that lasted practically until the middle of the 20th century. What was the purpose of theological research for Origen? In philosophy, men have sought wisdom[19]. In Christ, who is the divine Sophia, Wisdom itself has spoken to men. This knowledge is contained in the faith of the Church transmitted by the Apostles, of which Origen, through his travels and contacts with all the great centres of Christianity of his time, is one of the main witnesses. Everything that is necessary for salvation is contained in this faith and in the knowledge it transmits. However, the Lord and his Apostles left many points open, so that the disciples, the believers, could carry out the theological search, which is also the way to become more and more similar to Christ. This search involves the whole person, his highest rational faculties, and determines his progressive conformation to the divine Logos, who is Christ. Theology, as a science, has as its aim not so much the exploration of divine mysteries in order to increase knowledge in a purely quantitative sense, as the realization of man's highest vocation. In studying the difficult points in the Holy Scriptures, it is possible to arrive at different solutions, which are nevertheless possible in so far as they are in harmony with the faith of the Church.

Origen's approach is thus characterised by great freedom and by the formulation of theoretical hypotheses, some of which would be rejected by the Church in later centuries. Nevertheless, it remains an example of a theological science whose scientificity is not simply derived from other forms of science, although the influence of the methods of philosophy and philology of the time is evident, but which

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19     Cfr. Origenes, *De principiis, Praefatio Origenis*, 1-4.

finds in itself and in the confession of faith the epistemological basis for its own approach.

## Immanuel Kant

The Prussian philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) operates in a radically different perspective. It may seem surprising to include the great master of critical philosophy in a list of theologians. However, a careful reading of his written Manifesto on the Enlightenment (*Was ist Aufklärung?*) reveals how his ideas, though generally understood as *sapere aude* in all branches of knowledge, manifest their disruptive power first and foremost in theological practice[20]. Kant made significant contributions of a genuinely theological nature though no longer 'Christian' in the strict sense[21]. The results of his reflections profoundly influenced subsequent theology. In his Manifesto, Kant, like Origen, makes a clear distinction between dogmas, that is, the official teaching of the Church, and the further research by which the theologian seeks to advance knowledge. He distinguishes between two modes in the use of reason: a public use of reason, and a private use. As far as the theologian is concerned, he exercises reason privately when he is fulfilling his individual duty, essentially when, as a pastor and official of a particular church, he proclaims, teaches, and exhorts in accordance with the dogmas of the denomination to which he belongs. Here he must adhere to the doctrine for which he has been employed. But in an enlightened society, he must be able to make free use of public reason, that is, the possibility to openly criticising even the dogmas of his own church and proposing a better version of them. As a scholar, that is, as a scientist, the theologian according to Kant must be able, without prejudice to perform his official duty, to freely and publicly express his judgements and convictions, even if they differ from the adopted confession, in order to promote an improvement. It should be noted that, whereas for Origen the traditional dogma was the minimum but necessary guarantee of being in the truth, and therefore the progress of theological science is a progressive fulfilment starting from this basis, for Kant the traditional dogma is only a historical concreteness that cannot be disregarded because it constitutes the starting point and context of the theologian's work, but it has no permanent value in time: on the contrary, progress seems to imply a necessary overcoming

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[20]    Cfr. I. Kant, *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?*, first published in „Berlinische Monatsschrift" 12 (1784), p. 481-494.

[21]    Cfr. G. Irrlitz, *Kant Handbuch. Leben und Werk*, Stuttgart/Weimer 2010, pp. 381-404

of the forms inherited from tradition. The Kantian approach, by not recognising the intrinsic value of the Church's witness (Kant of course lived in a Protestant country), creates a false competition between the theologian as scientist – the professor, who must advance dogma, and the theologian as pastor – the magisterium, who must adhere to the official dogma. Part of the contrasts between some university theology and the central Magisterium of the Catholic Church stems from an uncritical appropriation of this Kantian ideal of the scientific nature of theology.

Dogmatic Theology

Origen and Kant, while starting from different hermeneutical assumptions and with clearly divergent goals, seem to share the concept of theological progress as an effective increase in rationally argued and shared knowledge, leading to a concrete change in religious praxis, whether at personal or communal levels.

## Karl Rahner

Another master of theological thought, Karl Rahner (1904-1984), emphasised further function of theology as a science that is not included in the two ideals mentioned above. The figure of Rahner dominated the theological scene of the second half of the 20th century. For young theologians of that generation, he was a point of reference but also a challenge due to the complexity of his language and the breadth of his themes. In one of his earlier articles, on Clement of Alexandria, still written in Latin, he outlines a mode of theological work that actually seems to have become his inspirational model. In many of his writings, he seems to want to realise the ideal of theology that he believes he has traced in Clement of Alexandria in a way that is appropriate to the times[22]. In this short but very intense article, on the philosophical concept of *hyperkosmios* in Clement's works, he points out how at the heart of Clement's theological reflection was the effort to translate the Christian message into conceptual, philosophical and cultural categories that were comprehensible to the man of his time. This is not the place to consider whether and to what extent this interpretation is appropriate. Rather, it is important to note how clearly a specific task of theology as a science is outlined here, which is to translate the Christian message into a language understandable to the people of our time. It is easy to recognize in this aim the ideal underlying many recent products of theology. The increase of knowledge would consist

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[22]    Cfr. K. Rahner, *De termino aliquo in theologia Clementis Alexandrini, qui aequivalet nostro conceptui entis "supernaturalis"*, "Gregorianum" 18 (1937), pp. 426-431.

in the ability to isolate the fundamental core of the faith, separating
it from what has been its historical mantle, and then to clothe it in a
comprehensible language and conceptual framework that can be com-
municated in today's world. This also leads to the lack of appreciation
of the theological tradition, which has a purely historical scope but no
concrete relevance for the Church's current mission, as an inexorably
outdated form. This approach has greatly influenced not only recent
theological research in Catholic circles, but also pastoral practice, with
results that await critical evaluation. If such an approach is necessary,
it runs the risk of taking as its criterion of reference no longer the
content of faith, but the presumed capacity of contemporary man to
understand it[23]. Christian novelty is in danger of being curtailed and
reduced to the minimum that the dominant culture can accept.

## Josef Ratzinger

Finally, I would like to refer to Josef Ratzinger (1927-2022) in a 1990
text of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Donum veri-
tatis*, on the ecclesial mission of the theologian[24]. This is actually an
official document and not a personal writing by Ratzinger, but there
is no reason to believe that there is not complete agreement. Leaving
aside the immediate context of this document, which was written in
response to a public position taken by groups of theologians[25], what is
relevant is the synthesis that Ratzinger offers of the task of the theo-
logian, and thus of theology as science. This arises from a movement
in two directions: from the attraction towards its object, the Truth
revealed in Christ, and from the desire to communicate to others what
is known (*DV* 7). The particular nature of the object also determines
the way, the method by which the theologian should approach it, which
must therefore be in the context of a life of faith (*DV* 8). At the same
time, historically theology, as a rational endeavour to deepen faith,
has developed into a truly scientific discipline (*DV* 9). Critical rigour
is thus part of it, but it still requires constant intellectual honesty, lest
it be enslaved by ideological struggles that have little scientific value.
The relationship with the other sciences then takes into account the

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23    Cfr. J. Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God*, Maryknoll N.Y. 1999.

24    Cfr. *Donum Veritatis. Instructio de Ecclesiali Theologi vocatione*, 24.05.1990,
"Acta Apostolicae Sedis" 82 (1990), pp. 1550-1570.

25    It was the so called "Kölner Erklärung", Declaration of Cologne of 1989. The
complete title: *Wider die Entmündigung – für eine offene Katholizität. Kölner
Erklärung katholischer Theologieprofessorinnen und Theologieprofessoren vom
Dreikönigfest 6.1.1989.*

proper object of theology, which ultimately determines its method (*DV* 10). Finally, theology takes place *within* a believing community, and this determines how scientific theology relates to other ecclesial instances, the Magisterium and the People of God. In this perspective, integrated in a synthesis, we see the needs expressed by Origen, as personal depth, by Kant, as the public role of theological knowledge within the Church and society, by Rahner, as a commitment to communication. At the same time the relationship between theology and the other sciences is reaffirmed. This relationship is necessary, but it presupposes that theology remains true to itself and does not dissolve into other forms of knowledge.

Dogmatic Theology

## Conclusions

In the present context, the question of the scientific nature of theology's scientificity is usually raised in defensive terms: Theology has to prove that it is a science at the same level as the others in order to be accepted in the university context. However, this has sometimes meant that theology has had to adopt epistemological categories alien to itself and its own assumptions. In order not to lose its relevance as a science, Theology must keep at the centre of its work, with intellectual honesty but determination, the view of reality that comes to it from being a science of Faith. A young Australian researcher, Paul Tyson, who has been working on theological epistemology, has recently proposed a provocative project: instead of leaving the narrative on the nature of truth and the characteristics of true knowledge to the philosophy of science, why not develop a theology of science, capable of bringing the discourse on truth to a higher level than that of the currently dominant naturalistic sciences?[26]. Perhaps the last word on theology as science has not yet been spoken.

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[26]     Cfr. P. Tyson, *A Christian Theology of Science. Reimagining a Theological Vision of Natural Knowledge*, Grand Rapids 2022.

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Dogmatic
Theology

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# The Genesis and Evolution of Non-Collegiate Canon Chapters at the Cathedral Chapter in Vilnius (1388-1945) and in Białystok (1945-1993)

This study discusses one of the aspects of the history of the cathedral chapter in Vilnius and its continuation in the post-war period in Białystok. It directly concerns the circumstances of the formation and development of the canonry outside the strict chapter body, i.e. the functions of coadjutors and honorary canons in general. This issue has so far been neglected in historiography. The capitular body in Vilnius in the pre-partition period consisted of six prelates and twelve canons. The function of a non-collegiate coadjutor appeared for the first time in the 17th century. It reached its peak in the 18th century. During the partitions, as a result of the gradual reduction of prelate and canon offices by the tsarist authorities, temporary coadjutors began to be established, and as repressions against the Catholic Church increased – honorary coadjutors and honorary canons. The current constitutional and organizational shape of the chapter is mainly the result of the continuous evolution of the offices and dignities throughout the nineteenth century, in response to the dynamic changes in the partitioner's policy towards the Church and the needs generated by them.

**Key words**: Church, Vilnius, chapter, canon, coadjutor.

## Introduction

Research and reflection on the history of cathedral chapters in Poland have borne quite abundant fruit in the form of monographic studies as well as studies on the selected aspects of the functioning of

canon corporations. This includes both extensive works in the form of standalone publications, as well as specialized articles published in journals or in collective works[1]. Therefore, this issue is quite well studied in historiography. The authors usually expertly discuss the system and organization of chapters, their personal composition and activity, especially at the diocesan level, not ignoring the role they played in the ecclesiastical and state arena, fulfilling their statutory duties. This does not change the fact that in such a wide spectrum of issues, there are areas that seem to be marginalized or go unnoticed. These include the subject of canons, who did not constitute a strict body of the chapter, who were not introduced to it by appointment, but rather acquired the dignity and title of a canon, fulfilled their duties and used the acquired privileges. Over several centuries their position in the capitular corporation changed and evolved, depending on the needs and external conditions, often imposed by non-ecclesial factors, depending on the political situation of the country, which during the partitions and communist rule in Poland saw the secular authorities interfering in the internal structures of the Church. The fact of the existence and activity of non-collegiate canons cannot be omitted also because it was from this group that many collegiate members were drawn. In many cases, the position of a non-collegiate canon was the first step towards a brilliant clerical career, crowned with a bishop's mitre. A look at the historiography of the cathedral chapter in Vilnius, and since 1945 in Białystok, confirms that the above observations are not without merit, on the contrary – they find justification here.

## Coadjutors with succession rights

When analysing the genesis of the office and dignity of an honorary canon, one should go back a long way, as far as the Council of Trent. The Council empowered cathedral chapters, making them a *de facto* co-managing body of the diocese. The granting of such prerogatives to the chapters resulted from the negative experiences of the beginnings of Reformation, when Catholic bishops, converting to Protestantism, took entire dioceses with them. In order for the chapters to become an effective means of counteracting these practices, they had to be well

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[1]     Despite a rich historiography on the history of Polish chapters, there is no synthetic summary of the state of research. In this context, Józef Szymański's publication is all the more valuable: Szymański J., *Piętnaście lat badań nad dziejami polskich kapituł katedralnych i kolegiackich 1945-1960*, "Zeszyty Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego", 5 (1962), no. 1, pp. 89-115, which is trying to partially fill this gap.

organized and operate efficiently. Provisions ensuring the continuity of their operations were to serve this purpose. One of them was the statutes regarding coadjutor canons.

The structure and organization of the Vilnius Cathedral Chapter were shaped continuously from 1388 to 1520 (over approx. 130 years), i.e. until the approval of the first chapter statutes by the Holy See[2]. The foundations of the system and organization of the chapter formed at that time did not change until mid-nineteenth century. However, attempts were made to improve this model, including by introducing coadjutors with the right of succession[3].

Specific rules concerning chapter coadjutors were given by the Council of Trent. These rules declare that the so-called supporting canons (*canonici coadiutores*) with the right of succession were appointed by the Holy See at the request of the interested member of the chapter. The basic reason for the assisted canons (*canonici coadiuti*) to apply for a coadjutor was old age, illness, or other objective reasons that prevented or made it difficult for them to perform their duties, especially liturgical activities. Therefore, the Council of Trent introduced detailed provisions regarding the substitute function of a coadjutor. It also established their legal position. It was stated that supporting canons do not take part in chapter sessions, even in the absence of their *coadiuti*, they do not have the right to vote, and they are not allowed to hold solemn services in the cathedral[4].

The records of the Vilnius Cathedral Chapter place the introduction of the first coadjutor canon *cum futura successsione* (*cum iure successionis*) under the date of 28 December 1618. An interesting piece of information was recorded there. It shows that "... with the official admission of the Shepherd, with the approval of His Majesty, as well as papal confirmation, Fr. Łukasz Górnicki was installed as a coadjutor to prelate Paweł Górnicki" (pol. ...*za urzędową admisją J.O. Pasterza, z aprobatą J. Królewskiej Mości, jako też papieskim potwierdzeniem dokonano instalacji ks. Łukasza Górnickiego jako koadiutora prałata Pawła Górnickiego*). An eloquent mention was also made in the description of this fact: "The Chapter, being sons of obedience, felt obliged to

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[2]     W. Pawlikowska-Butterwick, L. Jovaiša, *Vilniaus ir žemaičių katedrų Kapitulų statutai*, Vilnius 2015, pp. 128-131.

[3]     T. Kasabuła, *Kanonicy koadiutorzy w kapitule katedralnej wileńskiej*, "Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej", 4 (2005), pp. 111-127.

[4]     *Sessio XXII: De reformatione*, no. 5, 37, *Sessio XXIV: De reformatione*, no. 79-91, in: *Canones et decreta Concilii Tridentini ex editione romana a. 1834 repetiti*, Lipsiae 1853; Statuta *capitularia Ecclesiae Cathedralis Cracoviensis*, ed. I. Polkowski, Cracoviae 1884, pp. 118-119, 280.

submit to the letter of the Holy See received with due respect. However, at the same time, it is still stipulated that in the event of the death of his *coadiuti*, the coadjutor will become a true canon and will fulfil all capitular duties by himself." (pol. *Kapituła będąc synami posłuszeństwa, na odebraną z powinnym poszanowaniem pismo Stolicy Apostolskiej, czuła się być do uległości w tym obowiązana. Wszakże przy tym nadal sobie zastrzega, że na przypadek zgonu swego koadiuta, tenże koadiutor prawdziwym już kanonikiem zostanie i wszystkie powinności kapitulne sam przez się spełniać będzie)*[5].

The tone of this note may raise certain suspicions, confirmed by the later state of affairs. Above all, the wording related to the reception of the letter from the Holy See is surprising here. There are no words of gratitude for the act of nomination, but the subordination of the chapter to Rome's decision is strongly emphasized. Emphasizing such an attitude leads us to believe that this nomination, which was a precedent at that time, was not to the chapter's liking, as it introduced a significant change to the practice of performing substitute service in the cathedral by another group, namely cathedral vicars. These vicars, and there could be as many of them as there were members of the chapter, received certain benefits and small remuneration from "their" canon for their upkeep. They replaced the members of the chapter in the burdensome choral recitation of the breviary and in the performance of other services established by the provisions of the vicarial statute of 1560[6] confirmed and supplemented by Bishop Abraham Woyna in 1653[7]. Whereas, the introduction of a coadjutor canons to the chapter, although it did not reduce the personal income of the *coadiuti*, did not give them the opportunity to make them dependent, as was the case with cathedral vicars. It was probably not insignificant that the chapter was reluctant to see interference in the personnel matters by anyone other than those holding the right of patronage. The monarch issued nominations for most of the chapter dignities in Vilnius and he was also reluctant to share this right with anyone, including, and perhaps especially with the Holy See, which was trying to interfere in the personal composition of the chapters by creating these expectatives. The pope's pushing for greater influence

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[5]     Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences in Vilnius (hereinafter referred to as LLAS), ref. no. f43-216, Acta Capituli Vilnensis (hereinafter referred to as ACV), vol. 8, pp. 354-354 v.

[6]     LLAS, ref. f43-211, ACV, vol. 3, pp. 257-257 v.

[7]     LLAS, ref. f43-221, ACV, vol. 13, pp. 257-257 v.; J. Kurczewski, *Kościół zamkowy czyli katedra wileńska*, vol. 2, Wilno 1910, pp. 52-53.

on the appointment of ecclesiastical offices, including the composition of capitular colleges through their own appointments, was one of the features defining the policy of the Holy See and a determinant of relations between the state and the Church in Western Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The function of the coadjutor canon, which required papal consent expressed in a bull containing the expectative, was exactly that kind of entry point, allowing papal candidates to be brought into the chapters[8].

It is therefore not surprising that the members of the Vilnius Cathedral Chapter intentionally did not support this precedent introducing a coadjutor canon into the Chapter.

The issue of coadjutor canons appeared on the agenda of chapter sessions again only after 150 years, in 1766, and this time it fell on the fertile ground of the changing mentality of the members of the chapter. It is clear from a note included in the minutes of the winter session of February 1766 that those present at the meeting adopted a resolution that henceforth every prelate and canon, burdened by age or illness, or for any other reasons allowed by ecclesiastical law, could choose a candidate for a coadjutor. The choice had to take into account all the criteria that would be required from a candidate for the current canon position (a nobleman, in good standing, educated, etc.) The selected candidate should have received an appointment from the holder of the right of patronage for the given canon position (a king, a bishop, a chapter). After these conditions had been met, an official letter was sent to the Holy See asking for a papal commission. In the practice of the Vilnius Chapter, coadjutors *cum iure successionis* were always sought, because only this clause allowed the coadjutor to take the place of the *coadiuti* after his death or promotion. This request was always included. A coadjutor nominated through a papal bull had to go through a "trial" established by the chapter statutes for current canons. However, he only acquired full rights after completing a five-month novitiate[9].

From 1766 to 1795, 28 effective trials for coadjutor *cum futura successione* were completed. Some insights can be gleaned from this list. First of all, it must be said that the vast majority of coadjutors took the place of their *coadiuti* after their death. Only a few assumed the expected dignity earlier, namely after their patron left the chapter or by taking the place of another, deceased canon, who at that time did not have a

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8     T. Kasabuła, op. cit., pp. 113-114.

9     J. Kurczewski, *Biskupstwo wileńskie od jego założenia aż do dni obecnych*, Wilno 1912, p. 124; idem, *Kościół zamkowy*, vol. 3, Wilno 1916, p. 437.

coadjutor. Two died before the promotion. They waited to attain the position of a current canon from several months to almost 30 years. Tomasz Puzyna waited the longest, as he only finally became a canon after 28 years as a coadjutor, after the death of his brother, a canon and a suffragan bishop of Vilnius, Nicodemus.

All permanent coadjutors, like their *coadiuti*, were noblemen. A few were even titular magnates. Among them were as many as 10 future bishops, one of whom, Stanisław Bohusz Siestrzeńcewicz, reached the highest rank in the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in the tsarist Russia, becoming the Metropolitan Archbishop of Mogilev and the president of the Saint Petersburg Roman Catholic Theological Academy. Three of the former coadjutors were appointed bishop ordinaries, two in the diocese of Vilnius (Jan Nepomucen Kossakowski and Hieronim Stroynowski) and one (Jakub Dederko) in the diocese of Minsk. Six served as auxiliary bishops, suffragans (Toczyłowski, Łopaciński, Nikodem Puzyna, Wołczacki, Houwalt, Pilchowski)[10].

The last permanent coadjutor in the Vilnius Cathedral Chapter was appointed in 1795, a few months after the third partition of Poland, which put almost the entire Vilnius diocese under the control of the tsars[11].

## Temporary coadjutors

In the changed political reality, the powers and tasks of Catholic ecclesiastical institutions were severely limited, and their activities were subject to state control. The *placet regium* on official contacts with the Holy See imposed by Catherine II and maintained by her successors was particularly burdensome. As a result of these decisions it became impossible to send requests to Rome for papal commissions for coadjutors[12]. Meanwhile, the need for substitute liturgical functions in the cathedral continued to exist and became more and more visible, as the number of cathedral vicars also decreased as a result of the reduction in salaries. In these circumstances, the bishop appointed to the diocese by Tsar Alexander I, Hieronim Stroynowski, guided by suggestions contained in canon law textbooks, approved,

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[10]    K. Kułakowski, *Z dziejów Kapituły Katedralnej Wileńskiej*, "Wiadomości Kościelne Archidiecezji w Białymstoku", 13 (1987), no. 2, p. 24.

[11]    LLAS, ref. f43-244, ACV, vol. 34, p. 47.

[12]    A. Boudou, *Stolica Święta a Rosja. Stosunki dyplomatyczne między nimi w XIX stuleciu*, vol. 1, Kraków 1928, p. 23; J. Wysocki, *Kościół katolicki w zaborze rosyjskim w latach 1772-1815*, in: *Historia Kościoła w Polsce*, ed. B. Kumor, Z. Obertyński, vol. 2, part 1, Warszawa–Poznań 1979, p. 177.

after introducing amendments, the Chapter's draft on the introduction of the position of a temporal coadjutor (*coadiutor temporalis*), even before his preconization[13].

It should be emphasized that the concept of a "temporary coadjutor" can and has been understood only in a sense analogous to the concept of a coadjutor in the proper sense, i.e. a permanent coadjutor. The difference was that permanent coadjutors, legally introduced into the church administration as prospectives, were appointed by the Holy See, while temporary ones were appointed by the Metropolitan of Mogilev and approved by the Bishop of Vilnius. The legal status of temporary coadjutors was therefore sanctioned only by the head of the diocese. Temporary Coadjutors appointed in this way did not have the right of succession, some would not even have a permanent relationship with a specific current canon. Whereas the current canon (increasingly referred to as the real canon) could have even two or more temporary coadjutors if he had the ability to maintain them. The upkeep of temporary coadjutors was not the responsibility of the chapter as a corporation and did not come from its common possessions, but only from a part of the remuneration due to actual canons for performing liturgical services. A temporary coadjutor canon received a salary averaging 25% of canonical remuneration. Temporary coadjutor canons were entitled to certain privileges, which should strictly belong to papal prospectives. They also caused this office and dignity to be seen as quite attractive. Therefore, they had the right to wear a rochet and a black mantelletta and a canon's cross, they could participate in chapter sessions, although in a purely advisory capacity, they could sit in the choir stalls. However, they lost all these rights and privileges with the death of their principal. They were only left with the right of priority in applying for the vacancy among the current members of the chapter[14]. Few exercised this right, as the practice of co-opting temporary coadjutors lasted for less than 10 years and ended with the

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13     LLAS, ref. f43-249, ACV, vol. 39, pp. 83, 97. This project was prepared at the behest of the chapter by canon Antoni Kruszewski, a former Jesuit, a lawyer by education, who held the office of an auditor of the court office of Bishop Ignacy Massalski after the dissolution of the Society. It is possible that when preparing the commissioned text of the project, he suggested a comment taken from the then popular textbook study by P.J. Riegger, where the author makes the following comment: "quod si vero ipsorum (episcoporum et praelatorum) ecclesiae Roma longius distent, episcopus cum adsensu capituli vel duae ipsius partes, coadiutorem decernunt". P.J. Riegger, *Institutionum iurisprudentiae ecclesiasticae*, vol. 3, no. 3, Viennae 1780, p. 96.

14     J. Kurczewski, *Kościół zamkowy*, vol. 3, Wilno 1916, pp. 423, 424, 426, 428, 435, 437; A. Lipnicki, *Historia Wileńskiego Katedralnego Kościoła*, 1888 [manuscript

death of Bishop Stroynowski on 5 August 1815. In total, it resulted in 16 nominations for temporary coadjutors[15].

Abandoning the practice of appointing temporary coadjutors and the decreasing number of members of the chapter, who, after the cessation of papal prospectives, were appointed by the tsar and approved by the Minister of Education of the Russian Empire, made it increasingly difficult to properly hold services in the cathedral. The decision of Tsar Nicholas I, validated by the order of 13 January 1843, to reduce the number of canons from the previous twelve to only three was extremely harmful to the functioning of the chapter as a corporation[16].

## Honorary coadjutors

Things were getting worse. In order to put matters of God's service in order, Bishop Wacław Żyliński (1846-1858), referring to the provisions of the Council of Trent (Session XXII, *De reformatione*), established in 1849 six canons called "honorary coadjutors" (Polish *koadiutor honoralny*). This was a completely new solution, unprecedented in the history of the Vilnius Chapter, but necessitated by the situation and the most rational under the circumstances. It was analogous to the institution of the canon coadjutor from the pre-partition period. The members of the chapter established in this way, more and more often referred to as honorary canons, were assigned certain duties and privileges. They were obliged to participate in solemn services in the cathedral, in processions, and in "anniversaries and tabular days" (Polish *w aniwersarzach i tabelnych dniach*). It was their duty to assist the bishop at the sedilia as honorary deacons and, if need be, to stand in for the archdeacon, especially outside the cathedral. Their privileges included wearing a rochet and a black mantelletta in the cathedral (the actual members of the chapter wore in togas), took a place in the second row of the canon stalls, and in the absence of a real canon they celebrated vespers and singing mass at the canon altar in the cathedral[17].

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in: Library of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in Krakow, ref. 1232.], p. 121 nn.

[15]     LLAS, ref. f43-249-255, ACV, vols. 39-45, passim.

[16]     This reduction concerned all chapters in the Russian Empire. Only the Metropolitan Chapter of Mogilev retained four canons. B. Kumor, *Ustrój i organizacja Kościoła polskiego w okresie niewoli narodowej 1772-1918*, Kraków 1980, p. 306.

[17]     J. Kurczewski, *Kościół zamkowy*, vol. 3, pp. 490-491.

## Honorary canons

The appointment of these "honorary coadjutors" to the Vilnius Chapter in 1849 later simply called honorary canons, gave rise *ex traditione* to the introduction of the so-called honorary canons *de numero clauso* in the statute of the Chapter of the Vilnius Metropolitan Basilica in 1928. They had broader powers than the *extra numerum* honorary canons mentioned in that statute, whose number was not specified[18].

However, before this happened, even before the promulgation of the statutes, Bishop Jerzy Matulewicz appointed new members of the chapter in 1924, whom he no longer called "honorary coadjutors" but rather "honorary canons". With them, the number of honorary canons reached exactly 20[19].

An important change in the structure and composition of the metropolitan chapter came after Archbishop Romuald Jałbrzykowski took over the Archdiocese of Vilnius in 1926 (on 8 September). The archbishop increased its membership to 12 members, adding three new canons, so that from 1926 the Vilnius Chapter had six prelates and six canons. Following this decision, on 1 November that year, the archbishop appointed four collegiate canons to vacancies, a week later he increased the size of the chapter by introducing three honorary canons to it, and in October 1927 he increased the number of honorary canons by six more. Thus, the request for the statute to be approved, dated 12 May 1928 was signed by all the members of the chapter, six prelates and six canons. The new statute was adopted by the Vilnius Chapter at the general session on 9 May 1928. Archbishop Jałbrzykowski approved them on 27 October 1928[20].

Although the statutes of the Chapter of the Vilnius Metropolitan Basilica approved by Archbishop Jałbrzykowski introduced two honorary canons, distinguished by the additional term *de numero participantium* and *extra numerum*, for several years these terms were not commonly used and the distinction was not recognised. It appeared in general circulation only after its publication in the 1932 schematic. The names of *de numero* honorary canons listed therein, it can be seen that Archbishop Jałbrzykowski elevated to this dignity only those clergymen who had previously been honorary canons in Vilnius. There were six

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[18]   *Statuta Capituli Basilicae Metropolitanae Vilnensis*, Vilnae 1928, p. 54nn; Catalogus *Ecclesiarum et cleri archidioecesis Vilnensis pro anno Domini 1928*, Vilnae 1928.

[19]   *Catalogus Ecclesiarum et cleri archidioecesis Vilnensis pro anno Domini 1927*, Vilnae 1927.

[20]   *Statuta*, 1928.

of them, because according to the new statute, they could make up at most half of the members[21].

The distinction of *de numero* honorary canons gave them the privilege of precedence over other honorary canons and the right to wear a canons cross and a ring with a non-precious stone. However, they could not have any purple accessories at the black cassock, so no purple stripes, buttons, or lining. Their duties included assisting the archbishop during ceremonial celebrations as honorary deacons[22].

When the archbishop raised six honorary canons to a higher rank for the first time in 1932, 17 priests remained as *extra numerum* honorary canons. Their number was not increased until the outbreak of World War II, despite the fact that five of them died during that time[23]. At the outbreak of the war in 1939, all positions of prelate, collegiate canon, and *de numero* canon were manned. This number was supplemented by 13 *extra numerum*[24] canons.

The turmoil of war wreaked havoc in the chapter, so that in 1945 the college was severely understaffed. Of the 13 *extra numerum* honorary canons, only eight survived the war[25].

When Archbishop Romuald Jałbrzykowski was expelled from Vilnius in July 1945 and had to leave the borders of the Soviet Union, the Vilnius Chapter did the right thing and in 1945 none of its members left the position assigned to them, none exercised repatriation rights, all remained at the cathedral, both prelates and canons, as well as all honorary canons who were working in the Vilnius region at that time. The only exception was canon Władysław Suszyński, who, hiding from Germans during the war, had earlier found himself in the Białystok region and at the beginning of 1945 was staying in his hometown of Janów. He was the first representative of the chapter who found himself in a part of the Vilnius archdiocese which remained within the borders of the post-war Poland, apart from two honorary canons who permanently resided in the Białystok region. These were Białystok parish priests, Father Adam Abramowicz of St. Roch's parish and Father Aleksander Chodyko, the dean of the Białystok deanery. It was

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[21]    *Catalogus Ecclesiarum et cleri archidioecesis Vilnensis pro anno Domini 1932*, Vilnae 1932.

[22]    *Statuta*, 1928.

[23]    Cf. *Catalogus*, 1932 i *Catalogus Ecclesiarum et cleri archidioecesis Vilnensis pro anno Domini 1939*, Vilnae 1939.

[24]    *Catalogus*, 1939.

[25]    J. Pankiewicz, *Kapituła Bazyliki Metropolitalnej Wileńskiej w Białymstoku*, "Wiadomości Kościelne Archidiecezji w Białymstoku", 13 (1987), no. 2, p. 98.

not until 1946 that canon priest Antoni Cichoński came to Białystok from his long wanderings in the north and in August of the following year, after imprisonment and staying in the Komi Republic, canon Adam Sawicki made his way to Białystok. On 30 August 1947, Archbishop Jałbrzykowski elevated these two to the dignity of prelates[26], partially supplementing the composition of the chapter. In 1947, it had six prelates, four of whom remained in Vilnius, and three collegiate canons. One of them (Fr. W. Suszyński) came to Poland, the other two remained beyond the eastern border. These three clergymen (two prelates and one canon) constituted Archbishop Jałbrzykowski's closest advisory council in Białystok immediately after his arrival. Although there were vacancies in the chapter, the archbishop, while staying in Białystok, appointed only one clergyman as its official member. This was Father Stanisław Czyżewski, appointed on 25 September 1949. This four-men body constituted the metropolitan chapter in Białystok for many years, until 1968[27].

Meanwhile, the members of the chapter remaining in the Vilnius region, who were elderly, were gradually dying out. In 1964, on Good Friday, 27 March, prelate Lucjan Chalecki, the last member of the Chapter of the Vilnius Metropolitan Basilica, died in the vicarage in Maišiagala at the age of 90. He had stayed in the Vilnius region throughout his life[28]. From then on, all the members of the Vilnius Chapter were in the part of the archdiocese remaining within the borders of Poland.

Although Archbishop Romuald Jałbrzykowski only raised Fr. Czyżewski to the dignity of collegiate canon, he nominated several particularly meritorious clergymen as honorary canons: four *de numero* and four *extra numerum*[29]. The Ordinary of the Vilnius Archdiocese, Archbishop Romuald Jałbrzykowski, died on 19 June 1955.

His successors, who were administering the part of the Archdiocese of Vilnius remaining within the borders of Poland, appointed members of the chapter on the basis of the powers of the Holy See, granted

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[26]    *Archidiecezjalne Wyższe Seminarium Duchowne w Białymstoku 1945-1980*, ed. E. Ozorowski, Białystok 1980, pp. 26-27.

[27]    S. Czyżewski, *Ks. Dr Romuald Jałbrzykowski arcybiskup metropolita wileński. Wspomnienia* [typescript in: Archdiocesan Archives in Białystok], p. 311.

[28]    J. Pankiewicz, op. cit., pp. 99-100.

[29]    *Kalendarium liturgicum pro A.D. (...) 1948*, Białystok 1947; S. Czyżewski, op. cit., pp. 311-312.

only to the petitioner (*oratori*) through the intermediation of Primate Stefan Wyszyński[30].

After the reorganization of the structures of the Catholic Church in Poland under the bull *Totus tuus Poloniae populus* of 25 March 1992, the Białystok Metropolitan Chapter adopted a new statute on 8 December that year, approved by Archbishop Edward Kisiel on 14 February 1993. The introduction to this document states that the chapter "refers to heritage of the Vilnius Chapter, erected on 12 March 1388 [...], and considers its history, tradition, and customs to be its own"[31]. Compared to a similar document from 1928, the Statute of 1993 did not introduce any changes in the structure of the chapter. In addition to six prelates and six collegiate canons, it still consisted of six *de numero* honorary canons (equivalents of the former "honorary coadjutors") and a certain, not strictly defined number of *extra numerum* honorary canons. As the statute was being approved, all the positions of prelate and canon were manned.

## Instead of a conclusion

Outlining the six-hundred-year history of the cathedral chapter in Vilnius and several decades of its continuation in Białystok leads to conclusions that, in a broad sense, they are topical and applicable to the study of the past of the chapters in Polish lands in general. Against this background, we can clearly see areas of study that are under-appreciated and marginalized. A cursory look at the history of corporations of canons may make the impression that a seemingly insignificant aspect, such as the fact that they have the rank of a canon, but do not strictly belong to the capitular body, does not require more attention. Meanwhile, a broader view of the past reality related to the history of the chapter, if not completely overturns this belief, at least makes it subject to verification. The author of this text can only hope that by touching on the seemingly marginal issues topical in the case of the Vilnius Chapter, he can motivate others involved in discovering the past of the chapters to also reach for the periphery of the fundamental problem in order to obtain a clearer picture of the whole and a fuller understanding of its essence.

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[30]    A. Kakareko, *Kapituła katedralna przy farze białostockiej*, in: *Bazylika katedralna w Białymstoku*, ed. T. Krahel, Białystok 2005, pp. 242-244.

[31]    *Statuty Białostockiej Kapituły Metropolitalnej*, Białystok 1995, p. 1. This statement has never been officially challenged or treated as a usurpation, especially since the Vilnius Cathedral Chapter was not established in the archdiocese restored in Lithuania in 1991.

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History
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# Conscience and the Contemporary Professional Life Challenges

The issue of conscience is one of the essential theological and moral issues. Contemporarily it is gaining even a greater importance due to the necessity of taking into account the research results of other sciences, including the non-theological ones, as well as due to the current cultural and social conditions which provide a range of challenges for each individual's conscience. Work and professional life are the platforms which reveal a range of moral dilemmas. The article indicates the most important challenges which are being faced nowadays, it highlights the role of conscience in the professional life and the basic rules of conduct in case of a conflict between conscience and the law.

**Key words**: conscience, work, professional life, morality, the law.

## Introduction

The issue of conscience has been of a great importance for the theological and moral reflection. In some periods of time it was ahead and surpassed the capacity of other fundamental treaties. It resulted from the fact that since the beginning of its existence as an independent scientific discipline[1], moral theology has aimed at solving the problems of conscience (cases) and at the formation of the confident conscience, which is free from any doubts. Although the time of casuistry in the

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[1]　The conventional date of the appearance of moral theology among other theological disciplines is 1600 – the year when the first volume of the work of the Spanish Jesuit Juan Azor called: *Institutionum moralium in quibus universae quaestiones ad conscientiam recte aut prave factorum pertinentes breviter tractantur* was written. This work marked the beginning of the period called: *Institutiones morales*, recognized as the first coursebooks of moral theology.

previous form as well as of the disputes on the so called moral systems[2] (the essence of which was to seek the way out in case of a conflict and the doubts of conscience which appeared on the basis of the tension between freedom and the law)[3], have long gone, however, the issue of conscience and of its role in the moral life focuses the attention of those who consider "morality" , which is expressed as the good and evil of human deeds and of the person who does it,[4] to be the subject of their research.

The issue of conscience has become more and more important nowadays, not only due to the research results conducted by non-theological

Moral
Theology

[2]    In the history of moral theology there have been six classic moral systems: probabilism, laxism, extreme tuciorims (rigorism), moderate tuciorism, probabiliorism, equiprobabilism.

[3]    It mainly concerned the answer to the question: when does man have to comply with the law, and when is he allowed to use his freedom not complying with the law. This particular case of the doubt of conscience caused extreme polarisation of opinions at the very beginning of moral theology. Probabilists (Bartolomé de Medina OP and his followers, mainly Jesuits) answered this question in the following way: you can use your freedom not complying with the law if the premise in favour of it is really probable (*probabilis*), that is: based on the justified positive proofs and supported by good arguments or by the authority of serious authors. Such an opinion however led to laxism, that is to a free and broad interpretation of duty. Therefore it resulted in a reaction of extreme rigorism which was preached by Jansenists and later in the more moderate probablism created and proclaimed mainly by Dominicans. In the context of these disputes, St Alphons Maria de Liguori suggested his own system. The system was called equiprobabilism and it was accepted by the Church. It is based on three principles: 1) in case when the opinion in favour of the law seems to be more certain in an obvious way, the law must be obeyed and freedom should not be advocated; 2) if the opinion in favour of freedom is only probable or equally probable to the opinion in favour of the law, freedom must not be advocated but a certain judgement should be formed; 3) in case when the conscience is not able to form certain judgement and the opinions in favour of the law and in favour of freedom are equally probable, we can use freedom because there is a doubt which regards the very existence of the law and this means that the law was not properly promulgated while without such promulgating the law has no binding force. See T. Rey-Mermet, *Teolog sumienia*, transl. W. Kawecki, H. Pagiewski, Kraków 1996, pp. 127-128.

[4]    See John Paul II, Encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, no. 29, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/pl/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor.html.

sciences[5], which – with the use of proper tools[6] – should be taken into account in the theological reflection over man and his deeds, but also due to the contemporary cultural and social situation which causes numerous moral dilemmas the amount of which surpasses the number of such dilemmas in the time of the disputes on the moral systems. Contemporary culture is marked with many disturbing phenomena of eclipse of conscience, depravity and even of the evolving new forms of "breaking the conscience", particularly on a professional level. The man who lives in the complicated system of mutual social, cultural and legal conditioning has more and more difficulties in taking proper decisions. The dominating ideologies and the cultural mainstream trends result in the fact that the intransigence of some attitudes faces the incomprehension and condemnation of others[7].

Moral
Theology

Therefore, moral theology re-faces the question on the very essence of conscience, on its role in the professional life and on its reference to the world of values. What is conscience? What are the most important challenges which conscience is facing nowadays? Is conscience necessary at all – as some are trying to convince – it disturbs man in self-realization and in career-making? In the face of these questions

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[5] Some philosophical trends devote a lot of space to the issue of conscience, mainly the trends which are inspired by phenomenology by E. Husserl, F. Brentano, M. Scheler, D. von Hildebrand, and by psychology , while certain psychological trends deprive conscience of any relations with God and even protest against the Christian concept of conscience perceiving it as a set of demands and habits learned from parents and from the society, which are contrary to the deepest human inclinations and to his genuine nature (S. Freud).

[6] These tools were indicated by John Paul II in his encyclical *Veritatis splendor*: "Because the Church's morality necessarily involves a *normative* dimension, moral theology cannot be reduced to a body of knowledge worked out purely in the context of the so-called *behavioural sciences.* The latter are concerned with the phenomenon of morality as a historical and social fact; moral theology, however, while being in need to make use of the behavioural and natural sciences, does not rely on the results of formal empirical observation or phenomenological understanding alone. Indeed, the relevance of the behavioural sciences for moral theology must always be measured against the primordial question: *What is good or evil? What must be done to have eternal life?*" (no. 111), as well as in the encyclical *Fides et ratio*: "Reference to the sciences is often helpful, allowing as it does a more thorough knowledge of the subject under study; but it should not mean the rejection of a typically philosophical and critical thinking which is concerned with the universal" (no. 69). Furthermore, the need for and the general principles to use sciences, economy and medical science in moral theology are indicated by the document of the International Theological Commission *Theology today*, no. 81.

[7] See A. Derdziuk, *Sprzeciw sumienia w życiu Kościoła*, "Teologia i Moralność" 8(2013), no. 2, p. 78.

it seems that contemporary moral theology should become more practical again although in other sense than it used to be during the times of Juan Azor or of St. Alphonse[8]. It should become not only a theoretical reflection on the conscience but also a call for "the people of conscience"[9] in the contemporary reality, also the Polish one.

## The essence and the role of conscience

Every man is capable of judging his deeds. There are various sciences which interpret the sources of this ability in a different way[10], however, there is a general agreement concerning the fact that conscience is a particular feature of man; of every man. Due to this feature man can recognize the world of values, take its side and head his life towards them. What is more, on his way of conscience man recognizes himself as a value: the given and set value. Conscience reveals itself as a natural moral awareness.

Conscience is often called "the heart"[11], it is the deepest human inside where he leads his inner dialogue. The Second Vatican Council adds that conscience is the "most secret and sanctuary of a man", where he meets "God, Whose voice echoes in his depths"[12]. Therefore

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[8]     The practical nature of moral theology at that time mainly meant a relation with the sacrament of penance and, indirectly, also with the addressees of the coursebooks. The coursebooks were meant to provide aid to confessors and they were to serve in solving certain cases in the confessional.

[9]     See John Paul, Homily (Skoczów, May 22nd, 1995), https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/pl/homilies/1995/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19950522_skoczow.html.

[10]    Conscience is perceived differently by psychological, sociological, philosophical and theological sciences. Moreover, even within the same kind of science, the approach to the issue of conscience can differ e.g. Freudianism defines conscience in a different way than phenomenology and differently than personalism.

[11]    The Hebrew word *leb* and its Greek substitute (*kardia*), which means "the heart" are the Old Testament expression of the reality of conscience. It means the ability to distinguish the good and evil (Sir 17,15). It has the role of the prosecutor after committing sin (Gen 3,7-10; 2Sm 24,10), it praises justice (Hi 27,6; Ps 17,3; 26,2). Psalm 50 speaks about the heartache caused by sin. Ultimately, it is God's voice which is particularly audible in Cain's remorse after Abel's death (Gen 4,13-16). Furthermore, the New Testament, especially the Gospels, speak about "the heart" as the inside of man which has the decisive role in recognizing good and evil. It is also the witness of human deeds (Rom 2,15) and their source (Mt 15,19).

[12]    See The Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, no. 16; https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

conscience is the meeting place and the space for dialogue; the dialogue not only with the law, with the norms, but rather with man – with God and with and with oneself, and, to some extent, also with other people. This dialogical function of conscience is revealed not only by the Biblical terminology but also by certain images and similes used in the Holy Bible. And so conscience is "God's eye" (Sir 17,8), "God's voice", which speaks in man's inside and proclaims His will (1Sm 3,1-10), "the worm", which harasses and leads to the moral remorse (Iz 66,24; Mk 10,48). By comparison to the people who participate in a lawsuit, conscience is "the judge", "the witness" and "the prosecutor" (Rom 2,14-16).

Conscience has the decisive role in recognizing good and evil, that is the moral value of proceeding role (Lk 12,54-57). It is a kind of self-awareness of what is morally good or wrong (see 2Cor 4,1-2). It is the first and sometimes the only witness and judge of human deeds (Rom 2,15). It is a permanent disposition of valuation of universal nature; a subjective norm of morality which is subjected to the objective norm, that is to God's will expressed in the natural law and in the revealed law; the normative force when it tells you to do good and forbids to do evil. It is "sort of moral sense which leads us to discern what is good and what is evil...like an inner eye, a visual capacity of the spirit, able to guide our steps along the path of good"; "holy place where God reveals to him His true good"[13].

Human heart, that is his inside – conscience is the source of good but also of evil. "For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, unchastity, theft, false witness, blasphemy" (Mt 15,19). Therefore, conscience itself can be good (1Tm 1,5.19; Acts 23,1), clear (Acts 24,16; 1Tm 3,9; 1P 3,16), righteous, gentle, sensitive but it can also be evil, perverse and wrong. Conscience is not the natural ability, although even on the natural plane this ability can be recognized[14]. It is enlightened through faith (1Tm 1,5; Rom 14,23). What is more, the Holy Spirit comes to aid to the conscience (Rom 8,27), and love provides it with "a spirit of wisdom and revelation" (Eph 1,17n). Thanks to opening to

Moral
Theology

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[13]     John Paul II, Apostolic exhortation *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, no. 26, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/pl/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_02121984_reconciliatio-et-paenitentia.html.

[14]     It is evidenced by, among others, literary metaphors which used to define conscience. These include e.g. gods and Erinyes of the Hellenistic world who harassed those who committed evil, leading them to the deepest feeling of experiencing moral guilt, which was often on the verge of madness (Orestes), or the Calderon's prompter (*Il gran teatro del mundo*).

the grace, conscience acquires the positive features mentioned above – kindness, chastity, righteousness and gentleness.

Therefore, conscience appears as the direct and practical moral norm. This means that it does not create norms or moral theories, and it does not evaluate the hypothetical state. In conscience man only makes the moral assessment of his certain deed, which he is doing here and now. It is therefore the direct moral norm, which remains in an essential relation to the objective norm[15]. Its function is strictly situational and practical in the sense that it evaluates various situational elements, inner and outer conditions, which, as a consequence, leads to a certain assessment, order or prohibition[16]. This assessment is conducted in a sensible manner in the light of the objective moral law, which becomes the inner regulation for the man, and the call to do good in a certain situation[17].

God's will is the objective norm, the very law of God[18]. However, taking into account the universal nature of conscience, we should emphasise that the revealed law of God such as the Decalogue or the law of Christ cannot be the only reference point. There must be a universal law the basic norms of which are directly knowable, in a spontaneous

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[15]    See John Paul II, Encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, no. 60.

[16]    The situational role of conscience should not be mistaken for situational ethics. The latter proclaims the absolute moral autonomy and inadmissibility of any intervention into this strictly personal sphere of thoughts and feelings. Situationism requires the total independence of conscience from any objective outer norm. It does not recognize any objective norms which are binding regardless of conditions. For situationism it is the independent conscience which finally determines good and evil in any particular situation. While the situational function of conscience comes to evaluation of performance in a particular situation.

[17]    The Second Vatican Council rejects the so called creative interpretation of conscience and emphasises that conscience is not an autonomous and only source of assessment of what is good and what is evil. However conscience has deeply inscribed the principle of obedience to the objective norm, which justifies and conditions the correctness of decisions with prohibitions and orders as the basis of human conduct: "In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil, the voice of conscience when necessary speaks to his heart: do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law written by God; to obey it is the very dignity of man; according to it he will be judged." (Rom 2,14-16)". See Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, no. 16; John Paul II, Encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, no. 54; Ibid, Encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem*, no. 43.

[18]    See John Paul II, Encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, no. 60.

way by every man, regardless of his faith or the lack of faith[19]. The most basic norm of such law is expressed in the statement: "do good and avoid evil". It is imposed on man as a golden rule, constantly present as the wisdom in the whole history of human ethical and religious thought, since Confucius and Buddha, until the Holy Scripture of the Old and the New Testament. In the wording of The Book of Tobit it states: " Do to no one what you yourself dislike!" (4,15), while Jesus puts it in a more positive way: " Do to others whatever you would have them do to you" (Mt 7,12; see also Lk 6,31). Other norms of the moral law, which is the reference point for conscience, are the logical conclusions resulting from these fundamental principles. Therefore conscience is a predisposition, the inborn ability which always demands good (*synderesis*), but which also requires the use of synderesis for a particular case, a conclusion (*syneidesis*).

Moral Theology

The so called moral dilemmas are born at the application level of these general principles in a certain situation; at the level of introducing conclusions from fundamental principles, while the very situations can be referred to as challenges. Every man is equipped with synderesis. What is more, it is always proper and indestructable. While proper conscience (Lat. *conscientia*), which is the act of practical reason judging the moral value of a certain deed[20], can err recognizing wrongly and demanding an objectively evil action or prohibiting objectively good deeds. Errors of conscience and its faulty acting are happening

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[19]    For a non-believer conscience is a kind of awareness the subject of which is his own conduct (deeds) and the value or lack of value connected with it, evaluated in the light of the standards which a person recognizes as fundamental, wherein these standards do not have to be moral principles. See M. Klinowski, *Czy sumienie zawodowe jest kwestią moralności?*, "Przegląd Prawa Medycznego" 2(2019), no. 2, p. 11.

[20]    St. Thomas Aquinas defines conscience in the following way: *conscientia est iudicium intellectus practici ex principiis communibus dictans de bonitate vel malitia alicuius actus a nobis faciendi vel facti*. It is an intellectual approach which – in contrast to the voluntaristic approach of St. Bonaventure and the whole Franciscan school – perceives conscience with special emphasis on the a judgement of reason (Lat. *intellectus*). The contemporary teaching of the Church seems to be combining these two approaches: "The dignity of the human person implies and requires *uprightness of moral conscience*. Conscience includes the perception of the principles of morality (synderesis); their application in the given circumstances by practical discernment of reasons and goods; and finally judgement about concrete acts yet to be performed or already performed. The truth about the moral good, stated in the law of reason, is recognized practically and concretely by the *prudent judgement* of conscience. We call that man prudent who chooses in conformity with this judgement". *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1780.

nowadays due to conflicts and doubts which arouse in various spheres of life. One of such spheres undoubtedly involve work and professional life. This sphere has become the place of "a test of conscience" in the face of the attempts of breaking the conscience by employees and often without the consent of the employee.

## Conscience in the professional life
## – contemporary challenges

There are many challenges for human conscience which appear in the professional life. It is impossible to present all of them in a short dissertation. Anyway, every kind of job and every profession involve specific challenges. What is more, with the ongoing technological development and due to the ongoing social transformations and changes of law, new challenges appear. However, it seems that these challenges can be grouped round various circles of reference.

The first group of challenges is connected with the need to answer the question: what values should work serve and what is its final meaning? This question arises in every place where professional work is placed above man as such; as more important than personal and family life; where the employee is deprived of the right to rest or when his religious practice is hindered[21]. It is therefore a question of the hierarchy of values. The objection of conscience should arise in any attempt of putting a product of human work over the man as its subject, as well as in case of raising any economic, political or moral reasons over man. The danger in treating human work as "a product" or as anonymous "force" necessary for production ("human labour"), which John Paul II wrote about in his encyclical *Laborem exercens*[22], and which is a current problem. It is present in any place where the whole vision of the issue of economy is marked with premises of materialistic economism[23]. However, it is necessary to emphasise that such

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[21]    The labour code which is applicable in Poland (Act from June 26th, 1974 with further amendments, Journal of Laws 2023, fasc. 1465) obliges the employer to guarantee each employee a daily rest and a week rest (art. 132 § 1). Otherwise the employer can be sued by the employee to pay him indemnity or compensation. Failure to provide a daily rest or a week rest is considered to be the violation of regulations concerning the working time and the employer can be punished for that with a fine. However, in practice the law is violated or circumvented in numerous ways, sometimes even with the employee's consent.

[22]    See no. 7.

[23]    See W. Wieczorek, *Teologia pracy w nauczaniu Jana Pawła II*, "Roczniki Nauk o Rodzinie i Pracy Socjalnej" 4(2012), p. 327.

objectification of man and treating a person only as a work force and as an element of production, accompanies the employees who only aim at making a profit. Unfortunately, it is a feature which is also practised by employees who are tempted with higher earnings and therefore they agree to be subjected to such treatment.

Therefore, motivation is a challenge for any individual's conscience. In the context of such contemporary phenomena as undertaking job only because of financial reasons, or because of the job satisfaction, for gaining recognition or prestige, for one's own contentment, it is a challenge to awaken your inner personalistic, social or religious motivation. Aiming at one's success – according to John Paul II – must not drown out the voice of conscience[24]. Through work man is to realize himself as a human being, in a way to become "more of a man"[25]. He is supposed to express himself and his dignity through work. He is to improve his personality, multiply his virtues. He is to serve with his work and with its results and ultimately, through work he is to participate in the creative and salvific work of God. Unfortunately, in the period of secularism and consumerism, professional work is brought down to a choice of a post, a position. It is perceived only in two dimensions: the source of profit and the way to achieve proper social status. Therefore, where work is used against man and where it deprives man of his dignity, becoming work without any deeper meaning, conscience should protest out loud.

The other group comprises the challenges which appear at the level of interpersonal relations created at the workplace e.g. the problem of submission to people who do not have proper qualifications; the problem of professionals' secrecy; the problem of limits of obedience, loyalty etc. Every job has its social dimension – it is working "with others" and, to some extent working "for others". If it becomes only working "for oneself", if it is closed in egoistic approach, conscience should bring the motivation to work on the good side but also it should thus be turned into the good for others whom man meets in his workplace and for those who benefit from the fruits of this work. Unfortunately, in contemporary times work not always contributes to strengthening interpersonal bonds, both in the workplace and in families as well as the interpersonal relations on a larger scale. Although the workplace gives opportunity to create various bonds between employees and to develop solidarity of working people on a larger scale, unhealthy

Moral
Theology

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[24]     See Homily (Zamość, June 12, 1999), https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/pl/homilies/1999/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19990612_zamosc.html.

[25]     See John Paul II, Encyclical *Laborem exercens*, no. 9.

competition occurs more commonly, which is an anti-community factor. And so are the demands and requirements of the employer, which are against the system of values of an employee, and which often involve working overtime without any additional payment[26].

Sometimes the material relations can also become the source of challenge e.g. when the fruits of work are wasted or used for improper aims. This group would also involve the issue of working conditions, including payment for work and the question which is connected with this: whether e.g. too low income is an excuse for disregarding the job. The spirit of individualism results in the fact that contemporary man focuses on the fruits of his work for his own benefit and which do not contribute to multiplying the common good of certain communities and of the whole humanity. Although the produced goods become the object of social exchange, and thanks to the processes of globalization this exchange is facilitated, however the products of work are no longer treated as a link, as the platform which creates interpersonal bonds, but as the object of trade, of competition and of commercialisation. What is more, this object is sometimes created only to shock – e.g. as artistic works. Thus the question about the reaction of conscience in a situation when the employer (in this case the creator, organizer or the patron of the cultural life) requires from his employee to undertake a specific action which raises the moral objections[27].

Certain jobs which involve man as the object of work (education, upbringing, medicine, journalism, politics, legal professions), or the so called professions of public trust[28], constitute particular challenges for the conscience. Contemporarily these professions are put under the legal pressure, which more and more often is in conflict with God's law and with the natural law, and the employees are expected to strictly comply to the current norms set by the current government. Examples of such a situation include: introducing to schools and universities curricula which contain contents contrary to the values of the

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[26]     See K. Kietliński, *Sprzeciw sumienia wobec wyzwań współczesnego zarządzania*, "Teologia i Moralność" 8(2013), no. 2, p. 92.

[27]     See K. Gryz, *Sprzeciw sumienia w kulturze*, "Teologia i Moralność" 8(2013), no. 2, pp. 108-110.

[28]     In the light of art. 17 act. 1 of the Polish Constitution the profession the execution of which is in everyone's interest (the so called public interest) is called the profession of public trust and the appointed professional self-government takes care of it. M. Klinowski broadens this definition with the professions which require trust to be performed the way the beneficiary bestows on the person performing the profession. See *Czy sumienie zawodowe jest kwestią moralności?*, op. cit., p. 20.

teachers[29], depriving the employees of medical professions of the right to conscientious objection and demanding from them to act against the particular dignity of human life and procreation[30]: the doctors – abortion, euthanasia or treatment refusal[31], geneticists – the decision to undertake prenatal diagnosis as the reason for killing a child before its birth in a legally justified procedure[32]; nurses and midwives – participating in procedures, treatments and experiments which are against their professed norms[33], pharmacists – selling contraceptives, anti-implantation and aborticides or medications which cause euthanasia, assisted suicide or medications used in the procedures of assisted reproduction[34], laboratory diagnosticians – preparation to the *in vitro* procedure, selective abortion or euthanasia[35], paramedics – transport of a patient to an abortion clinic, administrative workers of hospitals – preparation and issuance of a certificate which is the basis for the procedure of terminating pregnancy. In non-medical professions we can also indicate ideological and financial blackmail of journalists, ostracism in the workplace of the legal community against those whose views are different, demand for absolute party loyalty. These are only a few examples of situations in which the individual conscience comes into conflict with the applicable law, however wicked and unjust it is.

Moral
Theology

A situation in which you have to choose between conscience and reason on the one hand, and legality on the other hand also concerns

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[29]    See Francis, Apostolic exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, no. 279. See also: M. Szczodry, *Kwestia sumienia w posynodalnej adhortacji apostolskiej Amoris laetitia papieża Franciszka*, in: *Miłość jest nam dana i zadana. Komentarz do Posynodalnej Adhortacji apostolskiej Amoris laetitia papieża Franciszka*, ed. G. Chojnacki, Szczecin 2017, pp. 250-251.

[30]    See Francis, Apostolic exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, no. 83. See also: J. Pawlikowski, *Spór o klauzulę sumienia z perspektywy celów medycyny i etyki lekarskiej*, in: *Sprzeciw sumienia w praktyce medycznej – aspekty etyczne i prawne*, ed. P. Stanisz, J. Pawlikowski, M. Ordon, Lublin 2014, p. 149.

[31]    See K. Marczewski, *Klauzula sumienia w praktyce lekarza internisty*, in: *Sprzeciw sumienia w praktyce medycznej*, op. cit., p. 186.

[32]    See A. Midro, *Klauzula sumienia z perspektywy lekarza genetyka klinicznego*, in: *Sprzeciw sumienia w praktyce medycznej*, op. cit., p. 179.

[33]    See B. Dobrowolska, *Sprzeciw sumienia w zawodzie pielęgniarki i położnej – założenia i praktyka*, in: *Sprzeciw sumienia w praktyce medycznej*, op. cit., pp. 201-202.

[34]    See M. Prusak, *Sprzeciw sumienia w praktyce aptecznej*, in: *Sprzeciw sumienia w praktyce medycznej*, op. cit., p. 224; M. Prusak, *Konflikt sumienia katolickiego farmaceuty w praktyce aptecznej*, "Teologia i Moralność" 8(2013), no. 2, pp. 37-41.

[35]    See W. Głusiec, E. Puacz, *Sprzeciw sumienia w zawodzie diagnosty laboratoryjnego*, in: *Sprzeciw sumienia w praktyce medycznej*, op. cit., p. 232.

the issue of the so called unreasonable regulations which are contradictory to the common sense and sometimes even contradictory to one another or absolutely immoral; the realization of them can bring harm to people or even to the whole community. Solving such dilemmas seems to be apparently simple: one should make use of his conscience and of common sense. However, in such cases, one must always expect the possible consequences. Contemporary societies, even though they declare religious freedom and the freedom of conscience[36] as a result of the first one, violate and limit this freedom in various ways. Currently the law becomes more important than conscience and thus it forces opportunism, otherwise one risking his professional career.

## The role of conscience in the professional life and in the context of contemporary challenges

Conscience, as the ability to recognize what is good and what is bad, plays a fundamental role in everyone's life. In his conscience man recognizes his vocation. In the conscience he makes his independent moral decisions which confirm his vocation or deny it. Therefore, the judgement of conscience is obliging – we should always follow the voice of conscience (*conscientia semper sequenda*). This particular dignity and the binding power of conscience result from its closeness and from the ability to recognize the objective truth, that is God's will. Conscience recognizes and gives to man the objective judgement of the moral order.

> If man acts against this judgement or, in a case where he lacks certainty about the rightness and goodness of a determined act, still performs that act, he stands condemned by his own conscience, *the proximate norm of personal morality*. The dignity of this rational forum and the authority of its voice and judgements derive from the *truth* about moral good and evil, which it is called to listen to and to express. This truth is indicated by the "divine law", *the universal and objective norm of morality*[37].

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[36]     See *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* from 1948 (art. 18); *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, accepted by the United Nations on December 16th, 1966 r. (art. 18); *The Helsinki Final Act (Akt końcowy Konferencji Bezpieczeństwa i Współpracy w Europie)*, signed on August 1st, 1975 r. (art. 7); *Resolution of the European Council (Rezolucja Rady Unii Europejskiej)* from November 16th, 2009. (*Council conclusions on freedom of religion or belief*); *Treaty of Lisbon (Traktat z Lizbony)* (art. 6); *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Karta Praw Podstawowych Unii Europejskiej)* (art. 10); *Konstytucja Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej* (art. 48 i 53).

[37]     John Paul II, Encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, no. 60.

It is necessary to aim at maintaining the voice of conscience, genuine and confident. However, sometimes the conscience can be misled – even without the fault of man: "Conscience frequently errs from invincible ignorance without losing its dignity"[38]. However, if its voice is confident, man must follow it. Conscience is the ultimate authority for everyone, although it is not absolute. Therefore, it must be emphasised, man must not act against the reasonably monitored voice of conscience.

The right to freedom upholds the authority of conscience and it means that conscience is protected from any outer influence of any human authority and that man is bestowed with the freedom to the personal convictions with regard to what he must and must not do. Emphasising the meaning of the freedom of conscience from any pressure of any authority, the Second Vatican Council teaches that: "Wherefore every man has the duty, and therefore the right, to seek the truth in matters religious in order that he may with prudence form for himself right and true judgements of conscience, under use of all suitable means"[39].

Discussing the role of conscience in professional life, we should always remember that there is only one conscience and one morality – both on the level of faith and in the presence in the world. No one can demand from man to lead a life of double standards – one in relation to God, and the other, in work and professional life if it is so, the state which introduces such standards becomes totalitarian, even if the authorities call it democratic and forward-thinking.

In every field of life, particularly in the professional life, we should always follow the voice of conscience (*constientia semper sequenda*); we should emphasise: the voice of genuine conscience that is one which calls the good – good, and the evil – evil; and which does not create its own norms for its own sake but which recognizes the existence of the objective truth which man seeks and which he wants to follow. Therefore, if man recognizes the genuine criterion of good in a moral norm or a God's direct order, he should remain submissive to this norm and he should act according to it.

Man owes obedience to the constituted human law (ecclesial or lay), as long as the law is just and as long as it is the guardian or the truth and the good. In such a case man can feel released in his conscience

Moral Theology

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[38]    The Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, no. 16. See also: John Paul II, Encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, no. 62.

[39]    Declaration on religious freedom *Dignitatis humanae*, no. 3.

from complying with the human law in case when it violates the limits of reasonability and the more if it is unjust or immoral (e.g. when the employer demands from his employee to do something evil or tries to impose certain views). There have been many cases in history of people who assumed persistent attitude which was contradictory to the constituted law, they were motivated by the voice of conscience and they had to face all the resulting consequences of their objection[40].

Man must never be reduced to the position of an object. We should never trust illusions of the slogans about the apparent freedom in cases when work and professional life would lead to indignity of man as a human being. The man of conscience can notice the world of people and their needs outside and over the world of material objects. Work as such constitutes a value but it is not the highest value. It is rather a tool which helps to satisfy other needs and to achieve other values. Therefore, we should protest in any case when work begins to become the value of its own sake and the more when it turns against other people.

In the face of many contemporary forms of violating consciences in the professional life, man should re-discover the role of the Church Who comes to rescue the conscience of an individual. Teaching moral norms, the Church "in no way undermines the freedom of conscience of Christians. This is so not only because freedom of conscience is never freedom "from" the truth but always and only freedom "in" the truth, but also because the Magisterium does not bring to the Christian conscience truths which are extraneous to it; rather it brings to light the truths which it ought already to possess"[41]. As the revealed truth was entrusted to the Church and She proclaims it and genuinely interprets, Christian should "the Christian faithful ought carefully to attend to the sacred and certain doctrine of the Church"[42].

In the face of the current situation, there is a need for the ongoing formation of the conscience which has not been bestowed on man as completed. Therefore, everyone is obliged to form his conscience in such a way to make it more mature. Apart from that, an individual conscience – although it is the direct norm of personal morality – "is not exempt from the possibility of error. [...] in the judgements of our conscience the possibility of error is always present. Conscience *is not*

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[40]    See S. Gałecki, *Sprzeciw sumienia i nieposłuszeństwo obywatelskie*, "Studia Kulturoznawcze", 12(2017), no. 2, p. 156; K. Jaworski, *Zasada równego traktowania a sprzeciw sumienia*, "Logos i Ethos" 2019, no. 1, pp. 110-112.

[41]    John Paul II, Encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, no. 64.

[42]    Declaration on religious freedom *Dignitatis humanae*, no. 14.

*an infallible judge;* it can make mistakes"[43]. Therefore, the formation of conscience should be understood as striving for getting to know the objective truth, in order to make proper judgement on the basis of it to make conscience righteous. In other words, formation of conscience is the process of "a continuous conversion to what is true and to what is good"[44].

Religious factors constitute an essential role in the process of conscience formation. Growing up in the atmosphere of closeness of God the Father Who gives them love, in the life of sacraments and being open to God's word, opens and shapes human heart and conscience, creates a specific atmosphere of love and responsibility, carries out the internalization of laws and God's commandments. What is more, the natural elements of the formation of conscience such as deepening the faith, being submissive to the genuine authorities, constitutes aid in the process of the formation of conscience which never ends.

Moral Theology

A well-formed conscience makes proper decisions in work and in professional life. Man who is led by such conscience is able to protest in a situation in which at work and in his professional life he is to be limited to the role of a tool. Such a protest becomes prophetic that is: it reveals the basic moral truth – God's primacy in the life of man as well as the beauty and the liberating value of the Truth revealed in Christ[45].

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Conscience is the basic determinant of human dignity. On the path of conscience man finds and constantly confirms his identity. Through conscience he can find the whole truth about himself and he tries to live to the extent of this truth. It is not a tool for independent determination of what is good and what is bad, but rather, an act of rational getting to know the truth, it is a witness and the first judge. Properly formed conscience, that is the conscience capable of discovering the genuine hierarchy of values, is the best protection for human freedom. Some consciences are wrongly formed. However, even then nobody should be forced to act against his conscience.

There are numerous opinions that work and professional life should be free from any moral assessment – that they should be "deprived of

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[43]    John Paul II, Encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, no. 62.

[44]    Ibidem, no. 64.

[45]    See Z. Wanat, *Profetyczny wymiar sprzeciwu sumienia*, "Teologia i Moralność" 8(2013), no. 2, p. 32.

any moral judgement", ethically neutral. There are numerous attempts which are to stop man from seeking the truth and the good. There are many attempts aiming at giving conscience the rank of the supreme instance of moral judgement; categorical and infallible in deciding of what is good and what is bad, as well as attempts to replace conscience with the law or with an authority.

Being faithful to your conscience in the professional life can unfortunately mean suspension of career, job loss and other consequences. It seems that people without any moral principles today, with "no conscience" can be promoted more easily, to the detriment of honest people. Therefore, contemporary man no longer feels any dilemmas of the conscience. Being deeply engaged with his professional passion, man reduces himself to the role of an object; by accepting evil, he allows his conscience to be violated. The conscience cannot be violated otherwise than with the cooperation of the one whose conscience is violated.

In fact, the genuine engagement with the world, responsibility for public affairs requires sensitive conscience. And only then this engagement will be effective, beneficial for the good of man and of human community. "The world of work – as John Paul II stated – needs people with properly formed consciences"[46]. We need witnesses of fidelity to conscience, people who are truly free, brave, not limited by conformism.

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[46]     John Paul II, Homily (Sosnowiec, June 14, 1999), https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/pl/homilies/1999/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19990614_sosnowiec.html.

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Moral
Theology

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# Leadership as a Research Problem in the Pastoral Theology

The issue of leadership is relatively rare in the pastoral theology. However, due to the cognitive and practical reasons, it is necessary to conduct further more frequent research on leadership. Such research can be conducted thanks to the cooperation between pastoral theology and the disciplines which are beyond theology, such as pedagogy, sociology, psychology and management science. These sciences are treated as auxiliary sciences for the pastoral theology. The cooperation between the pastoral theology and the auxiliary sciences from beyond theology involves research on such subjects as: the essence of leadership, the features of leaders, the leadership behaviours, the models of leadership, group communication, the formation of leaders etc. Apart from the cooperation between pastoral theology and the auxiliary sciences, it is also possible to practise the leadership theology. It can constitute an additional theological sub discipline which is called into existence similarly to the charity theology. The range of the leadership theology, similarly to the charity theology, is included into the pastoral function of the realization of the Church.

**Key words**: leadership, ecclesial leadership, leadership theology, management, leader.

In the Catholic pastoral theology in Poland, the issue of leadership is a relatively rare subject. The publications devoted to it directly focus on the possibility to practice the theory of leadership in the Church. Indirectly, this issue is quite widely discussed in many scientific studies. These studies basically focus on the leadership of a bishop or of a parson and are mainly rooted in the principles worked out on the basis of the canon law. The relatively numerous publications concerning leadership are written mainly by the Protestant pastoralists. These

publications generally focus on the practical use of the theory of leadership in the ecclesial communities. The publications of the Protestant theologians often directly or indirectly raise the question of the place of the theory of leadership among the theological sciences and of its role in the pastoral practice.

This article is an attempt to answer the question of the place of the issue of leadership in pastoral theology. It seems necessary to place the theory of leadership and of the management sciences in relation to the pastoral theology, similarly to the relation of this theological discipline to other non-theological disciplines. In this regard, the relations between the pastoral theology and sociology, especially the sociology of religion, and with psychology, particularly the psychology of religion, and with pedagogy, are of greater importance. For a long time pastoralists have been cooperating with sociologists and with psychologists. The results of the research conducted by social sciences have been widely used by the theological and pastoral research. We can therefore assume that the theological and pastoral research conducted with regard to the management sciences will allow to answer the question concerning the possibility to work out the theology of leadership.

## Pastoral theology and the non-theological disciplines

The cooperation between the pastoral theology and disciplines other than theology somehow results from its definition. Praxeologically, the pastoral theology can be defined as "the science which, by means of the sociological and theological analysis of the actual contemporary condition of the Church, aims at working out certain theological models and the corresponding imperatives and agendas according to which the Church in this current accurate condition updates Her essence, realizing the mission of being an intermediary in salvation"[1]. The cited sociological and theological analysis of the current social condition of the Church, in which She realizes Her mission, is possible thanks to the cooperation of the pastoral theology with sociology, particularly with the sociology of religion. Combining the results of the theological and sociological research enables more versatile reflection of the religious and pastoral conditions as well as the interpretation of it which leads to working out the pastoral models and agendas as well

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[1]     W. Piwowarski, *Perspektywa teologiczna a perspektywa socjologiczna w duszpasterstwie*, "Chrześcijanin w Świecie" 1973, no. 26, pp. 32-33.

Pastoral Theology

as the imperatives of the pastoral activity, which are adequate to the existing challenges and needs[2].

It should be noticed that the results of the sociological research are not always an appropriate source for getting to know the current reality in which the Church exists and acts. There are many fields of pastoral activity in which the research conducted by psychologists, particularly the psychologists of religion, is more useful. In such cases the pastoral theology cooperates with psychology, and on the basis of the research results, experts create the models of pastoral care and the corresponding programs and postulates.

The pastoral theology has been making use of the tools, methods and results of sociological and psychological research for a long time. Despite the initial distrust, various ecclesial circles have commonly acknowledged the cooperation between the pastoral theology and sociology and psychology. Both theoreticians and practitioners of pastoral care make use particularly of the research results of the sciences in order to get to know better the conditions and challenges of the pastoral activity. However, they indicate that research results cannot be the definitive premise for taking decisions about initializing, modification or discontinuation of the pastoral care.

Pastoral Theology

A similar approach can be taken to discuss the cooperation of the pastoral theology and pedagogy. It deals with research of the processes of education and upbringing. Among the sub disciplines of pedagogy, the pedagogy of religion deserves particular attention because it deals with the issue of the influence of religion on education and upbringing of man. The results of pedagogical research can therefore be effectively used in building pastoral models and the corresponding agendas which are worked out by the pastoral theology[3].

It should be noticed that the cooperation between the pastoral theology and the non-theological disciplines mentioned above takes place not only at the stage of constructing theological models and pastoral agendas but also at the stage of their realization. The models and agendas are some kind of patterns, the ideal versions of the activity of the Church. However, their realization proceeds only in certain conditions, which are sometimes far from the ideal, therefore, their implementation requires critical reflection which is controlling in nature. In order to make it possible for the controller to do this, it is necessary to refer

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[2]     K. Święs, *Socjologia religii a teologia pastoralna*, in: *Teologia pastoralna*, vol. 1, ed. R. Kamiński, Lublin 2000, pp. 55-58.

[3]     K. Półtorak, *Pedagogika pastoralna. Nowe inspiracje duszpasterskie*, "Teologia Praktyczna" 2(2001), pp. 74-76.

not only to the models and agendas, but also often to the theological and non-theological premises which are their basis[4].

The cooperation of the pastoral theology with non-theological disciplines is based on the thesis that the Church is a divine-human reality. Although the Church is rooted in the supernatural reality – Christ is Her Head, She is enlivened by the Holy Spirit and She is led to the Father. What is more, She has particular aims to realize, these are different from the aims of the purely human organizations – and thus She realizes Her mission in the earthly reality. The Church consists of

> the people who are the heads of ecclesial communities and who lead them. Hence the divine-human reality must assume leading of the external activity which should benefit from the experience of not only sociology, psychology and religious anthropology, but also from praxeology and from the management sciences. Being aware of the dissimilarity of the features of the Church manager we can assume that in social terms, the problems and tasks, the methods and techniques of performing the managerial functions resemble the existing ones in other forms of the organized human activity[5].

The cooperation of the pastoral theology with non-pastoral disciplines takes place on the basis of the research paradigm of the pastoral theology. It functions like a syllogism in which the theological premise is greater and the data obtained from the non-theological disciplines belong to the minor premise. This means, among others, that the research results conducted on the basis of the non-theological disciplines are interpreted in the light of the theological sciences research results and not the other way round. Due to that, the sociological, psychological and economic research results have only the illustrating value, which reflects a certain reality in which the Church realizes Her mission, and the image of the Church Herself. The theological and pastoral research results obtained on the basis of the non-theological disciplines are not the final ones but they shall be interpreted in the light of God's Revelation.

<div style="margin-left:2em; font-style:italic;">Pastoral Theology</div>

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[4]    See T. Wielebski, M. Tutak, *Meandry interdyscyplinarności teologii pastoralnej. Przyczynek do dyskusji*, "Teologia Praktyczna" 17(2016), pp. 40-43.

[5]    R. Kamiński, *Wprowadzenie do teologii pastoralnej*, in: *Teologia pastoralna*, vol. 1, ed. R. Kamiński, Lublin 2000, p. 29.

## The possibilities of cooperation between the management sciences and the pastoral theology

Although in theology, and thus also in the pastoral theology, the term "leadership" is rarely used, they often use the related terms such as: power, management or leader. The first two terms mainly refer to the Church hierarchs who head the greater communities of the faithful. Their power is rather formal, conferred by other hierarchs who are above them in the ecclesial hierarchy. The term"leader" and the derivatives of this term are usually used with regard to the heads of smaller groups of the faithful such as small religious groups. Such leaders are mainly the laymen. Their leadership is based mainly on their personal charisms and on their individual leadership features. The rare use of the term "leadership" probably results from the negative connotation with the political leadership or from the fear of the random use of the elements of management sciences in the life of the Church and in theology, which results in the relatively minor use of the output of these sciences in the theological and pastoral research. However, using them can take place in a broader scope on such bases which are used in the research of other auxiliary sciences: the sociology of religion, the psychology of religion and others. Thanks to using the management sciences it is possible to lead the ecclesial communities in a better way. The term "better" means not only more effective, like in the economic sciences, but mainly enabling a more effective realization of the Church's mission which is better suited to the current challenges and conditions.

Pastoral Theology

The analysis of the term "leadership" may prove helpful, as it comprises both the process of leadership and the features of a leader. In the theological and pastoral research, the researchers can use the two directions of search: one focused on the ecclesial leader and the other focused on the leadership process which is dynamic and which is characterized by certain properties. It should be noted that the problems discussed in the management sciences are also discussed in the practical pastoral activity. The solutions assumed by priests have been used for decades and even for centuries in the ecclesial practice. In the management sciences the reflection on them has a shorter history but it is undertaken in a more methodological and systematic way and, due to this, the knowledge on the leadership is more holistic. This allows for more effective combining of that knowledge with the knowledge of other fields of science, which can result in the more effective pastoral care.

The cooperation of the pastoral theology with the management sciences is widely used in the pastoral care due to the practical dimension of theology. The first ones who can benefit from this cooperation are the ecclesial leaders. Owing to this cooperation they can deepen their awareness that their power – although it is formal (valid) – can also be expressed in other forms. It can also be the power of rewarding, especially with regard to the full-time workers and to the most engaged volunteers. Providing them with various awards – from the verbal praise to the pay rise and promotions – the ecclesial leaders can influence the quality of their work and strengthen their attachment to the community of the Church. It is particularly necessary to provide the ecclesial leaders with the expert authority which results from their competence and power. Priests do not have to be experts in the issues regarding the contemporary reality but they should be specialists in the spiritual issues and in the supernatural reality[6]. It is also necessary to constantly develop and to undergo the ongoing formation. It is particularly beneficial for the clergy to be aware and sensible in using the coercive power and they should tend to properly use the attributed power which consists in identifying themselves with the ones under their power. The attributed power is connected with following the example of the leaders[7]. This means that ecclesial leaders wield their leadership better when they themselves are the role models for the faithful.

The features of a leader are an important issue for the pastoral theology – both in the theoretical aspect and in the practical aspect. The research on the features of a leader based on the ground of the management science did not lead to preparing a list of such features, however, attention was drawn to the ones which are more useful for the leaders than others. These are both the inborn features and the acquired features. The management sciences emphasise the skills of a leader which can be developed to a great extent on the basis of one's inborn predispositions[8]. It is an important conclusion for the pastoral

<div style="float:left">Pastoral<br>Theology</div>

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[6]   Benedict XVI, Speech during the meeting with the clergy [Przemówienie podczas spotkania z duchowieństwem] *Wierzcie w moc waszego kapłaństwa!* (Warsaw May 25th, 2006), L'Osservatore Romano" (the Polish edition) 27(2006) no. 6-7, pp. 15-17.

[7]   R.W. Griffin, *Podstawy zarządzania organizacjami*, Warszawa 2004, pp. 556-558.

[8]   J.A.F. Stoner, R.E. Freeman, D.R. Gilbert, *Kierowanie*, Warszawa 2011, pp. 454-456.

theology because it indicates the need for the multifaceted ongoing formation of pastoral care priests, especially of the pastoral formation[9].

Another issue discussed on the basis of the management sciences, which can be important for the theological and pastoral research, concerns the leadership behaviours. They are mainly focused on the aims of the activity and on the members of the team guided by the leader. The leadership behaviours are important in leading the groups and religious communities. On the basis of the pastoral theology, they become particularly important due to the Biblical premises which are of priority nature in the theological research. The awareness of the aim, which is salvation, focuses the activity of the leader and of the religious group members on the effective realization. On the other hand, the ecclesial leader is aware that the members of the community are God's children who are bestowed with dignity as the inalienable value of a human being. The skilful pursuit of reconciling these two leadership behaviours, which are directed at the realization of the goal and at building the community, assumes a particular importance in comparison to other human teams. Making use of the research results in the field of the management sciences plays a significant role because it allows to choose the most proper ones.

Pastoral Theology

Another issue discussed by the management sciences, which can be useful for the pastoral theology and pastoral care, concerns the styles of leadership. This issue is discussed in the pastoral theology of the Catholic movement[10], as well as of the Protestant one[11]. The theological and pastoral research indicate that particular Churches practise different styles of leadership. They are practised in such a way that each of the denominations uses a range of styles. Therefore, there is not just one characteristic style determined for a certain Church, but they use various styles, depending on the type of community and on their current need. The Catholic publications shows that the styles of leadership realized by particular spiritual and secular leaders are not always adequate to the existing conditions. Once adapted, they are sometimes modified with great efforts or they are replaced by others[12]. The cooperation of the pastoral theology with the management

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[9]     See D. Lipiec, *Cechy duszpasterzy jako przywódców*, "Teologia Praktyczna" 19(2018), pp. 42-48.

[10]     See J. Sikorski, *Kierowanie parafią według metody „zarządzanie przez cele",* "Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne" 1(1983), pp. 339-359.

[11]     See J.M. Rachwalska, *Style przywództwa w ruchu pentakostalnym*, Warszawa 2021 (doctoral thesis in ChAT in Warsaw).

[12]     See A. Żądło, *Parafia w trzecim tysiącleciu*, Kielce 1999, pp. 41-53.

sciences can in this respect result in a wider range of possibilities concerning the styles of leadership. On the basis of this cooperation, the pastoral theology can work out methods of introducing the changes into the styles of leadership as well as determine the time of using them, their range and field. The charismatic leadership is a unique issue within the field of the styles of leadership; it is relatively commonly discussed in the management sciences and, at the same time, it can be applied in various ways in the practice of the ecclesial leadership.

Communication is also one of the most important issues in the pastoral theology. It is often referred to in the context of the dialogue which becomes either the internal or external dialogue in the Church. The inner-Church dialogue takes place between the members or groups of the faithful. The most common research issue is the dialogue between the clergy and the laymen who were entrusted with the possibility of the personal engagement into the ecclesial life by the Second Vatican Council. The issue also concerns the consecrated people who enter the dialogue with both the laymen and the clergy. It is emphasised that the inner-Church dialogue is salvific in nature, which determines not only its aims but also the way of leading and the mutual relations of the interlocutors.

The outer-Church dialogue regards the relation of the Church with Her environment. Contemporarily, due to the processes of secularisation, we can notice various approaches to this type of dialogue. We can notice the tendency of withdrawing of some groups of the faithful from the dialogue with the world as one of the extremes and the other as the almost aggressive extreme expansion to the world. There are also many indirect approaches. It is not always noticed that the dialogue between the Church and the world is salvific in nature and it is supposed to lead the interlocutor to meeting with God and to deepening the bond with Him.

Due to the complex environment of the contemporary Church, the pastoral theology can make use of the output of the management sciences in its research. As the theory of communication is not something unfamiliar to the pastoral theology, the forms of communication through various persons or groups can be adapted to the ecclesial ground. It can be an issue concerning the pastoral theology which is discussed within the research on the formal and informal communication, which use the contemporary forms of the exchange of thought. The obstacles in the inner-Church communication as well as the ways of overcoming them can also be an important research problem. The

research results concerning the theory of organization can be used in various ways in the theological and pastoral search[13].

The management of the groups of people is a similar issue discussed by the pastoral theology on the ground of the management sciences. In the Catholic Church there are various groups of the faithful who belong to larger associations or who form independent local groups of people. It is common in the pastoral practice to use the methods of the group work as one of the effective methods of the formation of the faithful. In this field the theological and pastoral reflection uses the sociological research results which concern small and large social groups as well as the psychological research results, especially with regard to the research on the group dynamics. The theological and pastoral research regards the management sciences to a smaller extent. They often refer to psychology and sociology but they have worked out its own approach to this issue[14]. From the point of view of the pastoral theology, the research on the features of the teams of people and on the conflicts between the team members and between the teams are of particular interest. They can be used in the pastoral reflection on the inner-Church conflicts. The research on the management of the conflict in an organization is also interesting in this respect, and in case of the Church as a divine-human organization, it is of particular importance[15].

The issues concerning the leadership process which are discussed by the management sciences and which can become of interest for the pastoral theology, are also interesting. They include the elements of the individuals' behaviour in organizations; these include: stress and the human behaviour in an organization, creativity and the types of behaviours in organizations. The knowledge obtained by the management sciences is not only interesting but, due to its reference to the specific organization, that is the Church, it can also be useful for the ecclesial leaders who manage teams of people and particular individuals. Understanding of the behaviours of the Church members, especially of those who are engaged in religious groups, is the basis of the effective management of them, of satisfying their needs and of the realization of the main aim of the Church that is leading people

Pastoral Theology

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[13] R.W. Griffin, *Podstawy zarządzania organizacjami*, pp. 605-612.

[14] See B. Wawrzyniak, *Zarządzanie zmianami w organizacji*, in: *Zarządzanie. Teoria i praktyka*, ed. A.K. Koźmiński, W. Piotrowski, Warszawa 2000, pp. 507-523.

[15] See D. Lipiec, *Przywództwo w parafii*, in: *Kościół – komunia i dialog. Księga pamiątkowa ofiarowana księdzu biskupowi Kazimierzowi Ryczanowi w 75. rocznicę urodzin*, ed. P. Kantyka, J. Czerkawski, T. Siemieniec. Kielce 2014, pp. 403-414.

to salvation. Motivating the laymen and the clergy associates for the effective engagement in the life of the Church is a similar issue. The solutions worked out on the basis of the management sciences can effectively be used in many cases in the pastoral practice. All of them, even the ones which are impossible to use in the Church, can be the object of the analysis of the pastoral theology.

The formation of leaders is an important issue which can become the object of the analysis for the pastoral theology. It consists of such research problems as: the selection of candidates, the training on the leadership and the strategy of the development of the leadership in the Church[16]. These problems are partly discussed in the theological and pastoral research. They include, among others, the ongoing formation of presbyters, especially in the pastoral dimension, or the formation of the laity. Some of the problems are discussed also by other theological disciplines, namely: the moral theology and the theology of spirituality. Another discussed issue is the formation, especially in the spiritual and human dimension. Taking into account the management sciences, the research can broaden the scope of the theological and pastoral search and can be beneficial for the broader view of the leadership and of the realization of the leadership process.

## The leadership theology

The Second Vatican Council opened a new chapter concerning the relation of the Catholic Church and the earthly reality. In the post-Conciliar period, the relations between the Church and the world used to have a different course. The Middle Ages were the period of overlapping the lay and ecclesial activities. The earthly reality was permeated by religiousness in such a way that human activity was motivated by the Christian values and was Christian in nature. In the course of time, the Church and the world have separated and the state has taken over more and more social institutions which had previously been managed by the Church. Taking over more and more works and replacing them with the state ones often resulted in creating the anti-religious environment. Facing the ongoing processes of secularization, the Church most often assumed the defensive attitude. The very phenomenon of secularization was evaluated negatively, while the Church was deprived of many social, cultural and educational institutions and of other similar ones, and therefore, She started to

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[16]    See J. Adair, *Kształtowanie liderów. Siedem zasad rozwijania zdolności przywódczych*, Warszawa 2013, pp. 89-220.

create Her own alternative institutions resembling the ones created by the state authorities. Although the institutions functioned as the religious ones, they were open to the general public and they contributed to the weakening of the anti-religious attitudes. This in turn led to the change in the attitude of the Church towards the world, as the Church started to be perceived as transcendent in comparison to the earthly reality and at the same time She got engaged into the world affairs. This engagement has a completely different dimension and nature than the activity of the worldly community.

The Conciliar *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* understands the world in the broad and multifaceted meaning. The world is thus perceived as a community of people, as the people's history and as the history of salvation. "In other words, it is the anthropological understanding of the world as the humanity – in the social, historical and salvific aspects, without skipping the material aspect"[17]. The post-Conciliar Catholic Church does not determine Her attitude towards the world as being opposed to it. Although She remains the reality which is separate from the world, the two worlds permeate – the Church is present and active in the world. It expresses the multifaceted inner connection between the community of the followers of Christ and the rest of humanity to which the Christians belong. The Church as the spokesman of the Christ's Gospel deals with the human values indicating their absolute sense and tries to enhance their development[18].

Such an attitude of the Church towards the world influences not only Her activity but also the research which She conducts. The engagement into the earthly reality presupposes undertaking certain research in the light of God's Revelation. Thus the Conciliar teaching enabled the development of the "theology of the earthly realities". After the Second Vatican Council, further research was initiated on such fields of human activity as culture or work, thus initiating the contemporary theology of culture and theology of work. These are the approaches of the earthly realities which are separate and different from those presented by the social sciences.

Analogically, we can promote the theology of leadership as the "theology of the earthly reality". Leadership can be perceived not only in the light of the management sciences but also in the light of God's Revelation. It is a different and unique approach in which God's

Pastoral Theology

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[17]    M. Fiałkowski, *Stosunek Kościoła do świata*, in: *Teologia pastoralna*, vol. 1, ed. R. Kamiński, Lublin 2000, p. 250.

[18]    See Ibidem.

Revelation provides the basic premises for the conducted research. Promoting the theology of leadership is something more than making use of the management sciences in the theological and pastoral granting. The second case concerns treating the management sciences as the auxiliary sciences and using their results, methods and research techniques for the current theoretical and practical needs of the pastoral theology. The theology of leadership is holistic and systematic and, although it has the same material object as the management sciences, which is the leadership, it differs as far as the formal object is concerned as it is based on the Revelation.

The possibility of promoting the theology of leadership is indicated by the ecclesiological premise. The Catholic theology after the Second Vatican Council indicates three basic functions of the Church; these are the inalienable forms of realizing the Church and the implementation of them enables Her to fulfil Her mission of salvation in the world. The Church cannot reject them or limit their implementation. The basic functions include the teaching function (prophesy), which is based on proclaiming God's word; the priestly function which is realized through the cult, and the pastoral function which aims at the realization of the Christian love[19]. Some theologians divide the pastoral function into giving the testimony of the Christian life, the charity function and the managing function. The managing function enables the development of the theology of leadership because it is connected with leading the faithful and their groups to salvation. It can be perceived as analogous to the charity theology the realization of which it concerns[20].

The theology of leadership understood in such a way is rooted in the Bible and in theology. We can also indicate the history of the leadership and the development of the theological thought which concerns this issue[21]. It is not difficult to determine the material object of the theology of leadership and the issues which it can comprise[22]. Apart from the ones mentioned above, we can indicate a number of others which can be discussed as a result of the cognitive and practical needs. We can also determine the formal subject which results from God's

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[19]   W. Przygoda, *Istota i posłannictwo Kościoła*, in: *Teologia pastoralna*, vol. 1, ed. R. Kamiński, Lublin 2000, pp. 134-145.

[20]   See W. Przygoda, *Funkcja charytatywna Kościoła po Soborze Watykańskim II*, Lublin 1998, pp. 16-22.

[21]   See J.M. Rachwalska, *Style przywództwa w ruchu pentakostalnym*, pp. 158-191.

[22]   R. Kamiński, *Teologia pastoralna (praktyczna) wśród dyscyplin teologicznych*, in: *Teologia pastoralna w służbie nowej ewangelizacji*, ed. Cz. Krakowiak, W. Przygoda, A. Kiciński, M. Wyrostkiewicz, Lublin 2010, pp. 29-32.

Revelation[23] and indicate the research methods used by the pastoral theology which will be completed with the ones used by the management sciences[24]. The subject of the pastoral theology is also the subject of the leadership theology. In order to preserve the theological character of the leadership theology, it seems to be necessary to choose a person who is faithful, a Christian who is capable of combining the premises which result from faith with the natural premises. The substantive aspect of practising theology assumes that its subject should have the knowledge of the leadership theology which is excerpted from the management sciences. All of these formal elements of the leadership theology can develop and as such they can constitute the subject of the discussion of both theologians, especially of pastoralists and of economists.

The name of this theological discipline is also disputable. The term "leadership theology" adopted in this article can be disputable due to the connotations with the terminology regarding the management sciences. Many theologians consider the term "management theology" to be more appropriate and adequate. It is also possible to adopt different terms.

Pastoral
Theology

## Conclusion

Leadership cannot be treated only as one of many issues discussed in the theological and pastoral research. Due to the role of the management function among the basic functions of the Church, it is worth to create a separate sub discipline of the practical theology. Due to such placement, it is possible to determine its scientific character and to indicate the formal elements as the field of science. It is also possible to indicate its practical character and the relations with the pastoral activity of the Church. So far the theological and pastoral research has used the management sciences as the auxiliary sciences of the pastoral theology, focusing on the selected elements of the content, in accordance with the appearing cognitive and pastoral needs. Both the cognitive and the practical reasons assume undertaking research regarding the leadership theology as the branch of the pastoral theology. The lack of this scientific sub discipline, which is necessary due to the holistic elaboration of the basic functions of the Church, indicates

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[23]    See G. Strzelczyk, *Samoświadomość teologii*, in: *Metodologia teologii praktycznej*, ed. W. Przyczyna, Kraków 2011, pp. 13-14.

[24]    W. Przygoda, *Paradygmaty postępowania badawczego w teologii praktycznej*, in: *Metodologia teologii praktycznej*, ed. W. Przyczyna, Kraków 2011, pp. 97-113.

cognitive motive. The practical motive results from the need to take a closer look at the ecclesial leadership. It experiences various difficulties and in order to overcome them it is necessary to introduce the scientific reflection meant as the holistic and systematic thought on it.

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Pastoral
Theology

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# Pupils as Theologians. Investigation of Theological Conversations of Pupils in Religious Education in Slovakia

This article explores the theological conversations of pupils of Religious Education in schools in Slovakia. It clarifies the foundations of a theology of children that seriously takes pupils as subjects and constructors of their own religious reality, and discusses the possibilities and conditions for children's theologizing in Religious Education. It analyses and examines specific sequences of pupils' theological conversations, highlighting the specific roles of the teacher of Religious Education and offering suggestions for supporting pupils' independent theological thinking

**Key words:** children's theology, theological conversations, Religious Education, teacher of Religious Education.

## Introduction

Theological conversations in the classroom represent a crucial part of Religious Education in schools. To see pupils as theologians, who are capable of reflecting and reasoning as actual theologians, is a central idea of the so-called *children's theology*, which is becoming a new paradigm in Religious Education. The children's theology is indeed a crucial basis for understanding theological conversations that are often the central dimension of Religious Education classes.

The investigation of theological conversations of pupils is done on the grounds of Religious Education as well as of the new curriculum for teaching Catholic Religious Education. In order to analyse theological conversations, we chose to work with the topic of "The Parable of the Good Samaritan", and thus we studied its contextualisation in the class, as well as specific theological conversations, in order to identify the theological knowledge that the pupils themselves brought into these mutual conversations. In the end, we are going to present a series of evaluations from the Religious Education teachers as they reflected on their own Religious Education classes, and we are going to state some important implications for teaching Religious Education.

## Children's theology as the basis for theologising of children

The idea that it is possible to theologise with children during Religious Education classes is the result of discussions that have taken place over the past decades of the 20th century. It was the religious educator A. Bucher who first used the denomination *children's theology* in order to explain the type of theology that is formed by children themselves. For centuries, according to A. Bucher, children had been considered unconscious and inadequate beings, in mercy of their own instincts, tossed about by their own whims[1]. It was not until the cognitive-structural development psychology, that an opinion prevailed, according to which the child is above all an active subject. Children are therefore seen as subjects and creators of their own reality, and they are described as active and constructive[2].

Taking children seriously as subjects and constructors of their own religious reality is a fundamental belief of children's theology, which thus becomes a new paradigm of Religious Education. However, when we talk about children's theology, we have to start from an expanded understanding of theology, which is defined as religious awareness of religious thinking. Children's theology contains this reflective moment, which manifests itself in a rational interest in God or in the desire to embrace faith, and shows that children not only speak and think religiously, but are capable of reaching a reflective level where they reflect on their religious thinking.

Religious
Education

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[1]    A.A. Bucher, *Kinder als Theologen?*, "Zeitschrift für Religionsunterricht und Lebenskunde", 21/1 (1992), pp. 19-22.

[2]    A.A. Bucher, *Kindertheologie: Provokation? Romantizismus? Neues Paradigma?*, "Jahrbuch für Kindertheologie" 1 (2002), p. 14.

Concerning the term children's theology, a number of semantic levels exist nowadays. If children's theology means an independent manner of theologising by children alone, it does not mean that children do not need a targeted Religious Education[3]. Therefore F. Schweitzer calls for differentiating children's theology and accompanies children's theology by theology for children that offers specific theological knowledge for children, as the manner of children's contemplation and reasoning depends on the level of knowledge that they acquired in the given context. Even though Religious Education emphasizes independence as well as independent pupil's activity, it is always dependent on teacher stimulation[4]. Religious Education initiates manners in order for the children to become aware of their own religious experience and to be able to interpret it, but at the same time it corrects their experience and expression. Therefore, for the theological reasons, the Religious Education program of children must always include theology for children[5]. Finally, in 2005, H. Schluß emphasized the need to take children seriously as theological partners, and thus he complements the differentiation of children's theology with the third basic feature, that of *theology with children*, which respects the asymmetrical relationship between teachers and students, but at the same time underlines the symmetrical communication between teachers and students on the relational level: teachers become partners in dialogue with pupils. Therefore, children themselves are theologians, however, they only become theologians with the assistance of adults, who are capable of accepting the questions of children concerning life and keeping them open, and who also experience their own questions and answers authentically in regard to children[6].

In the Slovakian context, the children's theology, as seen from the point of view of the religious-educational relation, has been adopted on a very small scale. Apart from suggestions made by two religious educators from the Czech Republic, N. Bravená and L. Muchová, who have been studying theologising and philosophisng of children in Religious

[3]     A. A. Bucher, *Kindertheologie: Provokation? Romantizismus? Neues Paradigma?*, "Jahrbuch für Kindertheologie" 1 (2002), p. 25.

[4]     F. Schweitzer, *Was ist und wozu Kindertheologie?*, "Jahrbuch für Kindertheologie" 2 (2003), pp. 11-18.

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Education for quite some time[7], there is exclusively D. Hanesová in Slovakia, who deals with the issue of children's theology, and who is exploring how the basic children's religious knowledge influences their ability to express their religious experience[8]. It is an interesting fact that the attention to the theologising of children is rather applied in the area of homiletics and catechetics than in the area of Religious Education[9]. This is especially evidenced by the great emphasis on children's theology within the framework of "Catecheses of the Good Shepherd", inspired by the translations of series of publications from an Italian author S. Cavalletti[10].

## Theological conversations in Religious Education classes

Theological conversations with children during Religious Education classes are quite complex. Pupils do not always ask questions as expected, their questions are rather surprising, sometimes provocative, other times they are inconspicuous and quiet, and thus they are easily overlooked. However, even primary school pupils can ask the most difficult theological questions.

Religious Education

According to A. Reese-Schnitker, conversations represent the core dimension of Religious Education, and they account for the third of the total teaching time of the Religious Education classes. At the same time A. Reese-Schnitker emphasises that these conversations, that take place within a large group, sometimes of up to 30 pupils, cannot be compared with conversations that take place under normal everyday conditions. Conversations in class are extraordinary and therefore present a challenge for every teacher. They follow specific rules that are clearly formulated and agreed upon by the pupils of each classroom. Teacher is the one who directs, leads and closes the

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[7]  L. Muchová, *Filosofické rozhovory jako způsob otevírání výuky v předmětech etická a náboženská výchova*, in: *Kritické myslenie a filozofická reflexia v edukácii*, ed. J Kaliský, Banská Bystrica 2020, pp. 171-181. N. Bravená, *Dítě teologem. Nábožensko-pedagogická reflexe dětského prožívání transcendence*, in: *Myšlení o transcedenci*, ed. M. Ryšková, M. Mikulcová, Praha 2013, pp. 199-220.

[8]  D. Hanesová, *Prvky konštruktivizmu v náboženskej pedagogike*, in: *Zborník vedeckovýskumných prác č. 14, Acta Universitatis Matthaei Belli*, ed. S. Karikov, Banská Bystrica 2013, pp. 85-98.

[9]  R. Horka, *Možnosti a spôsoby formovania hodnotových rámcov v homíliách pre deti a mládež*, in: *Morálka v kontexte storočí*, ed. E. Brodňanská, A. Koželová Prešov 2019, pp. 168-169.

[10]  S. Cavaletti, *Náboženský potenciál dieťaťa*, Bratislava 2019. S. Cavaletti, *Náboženský potenciál dieťaťa vo veku 6-12 rokov*, Bratislava 2022.

conversation. Their aim is to create a conversation that is characterised by the mutuality of its participants, who they try to involve into the dialogue the most, and by the meaningfulness of their expression by following a specific didactic goal in mind. It is a challenging task for each teacher, and it requires an extraordinary amount of creativity and ability for communication[11].

Based on the observation, there are four different forms of conversations in Religious Education classes. A half of all didactic conversations in classes has the form of "ping-pong" conversation, with continuous attention alternating from teacher to pupils. Another form of conversation is manifested by a sequence of several student contributions, which are not commented nor interrupted by the teacher. This is not a real conversation as such, regarding that the pupils' statements do not follow each other nor do they relate to each other. The third form of conversation is understood as a "camouflaged" teacher's lecture: the teacher, who is the dominating figure there, by using targeted questions, is trying to lead pupils into defining, repeating or guessing the content that has been previously chosen by the teacher. As A. Reese-Schnitker puts it, only one sixth of all communication forms in Religious Education take place as real conversations between pupils, where pupils speak between themselves, relate mutually, or eventually discuss things in a controversial manner. This means that the pupils explicitly confront certain topic and express or develop their own opinions. At the same time, the teacher plays the role of an observer, or they can join as a participant with their own views. Using real conversations in the classroom is appropriate when the aim is to create a personal opinion, to reassess attitudes, and to implement what pupils have learned previously, as well as when the aim is the mutual controversial exchange of reasoning[12]. According to F. Kraft, real conversations between pupils are rare, mostly because high quality conversation is needed. This cannot be achieved without a specifically created environment in class, and above all a certain conversation culture, that is openness and respect on the side of the pupils, interest in the other as well as a willingness to know and to understand other points of view. Therefore, an important aspect of these conversations between pupils is the quality of relationships between

<div style="margin-left:2em; font-style:italic;">Religious Education</div>

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[11]    A. Reese-Schnitker, *Einander zuhören und verstehen, aufeinander eingehen und miteinander reden. Gelingensfaktoren von Gesprächen im Religionsunterricht auf der Spur*, "Katechetische Blätter" 4 (2023), pp. 305-306.

[12]    A. Reese-Schnitker, *Einander zuhören und verstehen, aufeinander eingehen und miteinander reden. Gelingensfaktoren von Gesprächen im Religionsunterricht auf der Spur*, "Katechetische Blätter" 4 (2023), pp. 306-308.

the involved pupils. Consequently, if real conversations between students are to be successful, a prerequisite here is to support the ability of students to listen to one another, to want to understand the others and to have genuine interest in the others[13].

And what are the skills to be acquired by the teachers so that they are capable of theological discussions with pupils beneficially? P. Freudenberger-Lötz emphasizes that the primary goal of theological conversations is for the teacher to sense the way pupils understand a given topic. Therefore, in theological conversations a genuine interest in pupils' interpretations is needed: the teacher must proceed carefully, try to find the child's own opinion, but at the same time the teacher introduces into the conversation the stimuli for further understanding. Teacher plays a role of a professional before the children and inquires about other possible answers to offer to the children in order to incite their further reasoning. At the same time, the teacher needs to acquire the attitude of interest in inquiring and reflecting on the pupils' answers[14].

To theologise with children in Religious Education classes means to help pupils to create a certain questioning attitude and to be able to formulate their own theological interpretation. At the same time, the role of the teacher is exceptionally important, as they take on different roles and enter the play depending on the situation. According to P. Freudenberger-Lötz, these roles can be described either as the role of an attentive observer, who perceives the way pupils understand the topic, or the role of a partner, who incites the dialogue and encourages the pupils into further understanding, or the role of a guiding professional, who contributes with their knowledge on the given topic and offers possible answers to unanswered questions from the Christian-biblical tradition. These teacher roles clearly demonstrate that theological conversations represent a multiple-level process of understanding, which means understanding the topic, and also, a very important aspect, understanding the process of how pupils comprehend the topic. Hermeneutic competence is therefore a key competence in theological conversations[15].

Religious Education

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[13]   F. Kraft, *Theologische Gespräche mit Kindern und Jugendlichen. Eine didaktische Perspektive*, "Loccumer Pelikan" 4 (2012), p. 154.

[14]   P. Freudenberger-Lötz, *Theologische Gespräche mit Kindern – Chancen und Herausforderungen für die Lehrer/innenausbilung*, "Theo-Web. Zeitschrift für Religionspädagogik" 6/1 (2007), p. 15.

[15]   P. Freudenberger-Lötz, *Theologische Gespräche mit Kindern. Untersuchungen zur Profesionalisierung Studierender und Anstöße zu forschendem Lernen im Religionsunterricht,* Stuttgart 2007), p. 130.

## The context of Religious Education in Slovakia and the theme of "The parable of the Good Samaritan" in Religious Education classes

Roman-Catholic Religious Education in schools is a specific space, where pupils discover and learn about the reality from the religious point of view, which cannot be offered by other educational subjects in school. Teaching Religious Education creates space for pupils to inquire about existential and religious matters and to contemplate answers that are offered to them by the Catholic faith. In this way pupils broaden their own world-view, develop their own understanding of faith and life and have the possibility to discover their personal faith in God.

Based on the Treaty between the Slovak Republic and the Holy See about Catholic upbringing and education, the Roman-Catholic Religious Education is taught as one of the compulsory elective subjects in primary and secondary schools. Religious Education in schools is taught as confessional Religious Education, which enables a direct and authentic contact with the faith of Catholic Church. This meeting with the living experience of faith and its traditions also provides students with the opportunity to create a personal religious identity in an open and diverse society[16].

The biblical parable about the Good Samaritan is among the most popular biblical texts in Religious Education in schools. According to P. Freudenberger-Lötz, children in primary schools are capable of understanding the nature and the meaning of biblical parables. At the same time, she points out that there are significant differences between individual children and some pupils, as some of them are not able to define the meaning of the parable[17]. Similarly, A. Bucher emphasizes the importance of already acquired religious or biblical knowledge: the children that have the knowledge of biblical stories are able to identify the parables *as actual parables* at younger age compared to the children who do not posses this knowledge[18].

Similar conclusions are made by D. Hanesová, who within the scope of the study conducted among the children in Slovakia, confirms that

Religious Education

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[16]   T. Reimer, *Náboženská výchova ako rozvoj náboženských kompetencií,* Bratislava 2020, pp. 138-139.

[17]   P. Freudenberger-Lötz, *Theologische Gespräche mit Kindern. Untersuchungen zur Profesionalisierung Studierender und Anstöße zu forschendem Lernen im Religionsunterricht,* Stuttgart 2007, p. 146.

[18]   A.A. Bucher, *Gleichnisse verstehen lernen. Strukturgenetische Untersuchungen zur Rezeption synoptischer Parabeln,* Freiburg 1990, p. 20.

as long as the children have the basic knowledge of religious terms, they are able to express their religious experiences in a better way. This means that a child that has previous knowledge of biblical stories will be more successful in presenting its own interpretation of a biblical story[19].

For that reason, the work with biblical parables in Religious Education presents huge opportunities, as well as challenges and risks. On one side, the Religious Education incites the pupils to discover and learn about the "correct" meaning of a biblical parable, but on the other side, it encourages each student to express their understanding and thus adopt individual approaches in learning productively about a biblical parable.

The parable of the Good Samaritan in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 10, 25-37) belongs to the best-known texts of the New Testament. The parable of the Good Samaritan deals with an unknown man who is attacked and robbed by robbers and left heavily injured alongside the road. A priest and a Levite see him, but they pass by without helping him. Only a man from Samaria appears to help and have mercy. The parable is introduced by a Jewish law teacher with a question, "Who is my neighbour, who am I to help or to love?" The answer that Jesus gives in the parable about the Good Samaritan ignores this question and rather rephrases it: Who shown himself to be the neighbour of the one who needed help? While the pre-Christian piety deals with the issue of who deserves our help, the Jesus's Christian moral rather concentrates on this theme: Who has allowed himself to be transformed by the cult to become a source of help and love? The Christian morality is essentially not supposed to be a guide to how to act correctly, but a guide to the right way of being; worship is therefore a prerequisite for knowing our neighbours. The new life thus becomes the source of love[20].

Religious Education

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[19]   D. Hanesová, *Prvky konštruktivizmu v náboženskej pedagogike*, in: *Zborník vedeckovýskumných prác č. 14, Acta Universitatis Matthaei Belli*, ed. S. Karikov, Banská Bystrica 2013, p. 95.

[20]   F. Trstenský, Biblické východiská chápania milosrdenstva Boha, *Božie milosrdenstvo v obraze katechézy*, ed. P. Tirpák, Prešov 2016, p. 22.

## Realization and reflection of the theological conversations on the theme of "the Parable of the Good Samaritan"

In this part, we are going to introduce some specific sequences of realized Religious Education classes based on the theme of "the Parable of the Good Samaritan". The primary reflection is dedicated to the entry, more specifically the contextualisation of the teaching lesson. The idea is to understand the way the teacher brings the topic to the pupils and the way he or she forms the primary understanding of the topic in pupils. For that reason, we are going to deal with specific theological conversations that occurred in Religious Education classes and the knowledge that was brought into the mutual discussions by pupils themselves. In the end, we are going to present a few statements of the subject teachers connected to the reflection of the Religious Education class they taught. We based our study on the results of the implemented innovative education for Religious Education teachers, which was dedicated the topic of "theologizing of children in Religious Education classes"[21].

Religious Education

## Making a proper introduction to the lesson and introducing the topic

The primary task of the teacher is to introduce the topic and its context to pupils. In connection with this, P. Freudenberger-Lötz speaks about creating a stimulating learning environment. The point here is not only in preparing suitable materials, but rather in creating a correct stimulus, in order for each pupil to individually confront the given topic. The point here is also for the teacher together with the pupils to take steps through this created learning environment with the goal of mutual learning[22].

Based on the examined sequences of teaching lessons, we found out that in most of the cases the introduction of the topic of the parable of the Good Samaritan takes place in a very simple way – by reading a biblical text and by an introductory question made by the teacher, which usually equals to the reproduction of a text or a scene: "What happened in the story?". A specific example follows:

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[21]     Innovative education took place from October to December 2023 and 40 teachers of religious education participated in it.

[22]     P. Freudenberger-Lötz, *Theologische Gespräche mit Kindern. Untersuchungen zur Profesionalisierung Studierender und Anstöße zu forschendem Lernen im Religionsunterricht,* Stuttgart 2007, p. 127.

*In the beginning of the class, the teacher welcomes the pupils of the 4th grade, she introduces the topic to them and she distributes the worksheets. She stands at the teacher's deck during the reading of the biblical text of Luke 10, 25-37, then, during the children's work and discussion, she moves between the children and the desks.*

Teacher:    What happened in the story?

Miško:    The story is that the robbers attacked a man.

Teacher:    What did they do to him?

Miško:    They attacked him, beat him and some other things, they took everything from him and left him half dead alongside the road.

Teacher:    Would he have survived if no one had helped him? He might have died, right? Go ahead! Try! (She makes a gesture towards another pupil, who raised a hand.)

Michal:    A priest saw him, but he didn't help him.

Teacher:    Uhm.

Michal:    Then a Levite came along, and he saw that he was suffering, so he took him...

Ema:    Hmm. Not yet...

Teacher:    Who remembers how many people passed by... by the injured one, how many passed by?

Simonka:    Three.

Teacher:    Three. The first one was – yes – the priest, who was probably in a hurry to the temple. Quickly, quickly! The second one was the Levite, who served in the temple, and he was probably also in a hurry, and the third one was the Samaritan, the third one. Did you notice?

Class:    Yes! Yes!

Teacher:    The third one. What did he do?

Teo    ... so he felt extremely sorry for him. So he treated his wounds with oil and wine, took him with him and continued to take care of him.

Teacher:    Into a tavern. It is a type of a guest house, where you can also have some food. So he could recover completely. The Samaritan paid him the accommodation and the food. If necessary, he would pay any extra cost on his way back. If not for the Samaritan..., Samaritan means a citizen of Samaria, and they did not really like each other, they deprecated each other, they with the Jews reproached each other some things. Even though he was a Jew, he saw that the man needed his help. He overcame all those wrongs, prejudice and hatred, and I do not know what other reproaches, and told to himself, "But he needs my help." And that was what mattered. If it wasn't for the fact

that he realised it, that person probably wouldn't have survived. Do you agree?

Everybody: Yes. Of course.

The example given above is the most common type of introducing pupils to the biblical parable about the Good Samaritan. In most of the cases, the biblical text (Luke 10, 25-37) is read by the teachers, or they let the pupils read it. The most common way of learning about the text is done by a teacher asking a question in other for the pupils to reproduce the text, the scenes or the characters that appeared in the text, "So what was this story about?, Who can tell me?", "What did we hear about in this parable?", "What happened in the story?, What did we read about?", "Children, what did we hear about in this parable?", or simply by introducing into the lesson an emotional feedback to the presented biblical text, "Did you like this story?", "What did you find interesting about it?". Some teachers, already by their first question, try to make pupils evaluate the behaviour of the characters in the biblical story, "What do you think of the behaviour of the people in the story?", "What do you think this Samaritan did?", "Do you know what the word *merciful* means?", "What did Jesus want to say by telling this parable, what did he want to teach us?". In some cases, the initial question anticipates the basic answers of the parable, e.g. "Who do you think is your neighbour?", "Why do you think he is called the Good Samaritan?".

In the above given introduction into the topic of the Good Samaritan, the teacher, above all, takes a role of an accompanying professional, who contributes with her knowledge of the topic and complements it appropriately. More specifically, she corrects Michal with regard to the order of the characters and the person of the Levite as well as the Samaritan. The teacher then further explains the parable by explaining the term a 'tavern' as a place of accommodation and catering, as well as the generosity of the Samaritan. The teacher also chooses to explain the main intention of the parable, when she points out the hostile relationship between Jews and Samaritans, and thus she explains the challenging aspect and the importance of the Samaritan's help. The pupils here rather take a role of respondents to the individual questions of the teacher that she addresses to them directly ("Right?", "Did you notice?", "Do you agree?"). The pupils have the basic knowledge about the characters in the parable, although sometimes they do not get their order right. Although the teacher gives them time to express themselves, she does not strive to broaden their answers by adding any more appropriate questioning.

Religious Education

By observing this introduction to the lesson we notice a straight-forward dominance of the teacher's role, as she allows the students to clarify the basic elements of the biblical parable, but eventually takes on the task of explaining its basic characters, circumstances as well as the main significance of the parable. Her way of leaving the space for the pupils to deal with the biblical text more intensely is not sufficient, and she has them play the role of by-standers, who only react to the teacher's questions. On the side of the teacher, we can observe a "ping-pong" type of a dialogue with previously expected answers. Moreover, she does not take the opportunity to clarify the parable by using other biblical texts and thus enables the pupils to understand the parable in a broader context.

## Theological reasoning of the pupils based on the example of the parable of the Good Samaritan

The goal of the theological conversations in the Religious Education classes is to help and encourage pupils to do their own theological reasoning and understanding. It often requires the teacher to withdraw themselves and leave the pupils the space for expressing their views and opinions. According to the above given roles, the point is to become rather an attentive observer, who perceives the way the pupils understand the topic. As we have seen earlier, the teacher in this case is a dominating figure, she directs and outlines the teaching process rather than accompanying it.

Religious Education

The teacher's activity also influences the theological conversations of the pupils in Religious Education classes. Based on the examined sequences of the teaching lessons, we could observe that the teachers encountered big difficulties when leading pupils towards a more profound theological reasoning. Pupils rarely had real conversations with one another during the lesson, where they would react to one another and relate with each other. We bring one sequence of a conversation, where a simple theologising took place between pupils, at least in a small amount.

| | |
|---|---|
| Teacher: | So, please, could you read to me what you think is the most important in this story. Let's begin: |
| Emka: | The good and the help. |
| Teacher: | Well done. Do you agree with Emka? Maybe you have similar thoughts. |
| Darinka: | To behave well, to help somebody. |
| Veronika: | To be good persons and to help each other. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Simonka: | To spend less time on video games and to help people or parents. |
| Teacher: | Well done! Thank you. |
| Peťko: | To help each other more and not to fight against each other. |
| Mirko: | To help each other and to be friends. |
| Teacher: | Good. |
| Adam: | To do well and to help each other. |
| Teo: | To always help others. |
| Teacher: | Good. |
| Dianka: | To take an example. For example, to be helpful, gracious and kind. |
| Miško: | To help others, and when we die, it will be a point in heaven. |
| Michal: | A point in heaven? (He turns around to the classmate with a question.) |
| Miško: | Just like a reward for a good deed, don't you understand? |
| Michal: | Ok, well then. I have this one: to help and to ensure help. |
| Teacher: | To notice each other. |
| Betka: | To be good. |

The teacher introduces this sequence with an open question to all pupils ("What do you think is the most important in this story?"). The pupils react in a spontaneous and open manner. The teacher, by her entries ("well done", "good"), encourages pupils to join in with the answers. She decides to incite the conversation with questions and encouragement. The pupils prefer to react to the questions of the teacher and relate very little to each other. They do not comment on the answers of the others, nor do they evaluate them. The answer of Miško creates an extraordinary situation, as with his statement he brings a new aspect to the conversation, which incites a question. For others, "A point in heaven" (at least for Michal) is a misunderstood element. Michal repeats his statement, he dares to turn around to the classmate and ask for clarification. A surprising situation occurs. Miško takes on a role of a professional, who is capable of explaining his answer to the classmate and to defend his opinion before the others, while we can observe his own theological reasoning. Not only he discusses with the classmates the meaning of doing well, but he can also apply it in his life as a means of personal responsibility. At the same time, although pupils express it in a childlike way, a simple understanding of eschatology topics can be observed in this sequence – reward and punishment, particular judgement. The teacher takes on a role of an attentive observer in this situation, who perceives how pupils understand and reflect on the topic. This might also be an opportunity for a more intensive mirroring of the pupils' answers, but the teacher decides not

to enter into the dialogue and thus it ends instantly. Michal agrees with Miško and, at the same time, he says that he understood his intention. However, he does not want to remain in the position of a person who is being instructed, and adds his own opinion to the question.

Likewise, we observed the theological reasoning of the pupils in another examined sequence. After reading a text from the Bible, a conversation followed, where the teacher was asking about the characters that took part in the parable, while the teacher took a role of an accompanying professional who clarifies the ambiguities of the pupils (Jericho is a town, the character of the Levite, etc.). The conversation follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Martin: | The priest doesn't get it that he should help him, though. |
| Teacher: | And should he get it? We all would expect that the priest is the one who would help that man. |
| Adam: | Yes. So why didn't he help him? |
| Matúš: | Maybe he was drunk. |
| Martin: | Who was drunk? The priest? |
| Matúš: | No, that person. |
| Teacher: | Maybe it was like that. Who knows ... What other reason you think he had for not helping him? |
| Pupils: | He was lazy, proud, and blind. |
| Teacher: | How would he see him then? |
| Nicolas: | He might have tripped over him. |
| Teacher: | Hm, I didn't find anything like that in the text. |
| Matúš: | But I still don't understand, why that person, if he became a priest, doesn't believe in God? |
| Martin: | He didn't have a good heart. |
| Adam: | But the Samaritan's heart was lit by the oil of love. |
| Teacher: | Yes, his help is amazing, because he has shown mercy, his goodness. |

Religious Education

In the examined sequence, we can observe that the teacher is trying to change from the position of a professional to the position of an attentive observer. She clearly tries to avoid intervening into the pupils' conversation. The pupils' attention is evidently drawn to the behaviour of the priest. Based on their personal experience, they deduce that a priest is usually someone caring and someone who takes interest in other people. Here we encounter an antagonistic behaviour, which incites embarrassment and misunderstanding in pupils. It is explicitly expressed by Martin and Adam, when they say, "So why didn't he help him?" The pupils are now trying to understand the reasons for that behaviour. Matúš is trying to explain this behaviour by stating a possible negative characteristic of the injured ("Maybe he was drunk."),

which, at the beginning, is misunderstood by Martin. Matúš clarifies his statement that he is speaking about the injured man and possibly introduces his own experience into the discussion (for instance, an experience with a drunk homeless person), or rather a social convention (you do not have to help a drunk person). The pupils do not elaborate on this aspect, however, encouraged by the teacher, they rather concentrate on the priest, who refuses to help the injured person ("He was lazy, proud, blind ..."). While Martin emphasizes his moral attitude ("He didn't have a good heart"), Matúš introduces a completely new aspect: the faith in God. He interconnects the reluctance to help the injured with the obvious deficiency of lack of faith in God. Martin essentially surpasses the usual interpretation of the contrast between worship and charity and introduces a much more profound issue of faith and life. He basically expresses a theological reflection that the new life of a human departs from the faith in God: where there is a lack of faith, so there is lack of service to the neighbour. The new life thus literally becomes the source of love. Therefore, the Samaritan does not only become the prototype of service to the neighbours, but also a prototype of the faith in God. This is practically expressed also by Adam, who closes the discussion with a very interesting statement, describing the Samaritan's heart as "lit by the oil of love".

This studied sequence points out the fact that pupils can also become theologians and that they are capable of theological reasoning on a very intense level. However, the environment of acceptance in class is needed as well as the ability to listen to each other and the ability of the teacher to abandon the role of a professional and rather take on the role of an observer and a partner in dialogue.

However, on some occasions, the theological reasoning of pupils occurred also outside theological conversations. When studying the sequences of Religious Education classes concerning the theme of the Good Samaritan, we encountered the topic of drawing a picture containing the figure of the Good Samaritan. It was interesting to observe in various classes what colours the pupils used for colouring the pictures. Almost all children used warm tones when colouring the Samaritan: red, brown, orange, green. As for the antagonistic characters of the story, the children either did not colour them, they used grey tones, or they just struck them out. Such a contrast of characters emerged naturally, without a specific assignment from the teacher. Children thus made a distinction, even by using different colours, in order to accentuate who the good and the bad characters in the story

are. We can consider it a significant expression of theological reasoning based on the topic of a biblical parable.

During the reflection on their own teaching of the classes, the involved teachers emphasized the fact that they did not sufficiently profit from the ability of their pupils to take over the theologising process and to maintain theological conversations during Religious Education classes. One of the main obstacles here is above all the teacher's directive approach in religious education classes. One of the teachers expressed it in the following way: "Most of the time, I took on the role of an accompanying professional, who, in an unsuccessful way, tries to become an encouraging partner in the dialogue. The class is well together, the pupils know one another well, and they know how to make jokes. Maybe they were already tired because it was their last lesson. They answered my questions in a pre-learned manner and it did not take them too much time to think. Moreover, the pupils got used to consulting all their doubts with the teacher and I tend to direct them all the time (teacher, 38 years old)." Another teacher responded similarly, "I would love to take on the role of an attentive observer, but the conversation with the pupils has never developed in such a way that I could be this observer (teacher, 47 years old)." The teachers do realise that they could draw the pupils into the dialogue even more, leave more space to the pupils, and concentrate less on achieving the set lesson objectives.

Religious
Education

## The final evaluation of theological conversations on the theme of "the Parable of the Good Samaritan"

Based on the analysis and the evaluation of the examined sequences of the realised classes of religious education based on the theme of "the parable of the Good Samaritan", we can specify some interesting observations concerning Religious Education in Slovakia.

"The children's theology" as such is rather an unknown term. At present, there is no scientific or specialized literature that would deal with the study of children's theology in Religious Education classes. This reflects the fact that the Religious Education teachers do not see the children as individual subjects and the creators of their own religious reality. Also for that reason, in the examined sequences of the lessons, it occurs very rarely that the children express their own observations, questions, interpretations, thoughts, reasoning, reflections and judgements in connection with religious topics that they would think independently about.

A characteristic trait of Religious Education in Slovakia is a dominating figure of the religious education teacher. In most of the examined sequences, the teacher takes on the role of an accompanying professional, who takes over the teaching process, asks questions and contributes to the topic with his or her knowledge by offering possible solutions to the unresolved questions. That, however, means that teachers do not sufficiently develop the questioning attitude in children. One teacher expresses this concisely,

> I am not sure whether I supported and motivated them enough, but the pupils did not ask any questions during this class. I was surprised by this situation, as I know the pupils well, and I know that some of the boys are capable of asking significant questions. I think this happened, because this was their first lesson of the day, and they didn't feel like thinking. Or maybe I asked wrong questions. (…) I felt like I was the only one talking, I asked a question every time the class was quiet and then someone answered, but not all the pupils joined the conversation (teacher, 52 years old).

Religious
Education

In most of the cases, the teacher is aware of this dominance and considers the possibility to create for the pupils more space for thinking. This is what one teacher stated,

> Maybe I could have tried to leave even more space for pupils to develop their thoughts – I think we, teachers, intend to complement the class in order to avoid silence. At least I notice that I have a greater need to speak every time the class is silent, but maybe we would learn more if the teacher sometimes remained quiet for a longer period of time instead of speaking right away (teacher, 44 years old).

At the same time, the examined sequences of the Religious Education classes point out the fact that the teacher often plays the role of someone who directly delivers the knowledge about the Bible to the pupils and does not allow the pupils to come up with their own interpretations about the text.

> I didn't strive to find out the opinion of the pupils. I mainly wanted the pupils to understand the matter and the given topic. I didn't incite a much-needed genuine interest in pupils' interpretations by asking the correct questions (teacher, 54 years old).

However, based on the examined sequences of the Religious Education classes, we can state that where theological reasoning of the children occurred, we could witness very profound and intense theological thoughts and interpretations that are often even surprising. This is the

evidence that children's theologising in Religious Education classes, in fact, leads to developing theological competences of the pupils.

The children's theology and the emphasis on the theologising of the children in Religious Education classes is the new paradigm in teaching Religious Education and has the potential of becoming a new challenge for teaching Religious Education in Slovakia. In spite of the lacking scientific background of children's theology in Slovakia, it presents a huge potential in considering children as real theologians and as real actors of their own religiosity. It should be borne in mind that the emphasis on independence as well as on independent children's activity requires the Religious Education teachers to be actual partners in the dialogue with pupils. Although children are actual theologians, they only become theologians when accompanied by adults, who are capable of accepting existential questions and maintain them open for discussion and who, at the same time, live authentically by these questions and answers with regard to children.

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Religious Education

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# Exploring the Potential of Roman Catholic Clergy to Strengthen Societal Security in Poland Based on Empirical Research among Members of the Society of Dogmatic Theologians

The aim of this article was to explore the potential of Roman Catholic clergy to strengthen societal security. The presented conclusions are based on the results of an empirical study carried out among members of the Society of Dogmatic Theologians operating in Poland. The used research method was a diagnostic survey, the technique was a questionnaire, and the research tool was a survey questionnaire. This research combines perspectives inherent in theology (namely, pastoral theology) and security sciences (focused on societal security).

**Key words**: Church, pastoral theology, Theologians, parish functioning, societal security.

## Background

In view of contemporary trends towards the development of inter-disciplinary research, it makes sense to reflect on a seemingly rarely

explored common research domain in the Polish societal context. This is particularly relevant in the interface between theology – especially pastoral theology[1] – and security sciences, with a particular focus on societal security[2]. Detailed analyses of the functioning of the Roman Catholic Church and the accomplishment of its mission in the world, based on theology and custom, increasingly benefit from empirical research. The aim of such research is to objectively identify the phenomena of interest, especially those relevant to ministrative activity and the socio-cultural preconditions of the Church's salvific work under analysis[3]. A similar approach is found in security sciences[4], where it is precisely security that is often interpreted as a societal phenomenon[5]. In Polish research into societal security there is even an axiom stating the necessity of including the activities of churches and religious associations in analyses specific to the research domain mentioned here. This includes the role of churches and religious associations in charitable and care activities[6].

Observations of the Polish reality reveal that collective religious entities, such as parishes and various groups and associations operating in the ecclesiastic domain or inspired by the Gospel, have the potential to do good for society. Sometimes, however, this potential goes unnoticed or remains inactive. It can be assumed that the activities of the Roman Catholic Church in this area are, from a theological point of view, so ordinary and every day that they are not understood in non-religious terms – they are not seen as a significant contribution to improving societal security. The aim of this article was to explore the potential of Roman Catholic clergy to strengthen societal security on

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[1]    T. Wielebski, M. Tutak, *Meandry interdyscyplinarności teologii pastoralnej. Przyczynek do dyskusji*, "Teologia Praktyczna" 2016, 17, pp. 25-4.

[2]    M. Leszczyński, A. Szydlik-Leszczyńska, *Bezpieczeństwo społeczne w wymiarze lokalnym*, "Res Politicae" 2022, 14, pp. 99-11.

[3]    W. Przygoda, *Paradygmaty metodologiczne we współczesnej teologii pastoralnej*, "Teologia Praktyczna" 2009, 10, pp. 31-43.

[4]    J. Gierszewski, *The Importance of the System Category in Security Studies*, "Historia i Polityka" 2023, 44(51), pp. 55-72; M. Ciesielski, *Socjologia bezpieczeństwa jako subdyscyplina nauk o bezpieczeństwie*, "Cybersecurity and Law" 2019, 2, pp. 109-134.

[5]    A. Kołodziejczyk, *Bezpieczeństwo jako fenomen społeczny: pojęcie bezpieczeństwa, jego interpretacje i odmiany*, "Saeculum Christianum: Pismo Historyczno-Społeczne" 2007, 14(1), pp. 223-252.

[6]    J. Gierszewski, *Bezpieczeństwo społeczne. Studium z zakresu teorii bezpieczeństwa narodowego*, Difin, Warszawa 2013, p. 201; A. Skrabacz, *Bezpieczeństwo społeczne. Podstawy teoretyczne i praktyczne*, Warszawa 2012, p. 233.

the example of the feedback from members of the Society of Dogmatic Theologians operating in Poland. It is worth noting that the Society of Dogmatic Theologians is made up of both lay and ordained persons. This research belongs to the shared space of theology (especially pastoral theology) and security sciences (specifically, societal security).

## 2. Research methodology

The aim of this article was to explore the potential of Roman Catholic clergy to strengthen societal security. In order to realise this aim, we invited members of the Society of Dogmatic Theologians (hereafter TTD) to the survey, whom we asked about:
– What are the main functions of the Church, apart from sacramental ministry?
– What can priests do in the parish, for the sake of societal well-being, beyond the sacramental ministry?

The survey was conducted on 12-14 September 2022 among 64 members of the TTD. This group included ordained clergy but also lay theologians. It is an organisation that featured (as at the time of the research) 239 scholars engaged in dogmatic theology in their research and teaching work.

Social Teaching of the Church

The group participating in the study consisted of current lecturers in seminaries and theological faculties, i.e. those responsible for teaching and for the formation of future priests[7]. The selection of respondents was intentional due to their profession and knowledge of the research subject.

The research conducted among lecturers of Roman Catholic seminaries in Poland is significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, given the significant role that the Roman Catholic Church plays in Polish society, influencing the values, social norms, as well as attitudes and behaviours of citizens, this research can provide key information on the impact of the Church on the sense of societal security. Furthermore, by analysing the Church's contribution to security, which is a multidimensional concept that includes physical, psychological, economic and environmental aspects, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of which areas are emphasised by the Church and what strategies are used to promote them. The results of such research can therefore be applied to the formulation of public policies. The content of intellectual

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[7] For more information on this study, see the following publication, cf. C. Smuniewski, I. Urych, K. Majka, M. Składanowski, B. Bado, *What to Do with Free Time? The Prospect of Strengthening Societal Security in the Opinion of Polish Theologians*, "Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej" 2023, 22, pp. 229-259.

formation in seminaries is also not insignificant. To a large extent, the way in which the future leaders of the Church function in society and their active participation (or non-participation) in building societal security depends on this content. Ultimately, these studies can reveal how the Church adapts its approach to the changing needs of society and the ways in which the Gospel is proclaimed.

A diagnostic survey method and questionnaire technique were used to explore respondents' opinions on the Church's potential to strengthen societal security[8]. The used research tool was a proprietary survey questionnaire.

## The problem

From the point of view of Catholic theology, the concern of believers for society is simply a manifestation of the implementation of the commandment of love for the fellow men. It is also a manifestation of the communal nature of the human vocation. The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds people of this by stating: "The human person needs to live in society. For him society is not an extraneous addition but a requirement of his nature. Through the exchange with others, mutual service and dialogue with his brethren, man develops his potential; he thus responds to his vocation"[9]. The next point of the Catechism is significant, where, in defining the community, it describes it in relation to its potential (the endowment of "talents"). The strength of this community is revealed in its pursuit of diachronic and synchronic communion: "A society is a group of persons bound together organically by a principle of unity that goes beyond each one of them. As an assembly that is at once visible and spiritual, a society endures through time: it gathers up the past and prepares for the future. By means of society, each man is established as an 'heir' and receives certain 'talents' that enrich his identity and he must develop its fruits. He rightly owes loyalty to the communities of which he is part and respect to those of the authority who is in charge of the common good"[10]. The indication in the last sentence of this text – which treats "society" – of issues such as "communities", "authority" and "common good" mandates the interpretation of these indications of

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[8]     J. Sztumski, *Wstęp do metodologii i technik badań społecznych*, Katowice 2010, pp. 190-192.

[9]     *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., Citta del Vaticano 2019, no. 1879.

[10]     Ibidem, no. 1880.

ecclesiastic provenance as symphonic with the reflection inherent in societal security research.

In the context of the creation of the common good, considering the use of the Church's potential – including its strength, agility and efficiency – in strengthening societal security seems reasonable. Note that research from the perspective of theology, including Catholic social teaching, as well as various social sciences, is underway and with great success. This research is concerned with the role of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland in the process of societal security and, more broadly, its influence in the context of national security[11]. To clarify terms, by societal security we mean the protection and development of the existential and basic living conditions of individuals and the functioning of society. This includes the provision of opportunities to meet material and spiritual needs; the realisation of life aspirations through the creation of conditions for work, parenthood, education, rest, health protection and social guarantees. An important aspect also regards the building of care spaces for the seniors, the sick and the socially maladjusted, and support in recovery from difficult life situations. Societal security encompasses all legal, organisational and educational measures by the central government, local governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and individual citizens. These measures are intended to ensure a certain standard of living for individuals, families, social groups and to prevent their marginalisation and social exclusion. The reflection on societal security focuses on the analysis of measures (actions) at the state level and their manifestations at the local level, such as local government. It also includes the measures (actions) of individuals and organisations that are part of the fabric of social life, such as NGOs, trade unions, churches and religious associations. When interpreting societal security in this way, it should be seen as a force influencing the material, demographic and

Social Teaching of the Church

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[11]    S. Fel, K. Michaluk, *Religious Grammar of the Welfare State in Poland*, "Religions" 2023, 14(1), pp. 1-17; R. Zapart, *Kościół Katolicki w Polsce wobec nowych zagrożeń bezpieczeństwa narodowego*, "Polityka i Społeczeństwo" 2022, 3(20), pp. 221-237; S. Fel, K. Michaluk, *Idee i wartości katolickiej nauki społecznej a państwo dobrobytu w Polsce*, "Zeszyty Naukowe KUL" 2022, 65(4), pp. 5-22; S. Sowiński, *Kościół w sferze publicznej. Pewna strategia i jej ograniczenia*, "Chrześcijaństwo – Świat – Polityka" 2013/2014, 1/2(15/16), pp. 38-53; S. Sowiński, *Boskie, cesarskie, publiczne. Debata o legitymizacji Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce w sferze publicznej w latach 1989-2010*, Warszawa 2012; E. Nassalska, *Kościół Katolicki a bezpieczeństwo społeczne w Polsce*, "Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu. Nauki Społeczne" 2011, 4(213), pp. 138-160.

spiritual development of the nation[12]. Hence, societal security creation processes are closely tied to national security issues.

But why do we even think about the potential of the Roman Catholic Church in shaping societal security in Poland? When looking for an answer to this question, it is worth noting the results of surveys on social trust in Poland. The data from the surveys is provided by Centre for Public Opinion Research (Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej – CBOS)[13], which presents the attitudes of Polish citizens towards the activities of Caritas, the largest Church charity organisation in Poland. The operations of Caritas are wide and diverse, including rehabilitation centres, nursing and care homes, social care homes, occupational therapy workshops, single mother's homes, soup kitchens for the poor and day care centres for children and senior citizens. According to a CBOS survey published in April 2020, Caritas enjoys a high level of public trust, reaching 78%. This result places Caritas second in Poland in terms of public trust in aid organisations, just behind Wielka Orkiestra Świątecznej Pomocy (The Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity)[14], which earned 84% trust[15]. These figures clearly show that Caritas is an organisation that is active in the area of building societal security in Poland and, at the same time, an institution that enjoys considerable public trust.

When further considering the potential of the Roman Catholic Church in shaping societal security in Poland, it is worth referring to the results of research by Marcin Składanowski. This scholar from the Catholic University of Lublin (KUL), who is both a theologian and a securitologist, stresses the impossibility of separating Polish culture and statehood from Christianity. It recognises that Christianity is an

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[12]    P. Zając, *Definicja bezpieczeństwa społecznego okiem prawnika – krytyczna próba usystematyzowania pojęć*, "Roczniki Nauk Prawnych" 2019, 29(4), pp. 129-140; J. Gierszewski, *Bezpieczeństwo społeczne jako dziedzina bezpieczeństwa narodowego*, "Historia i Polityka" 2018, 23(30), pp. 21-38.

[13]    CBOS – Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej (Public Opinion Research Centre). It is one of the largest centres in Poland specialising in public opinion research and publishing information about changes in current states and trends. CBOS regularly provides research and survey results to state agencies and public institutions, issuing reports and carrying out projects that are marketing and scientific in nature.

[14]    WOŚP is a philanthropic non-governmental foundation. Its mission includes measures for health care by saving the lives of sick people, especially children, and working to improve their health, as well as working for health promotion and prevention.

[15]    M. Omyła-Rudzka, *Zaufanie społeczne*, CBOS Research Communication, no. 43, 2020, p. 11.

integral part of the Polish national identity and an important state-building factor. In the context of Poland, the Roman Catholic Church contributes to national security because: "(...) it integrates society, not only its own members, by upholding the rights of every individual, supporting what is good and valuable in the Polish public life – political, social and economic – while criticising and exposing those elements that harm humanity, disintegrate the national community and thus weaken the state (...)"[16]. This approach to the Polish specificity of the relationship between religion, and above all, the Roman Catholic Church, and public and even political life, was described by Krzysztof Kosela, a sociologist from the University of Warsaw – as an 'entangled identity'. The term comes from the title of his monograph: *Pole and Catholic: An Entangled Identity* (*Polak i katolik. Splątana tożsamość*)[17].

We can summarise the above discussion on the potential of the Roman Catholic Church in shaping societal security by referring to the research by Mirosława Grabowska, a sociologist from the University of Warsaw. Having analysed the collated data from nationwide surveys, Grabowska concluded that in Poland there is a correlation between religiosity (the religious practice – going to church, participating in public religious practices) and activity for other people and the common good. According to Grabowska, this shows that the Church, on the one hand, creates opportunities for such activities and, on the other hand, there are people who engage in these activities[18]. The activities can be considered as "community security actions", even though Grabowska herself did not use such term. In her research, Grabowska refers to parishes undertaking a variety of activities, not only organising pilgrimages to places of worship, but also other, non-religious activities, such as helping the poorest, caring for children and young people (by way of holiday trips or clubs), caring for the seniors or sick (including hospice operations), holding cultural events (concerts or exhibitions), sports and tourist events, managing libraries, cafés, or various training or courses (such as computer skills)[19]. In the light of this data, Mirosława Grabowska makes a bold statement: "(...) we are dealing not with an atrophy of the social functions performed

Social Teaching of the Church

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[16]    M. Składanowski, *Kościół, naród i państwo w perspektywie chrześcijańskiej. Refleksja ekumeniczna*, "Zeszyty Naukowe KUL" 2018, 61(4), p. 452.

[17]    K. Koseła, *Polak i katolik. Splątana tożsamość*, Warszawa 2003.

[18]    M. Grabowska, *Bóg a sprawa polska. Poza granicami teorii sekularyzacji*, Warszawa 2018, p. 201.

[19]    Ibidem.

by parishes, but rather with their hypertrophy"[20]. This data clearly indicates the potential of the Roman Catholic Church in shaping societal security, which should be followed and studied. From the point of view of society, such study is important for its welfare, while from the point of view of the Church, it is important for its theologically grounded societal mission.

## Functions of the Church to strengthen societal security

We were interested in the functions of the Church in strengthening societal security. We asked respondents "What are the main functions of the Church, apart from sacramental ministry?". The respondents were given the opportunity to indicate more than one answer in a set of the following suggestions: a) protection of mothers and parenthood; b) dissemination of patriotic values; c) formation of national identity; d) organisation of leisure activities for young people; e) building of societal bonds; f) support of social security; g) organisation of support for victims of domestic violence; h) support for victims of persecution and discrimination; i) raising awareness of problems related to alcoholism, drug addiction; j) counteracting societal pathologies; k) social activation; l) raising awareness of societal problems; m) teaching the principles of societal morality; n) other, which? The obtained answers made it possible to observe distinctive responses in the group of theologians surveyed.

The most frequently indicated function of the Church (78.1%) was "building societal bonds" and "teaching the principles of societal morality". While observing a trend, it is more common for younger theologians to indicate the Church's function of "building societal bonds" and older theologians to indicate "teaching the principles of societal morality". "Building societal bonds" was indicated by 86.7% of the respondents in the youngest age group (up to 40 y.o.), in the middle age group (41-55 y.o.) it was 82.6% and among the oldest (>55 y.o.) 69.2%. On the other hand, with regard to "teaching the principles of societal morality", among the youngest (up to 40 y.o.) only 60.0% of respondents indicated this function, among the older (41-55 y.o.) 87.0% and among the oldest (>55 y.o.) 80.8%.

The difference in views by age is also evident in the responses to other non-sacramental functions of the Church – "dissemination of patriotic values". Despite the fact that equally 50% of the interviewed theologians rank this activity among the main non-sacramental

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[20]     Ibidem.

functions of the Church and 50% of them do not indicate this activity, a difference in views by age of the respondents is apparent. Among the youngest (up to 40 y.o.) theologians only 20.0% indicate this, among the older (41-55 y.o.) the result is 52.2% while the oldest (>55 y.o.) is 65.4%. This differentiation is even more pronounced on the question involving patriotism. The respondents were able to indicate in the survey that one of the main functions of the Church, besides the sacramental ministry, is "formation of a national identity". Views on this issue are almost evenly distributed, with 48.4% agreeing with the view and 51.6% disagreeing. In contrast, there is a clear trend that mainly the older theologians who agree with this view. Among the oldest (>55 y.o.) 65.4% think so, among the middle-aged (41-55 y.o.) 52.2%, while among the youngest (up to 40 y.o.) only 13.3%.

Given the observed tendency for older and younger theologians to differ on ideological (patriotism, national identity) and socio-fundamental (societal bonds and societal morality) issues, let's look at the following socio-fundamental issues: "protection of mothers and parenthood", "organisation of support for victims of domestic violence", "support for victims of persecution and discrimination", "raising awareness of problems related to alcoholism, drug addiction", "counteracting societal pathologies". We omit here the issue of "organisation of leisure activities for young people" because the content related to it is presented in another study.[21] With regard to the "protection of mothers and parenthood", 54.7% of the survey participants recognise this action as one of the main functions of the Church, in addition to sacramental ministry. Those who are inclined towards this, however, are the older theologians. Among the oldest (>55 y.o.) it is 61.5%, in the middle group (41-55 y.o.) 65.2%, while among the youngest (up to 40 y.o.) only 26.7%.

As far as the "organisation of support for victims of domestic violence" is concerned, only 26.6% of respondents recognise this activity as one of the main functions of the Church, apart from sacramental ministry. In this small group of respondents, if we juxtapose the three distinguished age groups, the youngest ones (up to 40 y.o.) stand out with 33.3%, the older ones obtaining successively: 26.1% (41-55 y.o.) and 23.1% (>55 y.o.). Let us now look at "raising awareness of problems related to alcoholism, drug addiction". Less than half of the respondents think that this activity can be counted among the main functions of

Social Teaching of the Church

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[21]     See: C. Smuniewski, I. Urych, K. Majka, M. Składanowski, B. Bado, *What to Do with Free Time? The Prospect of Strengthening Societal Security in the Opinion of Polish Theologians*, "Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej" 2023, 22.

the Church (48.4%). Those who think so tend to be older theologians, 56.5% (41-55 y.o.) and 53.8% (>55 y.o.) respectively, while among the youngest (up to 40 y.o.) only 26.7% share this view. Regarding "counteracting societal pathologies", this Church activity was marked in the survey questionnaire by a slightly larger group of respondents (53.1%). In the group of the youngest (up to 40 y.o.) theologians, less than half (46.7%) are inclined towards this activity, among the older ones the result is higher and amounts to the following: 60.9% (41-55 y.o.) and 50.0% (>55 y.o.). The trend observed and described above is not exactly reproduced in the question of "support for victims of persecution and discrimination". This action of the Church was indicated by less than half of the respondents (39.1%). This group consists of respectively: 40.0% (up to 40 y.o.), 47.8% (41-55 y.o.) and 30.8% (>55 y.o.). Among the oldest theologians, there is the least support for this activity.

Among the suggestions included in the survey questionnaire, we proposed three general themes of a social-theoretical nature: "social activation", "raising awareness of societal problems" and "support for social security". Regarding the first theme, among those surveyed, 46.9% recognise it as one of the main functions of the Church, in addition to sacramental ministry. Among those who indicated this activity, older theologians predominate. While in the middle age group (41-55 y.o.) 56.5% think so and among the oldest 50.0% (>55 y.o.), among the youngest (up to 40 y.o.) it is only 26.7%. The activity "raising awareness of societal issues" was indicated by 51.6%. In this group, the youngest theologians stand out, albeit slightly. In their age group (up to 40 y.o.), 40.0% support this view. Among older theologians, the results are higher: 47.8% (41-55 y.o.) and 61.5% (>55 y.o.). On the other hand, the issue of "supporting social security" as one of the main functions of the Church was indicated by only 28.1%. In this group, the youngest theologians (up to 40 y.o.) also stand out with a score of 13.3%, while the older ones reach 34.8% (41-55 y.o.) and 30.8% (>55 y.o.) respectively.

For a more comprehensive picture of the above analyses it should be added that respondents were given the opportunity to list their own proposals for the main functions of the Church. Ten respondents took advantage of this opportunity. They listed: "Creating culture", "Conducting biblical studies", "Spreading the principles of natural law", "Creating bonds, relationships", "Helping people on the periphery", "Preaching the Gospel, catechisation, philosophical and theological education", "Charitable work", "Helping those in need", "Formation of the young, catechesis of adults, being with people, support (not necessarily social and material)". One respondent wrote: "The Church is not

one of many organisations for the societal good, if it can be reduced to the same understanding, it will be 'salt that loses its taste!'". It was this last answer (repeated by the respondent in the question concerning the possible activities of priests in the parish, for the sake of societal good – referred to in the next section of this article) identified in the questionnaires already on the day of the survey that prompted us to conduct additional individual interviews among the respondents on the subject of the activity of the Church in Poland in societal issues. On the basis of the twelve interviews, we deduced that theologians in Poland do not perceive the Church as an organisation with links to societal security-building processes. The very notion of 'security' seems rather alien to them in relation to theological concepts. Perhaps this is the result of their use of a hermetic theological language to describe the present. For in this language, the word 'security' is not associated with social or societal issues. However, it is to be expected that in the language of theology this concept will be increasingly used, if only in those areas of theology that concern moral theology and, above all, Catholic social teaching.

Considering the answers given to the question "What are the main functions of the Church, apart from the sacramental ministry?" and summarising the above analysis, it can be concluded that in the surveyed group of Polish theologians there is a division in views between younger (up to 40 y.o.) and older (>41 y.o.). The younger ones are more likely to think about building societal bonds without references to patriotism and national identity. It is also noticeable that the views of younger theologians on societal issues differ from those of older theologians. However, the sources as well as the possible consequences of this phenomenon need to be clarified in further research.

Social Teaching of the Church

## The role of priests in strengthening societal security

We were interested in the role of priests in strengthening societal security. We therefore asked in the survey: "What can priests do in the parish, for the sake of societal well-being, beyond the sacramental ministry?". Respondents were given the opportunity to indicate more than one answer in a set of the following suggestions: a) organisation (management) of leisure time for children, young people and adults (e.g. running interest circles, sports clubs, dance groups); b) volunteering; c) social animation (e.g. activating the local community to take action for the development of the neighbourhood/commune/village/town, work in the local government, organising debates, discussions

on the problems of the local community); d) societal diagnosis (e.g. identifying socially disadvantageous phenomena); e) prevention (e.g. prevention of addiction and other dysfunctional behaviour, like alcoholism, drug addiction, risky sexual behaviour and criminality); f) cultural animation (e.g. developing the creative skills and inventiveness of children, young people and adults, raising the level of cultural life in society); g) care and rearing (e.g. organising care for neglected children, abandoned children, chronically ill children; shaping moral attitudes in children and young people, the ability to make choices and hierarchise ethical values); h) re-socialisation (e.g. bringing socially maladjusted children and young people into forms of behaviour that conform to current societal norms); i) preparing children and young people to take responsibility for their own behaviour, to be independent in life and to interact with others; j) cooperation with NGOs; k) promoting the culture of national minorities, folk culture and regional culture; l) activity in local and national organisations aiding children, young people and adults; m) establishment (founding) and participation in the activities of social and educational institutions, associations (e.g. parish daycare centres) providing aid, especially to children and young people; n) counselling (e.g. helplines, consultation points, family counselling centres at parishes); o) celebration of national holidays (e.g. Independence Day); p) promotion of self and civil defence (e.g. altar servers taken to shooting range practice); q) other, which? The obtained results made it possible to observe distinctive responses. For the sake of clarity, in the following description we will present the indicated roles starting with the one that was most frequently selected by respondents.

Let us look at the most frequently indicated roles, taking into account the age of the surveyed theologians. **(1)** The most frequently indicated role of priests apart from sacramental ministry was "cultural animation" (70.3%). The respondents who indicated this activity were members of the oldest two age groups: (41-55 y.o.) 78.3% and (>55 y.o.) 76.9%. In the age group of the youngest theologians (up to 40 y.o.), this view is shared by less than half of the respondents – 46.7%. **(2)** Taking into account the number of answers selected by the respondents, the "volunteering" role came in second place with a result of 68.8%. As in the role of priests described above, also in this case, those who indicated this activity of the clergy are members of the oldest two age groups: (41-55 y.o.) 82.6% and (>55 y.o.) 65.4%. Only 53.3% of the youngest theologians (up to 40 y.o.) indicated this role. **(3)** The role of priests "care and rearing" was indicated by **65.6%** of respondents. In

this case, however, the youngest theologians (up to 40 y.o.) were the most frequent choice with 80.0%. In the other age groups, the choices are distributed as follows: 73.9% (41-55 y.o.) and 50.0% (>55 y.o.). Thus, the older the theologians are, the more sceptical they are about this role of the clergy. **(4)** The next – fourth – function indicated by respondents was "organisation (management) of leisure time for children, young people and adults" – result 64.1%. We skip discussing this function in detail because the content related to it is presented in another study[22]. **(5)** In the fifth place there is "counselling", indicated by 60.9% of respondents. This role of clergy was marked in the survey mainly by older theologians: (41-55 y.o.) 60.9% and (>55 y.o.) 65.4%. Younger theologians (up to 40 y.o.) once again differed in their responses from their older colleagues, as 53.3% of them indicated this function. **(6)** In the sixth place, with a score of 57.8%, there is the role "preparing children and young people to take responsibility for their own behaviour, to be independent in life and to interact with others". Those who identify this role with possible activities of priests are mainly older theologians: (41-55 y.o.) 65.2% and (>55 y.o.) 57.7%. Younger theologians (up to 40 y.o.) marked this role less frequently – 46.7%. **(7)** The clergy's role of "celebration of national holidays" came in the seventh place with a result of 56.3%. Here, the gap between the two age groups of the oldest theologians and that of the youngest is particularly apparent. Among the youngest (up to 40 y.o.), only one in four – 26.7% – indicated this role, while among the oldest it is two in three respondents: (41-55 y.o.) 69.6% and (>55 y.o.) 61.5%. **(8)** The eighth place in terms of frequency – 54.7% – was given to the function "establishment (founding) and participation in the activities of social and educational institutions, associations (e.g. parish daycare centres) providing aid, especially to children and young people". Here, too, the trend of differentiation by age is confirmed. In the middle age group (41-55 y.o.) 52.2% share this view and among the oldest (>55 y.o.) 61.5%. Among the youngest theologians (up to 40 y.o.), less than half of them recognise this role of the clergy – 46.7%. **(9)** In the ninth place there was "social animation" with a result of 51.6%. As in the role of priests described above and also in this case, those who indicated this clergy activity were members of the oldest two age groups: (41-55 y.o.) 65.2% and (>55 y.o.) 50.0%. Among the youngest (up to 40 y.o.), only one in three theologians – 33.3% – indicated this role. **(10)** The role of priests in "Cooperation with NGOs" was indicated by 50.0% of respondents. As a result, this role was ranked as the tenth. The aloofness of the

Social Teaching of the Church

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22    Ibidem.

youngest theologians is also evident in this case. While 60.9% of theologians (41-55 y.o.) and 46.2% of theologians (>55 y.o.) indicate this role, it is only 40.0% for the youngest (up to 40 y.o.). Thus, the tendency of the youngest theologians to have a slightly distinct position is also confirmed in this case.

In the remaining six categories, in which the frequency of choice is below 50%, the respondents' selections were distributed as follows (consistently given in descending order from position 11):

**(11)** "prevention (e.g. prevention of addiction and other dysfunctional behaviour, like alcoholism, drug addiction, risky sexual behaviour and criminality)" 42,2% – (up to 40 y.o. 33,3%), (41-55 y.o. 60,9%), (>55 y.o. 30,8%);

**(12)** "promoting the culture of national minorities, folk culture and regional culture" 37,5% – (up to 40 y.o. 20,0%), (41-55 y.o. 47,8%), (>55 y.o. 38,5%);

**(13)** "promotion of self and civil defence (e.g. altar servers taken to shooting range practice)" 32,8% – (up to 40 y.o. 6,7%), (41-55 y.o. 39,1%), (>55 y.o. 42,3%);

**(14)** "activity in local and national organisations aiding children, young people and adults" 31,2% – (up to 40 y.o. 20,0%), (41-55 y.o. 39,1%), (>55 y.o. 30,8%);

**(15)** "societal diagnosis" 28,1% – (up to 40 y.o. 6,7%), (41-55 y.o. 39,1%), (>55 y.o. 30,8%);

**(16)** "re-socialisation" 26,6% – (up to 40 y.o. 20,0%), (41-55 y.o. 30,4%), (>55 y.o. 26,9%).

In the above list, it is only in the eleventh position that the trend is disturbed, with the youngest theologians achieving a result of 33.3%, placing them between the older ones, who have 60.9% and 30.8% respectively. However, given that this is the eleventh position (marked by less than 50% of respondents), this result does not significantly distort the general trend evident in the survey.

For a more comprehensive picture of the above analyses it should be added that respondents were given the opportunity to list their own suggestions for possible roles of priests in the parish, for the sake of social welfare, beyond the sacramental ministry. Five respondents took advantage of this opportunity. They listed: "Marches in defence of the life of the unborn"; "Organising an eatery for the poor. Making parish Caritas the main parish organisation"; "Catechisation at the parish, developing the informed Christian faith through education, pastoral care". One respondent argued that the sentences we indicated in the survey questionnaire "can hardly be considered dedicated to priests

– because they can only undertake them if they are activities of their parish, communities". Another survey participant repeated the answer "The Church is not one of many organisations for the societal good, if She can be reduced to the same understanding, She will be 'salt that loses its taste!'" that he had noted at the previous question, which had been commented on earlier.

In light of the above, it can be said with great conviction that the youngest theologians (up to 40 y.o.) stand out from the rest of the community in their views. In this context, two statements must be made. Firstly, the youngest theologians point above all to the involvement of priests (not counting sacramental ministry) in "care and rearing (e.g. organising care for neglected children, abandoned children, chronically ill children; shaping moral attitudes in children and young people, the ability to make choices and hierarchise ethical values)" – this function was indicated by 80.0% of the theologians in this age group. Secondly, the role that was chosen just as frequently was "organisation (management) of leisure time for children, young people and adults (e.g. running interest circles, sports clubs, dance groups)" – 60.0% in this age group.

It is significant that the greatest extent of non-sacramental activity among clergy is seen by theologians who are in the middle age group (41-55 y.o.). However, this issue calls for further recognition and research, which is beyond the accepted scope of this study.

Social Teaching of the Church

## Conclusion

The aim of this article was to explore the potential of Roman Catholic clergy to strengthen societal security on the example of the feedback from members of the Society of Dogmatic Theologians operating in Poland. The analysis of the results of the empirical study carried out and presented in this paper made it possible to answer research problems and the following conclusions to be drawn:

1. Young theologians differ from older theologians not only in their approach to societal issues but also to national issues. They do not recognise, for example, the spreading of patriotic values and the formation of national identity as tasks that the Church should carry out. Similarly, many of them do not see the need for priests in parishes to be involved in celebrating national holidays (e.g. the restoration of independence) or promoting defensive attitudes.
2. Younger theologians' approach the contemporary agency of priests in the non-sacramental field with greater distance. This

distance is particularly noticeable in their frequency of marked responses in the surveys. Of the 16 proposed functions of priests, only four received approval from more than 50% of the young theologians. However, we do not know whether this state of affairs is due to their scepticism or perhaps to a desire to specialise in functions they considered important. Nevertheless, there is a discernible difference between the specified age groups of the respondents in this regard. Indeed, older theologians have a broader perspective on the role of priests in the modern world. However, through the present research, we know that this perspective is narrowing.

3. Theologians categorised in the age group (41-55 y.o.) are the most optimistic about the issue of priests' agency. Indeed, of all the listed age groups, they are the ones who indicate the most functions of priests as ones that should be carried out by them. The frequency of their indication is also high. However, the explanation of this phenomenon goes beyond the planned research framework of this study. This finding, however, should be treated as a stimulus for further in-depth research.

4. Theologians in Poland do not perceive the Church as an organisation with links to societal security-building processes. Moreover, this notion seems rather unknown to them in relation to theological concepts.

5. Despite the fact that the studied group of Theologians is a hermetic group, there are significant differences of a societal nature within it. It is also to be expected that future clergy, whose current teachers are mostly young theologians in the study group, will adopt positions close to those presented and analysed within the up to 40 y.o. age group.

In the light of the above, one more conclusion of a general nature can be formulated. The societal activity of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland should be the subject of theological and securitological studies. Such studies could contribute to the creation of a set of effective practices regarding the cooperation of religious organisations with local and central authorities. In turn, an interdisciplinary approach would allow for an in-depth analysis of societal activity and its optimisation. A scientific diagnosis of this phenomenon can support the development of coordinated cooperation between the state and the church that serves the common good, i.e. the well-being of society. In this way, research can contribute to a synthesis of the perspectives of pastoral theology and societal security sciences.

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# Contemporary Concept of Marriage and Family in the Opinion of Students

The article will address the problem of the contemporary concept of marriage and family in the opinion of students. The first part will address the issue of defining the concept of marriage in contemporary theological, canonical, psychological, pedagogical and sociological literature. In this context, a thorough and critical analysis and synthesis of the scientific literature on marriage will be made. It seems that marriage is an interdisciplinary term. In this approach, there will be a certain agreement as to the basic elements that make up the overall definition. In the second part of this publication, the same methodological steps as above will be undertaken, however, this time with regard to the concept of family. In this case, a certain, specific concept of an interdisciplinary family will emerge. The third part of the article will concern the analysis of the empirical research that had been conducted. Diagnostic survey is the method used in this research, and a questionnaire is the tool. At the beginning there will be a data sheet followed by six open questions. The entire article will be closed with a brief ending and conclusions.

**Key words**: cohabitation, marriage, engagement, polyamory, family, divorce.

## Introduction

The issue of marriage and family is the subject of numerous interdisciplinary studies. However, recently, new scientific disciplines dealing with marriage and family have been created. These are gamology and familiology. The main problem addressed in this article is the contemporary concept of marriage and family in the opinion of students. The structure of this article is based on two theoretical and one empirical parts. Hence, two methods were used. One of them is a critical analysis

and synthesis of the literature on marriage and family. The second method refers to the empirical part of the article. It is a diagnostic survey using a questionnaire as a research tool. The theoretical goal of the article is to present a coherent concept of marriage and family and to verify it with the concept of marriage and family formulated by the surveyed students. The pragmatic goal is to present the publication to parents, educators, teachers and specialists in the field of family sciences in educational work with a holistic approach.

The issues of marriage and family were the subject of particular concern of the last popes, St. John Paul II and Benedict XVI. There is a certain continuity in this. Benedict XVI dedicated his first encyclical *Deus caritas est* to the love that is God himself. He showed that the whole newness of the Christian understanding of God brings to light the newness of the Christian image of man. "The calling of the human person to love is the deepest essence of the reflection of God, to which God chose man, using the way of love to reveal to us people the deepest mystery of his life in the Holy Trinity. Here, Benedict XVI pointed out the close relationship existing between the image of God, who in entirety is love, and human love. Namely, monogamous marriage corresponds to the monotheistic image of God"[1]. True marital love is naturally realized in family life.

The traditional understanding of marriage and family was not unknown to the respondents. The respondents are students of the Faculty of Humanities and Computer Science of the Masovian University in Płock. They constituted a research sample of 80 people. The surveyed students were asked to answer six basic questions. At first, it was about providing our own definition of marriage and family. The next questions concerned open (polyamorous) relationships, informal relationships, engagement and the causes of divorce of married couples. An important element of scientific reflection regarded the confrontation of students' answers with current traditional views on marriage and family

Theology of the Family

## The concept of marriage

The modern concept of marriage in accordance with God's will can be found in canon 1055 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law: "Marriage is a covenant entered into freely by a man and a woman who have formed an indissoluble community of life, directed by its nature to the good of

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[1]     K. Koch, *Rodzina jako Kościół domowy w myśli Benedykta XVI*, in: *Rodzina jako Kościół domowy*, ed. A. Tomkiewicz, W. Wieczorek, Lublin 2010, p. 207.

the spouses and the procreation and upbringing of children". Within the meaning of canon law, marriage is by nature indissoluble, it should be said that it is lifelong[2]. E. Ozorowski emphasizes that the history of salvation is the realization of the Creator's saving plan over time. The Bible presents the history of humanity as creation, fall and the way of return. The fundamental feature of this teaching is the connection between God's relationship with people and the marital relationship between a man and a woman. These two realities interpenetrate and explain each other[3]. S. Wyszyński taught that:

> Marriage is a special type of covenant. It has the hallmark of a universal and socially necessary institution, but implemented by people consciously and voluntarily. In it, a human person abandons his loneliness and opens himself to another person; connects with it on a common path of life, which is also a way of giving new life. Marriage is the natural beginning of the family – the cradle of life[4].

We find similar definitions of marriage in the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

> The marital covenant, by which a man and a woman create a community of the whole of life, directed by its nature to the good of the spouses and the procreation and upbringing of offspring, has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament between the baptized[5].

The concept of "marriage" can also be defined in a philosophical context. It then means one of the basic forms of implementing the natural law of love. It is also a place of a "gift" from man to man – a complete, exclusive, irrevocable, total gift. "A gift unlimited in time, encompassing the whole man, his spirituality and corporeality, including sexuality"[6]. All the above concepts of marriage refer to marriage as a union of two people: a man and a woman.

Theology of the Family

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[2]     R. Sztychmiler, *Małżeństwo*, in: *Słownik małżeństwa i rodziny*, ed. E. Ozorowski, Warszawa–Łomianki 1999, p. 223.

[3]     E. Ozorowski, *Małżeństwo*, in: *Słownik małżeństwa i rodziny*, ed. E. Ozorowski, Warszawa–Łomianki 1999, p. 225.

[4]     S. Olejnik, *Teologia moralna życia społecznego*, Włocławek 2000, p. 271; cf. J. Kiedos, *Małżeństwo – rodzina – wychowanie w wypowiedziach Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego*, in: *Rodzina. Historia i społeczność*, ed. W. Korzeniowska, U. Szuścik, Kraków 2006, p. 11.

[5]     *Katechizm Kościoła katolickiego*, Poznań 1994, no. 1601.

[6]     P. Magier, *Małżeństwo i rodzina. Kluczowe elementy personalno-chrześcijańskiej koncepcji rodziny*, in: *Rodzina. Historia i współczesność*, ed. W. Korzeniowska, U. Szuścik, Kraków 2006, p. 85.

In understanding marriage as a natural system it should be emphasized that marriage is not just a mathematical or physical sum of two elements: a man and a woman, but is a whole that, in turn, creates a new quality. In this aspect, changes in one spouse determine changes in the other spouse and take on the nature of dynamic, mutual relationships[7].

Unlike the religious view of marriage, it is worth mentioning the secular definition of marriage. "Marriage is a permanent union between a man and a woman. Marriage is concluded by two unmarried persons of the opposite sex submitting a joint declaration on entering into marriage"[8]. Marriage in this sense is a legal relationship of a personal nature that binds a husband and a wife. The necessary conditions for entering into a marriage are: different sexes of the bride and groom and their declarations of will at the same time.

> The institution of marriage is characterized by: monogamy and equality of rights and obligations in personal and property relations. It may be included in a secular or religious form. Declarations about entering into marriage should, as a rule, be made publicly in the presence of two adult witnesses. Marriage can be concluded by persons who are over 18 years of age. For important reasons, the guardianship court may allow a woman who is over 16 years of age to enter into marriage[9].

The effect of entering into a marriage is that it imposes rights and obligations on both spouses. Spouses are obliged to: cohabitation, mutual assistance, fidelity, cooperation for the good of the family they have founded through their union, contributing to meeting the needs of the family – each according to their strength and earning and property potential, joint and several liability for the obligations incurred by one of them in matters resulting from meeting the ordinary needs of the family[10]. From the moment of marriage between the spouses a community of properties is established by law[11]. The institution of formal

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[7]    B. Harwas-Napierała, *Specyfika komunikacji interpersonalnej w rodzinie ujmowanej jako system*, in: *Psychologia rodziny*, ed. I. Janicka, H. Liberska, Warszawa 2014, p. 59; B. Yorburg, *Family relationship*, New York 1993.

[8]    https://www.infor.pl/slownik/prawo/74311,Malzenstwo.html (date of access: 13.01.2024).

[9]    Ibidem.

[10]   M.Z. Stepulak, *Futurystyczna wizja małżeństwa i rodziny w świetle aktualnej refleksji naukowej*, in: *System rodzinny w ujęciu temporalnym. Przeszłość – Teraźniejszość – Przyszłość*, ed. M.Z. Stepulak, J. Łukasiewicz, Lublin 2016, pp. 268-272.

[11]   https://www.infor.pl/slownik/prawo/74311,Malzenstwo.html (date of access: 13.01.2024).

marriage of an extra-sacramental nature is based in a special way on the interpersonal relationship as the relationship between a man and a woman[12]. This situation differs from a sacramental marriage, in which interpersonal relations between spouses are established and at the same time focused on the relationship with God.

## The concept of family

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines the family as follows: "A man and a woman united in marriage create a family with their children. This relationship is prior to recognition by the public authority; it imposes itself. It should be considered as the normal point of reference in determining the various degrees of kinship"[13]. The Polish term for family comes from the word "parent". A marriage between a man and a woman becomes a family at the moment of conception and then the birth of their first child. Spouses in such a situation are parents, the father and the mother. A family of a Christian nature strives to be, above all, a fully living part of the People of God of the New Covenant, to participate in the priestly, prophetic (teaching) and royal mission of Christ and His Church[14].

The condition for the implementation of this triple mission in the family is the development of mature religiosity and spirituality[15]. Nowadays, in the context of family issues, there is a confrontation of two theories: liberalism and conservatism. Liberal theory recommends that instead of religious faith developed in the family, the so-called civic education consisting in the ability to improve social relations.

> The basis for such a change from religious faith to 'civil faith' was provided by liberal anthropology, which showed man more as a social being (...) than as an autonomous individual pursuing his own immanent and transcendental goals[16].

A Catholic couple with a conservative orientation takes up the effort of self-education of the spouses and raising children in a religious

Theology of the Family

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12   See E. Mandal (ed.), *Masculinity and femininity in everyday life*, Katowice 2012.

13   *Katechizm Kościoła katolickiego*, Poznań 1994, no. 2202.

14   W. Tabaczyński. *Rodzina*, in: *Słownik małżeństwa i rodziny*, ed. E. Ozorowski, Warszawa–Łomianki 1999, p. 388.

15   M.Z. Stepulak, *Człowiek „wewnętrzny" w systemie rodzinnym*, in: *Współczesne problemy system rodzinnego. Diagnoza – Terapia – Profilaktyka*, ed. M.Z. Stepulak, Lublin 2014, pp. 62-63.

16   T. Zawojska, *Paedogogia perennis. Pomiędzy liberalizmem i konserwatyzmem*, in: *Wychowanie jako wartość*, ed. M.Z. Stepulak, M. Dubis, Lublin 2017, p. 128.

spirit. The following stages could be distinguished in this process: 1) Awakening. At its core, we can find adequate interpersonal relationships between the child and the parent. This type of relationship leads to the proper development of the personality of parents and their children. At this stage, mutual love plays a huge role, allowing the child to learn to understand his or her inner self and fully open up to God and other people. 2) The second stage is development. It is the process of giving the child a more complete idea of God. A child develops extraordinary sensitivity in reading God's presence in the surrounding reality. The child unconsciously uses modeling and imitation mechanisms and it builds its own religious orientation on the attitudes of his parents. Parents pass on to their children such values as: prayer, religious practices, decisions, the sense given to various meanings, and cultivating religious traditions and home customs. 3) The last stage is completion. This stage of religious education leads to full knowledge of God and the ability to express one's faith, to mature personal and free choices of values and to develop a sense of responsibility, to life in the "community of saints"[17].

According to L. Cynarzewska-Wlaźlik, family is a community of people connected by marriage and kinship (sometimes adoption), which is realized in the transmission of life, upbringing and introducing new generations to the cultural and religious heritage. The family is protected by the legal order and social and religious norms. It implements individual and community tasks and goals and meets the needs of love, belonging, growth and development. As a social group important for society, it is supported in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity by the state and the Church in fulfilling the rights and obligations arising from its nature and formal and institutional status[18].

A special type of family are multi-generational families. It is therefore important to notice the presence of elderly people. They are the guardians of collective memory and are worthy of the respect due to them, because the hallmark of a truly human civilization is expressed in the respect and love for elderly people. Intergenerational relations in the family system teach primarily those who are mature and honest in social life. In many families, grandchildren learn and discover the

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[17]   M.Z. Stepulak, *Religijny wymiar wychowania w systemie rodzinnym*, in: *Rodzina wobec współczesnych wyzwań*, ed. W. Kowalski, Lublin 2014, p. 283.

[18]   L. Cynarzewska-Wlaźlik, *Rodzina*, in: *Encyklopedia katolicka*, ed. E. Gigilewicz, vol. XVII, Lublin 2012, p. 178.

basics of faith thanks to their grandparents, and as a result, they learn adequate religious, spiritual and moral attitudes[19].

Among modern definitions there is the phrase that a family is nothing else than a group of people that are related to each other, most often through kinship, but also affinity or common residence. According to sociologists, it is also one of the most fundamental social units on which the entire society is based. Undoubtedly, the topic of family is one of the most interesting, as can be seen from how often this concept is studied by psychologists, familiologists, sociologists, educators and social workers. According to some, the family is the basic social group, according to others, the family is a system that should be considered as a whole. Nowadays, a new definition of family is given as a spiritual unification of a group of people gathered around one home and showing mutual care and concern based on belief in real or presumed biological connection. According to the Church, a family is a marriage between a man and a woman and their children who are spiritually united[20].

Ultimately, it seems that the definition of family is more complex, although nowadays many people try to limit it significantly, recognizing that only the mother, father and child constitute a family. As numerous definitions show, biological ties are not the only and basic determinant here. Of course, they are a certain basis, but they do not constitute an absolute rule. A family is a group of people that are related to each other (biologically, but not only), by the most important determinants, among which there are love, self-respect and willingness to help without expecting payment and care for each other[21].

## Analysis and interpretation of empirical research

For the purposes of this article, empirical research was carried out using the diagnostic survey method using the following questionnaire as a tool. The purpose of the survey questions was to obtain knowledge regarding the current concept of marriage and family among students. In this research, neither the main hypothesis nor specific hypotheses are formulated, because the questions formulated in the survey determine the direction of exploration of scientific investigations. The survey had the title: Marriage and family and took the following form:

Theology of the Family

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[19] M. Brzeziński, *Religijno-moralne życie rodziny w obliczu przemian społecznych*, in: *Rodzina europejska*, ed. J. Koperek, Lublin 2011, p. 92.

[20] https://rodzinarodzinie.pl/co-to-jest-rodzina (date of access: 16.01.2024).

[21] Ibidem.

**INSTRUCTIONS**: The following survey is anonymous. Please provide honest and complete answers to the questions below. The order of answering is optional (please provide the number of the question you are answering). You can get extra sheets of paper for your answers

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*Personal data:*
*Sex.................................................*
*Age.................................................*
*Place of residence: city; village..............*

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1. Please provide your own definition of marriage

2. Please provide your own definition of family

3. What is your opinion on open (polyamorous) relationships?

4. What is your belief about informal relationships?

5. How do you understand the concept of engagement and what does it mean for your future marriage?

6. What is the reason why many married couples divorce?

**Thank you very much for participating in the research. The information obtained will be used to prepare new methods and strategies necessary in working with people preparing for marriage.**

The table below shows the number of surveyed students according to their fields of study:

Table No. 1. Students of the studied fields of study

| No. | Field of study | Women | % | Men | % | Total (N) | % |
|-----|----------------|-------|------|-----|-------|-----------|--------|
| 1. | Social work | 7 | 13.07 | 1 | 4.55 | 8 | 10.00 |
| 2. | English philology | 9 | 15.52 | 1 | 4.55 | 10 | 10.50 |
| 3. | New media | 11 | 18.96 | 12 | 54.54 | 23 | 28.75 |
| 4. | Psychology | 31 | 53.45 | 8 | 36.36 | 39 | 48.75 |
| | **TOTAL** | 58 | 27.50 | 22 | 72.50 | 80 | 100.00 |

Source: the author's own research.

80 people participated in the research, including 58 women and 22 men. The study covered students of such fields as social work, English philology, new media and psychology. They were first, second and third year students. The above majors of studies are carried out

at the Faculty of Humanities and Computer Science of the Masovian University in Płock.

The surveyed students provided their own definitions of marriage in specific categories.

Table No. 2. Please provide your own definition of marriage

| No. | Category of answers | Women | % | Men | % | Total (N) | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | The love relationship of a man and a woman | 26 | 44.83 | 11 | 50.00 | 37 | 46.25 |
| 2. | Formal union of a man and a woman (church wedding, Civil Registry Office) | 29 | 50.00 | 11 | 50.00 | 40 | 50.00 |
| 3. | Alternative relationships (homosexual, cohabiting and other relationships) | 3 | 5.17 | - | - | 3 | 3.75 |
| | **Total** | 58 | 100.00 | 22 | 100.00 | 80 | 100.00 |

Source: the author's own research.

Giving their own definition of marriage, 50% of students claim that it is a formal union between a man and a woman (it may be a church wedding or a civil contract at the Civil Registry Office). This definition was given by 50% of women and 50% of men. In this case, young people's attachment to the traditional, conservative form of marriage is visible. The point is, however, that for them a church wedding is identical to a civil contract. Therefore, there is a lack of awareness of the distinction between the sacred and the profane. A similar view could be found in Polish literature[22]. The second proposal for the definition of marriage referred to the claim that marriage is a union of love between a man and a woman. This definition was given by 46.25% of students, including 44.83% of women and 50% of men. This definition correlates highly with the Polish-Belarusian research conducted in 2018[23]. The third category of answers was expressed by the definition that marriage is an alternative relationship (mainly homosexual, cohabiting and other

Theology of the Family

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[22]  Z. Tyszka, *Rodzina we współczesnym świecie*, Poznań 2003.

[23]  L. Łysiuk, M.Z. Stepulak (ed.), *Miłość nigdy nie ustaje. Miłość w systemie wartości rodzinnych*, Lublin–Brześć 2018; cf. B. Więckiewicz, *Katolicki model rodziny a wierność jego zasadom*, in: *Miłość, wierność i uczciwość na rozstajach współczesności*, ed. W. Muszyński, E. Sikora, Toruń 2008, pp. 36-46.

relationships). Similar research has been carried out in the world and in Poland, which confirms the selection of the above relationships[24] to an even greater extent. This definition was provided by 5.17% of women, which constitutes a total of 3.75% of all respondents.

Table No. 3. Please provide your own definition of family

| No. | Category of answers | Women | % | Men | % | Total (N) | % |
|-----|---------------------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----------|-----|
| 1. | Relationship of loving and related people | 49 | 84.48 | 16 | 72.73 | 65 | 81.25 |
| 2. | Family is a community and social value | 8 | 13.79 | 5 | 22.73 | 13 | 16.25 |
| 3. | Informal community (homosexual relationship) | 1 | 1.73 | 1 | 4.54 | 2 | 2.50 |
| | **Total** | 58 | 100.00 | 22 | 100.00 | 80 | 100.00 |

Source: the author's own research.

81.25% of respondents believe that a family is a union of loving and related people. 84.48% of women and 72.73% of men think so. Similar research results were obtained in Ukraine in the Volyn region[25]. 16.25% of students claim that family is a community as a social value. This applies to 13.79% of women and 22.73% of men. The third category of answers refers to the definition of family as an informal community (homosexual relationship). 2.50% of respondents think so, including 1.73% of women and 4.54% of men. Young people claim that they are not personally interested in such relationships, but they do not condemn such relationships.

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[24]    A.E. Artis, *Maternal Cohabitation and Child Well-Being among Kindergarten Children*, "Journal of Marriage and Family" 69 (2007), pp. 222-236; A. Goodman, E. Greaves, *Cohabitation Marriage and Relationship Stability*, "Economics& Social Research Council" 2010, pp. 1-13; C.M. Kamp Dush, P.R. Amato, *Marital and Cohabitation Dissolution and Parental Depressive Symptoms in Fragile Families*, "Journal of Marriage and the Family" 75(2013), pp. 91-109; A. Prusik, *Rodzina i jej alternatywne formy w poglądach młodych Polaków*, Olsztyn 2014; A.M. Zeiss, J. Kasl-Godley, *Sexuality in Older Adults' Relationships*, "Generations" 25(2) (2001), pp. 18-24.

[25]    I. Filippowa, Y. Yemielianova, *System wartości na pograniczu Ukrainy*, in: *Znaczenie wartości w badaniach psychologicznych i życiu społecznym*, ed. M.Z. Stepulak, J. Łukasiewicz, Lublin 2016, pp. 79-92; B. Ogrodowska, *Polskie tradycje i obyczaje rodzinne*, Warszawa 2011.

Table no. 4. What is your opinion about open (polyamorous) relationships?

| No. | Category of answers | Women | % | Men | % | Total (N) | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | The right way to break the traditional model of a relationship | 17 | 29.31 | 8 | 36.36 | 25 | 31.25 |
| 2. | Open relationships destroy values and true married life | 38 | 65.51 | 13 | 59.09 | 51 | 63.75 |
| 3. | I have no opinion | 3 | 5.18 | 1 | 4.55 | 4 | 5.00 |
| | **Total** | 58 | 100.00 | 22 | 100.00 | 80 | 100.00 |

Source: the author's own research.

31.25% of respondents, including 29.11% of women and 36.36% of men, believe that polyamorous relationships are the right way to break the traditional relationship model[26]. These types of responses are an expression of a protest against traditional marriages, which in many cases fall apart. This is therefore, an attitude of breaking generational transmission[27]. Some people claim that the tendency to enter into open relationships is a derivative of people's unstable emotionality and amorousness[28]. It may also be a desire to escape from routine and experiment[29]. However, 63.75% of respondents, including 65.51% of women and 59.09% of men, claim that open relationships destroy values and true married life.

Theology of the Family

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[26] D. Anapol, *Poliamoria. Miłość i intymność z wieloma partnerami i partnerkami*, Warszawa 2013.

[27] J.A. Lavner, B.R. Karney, T.N. Bradbury, *Do Cold Feet Warn of Trouble Ahead? Premarital Uncertainty and Four-Year Marital Outcomes*, "Journal of Family Psychology" 26(6) (2012), pp. 1012-1017.

[28] M. Sawicki, *Kochliwość. Czy to coś pomiędzy monogamią a poliamorią?*, "Charaktery" 9-10(32) (2023), pp. 36-40.

[29] A. Loewe-Kurilla, *Co nas motywuje do wchodzenia w otwarte związki?*, "Charaktery" 2(313) (2023), pp. 44-47.

Table no. 5. What is your belief about informal relationships?

| No. | Category of answers | Women | % | Men | % | Total (N) | % |
|-----|---------------------|-------|---|-----|---|-----------|---|
| 1. | 1. Informal relationships do not oblige you to anything. They provide opportunities for personal development and autonomy. | 46 | 79.32 | 19 | 86.36 | 65 | 81.25 |
| 2. | Informal relationships are at odds with maintaining fidelity and cultivating love. | 12 | 20.68 | 3 | 13.64 | 15 | 18.75 |
| | **Total** | 58 | 100.00 | 22 | 100.00 | 80 | 100.00 |

Source: the author's own research.

81.25% of surveyed students (79.32% of women and 86.36% of men) accept informal relationships. In their answers, they justify that informal relationships do not oblige them to anything. Such a statement can be found in the literature on the subject[30]. Nowadays, young people live in cohabitation as an informal, temporary relationship. This thesis is confirmed by my previous research on cohabitation[31]. Such relationships provide – according to students – a chance for personal development and human autonomy. 18.75% of respondents (20.68% of women and 13.64% of men) emphasize the importance of formal marriages (civil contract), but are even more in favor of sacramental marriages[32]. Therefore, there is a clear crisis related to entering into formal relationships, especially sacramental ones.

[30]    J. Kiedos, *Małżeństwo-rodzina-wychowanie w wypowiedziach Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego*, in: *Rodzina. Historia i społeczność*, ed. W. Korzeniowska, U. Szuścik, Kraków 2006, pp. 11-21. M.Z. Stepulak, *Postawy młodzieży maturalnej z diecezji siedleckiej wobec kohabitacji*, in: *Specyfika wychowania w systemie rodzinnym*, ed. M.Z. Stepulak, Lublin 2013, pp. 25-51.

[31]    M.Z. Stepulak, *Postawy młodzieży maturalnej z diecezji siedleckiej wobec kohabitacji*, in: *Specyfika wychowania w systemie rodzinnym*, ed. M.Z. Stepulak, Lublin 2013, pp. 25-51.

[32]    E. Zawadzka, *Funkcje rodziny dawniej i współcześnie. Podobieństwa i różnice – studium teoretyczne*, in: *Instytucja rodziny wczoraj i dziś. Perspektywa interdyscyplinarna*, ed. K.M. Stępkowska, J.K. Stępkowska, Lublin 2012, pp. 7-13.

Table no. 6. How do you understand the concept of engagement and what does it mean for your future marriage?

| No. | Category of answers | Women | % | Men | % | Total (N) | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | It is a special period of preparation for marriage | 53 | 91.38 | 18 | 81.81 | 71 | 88.75 |
| 2. | Engagement is an insignificant stage | 3 | 5.17 | 3 | 13.64 | 6 | 7.50 |
| 3. | I have no opinion | 2 | 3.45 | 1 | 4.55 | 3 | 3.75 |
| | **Total** | 58 | 100.00 | 22 | 100.00 | 80 | 100.00 |

Source: the author's own research.

The vast majority of students (88.75%), including 91.38% of women and 81.81% of men, emphasize that engagement is important. In their opinion, this is a special period of preparation for marriage[33]. However, it does not matter whether the bride and groom live together or separately before the wedding. Engagement and living together is the next stage leading to marriage. It is a kind of adjustment. This aspect highlights the lack of understanding of the proper definition of engagement, in which the teachings of the Catholic Church are an important element. The engaged couple cannot live together and must maintain premarital chastity[34]. Nowadays, there is a phenomenon of absolute acceptance of informal (engagement) relationships by parents in which their children live[35]. Only 7.5% of respondents believe that engagement is an insignificant stage in life. However, 3.75% of students have no opinion on engagement.

Theology of the Family

Table no. 7. What is the reason for divorce in many marriages?

| No. | Category of answers | Women | % | Men | % | Total (N) | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Incompatibility of characters and personality immaturity | 14 | 24.14 | 5 | 22.73 | 19 | 23.75 |

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[33]   See S. Bukalski, *Style przywiązaniowe nupturientów oraz inne czynniki psychologiczne jako predyktory jakości narzeczeństwa*, Szczecin 2013.

[34]   M.Z. Stepulak, *Religijny wymiar wychowania w systemie rodzinnym*, in: *Rodzina wobec współczesnych wyzwań*, ed. W. Kowalski, Lublin 2014, pp. 271-293.

[35]   See S. Plopa, *Rodzice a młodzież*, Warszawa 2012.

| No. | Category of answers | Women | % | Men | % | Total (N) | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2. | Lack of adequate interpersonal communication | 12 | 20.69 | 4 | 18.18 | 16 | 20.00 |
| 3. | Marital infidelity | 11 | 18.97 | 4 | 18.18 | 15 | 18.75 |
| 4 | Marital conflicts | 8 | 13.79 | 4 | 18.18 | 12 | 15.00 |
| 5. | Burnout in marriage | 8 | 13.79 | 4 | 18.18 | 12 | 15.00 |
| 6. | Financial problems | 5 | 8.62 | 1 | 4.55 | 6 | 7.50 |
|  | Total | 58 | 100.00 | 22 | 100.00 | 80 | 100.00 |

Source: the author's own research.

The surveyed students gave various reasons why people divorce. 23.75% of respondents believe that character incompatibility and personality immaturity are the main causes of divorce. However, it seems that in this case young people succumb to stereotypes. In this case, there are no fundamental differences between women and men[36]. The second reason for divorces is the lack of adequate interpersonal communication (20% of respondents). For 18.75%, the reason for divorce is marital infidelity. 15% of students believe that the next causes of divorce are marital conflicts and marital burnout. Financial problems are the reason for divorce for 7.5% of the surveyed people[37].

## Conclusion

Marriage is generally understood as a covenant entered into voluntarily by a man and a woman. The purpose of this covenant is the good of the spouses and the birth and upbringing of children. In the philosophical sense, marriage is a gift from man to man, exclusive, irrevocable and total. Marriage creates a whole that is a new quality. The concept of family is closely related to the definition of marriage. A marriage between a man and a woman becomes a family at the moment of conception and then the birth of their first child. There are two basic approaches to marriage: liberal and conservative. According to some researchers, the family is the basic social group. According to other scholars, the family is a system that should be looked at

[36]    M. Błażek, M. Kaźmierczak, A. Lewandowska-Walter, B. Pastwa-Wojciechowska, *Funkcjonowanie kobiet i mężczyzn w sytuacji rozwodowej – analiza psychologiczna*, "Polskie Forum Psychologiczne" 17(1) (2012), pp. 62-78.

[37]    E. Zubrzycka, *Narzeczeństwo, małżeństwo, rodzina, rozwód?*, Gdańsk 1993.

holistically. Family can also be defined as the spiritual unification of a group around one home. An important element of both marriage and family is mature love.

By analyzing and interpreting the results obtained in the research, the following conclusions could be drawn:

– Almost half of the surveyed students – 46.25% – defined marriage as a union between a man and a woman, and 50% believe that marriage is a formal union between a man and a woman (church wedding or civil contract). These results do not contradict the traditionally understood definition of marriage.

– Most respondents define family as a community of loving relatives. Family understood in this way grows out of marriage as a union between a man and a woman.

– 31.25% of respondents believe that polyamorous relationships are the right way to break the traditional relationship model. These statements are an expression of young people's opposition to tradition and the prevailing postmodern fashion. However, 63.75% of students are convinced that polyamory is an open relationship they destroy values and true married life. It may also be an expression of an individual approach to mature and responsible attitudes.

– 81.25% of respondents accept informal relationships. In their opinion, informal relationships do not oblige anyone to anything. However, almost 20% of respondents believe that informal relationships interfere with maintaining fidelity and cultivating true love.

Theology of the Family

– Generally, respondents understand engagement as a special period of preparation for marriage. However, students are far from the traditional understanding of engagement, which understands that the engaged couple cannot live together (cohabitation) and should maintain premarital chastity.

– The respondents list the reasons for divorce in the following order: incompatibility of characters, immaturity of personality, lack of adequate communication, marital infidelity, marital conflicts and, to a small extent, financial problems. However, it seems that students are guided by stereotypes prevailing in society.

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Theology
of the Family

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# A Person with a Disability in the Church: The Concept of the Active Church – the Objective Dimension

For a person with a disability the activity in the Church depends not only on the personal convictions but also on the external factors which are independent from him or her but which condition the possibility of being active in the Church to a greater extent. The article focuses on the analysis of the interviews conducted with people with physical disabilities, with the deaf, with the blind, with those with full or partial mental disability as well as with the caregivers of people with disabilities.

The aim of the article is to find answers to the following questions: which spheres of the pastoral practice determine the inclusive Church? To what extent can people with disabilities be active in the Church and to what extent do they want it? The article discusses the original Concept of the Active Church (KAK) in the objective dimension. The concept constitutes the answer to the above-mentioned questions.

KAK in the subjective dimension includes the spheres in which people with disabilities can and want to be active in the Church.

**Key words**: a person with a disability, the Church, the Active Church, inclusion, affiliation.

## Introduction. A person with a disability in the Church

The teaching of the contemporary Church indicates the need for including people with disabilities into the life of the community of the Church. Regardless of the kind and degree of disability, the faithful manifest certain expectations from the Church and this Church, through certain activities and initiatives, is inclusive for everybody,

and She activates the parish community and, through the integration of all the faithful, strengthens the sense of community and affiliation. The attempts to define the model of the inclusive Church accepting people with disabilities, were described by, among others: J.O. Enyinnaya[1], Wen-Pin Leow[2], J.M. Hull[3], E.W. Carter[4] (2021), Rea Dennis and Trish Murdoch[5], Mhelle LaRocque and Rick Eigenbrook[6] . In the practice of the ecclesial communities we can also find the attempts of implementation of the special projects which regard the correct and complete inclusion of the people with disabilities into the life of the community of the Church.

However, neither the integration nor the inclusion are enough to be determined as the satisfying feeling of being a part of the community. Eric W. Carte noticed the fact in a right way saying that the old concept of integration is now replaced by the concepts of inclusion or involvement. However it turns out that neither of these terms properly explains the need to belong. Man's true desire is to experience something more than integration or inclusion. Man wants the full belonging. The writer explains that the Church used to tend to integrate but nowadays She aims at inclusion and enabling. However, it seems that neither of these concepts reflect what is really important in this matter. Man wants to experience something more than only integration or inclusion. People with disabilities want to experience genuine belonging[7]. It should be emphasised that the need for belonging is not "an unusual need". In reality it is an ordinary need of the majority of people, also of those with disabilities. However, belonging is a concept difficult to define. It is immediately felt when we lack it, but defining the feeling is much more difficult. Eric W. Carter identified ten dimensions of belonging which condition achieving the satisfying level of belonging

Theology of the Family

[1]   J.O. Enyinnaya, *The Church's Ministry to People with Disability*, in: *Going and Making Disciples of all Nations*, Ogbomoso 2016, pp. 149-155.

[2]   L. Wen-Pin, *Enabling Hearts: A Primer for Disability-Inclusive Churches*, "Disability Ministry in Asia" 2021, vol. 1, Graceworks.

[3]   J.M. Hull, *Disability: The Inclusive Church Resource*, London 2014.

[4]   E.W. Carter, *A Place of Belonging: Including Individuals With Significant Disabilities in Faith Communities*, "Inclusive Practices" 1(1) 2022, pp. 6-12.

[5]   R. Dennis, T. Murdoch, *Disability Focus Groups: A Strategy for Including People with Disability in Parishes, Religion*, "Disability & Health" 2013, vol. 5/4, pp. 45-59.

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of a person with a disability. – or even of everyone – to the community of the faithful, although in practice this idea applies to the presence in any other group and can be a universal concept. In the terms defined by Carter, the proper building of the feeling of belonging to a community consists of ten dimensions: present, invited, welcomed, known, accepted, supported, cared for, befriended, needed, loved. Belonging is the source of feeling "in" and "for" the group or community which conditions the full belonging and engagement. Pope Francis writes that: "Numerous reports point to the lack of appropriate structures and ways of accompanying persons with disabilities, and call for new ways of welcoming their contribution and promoting their participation: in spite of its own teachings, the Church is in danger of imitating the way society casts them aside".

## Methodology

The method of synthesis used in the article is based on the acquired results of the sociological research conducted among people with disabilities and their caregivers throughout the whole Poland.

The nationwide qualitative research (using the Focused Group Interview FGI) was conducted among people suffering from disabilties (people with physical disabilities, the deaf, the blind and the visually-impaired, those with full or partial mental disability) as well as among the caregivers of people with disabilities. The researchers used the selection of an intentional sample. The research was focused on providing the maximum volatility in the sample, which allowed for capturing variation and diversity within the research field. The assumption allowed for understanding the areas of activity in the religious life of people suffering from various disabilities and with different intensity of them, living in various parts of the country. Due to the subject of the research, it was assumed that only the faithful of the Roman Catholic Church would be taking part in the quantitative research. At the same time, the degree of religiousness among the participants of the research was not taken into account or evaluated because the degree of religiousness was not the subject of the discussion.

The research material consisted of a transcript of 49 in-depth interviews conducted in five groups of people: with the deaf (the number of conducted interviews – 7), with the physically disabled – (the number of conducted interviews – 4), with the blind – (the number of conducted interiews – 5), with developmental disorders (the number of

the interviews – 24), with the caregivers of the people with disabilities (the number of the interviews – 9).

The interviews were considered to be the tool for getting to know the way in which the interviewees perceive the issues which constituted the subject of the interviews. The conducted interviews enabled the participants to present the issues from their perspective and with their own words.

During the elaboration on the transcript of the interviews, the researchers indicated the following major topics dicussed in the interviews: faith in God, the prayer, the Holy Mass, sacraments, activity in the liturgical service, activity in the parish communities, the attitudes of parishioners, the expected attitudes of parishioners, the clergy, the obstacles to the active participation in the religious and community life.

The researchers used the following research tools: coding the meanings, condensation of the meanings, cathegorization of the meanings.

## The Concept of the Active Church – the objective dimension (further on: also KAK)

The active Church in the objective dimension is built on three pillars: the priest – the person with a disability – the environment consisting of the able-bodied people[8]. The responsibility for inclusion is particularly emphasised, not only with regard to the priest but also to all the members of the community of the Church and – which is obvious, to the very person with a disability. However, the objective dimension constitutes the foundation on which all the important dimensions of the presence in the community of the Church are based.

Theology of the Family

The Concept of the Active Church (KAK) aims at determining the full model of inclusion and belonging of the people with disabilities in such dimensions as: pastoral care, architecture, liturgy and sacraments, community, and belonging, catechesis and communication. It is also worth to indicate that KAK focuses on shifting the full responsibility for the presence of the people with disabilties in the Church from the priest to the person with a disability and to other faithful alike.

### Pastoral care

The interviewees assign the key role in building the idea of the Active Church to the priests and expect them to be engaged and to take

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8     Zielińska-Król K., Referat: *Koncepcja Aktywnego Kościoła*; Konferencja: *Niepełnosprawność – zadanie czy wyzwanie we współczesnym świecie?*, UKSW, Warszawa, November 2022.

initiatives to create an inclusive parish. Their activities directed at including everyone to take various activities in accordance with their needs and possibilities in the broad scope of the functioning of the parish community, are necessary for building the sense of belonging. Pastoral care is addressed to all the parishioners and it aims at creating the integrated formation, adjusted and available, which aims at including all the able-bodied and disabled into the main stream of the parish community life. Although the interviewees with disabilities perceive priests as organizers and initiators of the Active Church, we must bear in mind that – as it was mentioned above – the initiative should reach both the able-bodied and the disabled who take on the tasks resulting from KAK alike.

## Architecture

The Active Church in the context of architecture focuses on providing such structural and organizational conditions which will enable: the full accessibility to the places of worship and prayer (this regards e.g. the proper width of entrances, drives for the wheelchairs (or the lifts), access to the adapted spaces and methods enabling preparation for and receiving sacraments, materials in alternative formats (e.g. Braille's with regard to the principles of a text which is easy to read and to understand and which is available in electronic form).

In the situation when it is impossible to adapt the space (e.g. limitations resulting from the custody of the conservator of monuments), it is necessary to promote such strategies of support which will enhance independence and self-reliance of each individual instead of preserving their dependence on others or their isolation. The strategies of creating inclusive space of the parish consist in taking into account various needs of parishioners. In the contemporary world the idea of normalization of the life of people with disabilities has its own practical implications in the form of the universal designing. In this context, the accessibility of the churches is also emphasized. For obvious reasons the universal designing will not be applied in all churches, however, in case of renovating, building or adaptation of the buildings used for religious purposes – the places of worship, it is particularly necessary to implement.

## Liturgy and sacraments

In the dimension of the liturgy and sacraments, the interviewees clearly indicated the conditions which determine the level of presence

and engagement of a person with disabilities in the community of the Church. The necessary condition for that is the adaptation of the communication (with special regard to the adaptation of the songbooks, of the Holy Scripture, of the prayer books and of other printed texts), the possibility to use the translators of the sign language or displaying the subtitles on the screen in such a way as to enable reading to the people with special needs. Participation of people with disabilities in the Holy Mass, receiving the sacraments and belonging to religious communities constitute the foundations of the Active Church which help to satisfy not only the spiritual needs but also the social needs, – being a part of a community, sharing experiences, experiencing belonging in the full sense[9].

Popularization of activities directed at the development of the social responsibility and citizens' initiatives enables to obtain the support from associations and foundations which provide service for people with disabilities. In this context it regards not the organizational aid but rather the conceptual aid, creating the forms of inclusion, initiating the inclusive methods of participating in the ministered pastoral services and in the community service.

## Catechesis

Catechesis is the generally understood work which consists in the whole pastoral activity that is the formation of religious attitudes, catechization through the preparation for receiving sacraments, participating in the worship, in the days of retreat, pilgrimage[10]. The analysis of the interviews leads to the conclusions that the offer of KAK assumes taking particular care for this type of catechization of children, of young people and adults with disabilities, with the particular emphasis on the catechization of the deaf, of those physically disabled, of the blind, of the ones with the impaired intellectual norms and of those with developmental disorders.

Theology of the Family

While implementing the contents of the teaching and religious education, educators should make use of the potential created by the environment of the student, person as well as by the material and didactic base of the school and of the parish. The development of the religious life of the person according to the principle that everyone, regardless of their limitations, is capable of development in their holiness, should be

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[9]     N.H. Annandale, E.W. Carter, *Disability and theological education: A North American study*, "Theological Education" 48(2) 2014, pp. 83-102.

[10]    Stopikowski A., *Duszpasterstwo osób głuchoniemych na przykładzie archidiecezji częstochowskiej w latach 1952-2012*, Kraków 2016, p. 60.

the most important criterion for the selection of the content. The implementation of the content is connected with the favourable educational conditions which enable discovering of faith. While implementing this task, it is essential to get to know the environment of the person with disabilities, particularly the parents and the family environment. It is also necessary to take into account the unique individual cognitive and developmental criterion of the person who is eager to participate in the catechesis or/and in receiving the sacraments. This concerns the intellectual potential of the person with a disability but also the way they experience their faith, and, in particular cases, the regard to the faith and religious attitudes of the parents / caregivers of the person with a disability or of the community to which they belong, as this may be the important aspect of the implementation. The Concept of the Active Church indicates that the syllabus of catechization should include the full account of the individual pace of development and of the cognitive and perception abilities of a disabled person.

## Community and belonging

The statements of the interviewees who experience disabilities indicate that the feeling of belonging to a community is extremely important in building the bonds and integrity with the group, however, not in the sphere of the dedicated pastoral care but also for the universal pastoral care. The idea of the Active Church indicates initiating, especially by priests, the activity which aims at facilitating it for people with disabilities to be able to function as independent individuals, particularly in the parish. The surveyed group of the faithful expects the attitude of openness and flexibility of their priests and of other members of the parish, along with the positive atmosphere which would motivate them to regularly participate in the liturgy and in other activities in the parish. The Active Church is also a place which is inclusive and encouraging for its members to intitate organizing various activities for the people with disabilities and by them as well.

On the one hand, people with various disabilities are the recipients of the initiative of formulating a wide variety of classes which correspond with certain kind of disability, however, on the other hand, they can and want to be the source of inspiration and help for others. Many disabled people are bestowed with extraordinary gifts which can be used in their community and for the community.

## 3.6 Communication and openness

People with disabilities often suffer from the so called "social suffering" – experiencing loneliness and rejection[11]. On the one hand, it results from the limited possibilities to make spontaneous social contacts. On the other hand, the functional consequences of the dysfunctions they suffer from, such as: impeded mobility, communication difficulty influence their possibility to realize certain roles. The Active Church treats a person with disabilities in the cathegory of "one of us" and not as "one of them"[12]. It is also re-emphasising the formula that a person with disabilities can also be a giver and not only a taker of all the forms of action, support, help and engagement. For those taking part in the research, the personal relations with priests and with animators of evangelizing groups are of particular importance. The genuine engagement of priests, of the leaders of communities and of prayer groups into the matters of people with disabilities can be the source of their religious life development. The man who experiences suffering and loneliness, who is aware of their infirmity in many life situations, who faces rejection or isolation, and at the same time is trying to develop a positive identity – needs other people who would accept him the way he is, who would give him care, respect, liking and their genuine presence.

KAK is the answer to the need for an emphatic listener, for an aware witness who would firstly understand the negative emotions (dismay, anxiety suffering), and later on will provide skilful spiritual guidance and will become the leader of creating the inclusive space. The process of adaptation to the limited bodily physical ability is multiphase, filled with numerous dramatic situations, emotionally difficult. In the Active Church, people with disabilities who are undergoing this process can use the help of psychologists and spiritual therapists. The genuine interest, emotional support, readiness to listen and to understand, indicating the forms of aid which are adequate to the experienced situation, are a foundation for the development in faith, and often the reason to remain in the Church. In the context of initiating communication, it is worth to re-emphasise the parallel role of the other members of the community and of the disabled members as well. They are equally invited and responsible for the satisfying and efficient communication as well as for building the sense of belonging.

Theology
of the Family

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[11]     Ż. Stelter, *Cierpienie a utrata sprawności*, Poznań 2010, p. 2, https://repozytorium.amu.edu.pl/bitstreams/bb54bc4f-646c-4b53-aecf-7a3c98fe78cd/download

[12]     See D. Lipiec, *Przeciwdziałanie marginalizacji niepełnosprawnych w życiu wspólnotowym Kościoła*, "Polonia Sacra" 22/4(53) 2018, pp. 135-149.

## Conclusions

The analysis of the conducted interviews with people with disabilities allows to conclude that the degree of engagement of the life of the parish, the sense of belonging to the community of the Church, spiritual development and growing in faith to a great extent depend not only on the level of their religiousness or on the degree of trust in the Church but also on the atmosphere of openness, on infrastructural availability and on the proper "offer" in the Church. Many faithful with various dysfunctions can manifest certain dualism; sometimes they separate their faith and spirituality from the physical participation in a devotion, often deciding to participate in the worship through watching of listening to a TV or a radio broadcast or visit the church after the time of the Mass. On the other hand, their needs of the physical presence in the community of the Church can easily be noticed. Such an attitude partly results from the specific nature of their physical and mental limitations, however, it seems crucial for them to feel invited to the community. Such an invitation results not only in getting through with a message. The invitation is also connected with the message that the presence of the person is expected and awaited. The invitation is personal, targeted, nonrandom, it allows to feel that the invited person and his or her presence is essential.

It should be emphasised that the activity of people with disabilities in the Church results on an equal footing from the initiative of priests, of the whole community of the Church as well as of the people with disabilities themselves. Priests, through their activity and their attitudes, create the positive atmosphere enabling the presence of this group of faithful in the religious devotions. The members of the community, while observing the priests' activity and leadership, their openness and understanding for the people who suffer from disabilities, often follow the message and change their own attitudes into more positive ones. All in all, the people with disabilities also have their tasks which enable but also compulsorily include the responsibility for determining their place in the community of the Church.

This means that everybody (the able-bodied and the disabled) can be the addressees of the activity of others, but also, that they themselves – to the best of their abilities – have the right or even the duty, to get engaged into the life of the community of the parish and in its dynamics. At the same time the Church is obliged to provide the conditions and possibilities of various ways of involvement within the range:
   – accessibility and participation in liturgies, devotions and receiving sacraments;

– every basic function;
– the parish and sacramental catechesis;
– engagement in the parish prayer, the caregiving, educational, cultural, social and other groups;
– inclusion into the entities and teams connected with the functioning of the parish;
– access to information and the possibility to communicate, taking into account the participation of priests, of people with disabilities and of the able-bodied.

According to Amadeusz Krause's apt comment, "the gravity" of the contemporary marginalization is transferred towards taking responsibility for one's own fate. The negative social marking caused by external factors, which are independent from an individual, and which include disability, diminishes. The factors which influence social exclusion are conditioned by the society to a lesser extent, and to a greater extent it depends from the individual competence (resourcefulness, the ability to cope with crises). Therefore, we can assume that it is not the environment that marginalizes an individual but an individual contributes to it himself to some extent. It emphasises the role and responsibilities of people with disabilities for the participation and activity in the community of the Church as well as the responsibility for the effective communication of their needs, expectations and abilities.

Building the Church which is open and inclusive for everybody and which is hospitable to everybody alike, is the more important as it assumes the responsibility for all the members. It is worth to emphasise the words of Pope Francis that disability "that we exist as an *us* and not a *them*"[13], we are convinced about it

Theology of the Family

> whenever disability, whether temporary or due to natural aging, affects ourselves or someone for whom we care. Then we begin to look at reality with new eyes and we see the need to break down even those barriers that at first seemed insignificant. Nothing, however, can detract from our certainty that no disability – temporary, acquired or permanent – can change the fact that we are all children of the one Father and enjoy the same dignity. The Lord loves us all with the same tender, fatherly and unconditional love[14].

In the Church they should have their own place to which they are invited. Building the activity of people with disabilities in the Church

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[13]    Francis, *Orędzie na Międzynarodowy Dzień Osób Niepełnosprawnych*, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/messages/pont-messages/2022/documents/20221203_messaggio-disabilita.html

[14]    Ibidem.

not only creates a more inclusive religious environment but also promotes the idea of a community which includes the variety and cares for the needs of all its members.

The suggested Concept of the Active Church, in the whole range of the described spheres, is the answer to the needs indicated by people with disabilities. This concept can become the foundation for building a proper model of the presence and activity of people with disabilities in the community of the Church and it will implement the Pope's idea of the "hospitable home".

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Theology
of the Family

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# Reimagining Heaven. Visions of Late Medieval Female Mystics

Eschatology is important for people of all times, but it had particular significance during the Middle Ages. Eschatological fears, especially triggered by plagues and wars, were common at that time. People lived in constant proximity to death. As a result, they were especially open to the hope of eternal life provided by Christianity. The experiences of female mystics are particularly interesting and valuable for understanding the eschatology of that period. Among others, really important are their descriptions of heaven which seem innovative for those times. They depict heaven not only as a perfect hierarchical structure but first of all as an experience of fervent love from God. Undoubtedly, the mystic women surprise with their original, fresh, and daring approach to matters related to life after death.

**Key words**: Eschatology, Haeven, mysticism, female mistics, Middle Ages.

## Introduction

Eschatological themes, especially the fate of the soul after death and descriptions of heaven and hell, were some of the main themes of medieval mystical literature[1]. The focus of its interest was not necessarily the eschatological places themselves, but rather the experiences of the soul encountering Christ in the afterlife. This was an expression of the affective meditation developing at the time, focusing on the emotional, individual bond between one's soul and God[2]. An example

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[1] E. Gardiner, *Medieval Visions of Heaven and Hell. A Sourcebook,* New York 2018; R.M. Pollard, *Imagining the Medieval Afterlife,* Cambridge–New York 2020.

[2] C.W. Atkinson, *Mystic and Pilgrim. The Book and the World of Margery Kempe,* Ithaca NY 1985, pp. 129-156.

of this tendency is late medieval female mysticism[3], flourishing from the 12th to the 16th century[4]. Women's mystical experience brought new light to the understanding of eschatological truths. Their writings attained a high reputation in the Middle Ages and became the real authority. This seems to be a particularly intriguing phenomenon, considering the social relations of the time and the low status of women.

This article is dedicated to images of heaven present in the writings of medieval female mystics[5]. Particularly interesting and valuable sources on this topic can be found e.g. in the mystical experiences of Hildegard of Bingen[6] (1098-1179), Mechthild of Magdeburg[7] (1207-1282), Gertrude the Great[8] (1256-1302), Angela of Foligno (1248-1309), Birgitta of Sweden[9] (1303-1373), Catherine of Siena (1347-1380), Fran-

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[3]   The phenomenon of medieval women's mysticism is discussed from a historical perspective for example in the following publication: C.W. Bynum, *Jesus as Mother. Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*, Berkeley 1982, pp. 170-209.

[4]   Z. Danielewicz, *Niebo. Historia przyszłości*, Warszawa 2005, p. 136.

[5]   E.R. Obbard, *Medieval Women Mystics: Gertrude the Great, Angela of Foligno, Birgitta of Sweden, Julian of Norwich: Selected Spiritual Writings*, New York 2002.

[6]   In Italy, Hildegard's texts were disseminated in a very popular collection of apocalyptic texts by Sybilla Tiburtina. Hildegard became known as the Sibyl of the Rhine and was mentioned in a line with other sibyls and apocalyptic prophets. Her popularity began to fade only in the 16th century. See: A. Holdenried, *The Sibyl and Her Scribes. Manuscripts and Interpretation of the Latin Sibylla Tiburtina c. 1050-1500*, Aldershot, UK; Burlington, VT 2006; F. Beer, *Women The influence of prophecy in the later Middle Ages: a study in Joachimism*, Oxford 1969.

[7]   Mechthild wrote in German, but her works were translated into Latin shortly after her death. They had been known in Italy before 1300 AD and probably inspired Dante Alighieri. Some scholars believe that his description of hell was partially influenced by Mechthild's visions. See: Mechthild of Magdeburg, *The Revelationes of Mechthild of Magdeburg (1210-1297). Flowing light of the Godhead*, New York 1998, p. 263.

[8]   Her revelations were recorded in Latin and received favourable responses from Franciscan and Dominican theologians, which led to the rapid growth in their popularity. Her writings were published in print as early as 1536. See: C.W. Bynum, *Jesus as Mother. Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*, pp. 178-179.

[9]   The revelations of Birgitta of Sweden were popular from the 14th to 17th century. They were available primarily in Latin (over 150 manuscripts). Birgitta's writings were also available in national languages; Italian, Swedish, German, English, and Czech translations had been produced by the end of the Middle Ages. In the 15th century her works were popular not only among theologians, but also at courts. See: C.L. Sahlin, *Birgitta of Sweden and the Voice of Prophecy*,

ces of Rome (1384-1440). Their writings were widely disseminated, thus greatly influencing theological reflection, preaching, catechesis and the faith of many Christians.

When examining their writings, one must be aware of the unique nature of this type of transmission. Mystical experience is very individual and personal; it is conveyed in a symbolic form through specific language. Therefore, the basic hermeneutical principle should be to engage the symbolic imagination in the analysis of the content. The distinction between vision and visualisation, introduced by Bernard McGinn to explain the mystical phenomenon, seems helpful. He understands the vision as a supernatural message given to a mystic and available only to him/her. On the other hand, visualisation describes this experience through various symbols and images taken from the Bible, culture, liturgy, theology, or art[10]. Thus, mystical literature is full of astonishing metaphors, images, and analogies extending beyond aesthetic value.

## Heavenly experience of love full of emotions and passions

Mysticism introduced significant elements to the medieval conception of the nature of heavenly happiness. To understand the novelty of this view, one must consider its context, namely the medieval ideal of courtly love[11]. However distant and unrelated these two things may seem, there is a connection between mysticism and courtly love. The ideal of courtly love fostered by poetry contributed to the emergence of a new conception of heaven. It was in opposition to the one

Theology of Spirituality

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Woodbridge 2001, p. 19; D. Pezzini, *The Italian Reception of Birgittine Writings*, in: *The Translation of the Works of St. Birgitta of Sweden into the Medieval European Vernaculars*, eds. B. Morris, V. O'Mara, Turnhout 2000, pp. 186-212.

[10]   B. McGinn, *Visions and Visualisations in the Here and Hereafter*, "The Harvard Theological Review" 98 (2005), p. 235. See: M. Chmielewski, *A Meditative Dimension of Woman's Genius*, "Soter" 75 (2020), pp. 5-13.

[11]   The idea of courtly love was born in the Middle Ages and was a revolutionary innovation to emphasising love and affection. See: J. Le Goff, *The Historian and the Common Man*, in: *The Historian between the Ethnologist and the Futurologist*, ed. J. Dumoulin, Paris 1973, pp. 204-215. For more on the courtly love ideal, see: R. Boase, *The Origin and Meaning of Courtly Love. A Critical Study of European Scholarship*, Manchester 1977. See also D.W. Robertson, *The Concept of Courtly Love as an Impediment to the Understanding of Medieval Texts*, in: *The Meaning of Courtly Love*, ed. F.X. Newman, Albany 1968, pp. 1-18.; H. Moller, *The Meaning of Courtly Love*, "The Journal of American Folklore", 287 (1960), pp. 39-52.

developed by scholastic theology[12]. The troubadours praising courtly love contributed to the valuing of affection, emotion, passion, and personal commitment. Until then, the feeling of love was relegated to the background due to the medieval concept of marriage[13], which was conceived primarily as an institution, a contract in which reason and prudence played an essential role. The development of courtly love restored feelings to their rightful place. It also made it possible to appreciate their role in the understanding of a person's happiness. As a result, the scholastic conception of heaven developed by scholasticism became unacceptable, as it stressed mainly the participation of the intellect in the happiness of the saved. The vision of heaven as a static, purely intellectual contemplation of God became incomprehensible to those who discovered the importance of love in human life or the proponents of courtly love; another obstacle for the adoption of a scholastic heaven was its extreme theocentricity summarised in a maxim: only God and myself. The key question was: how to combine human love with the love of God? The opposition between love for God and love for humans was concealed, though clearly present in the religious literature of the time[14], exposing the problem of the mutual exclusion of these two loves. Courtly literature resolved this problem in favour of human love. According to the troubadours' poetry (e.g., the works of Giacomo da Lentini), heaven is a place where lovers can enjoy eternal and sensual joy. God has been marginalised or completely vanished from such heaven[15]. Thus, there were two polar extremes: the scholastic heaven of the theologians and the secular one imagined by the troubadours. This polarisation arose from their contrasting attitudes to love and affection. The heaven of the mystics represents a third way. Yet this status does not imply being somewhere in-between

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[12]    The synthesis of Catholic teachings on eschatology is presented e.g. by P. Mąkosa, *The Roman Catholic Church's Late Medieval Teaching on Eschatology as the Basis for Visual Catechesis*, "Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej" 18 (2019), pp. 139-151.

[13]    The medieval institution of marriage usually had little in common with love. It was primarily a kind of a social contract or alliance between two families that was forged for political and economic purposes. See: P. Dinzelbacher, *Pour une historie de l'amour au moyen âge*, "Le moyen âge. Revue d'histoire et de philologie, 153 (1987), pp. 223-240.

[14]    A fine example of this approach might be the work of Guido Guinizelli from Bologna. In one of his works, he described a conversation with God in which a clear alternative is posed: it is either God's love and heaven, or human love. See: G. Guinizelli, *Al cor gentil*, in: *The Courtly Love Tradition,* ed. B. O'Donoghue, Manchester 1982, p. 265.

[15]    C. MCDannell, B. Lang, *Heaven. A History*, New Haven 2001, p. 95.

the religious and secular concepts but also expresses an attitude towards love and emotions. Mysticism portrayed heaven as experiencing the deepest love, focused on God, but not devoid of emotionality or passion. It was still theocentric, but it had a place for the whole spectrum of human feelings[16].

The mystical writings of St. Bernard of Clairvaux greatly contributed to the spread of this new view of heaven. They were contained primarily in his commentaries on the *Song of Songs*[17]. This notion, however, found a wide resonance in women's mysticism. Its subject was not so much heaven as a place, but rather God Himself as the Lord and King of Heaven – the fulfilment of human longing[18]. The emphasis was thus shifted from a place to a person, which was the first step towards a new view of eschatology as a science concerning individuals and states rather than locations and objects. Medieval eschatology was characterised by a reistic approach, thus gaining a new perspective. Yet, it was not sufficiently established to change permanently the nature of the eschatology of the time and give it a personalistic shape[19]. In the mystical visions, a soul experienced heaven as a personal encounter with Christ the Bridegroom. The mystics focused on the relationship with Christ the Bridegroom, on feelings associated with it, and on the moment of eternal nuptials but less on descriptions of the abode of the saved. Despite this, such descriptions also occur in mystical writings. A frequent motif describing celestial reality and happiness is presented as encountering Christ in the secret wedding chamber. In one of the visions, Mechthild of Magdeburg saw her soul in heaven in the form of a beautiful, high-born lady, who is adorned by her servants for the meeting of the approaching prince. Afterwards, she is sent into the forest to await the bridegroom in the shade of trees, amidst the songs of nightingales. The meeting takes place in a beautiful setting,

Theology of
Spirituality

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[16]    M. Jagodziński, *Eschatologia w perspektywie komunii* (Lublin: 2020). Such a concept to some extent constituted an anticipation of contemporary theology, see: A. Proniewski, *Joseph Ratzinger's (Benedict XVI) Conceptualization of Eternity*, "Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej" 18 (2019), pp. 44-56.

[17]    Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones super Cantica Canticorum*, in: *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 183, ed. J.P. Migne, Paris: 1862, pp. 785-1198.

[18]    C. McDannell, B. Lang, *Heaven. A History*, p. 98.

[19]    Such a change took place only in the twentieth century, when eschatology ceased to be understood exclusively in relation to eschatological places. Instead, a personalistic approach to ultimate reality as a personal encounter with God was introduced. See: E. Zarosa, *Ostateczne rzeczy*, in: *Encyklopedia katolicka*, vol. XIV, ed. E. Gigilewicz, Lublin 2010, p. 936; J. Miczyński, *Il metodo personalistico nella teologia spirituale*, "Mysterion" 12 (2019), pp. 248-256.

at high noon, which undoubtedly has symbolic significance indicating the fullness of time. The prince takes the soul to the wedding chamber of his palace[20]. This convention of description, with its exposed element of intimacy and mystery, undoubtedly recalls courtly love and is subject to its rules[21]. This is not an isolated case in the bridal theology of the discussed period[22]. The soul residing in heaven, as a beautiful woman dressed in ornate robes becomes the central theme[23]. In the works of Mechthild, some scholars find certain undertones of sensuality regarding the relationship between Christ and the saved[24].

In another vision[25], Mechthild witnessed the moment when souls were taken out of purgatory and led into heaven. This was accompanied by the crowning of the saved ones by angels or, in exceptional cases, by God himself[26]. This scene and its symbolism, speaking of participation in heavenly glory became a vital part of the mystics' heaven. Gertrude the Great repeatedly described the soul united with Christ as a queen who sits with the Heavenly King on the throne. Threads similar to the thoughts developed by Mechthild are present in her visions as well, except that there are fewer references to romantic courtly love. They are rather inspired by images from the *Song of Songs*, often mediated by the commentaries by Bernard of Clairvaux[27]. It is thus a bridal mysticism, in which heaven appears as a state of eternal marriage and reign alongside Christ, the King of Heaven. In one vision, Gertrude saw herself dressed in royal purple, sitting at the right hand of Christ who embraced her tenderly[28]. According to the mystic,

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[20]    Mechthild of Magdeburg, *Flowing light of the Godhead*, 1.44.

[21]    C. MCDannell, B. Lang, *Heaven. A History*, p. 101.

[22]    For more on the relationship between mysticism and courtly literature see: E. Wainwright de Kadt, *Courtly Literature and Mysticism*, "Acta Germanica" 12 (1980), pp. 41-60.

[23]    See R. Perintfalvi, *Erotik und Mystik als Grenzüberschreitung: Das Hohelied 5,2-8 und die mystischen Texte von Mechthild von Magdeburg*, "Journal of the European Society of Women in Theological Research" 21 (2013), pp. 85-98.

[24]    A. Otero Villena, *Experiencia mística y transgresión: Mechthild von Magdeburg y el eroticismo de Dios*, "Estudios eclesiásticos" 84 (2009), pp. 447-476.

[25]    Mechthild of Magdeburg, *Flowing light of the Godhead*, 4.24.

[26]    This theme is a reference to Revelation 2.10: "Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you; the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown".

[27]    Gertrude from Helfta, *The Herald of Divine Love*, New York 1993, 3.22; 5.4.

[28]    Ibidem, 5.1.

together with the scene of the soul's coronation, this symbolic image also applies to Mary and the Church. In her visions, the soul united with Christ, Mary, and the Church constitute a single symbolic reality. Mary is an archetype foreshadowing the eschatological destiny of both the Church and the individual human soul[29].

The images evoked by this mystic are therefore polysemous; they refer to Mary, the Church, and the soul at the same time. Similar details of heaven's description, drawing on bridal mysticism, can be found in the works of other mystics, including Angela of Foligno, who emphasised the ecstatic nature of the union[30]. She described an experience of immense sweetness, joy, and delight coming from God entering her soul. In turn, the termination of this experience caused great pain and a sense of being abandoned by the beloved person[31]. Catherine of Siena also strongly emphasized the role of affection and fiery desire (*ansietato desiderio*) in heavenly marriage[32]. The mystics' use of erotic imagery, drawn from the *Song of Songs* and courtly poetry, brought an emotional element to the concept of heaven. It took on a more personal dimension and began to be perceived as a meeting of people and experiencing love[33].

## Graduality of the heavenly reward

There is also a plethora of descriptions of heaven as a place in mystical literature. It is even possible to speak of a kind of celestial geography. One of such descriptions is Mechthild's vision recorded in the work *Flowing light of the Godhead*. While concentrating on showing

Theology of Spirituality

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[29]    This interpretation belongs to the mainstream theological tradition, derived from the Bible and developed in the allegorical exegesis of the Church Fathers during the patristic period.

[30]    Angela of Foligno, *Complete works,* New York: 1993, pp. 64-78. In Angela of Foligno's case we may speak of two kinds of mysticism. One of these is spousal mysticism, while the other is apophatic metaphysical mysticism. In the latter, there is no relationality but solely the experience of the absolute and his essence. In this context, Angela experienced God also as a kind of darkness. See. C.F. Heffernan, *Angela of Foligno: Her Mystical Experience and her Influence*, "Magistra" 25/1 (2019), pp. 49-61.

[31]    M. Stróżyński, *Mistyka relacyjna i metafizyczna w Księdze św. Anieli z Foligno*, "Filozofia Chrześcijańska" 16 (2019), pp. 7-25.

[32]    See W. Giertych, *Św. Katarzyna ze Sieny*, ed. W. Giertych, Poznań 1987, p. 6.

[33]    A lot has been written about the visions of medieval mystics and the presence of their ideas in Christian iconography by C. Frugoni, *Female Mystics, Visions, and Iconography*, in: *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, ed. D. Bornstein, R. Rusconi, Chicago 1996, pp. 130-164.

Christ's central role in heaven, she gives a rather detailed scheme of the place of eternal joy. In her vision, the heavens are not a homogeneous space, but are composed of a number of different places, which have their distinct character. The lowest part, called the First Heaven, is an earthly paradise, located in an unidentified place somewhere on earth. It is depicted as a garden. There, amidst lush vegetation, beautiful scents, and the sound of babbling rivers, Mechthild meets two Old Testament figures: Enoch and Elijah. She briefly mentions that this place is destined for souls who cannot yet enter heaven but are too perfect to be sent to purgatory[34]. Above the earthly paradise lies its celestial counterpart, the so-called "heavenly paradise": the Second Heaven. This consists of ten angelic choirs, which form a kind of a dome, with the number of angels per choir decreasing towards the top. There are empty seats[35] in the choirs, resulting from the fall of the angels after Lucifer's rebellion. After the Final Judgement, they will be occupied by the saved ones by their merits. Children who have not managed to acquire any merit before death will complete the lowest order. Unlike the other redeemed, they will not wear crowns symbolising their virtues. The other inhabitants of heaven will be crowned as a sign of the ultimate victory. The seats in the three highest choirs are reserved for the most distinguished souls: martyrs (the eighth choir), apostles (the ninth choir), and virgins (the tenth choir that once belonged to the fallen angels' leaders). Mary also resides in the tenth choir[36], resting on a special throne prepared for her. Ascribing the highest place in the celestial hierarchy to the Mother of Christ was considered a doctrinal axiom. Usually, it was a place at the right hand of Christ the Judge, above the angelic choirs that surround the divine throne. It was as an expression of faith in Mary's exaltation above all the angels. In Mechthild's vision, this exaltation has an added dimension; Mary's throne is mentioned thus expressing the conviction that she reigns together with her son. Still higher, above the dome of the Second Heaven, there is the Third Heaven, where the actual celestial liturgy takes place. It is the abode of God, His throne room, and the palace with the wedding chamber of Christ. No created being exists above the throne, only the infinite, incomprehensible, and inaccessible God's glory. Only holy virgins residing in the tenth choir of the Second Heaven have access to the Third Heaven. Only they will be granted the right to enter the

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[34]     Mechthild of Magdeburg, *Flowing light of the Godhead*, 7.57.

[35]     Otto of Freising, *The Two Cities. A Chronicle of Universal History to the Year 1146 AD*, New York 2002, pp. 505-508.

[36]     Mechthild of Magdeburg, *Flowing light of the Godhead*, 3.1.

wedding chamber. In one of her visions, Mechthild was invited there to receive a crown from Christ. The encounter with Him is described in terms of bridal terminology; she mentions kisses, a tender hug, and the delight of love. There is a motif of a clandestine meeting of lovers known from courtly love literature[37]. The applied metaphor seems rather bold and surprising concerning the eternal relationship between the saved ones and God. It represents the stark contrast to previous notions and does not fit into the scholastic framework. According to the mystic, in heaven virgins receive the supreme reward of a spousal union with Christ[38].

The distinctly hierarchical structure of Mechthild's heaven is an expression of the widespread belief in the existence of an organised hierarchy of spiritual beings that form the supernatural society of heaven. This thought was popularised by Dionysius the Areopagite, who, in his treatise *On the Celestial Hierarchy*[39], established a specific classification of angels. He distinguished nine angelic choirs arranged in three hierarchies, each containing three choirs (triple triads)[40]. This division has been widely accepted by theologians[41]. Such a heaven was also observed by Frances of Rome in her vision[42]. Her deceased son appeared to her in a vision and told her that he resided in Heaven, where he belonged to the second choir of the first hierarchy. Mechthild deviates from the nine-level division, favouring the ten-level model. Hildegard of Bingen also does not fully follow the classification provided by Dionysius. In her work *Scivias*[43], despite distinguishing nine angelic choirs (or orders) divided into three hierarchies, they do not form triads. The first and the third hierarchies consist of two choirs each. Meanwhile, the second hierarchy contains five choirs. The outermost, lowest hierarchy includes choirs of angels and archangels. Their task is to preach God's glory and to help people in reaching heaven (guardian angels belong to these choirs). These angels guard

Theology of Spirituality

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[37]    C. McDannell, B. Lang, *Heaven. A History*, p. 101.

[38]    Mechthild of Magdeburg, *Flowing light of the Godhead*, 3.1.

[39]    Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, *De coelesti hierarchia – De ecclesiastica hierarchia*, in: *Patrologia Greca*, vol. 3, ed. J.P. Migne, Paris: 1857, pp. 119-583; See Pseudo Dionizy Aeropagita, *Pisma teologiczne*, Kraków 2005), pp. 71-216.

[40]    See C.S. Lewis, *Odrzucony obraz. Wprowadzenie do literatury średniowiecznej i renesansowej*, Kraków 2008, pp. 72-73.

[41]    See M.J. Gill, *Angels and the Order of Heaven in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, New York 2014.

[42]    G. Fullerton, *The Life of St. Frances of Rome*, London 2014, pp. 75-77.

[43]    Hildegard von Bingen, *Scivias*, New York 1990, 1.6.

humans in the last moments of life and fight demons for the final fate of the soul[44]. The five choirs of the central hierarchy, which symbolically refer to the five wounds of Christ, form the following angelic choirs: Virtues (*Virtutes*), Powers (*Potestates*), Principalities (*Principates*), Dominations (*Dominationes*), and Thrones (*Throni*). Their purpose is to watch over groups of people, nations, and leaders. They also correspond to five categories of people: non-Christian believers, Christians, rulers, monks, and virgins[45]. Like Mechthild, Hildegard observes the saved ones taking their future seats in various circles of the celestial hierarchy, but her classification is different. The highest hierarchy is composed of two choirs: the Cherubim (*Cherubin*) reflecting God's wisdom, and the Seraphim (*Seraphin*) burning with the fire of God's love and residing closest to him. They eternally praise the glory of God in hymns, thereby conveying this love to the lower hierarchies. The hierarchical structure of heaven is also manifested in the manner of participating in the divine glory. The upper choirs reflect the glory of God and pass it on to the lower ones, who pass it on to the even lower ones. The descending movement is accompanied by an ascending one as the lower choirs (*inferiora*) are moved towards God by the higher ones (*a superioribus*)[46]. In this way, the celestial beings mirror God's essence[47]. Hildegard compares angels to sunbeams, sparks of fire, and elusive all-encompassing radiance. She calls them living spheres that adhere to the eternal light[48]. Heaven is therefore filled with various types of lightning. There are numerous angelic entities, who reflect the divine radiance in various manners. The metaphor of light, which is the symbol of celestial reality and eternity, forms an important part of the description of heaven also in the writings of Mechthild and Birgitta of Sweden[49].

Therefore, in the accounts of medieval mystics, heaven is an inhabited and well-organised realm, where all entities are subject to a

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[44]     M. Kowalewska, *Bóg – Kosmos – Człowiek w twórczości Hildegardy z Bingen*, Lublin 2004, pp. 112-113.

[45]     Hildegard von Bingen, *Scivias*, 1.6.

[46]     Ibidem, 2.1.

[47]     M. Kowalewska, *Bóg – Kosmos – Człowiek w twórczości Hildegardy z Bingen*, p. 114.

[48]     Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, 2.1.17. See M. Kowalewska, *Bóg – Kosmos – Człowiek w twórczości Hildegardy z Bingen*, p. 112.

[49]     S. Kobielus, *Światło i biel w tradycji wyobrażania chwały eschatologicznej zbawionych. Wczesne chrześcijaństwo – średniowiecze*, "Communio" 61/1 (1991), p. 128.

multi-level hierarchy. It should be added that while angels and particular groups of the saved have a precisely defined place in this celestial structure, there is no such specificity regarding individual saints. The mystics were less clear and specific about the distribution of various saints' places in heaven. For instance, Mechthild briefly mentions a special place destined for the Dominicans. Yet, the hierarchical nature of heaven is not only manifested in its structure. According to Mechthild, the heavenly reward is also gradual. There are two ways of rejoicing in God. The first, is the beatific vision of God (*visio beatifica*), which is available to all the saved. However, as the martyrs and apostles are closest to the throne of God, the intensity of their visions is also greater. The second form of heavenly bliss is reserved for holy virgins and is referred to as beatific union with Christ. Their connection to Christ is inseparable. Although the other saints can see him directly feeling blissful joy, only the holy virgins experience this union which is characterised by the greatest intimacy[50]. Similarly, Gertrude the Great distinguishes these two types of happiness: seeing Christ and uniting with him. The sight of Christ is universal and available to all the saved and angels. By contrast, the access to the bridal chamber, where the experience of happiness is more intimate and individualised, is reserved for the holy virgins. For scholastic theology, this kind of familiarity with God was unacceptable. In its view, no creature has access to the Heaven of the Holy Trinity (*coelum Trinitatis*). Hildegard holds a similar belief regarding the unique place of holy virgins in heaven. She locates them in the highest echelon of the central sphere in the celestial hierarchy[51].

Theology of Spirituality

## Limitless celestial liturgy full of musical harmony

Another motif used by mystics to describe heaven is the celestial liturgy. In one of her visions[52], Mechthild saw the saved ones singing, dancing, and adoring the Holy Trinity in a flow of light shining down upon them. In her description of the celestial liturgy, heaven appears as a dynamic space filled with movement and having little in common with the static Roman Rite. It also significantly departs from the static *visio beatifica* of the scholastics[53].

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[50]     Mechthild of Magdeburg, *Flowing light of the Godhead*, 3.1.

[51]     C. McDannell, B. Lang, *Heaven. A History*, pp. 106-107.

[52]     Mechthild of Magdeburg, *Flowing light of the Godhead*, 4.24.

[53]     C. McDannell, B. Lang, *Heaven. A History*, pp. 100-101.

Perceiving heaven as the liturgy is particularly characteristic of Hildegard's visions. She views the celestial liturgy as the ultimate harmony and defines it in musical terms. Numerous hymns contained in the collection *Symphonia armoniae celestium revelationum* contain such metaphors: *O orzchis Ecclesia, O ignea spiritus, Quia felix puericia, O presul verte civitatis*[54]. Significantly, these are works with a liturgical purpose. This is because Hildegard believed that the earthly liturgy was the prelude and anticipation of the heavenly one: heaven begins here on earth and is the most present in the liturgy. At the same time, the Church on earth remains in communion with the Church in heaven; thus, they are virtually a single Church, possessing both terrestrial and celestial structures. Hildegard speaks of this dual structure in *Scivias* and the hymn *O orzchis Ecclesia*[55]. To describe heaven, she uses several neologisms and an invented language (*lingua ignota*), which testifies to the impossibility of conveying this reality in any human tongue[56]. Because of its dual structure, she describes the church through a paradox, employing two contradictory adjectives: limitation and limitlessness. The first term corresponds to the earthly church whereas the latter refers to the Church of Heaven. The very same paradox applies to the liturgy; the earthly one is limited, while the celestial liturgy is limitless. Yet, both form an indivisible whole. This dual nature is a characteristic of the Church both on earth and in heaven.

In Hildegard's visions, heaven is a community imbued with the Holy Spirit and singing a hymn of glory. The mystic poetically captures this aspect of heaven through a musical metaphor and compares the eternal life of the saved to a symphony. For a proper understanding of this aspect of heaven, one must first be familiar with Hildegard's idea of music[57]. It is founded on the principle that the Holy Spirit is the source of music. Therefore, the union between the soul and God, which is the work of the Holy Spirit as well, is the loveliest and most

Theology of Spirituality

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[54]     Hildegard of Bingen, *Symphonia. A Critical Editions of the Symphonia armoniae celestium revelationum*, London 1988.

[55]     S. D'Evelyn, *Heaven as Performance and Participation in the Symphonia armonie celestium revelationum of Hildegard of Bingen*, in: *Envisaging heaven in the Middle Ages*, ed. C. Muessig, A. Putter, London/New York 2006, p. 155.

[56]     J. Schnapp, *Virgin Words. Hildegard of Bingen's Lingua ignota and the Development of Imaginery Languages Ancient to Modern*, "Exemplaria" 3 (1991), pp. 267-298.

[57]     See. *Vision: The Life and Music of Hildegard Von Bingen*, ed. J. Bobko, M. Fox, B. Newman, London 1995. See also B. Miljević, *Musical World of Hildegard of Bingen*, "International Magazine for Music" 42 (2013), pp. 167-182.

perfect sound. Hildegard draws from Boethius, who differentiated two kinds of music: *musica instrumentalis* (instrumental music) and *musica humana* (the metaphysical music, or the spiritual unity of man resulting from the combination of irrational and rational elements). Hildegard creates an analogy to this model; the Holy Spirit is for man what music is for instruments[58]. The slow refinement and spiritual growth of man, accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit, restores the primordial harmony ruined by the original sin[59]. As the human soul is symphonic (*symphonialis est anima*)[60], it attains full harmony in heaven and becomes a pure sound produced by the Holy Spirit[61]. Hence, the musical metaphor perfectly captures the essence of the eternal happiness of the saved. In heaven, angels and saints sing and create a perfect celestial harmony in which not a single voice can be absent, for each one is unique. The fullness of glory can only resound through communal participation, which plays a key role in this concept. Every redeemed person has a unique role within this great symphony and contributes to achieving complete harmony. For Hildegard, the variety of voices and instruments making music and myriads of harmonious sounds are a metaphor for the community of the saved ones. Their happiness lies in the perfect harmony with God and with the saints while preserving their own individuality and personal uniqueness. Hildegard enriches the descriptions of heaven with a variety of musical instruments and relates them to the saved[62]. Just as each instrument adds its timbre to a symphony, each saved person contributes to the embellishment of the celestial song. Hildegard's reflections on heaven are summarised in the concise expression

Theology of
Spirituality

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[58]  S. D'Evelyn, *Heaven as Performance and Participation in the Symphonia armonie celestium revelationum of Hildegard of Bingen*, pp. 157-158.

[59]  The original harmony was a gift that man enjoyed in paradise. It was expressed in clean singing. Hildegard often used the image of a singing Adam, endowed with an angelic voice, to reflect a state of happiness of paradise. See. Hildegard of Bingen, *Epistola 47*, in: *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 197, ed. J.P. Migne, Paris 1855, p. 220; Hildegard of Bingen, *Symphonia. A Critical Editions of the Symphonia armoniae celestium revelationum*, p. 25.

[60]  Hildegard of Bingen, *Epistola 23*, in: *Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio mediaevalis*, vol. 91, ed. L. van Acker, Turnhout 1991, p. 140.

[61]  For Hildegard, harmony and symphony were synonymous. See B. Matusiak, *Hildegarda z Bingen. Teologia muzyki*, Kraków 2003, p. 52.

[62]  Hildegard attributes the allegorical meaning to instruments linking them to particular groups of the saved. For instance, she associates drums with martyrs. See. Hildegard of Bingen, *Symphonia. A Critical Editions of the Symphonia armoniae celestium revelationum*, p. 23. See also B. Matusiak, *Hildegarda z Bingen. Teologia muzyki*, p. 129.

*celestis armonia,* which links heavenly harmony with worship[63]. This term must be understood in its liturgical context. It describes heaven by analogy with the liturgy as an eternal festival during which joyful music resounds, which is an embodiment of God's glory and the perfect harmony of the saved. Hildegard believes the liturgy represents a fundamental hermeneutical key because, in her view, it is the space where heaven and earth are united[64]. She repeatedly returns to this analogy. She perceives heaven as the eternal liturgy, the song of glory, and the community participation. The *musica coelestis* will fully resound at the end of time when salvation is completed. Descriptions of heaven are also present in the works of other late medieval women mystics, yet they are not as novel and multifaceted[65].

## Material and spiritual image of Heavenly Jerusalem

The model of visible-invisible and material-spiritual is applied to the Church Triumphant in Heaven. Hildegard's description of heaven is thus marked by a certain duality which is expressed in a two-track narrative and the use of double terminology. It portrays heaven as a city by juxtaposing the word *urbs* to imply its material aspect and the term *civitas* to indicate the community that inhabits it. Therefore, it is the Heavenly Jerusalem made of precious stones, which means a very concrete reality[66]. Because of the close bond between the Heavenly Jerusalem and the Church on earth, all human activities that contribute to the growth of the earthly church simultaneously contribute to the expansion of the Holy City in heaven. The construction of the Heavenly Jerusalem will continue throughout the entire history of mankind and will be completed at the end of the world when the battle between good and evil comes to an end[67]. On the other hand, Hildegard describes heaven as a perfect harmony of sound and smell: something that is intangible and spiritual. She develops this aspect by referring to the Greek term *chrisma* (anointing) and St. Paul's

Theology of Spirituality

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[63]    S. D'Evelyn, *Heaven as Performance and Participation in the Symphonia armonie celestium revelationum of Hildegard of Bingen*, p. 159.

[64]    Ibidem, 160.

[65]    T.W. Petrisko, *Inside Heaven and Hell. What History, Theology and Mystics Tell us about the Afterlife*, McKees Rocks 2000, pp. 57-61.

[66]    P. Dronke, *The Symbolic Cities of Hildegard of Bingen*, "The Journal of Medieval Latin" 1 (1991), pp. 168-183.

[67]    M. Kowalewska, *Bóg – Kosmos – Człowiek w twórczości Hildegardy z Bingen*, p. 299.

teachings on the mystical body by saying that heaven is a mystical body that sings a heavenly symphony, filled with the Holy Spirit. Here, diversity is the essential feature as it best captures the essence of heaven as the complete harmony[68].

The aspect of heaven described by Hildegard through the image of the Heavenly Jerusalem was elaborated in the third book of *Scivias*[69]. Both the vision of a celestial city and its architecture are very extensive and contain a great deal of detail. It constitutes one of the most explicit and vivid accounts of the Heavenly Jerusalem in medieval literature[70]. In Hildegard's work, the meticulously rendered architecture and inhabitants of the city bear mystical and symbolic significance, allegorically referring to various events or individuals from human history. Thus, the city is inhabited by personifications of the Virtues (Celestial Love, Discipline, Modesty, Mercy, Victory, Patience, Longing for the coming of the Messiah, Constancy, Celestial Desire, Compunction, Contempt of the World, and Concord)[71] and is filled with symbolic buildings: the tower of anticipation of God's Will, the pillar of the Word of God[72], the pillar of the Trinity[73], the pillar of the Saviour's humanity[74], and the Tower of the Church[75], The throne of God hovers on a luminous cloud over the eastern part of the city, emitting beams of light in all four cardinal directions. This creates an infinite circle of light around the city reaching as far as earth. Hildegard calls it the Circle of Divine Power (*circulus divinae potestatis*)[76], It is intriguing to note that God's throne is situated outside the city, as it infinitely surpasses its structure. The Heavenly Jerusalem lies at the foot of the throne, on

Theology of Spirituality

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[68]   S. D'Evelyn, *Heaven as Performance and Participation in the Symphonia armonie celestium revelationum of Hildegard of Bingen*, p. 156.

[69]   Hildegard von Bingen, *Scivias*, 3.2-10.

[70]   M. Kowalewska, *Bóg – Kosmos – Człowiek w twórczości Hildegardy z Bingen*, p. 300. See also C. Trottmann, *Sujets de la Jérusalem Céleste. L'humanisme comme mise en perspective eschatologique de l'homme et de sa liberté chez Hildegarde de Bingen et Bernard de Clairvaux*, in: *Spiritualität in Europa des Mittelalters. L'Europe spirituelle au Moyen Âge: 900 Jahre Hildegard von Bingen,* ed. J. Ferrari, S. Grätzel, Remscheid 1998, pp. 91-104.

[71]   Hildegard von Bingen, *Scivias*, 3.3; 3.10.

[72]   Ibidem, 3.4.

[73]   Ibidem, 3.6.

[74]   Ibidem, 3.8.

[75]   Ibidem, 3.9.

[76]   Ibidem, 3.1.

an iron mountain symbolising faith[77]. Topography itself is therefore a reflection of the hierarchy of beings and expresses a fundamental ontological truth. The infinite God cannot be contained within a finite being as he is beyond everything, including the eschatological heaven.

The Heavenly Jerusalem is depicted as a fortified city surrounded by luminous walls. It is constructed on a square inscribed in a circle formed by a beam of light flowing from the throne of God[78]. The square is symbolic: the four ends of the Heavenly Jerusalem face the four corners of the world, signalling that salvation is universal and includes all peoples and nations. The different parts of the city are symbolically inhabited by various attributes of God and divine persons. For example, the northern part is the seat of God's zeal (*zelus Dei*)[79], the eastern part – of God's justice (symbolised by Noah), the southern part – of the Son of Man (his throne is erected here)[80], and the western part which is dedicated to the Holy Trinity. Outside the celestial city one can see the land where people live before crossing the border of death. From the northern end one can observe the infernal abyss: the land of darkness[81]. Hildegard also discusses the attire of the Heavenly Jerusalem residents. According to her, saints are dressed in purple silk robes and white shoes[82]. In one of her visions, she saw a huge crowd of radiant figures, wearing gold and jewels. Their attire is meticulously described; it contains many symbolic elements such as the images of the Holy Trinity, the Lamb, and the angels located on their heads, foreheads, and above ears, respectively[83]. The details of the costumes vary from vision to vision, but their common feature is lavishness. This contrasts with claims made by some medieval theologians, who believed that the inhabitants of heaven were naked. This opinion, however, was rather isolated at the time and was discarded with the growing aversion to nudity perceived as sinful and derogatory towards human dignity.

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[77]    Ibidem, 3.2.

[78]    M. Kowalewska, *Bóg – Kosmos – Człowiek w twórczości Hildegardy z Bingen*, pp. 300-301.

[79]    Hildegard von Bingen, *Scivias*, 3.5.

[80]    Ibidem, 3.10.

[81]    M. Kowalewska, *Bóg – Kosmos – Człowiek w twórczości Hildegardy z Bingen*, p. 306.

[82]    Such an image is expressed in the song *O Jerusalem, aurea civitas* which is a reference to the Book of Revelation. See A. McGrath, *Historia nieba*, Kraków 2009, p. 34.

[83]    Hildegard von Bingen, *Scivias*, 2.5.

## Conclusions

Undoubtedly, female mystics of the Middle Ages presented visions of heaven in a unique way. In their revelations, death and judgment appear primarily as a prelude to everlasting happiness full of love and affection. Furthermore, their conception of heaven significantly differed from the scholastic approach. They portrayed heaven not only as a perfect hierarchical structure but especially as experiencing God's passionate love. The analysis of female mystical literature leads to the conclusion that medieval mystics were indeed surprising. They surprise the reader with their original, fresh, and bold approach towards the issues related to the afterlife. Undoubtedly, this is due to the unique, supernatural nature of the sources available to them. Unfortunately, due to its elite nature and limited reach, many novel ideas failed to anchor in mainstream medieval eschatology and waited for a long time to be rediscovered.

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Theology of
Spirituality

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# Two Notions Important for Consecrated Life: Poverty, Obedience[1]

The keywords-concepts presented below have been prepared (in Polish) to the *Encyclopedia of Pedagogical Axiology*, Vol. 1-2, edited by Prof. Assoc. Krystyna Chałas and Rev. Assoc. Adam Maj, Prof. KUL, in Polish Publishing House by Peter and Joseph Wojcieszek, edited in Radom 2016. Their content was part of the formation and pedagogical context of the ongoing Year of Consecrated Life and the scientific conferences taking up the issue organized in the universal Church. Published in English they are promoting Polish theological thought, which can be of use in a broader research area.

**Key words**: poverty, obedience, formation towards poverty, formation towards obedience.

## Poverty

– term pointing out to the lack (inability to acquire) particular resources: material, intellectual, health, cultural etc. In this meaning, equated with penury or lack of skills required for successes in particular areas, it remains an anti-value.

It becomes a value in a situation when its meaning is transferred from a purely economic sphere (the state of non-possession) into the personal sphere (Pius XII: *ownership is the living space of a person*), it points out to qualitative rather than quantitative categories. Even "natural humanism requires that man does not destroy man, sacrificing him for the sake of money" (F. Perroux), the more so in the

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[1] Cf. T. Paszkowska, *Three notions important for consecrated life: Christ-forming – the formation of persons – humility*, "Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej", vol. XIV/1, 2015, pp. 159-175.

theological doctrine, which highlights the priority of a person above things and refers to the dignity of a human person.

Poverty undergoes anthropological value redefinition when someone consciously and voluntarily resigns from possessing (acquiring) particular goods, assuming another object as the pursued goal for instance acquiring wisdom (eg. philosophers) or ascetical skills (eg. monks). Here the choice of the "being more" option occurs instead of the prevalent attitude of "having more" (John Paul II).

In the Christian context, poverty is inscribed into the logics of evangelical metanoia, which aims at "deepening of the existence" (S. Kierkegaard) and coming to the Kingdom of God, promised to the "poor in spirit" (cf. Matt 5,3). In the liturgy Holy Spirit is invoked as the "father of the paupers" (*pater pauperum*), so those who question the commonly valued instinct of an owner. A spiritual man (that is not obsessed with the lust for material goods) lives not only for himself (using the goods), but undertakes service for the others' sake (without financial remuneration).

In general, poverty can be classified (R. Cantalamessa[2]) in several ways:

– *negative material one* – destitution, which dehumanizes as an imposed social condition, it should be countered, since it causes suffering.

– *positive material one* – it is born out of free choice, it is accepted as an ideal (anthropological or evangelical). It prompts the others to participate in it (disciples, followers).

– *negative spiritual one* – means lack of spiritual goods, for instance in people rich in material goods. It is connected with the avaricious attitude (see Ambrosius Aupert, treatise *De cupiditate* about fatal results of avarice), which sees highest value in "having," distorting the vision of the world and man.

Theology of Spirituality

– *positive spiritual one* – means humble trust in God, especially by those who are poor materially, when they "do not worry too much" about today and tomorrow, being satisfied with the minimum necessary to survive. Biblical terms: Greek *ptochos*; Hebr.: *anavim Jahwe* do not refer to beggars (voluntary), but to those who are humiliated and disdained and in spite of social oppression, assess the current state of affairs from God's perspective.

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[2]     R. Cantalamessa, *Ubóstwo*, [*Poverta*], transl. M. Przeczewski, Kraków 2006, p. 10.

## Poverty as a social challenge

Materialistic desire for possession generates social insensitivity to the fact of poverty, still affecting broad circles. Such attitude, devoid of caring about the preservation of material resources balance and meeting the most basic needs of every human being, provokes social resistance and claims for solidarity and charitable activities.

Material deprivation is clearly inscribed into the context of social injustice, is a state humiliating for a man, often leading to the lack of hope and despair. In this sense "the greatest and most serious poverty of our time is the callous treading upon the rights of the human person" (Instr. *Starting Afresh from Christ*, no. 35), in the name of economic and ideological priorities. Absolutization of material values, the cult of possession and consumerist attitude show that the modern man is losing his internal liberty towards goods.

"Those who are aware of the scarcity of the planet's resources and who invoke respect for and the conservation of creation by reducing consumption, by living more simply and by placing a necessary brake on their own desires" (Exh. *Vita consecrata*, no. 90) attempt to recover the proper order in the hierarchy of social issues. They confront welfare, which has been made a social ideal, with spiritual ideals. Also modern man reaches the conclusion that "richness needs to be devaluated, money should be deprived of honour"(F. Perroux).

In the Christian perspective there is an ideal of internal liberty which enables to renounce the possessed goods (literally: *give away to the poor* – Matt 19:21; Lk 18:22) when man is confronted with the Highest Good. It is not about condemning the very possession of goods, but about an unbridled will to cumulate and use in an improper way (see Clement of Alexandria, *Who is the Rich Man who is Saved?*). There is a real danger of an "alluring security of possessions, knowledge and power" (Paul VI, Exh. *Evangelica testificatio*, no. 19), taking pleasure in affectedness and vanity (ibid., no. 22).

When poverty becomes integrated with the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, it acquires theological character itself, that is – is no more focused on the righteousness of the goods usage (horizontal aspect) but is set on the truth of references to God (vertical aspect).

Reference to social economy gives way to the reference to the economy of Redemption. The social motivation for the attitude of solidarity with the poor is enhanced by the evangelical motivation. Christian *caritas* refers to a Christological principle stating that others "can be enriched with one's poverty" (cf. 2 Cor 8:9). Thus, poverty

Theology of Spirituality

becomes a "means" useful in the ministry aimed at eliminating social destitution and injustice.

Valorisation of the poverty attitude does not aim at glorifying destitution, helplessness, lack of involvement and sense of responsibility. It is connected with the First Commandment of the Decalogue (it is only God who safeguards human fate) and the first of Christ's blessings, which opens the access to the Kingdom of God for the "poor in spirit", since they suffer poverty patiently in the hope of "receiving better and enduring wealth" (Heb 10:34).

## Evangelical valorisation of poverty

Evangelical poverty refers to Christ's attitude, who "though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor" (2 Cor 8:9), "emptied himself" (Phil 2:7) as the Servant of Jahwe. Choosing a style of life of poverty, in relationships with people he discriminated neither the rich nor the poor, calling everybody to change their attitudes. The Church has undertaken this call, gathering in itself both the wealthy and the poor. In the first generation, in this community many sold their goods so that the common means could eliminate the social differences in this group. In the *vita apostolica* practice "no one claimed private ownership of any possessions" (Dz 4:32). And since God chose "that which is not" (1 Cor 1:29), "the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom" (James 2:5), believers cannot disdain anybody "in dirty clothes" (cf. James 2:1-7). Works of mercy done at the cost of "unrighteous money" (Lk 16:9) make the disciples of Christ in the world "as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything" (2 Cor 6:10).

Theology of Spirituality

While forming such attitudes several significant aspects need to be included:
- the choice of poverty is made "out of joy" (Matt 13:44), flowing from finding something more valuable than the possessed goods (see Matt 6:21: *where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*); abnegation or desperation coming from other reasons are not enough. It is illustrated, for instance, by Zacchaeus willing to give half his possessions to the poor and paying back fourfold to everybody he has harmed (Lk 19:1-10). Voluntary renunciation of many goods is an expression of the *joy of recovering oneself*.
- the principle: "do not worry too much" (Matt 6) about one's own life (v. 25), clothes (v. 31), tomorrow (v. 34), body (Lk 12:22; Rom 13:14); do not worry exceedingly (Phil 4:6) does not mean resigning from social involvement and work which brings measurable

profits. It has its final goal in strengthening the trust that God will take care of those who devote themselves to fulfilling His plans for man (cf. Lk 22:35).

– the work in order to provide for oneself and to support the poor (cf. Acts 20:17) is everybody's duty and also the source of personal satisfaction. St. Paul attributes to Christ the principle: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). *The evangelically poor* take on joyfully and eagerly many works, expressing in this way their gratitude to God for all gifts. Both work and poverty are values for them, not an overwhelming duty. St. Francis of Assisi, called Poverello, is a special exponent of such spirituality. His brothers are wrongly called "mendicants" (beggars), since he stated clearly: "A friar living in poverty should not have an established income, he should work to receive a modest, everyday meal and if the employers refuse to provide this, he should ask for alms and not be ashamed of that"[3]. And I worked with my hands and I wish to work and I wish firmly that all the other brothers should work at some labor which is compatible with honesty. Let those who know not [how to work] learn, not through desire to receive the price of labour but for the sake of example and to repel idleness. And when the price of labour is not given to us, let us have recourse to the table of the Lord, begging alms from door to door" (*Testament*). Christianity in no way is situated "in its cultural roots in an idlers' civilization [...] John Paul II tries to strongly emphasize in his encyclical that, on one hand, Holy Bible, starting with the Genesis, lays foundations for a new civilization of labour (LE 4), on the other – to what degree Christ himself was related to the working world and how much place there is for the problems of labour and the culture of labour in his evangelical teaching (LE 26)" (Majka, p. 109)[4].

– poverty should not be cultivated for itself or given absolute value, since this belongs only to God. Poverty is a means (*usus pauper* – St. Thomas Aquinas) to perfect the person and the life of an earthly community. The ideal would be to jointly possess modest

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[3]    *Rule*, chap. 5; cf. A.J. Nowak, *Osoba konsekrowana*, vol. 1. *Ślub ubóstwa*, Lublin 1992, pp. 88-89.

[4]    J. Majka, *Praca jako środek doskonalenia człowieka*, in: Jan Paweł II, *Laborem exercens. Powołany do pracy. Komentarz pod red. ks. J. Kruciny*, Wrocław 1983, p. 109.

goods, acquired and governed properly, enabling to achieve particular goals in the spirit of brotherhood[5].

– persons committing themselves to poverty through a *vow*, without demonstrating it exceedingly, give a clear external expression to their ideal. The *Code of Canon Law* obliges to do so: "The evangelical counsel of poverty in imitation of Christ who, although he was rich, was made poor for us, entails, besides a life which is poor in fact and in spirit and is to be led productively in moderation and foreign to earthly riches, a dependence and limitation in the use and disposition of goods according to the norm of the proper law of each institute" (can. 600). The task of consecrated persons is to "remind the baptized of the fundamental values of the Gospel, by bearing 'splendid and striking testimony that the world cannot be transfigured and offered to God without the spirit of the Beatitudes'" (Exh. *Vita consecrata*, no. 33). However, the antithesis of a vowed poverty "is not riches, but pride, conceit, self-sufficiency. Lack of internal poverty is often manifested through closing one's own self to God and other people"[6].

– in the theological perspective the *mystery of poverty* is indicated, into which man is initiated and introduced by God: "poverty actually enters into the interior structure of the redemptive grace of Jesus Christ. Without poverty it is not possible to understand the mystery of the gift of divinity to man, a gift which is accomplished precisely in Jesus Christ. For this reason also it is found at the very center of the Gospel, at the beginning of the message of the eight beatitudes: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit.' Evangelical poverty reveals to the eyes of the human soul the perspective of the whole mystery, 'hidden for ages in God.' Only those who are 'poor' in this way are also interiorly capable of understanding the poverty of the one who is infinitely rich" (Exh. *Redemptionis donum*, no. 12). The Exhortation *Vita consecrata* stresses the "relation between the evangelical counsels and the Holy Trinity, the source of holiness" (no. 21), discerning here the sense of people's committing themselves to the practice of evangelical poverty. "*Poverty* proclaims that God is man's only real treasure. When poverty is lived according to the example of Christ [...] it becomes an expression of that *total gift of self* which the three Divine Persons make to one

Theology of Spirituality

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[5]  Y.-M. Congar, *Problem ubóstwa chrześcijańskiego w ramach cywilizacji dobrobytu*, transl. A. Turowiczowa, „Concilium" 1-10 (1966-1967), pp. 189-190.

[6]  A.J. Nowak, *Osoba konsekrowana*, p. 101.

another. This gift overflows into creation and is fully revealed..."
(ibid.).

Poverty – understood as an internal skill and externalised attitude – is an anthropological and evangelical value, with a great social and educational impact. It is a fact that excessive attachment to riches destroys the sense of fraternity and deforms man internally. From this results the necessity of forming attitudes open to the ideal of spiritual poverty (Phil 3:8: *I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ*) and the readiness to eliminate material destitution using one's own goods and powers.

## Obedience (Latin *obedientia*)

– an attitude expressing the submission of a person to the will of an accepted authority, his/her decisions and resolutions. In the theological sense it is a *virtue* (a moral and spiritual skill), which connects the liberty of a person with the Truth and Good, often implying choosing a situation of a "cross". It helps to get rid of egoism in order to respect a higher good or social goal, in the service of which both the superior and the subject remain.

The first authority to which man owes obedience is a *properly formed, right conscience*. Every command of those in power needs to be verified with this instance. The norm: *to be submitted* is written into the status of created beings. The incarnated Son of God revealed that the state of internal relations of Divine Persons is also marked by a *submission full of love*, in which the created world finds the highest standards of obedience in love.

Obedient (Greek: *hypakoos*) – is the listener who, like a disciple, respects the words of the speaker. According to Tertulian, the eternal Word, which God bore inside himself, emerged during the creation of the world (*Adversus Praxeas* VII, 1). Through incarnation the Word went among sinners, for whom listening poses a great difficulty. Sin is, in principle, "non-listening", disobedience (Exh. *Verbum Domini*, no. 26).

All creation is submitted to God's authority (cf. Gen 1 – creative power of the Word). Winds and seas, and even demons are obedient to Jesus (see Matt 8:27; Mk 1:27). The spheres of heaven and stars respond joyfully to the *voice* of the Creator: "he called them, and they said, 'Here we are!' They shone with gladness for him who made them" (Bar 3:34; cf. Ps 104:4, Sir 42,23; 43,13-26). Sinful humanity excludes itself form this zeal, remaining *closed in its disobedience* (cf. Rom 11:32),

therefore it needs liberation. Before it achieves the proper "freedom of God's children", creation "subjected to futility" (Rom 8:20) suffers oppression.

The history of the relationship between God and man focuses on the deepening of the convergence of wills – "God's will is no longer for me an alien will, something imposed on me from without by the commandments, but it is now my own will, based on the realization that God is in fact more deeply present to me than I am to myself. Then self-abandonment to God increases and God becomes our joy" (Enc. *Deus Caritas est*, no. 17).

## Obedience in human communities

– in the family, state, professional relations etc. it concerns *authority understood as ancillary and coordinating instance*, in order to achieve social goals and goods. Submission to this authority facilitates self-fulfilment of individual persons and speeds up achieving the goal through combined forces. Conflicts between individual and social needs are inevitable, they are part of human condition and in Christian sense they are the reality of the "Cross." There are situations where one should resist the authorities, retaining obedience to God, Who should be "more listened to" than men (Acts 4:19). A Christian person accepts, however, that all authority "comes from God" – even in pagan communities. It is God who entrusts Hazael with the authority over Damascus – 1 Kings 19:15; 2 Kings 48:9-13; He gives Nebuchadnezzar the power over the whole East (Jer 27:6) – so it should not be ignored or insulted. An extensive description of a clever election campaign, vile actions of the ruler and their consequences are included in the ninth chapter of the Book of Judges (9: 1-57).

Theology of Spirituality

Research shows that there is a tendency in the human nature to be obedient, but its value is ambivalent (S. Milgram's experiment[7]). Entering interaction with the influence of the society directed at creating an obedient man, one is all too quick to renounce the responsibility for one's own actions and becomes influenced by significant political or scientific authorities. Few people can retain the strength of belief to "openly resist" (cf. Gal 2:11-21) the highest authority in a particular situation. Many use manipulation – in the form of ingratiation – employing flattery and servility towards the ones in power, awaiting due gratifications.

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[7]     Cf. S. Milgram, *Posłuszeństwo wobec autorytetu* [*Obedience to Authority. An Experimental View*, 1974], transl. M. Hołda, Kraków 2008.

## Obedience in faith

– Greek *pisteuein* (believe) and *peithesthai* (be obedient) in the New Testament express man's acceptation of the redemption message. Man wholly entrusts himself to the self-revealing God, by displaying "full compliance of reason and will" (Const. *Dei Verbum*, no. 5). And since obedience is a fruit and sign of faith, consequently – lack of faith brings about disobedience and lack of obedience is a symptom of a crisis of faith. The experience of faith and obedience refers to the Word of God (Gen 12:1; 22:2; Ex 24:7). According to St. Paul, no man, because of sin, manages to be fully obedient to God (cf. Rom 7:14). Humans are liberated from being submitted to the "law of sin" by the obedient Servant of Jahwe (cf. Is 50:4), always doing God's will (cf. Ps 40:7nn).

A Christian is formed towards obedience on the Lord's Day, when "on the first day of the week" he listens to the Word in order to later subdue the earth to himself. Such obedience integrates the Third Commandment of the Decalogue with the third Blessing (Matt 5:5), which promises the "quiet" to receive the possession of the earth[8].

In the Church it is obligatory to be obedient to bishops, who are the "stewards of the Word of God and the power of sanctification," serving the liberty of God's children; they guard them in the obedience to the Holy Spirit (Greek: *episkopoi* – the overseers of the community). Only an "obedient authority", that is, the one who himself is submitted to God, guarantees safe obedience. Submissiveness and obedience in the Church towards the superiors flows from obedience to Christ, Who entrusted His Church to the Apostles and their successors, in the face of the danger of foreign influences (cf. Heb 13:9) in the following generations "have care over souls ... and have to give account for this" (Heb 13:17).

Theology of Spirituality

## The obedience of Christ

– the mystery of Redemption was fulfilled by "the obedience of the One," bringing about a breakthrough in the state of humanity: "many were made righteous" (Rom 5:19). The fulfilment of the Father's will by the Only-Begotten Son has saved the whole offspring of the disobedient first parents (cf. Rom 5:19; Phil 2:9).

Christ showed obedience towards the Father directly (cf. Heb 10:7; Phil 2:8) and indirectly – through being submitted to parents, events, institutions, earthly authority (cf. Lk 2:51; Matt 17:27). In the Gethsemane absolute submission to the Father's will was revealed

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[8]    A.J. Nowak, *Osoba konsekrowana II: Ślub czystości*, Lublin 1999, p. 15

– obedience "until death" (Mk 14:36). Paradoxically through obedience in which He "suffered" a lot (Heb 5,8) He has become "the Lord" (Phil 2:11) and the Author of eternal salvation for those "who obey him" (Heb 5:9). Since then, being submitted to the Son is the ultimate Law and Norm for fulfilling the laws previously revealed by God.

Consecrated obedience – concerns *new* people (baptised, living sacramentally), who want to follow in the footsteps of obedient Christ and publicly vow the readiness "not to do their own will" (Jn 6:38; cf. Matt 26:39).

Such an attitude is a provocation against the understanding of liberty which does not relate it to truth and ethical norm (cf. Exh. *Vita consecrata*, no. 91), it questions the so called "independent life" – slavishly dependent on impulses, drives, fashion, idols, prosperity and mirages of greatness. The temptation of such life appears also among the baptised, so the witness of the truly free life must strengthen the ones who are weak in faith. A vowed obedience is an assurance that "there is no contradiction between obedience and liberty" (ibid.), in the context of a consecrated person – "to be free means to be *occupied* by Christ"[9].

Consecrated obedience points out to the far-sightedness of faith, which oversteps narrow horizons of changeable personal desires, of giving in to passions or delusive ideas. It makes the person yielding – to the authority of the Church – in a way far from infantilism and servility and, at the same time, from a defensive and distrustful attitude. A voluntarily vowed obedience "practised in imitation of Christ... shows the liberating beauty of a *dependence which is not servile but filial,* marked by a deep sense of responsibility and animated by mutual trust, which is a reflection in history of the loving *harmony* between the three Divine Persons" (Exh. *Vita consecrata*, no. 21). The aim of consecrated obedience is not the submission of the person itself or acquiring an attitude of docility. The proper aim is to achieve eternal life through obedience to God, but including human intermediaries (Instr. *The Service of Authority and Obedience*, no. 9). In practice it has many *functions* helpful in the spiritual growth of a person: the ascetic, pedagogical, moral, mystical, social and apostolic one. Consecrated persons should practice it in the spirit of faith, moved by the Holy Spirit to love the will of God (cf. Decree *Perfectae caritatis*, no. 14), striving for it to be active, responsible and voluntary obedience. Its proper object comprises: the rule and/or constitutions, the good of a charismatic community, the current will of the superior.

Theology of Spirituality

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[9]     Ibidem, p. 105.

## Obedience in the tradition of religious orders

– original ascetes presented absolute obedience, becoming strongmen in the fight against "one's own will" (John Cassian +435). Pachomius (+348) introduced obedience into the space of *cenobium* containing thousands of people; St. Basil (+379) holds obedience in high esteem, mitigating its character through a family-like atmosphere of communities smaller than the Pachomian ones. In the *Rule* of St. Benedict (+547) there is a clear statement about the "promise of obedience" (58,17), although this is not connected with professing the three evangelical counsels. The monks promise to live in a particular cloister "under the Rule and abbot" (1,2), being obedient to the head of the community as the representative of Christ (*dominus, abbas*). Practising obedience forms humility: "the first step of humility is obedience without delay" (chap. 5).

Franciscan obedience on one hand is aimed at opening brothers directly to the Holy Spirit in order to discover the will of God, on the other hand friars promise obedience to the Pope and Roman Church, combining with it the duty of obeying "brother Francis and his successors" (2 Rule 1,1-3). Francis created a new, decentralized, "evangelical" style of authority and obedience, resembling the apostolic community of Jerusalem. In the face of a rapid growth in the community he had to admonish his brothers more often about obedience than about poverty (C. Esser OFM). In his *Testament* (no. 9) he writes about the obedience in the way of a "prisoner" in the hands of the superior; in the *Admonitions* he speaks about perfect obedience, in which the subordinate who sees a better solution than his superior does, willingly makes sacrifice out of it. Obedience to God includes, according to St. Francis: *obedience to the Spirit* (to acquire the Spirit of the Lord) and *obedience to the Word* (The Son of God, Gospel, the preached Word, the Eucharist).

Dominicans, taking the vow of obedience to the general superior, expressed (for the first time) the unity of all the members of the order in the world. St. Dominic initiated an original combination of authority and obedience – brothers participate proportionally in governing the order; the superior is a *primus inter pares*, so he should be distinguished by intelligence, experience, wisdom, love. J. Woroniecki includes among the duties of a superior: governing (knowing the norms), giving orders (well-thought, clear commands and permissions), reproaching (educational and preventive function of punishments and praises).

St. Ignatius Loyola (+1556) introduced a strict discipline of obedience, which makes Jesuits a skilful tool in the hands of the Church. In a

Theology of Spirituality

well-known letter written in Rome on 16th March 1553[10] he emphasizes that perfect obedience concerns not only the submission of will, but also of intellect. The principle is to not to see a concrete person as the superior, but Jesus. Jesuits and other male religious orders created in this time received Holy Orders, without internal discipline proper for cloisters. Instead of it St. Ignatius introduced a complex system of meditation, self-assessment, resolutions in order to eradicate vices and build virtues.

Formation towards obedience, based on biblical assumptions, perceives a mysterious relationship "between renunciation and joy, between sacrifice and magnanimity, between discipline and spiritual freedom" (Exh. *Evangelica testificatio*, no. 29). It does not agree to identify submissiveness with obedience, since submissiveness means renouncing and losing one's freedom (a low measure of humanity), while obedience requires being free and disposing of one's freedom (a high measure of the dignity of a person).

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[10]    See *Pisma wybrane św. Ignacego Loyoli* [*Chosen writings of St. Ignatius Loyola*], vol. 1, Kraków 1968, pp. 490-500.

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# The Holy Spirit Will Overshadow You: Conversation as the Transformative Openness to the Unknown

The paper reflects on the Incarnation of Christ as a transformative event that redefines human understanding and history. The central thesis explores how the Incarnation reveals a divine conversation – an eternal dialogue of love and understanding between the Father, the Son, and humanity. This divine conversation invites us into a dialogical openness, challenging our comprehension and deepening our participation in God's mystery.

The Incarnation is the ultimate hermeneutic event, where divine self-disclosure meets human receptivity. Christ's embodiment of God's reigning (βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ) reveals that heaven is not a distant realm but a mode of being characterized by communion, love, and trust. This theological depth is particularly embodied in the Annunciation, where Mary's dialogue with the Archangel Gabriel exemplifies transformative openness. Mary's fiat symbolizes human consent to divine action, a model for walking together (σύν-ὁδός) in faith, discernment, and participation in God's unfolding plan.

A hermeneutic reading of Luke 1:35 highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in the Incarnation. The Spirit's overshadowing (ἐπισκιάσει) mirrors divine creativity, as seen in Genesis, and serves as a paradigm for understanding synodality – a continuous process of renewal and shared journey within the Church. This protective and transformative overshadowing creates a sacred space for life and love to emerge, revealing God's gentle yet powerful intervention in human history. It emphasizes that divine action respects human freedom while enabling participation in God's salvific plan.

The paper also draws upon artistic representations to deepen its theological insights. Henry Ossawa Tanner's *The Annunciation* (1898) and Jacek Malczewski's *Annunciation* (1928) are examined for their disclosure of the Holy Spirit's presence. Tanner's use of light symbolizes divine grace as an illuminating

and non-coercive force, while Malczewski's intimate setting emphasizes the ordinary as a site for divine encounter. Both artworks invite viewers into a contemplative space where the sacred transforms the mundane, reinforcing the centrality of openness and dialogue in divine-human interaction.

The hermeneutic notion of conversation as a transformative event extends to synodality in the Church. Synodality, informed by the Incarnation, is a way of being that embraces dialogue, listening, and communal discernment. It reflects the Church's call to openness, solidarity, and participation in God's mission, especially in responding to suffering and division in the world.

The closing reflections turn toward the existential implications of divine faithfulness and human belief. The Incarnation is framed as a perpetual call to trust, participate, and live in the fullness of divine love and renewal. By entering this divine conversation, humanity finds its ultimate purpose in communion with God and the world.

This paper provides a reflective theological exploration of the Incarnation as a dialogical and transformative event, enriched by scriptural interpretation, artistic analysis, and reflections on the Church's mission. It concludes with a heartfelt call for compassion, solidarity, and openness to God's grace during times of suffering and hope for peace in the world.

**Key words**: Annunciation, Incarnation, Synodality, divine self-disclosure, Ossawa Tanner, Jacek Malczewski.

The Incarnation of Christ is a transformative event that transcends time, reshaping human history and the entire horizon of human understanding. This momentous occurrence (*Augenblick*), rooted in divine revelation, invites us to deeply connect with God's self-manifestation and self-disclosure. Such engagement unfolds as a conversation – a dialogical openness to the unknown, where the boundaries of comprehension are pushed, revealing new depths of divine mystery. The Father and the Son speak to one another about their love for humanity. They *are* a conversation (*Gespräch*) – a profound, eternal dialogue of love and understanding. The Son of God enters the world, taking on flesh, embodying the very essence of creation so that he will be God-with-us (עִמָּנוּאֵל, Ἐμμανουήλ). He comes to dwell among us, to engage in a living conversation with us, sharing the mystery of God's reigning, which is nothing less than heaven itself. Through His presence among us, the Son reveals that He *is* the reigning of God (βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ): not a distant realm but a way of being, a communion of love and trust that transforms our very existence. In the sacred dialogue, we are invited to listen, respond, and join in the divine conversation that has no

beginning and no end – a conversation in which heaven is within and among us (ἐντὸς ὑμῶν ἐστιν). In a dynamic walking together, a shared journey (σύν-ὁδός), we enter a living dialogue, internally and externally, with God and our lifeworld. This horizon is marked by listening, serving, and bearing witness, mirroring God's invitation to be with us.

Conversation as transformative openness to the unknown finds its richest expression in the Gospel narrative of the Annunciation (Lk 1: 26-38), where Mary, in dialogue (διά-λογος) with the archangel Gabriel, lets herself be open (*Öffnenlassen*) to the mystery of God's plan. This conversation, underscored by the power of the Holy Spirit, reveals the nature of waking together as a process that requires discernment, listening, and an openness to the new, to the mystery that transcends human expectation and control.

The hermeneutic reading of the Incarnation captures this transformative openness by revealing the theological depth of the Holy Spirit's overshadowing of Mary (Lk 1:35) and connecting it to God's creative breath. The Spirit's role in creation and new creation is a paradigm for understanding synodality as a continuous unfolding of life, renewal, and participation in the divine plan.

The Incarnation *in-forms* the pathway of the Church's synodal mission. Just as Mary's "yes" to God opened the way for the Word to become flesh (ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο, J 1:14), so does the Church say "yes" to walking together, listening, and discerning the Spirit's guidance in our lifeworld. This is a journey of continual openness, a willingness to be metamorphosed (μετα-μορφώνω) by encountering the unknown in God, others, and the Church. This transformative openness mirrors the Incarnation's profound mystery, calling us to embody the permanent movement of God's love and truth in a fragmented world.

The connection between the Incarnation and synodality emphasizes how the celebration of the Incarnation is not just a remembrance of a past event but an ongoing participation in God's life-giving presence in the world by walking together toward communion with him. Discerning the timing for moving in haste is required for the communion to happen. Mary recognizes the call to exit in haste (μετὰ σπουδῆς, Lk 1:39). This is the opportune moment, the right time (καιρός) to take action initiated by excitement (ἔξοδος). Leaving the known to follow the unknown to be with and for the others. Abandoning everything that captivates us. Entering the realm of unimagined possibilities. The unknown discloses itself through shared discernment, humility, and an openness to the Spirit's guidance. The narrative's movement from Nazareth to the hill country represents a geographical translocation

Re-newal
of Theology

but also spiritual and relational dynamics. Mary moves from the private sphere of the Annunciation into a communal expression of discipleship grounded in readiness and urgency to serve.

## Lk 1: 35 in Greek reads:

Καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ ἄγγελος εἶπεν αὐτῇ· Πνεῦμα Ἅγιον ἐπελεύσεται ἐπὶ σὲ καὶ δύναμις Ὑψίστου ἐπισκιάσει σοι διὸ καὶ τὸ γεννώμενον ἅγιον κληθήσεται, Υἱὸς Θεοῦ. In the King James' translation, it is rendered: "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore, also that holy thing (the unborn) which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God".

The verse opens with the Archangel Gabriel responding to Mary's question, revealing the mystery of the Incarnation. He announces that the Πνεῦμα Ἅγιον (Holy Spirit) will come upon her, and δύναμις Ὑψίστου (the power of the Most High) will overshadow her (ἐπισκιάσει). This overshadowing is a profoundly significant expression, filled with biblical resonances and theological depth. The hermeneutic reading of this verse discloses something essential about the divine atmosphere. The Holy Spirit is the creative breath of God and represents the divine creative power, seen in Genesis 1: 2, where the Spirit hovers over the waters. Πνεῦμα Ἅγιον is always in motion and brings forth life: Descending on Mary recalls that same divine creativity, this time focused on the new creation in Christ.

The power of the Most High refers to God's sovereignty and majesty. This evokes an image of God's immense, transcendent authority, yet this power manifests not in domination but is life-giving. The δύναμις of God is gentle enough to respect human freedom (Mary's consent, *fiat*) yet sufficiently powerful to bring about the (im)possible. God's power is not coercive or violent but a form of love that respects human autonomy while enabling divine participation in history.

The birth of the Holy One (τὸ γεννώμενον ἅγιον) speaks to the profound mystery of the Incarnation, where the divine and human are united in Christ. The eternal God enters the temporality and vulnerability of human life without losing divine majesty. This gives rise to *incarnational hermeneutics*, where the divine and human union shapes understanding. The Incarnation is the ultimate hermeneutic event, where the Word becomes flesh, disclosing God's love within the confines of human life.

The overshadowing (ἐπισκιάσει) *is* a divine protective presence. The verb ἐπισκιάσει means to overshadow or cover, and it recalls the cloud of God's presence that overshadowed the Tabernacle in the desert (Ex 40:35), as well as the transfiguration of Jesus when the voice from the cloud revealed him as God's Son (Lk 9:34-35). This shadow indicates divine presence, protection, and glory, revealing that God's action is enveloping, tender, and creative. The shadow conceals and reveals the sacred, marking God's nearness. God creates a sacred space where life can emerge. The shadow is not something dark or threatening but rather a place of refuge and renewal, such as in Psalm 91:1, where those who dwell "in the shadow of the Almighty" find protection and peace. God covers, nourishes, and protects. His love is gentle, embracing, and life-giving, akin to how a shadow shields from the sun's harshness, offering refreshment and shelter.

The image of God overshadowing Mary reminds us of the mystery of divine presence in our lives. This presence summons us to dwell in the openness of God's mystery, where we are called to trust and respond with the same openness Mary displays. She represents the archetype of human openness to divine action. Her *fiat* models how humanity is invited to answer (*Ant-wort*) to God's grace. Understanding the urgency of replying to God is not merely intellectual but involves a deep receptivity to what is beyond our control or comprehension.

The imagery of the Holy Spirit overshadowing someone has inspired artists for centuries. This overshadowing is depicted using powerful visual metaphors in various artistic representations.

Henry Ossawa Tanner's *The Annunciation* (1898) is a famous and powerful interpretation of the Annunciation, notable for its realistic and humble setting. The room is plain and sparse, with a simple bed, an earthen floor, and a woven rug. Mary is seated on the edge of the bed, wrapped in a cloak, her hands resting in her lap. Her posture and facial expression convey a sense of awe and hesitation. Her body language suggests that she is still absorbing the weight of the divine message being conveyed to her. This humanizes Mary and highlights her vulnerability and ordinary nature, emphasizing that the divine overshadowing happened to a real person in a real moment. Tanner's choice of a humble, earthly setting reflects the theological truth of the Incarnation: God chose to enter the world through the life of a simple, young woman. The overshadowing of the Holy Spirit takes place in the most ordinary of circumstances, transforming the mundane into something sacred.

Re-newal
of Theology

One of the most striking features of Tanner's painting is the absence of an angel. Instead, the divine presence is represented by an intense, radiant column of light. This light spills across the room, illuminating Mary and creating a sharp contrast between the warmth of the divine presence and the subdued tones of the rest of the room. Using light instead of a physical angel suggests a more open, spiritual understanding of the divine messenger. The light symbolizes God's presence and the Holy Spirit's overshadowing, evoking the image of the Spirit as a luminous, transformative force. The light is a physical reality and a metaphor for divine grace and revelation, emphasizing the mysterious, transcendent nature of the event. The light is soft, not overwhelming, reflecting the gentle, non-coercive nature of the Holy Spirit's presence. The interplay between light and shadow mirrors the theological tension between revelation and mystery in the Annunciation. The Holy Spirit's overshadowing is an act of divine revelation – God's plan for salvation – but it remains shrouded in mystery. The shadows in the painting suggest that while Mary receives the promise, the full unfolding of that promise lies ahead. She is encountering the divine light and stepping into a future filled with uncertainties

and challenges. The light guarantees transformation, but the shadow suggests that this transformation will involve integrating unknown aspects of her journey. Tanner's painting invites us into a contemplative space, where the emphasis is not on external details but on the profound internal shift that is taking place within Mary.

The absence of a visible Holy Spirit is a mode of presence that can be disclosed through its hiddenness. Absence is not mere non-existence, but a form of being that reveals something more profound about how we encounter truth, mystery, and reality. As such, it draws attention to what is concealed or deferred, opening a space for interpretation, reflection, and participation in the disclosure of meaning. It transforms how something is experienced. The Holy Spirit is not absent in the sense of being "missing"; rather, the Spirit *is* a presence that is there but not fully disclosed in a literal sense.

Just as Mary contemplates the mystery of the divine, we are invited to engage with the mystery of the Holy Spirit's presence through its absence. The divine is present in a way that resists easy interpretation. By dwelling in the realm of divine disclosure, we let the presence of the Holy Spirit unfold in a concealed and revealed way.

Jacek Malczewski's *Annunciation* (1928) offers a similarly unique interpretation, moving away from highly dramatic depictions to quiet, intimate, and deeply human. Malczewski shows Mary and the archangel in a simple, rustic interior. The setting is a modest wooden table, an open window with gentle light filtering through, and a few household objects. This invites us to see the divine intervention not as distant or abstract but as something that enters life's ordinary moments. God's presence comes to us in our most unassuming, everyday experiences. The Holy Spirit's overshadowing gently envelops the human world, silently transforming what is ordinary into something sacred. The simplicity of the setting speaks to the universality of divine encounter, where the ordinary becomes the threshold for the extraordinary. The figures' gestures – hands held in thoughtful, intimate positions – suggest a conversation beyond verbal exchange. It is a moment of shared contemplation, where something deeper is being communicated beyond the reach of the said. The Holy Spirit's overshadowing is a dialogical process where the relationship between the two figures shapes understanding. This represents a more internalized form of overshadowing – the divine presence works quietly through shared human experience, transforming understanding from within.

Re-newal
of Theology

The expressions and gestures of the two figures in the painting suggest an intimate conversation filled with curiosity and awe. Their speaking combines wonder, concentration, and deep inner awareness. This encounter between the two figures reflects the theme of openness to the divine mystery. There is no dramatic display of power but a subtle exchange, a dialogue representing Mary's deep contemplation and willingness to accept her role in this transformative event. The Holy Spirit's overshadowing enters through conversation, attentiveness, and a humble readiness to participate in God's unfolding plan. The intimate dialogue mirrors the internal conversation between the human spirit and the divine call.

Natural light entering through the window is essential to the painting. It subtly illuminates the scene, highlighting the faces and gestures of the archangel and Mary while the rest of the room remains in a gentle shadow. Though not overpowering, the light suffuses the scene with warmth and clarity. This soft light reflects the symbolic presence of the Holy Spirit, Who overshadows Mary with a protective presence. The light invites reflection on how the Holy Spirit's work occurs in the background, subtly illuminating the path ahead. Like light, the Spirit is visible and invisible, touching the human world without explicitly revealing the divine mystery.

The lack of prominent divine symbols (like the dove or halos) invites us to meditate on the sacredness of the human encounter itself. Malczewski invites us to reflect on how divine overshadowing does not remove us from our human context but enters it. The encounter between the archangel and Mary represents the Annunciation's historical moment and the Spirit's continual presence in the everyday. It shows how the divine mystery involves the human – our hands, conversations, and lives. There is no rush, no overwhelming emotion, only quiet, reflective anticipation. This suggests that the Holy Spirit's overshadowing is an act that is deeply intimate and profoundly cosmic. This quietness speaks to the mystery of how God often works – through subtle, almost unnoticed moments that change the course of history.

Upon closer reflection, it's clear that the painting plays with ambiguity regarding the identity of the two figures. In many traditional depictions of the Annunciation, the Archangel Gabriel is portrayed with youthful and androgynous features, blending masculine and feminine traits. In Malczewski's painting, the Angel has short hair and a soft and somewhat ambiguous face, which could be interpreted as either a young man or a woman. This ambiguity allows for a broader range of interpretations, and it is possible that Malczewski intentionally blurred the lines between genders to highlight the universality of the divine encounter. This ambiguity indicates that divine encounters, such as the Annunciation, transcend human categories. Gabriel's role as a messenger is less about his personal identity (לאירבּגּ, God is my strength) and more about his function – delivering God's message to Mary. Therefore, depicting the angel this way suggests that the divine messenger could appear in many forms, reflecting the mystery of divine intervention. Blending masculine and feminine traits in the painting is an artistic way of expressing the inclusivity and transcendence of the divine. It enriches the reading of the painting and invites us to explore the layered, mysterious aspects of divine encounters.

Re-newal of Theology

Diving further into the painting, we reflect on the objects present, particularly the simple wooden table and the fingerhut (thimble) and scissors lying on it. These seemingly mundane objects carry significant symbolic weight. The sturdy yet plain wooden table evokes associations with Joseph, who is traditionally presented as a carpenter. The table anchors Mary's everyday reality, emphasizing her surroundings' simplicity and humble status. This table is a metaphor for the foundation of Mary's life, representing the practical, mundane world into which the divine mystery is about to unfold. It also evokes the coming reality that Jesus will be born into the laboring world of a carpenter's

family. It grounds the scene in the human condition – a tangible, earthly object that anchors the divine message in the reality of human labor, craftsmanship, and provision.

The thimble and scissors on the table are tools for sewing or mending, associated with Mary's traditional role as a woman of the household. A thimble protects the finger while sewing, a task associated with care, repair, and creation. As the mother of Jesus, Mary is a guard and a vessel through which God's plan will be stitched into the fabric of history. Mary will need care and protection as she embarks on bringing the Savior into the world and nurturing Him.

Scissors are a tool for cutting, symbolizing the act of separation or preparation. They signal that Mary's life is about to be irrevocably changed – cut from the path it was on and redirected toward a new, divine purpose. Scissors also represent her ability to make decisions (κρίνω), signifying her role in actively consenting to God's plan rather than being a passive participant.

The thimble and the scissors connect Mary's domestic life to the grand narrative of salvation. The divine works through the most minor details of human life – through acts of care.  Just as a carpenter shapes wood and a seamstress mends fabric, God's work through the Holy Spirit in the Annunciation is a creative act that brings forth (ποίησις) new life. The Holy Spirit's overshadowing is a moment when the divine meets the human in the most practical, tangible ways – through tools, work, and everyday life. This meeting of the divine and human through the promise of the Holy Spirit transforms Mary's life and the world itself.

The promise (ἀπαγγελία) of the Holy Spirit overshadowing Mary, as expressed in Lk 1:35, carries a profound and deeply poetic significance. It is not just about physical proximity or shelter; it suggests a protective, enveloping presence. This is no ordinary promise. It is a divine promise that holds within it the miraculous and the impossible. God acts in the space of the seemingly impossible. Understanding the promise is also the task of understanding the nature of God's word and work in the world. The promise to Mary is, in a sense, a microcosm of God's promise to all of creation. Through the Holy Spirit, God continues to bring forth life, light, and redemption, overshadowing the chaos and brokenness of the world with love and creativity.

The promise of overshadowing concerns divine protection and guidance. Mary will not be alone on this journey. The Holy Spirit will be with her, guiding, comforting, and empowering her. The overshadowing is not just a theological abstraction but a deeply personal, almost

maternal act of God drawing Mary into the mystery of new life. It allows reflecting on the broader feminine aspects of God's creative and nurturing power.

For Mary, the overshadowing is a moment of grace, and she trusts in the divine presence despite her uncertainty. Her encounter with the angel requires a leap into the unknown, with the potential for profound transformation. The overshadowing of the Holy Spirit is a moment of divine integration. The unknown is not something to be feared but embraced, as it holds the potential for transformation, creativity, and new life.

## The work of art as understanding

The paintings invite us to participate in understanding through an aesthetic experience. The light becomes a metaphor for revelation and understanding, mirroring how understanding dawns gradually, like light entering a dark room. The Holy Spirit presented as the light symbolizes the sudden, overwhelming presence of understanding from outside us, illuminating human thinking and bringing divine mystery into the world. This moment represents understanding as an event that is mysterious, overwhelming, and profoundly transformative. Understanding is an event that happens to us. Mary's horizon of human understanding meets the divine horizon of God's will. This is an instance when the human and the divine mystery converge, and understanding begins to unfold within her.

Unlike Tanner's painting, where light dramatically signifies the Holy Spirit, Malczewski suggests that divine presence can be found in ordinary and human interactions. The Holy Spirit's work is quieter here, almost hidden, but no less profound. Two figures in close, conversational proximity indicate the dynamic, human aspect of divine encounter – the moment of understanding that emerges through dialogue and presence. The artwork itself becomes an event where understanding unfolds through conversation. The painting reflects the hermeneutic idea that truth happens in conversation – understanding arises through the back-and-forth of encounters. In Malczewski's painting, understanding is a subtle unfolding that occurs through human interaction and reflection. In both works of art, the Holy Spirit is at work, guiding the process of understanding. Whether through a dramatic revelation of light or a quiet conversation, the Spirit's work brings divine truth into human awareness, transforming us and our lifeworld through understanding.

Re-newal
of Theology

When we view the work of art, we participate in the process of contemplation and revelation, like the figures in the paintings. The artworks are sites of understanding where the divine presence and human response meet, and the Holy Spirit continues to overshadow us, opening us to deeper truths and insights. The paintings are not just representations of the Holy Spirit's work; they are active participants in understanding, inviting us into the mystery of divine encounter and the unfolding of meaning.

Understanding conversation as overshadowing the people led by it reflects a profound insight into the nature of dialogue and communication. Hans-Georg Gadamer famously stated, "The conversation leads us (*das Gespräch führt uns*)." In genuine dialogue, the participants do not control the conversation, but the conversation guides them. Conversation is not just an exchange of pre-formed ideas but a dynamic, living process that brings the participants into a shared horizon of meaning. It overshadows them by transcending their individual intentions, leading them to insights and understandings they could not have anticipated beforehand.

The Holy Spirit, often described as the *Paraclete* (Παράκλητος, comforter, advocate, One Who comes to assist), is also considered the Spirit of Truth (Πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, J 16:13). In this role, the Holy Spirit guides and leads us into all truth, not by imposing external knowledge but by unveiling deeper understanding. The overshadowing of the Holy Spirit in the Annunciation reflects this guiding presence – an invitation to be drawn into the divine mystery, just as conversation draws us into new insights we could not predict. Conversation is not about controlling or forcing our views but about openness to others. Being overshadowed by conversation points to its transformative power. Just as the Holy Spirit's overshadowing transforms Mary's life and role in history, so does the conversation have the power to transform us. Through conversation we are changed – our perspectives broaden, our challenged assumptions, and new meanings emerge. Our willingness to be led by a conversation reflects a radical openness to the unknown, an acceptance of being addressed by something beyond our comprehension.

The Holy Spirit in the paintings symbolizes the dialogical space between the divine and the human, where meaning and understanding are created through collaboration. Understanding happens in the space of encounter, where we are drawn beyond our perspectives and opened to something greater.

## Incarnation and synodality:
## a call to transformative openness

The Incarnation of Christ marks a pivotal moment in human history, where God's eternal Word enters time and space, reshaping the entire narrative of salvation. The Incarnation is an ongoing reality that calls the Church to live in constant transformation, openness, and dialogue with God and the world. This is the essence of walking together, where we embrace the call to discern, listen, and act guided by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit's overshadowing of Mary becomes a theological model for understanding how the Church is invited to participate in God's creative and redemptive work. Just as the Holy Spirit brought forth life in Mary, so does the Spirit continue to animate the Church, guiding Her toward new horizons of understanding and communion. Synodality, as a mode of being and acting, requires us to be open to the unknown – to the unexpected ways God's grace unfolds in history. It is a call to walk together in a shared journey where listening, dialogue, and discernment are central to our lives. The synodal Church, therefore, is not a static formal institution but a dynamic community continually transformed by Her encounter with God and the world.

Every engagement with God is a new beginning, a moment of transformation that calls for a renewed openness to the divine mystery. This openness is mirrored in the process of synodality, where we are called to listen to all voices, especially those on the margins, and discern the path forward. Celebrating the Incarnation is an invitation to live in a perpetual openness to the new and the unknown. We are invited to continuously converse with God, one another, and the world. This conversation concerns remaining open to the Spirit's movement and trusting that God will guide us toward deeper understanding and communion. The horizon of synodality as ongoing transformation reflects the very nature of the Incarnation. Just as the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, so too does the Church, through synodality, embody the Word in the world, becoming a living witness to God's love and truth.

Re-newal of Theology

In many parts of the world, full-scale war persists. In a movement of the heart, *motus cordis,* we turn toward all who suffer due to various conflicts – military, political, ideological, religious, social, personal, and even the inner battles we fight within ourselves. In the spirit of the movement of the heart as a response to the call of grace, we allow our hearts to be moved toward others in compassion and solidarity. This movement is guided by love that knows no boundaries. Our heart never

comes to rest (*cor inquietum*) but continually reaches toward others, transforming through closeness and care. Like for Simone Weil, our heart's movement might be one of descent in humility toward the most wounded places, where love can flow like water to the lowest points.

The more faith we lose in people, the more God confirms His faith in us and sends us his Son so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (J 3:16). To perish (ἀπόλλυμι, total annihilation, *Verfallenheit*, can be seen also as the disintegration, *Zerfallenheit*) is to fall out of the horizon of possibility into closure where no *disclosure* (ἀλήθεια) can occur not because of divine rejection but through our own choice to close ourselves off from love and truth. The threat of being lost underscores what might happen if we remain in isolation or reject divine love, framing perishing as a potential reality, not a predetermined fate. Perishing is not just mere loss or death but an existential state of being lost (*Verlorenheit*) to our meaning, destiny, and relational identity in the openness of Being.

We experience the paradox of divine faithfulness in the face of human disillusionment. As trust in people wanes, a more profound calling emerges to recognize God's unwavering trust in humanity. God's love is not abstract but revealed through action. God gives us not something we might actually wish for but his only Son (ὁ μονογενὴς Υἱός). Believing in the divine gift transcends human failures, opening the path to eternal life through divine grace and inviting a transformative response rooted in trust and confidence. Believing (ὁ πιστεύων) is not mere intellectual assent but an existential engagement – a being-open to the possibility of encountering life (ζωή) beyond the confines of temporal existence. Eternal life (ζωὴ αἰώνιος) emerges as a lived reality within the dynamic space where God's love and human belief intersect. By being brought (back) into the openness of life, we are offered not merely endless existence but life as a process and an unfolding gift characterized by fullness, participation in God, and existential wholeness. Ζωὴ αἰώνιος is the space of unending *disclosure*, where human beings live fully attuned to the divine. This openness is made possible through belief (ϖιστεύων), understood as radical trust and participation in God's ongoing work of renewal.

May our hearts move toward God, Who suffers with the suffering, distressed, and afflicted, responding to the divine call of shared humanity and the hope for peace. A very Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year!

Re-newal of Theology

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# Sprawozdanie z działalności Katedry Teologii Katolickiej Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku w roku akademickim 2023/2024

## Kadra Katedry Teologii Katolickiej

Na Uniwersytecie w Białymstoku w ramach Katedry Teologii Katolickiej w roku akademickim 2023/2024 zatrudnionych było czterech pracowników. Wśród nich jest trzech pracowników naukowo-dydaktycznych. Na stanowisku profesora nadzwyczajnego zatrudniony był ks. dr hab. Andrzej Proniewski na całym etacie, który pełni także obowiązki kierownika Katedry Teologii Katolickij. Ks. dr Tadeusz Kasabuła był zatrudniony na stanowisku adiunkta w wymiarze pół etatu, zaś ks. dr Marek Kowalczuk na stanowisku asystenta – również w wymiarze pół etatu. Oprócz pracowników naukowo-dydaktycznych na stanowisku pracownika administracyjnego w Katedrze Teologii Katolickiej był zatrudniony ks. mgr lic. Leszek M. Jakoniuk na całym etacie. Siedziba Katedry Teologii Katolickiej mieści się przy ul. Zamenhofa 15 w Białymstoku, w pomieszczeniach należących do Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku.

## Działalność dydaktyczna

W ramach działalności dydaktycznej pracownicy KTK przeprowadzili następujące wykłady:

**ks. dr hab. Andrzej Proniewski, prof. UwB (95 godzin)**
– *Religia i religijność wobec społeczeństwa ryzyka* (10 godz.), Wydział Nauk o Edukacji;
– Seminarium magisterskie (60 godz.), Wydział Studiów Kulturowych;

– Seminarium magisterskie cz. 3 i cz. 4 (25 godz.), Wydział Nauk o Edukacji.

**ks. dr Tadeusz Kasabuła, adiunkt (45 godzin)**
– *Historia kultury* (30 godz.), Wydział Studiów Kulturowych;
– *Chrześcijańskie dziedzictwo Europy* (15 godz.), Wydział Historii.

**ks. dr Marek Kowalczuk, asystent (40 godzin)**
– *Spotkanie kultur: judaizm, chrześcijaństwo pierwotne i świat grecko-rzymski* (30 godz.), Wydział Studiów Kulturowych;
– *Ciało i dusza w historii* (10 godz.), Wydział Nauk o Edukacji.

Pracownicy KTK w roku akademickim 2023/2024 oprócz dydaktyki prowadzonej w Białymstoku przeprowadzili wykłady w Wilnie w Filii Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku w ramach kursu dokształcającego katechetyczno-pedagogicznego we współpracy z Archidiecezją Wileńską.

## Konferencje naukowe

Katedra Teologii Katolickiej UwB w okresie sprawozdawczym była współorganizatorem konferencji naukowych:
• „Wspólnota Kościoła w laicyzującym się świecie" (Białystok, 13 stycznia 2024);
• „Nauki teologiczne na uniwersytecie. XXV-lecie katedr teologii Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku" (Białystok, 1 marca 2024);
• „Po dwóch stronach ołtarza. Dwie perspektywy, jeden Kościół" (Białystok, 6 kwietnia 2024).

## Działalność naukowo-badawcza

Pracownicy Katedry Teologii Katolickiej Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku w roku sprawozdawczym opublikowali następujące artykuły naukowe:

**ks. dr hab. Andrzej Proniewski, prof. UwB**
Rozdziały książek:
• *W kierunku teleologii dziecka*, w: E. Kryńska (red.), *Dziecko w historii – między godnością a zniewoleniem. Wychowanie od Bolesława Chrobrego do współczesności*, w druku.
Artykuły naukowe:
• *The Protection of Human Dignity in Selected Norms of Civil Law and in Theology*, „Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej" 2023, t. 22, s. 148-169 – współautor;

- *The Social Message of John Paul II's Encyclicals in the Implementation of Horizontal Principles in EU Projects*, „Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej" 2023, t. 22, s. 214-228 – współautor;
- *Synod w Kościele katolickim w Polsce jako fundament doświadczenia jedności wspólnoty*, „Teologia w Polsce" 2023, no. 17, z. 2, s. 143-160;
- *The Church Lives by the Eucharist, the Eucharist Lives in the Church: The Ontological Identity of the Believers*, „Collectanea Theologica" 2023, t. 93, no. 4, s. 85-107.

Publikacje popularyzujące naukę:

- *O Synodalności*, „Feniks. Pismo Alumnów AWSD w Białymstoku" 2024, 1(65), s. 9-14.

Sprawozdania, recenzje, varia:

- Recenzja wydawnicza: Tadeusz Zadykowicz, *Moralność katolicka. Przewodnik dla początkujących według nauczania św. Jana Pawła II*, Lublin 2023, ss. 144;
- Recenzja rozprawy doktorskiej ks. mgr. lic. Marcina Jakubiaka, *Próba liturgicznej interpretacji teologii dramatycznej Hansa Ursa von Balthasara*, napisanej pod kierunkiem dr. hab., prof. UPJPII Roberta Woźniaka, Kraków 2023, ss. 244 (14 grudnia 2023);
- Recenzja rozprawy doktorskiej ks. mgr. Pawła Ziei, *Wiarygodność chrześcijańskiej nadziei w ujęciu Wacława Hryniewicza OMI*, napisanej pod kierunkiem ks. dr. hab. Pawła Borto, Lublin 2024, ss. 211 (26 lutego 2024);
- Recenzja rozprawy doktorskiej ks. mgr. lic. Krzysztofa Mętlewicza, *Kapłaństwo eucharystyczne w teologii Josepha Ratzingera/Benedykta XVI*, napisanej pod kierunkiem ks. prof. dr. hab. Mariana Kowalczyka SAC, Warszawa 2024, ss. 388 (16 maja 2024);
- Recenzja rozprawy doktorskiej mgr lic. Zofii Kaszy, *Apologia katolicyzmu w pismach G.K. Chestertona. Perspektywa teologiczno-moralna*, napisanej pod kierunkiem ks. dr. hab. Arkadiusza Wuwera, prof. UŚ, Katowice 2024, ss. 408 (5 czerwca 2024);
- Recenzja rozprawy doktorskiej ks. mgr. lic. Grzegorza Rozborskiego, *Social and Cultural Changes of the 21st Century in the United States of America as a Challenge for the Pastoral Care of the Catholic Church* [*Zmiany społeczne i kulturowe XXI wieku w Stanach Zjednoczonych Ameryki jako wyzwanie dla duszpasterstwa Kościoła katolickiego*], napisanej pod kierunkiem ks. prof. dr. hab. Wiesława Przygody, Lublin 2024, ss. 324 (17 czerwca 2024);

- Recenzja rozprawy doktorskiej dr nauk fizycznych Ewy Banasińskiej *Relacje między naukami przyrodniczymi a teologią chrześcijańską w świetle twórczości Johna Polkinghorne'a jako fizyka i teologa*, napisanej pod kierunkiem ks. dr. hab. Pawła Borto, Lublin 2024, ss. 212 (26 czerwca 2024).

### ks. dr Tadeusz Kasabuła
Artykuły naukowe:
- *Teologia w świecie nauk*, „Studia Teologii Dogmatycznej" 2023, t. 9, s. 74-86.

Publikacje popularyzujące naukę:
- *Czas jubileuszy*, „Drogi Miłosierdzia" 2024, nr 1, s. 16;
- *Wpierw nim zaistniała parafia, czyli dlaczego jubileusz 600-lecia*, „Drogi Miłosierdzia" 2024, nr 2, s. 29;
- *Działo się w Goniądzu lat temu 600, czyli o bólach rodzenia parafii*, „Drogi Miłosierdzia" 2024, nr 3, s. 29.

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Artykuły naukowe:
- *Pedagogical Principles of Culture in Pope Francis' Exhortation Gaudete et Exsultate*, „Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej" 2023, t. 22, s. 23-30;
- *Przygotowanie pierwszokomunijne w dokumencie „Wskazania duszpastersko-katechetyczne Arcybiskupa Metropolity Białostockiego*, „Studia Teologii Dogmatycznej" 2023, t. 9, s. 62-73;
- *Podmiotowość w kształtowaniu świadomości eklezjalnej. Ekumeniczne spotkania młodzieży w Taize*, w: P. Mąkosa, H. Słotwińska (red.), *Nie służymy sprawie przegranej. Księga pamiątkowa z okazji 65. rocznicy urodzin ks. prof. dr. hab. Mariana Zająca*, Tarnów 2024, s. 443-456.

Publikacje popularyzujące naukę:
- E. Młyńska, J. Wysztygiel, L. Jakoniuk, B. Skłodowski (red.), *„Bóg mnie woła": scenariusze spotkań z dziećmi klas pierwszych, scenariusze spotkań z rodzicami*, w: *Na spotkanie z Panem Jezusem*, z. 1, Białystok 2023;
- E. Młyńska, J. Wysztygiel, L. Jakoniuk, B. Skłodowski (red.), *„Biegnę na spotkanie": scenariusze spotkań z dziećmi klas drugich, scenariusze spotkań z rodzicami*, w: *Na spotkanie z Panem Jezusem*, z. 2, Białystok 2023;
- E. Młyńska, J. Wysztygiel, L. Jakoniuk, B. Skłodowski (red.), *„Razem świętujemy": inicjacja liturgiczna dzieci klas trzecich*,

*nabożeństwa i obrzędy, biały tydzień, scenariusze spotkań z ro-dzicami*, w: *Na spotkanie z Panem Jezusem*, z. 3, Białystok 2023;

- E. Młyńska, J. Wysztygiel, L. Jakoniuk, B. Skłodowski (red.), *„Kochamy Jezusa”: scenariusze spotkań z dziećmi klas czwartych, scenariusze spotkań z rodzicami*, w: *Na spotkanie z Panem Jezusem*, z. 4, Białystok 2023;
- E. Młyńska, J. Wysztygiel, L. Jakoniuk, B. Skłodowski (red.), *Na spotkanie z Panem Jezusem. Plansze katechetyczne*, Białystok 2023;
- E. Młyńska, J. Wysztygiel, L. Jakoniuk, B. Skłodowski (red.), *„Bóg mnie woła”: pomoce katechetyczne*, w: *Na spotkanie z Panem Jezusem*, teczka nr 1, Białystok 2024;
- E. Młyńska, J. Wysztygiel, L. Jakoniuk, B. Skłodowski (red.), *„Biegnę na spotkanie”: pomoce katechetyczne*, w: *Na spotkanie z Panem Jezusem*, teczka nr 2, Białystok 2024;
- E. Młyńska, J. Wysztygiel, L. Jakoniuk, B. Skłodowski (red.), *„Razem świętujemy”: pomoce katechetyczne*, w: *Na spotkanie z Panem Jezusem*, teczka nr 3, Białystok 2024;
- E. Młyńska, J. Wysztygiel, L. Jakoniuk, B. Skłodowski (red.), *„Kochamy Jezusa”: pomoce katechetyczne*, w: *Na spotkanie z Panem Jezusem*, teczka nr 4, Białystok 2024;
- E. Młyńska, J. Wysztygiel, L. Jakoniuk, B. Skłodowski (red.), *Materiały katechetyczne dla dziecka,* w: *Na spotkanie z Panem Jezusem*, teczka nr 5, Białystok 2024.

## Udział w konferencjach, zjazdach naukowych i wydarzeniach kulturalno-naukowych, referaty

W roku akademickim 2023/2024 pracownicy Katedry Teologii Katolickiej oprócz uczestniczenia w wydarzeniach współorganizowanych przez KTK wzięli udział w konferencjach, sympozjach, zjazdach, wernisażach, wystawach:

**ks. dr hab. Andrzej Proniewski, prof. UwB**
- Konferencja naukowa: „Wiara czy rozum. Fałszywy dylemat” (Białystok, 21 października 2023), członek komitetu organizacyjnego;
- Diecezjalny Dzień Pastoralny (Drohiczyn, 14 października 2023), referat: *Kościelność ruchów katolickich na drodze synodalnej;*
- Konferencja naukowa: „Wspólnota Kościoła w laicyzującym się świecie” (Białystok, 13 stycznia 2024), członek komitetu organizacyjnego;

- Międzynarodowa konferencja naukowa: „Nauki teologiczne na Uniwersytecie. XXV-lecie katedr teologii Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku" (Białystok, 1 marca 2024), udział w debacie panelowej: *Teraźniejszość i przyszłość nauk teologicznych na uniwersytetach*;
- Konferencja naukowa: „Święty Tomasz na nowo odczytany. W 750 rocznicę śmierci Akwinaty" (Białystok, 9 marca 2024), prowadzenie konferencji;
- Konferencja naukowa: „Po dwóch stronach ołtarza. Dwie perspektywy, jeden Kościół" (Białystok, 6 kwietnia 2024) organizator;
- Konferencja naukowa: „Wyzwania i perspektywy wiary we współczesnym świecie" (Tarnów, 9-11 września 2024), udział zgodnie ze statutem TTD;
- Konferencja naukowa: „Zmartwychwstanie Jezusa Chrystusa jako wydarzenie historyczne i transcendentne" (Sandomierz, 18-20 września 2024), udział zgodnie ze statutem STF;
- Ogólnopolska Konferencja naukowa: „Dziecko w historii – między godnością a zniewoleniem. Wychowanie od Bolesława Chrobrego do współczesności" (Białystok, 21-22 września 2024), referat: *W kierunku teleologii dziecka.*

**ks. dr Tadeusz Kasabuła**
- Wystawa „Dziedzictwo do życia przywrócone", kopie dokumentów z lat 1515-1597 znajdujących się w zasobach Archiwum i Muzeum Archidiecezjalnego w Białymstoku (Białystok, październik – grudzień 2023), organizator;
- Sesja naukowa „Sacrum ocalone", z okazji 10-lecia współpracy Archiwum i Muzeum Archidiecezjalnego w Białymstoku i Pracowni Konserwacji Malarstwa Sztalugowego Wydziału Konserwacji i Restauracji Dzieł Sztuki ASP w Warszawie (Białystok, 1 grudnia 2023);
- Sesja naukowa „Konserwacja ksiąg metrycznych" (Białystok, 5 grudnia 2023), organizator;
- „Noc Muzeów": wernisaż wystawy „O pożytkach z konserwacji płynących" – organizator; wernisaż wystawy: „Skarby Kościoła białostockiego" – organizator; wernisaż wystawy: „Malarstwo w zbiorach Muzeum Archidiecezjalnego w Białymstoku" – organizator (Białystok, 18 maja 2024);
- Dyskusja panelowa: „Wybory 4 czerwca 1989 r. w Polsce północno-wschodniej" (Białystok, 4 czerwca 2024), współorganizator z IPN o/Białystok.

**ks. dr Marek Kowalczuk**
– Warsztaty w ramach projektu: „Pamięć nośnikiem kulturowego dziedzictwa" (Białystok, 10 października – 5 grudnia 2023), wykłady: *Geografia i historia biblijna czasów prorockich* oraz *Prorok w służbie historii – przykład księgi Izajasza.*

**ks. mgr lic. Leszek M. Jakoniuk**
– Konferencja: „Pamięć nośnikiem kulturowego dziedzictwa" (Białystok, 7 października 2023), członek komitetu organizacyjnego oraz słowo wprowadzające: *Pamięć, kultura, dziedzictwo*;
– Konferencja: „Konieczność zagospodarowania doświadczenia człowieka dorosłego" (Białystok, 19 grudnia 2023), członek komitetu organizacyjnego oraz słowo wprowadzające: *Zagadnienie „doświadczenia" w społeczeństwie wielokulturowym, wielowyznaniowym, wielopokoleniowym*;
– Międzynarodowa konferencja naukowa: „Resilience and Christian Hope. Religious Education as an essential driving force in Times of crisis" (Poprad, Słowacja, 3-7 kwietnia 2024), wprowadzenie do dyskusji w ramach grupy roboczej;
– Ogólnopolska konferencja naukowa: „Teraźniejszość i przyszłość katechezy szkolnej" (Stegna, 21-23 maja 2024), uczestnik;
– Międzynarodowe Sympozjum Katechetyczno-Socjologiczne: „Edukacja religijna młodzieży. Wyzwania i perspektywy" (Lublin, 14-15 czerwca 2024), uczestnik;
– Ogólnopolska konferencja naukowa: „Współczesny katecheta – prorok w czasach AI" (Skorzeszyce, 9-11 września 2024), uczestnik;
– Ogólnopolska konferencja naukowa: „Katecheza rodziców w nowej sytuacji społecznej" (Porszewice, 17-19 września 2024), uczestnik.

## Wydawnictwo

Nakładem Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku w ramach działalności KTK ukazały się w roku akademickim 2023/2024 następujące pozycje:

– „Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej", Białystok 2023, t. 22 (200 punktów)
– „Studia Teologii Dogmatycznej", Białystok 2023, t. VIII (20 punktów)

## Projekty

Katedra Teologii Katolickiej Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku realizuje projekt pt.: „Synodalność w Kościele. Konferencja Międzynarodowa: Historia i Perspektywy". Projekt został przyjęty do finansowania w drodze konkursu. Dofinansowanie w kwocie 31405,00 zł ze środków budżetu państwa zostało przyznane przez Ministra Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego w ramach programu pod nazwą „Doskonała nauka II". Realizacja projektu: 31 grudnia 2023 r. – 30 grudnia 2025 r.

### ks. dr Tadeusz Kasabuła

– Projekt nr WND-RPPD.08.03.00-209048116 pod nazwą „Ochrona i cyfrowe udostępnienie obiektów dziedzictwa kulturowego znajdujących się w zasobach Archiwum i Muzeum Archidiecezjalnego w Białymstoku" realizowany w ramach Regionalnego Programu Operacyjnego Województwa Podlaskiego na lata 2014-2020 (w okresie trwałości do 2025 r.) – kierownik projektu;

– Konserwacja księgi chrztów parafii w Krynkach z lat 1605-1668 ze zbiorów Archiwum i Muzeum Archidiecezjalnego w Białymstoku. Projekt współfinansowany przez Naczelną Dyrekcję Archiwów Państwowych (90%). Czas realizacji – 12 miesięcy (2023 r.) – koordynator projektu;

– Konserwacja księgi chrztów i ślubów parafii rzymskokatolickiej w Sokółce z lat 1672-1694 ze zbiorów Archiwum i Muzeum Archidiecezjalnego w Białymstoku. Projekt finansowany przez Archiwum i Muzeum Archidiecezjalne w Białymstoku oraz parafię rzymskokatolicką w Sokółce. Czas realizacji: 20 czerwca – 29 listopada 2024 r. – koordynator projektu.

# Authors

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*katechetyczny* (Kielce 2022), *Les chants de Taizé* (Paris 2021), *Archbishop Edward Kisiel: The "Primary Catechist" of the Diocese* (Białystok 2018), *The French and Polish Versions of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: An Examination of Certain Passages of the Catechism's Teaching on the "Mysterium Ecclesiae" from a Philological and Translational Perspective* (Białystok 2017), *L'Exultet – une catéchèse vécue* (Białystok 2013), *L'Exultet – La Bonne Nouvelle chantée* (Białystok 2012).

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ORCID 0009-0007-7885-2042

# General Rules for Submission and Publication of Articles

1. "Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej" (*The Annual of Catholic Theology*) is an English-language magazine promoting theological sciences published by the Chair of Catholic Theology (University of Bialystok, Poland).
2. The Editorial Board requires scientific reliability and fairness from the authors of the articles submitted for publication in "Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej". Please note that the Editorial Board implements Anti-ghost writing and guest authorship procedure. Each article will be verified by plagiarism detection tool. All the detected cases of misconduct will be exposed, including notification of relevant subjects whose welfare has been violated.
3. Articles should be sent along with author's affiliation, a short up-to-date biography (maximum 400 characters with spaces each) as well as with an up-to-date email address.
4. Each article should be sent along with a short summary including: *aim*, *research method*, *results* and *originality* of the topic listed in separated paragraphs. Each summary should not exceed 1 200 characters with spaces. The article should also contain the keywords (up to 5) in both Polish and English as well as the title in Polish language.
5. Article's length including tables, charts etc., should not exceed 30 000 characters with spaces. The article should also include the so-called publication bibliography.
6. Each article should be proofread before sending to the Editorial Board. The spelling should comply with English language standards. If the language of the article is not the author's mother tongue, please make sure that a native speaker of the target language corrects the text. This person's data should be sent along with the article.
7. The text attached should be saved in one of the following formats: *.doc, *.docx; all figures, charts, graphic symbols in PDF format.
8. Each article is reviewed by two reliable reviewers from national or foreign scientific centres. The reviewers shall evaluate the items as confidential and anonymous according to the model which assumes that the author(s) and reviewers do not know their identities (double-blind review process).
9. Articles should be submitted until March 31 using the OJS online system. Only articles sent within the deadline and meeting the above editorial requirements as well as those which receive positive reviews will be taken into account in editorial process of "Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej". The editor-in-chief of the magazine takes the final decision whether to publish the article in "Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej".
10. More information on article's main text, related footnotes and the practices of peer review can be found on the following website: www.rtk.uwb.edu.pl.