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The Noahide Laws and the Universal Fellowship with God

This article presents the possibility of a theory of natural law in Judaism from the Jewish perspective by listening to the Jewish tradition of scholarship on religion and philosophy. The first part of this paper is concerned with evidence for a theory of natural law in Judaism. It centers around the Noahide Laws and their influence on Gentile and pre-Simatic Judaism. The second part deals with Moses Maimonides and his ideas concerning the interpretation of natural law for Jews. The third part discusses Jewish scholars who have refuted the work of Maimonides and proposed various theories of natural law. They have been a consistent part of Jewish tradition and provide a path, however narrow, along which Jews may travel towards participation in global issues and work among non-Jewish people.

Keywords: natural law, Moses Maimonides, the Noahide Laws, classical Islamic philosophy, ecumenical dialogue.

The possibility of a theory of natural law in Judaism may seem strange to both Christian and Jewish scholars alike. It is certainly not surprising as the most critical event of law-giving centered on the great theophany on Mount Sinai. Two main factors have influenced scholars to decry or ignore the possibility of a natural law theory in Judaism. The first is the belief that every law in Judaism is traditionally conceived as a revelation. The second is the impact of one of the greatest Jewish medieval philosophers and theologians, Moses Maimonides (1135-1204), also known Rambam.

The impact of Maimonides' writings and thoughts are common to all branches of Judaism. Orthodox Judaism, however, holds him in the highest regard. Within this branch of Judaism, his codification of the

law, holiness, and fervor have earned him a place at the heart of Jewish faith and its interpretation, but he does not have sole jurisdiction over the subject. There is a steady line of scholars who have disputed with Maimonides down the ages. From the rise of Reformed Orthodox Judaism in the nineteenth century, scholars have undertaken a serious reassessment of Maimonides' works, particularly his ideas concerning law and morality. Within this framework, natural law has also been reassessed and continues to be part of contemporary debate within Judaism.

This paper presents the Jewish, and not Christian, perspective. The author places himself within the Jewish tradition of scholarship by listening to Jewish philosophers in order to answer Jewish questions.¹ This work might promote cooperation, dialogue, and understanding among Christians and Jews in fundamental moral theology. If natural law is acknowledged within Judaism and becomes recognizable, then a further dimension can be affirmed in developing Jewish-Christian dialogue. In a published document by the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales, natural law is singled out as a quality that can serve the common good and further a growing understanding between the two great religious traditions:

The interpretation of natural law is rarely straightforward and often controversial. It is easier to say that natural law points to the need for an harmonious and balanced order than to say in any particular case exactly where the balance is to be found... to ignore natural law, for instance, by organising society so that in effect it serves the interests of a few rather than the common good, is to collaborate with the structures of sin.²

The Noahide Laws as a Basis for a Theory of Natural Law in Judaism

Theories of natural law contain two essential elements. The first is a general or universal (natural) standard that can serve as the basis for society's conduct and normative acts. They are founded upon more binding and permanent principles than custom, convention, or human

¹ The author wishes to thank the Jewish student community of The Jews College, Golders Green, which is part of the university of London as well as the college librarian, Mr. Khan.

² "The Common Good and the Catholic Church's Social Teaching: A Statement by the Catholic Bishop's Conference of England and Wales," 1996, <https://cbcew.org.uk/plain/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2018/11/common-good-1996.pdf>.

agreement. The second is that these natural standards can be used as criteria by which particular laws or legal codes can be judged or in which they can be grounded. The claims of these standards provide the criteria to which a person can appeal as a higher standard of justice than that which is contained in a particular legal code. They are the basis for resolving legal questions when the existing legal code does not provide legislation regarding a particular problem. Any serious investigation seeking a natural law theory in the Jewish scriptures must have these claims as a backdrop. The Jewish legal code extends beyond the written text known in the Christian tradition as the Pentateuch and includes the rabbinic oral tradition and rabbinic written texts. Within the rabbinic tradition, it is possible to support a theory of natural law based on the *Noahite* or *Noahide Laws*.

Implicit in Scripture

There is no support in the Jewish scriptures for the term natural law, and it has no corresponding Jewish equivalent in the text. In the rabbinic texts, the closest reference to nature is the expression, “the world follows its own habit.” This suggests that events typically occur in a pattern established under Divine Providence. Still, it was not until the Middle Ages that the Hebrew word *teva* (“implant” or “impression”) was coined to express the idea that nature is the order that God impressed on His creation. A later development of the word – *ha-teva*, “the nature”—identifies nature with God. There have been Jewish thinkers who recognized the notion of natural law, and there have been non-Jewish writers concerned with the idea.³ However, in Judaism there is a deep-seated antipathy to any theory of natural law because it would be considered a form of questioning God’s omnipotence.

Indeed, there is a lack of reference to natural law in scripture that reinforces the argument of those who oppose such a theory. They develop their argument by suggesting that a theory of natural law is probing God’s omnipotence. This argument employs a literal interpretation of scripture which suggests that no independent laws of nature are possible. This ultimately confirms God’s omnipotence because everything must be subject to His absolute authority. The lack of scriptural authority is an indication that God, Himself, does not sanction this form, which Jeffrey Macey summarizes in his book *Natural*

³ The Dutch scholar Hugo Grotius’ (1583-1645) work *De Veritate Religionis Christianae & De Juri Belli ac Pacis*, examines the question of natural law in the Pentateuch. See also John Seldon, *De Joe Naturalis et Gentium Juxta Disciplinam Ebracorum*, Argentorati, Sumptibus Societatis, 1665.

Law: “Thus, the lack of independent laws of nature and the emphasis upon divine creation and control of everything that exists and occurs highlights the position that everything in our world is subject to the absolute authority of God and is responsive to His will.”⁴

Questioning God’s omnipotence is also seen as damaging to the God of history, and, within this context, it also becomes a threat to the law. For, God has continual power over creation and gives a perfect law, which is ratified by God’s right to punish those who transgress the law. It is His prerogative alone. In this case, there is no room for an independent category of human law, which could be considered an independent natural principle that poses the danger of becoming superior to divinely revealed law.

John Selden (1584-1654) was not a Jew, but he is credited with arousing interest in the natural law theory within Judaism. He argued that a theory of natural law could be identified in the Noahide Commandments. These laws, which are relatively unknown outside of Judaism, were considered to contain important theological principles, which is confirmed by the fact that they were elevated to the dignity of rabbinic debate.⁵

Distinctive Characteristics

The Seven Laws of Noah are also known as the Noahide (Noahite) Laws.⁶ They are a set of laws that the rabbinic tradition considers important as the minimal moral duties that the Bible enjoins on all men.⁷

The Seven Laws contain specific prohibitions that make up the Noahide Laws; they are prohibitions against idolatry, blasphemy, bloodshed (murder), sexual sins, theft, eating flesh from a living animal, and an injunction to establish a legal system. The titles are derived from Midrashic and Talmudic sources.⁸ Although the expression “Noahide Laws” intimate that the laws were given to Noah, this is somewhat

⁴ Jeffrey Macy, *Natural Law*, 664.

⁵ Cf. Babylonian Talmud (BT) Sanhedrin 56a-59b; Tosef. AV. Zar. 8:4; Dictum BT Yoma 67b 7; BT Eruvin 1006. The first talks about keeping those commandments, which should have been written, even if they had not been included in Scripture by right. The second states: “If the Torah had not been given, we could have learned modesty from the cat, aversion to robbery from the ant, chastity from the dove, and good manners from the cock.”

⁶ In Hebrew: Sheva Mitzvot benei Noach.

⁷ San. 56-60; Yad Melakhah 8:10, 10:12.

⁸ Reproduced in the Tosefta; a work commonly believed to have been edited late in the second century A.D. Av. Zar 8:4; Sanh. 56a.

misleading because the laws were derived exegetically from divine commands addressed to Adam and only later re-established with Noah.⁹ As such, the message takes on a universal dimension as Adam represents humankind and serves as a point of theological contact with those outside of the Jewish Covenant.

A non-Jewish person who accepts the prohibitions of the Noahide Laws has a particular identity within Judaism. Every non-Jew is considered to be a son of the covenant with Noah (Gen. Ch. 9) and becomes a *ger-toshav*, a resident stranger, or a semi-convert. The *ger-toshav* has the full support of the Jewish community and is entitled to full material assistance;¹⁰ he is obliged to fulfilled certain prescriptions and is penalized by the Jewish authorities for breaking the Jewish Code of Law.

For a non-Jew, the critical status of the Noahide Laws and their theological implications can contribute to a more effective and focused examination of the textual evidence, especially the way in which they developed in relation to the laws given at Sinai.

The status of a Noahide Gentile implies that there is, in fact, a distinction between a Jew and a Noahide within Judaism. This starting point best reflects the Orthodox Jewish view, which upholds that a Noahide Gentile also accepts monotheism and understands that unity is found in God Himself. This shared Jewish belief serves as a bridge that opens the way to dialogue and creates an atmosphere in which suspicion may be set aside.¹¹ Consequently, dialogue takes place within the overall context of Judaism and, therefore, can grow and develop without fear of contamination and uncleanness. In this context the Gentile Noahide and Orthodox Jewish communities can co-exist because they have become “co-religionists,” striving for the same end. The Gentile Noahites are, therefore, an “incorporated people” within the Jewish nation’s life and can show solidarity not only in their religion but also in a relationship of “Peoplehood” with God. The non-Jew is now within the community of the Jews, and the same God may be found on each path: “The One God is found on both paths because the One God gave both. The Noahide laws define the path that God gave to the non-Jewish people of the world.”¹² The paths

⁹ Gen 2:16. This idea is reenforced by the article “Noachide Laws,” *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 12, , 1190.

¹⁰ *Sefer Hasidim* 1957, 358.

¹¹ The laws are also commandments. In Hebrew the word “mitzvah” also means connection.

¹² “Laws of Idolatry,” Chapter 8. Law 11, *Mishnah Torah*.

on which both communities tread on their way to God, however, are not strictly the same.

Theological Principles and Reward

The theological status of the Noahide derives from the Commandments themselves. The Mitzvahs, which mean “to attach or join,” unite the Noahide to God’s will and wisdom, and it is from these that a person will receive light for his soul. This light is eternal, and through it, the soul earns an eternal reward. The Gentile fulfills the purpose of God’s creation and receives a share in the world to come—the blessed spiritual world of the righteous.¹³ As Clorfene and Rogalski explain, preparation for this world occurs through the Gentile’s acceptance of the rabbis’ teaching, since this is the primary source of the Commandments: “The source of understanding the Seven Noahide Commandments is found in the Talmud and later rabbinic teachings and nowhere else.”¹⁴

The influence of these laws within Orthodox Judaism is limited. One of the reasons for this is simply a dislike of the idea that the Noahide Laws could serve as a textual basis for a theory of natural law in Judaism. Current Orthodox tradition does not tolerate a form of law that is anything other than revealed. Throughout the ages, Maimonides’ teaching and personal dislike of natural law have overridden the voice of critical historical research.

The Place of Noahide Laws in the Scriptural Tradition of Israel

Now we can confidently assess the development of Noahide Laws within a textual and extra-textual context. An analysis of the laws themselves will demonstrate the basis of a theory of natural law within Judaism.

We begin with the *Mishneh Torah*, a collection of oral traditions that contains a pattern of events that lead directly to the establishment of the Noahide Laws in the tradition of Israel. Here we find the teaching that the laws were given to Adam, and he was enjoined to teach them to future generations. The teaching develops to press the point that it was unfortunate that man failed to keep God’s laws or impart

¹³ Chiam Clorfene and Yakov Rogalski, *Path of the Righteous: An Introduction to the Seven Laws of the children of Noah*, 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 5.

them to others as he developed under God. God sent the flood to destroy the world because of man's failure to keep the law. Yet, before the destruction of the world by the flood, God singles out Noah as the people's new leader. Noah is chosen because he remained faithful to God's Law and "walked with God."¹⁵ God rewards Noah for his fidelity by establishing a covenant between Himself, Noah, and Noah's children.¹⁶ However, Noah notices one thing that is missing that troubles him: God had walked with Adam in the garden. For this reason, Noah wishes to re-establish the Divine Presence on earth.

In an amusing scene, Noah tries to tempt the Divine Presence back to earth with a beautiful vineyard,¹⁷ but Noah only succeeds in getting drunk on the wine. The Talmudic tradition suggests that Noah's drunkenness in the vineyard carries on Adam's disobedience and shame; as a result, the Divine Presence chose not to dwell in the vineyard. At this point, it is tempting to think that God will destroy Noah and the Noahide Law with him. Instead, God, mindful of His postdiluvian covenant, looks down with pity on Noah,¹⁸ and both he and the laws are given a secure future. Noah's descendants are entrusted with the responsibility to teach the law.

The Seven Commandments of the Children of Noah remained, as before the flood, unheeded by all but a few, notably Shem and his grandson Eber, who established Houses of Study for the purpose of understanding and fulfilling the Noahide Laws.¹⁹

A severe decline in the people's behavior, as exemplified in such stories as the Tower of Babel, Sodom and Gomorrah, and witchcraft,²⁰ seriously damaged their relationship with God. Eventually, a righteous man was raised up—Abraham, who stood alone against the world, clinging to the Creator and the fulfillment of His will. Thus, the People of God came into existence. The generations of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob brought honor to God and the Children of Israel through them. Through Abraham, a legal thread links the past, present, and future in the Noahide Laws. After Noah, the Patriarchs revere the Laws of Noah

¹⁵ Gen 6:9.

¹⁶ Gen 9:12-13.

¹⁷ Gen 9:20-21.

¹⁸ Gen 9:23-27.

¹⁹ Rashi's commentary on Genesis, 25:22. Rashi is the popular Jewish name for Rabbi Schlomo Yitzhak (1040-1105), the author of the greatest commentary on the Humash (The Pentateuch).

²⁰ Gen 11:4-5; 13:13; Lev 19:26; Ex 11:18.

Laws of Noah and treat them as an essential part of the progression towards the Commandments revealed on Sinai. The Noahide Laws are not to be forgotten because they are part of the tradition.

Such commentaries can be found in early Jewish theological writing. The French Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (1040-1105), also known as Rashi, proposed that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob knew that their descendants would go to Egypt, be redeemed by God, and given the Commandments. He states that these ideas were maintained through the gift of prophecy:

The Patriarchs fulfilled the Seven Commandments of the Children of Noah, and through their gift of prophecy, saw what the Sinai Revelation would bring and obeyed those laws as well, even though they had not been commanded concerning them.²¹

Rashi's commentary points out the unique relationship between the Noahide Law and the Sinaitic Law. Rashi's use of biblical texts points to prophetic foresight of the future Code at Sinai: "Because Abraham listened to My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws."²² Such texts reinforce Rashi's theory that reference the word "charge" is considered equivalent to the Torah, which God had not yet given.

Although the Code is not mentioned directly in the biblical text, it can be discerned in some conflicting interpretations regarding legal observance. There is reason to suggest that the Noahide and Mosaic Codes existed side by side and were accepted as different traditions. A primary example of this is cited in the conflict between Joseph and his brothers, which has to do with the difference between the Mosaic and Noahite dietary laws. Mosaic tradition says that the flesh of a ritually slaughtered animal may be eaten even if the animal moves after it is slaughtered. At the same time, the Noahide law does not require ritual slaughter, but it forbids the eating of the flesh of an animal until it has ceased to move after being slaughtered. Joseph observed his brothers following the Mosaic precept and reported it to his father.²³ Joseph believed that his brothers had erred and acted on his belief. The consequences for Joseph were dramatic: he was sold into slavery in Egypt. The captivity in Egypt was a significant period of preparation for the Revelation at Sinai and the giving of the Torah.²⁴

²¹ Rashi, Commentary on Genesis 26:5.

²² Gen 26:5.

²³ Gen 37:3.

²⁴ Ex 24:10.

With the giving of the Torah, God chose a people to live by His Commandments. This is a critical moment for those who believe that revelation is the only authentic expression of law. Such individuals think that the Revealed Law predominates and that the Noahide Laws are absorbed into the Mosaic Laws, thereby losing their independence. This unification of the two sets of law during the revelation at Sinai strengthened and confirmed (rather than diminished) the obligation for non-Jews to follow the Noahide Laws. Righteous Gentiles were obliged to follow the Seven Commandments and, by association, the Sinaitic Commandments because the Noahide Laws were now considered subsumed into the Sinai Laws. This did not alter the distinction between the two sets of people who followed the respective laws. Unfortunately, a distinction within Judaism between the convert and the born Jew has always existed. From the time when the Jews finally settled in Canaan until the time of the Jewish Diaspora, Gentiles who wished to dwell in the land had to fulfill the Noahide Laws. Once this had been accepted, the Noahites could enter the Temple and offer sacrifices to God.²⁵ The relationship between the Noahites and the Jews would always be similar to the relationship between a priest and a faithful layman.²⁶

The obligation to follow the Noahide Laws was incumbent upon the Jews from Adam to the Revelation at Sinai. Virtually all Jewish thinkers who dealt with this issue kept this in mind.

Specific Differences Between the Two Laws

It would be a mistake to imagine that the Noahide Laws lost their influence after the Torah was given at Sinai. The differences in the two parallel laws illustrate this. The Noahide Law concerning idolatry declares that non-Jews do not have to know God but must declare themselves against false gods in order to ensure social stability.²⁷ Unlike the Jews, Noahites were not expected to die for this law. Still, the obligation to suffer “martyrdom” is present in the law against murder (see the *Pesahim*, *Book of the Passover* 25,b), where it is written that an individual should undergo martyrdom rather than shed another

²⁵ Zec 14:17-18.

²⁶ BT Sukkah 52b.

²⁷ Megillah, also known as The Book of Scrolls, is concerned with Purim, the feast of deliverance of the Jews from destruction in Persia as narrated in the book of Esther.

person's blood.²⁸ The Noahide Laws concerning blasphemy, murder, and theft are stricter than those codified from the Sinai tradition. This gives the impression that the penalties for a Gentile convert are more severe than those for born Jew. The explanation for this is that moral laxity was considered to be more prevalent outside Judaism and, therefore, more likely in the culture of the Noahide convert, and be more challenging to overcome. The prohibitions against theft, which covers many acts from military conquest to dishonesty in economic life, also support this idea and demonstrated the need for much more dissuasive and wide-ranging regulations.²⁹

By acknowledging the two sets of law, one of which defines the behaviors of the Gentile convert, Jews were obliged to establish the Noahide Code wherever and whenever they could. The Noahide Code indicated that courts should be established to implement the Code and punish those who did not keep it. By establishing these courts, the Jews accepted the differences between themselves and non-Jews in legal practices. However, when the courts recognized essential normative similarities within non-Jewish societies, the judges issued more lenient and tolerant judgments based on broad consensus. The judges did not try to synthesize the two codes, but they did recognize certain elementary standards that made interaction between the two "communities" possible. In other words, there was a system that acknowledged the place of the Noahide Law in Jewish life.

An Implied Theory of Natural Law

A fundamental element for consideration in any theory is the individual's natural inclination to make moral norms and reach a theory of natural law. If the Noahites hold themselves accountable to the law, and if Jews are not obliged to enforce it, then this implies that lawfulness is not something that Jews impose upon non-Jews, but rather inherent in humanity itself. In pre-Sinaitic times, human lawfulness is perceived as a necessary prerequisite for the emergence of Judaism. This leads to the conclusions that Jews are empathetic to the idea that all non-Jews are Noahites, but those who accept the obligations of the Code are rewarded in a particular way. The respect for Noahide Law that exists at this stage of legal development is but a short step away from acceptance of an independent non-Jewish law in order to establish a moral standard to be applied in regulating Jewish life itself: "There is

²⁸ Book of the Passover – 25b.

²⁹ Rashi to Sanhedrin 59a.

a tacit recognition that Jewish Law and non-Jewish Law have enough in common to allow non-Jewish jurisdiction to have validity in some cases involving Jews.”³⁰ Add to this a somewhat grudging acceptance: “Gentile moral standards are the minimum but not the maximum in Jewish Law.”³¹

The universal application of a code that regulated the conduct of “aliens” living within an established religious culture was not unique to Judaism. A precedent may be found in the Roman legal system. The Roman corpus of law known as the *Ius Gentium* governed cases in which either one party was not a Roman citizen or both parties were resident aliens. All men followed this body of law by virtue of natural reason, and this law differed from the *Ius Civile*, which was the law of a particular nation.

The Stoics believed that the entire universe is governed by laws that can be comprehended by perfected human reason because these universal natural laws exhibit rationality. They believed that it is possible for a rational human being to understand and act according to natural law. When a person acts accordingly, he becomes a member of one *cosmopolis* – a political community of the cosmos. In this society-state, all that matters is the attainment of wisdom, as this makes for a perfect society based on the laws of nature.

The Stoics and other Hellenistic writers influenced the Jewish writer and thinker Philo. He develops the argument for a natural law by asserting that the Law given to Moses on Sinai was based on the laws of nature. Philo argues that

the world and the law are in mutual accord, and that a man who is law-abiding is thereby immediately constituted a world citizen (cosmopolite) guiding his actions correctly according to nature’s intent, in conformity with which the entire universe is administered.³²

These ideas most certainly circulated throughout a large part of the Greco-Roman Empire. It is difficult, therefore, to imagine that Jewish thinkers and writers could be ignorant of a philosophical concept known as far back as Cicero and that played such an essential role in the Western Latin tradition of Europe.

The *ad silentium* argument for the absence of natural law in Jewish writings does not necessarily mean that the concept was ignored or not

³⁰ David Novak, *Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism: An Historical and Constructive Study of the Noahide Laws* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1983), 67.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 74.

³² Philo, *On the Creation of the World*, 1, 3.

taken seriously within Judaism. The rabbinic and normatively binding *Halakhic* prescriptions, which include prohibitions against acts of public nudity, the eating of human flesh and rancid carrion, and the obligation to look after and support one's infant child, which are all acts governed by natural law, demonstrate the continued implementation of natural law theory. These prohibitions also indicate a particular affinity with the *obligationes naturales* of the Roman law rather than biblical command or rabbinic legislation.

There were two essential sets of laws, one of which was for “non-Jews”—a title so given because there was no religious/national identity at that time that gave non-Jews the benefits of status, unity, and “righteousness.” The second set of law was given at Sinai and served as an affirmation of all past laws and as an acceptable way of life for the future. Before the Law of Sinai was given, the older Noahide Law was respected and followed by all and became the law that governed the status of a convert. Both sets of laws are complementary, and likely interchangeable in some areas. Interchanging the laws took place gradually in the teaching of certain rabbis and, in particular, Moses Maimonides. These rabbis argued that the Noahide laws were subsumed or surpassed by the prevailing Laws of Sinai. Either way, the Noahide Laws did not cease to be an accepted legal code. Outside of Judaism, similar sets of laws that referred to the actions of those who were not full members of a given social group or community also existed. It is possible, therefore, that these other laws influenced the application of the Noahide laws and passed on a theory of natural law to Judaism.

If the Noahide Laws are universally applicable to both Jews and non-Jews, then this implies that natural law lies at their heart because man arrives at and identifies law through his moral nature.

Nature and the Individual

Since a person can arrive at and identify a law through his moral nature, this debate can take place on a more speculative philosophical level. “Despite the absence of a specific reference to natural law in Biblical literature... there have been Jewish thinkers who have argued that natural law [is] implicit in the Noahide Commandments.”³³

A theory of natural law is based on the fundamental assertion that a human being comes to a knowledge of what is right and wrong through non-mandatory means. Individuals have a natural disposition,

³³ Jeffrey Macy, *Natural Law*, 58.

for example, to honor their fathers and mothers; not to steal; not to murder. Five of the Noahide laws fall within this category; in other words, these laws would have been mandatory even if they had not been revealed because they arise from natural law.³⁴

The law that prohibits eating a “torn limb” from a live animal, which was the reason why Joseph incurred the wrath of his brothers (Gen 9:4), was brought up in discussions that aimed to formulate opinions during the Talmudic period regarding whether or not the Noahide Laws were a formulation of the natural law.

Nature is non-human created order that was fully complete before man came into existence. To avoid the danger of becoming an alien in the world, humankind must understand nature’s ways and patterns. A human being must seek to live by observing the order of nature and avoid disturbing it. Both the Ancient Near East and Noahide tradition agree that, apart from mitigating circumstances, it would be unnatural to tear the limb off of a living animal for food! *Prohibitions* against castration, eating blood, and crossbreeding arise from this philosophical viewpoint. Rabbinic texts also support this reasoning. When Rabbi Eleazar was asked from where he derived his prohibition against crossbreeding, he replied: “Samuel says that scripture states, ‘My statutes you shall observe’ (Lev 19:19). Namely statutes I have already made for you... My statutes you shall observe; statutes which you were originally to observe.”³⁵

Rashi’s interpretation is directed towards the statutes initially observed by the Noahites, while the Spanish Rabbi Meir Abulafia (1170 – 1244), also known as Ramah, interprets the statutes as that from which the world is so ordered that creation cannot change. In other words, the Noahide Laws are not random decrees from an earlier generation but rather natural laws. To violate such laws is to infringe on the natural created order of the cosmos.³⁶

If violation of natural law is an infringement on the natural created order of the cosmos, then this universalism presupposes a “general righteousness” found among human beings. It is the pattern to which they are called to conform. This participation in “general righteousness,” may lead, in turn, to participation in the new world to come:

³⁴ Yoma 67b; Sifra Aharei Mot 13:10.

³⁵ Sanhedrin 60a. Rashi, 99.

³⁶ This idea is found in Philo, *De Spec. Leg.* 4.204:136-137. See Palestinian Talmud (PT); Nahmanides systematically expresses this idea in Ramban to Leviticus: 120-121.

“All the righteous men of the nations of the world have a share in the world to come.”³⁷

The fundamental nature of the text is contained in the latter half that states “a share in the world to come,” which is perceived as similar in meaning to the Christian term “to be saved.” If the passage can be interpreted to mean that those who are not Jewish may be saved, then a further question must be asked: Who can be saved? The text supplies the answer: Those who lead a morally righteous life. If we interpret the text in this way, which implies universal righteousness available to non-Jews, then we have also made a bold interfaith statement. It means that it is possible for those outside of the revelation of the law from Sinai receive salvation. Jewish scholars, especially those who follow Orthodox Judaism, do not readily agree on this concept. They refuse to accept that the Noahide Laws can stand on their own merit without the ratification of revelation. For, these laws have to be accepted and practiced because they were commanded by God and ratified by Moses. Outside of this, if a person obeyed the laws, or adheres to them through rational thought, then such a person may not be counted among the righteous.

The Influence of Moses Maimonides

Moses Maimonides is the leading opponent of a natural law theory, and his view frequently appear in his texts. On a superficial level, it is easy to see why he is against natural law: He disparages what ought to be done through reason and promotes the idea of law based upon revelation. However, he does not preclude rational explanations for the law or showing that a worthwhile end to be achieved exists. “For Maimonides, laws are true by Divine sanction, but reason discovers their wisdom and intelligibility.”³⁸

Moses Maimonides tries desperately to lay to rest the theory that states that, although human beings are to abide by the Noahide Laws (Sanhedrin 56a), anyone who conscientiously carries out these laws is potentially righteous. He argues that the natural progression of this theory is to claim that one can know the right course of action and follow it without the benefit of any Jewish revelation. Further, natural law adherents would not be concerned if the righteous Gentiles based their adherence to the laws on something other than reason. In this,

³⁷ Tosefta Sanh. 13:2b; Sanh. 105a.

³⁸ Isadore Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides* (Mishneh Torah) (New Haven: Yale University Press 1980), 457.

the essential point is missed: there is no natural law in the Noahide Code. Individuals must base their adherence to the law on revelation. Therefore, Maimonides wishes to attribute all law to *solum per revelationem*. Everyone who accepts the Seven (Noahide) Laws and is careful to fulfill them is one of the righteous, if he accepts and practices them on the grounds that God commanded them in the Torah and informed us through Moses our teacher that the sons of Noah (Noachites) had earlier been given these commandments. But if he practices them on the basis of his own rational considerations, then he is not a resident stranger/convert, *not one of the righteous men of the nations of the world, not one of their sages*.³⁹

Maimonides develops his argument in “The Laws of the Kings.” The text by Maimonides quoted above contains his main objection to Noahide Law and rational consideration. The ambiguity of the italicized portion of the text has fuelled controversy and debate; for those who believe in a theory of natural law, the “righteous man” will see by the light of reason that these laws are good in themselves, and a human being, may or may not believe that they have their source in any individual, human or divine. Maimonides accepts that a person who follows the Noahide laws is righteous and has a place in the world to come, but this is the case only if the same person accepts the Noahide Laws under the condition that Moses ratified them and God commanded them in the Torah. In this way, Maimonides singles out reason as the archenemy of revelation and continues his argument by attacking it as means to arrive at the acceptance of the judgments contained in the Noahide Laws. The penalty for not recognizing these views are, as might be expected, forfeiture of the benefits of righteousness. As the text declares: “But if he observes them because of his conclusions based on reason, then he is a resident alien and is not one of the righteous of the nations of the world, nor is he one of their wise men.”⁴⁰

Maimonides’ opponents employ both textual material and philosophy in their arguments. Steven Schwarzschild suggests a three-point plan to analyze Maimonides’ argument critically.

- a. From where in Jewish Law does Maimonides derive his doctrine?
- b. Why does he stipulate it?
- c. What are its implications?⁴¹

³⁹ Moses Maimonides, *Laws of the Kings* 8:11.

⁴⁰ See the translation of *Laws of the Kings* (Mishneh Torah – M. Maimonides) in Marvin Fox, “Maimonides and Aquinas on Natural Law,” *Dine Israel* 3, 5-36.

⁴¹ Steven S. Schwarzschild, *Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol.5 (2), no. 4 (April 1962): 301.

In response to the first question, Maimonides may be criticized for not specifying his sources when analyzing Noahite Laws in light of texts from the Mishna Torah. Thus, the materials to which he referred when assessing Noahide Laws cannot be traced. Maimonides' independent thought may be criticized not because it is right or wrong, but because his thought derives no authority from the Talmud.⁴²

Alternatively, some scholars disagree with Maimonides' methodology and lack of Talmudic authenticity.⁴³ Schwarzschild considers Maimonides' lack of Talmudic authority a grave impediment: "Whether he is philosophically or theologically right or not, legally, so far as Judaism is concerned, he would seem to be taking an almost untenable position."⁴⁴

Unfortunately, a great limitation when researching Maimonides' references is the fact that such investigations did not begin until after he died. This means that, although certain passages and words might be found in one text, the same wording often appears in different contexts in other rabbinic texts. The deceased Maimonides cannot specify his textual points of reference, so genuine source material remains a matter of speculation.⁴⁵ For instance, the text of the Mishneh Tora, which Maimonides uses, is not quite the same as an early version of the text found in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Between Maimonides' citation and the early version there is a discrepancy in the last few words; the Bodleian version contradicts Maimonides' citation by using the Hebrew word *ELA* instead of *VELO*. This changes the meaning of the text, which now reads: "*neither a resident convert/stranger nor a Noachite but one of their sages.*"

In an attempt to uncover references further, other scholars trace them to their historical sources. This approach is problematic, as can be seen in an obscure midrash given by R. Solomon ben Isaac of Wolosin quoted in *Toledot Adam* by Ezekiel Feival ben Zev. Ben Zev tries to give a precise reference for the text, which such scholars as R. Hirsch Chajes and Steven Schwarzschild refute as spurious proof.

⁴² Moses Mendelssohn, "Letter to Lavater," in *Gesammelte Schriften Jubilaeumsausgabe*, vol. 7, 11.c. See also Rabbi Joseph Karo's commentary *Kesef Mishneh*.

⁴³ See Joseph Karo's commentary *Kisef Mishneh*. Moses Mendelssohn and Herman Cohen quote the Lechem Mishneh to the same effect. See also Spinoza, *Ueber staat und Religion, Judentum und in Jüdische Schriften*, 346.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 304.

⁴⁵ D. H. Joel attempts to do this by using later source material, e.g., *Toldot Adam*, ref. 6:35a.

Michael Guttman⁴⁶ attempts another approach by uncovering a source that seems to reflect Maimonides' view.⁴⁷ The problem is that the text could so easily be the work of a later scribe who interpolated a passage from Maimonides. The only positive connection is the fact that Maimonides cites the *Mishnat* of R. Eliezer in two of his works: *Sefer Hamitsvot* and *Responsa*. This provides a much stronger argument for a definite source for Maimonides' view, but the theory lacks proof. In such a case, the argument remains speculative. Those on both sides of the textual argument make the valid point that the copyist would have translated the text according to his personal view: "Thus the copyist impressed by his 'rationalism' would read it as 'but,' and those otherwise inclined would read it as 'not,' and so textual arguments about which texts are preferable are unlikely to be profitable."⁴⁸

Influence of Classical Islamic Philosophy and the Philosophy of Maimonides

Sources outside the main Hebrew text may help shed light on Maimonides' position.⁴⁹ As a philosopher, Maimonides would have read much of the great philosophical writers. He even argues that one of his great "teachers," Aristotle, was not able to attain salvation because he embraced the dictates of reason and "not as of Divine documents prophetically revealed."⁵⁰

A leading Jewish writer, Oliver Leaman, suggests that classical Islam considerably influenced the place of reason in Maimonides' philosophy.⁵¹ The fact that Maimonides was accepted as an Islamic philosopher demonstrates that his thoughts conform to those of mainstream Islam.

In classical Islam, a theory of natural law did exist. However, as in Judaism, it had its proponents and antagonists. A strange comparison can be made between Maimonides' position and his Islamic predecessors who also disliked natural law theory. A primary example is seen in the work of Al Ghazali.

⁴⁶ Michael Guttman, "Zur Quellenkritik des Mischneh Thora," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, vol. 79, no. 2 (1935): 148-159.

⁴⁷ See *Mishnah of R. Eliezar, The Midrash of Thirty-Two Hermeneutic Rules*.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 80.

⁴⁹ Maimonides is regarded as an Islamic philosopher. He was known as *Mise b. Maymin*.

⁵⁰ *Theological/ Political Tractate*, vol.1, trans. Elwes, 80.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 89-91.

The notion of obligatory acts (*Wajib*) is equated with God's command and rewarded accordingly. This notion is present in the doctrine of the Sunnite legal tradition established by Shafi⁵² and Ibn Hanbal⁵³ and supported by Ash'ari's theology.⁵⁴ This idea stands in opposition to the Mu'tazilite⁵⁵ idea that certain acts were obligatory due to the properties of the acts and that God insisted they were requisite because of the sorts of acts they were. Some moral properties of actions are subjective and apply to certain kinds of phenomena in the world. Classical Islam argued that no act is obligatory in itself; that God has no purpose in particular human welfare; and that we can know nothing of our obligations through the independent use of reason, regardless of the aid of revelation.

The Mu'tazilite tradition comes close to natural law theory rather than a doctrine of ethical subjectivism, but Maimonides definitely distances himself from it, preferring Al-Ghazali's view that moral propositions are subjective and only obligatory if commanded by God.⁵⁶ Another difference in philosophical principles that suggests that Maimonides at least acknowledged reason and gave it a place in his thought is this: "Maimonides does not think that normal propositions are non-cognitive. The final end of human beings is contemplation, but the acquisition of moral virtues is a *sine qua non* for such a life."⁵⁷

In Judaism, moral opinions may regulate political life and prepare individuals for a final perfection are generally accepted; this is often described as theoretical knowledge of things as they really are. Within the process of constructing moral opinions for this purpose, an argument that suggests that rationality plays a part in the application and discovery of opinions exists.

To be sure, the reasoning involved would be of a lower order than the reasoning which characterizes pure contemplation, but it would still qualify as reasoning. The results of the reasoning, the moral opinions,

⁵² Shafi'i was a leader of a school of law named for him. Shafi'i emphasizes 'analogy' in interpretation of Islamic law.

⁵³ Ibn Hanbal was the founder of a legal school that worked strictly within the framework of the Koran and Islamic tradition (Sunna).

⁵⁴ Ash'ari was the strongest opponent of the Mu'tazilite school. He held a literal interpretation of the Koran as well as its 'uncreatedness.'

⁵⁵ The Mu'tazilite theological school of Islam was the first to use reason and dialectics as a tool for theological debate. This school fell afoul of orthodox Islam by upholding that the Koran was created.

⁵⁶ Mn. 111, 17, 469-471

⁵⁷ Ibid, 90.

would be objective in the sense that they would accurately describe how people could live together successfully; that is all that we can expect from a law which is not divine.⁵⁸

The Age of the Enlightenment's contribution, particularly to the reawakening of the importance of nature, was the most significant step forward in the debate concerning natural law in Judaism. The Enlightenment reassessed the power and the dignity of creation and man's place within it. Before the Enlightenment, creation was considered a mystery. As a result of the Enlightenment, creation became the symbol of the unified rational cosmos of law and order. This evaluation of creation was a short but significant step towards a theory upholds that, if nature represents God's perfect order, then what is natural must also be considered reasonable.

This new and initially shocking philosophy had the immediate effect of polarizing thinkers into radical and traditional camps. Not all, however, took an extreme position. Some thinkers tended to be conciliatory in their views, and this was true for religious thinkers and philosophers both within and outside Judaism. If the laws of reason could be found in all areas of endeavor, then could it not be found in religion too? While the answer to this question seems like common-sense, the danger rests in the methodology used in philosophy, which the Jewish scholar Noah Rosenbloom points out: "All that was necessary was to divest the historical religions of their accidental elements, superstitious accretions, and sacerdotal practices, and a rational religion would emerge."⁵⁹

Inevitably, the arguments in favor and against natural religion hinge on the criteria that undergird them. What constituted a rational religion was not that difficult to find: whichever religious ideas and values could be discovered in nature ought to be considered natural religion, or the religion of reason. When this approach is taken to its logical conclusion, then the idea of the *bon savage* was closest to universal reason, eternal truth, and natural religion. It is no wonder, then, that opponents to this idea tried desperately to find a higher synthesis. They attempted to identify Christianity with the principles of the religion of reason and, subsequently, with those of natural religion. The consequences of this philosophical trend are still felt today and are the basis of the arguments of those who oppose formal worship or organized religion.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 90.

⁵⁹ Noah H. Rosenbloom, *Judaism and Natural Religion*, 161.

Noahide Laws and Jewish Integration into Eighteenth-Century Society

The effects of the Age of Enlightenment were not limited to Christianity. Judaism was also hotly debating the new philosophy but with an added incentive. During the New Age, many European Jews were keen to emerge from the ghettos and take part in a more integrated society. The Noahide Laws “extend beyond their intrinsic, halakhic, and theological aspects[; t]his makes them ready for an important role to play in the political and social conditions of the Jews of Europe during the period of the Enlightenment”⁶⁰ as a ready-made link that bridges the gap between the two communities.

If the voice of Judaism was to be heard and the Jews themselves accepted into society, then the Jews had to extend the same openness to the Gentiles. The Noahide Laws were a means by which this contact could be achieved, and so the discussion concerning the implications of the Noahide Laws both for Jews and Gentiles resurfaced. In particular, the thoughts of Moses Maimonides were debated within a much broader forum:

In an age which theological discussions dominated the intellectual scene, the question whether Judaism accepts the Talmudic principle, “All the righteous men of the nations of the world have a share in the world to come,” is a crucial one in the struggle for emancipation.⁶¹

The Jewish philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) questions his alleged illiberal views, the challenge to Maimonides’s argument. Unfortunately, Spinoza’s answer was proved to be superficial in two significant ways. First, Spinoza uses a corrupt version of Maimonides’ text to argue his point. Second, although Spinoza is an original thinker and philosopher, he is no match for Maimonides’ Jewish scholarship. Spinoza’s conclusions are based more on speculation than fact. He summarizes the thrust of Maimonides argument by saying that those who keep the commandments on rational grounds as basic ethical precepts following from human reasoning may be called “wise” but not pious, and, therefore, not entitled to the reward in the life to come.

Even though Spinoza’s arguments against Maimonides are shallow, this did not distract from Spinoza’s far-reaching influence. His counterarguments against Maimonides became the source of a series

⁶⁰ Jacob, “Natural Law in Maimonidean Thought and Scholarship,” *Jewish Law Annual*, vol.6 (1987): 64.

⁶¹ Jacob I Dienstag, “Natural Law in Maimonidean Thought and Scholarship - On Mishneh Torah, Kings VIII,” *Jewish Law Annual* 6 (1987): 65.

of misunderstandings in the Jewish religion. This is particularly true in German literature and thought. Kant gleaned his knowledge and evaluation of Judaism from Spinoza, while Leibnitz (1646-1716) valued Maimonides' philosophy. After reading Spinoza, Kant concluded that Judaism was rightly condemned. In his famous polemic with the theologian Johann Casper Lavater, an admirer of Maimonides, Moses Mendelssohn continually emphasized his conviction that Judaism is true. He argued that Gentiles who are righteous or pious share in the world to come. Being aware that Maimonides was restrictedly tolerant, Mendelssohn questioned Judaism's exclusive claims to disallow an eternal reward to those who followed the Noahide Law without the light of revelation. He wrote to his friend R. Jacob Emden:

What, then, shall the nations do who are not recipients of the light of the Torah and who received no tradition except from untrustworthy and unreliable ancestors? Does God, then treat his creatures in the way of a tyrant, annihilating them and blotting out their names [by denying them a share in the world to come], though they committed no injustice? ⁶²

Mendelssohn believed that Noahide Law represented a theory of natural law. Still, he also understood Maimonides' point that moral principles have no true value because they are not subject to any rational demonstration. If there is no revelation, then the only source of morality is social convention. Mendelssohn argues that he has clear and sound demonstrations for good and evil, right and wrong, beauty and ugliness, which shows rational principles. Unfortunately, says Marvin Fox, Mendelssohn never demonstrates them.⁶³

A series of scholars and commentators have contributed to the debate. Steven Schwarzschild follows Mendelssohn's argument. He finds that, even though the text is amended, there is still the unresolved problem of exclusiveness:

He excludes what [he] might call the philosophical rather than the religious Noahites from the righteous men of the Gentile nations of the world and thus from the world to come. All questions previously raised with respect to this dictum, therefore, retain their validity. ⁶⁴

⁶² Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 215.

⁶³ Marvin Fox, "Law and Ethics in Modern Jewish Philosophy: The Case for Moses Mendelssohn," *P.A.A. JR.* 43 (1976): 10-12.

⁶⁴ Steven S. Schwarzschild, "Do Noahites Have to Believe in Revelation?" *Jewish Quarterly Review* 52, no 2 (1962): 302.

There is a problem in trying to find the relevant sources for Maimonides's arguments. Schwarzschild dismisses R. Jacob Emden's idea that there is a Talmudic source as well as Hermann Cohen's argument against Spinoza as full of personal prejudice, "Spinoza was the arch-enemy to Hermann Cohen... Spinoza's attack on Maimonides and through Maimonides on Judaism as a whole had to be annihilated at all costs."

Schwarzschild also disagrees with Spinoza, but he does not use personal and vehement attacks of Spinoza as a basis for his arguments like Cohen. Instead, Schwarzschild's argument is simple: Spinoza was wrong to ascribe to Maimonides' view to all Jewish law. Schwarzschild thinks that both Maimonides and Spinoza believe in the concept of natural law. Cohen, however, obscured the issue by identifying ethics with physiology, which assumes that morality is something that exists rather than can be achieved: "A subsidiary weakness of the doctrine which results from this fundamental fault is that it leads to chaos, for all ethical programs have... invoked the warrant of nature for their particular theses."⁶⁵

Jose Faur, who denies the possibility of a natural law theory in Jewish thought, holds the opposite view. He draws his conclusion after making a series of in-depth studies surveying natural law theories from ancient Rome through the Christian Fathers, medieval Jewish philosophers, and the Karaites.⁶⁶

Faur argues that natural law is foreign to rabbinic literature, of which Maimonides is the chief exponent. Divine commandments are imperative only based on revelation, and there can be no distinction between the divine (ceremonial) and rational (moral) commandments. Faur arrives at his conclusion quite abruptly, which makes it sound rather unscholarly. He considers it useless to think about the Noahide Laws as a possible source of a natural law theory. He adds the rejoinder that those who seek to arrive at a theory of natural law from the text have laundered the texts to suit their rational or humanistic theories. Marvin Fox thinks the same, but he reminds the reader that the vast majority of laws were explicitly intended for the Jews. In contrast,

⁶⁵ Jacob I. Deinstag, "Natural Law in Maimonidean Thought and Scholarship," 71.

⁶⁶ Jose Faur's survey and arguments are outlined in his two main texts: "Origin and Classification of Rational and Divine Commandments in Medieval Jewish Philosophy," *Augustinianum* 9 (1969): 299-304, and "Basis for Authority of the Divine Commandments according to Maimonides," *Tarbiz* 38 (1968): 43-54.

only the smallest part of biblical legislation is universal law intended for the rest of humanity.⁶⁷

Reason Cannot Extend to Morals

Marvin Fox considers Maimonides' view as the most extreme example of a theory that rejects all claims that reason can extend to the realm of morals. Fox encourages a proper understanding of Maimonides' work to illustrate the reasons why he could not believe in a theory of natural law; why he denied salvation to those who believed that one could arrive at moral knowledge on rational grounds; and why he considered such individuals neither pious nor wise.

Of those Jewish theologians already mentioned, Moses Mendelssohn is the most significant critic of Maimonides on this issue. For Mendelssohn, all truth was rational; all men must have partial access to the highest human good through which the good life can be attained. The Enlightenment influenced his philosophical arguments, which he used to expand his tendency to believe that there was no such thing as progress. Mendelssohn argues his rather startling position on the basis that, if progress were possible, then this would imply that those who lived earlier knew less truth than those who came later. (Mendelssohn may be said to represent the pre-historicist Enlightenment). In this way, Mendelssohn struck right at the accepted roots of Judaism, believing that Judaism itself was not *revealed truth* but *revealed law* – the law by which “one particular people was commanded to practice the truth which was, for the rest, accessible and comprehensible to all.”⁶⁸

Maimonides' argument perturbed Mendelssohn to the point of perplexity:

Maimonides believes that good and evil are positive, statutory enactments (*Merfursamot*), that they are not rooted or formed by reason. In which case, the only means of relying upon righteousness, wickedness, good, evil, the proper and improper is by conventions handed down by trustworthy authorities from the first recipient of revelation.⁶⁹

Maimonides continues his argument in favor of Noahites believing in revelation by including the theory that when a Noahite acts

⁶⁷ Marvin Fox, “Maimonides and Aquinas on Natural Law,” in *Studies in Maimonides and St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Jacob 1 Diestag (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1975), 76 -77.

⁶⁸ Steven Swartzschild, “Do Noachites Have to Believe in Revelation?”, 307.

⁶⁹ Moses Mendelssohn, “Letter to Lavater,” *Gesammelte Schriften Jubilaumsausgabe*, vol.16, ed. Haim Borodianski, 178ff.

out of belief, he reaches the highest good because the act is what God commanded – God who instituted it and who ordained that His will be obeyed in such a manner. A non-Jew who fulfills the Noahide Laws without knowing that these laws constitute the revealed will of God is incapable of complying with this requirement. Personal fulfillment cannot occur without knowledge of the One who commands or the One who, behind the Commandments, is the Supreme Fulfiller. Without such knowledge, there is only a state of nothingness, of non-being, standing in opposition to the state of fellowship with God. Scripture is used to support his thesis: “The wicked shall return to the Netherworld, even all the nations that forget God.”⁷⁰ In addition, Maimonides insists that one must have the correct and proper intention when following the laws. This can only be achieved if the purpose of the laws are known, in which case, a Noahite must believe in the revealed nature of the law. Again, reason – and even the recognition of the distinction between good and evil – plays a negligible part in the process. According to Maimonides, it is not a matter of rational intelligence but, rather, *convention or statutory enactment*. In either case, the good is not achieved through reasoning.

In his book, *Treatise on Logic*, Maimonides suggests the following classifications within the law:

a. Conventions – things that are known to be true without further evidence (i.e., knowledge that unchastity is repulsive or that repaying a benefactor as much as is possible is appropriate).

b. Traditions – accepted from a chosen person or many chosen people (i.e., a knowledge of what is beautiful and ugly).

Mendelssohn is not impressed by this aspect of Maimonides’ teaching and will not be dissuaded in his criticism. He ends with an impassioned plea to his friend R. Jacob Emden: “I have clear and correct evidence that good and evil, righteousness and wickedness, the proper and the improper are in truth rational.”⁷¹

It is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that the eloquent Moses Mendelssohn was the main scholar who was both critical of Maimonides and provided the definitive perspective on natural law. However, the Jewish scholar Joseph Albo,⁷² who wrote as far back as the fifteenth century, provides an original perspective on the theory of natural law and raises some crucial issues that became the basis of future debate.

⁷⁰ Ps 9:18.

⁷¹ Moses Mendelssohn, “Letter to Lavater,” 178ff.

⁷² Joseph Albo (d 1444).

In Albo's theory, there are three types of law: natural law, *nomos* (conventional law), and divine law. The natural law is known through reason, contains fundamental principles that promote justice, and removes wrongdoing. It has a universal application in that it is for all people at all times and places.⁷³ For Albo, natural law is necessary to permit and sustain political associations. He advances his theory by asserting that there need not be a scriptural prohibition against ordinary theft (*Baba Metsia* 16b), because a prohibition, here, is not founded on hermeneutics, but by virtue of natural law. It is not the only area to be considered. Albo treats murder and robbery in the same manner. Together – theft, murder, and robbery – form the three areas in which legislation based on natural law applies. Albo upholds the tradition of universality in his version of natural law theory in Judaism and strives to show “that natural law has a function: that society may be able to exist among men and everyone be safe from the wrongdoer and oppressor.”⁷⁴

While Albo attempts to explain why reason may legislate against theft, robbery, and murder, his writings contain no evidence that suggests that he sees society's preservation *per se* as mandated by natural law. He also does not suggest that an individual can become virtuous by following natural law, since the latter is not for the attainment of perfection in the spiritual sense but, rather, confined to moral and political principles for worldly justice and peace.

Extending Albo's thesis, the measures directed to preserve social structures are seen as matters of law rooted in natural law concepts. Maimonides' writing concerning the last Noahide Law, the establishment of courts, is a case in point.⁷⁵ It considers punishment for those who break the other six laws and, as such, is a discussion of the binding force of the law on non-Jews. Moses commands all to accept the *Mitsvot* given by God to the Sons of Noah.

Those who do not keep the commands are to be put to death. Maimonides adds that they are to be put to death “lest the world becomes corrupt.” This point considers the natural law; for, if evildoers are not punished, the very fabric of society would be destroyed. Here a subtle distinction is worth noting: Maimonides, suggests Bleich, does not see the Noahide Law as a product of natural law and must admit that it cannot be a binding obligation based on reason alone. The binding

⁷³ Joseph Albo, *Sefer ha-Ikkarim (The Book of Roots)*, I.7.

⁷⁴ David Bleich, “Judaism and Natural Law,” *Jewish Law Annual* 7 (1988): 15.

⁷⁵ Helkhot Melakhim 10:11.

force for good deeds in the land is natural law, and the preservation of an ordered society is mandated by reason.

The theories of Albo and many scholars – Jewish and non-Jewish alike – throughout the ages show the extent of the theological and philosophical intrigue that the whole subject of natural law in Judaism sparks. Maimonides' pivotal reflections illustrate that natural law theory is limited in its application and its proof is hotly debated. It would be much easier if natural law was totally excluded from Jewish legal theory. However, the question remains: If reason has been accepted, even in part, then why is it not accepted in a fully developed system of natural law? To answer this question is to bring the entire subject into the context of contemporary debate.

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Anselm of Canterbury and the Third Reich: Gottlieb Söhngen on Upholding the *Humanum* Amid the Inhumane

Gottlieb Söhngen (1892-1971) is a figure of no small significance: he directed both Joseph Ratzinger's (now Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI) dissertation and habilitation, and his writings on Anselm of Canterbury's theological contributions illustrate the struggles of a then still nascent theological discipline: fundamental theology. Söhngen's explorations occur within the context of National Socialist rule, while he teaches theology at Akademie Braunsberg in the eponymous city located in East Prussia (1937-45) during the dark years of the Third Reich. This investigation shows how very much Söhngen does justice to both Anselm's oeuvre and the Roman Catholic statement, while nevertheless introducing pointers to pre-Christian, Germanic notions in order to flatter the Nazi rulers, but more importantly to underscore how pagan concepts ultimately indirectly prepare the ground for the implantation of the Gospel.

Key words: Anselm of Canterbury, Gottlieb Söhngen, Joseph Ratzinger, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, Braunsberg Akademie/Braniewo, national socialism.

Throughout history the *humanum* has been and is under attack. Despite the hardship and suffering these contestations cause, over the long term such threats invigorate the positive and creative forces of culture. In the course of history these threats alter their guises. In the wake of Enlightenment and the attendant remarkable scientific discoveries as well as the therefrom resulting industrial revolution, something novel and unparalleled stepped onto the stage of history: man-made ideologies. In contrast to philosophy or literature, which thrive by allowing the dynamics of life to speak *a priori* to thinkers, by definition an ideology beguilingly offers a self-contained, exhaustive

explanation of history, humankind, and the individual human person to which reality need conform! By attempting a complete description of the meaning of life without a metaphysical eradication, ideologies invariably become totalitarian and, thereby, deeply inhumane. In the twentieth century, called “the wolfhound century” by the Jewish-Russian poet Osip Mandelstam (1891-1938), two ideologies—communism and national socialism—fatefully asserted their ugly grimaces.

Gottlieb Söhnngen

The German Catholic priest and theologian Gottlieb Söhnngen (1892-1971) was confronted with the task of preserving the humanum in general and the integrity of the Christian creed specifically vis-à-vis National Socialism during the Third Reich (1933-45) as a professor teaching at the state-run Braunsberg Akademie in East Prussia. He had been ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Cologne.¹

Söhnngen is of no little interest for the history of theology as he stands intellectually at the border between two different methods of communicating the one and same Catholic faith, the transition from a highly intellectual, though somewhat rigid Neo-Scholasticism to a personalist shift in Catholic theology, which will manifest itself especially during and after the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). Söhnngen becomes quite influential by being the *Doktorvater* and habilitation director of a most prominent theologian, Joseph Ratzinger, the future Pope Benedict XVI. Under Söhnngen’s aegis Ratzinger wrote the prize-winning dissertation *Haus und Volk Gottes bei Augustinus* (House and People of God with Augustine) in 1951.² Ratzinger uncovers afresh the notion of the Church as “the People of God.” This Augustinian term will figure prominently during Vatican II.³ In 1955, Ratzinger penned his terminal paper and the habilitation on St. Bonaventure’s understanding of history.⁴ Famously, this will permit the peritus Ratzinger to advise the hugely influential Archbishop of Cologne Cardinal Josef Frings at the Second Vatican Council to reject the original schema on revelation in

¹ Wolfgang Klausnitzer, “Gottlieb Söhnngen,” in *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon* (BBKL), Band 21 (Nordhausen: Bautz, 2003), rubrics 1446–1454.

² 2 Joseph Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus Gottes in Augustins Lehre von der Kirche: die Dissertation und weitere Studien zu Augustinus und zur Theologie der Kirchenväter*, in Joseph Ratzinger, *Joseph Ratzinger Gesammelte Schriften* (JRGS), Bd. 1 (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 2011).

³ See *Lumen Gentium*, especially chapter II, 9-18.

⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*, trans. Zachary Hayes OFM (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1989).

1962 and suggest a more dynamic understanding of revelation instead.⁵ This perspective no longer considers revelation as the communication of timeless propositions or postulates to be believed, but as encounter with the Lord, mediated by Scripture and Tradition (*Dei Verbum* 2).

As a priest of the Archdiocese of Cologne, Söhngen had probably played a decisive role in Ratzinger's appointment as professor to the prestigious Chair of Fundamental Theology at Bonn University. He may also have been instrumental in Ratzinger's acquaintance with the Cologne Cardinal Frings.

Söhngen had studied philosophy and theology with an emphasis on the former in Bonn and Munich. In 1915, he earned a doctoral degree on Kant's epistemology with a dissertation titled *Über analytische und synthetische Urteile. Eine historisch-kritische Untersuchung zur Logik des Urteils* (On analytical and synthetical Judgments. A historical-critical Examination regarding the Logic of Judgment).⁶ The historian of philosophy Clemens Baeumker (1852-1924), who had applied the historical-critical method to medieval texts, and Joseph Geysler (1869-1948) influenced Söhngen by teaching him an enlightened form of Neo-Scholasticism. Söhngen was interested in Kant, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), Husserl's student Max Scheler (1874-1928), and Nikolai Hartmann (1882-1950). While director of the Albertus-Magnus-Akademie in Cologne, Söhngen completed his major philosophical text *Sein und Gegenstand. Das scholastische Axiom Ens et Verum convertuntur als Fundament metaphysischer und theologischer Spekulation* (Being and Object. The scholastic Axiom Ens et Verum convertuntur as Foundation for metaphysical and theological Reflection, 1930),⁷ thereby earning a doctoral degree in theology from Tübingen University. He wrote his habilitation in the area of fundamental theology, titled *Teilhabe am göttlichen Wissen* (Participation in divine Knowledge, 1931) at Bonn University under the direction of the fundamental theologian Arnold Rademacher (1873-1939).⁸

While teaching as private docent in Cologne (1931-37), Söhngen became acquainted with the Catholic ecumenist and member of the

⁵ Joseph Ratzinger, *Milestones. Memoirs 1927-1977* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1998), 46-120.

⁶ Gottlieb Söhngen, *Über analytische und synthetische Urteile. Eine historisch-kritische Untersuchung zur Logik des Urteils* (Köln: J. Bachem, 1915).

⁷ Gottlieb Söhngen, *Sein und Gegenstand. Das scholastische Axiom Ens et Verum convertuntur als Fundament metaphysischer und theologischer Spekulation* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1930).

⁸ Gottlieb Söhngen, *Teilhabe am göttlichen Wissen* (Habilitation, University of Bonn, 1931) unpublished.

Cologne cathedral chapter Robert Grosche (1881-1967), the founding editor of *Catholica*, a journal devoted to ecumenical studies. Söhngen will become the journal's editor in 1958. He participates in the 1930's and 40's in the Protestant-Catholic dialogue on natural theology and the *analogia entis*, which involves namely Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, and Erich Przywara. He is also involved in the conversation on the theology of mystery with the noted Benedictine liturgiologist Odo Casel (1886-1948).

In 1937, Söhngen is appointed professor of theology at the government-run Akademie Braunsberg in East Prussia. He will occupy this position until his flight from the advancing Soviet forces in 1945 at the end of World War II. From 1947 until 1958 he teaches fundamental theology at Munich University, where Joseph Ratzinger will be his stellar student. While in Bavaria, he joins the Jäger-Stählin ecumenical group, initiated by the then-Archbishop of Paderborn Lorenz Jäger and the Protestant bishop of Oldenburg, Wilhelm Stählin, which will contribute indirectly to the ecumenical document *Unitatis Redintegratio* at Vatican II.

The name Söhngen represents a basic shift in accent in theological thought that is well captured in the change of the title of an important discipline of Catholic theology—namely, of apologetics to fundamental theology. While the former tended to be merely defensive and restorative, the latter establishes the common search of all of humankind for a personal meaning that only the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity can ultimately grant. A good summary of Söhngen's vision is captured in his essay as emeritus “Die Weisheit der Theologie durch den Weg der Wissenschaft” (The Wisdom of Theology through the Path of Science) in the first volume of the dictionary *Mysterium Salutis*.⁹ In a sense, the work is a good synopsis of his unpublished defense lecture presented during his 1932 habilitation entitled *Die katholische Theologie als Wissenschaft und Weisheit* (Catholic Theology as Science and Wisdom).¹⁰

Söhngen participated in important theological discussions. He dialogued with noted contemporary Protestant theologians just as easily as with the ancients: Plato and Aristotle, Kant and Hegel, Augustine, Anselm of Canterbury, Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure.

⁹ Gottlieb Söhngen, “Die Weisheit der Theologie durch den Weg der Wissenschaft,” *Mysterium Salutis*, Bd. I (Einsiedeln: Benzinger, 1965), 907-978.

¹⁰ Gottlieb Söhngen, *Die katholische Theologie als Wissenschaft und Weisheit* (Paderborn: Winfriedbund, 1932).

Söhnngen had contributed five titles to Anselm research: the two articles “The Unity of Theology in Anselm’s Proslogion”¹¹ and “The Ancient-Christian Science and Wisdom in Anselm’s New, Germanic Form of Thinking,”¹² as well as three encyclopedia entries “Credo, ut intelligam,” “Fides quaerens intellectum,” and “The Ontological Proof of God’s Existence” in the German Catholic dictionary *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, second edition, edited by Josef Höfer and Karl Rahner.¹³

The city of Braunsberg, now the Polish city of Braniewo, and one-time fortress of the Teutonic Order in East Prussia, is historically the center of the Catholic enclave Ermland (Warmia), in an otherwise overwhelmingly Protestant region of the former Kingdom of Prussia. In an effort to regain a foothold, the Catholic Prince-Bishop of the Bishopric of Warmia, Stanislaw Hosius (1504-1579), had founded the *Lyzeum Hosianum* in 1565. It served as a high school, academy, and theologate for seminarians until 1945. Since 1811 the Prussian government operated it. Thus, the Akademie Braunsberg, as it had come to be known in the nineteenth century, was under National Socialist control (since 1936) when Söhnngen taught there as professor of theology from 1937 until 1945. One of its graduates was Konrad Zuse, the German inventor of the computer.¹⁴

In this ambience of political tutelage in all matters, including theology, Söhnngen delivered two papers on Anselm of Canterbury. While “Die Einheit der Theologie in Anselm’s Proslogion” (The Unity of Theology in Anselm’s Proslogion) delivered in 1938 is still apolitical in tenor, the second lecture held in 1940 had to justify discussing the Christian monk and theologian Anselm at an institution controlled by a National Socialist academic administration that believed in the superiority of the Arian race and at best in a non-Christian, Germanic religion, but certainly not in a Catholic form of Christianity.

¹¹ Gottlieb Söhnngen, “Die Einheit der Theologie in Anselms Proslogion,” in *Die Einheit der Theologie* (Munich: Karl Zink, 1952), 24-62.

¹² Gottlieb Söhnngen, “Die antik-christliche Wissenschaft und Weisheit in Anselms neuer, germanischer Denkform,” *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* 8 (1941): 109-119.

¹³ Gottlieb Söhnngen, “Credo ut intelligam,” in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, Bd. 3, 2nd ed., (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1959), 89-91; Ibid, “Fides quaerens intellectum,” in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 2nd ed. Bd. 4 (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1960), 119f; Ibid, “Ontologischer Gottesbeweis,” in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 2nd ed., Bd. 7 (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1962), 1160f.

¹⁴ Manfred Clauss, “Die Theologische Hochschule Braunsberg,” in Udo Arnold, ed., *Preussen als Hochschullandschaft im 19./20. Jahrhundert*, (Lüneburg: Norddeutsches Kulturwerk, 1992), 23-42.

National Socialism and Religion

National Socialism was quasi- or pseudo-religious in nature. Officially it did not deny the existence of the numinous but *realiter* its leaders lived as *etsi Deus non daretur*. Hitler's Reich Minister for Church Affairs, Hanns Kerrl (1887-1941), had advocated "positive Christianity," rejecting in true Marcionite fashion the Old Testament and depicting Jesus as an Aryan. National Socialism tried to control all religious institutions. Nazi ideology did not allow for the existence of anything apart from this worldview. In logical continuity with Social Darwinism, it postulated that everything must be subordinated to a "Germanic" way of living. Thus, Nordic superiority should manifest itself. The Reich Minister for Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, claimed that there is "an insoluble opposition between the Christian and a heroic-German world view."¹⁵ The chief Nazi ideologue, Alfred Rosenberg (1892-1946) argued that all "foreign" forms of Christianity prior to the ascendancy of the Germanic race around 800 AD must be exterminated. This necessitates removal of all Bibles and the cessation of its publication. Belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Apostles' Creed are not part of pure, Teutonic "Positive Christianity." Only a copy of *Mein Kampf* may lie on the altars. A sword should replace the cross.¹⁶ Despite the concordat signed between the Holy See and the Reich in 1933, the Nazi government gradually refunctioned church property that was not strictly religious. Thousands of Catholic priests were incarcerated. Hundreds of monasteries were seized, and religious newspapers and journals were censored or banned.¹⁷

As mentioned, Söhngen was professor at Braunsberg Akademie, which lay in the then-German province of East Prussia. Its ruler was the Nazi Gauleiter Erich Koch (1896-1986). In a speech Koch identified Hitler as "the new Martin Luther," who introduces a new form of Christianity, wholly divorcing this new religion from Jesus Christ and Scripture.¹⁸ To Koch's mind Hitler liberates Germans from the oppressive and humiliating yoke of living under the religious precepts of

¹⁵ Martin Korschke, *Geschichte der bekennenden Kirche, allein das Wort hat's getan* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), 495.

¹⁶ Richard James Overy, *The Dictators: Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 283f; John S. Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches 1933-1945*, (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2001), 232 -257.

¹⁷ See Karl-Joseph Hummel, Michael Kiener, Christof Morrissey, *Catholics and Third Reich: Controversies and Debates* (Paderborn: Schöningh/Brill, 2018).

¹⁸ Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2003), 120.

an inferior person and race. Nota bene: the politician Koch also made this statement in his role as the duly elected President (*Präsident*) of the Lutheran Provincial Church Synod of East Prussia.¹⁹ Little wonder, in February 1940 Karl Barth accused German Lutherans of sacrificing biblical teaching and thus the essence of Christianity for the sake of Nazi state ideology.²⁰

Söhnngen and his Defense of Anselm of Canterbury

Tellingly, the title of Söhnngen's second public lecture at Braunschweig Akademie is "The Ancient-Christian Science and Wisdom in Anselm's New, Germanic Form of Thinking." It was part of a series titled "Trailblazers of the Germanic Spirit in Medieval Scholarship" held during the first trimester of 1940.²¹ In all probability the National Socialism Gauleiter Erich Koch attended the lectures.²² It was a major academic, political, and social event in East Prussia. While the Second World War had begun in the West, war with Russia would begin only in 1941.

In the opening sentences Söhnngen reminds his audience that the Greeks produced culture and scholarship, as the great German and East Prussian philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) had noted in the preface to his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Directed against the materialistic pragmatism of National Socialism, Söhnngen says that the cultured men of ancient Greece did not strive for knowledge in order to improve materially their lives, but because "they sensed that in pure investigation the nobility of a free person finds expression. ... [This] ... enthusiasm for pure scholarship is the highest and most free, absolutely divine form of living for the human being."²³ Metaphysics' ultimate intention is to seek wisdom for its own sake by way of the sciences. As a side benefit, so to speak, metaphysics seeks to advance towards the ultimate, primordial ground of being so that human beings can properly form their lives. This is realized by pursuing scholarship in a disciplined manner. In this context, Söhnngen quotes Augustine:

¹⁹ Ralf Meindl, *Ostpreussens Gauleiter: Erich Koch – Eine politische Biographie*, (Osnabrück: Fibre, 2007).

²⁰ Karl Barth, *Eine Schweizer Stimme, 1938-1945*, (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1945), 122.

²¹ Söhnngen, "Die antik-christliche Wissenschaft und Weisheit in Anselms neuer, germanischer Denkform," 14: "Bahnbrecher germanischen Geistes in der mittelalterlichen Wissenschaft."

²² Söhnngen, "Die antik-christliche Wissenschaft und Weisheit in Anselms neuer, germanischer Denkform," 14, fn 1.

²³ *Ibid*, 14.

“Tendimus per scientiam ad sapientiam” – we strive through scholarship for wisdom.²⁴ It was a bit cheeky for Söhngen to quote a Latin line, as on the whole Nazis lacked higher education and, therefore, did not understand the language of Horace and Virgil; this certainly included Koch.

Söhngen reminds his audience: “It is within the social and intellectual space of the Church that the Germanic tribes encounter Greek culture and scholarship.”²⁵ In the encounter of the Christian gospel with Greek culture Christianity proved victorious and “captured” Greek erudition. The victorious faith found its erudite incarnate expression in Greek thought. The free spirit of Greece, trained in discipline and ascetism, meets a truth that is truth for its own sake or purpose – and Greek philosophy had pursued this wholly non-utilitarian, sublime goal ever since Parmenides and Heraclitus. He reminds his German audience of the classic German poet Goethe’s observation: “to luxuriate [without effort] makes mean,” enjoying knowledge without hard scholarly labors amounts to materialist, “base sensuality of the mind.”²⁶ Gnostics sought such pleasant, unscholarly truth without investing existential sacrifice to achieve it. The very opposite is Anselm’s grand, overarching program—namely, *fides quaerens intellectum* – faith seeking understanding.

The encounter of ancient scholarship *scientia* with Christianity’s *fides* in the first centuries of the first millennium immensely enriched both. In later antiquity an unspent youth met this symbiosis. The youthful Germanic tribes met Christianity in the Church and knew themselves “called to become coheirs of ancient culture and scholarship,”²⁷ as Söhngen pointedly formulated. The Germans studied at the feet of the Christian and pagan masters they so much venerated in order to appropriate their knowledge and wisdom. This resulted in something altogether novel: Scholasticism, a young expression of the European spirit, carrying ancient culture and scholarship over into the Middle Ages.

²⁴ Ibid, 15. See Augustine, *De Trinitate* XIII, c. 19, no. 24.

²⁵ Söhngen, “Die antik-christliche Wissenschaft,” 15.

²⁶ Goethe: “Genießen macht gemein” and Söhngen: “Erkenntnisgenuß ohne wissenschaftliche Arbeit ist gemeine Wollust des Geistes.” Söhngen, “Die antik-christliche Wissenschaft und Weisheit in Anselms neuer, germanischer Denkform,” 15.

²⁷ Söhngen, “Die antik-christliche Wissenschaft und Weisheit in Anselms neuer, germanischer Denkform,” 15.

As a side note: Söhnngen takes exception with the position of the Protestant theologian Hans von Schubert (1859-1931). Schubert, who had authored a book titled tellingly *The History of the German Faith* in 1924,²⁸ had therein considered the Middle Ages wholly alien to “the German nature.”²⁹ Against von Schubert, Söhnngen asserts that the German Reformation was not “a national” reaction against a medieval worldview wholly foreign to Germans—namely, Scholasticism, but a religious protest. Luther had opposed the Scholastic trust in reason and contrasted it against his emphatic *theologia crucis*.

Thereupon Söhnngen introduces Anselm as the most significant thinker of the eleventh century and as the most independent-minded personality of the Middle Ages to his illustrious audience, the Nazi *haute volée* of East Prussia.³⁰ The Nazis in the audience are informed that Anselm was of Lombardian nobility, having Gundolf as his father and Ermenberga as his mother. Therefore he has a thoroughly Germanic pedigree – much like the great minds Hugh of St. Victor, Albert the Great – often also called “Albert the German,” Söhnngen points out – Hildegard of Bingen, and Nicholas of Kues as well as the later thinkers Kepler, Schelling, Hegel, Schiller, Hölderlin, and Mörike, so much extolled by Nazi propaganda. All of these Christians had been German. They demonstrate how very congenial the “*Deutsche Geist*” (the German mindset) is to Christianity and how Germans had brought Christianity and ancient thinking to new and theretofore unprecedented heights.³¹

With this unambiguous introduction Söhnngen embarks on discussing the basic outlines of Anselm’s proof of God’s existence. He detects an extreme degree of profundity and astuteness in the *Proslogion*. No significant philosophical thinker since, including Descartes, Leibniz, Kant, Hegel, can surpass Anselm’s proof. Anselm attempts to prove divine existence from one, stringently conclusive primordial thought (“einen einzigen, beweiskräftigen Urgedanken”) requiring no exterior buttress in his judgment.³² This primordial thought must be such that the denier of God’s existence must be able at least to think it, even when denying His actual existence. In fact, if we think God then at

²⁸ Hans von Schubert, *Die Geschichte des deutschen Glaubens* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1925).

²⁹ Söhnngen, “Die antik-christliche Wissenschaft,” 16.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 16: “Er ist die größte Denkergestalt des XI. Jahrhunderts und, wenn auch nicht der umfassendste, so doch der selbständigste Geist des Mittelalters.“

³¹ *Ibid*, 17.

³² *Ibid*, 18.

least we think “as that beyond which nothing greater can be thought.” This must be both greater than anything imaginable (thinkable) and real. Thought can only be imaginably greatest if it is really the greatest. Unfortunately, Söhngen observes how this thought was frequently misunderstood. Seeing Anselm through the lenses of Leibniz and Kant may be excused as a misunderstanding of Anselm. One hundred Thalers are precisely not “*ein Begriff*,” a concept or term, and, therefore, certainly incomparably different from the term “God” (it is *sui generis* as term) as Hegel already had pointed out. “Island” or “Thaler” are not words of the same ontic valence as “God.” Anselm’s superior response to Gaunilo is that, if there is something ontologically greater to be thought than “God,” then he will be delighted to give Gaunilo the lost island.³³ While assuredly the term “God” is the result of faith, it nevertheless is formed and understood by way of reason. As such, it is a mediating term between *fides* and *ratio*. It is the achievement of the *intellectus fidei*. Though this is rendered plausible *sola ratione*, it becomes luminously clear in faith.³⁴

Now Söhngen presents his understanding of Anselm’s theological program. For this he turns to the *Cur Deus Homo*. Theology is insight into faith, or *intellectus fidei*. Insight to Anselm means using radically reasoned (*sola ratione*) insight into the necessary reasons. And yet, this does not occur without faith, as it is faith that encourages one to proceed to truth. “Believing in the true God, entails trusting in the power of the [human] spirit according to Anselm ...[,]” being able to hear revelation and to give it human, rational expression.³⁵

This brings him to a central Christian dogma, the incarnation. Söhngen characterizes dogma as “*überzeitlich*,” it transcends temporality. Yet, consonant with the mystery of the Incarnation, it is translated in different ages into the particular idiom of a specific time and people.

Human beings’ imagination is bound to images, which also applies to antiquity when the contrast between master and slave was particularly powerful. This is extrapolated unto the cosmic order. This is the background of Paul speaking of pagan deities and the Law. This view is compared to the true Lord and God of creation, offering ransom through crucifixion for human beings enslaved by sin and death. Söhngen paraphrases Augustine to illustrate Anselm’s view: as the evil powers of this world assaulted the one who had not fallen victim to their baseness, He, Jesus, broke their power. Jesus is now the “Master,”

³³ Ibid, 19.

³⁴ Ibid, 20.

³⁵ Ibid.

who liberates His disciples from enslavement to the dark forces of this world. The English word “master” is nota bene “*Herr*” in German. The Nazis had claimed that Germans are the “*Herrenrasse*,” the master race of the world. This cosmic view offered the ancient world a dramatic interpretation of world history, giving depth to the social order and its attendant ethos that can be righted in Christ. The Gospel reveals that an overarching purpose to history exists, which applies to all people and not just one particular race. Söhngen emphasizes that every human being *qua homo* is gifted with intellect (*Geist*). Indeed, Christians provide “the hour of birth to a philosophy of history”³⁶ in the sense of fulfilling this search.

With the transition from antiquity to the Middle Ages the Christian understanding of redemption had to develop a different, interpreting image to convey the same, ageless Christian message of atonement, as Söhngen tells his not very captive audience. Otherwise, redemption would become “an abstract and thereby also an empty term,” as the local German hero Immanuel Kant had correctly observed in the *Critique of Pure Reason*³⁷ – Kant’s town Königsberg (present-day Kaliningrad) is less than 50 miles away from Braunsberg. This is Anselm of Canterbury’s signal achievement, and he uses the Germanic understanding of law to bring this about. Anselm introduces the notion of “satisfaction” to explain the Christian mystery of redemption to the Franks, Anglo-Saxons, and other Germanic tribes. By using such a Germanic concept, he introduces a more personal and more spiritual perspective to Christianity than antiquity. According to Söhngen, in antiquity the emphasis had been on sin as a real, but suprapersonal cosmic power, to which humankind had collectively fallen victim.³⁸ This impersonal understanding is well captured in the terms “slave to the devil,” “original sin,” and “concupiscence.” Anselm brings to bear a new, supposedly genuinely Germanic perspective of sin as a personal attack against the highest value of a human person: honor. This concept of honor is compared to insult. Sin insults God and His infinite honor, majesty, and holiness. While, there is no gainsaying that such an attack does not harm God in His aseity, the sinner who acts dishonorably vis-à-vis God loses his original honor. The sinner cannot restore his state of honor on his own. Söhngen points out that, in old Germanic law, a “*Meintat*” (a dishonorable and immune crime

³⁶ Ibid, 21.

³⁷ Ibid, there referencing Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 75.

³⁸ Ibid, 21f.

which cannot be righted by penance performed by the perpetrator)³⁹ is a grievous transgression that requires a satisfaction commensurate 1) to the gravity of the sin and 2) to the greatness of the one insulted. Insult of the infinite God requires a satisfaction of infinite value. Since all human beings are dishonorable in comparison to God and every human being is ontologically inferior, as a finite being, no one less than God Himself must supply satisfaction for His insulted divine honor and, thereby, pursue magnanimously the restoration of human honor. This occurs through the incarnation of Jesus Christ. And thus, Söhngen concludes, “the Godman Jesus Christ supplied vicariously satisfaction for the insulted honor of God, by paying with his infinitely precious life ‘*Blut und Wergeld*,’ blood money for the sins of all people.”⁴⁰ Anselm expresses this universal restoration using the Latin term “*rectitude*,” or uprightness in English. This term brings about a less forensic understanding of redemption and introduces the more spiritual and personal dimensions of the Christian understanding of redemption.

In a footnote Söhngen elaborates that such “*Vergeistigung*” (spiritualization) betrays a characteristic feature of the Germanic mindset. It replaces the ancient “*Loskauflehre*” (i.e., the teaching on the ransom of the sinner from the hands of the devil). The Patristic, impersonal understanding of ransoming the human race is replaced by God freeing the individual person. This is the original Germanic contribution to Christianity. While one might interject that there is a juridical dimension to Anselm teaching of satisfaction, this dimension also applies to Paul’s understanding of salvation. In the case of Anselm, however, the new understanding of satisfaction is perceived from his more comprehensive perspective of “*rectitude*,”⁴¹ a term that captures and

³⁹ See Jürgen Weitzel, ed, *Hoheitliches Strafen in der Spätantike und im frühen Mittelalter* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2002).

⁴⁰ Söhngen, “Die antik-christliche Wissenschaft,” 22. The word “Wergeld” (known in Old High German as “Weragelt,” or “Wergelt,” to the Old High German “Wer” “one.” See the cognate “Werewolf”) was the atonement money in Germanic law. In the case of a manslaughter, the manslayer had to pay compensation to the relatives of the slain, who otherwise would have had to exercise the blood revenge or the feud. Since the acceptance of the “Wergeld” deprived the injured clan of the right to feud, it was one of the important early legal instruments for social peacekeeping in times when a state monopoly on the use of force did not yet exist or could not be enforced. The value money went to the next male relative of the injured party; if these did not exist, it also went to women. “Wergeld” was applied not only to homicide, but also to other offenses. See Andreas Roth, “Wergeld,” in *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, Bd. 8, arr. by Robert Auty (Munich, Stuttgart: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2003), rubrics 2199–2201.

⁴¹ Söhngen, “Die antik-christliche Wissenschaft,” 23f, fn 27.

expresses something akin to the personal conformation of the sinner to the moral uprightness or integrity of Christ as the Godman and the Son of Man.

In Anselm's understanding of redemption, this Germanic spiritualization takes on two forms: 1) the modification of the ancient and Augustinian understanding of original sin (this point Söhnngen does not further elaborate) and 2) the Christianization of the pagan Germanic understanding of the concepts of "honor" and "satisfaction." Implicitly, he argues that Germanic thinking introduces a personal dimension to soteriology. Just as the ancient notion of a cosmic power weighed heavily on the Mediterranean mind, so also the Germanic notion of blood revenge stifled hope for the old pagan Germanic peoples. Shaming crude National Socialist chauvinism, Söhnngen introduces the quintessential German theater piece, Richard Wagner's *Nibelungenlied*—the "German Iliad"—used so greatly by Nazi propaganda:

At the end of [the German poet Christian Friedrich] Hebbel's [1813- 63] play "Nibelungen" Etzel [King Attila] cedes his crowns to Dietrich von Bern [King of Verona], in order to bring the terrible drama of blood revenge to an end, and Dietrich assumes the reign "in the name of the one who paled on the cross.: Similarly, [by way of] the theory of satisfaction the Germanic thinker Anselm lifts the crown jewel of Germanic juridical thinking to the heights of honor and sets it into the name and crown of victory of the one who paled on the cross.⁴²

The Essential Unity of Human Culture and the Christian Faith

Söhnngen reminds his audience that as long as human beings appreciate spirituality and intellectuality – in German "*Geistigkeit*" – people will express appreciation for Anselm's thoughts; the alternative would amount to pagan barbarism he cautions. Anselm's thoughts reflect his ascetism, his spiritual collection, and disciplined thinking – values common to all human beings. In this context Anselm arrives at "the one argument" for the demonstration of God's existence, as his biographer Eadmer so well records. Already Plato in the *Phaedo* had emphasized the quasi-monastic features of a true philosopher, the definition of which includes one who dies to himself and mortification. The organic continuity of Christian thinking with ancient philosophy, and of Christianity and Germanic life, evidences the remarkable, universal coherence of the human condition. It finds profound expression

⁴² Ibid, 23.

in Anselm's radically inquisitive reason that seeks the all-sustaining and necessary primordial concept and ground. Anselm seeks to comprehend what he believes as a Christian: God as the highest personal good. He seeks to understand, not in order to believe, but rather *credo ut intelligam* (I believe in order to understand) as the *Proslogion* famously and programmatically states. Söhngen sees Anselm uniting the undiminished powers of supernatural faith and human reason to one grand, symphonic unity. Such "unbroken power of the intellect (*Geist*) is the accomplishment of Anselm, a personality possessing the unbroken youthful energy of a Christian and the unspent youthful national (*völkisch*) energy of the German."⁴³

The cosmopolitan Cologne priest Gottlieb Söhngen was talented in navigating different worldviews. Granted, he overstates the Germanic dimension in the monk and thinker Anselm, but he does so *Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re*, as the Jesuit Claudio Acquaviva (1543-1615) poignantly formulated. Söhngen does not argue against the primitive exaltation of everything ethnically German. But neither does he compromise the Christian statement or Anselm's thought. Instead, he argues that universal Christianity reaches a new climax in the "Germanic" thinker Anselm of Canterbury. To this end, he demonstrates how Anselm uses pagan Germanic terms to enrich the Christian understanding of redemption. In this way, he tries to immunize Christianity from the destructive powers of National Socialism. Söhngen uses the Latin editions of Anselm's writings, and Allers' translation.⁴⁴ Rarely does he refer to the research of Adolf Kolping and Anselm Stolz.⁴⁵ Söhngen argues firmly against dull Nazi materialism. The human being is essentially the unity of spirit, mind, and intellect. Any denial of this ontologically grounded interdependent unity amounts to inhumanism. In addition, Söhngen insists on the inseverable link between antiquity and humanism, between Scripture and Christianity, between early Christendom, the Christian Middle Ages, and the present.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Rudolf Allers, *Anselm von Canterbury. Leben, Lehre und Werke* (Vienna: Thomas-Verlag, Hegner, 1936).

⁴⁵ Adolf Kolping, *Anselms Proslogion-Beweis der Existenz Gottes*, in *Grenzfragen zwischen Theologie und Philosophie VIII* (Bonn: P. Hanstein, 1939). Anselm Stolz, *Anselm von Canterbury* (Munich: Kösel-Pustet, 1937).

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Benedict Hesse's Teaching on Conjugal Abstinence

This article focuses on conjugal abstinence in the teaching of the great Polish theologian, Benedict Hesse, who lived and worked in Cracow during the fifteenth century. In his work *Commentary on the Gospel of St. Matthew*, Hesse focuses his discussion on chastity and conjugal abstinence in the context of several other subjects, including: the superiority of virginity over marriage; the superiority of virginal chastity over conjugal abstinence; the issue of assessing the pleasure of conjugal sexual intercourse; matters pertaining to modesty of the spouses and their exterior appearance; as well as castration for the Kingdom of Heaven. The issues that Hesse raises in relation to chastity and conjugal abstinence might bring a smile to a contemporary reader's face, since they seem mostly anecdotal and basic. This article is not a complete and systematic lecture on conjugal abstinence.

Key words: Benedict Hesse, conjugal chastity, conjugal abstinence, virginity, castration, spousal dress.

Introduction

Benedict Hesse,¹ a Polish philosopher and theologian who taught in Cracow during the middle of the fifteenth century, presents his teaching on marriage and family, among other topics, in his *Commentary on the Gospel of St. Matthew*. God created man as male and female and,

¹ Benedict Hesse (b. 1389 in Cracow, d. 1456) was a Polish scholar, philosopher, and theologian. He came from a bourgeois Cracovian family. He studied liberal arts, graduated in the field of theology, obtaining a Bachelor of Arts in 1411 and a Masters degree in 1415. After completing his studies, he was a professor in Cracow as well as the rector of the University Cracow several times.

therefore, sexually differentiated (Gen 1:27). Masculinity and femininity determine man's mission on earth.² God entrusted man with the duty to procreate and have dominion over the earth. This dominion should first begin in man himself.³ After original sin, the initial harmony that existed within creation was upset. As a result, man became enslaved to sin and concupiscence. With the fall, however, man did not completely lose his freedom or rational ability to freely make decisions. Thanks to God's grace, man can and should realize his vocation as a person who has both a soul and a body.⁴ Within marriage, which the Creator instituted, sexuality rediscovers its authentic dimension intended by God. Nowadays, the vocation to marriage is considered one of the specific Christian vocations to holiness.⁵ Married life consists in building a "communion of persons" in love through the spouses' reciprocal and free gift of self. The exclusive and defining feature of the conjugal gift is the "unity of the body," which is inherently directed to fertility, meaning the gift of new life.⁶

Usually the topic of conjugal abstinence is related to the issue of marital and family love. In Polish a rich body of literature dedicated to the different aspects of conjugal love exists.⁷ More recently, in his work *Love and Responsibility*, Cardinal Karol Wojtyła made significant contributions to the understanding of married love and human

² S. Stefanek, "Mężczyznę i niewiastę stworzył ich. Płeć w Biblii," *Studia nad Rodziną* 1, no. 1 (1997): 12; P. Anciaux, *Le Sacrement du Mariage* (Louvain-Paris: 1963), 196.

³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 377, accessed October 29, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM.

⁴ J. Bajda, "Płeć a powołanie," *Studia nad Rodziną* 1, no. 1 (1997): 21; J. Bajda, "Konsekracja ciała w aspekcie powołania osoby," in Jan Paweł II, *Mężczyznę i niewiastę stworzył ich. Chrystus odwołuje się do „początku”* (Lublin 1981), 185-202.

⁵ J. Bajda, "Powołanie małżeństwa i rodziny. Próba syntezy teologiczno-moralnej," in *Teologia małżeństwa i rodziny*, ed. K. Majdański (Warszawa: 1880), 7-156.

⁶ J. Bajda, "Powołanie chrześcijańskie a moralność małżeńska," in *Postługa spowiedników w realizacji powołania małżeńskiego* (Łomianki: 1999), 35.

⁷ J. Laskowski, *Małżeństwo i rodzina w świetle nauki Soboru Watykańskiego II* (Warszawa: 1979); M. Masini, ed, *Małżeństwo chrześcijańskie* (Warszawa: 1983); A. Zienkiewicz, *Miłości trzeba się uczyć* (Częstochowa: 1986); J. Vanier, *Mężczyznę i niewiastę stworzył ich do życia w prawdziwej miłości* (Kraków: 1987); K. Wiśniewska-Roszkowska, *Seks i moralność* (Warszawa-Struga-Kraków: 1988); A. Wielowiejski, *Przed nami małżeństwo* (Kraków: 1988); H. Łuczak, *Dorastanie do miłości* (Warszawa: 1989); J. Powell, *Jak kochać i być kochanym* (Pelplin: 1990); W. Szewczyk, ed., *Dorastać do miłości* (Tarnów: 1991); W. E. Papis, *Życie i miłość* (Warszawa: 1995).

sexuality.⁸ The Second Vatican Council updated the Church's teaching on the purpose of marriage by making conjugal love and procreation equal. Pope John Paul II went even deeper in this area through his own teaching, which he transmitted through documents, speeches, and catechesis.⁹ Currently, the Church treats the issue of sexuality clearly and openly, without being prude and manichaeistic. During the medieval period, theology approached the topic of the obligations of marriage cautiously and reservedly. At that time, theologians focused on certain aspects of marriage, particularly on the sin of impurity. For, marriage was not only meant for procreation, but also considered a cure for lust.

The primary source of Christian sexual ethics is Scripture, particularly the two passages from the Gospel of St. Matthew 5:28 and 9:18, which refer to this issue. In these passages, Christ speaks about adultery and the indissolubility of marriage. Here, the Lord restores the original commandment of purity as God intended it.¹⁰ Chastity is not only a virtue but also a norm that should influence man's behavior in the area of sexuality.¹¹ Conjugal chastity is connected closely to spousal love and fertility.¹² The history of theology includes two approaches to practicing the virtue of chastity: through conjugal abstinence or through a vow of chastity, otherwise known as the state of virginity. Since antiquity, theologians and philosophers have deliberated on which manner of practicing chastity is the noblest.¹³ From the beginning of Christianity, the Apostles emphasized that freely foregoing marriage for the sake of the Kingdom of God is the noblest. Never,

⁸ K. Wojtyła, *Miłość i odpowiedzialność* (Lublin: 1982).

⁹ T. Żeleźnik, ed, *Jan Paweł II o małżeństwie i rodzinie* (Warszawa: 1982); Jan Paweł II, *Mężczyzną i niewiastą stworzył ich. Chrystus odwołuje się do „początku”*. O Jana Pawła II teologii ciała, ed. S. Styczeń (Lublin: 1981); Jan Paweł II, *Rodzino, co mówisz o sobie? Dokumenty i przemówienia papieskie w Roku Rodziny* (Kraków: 1995).

¹⁰ S. Olejnik, “Dar-Wezwanie-Odpowiedź,” *Teologia moralna, t. 7: Moralność życia społecznego* (Warszawa: 1993), 35-40.

¹¹ J. Bajda, “Czystość,” in *Słownik małżeństwa i Rodziny*, ed. E. Ozorowski (Warszawa-Łomianki: 1999), 77-79.

¹² P. Anciaux, *Le Sacrement du Mariage*, 149-235.

¹³ K. Wolski, “Moralność seksualna w nauczaniu Kościoła,” *Studia nad Rodziną* 1, no. 1 (1997), 45-52; P. Brown, *Le renoncement à la chair. Virginité, célibat et continence dan le christianisme primitif* (Paris: 1995); J. E. Kerns, *Les chrétiens, le mariage et la sexualité. Évolution des attitudes chrétiennes envers la vie sexuelle et la sainteté dans le mariage* (Paris: 1966).

however, was or has the institution of marriage, in which the virtue of chastity should be cultivated through abstinence, been depreciated.

Benedict Hesse reflected extensively on chastity and conjugal abstinence as well as the relationship between marriage and virginity. The topic of virginity appears repeatedly in Benedict's writings, and he treated the topic extensively. An examination of these topics, however, would require a separate study that goes beyond the framework of this analysis. Given the topic and limitations of this paper, I will focus on Benedict Hesse's commentary on Matthew 5:8 as well as Matthew 19:10-12. The footnotes include the original quotations of Hesse's work in Latin in order to clarify his views, which are little known among the broader academic community.

Virginity and Conjugal Abstinence

Master Benedict wondered which state—virginity or marriage—was more worthy of praise, more important, and superior. Needless to say, he concluded that virginity is a nobler state than chastity and conjugal abstinence.¹⁴ Marriage points to the world, while virginity points to Heaven, where all people will be like the angels—that is, where every person will be abstinent. Hesse's arguments rely on the thought of St. Ambrose, Richard, and other ancient writers who claimed that virginity is nobler than marriage,¹⁵ since virgins already live an angelic life in their flesh. The Apostles taught and Christ advised the same.¹⁶ Benedict Hesse's teaching on this subject does not differ from the majority of the theologians of this era.

¹⁴ P. Nehring, *Dlaczego dziewictwo jest lepsze niż małżeństwo? Spór o ideał w chrześcijaństwie zachodnim końca IV wieku w relacji Ambrożego, Hieronima i Augustyna* (Toruń: 2005); R. Rubinkiewicz, "Małżeństwo i dziewictwo w nauce św. Pawła (1 Kor 7, 1-40)," *Zeszyty Naukowe KUL* 23, no. 3 (1980): 45-50; R. Cantalamessa, *Czystego serca* (Warszawa: 1994).

¹⁵ "Haec autem cordis munditia reperitur in virginibus, in viduis et coniugatis et viris ecclesiasticis. De primis, scilicet de virginibus legitur XXXII, q. 1: 'Nuptiae' in textu et in glossa, quod virginitas replet paradysum, nuptiae mundum, quia virginitas aseror est angelorum, quia ibi omnes erunt virgines, id est continentes. Unde Glossa I Ad Cor. VII at est etiam Ambrosius de viduis: 'Supergreditur etiam virginitas conditionem humanae naturas, per quam homines angelis assimilantur, maior tamen est victoria virginum quam angelorum, quia angeli sine impugnatione carnis vivunt, virgines in carne triumphant.' Unde canit Ecclesia de Virgine: 'Angelicam haec vitam duxerat in carne.'" C p. 403, B v. 16, p. 70-71.

¹⁶ "Castitas est melius bonum quam coniugium, quia Christus et Apostolus dederrunt consilium de isto tamquam meliori." C p. 404, B v. 16, p. 72.

In the Middle Ages, it was widely accepted that virginity was nobler than marital chastity. The virginal state is the state of perfect chastity, while the married state is a state of imperfect chastity, and that which is more perfect is of greater dignity. Hesse, however, posed a relativizing question: Which state has greater dignity: the state of complete abstinence, or the married state? According to Hesse, the valuation depends on the era in which different people live.¹⁷ From the earliest ages, the Old Testament conveys that marriage has more dignity than virginity. At that time, marriage was recommended and virginity was foregone in order to increase the number of people who believed in the One God. The situation changed once Christ came and the law of the Gospels prevailed. Now is the era of multiplication through spiritual birth; therefore, virginity—a state of complete abstinence from all bodily pleasure—is considered nobler than marriage.¹⁸

In order to support his claim that virginity is a more perfect state than marriage, Hesse refers to the writings of Augustine and Jerome.¹⁹ Both thinkers polemicized and argued against Jovinian, who placed marriage above virginity. Christ Himself chose a virgin as His Mother, thereby confirming the superiority of virginity. According to medieval theology, it was obvious that divine good was superior to human

¹⁷ “Sed quaeritur iam utrum virginitas sit maioris meriti quam castitas coniugalis? Richardus super IV Sententiarum, distinctione XXXIV respondet: ‘Aut quaeritur et habitibus, scilicet an habitus virginitatis sit maioris meritis quam habitus coniugalis castitatis et tunc dicendum est, quod habitus virginitatis est habitus castitatis perfectus, sed habitus coniugalis est habitus castitatis imperfectus. Illud autem quod est perfectius, est maioris meriti minus perfecto vel imperfecto et virtus perfecta est maioris meriti quam imperfecta. Aut quaeritur utrum maioris meriti sit status abstinentium, scilicet ab omni venerea delectatione quam status coniugatorum. Tunc respondetur, quod hii duo status possunt referri ad idem tempus vel ad diversa tempora.’” C p. 403, B v. 16, p. 70.

¹⁸ “Aut quaeritur utrum maioris meriti sit status abstinentium, scilicet ab omni venerea delectatione quam status coniugatorum. Tunc respondetur, quod hii duo status possunt referri ad idem tempus vel ad diversa tempora. Si primo modo, aut referuntur ad tempus legis scriptae et sic maioris meriti fuit status coniugatorum quam ab omni venerea delectatione abstinentium. Unde status coniugatorum tunc praecipiebatur et virginum prohibebatur propter fidelium multiplicationem. Sed nunc, tempore legis Evangelicae, quod est tempus multiplicationis per spiritualem Generationem, maioris meriti est status ab omni venerea delectatione abstinentium quam coniugatorum. Si autem illi duo status referuntur ad diversa tempore, ut status coniugatorum ad tempus legis scriptae et status abstinentium ad tempus: ‘Evangelicae legis, sic quolibet statu in suo esse optimo considerato unus alteri non praefertur.’” C p. 403-404, B v. 16, p. 71.

¹⁹ A. Kozłowska, *Kobieta w pismach świętego Augustyna o małżeństwie i dziewictwie* (Warszawa: 2006); A. Eckmann, ed, *Pisma świętego Augustyna o małżeństwie i dziewictwie*, arr. W. Eborowicz (Lublin: 2003).

good—that the good of the soul was superior to the good of the body, and that contemplative life is of higher value than the active life.²⁰

Virgins live like angels here on earth because they begin to live here what will be ours only after the resurrection of the dead. We will rise in our gendered bodies, but we will not procreate or engage in sexual intercourse in Heaven.²¹ Hesse continually refers to Jerome when substantiating this argument.²²

Virgins make up the apocalyptic procession and follow the Lamb wherever He goes (Rev 14:4). They follow Christ not only in the integrity of the purity of their thoughts, but also in the integrity of their flesh. Master Benedict asserts that the practice of marrying virgins who have already made a vow of chastity should be condemned. Anyone who does this commits a mortal sin because he steals God's own bride. Such a sin is unforgivable because the harm done cannot be atoned. No human person can restore the purity lost through sexual intercourse.²³

²⁰ “Unde Augustinus in libro De statu coniugali dicit: ‘Non est impar meritum continentiae in Iohanno qui nullas expertus est nuptias, et in Abraham qui filios genuit.’ Sed loquendo de tempora evangelicae legis tunc multis scripturis et auctoritatibus et rationibus patet excellentia virginitatis. Unde Hieronymus contra Iovinianum dicit hunc fuisse errorem Ioviniani, qui posuit virginitatem non esse matrimonio praefendam, qui destruitur exemplo Christi, qui elegit matrem Virginem et servavit, virginitatem consulit tamquam malius bonum. Unde dicit, quod multipliciter beator erit, si sic permanserit secundum suum consilium et rationibus, Patet tum quia bonum divinum est potius humano, tum quia bonum animae praefertur bono corporis, tum quia bonum vitae contemplativae praefertur bono vitae activae.” C p. 404, B v. 16, p. 71.

²¹ W. Turek, “Dziewictwo rozumiane jako ustawiczna walka dla Pana. Fundamenty biblijne w Liście 22 św. Hieronima do Eustochium,” *Vox Patrum* 76 (2020): 107-130.

²² “Et quae potest esse maior gloria mortalium in terra quam in carno ducere angelicam vitam, quod alii tantum sperant post hanc vitam? Audi Hieronymus contra Iovinianum super illud Mt. XXII et Lucae XX: ‘In resurrectione non nubent neque nubentur, sed similes erunt angelis.’ Dicit: ‘Quod alii postea in caelis futuri sunt, hoc virgines in terris esse coeperunt.’ Si angelorum nobis similitudo promittitur, inter angelos autem non est sequens diversitas, aut sine sexu erimus, quod angeli sunt, aut certe, quod limpide approbatur resurgentes in proprio sexu, sexus non fungebunt officio. Et Hieronymus in sermone ad Paulam et Eustochium sic inquit: ‘Haec vita vobis de caelo fluxit, quam professe estis supra usum naturae, nec inmerito usum vivendi de caelo quaesistis, quae vobis de caelo sponsum petistis.’ Hanc gloriam, scilicet angelice vivere habent in praesenti virgines.” C p. 404, B v. 16, p. 71-72.

²³ “Sed qualis ipsorum erit gloria in futuro? Apocalypsis XIV: ‘Hi sunt qui cum mulieribus non sunt coinquinati; virgines enim sunt: et sequuntur Agnum quocumque ierit.’ Agnus enim Christus graditur itinere virginali, virgines enim sequi Agnum quocumque ierit est imitari Christum non solum in integritate mentis, sed etiam in integritate carnis. Unde dico, quod voventi virginitatem

According to Hesse, virginity does not have absolute value; it is not a moral virtue in every case.²⁴ Not everyone who makes a vow of virginity is rewarded with the full glory of heaven or the aureole of sanctity. To preserve one's virginity requires a lot of effort and sacrifice. The most perfect examples of virginity are Christ and Mary.²⁵ Since neither had the stain of sin or a shadow of lust in them, their spirit did not need to be victorious over their flesh. With regard to the effort necessary to maintain abstinence, a widow must exert a greater effort in resisting

damnabile est nubere et contresens cum tali scienter peccat mortaliter ideo, quia rapit sponsam Deo et non potest eam sic restituere, peccatum enim prius non dimittitur nisi ablatum restituatur et, dispositam puellam et volentem caste vivera nemo debet retrahere. Sed ex quo est tam magnum bonum, nullus ipsum vel auxilii regulariter debet impedire nisi subsit impedimentum tale, ex quo magna elicitur et violenta praesumptio de recessu a bono incepto. Ratio Sapientis: 'Noli prohibere benefacere volentem, sed si potes et ipse fac.'" C p. 404, B v. 16, p. 72.

²⁴ "Ad quartam videtur, quod non multipliciter, Primo sic: nulla virtus est in nobis a natura, 2 Ethicorum, sed virginitas est natura, ergo etc. Secundo sic: omnis virtus moralis generatur ex actibus frequentatis, virginitas non, ergo etc, Tertio sic: nulla virtus aufertur involuntarie, virginitas autem aufertur involuntarie, sicut patet in oppressis, ergo etc. Quarto sic: nulla virtus perditur sine peccato, sed virginitas perditur sine peccato et meritorie per matrimonium, 1 Cor. 7: 'Non peccat virgo, si nubat,' ergo etc. Quinto sic: 'Omnis virtus amissa potest per paenitentiam restitui,' dicit Hieronymus. Sed virginitas amissa numquam potest restitui, ergo etc. Sexto sic: nulla vera virtus est in infidelibus, sicut Augustinus probat Contra Iulianum, libro tertio: 'Absit, inquit, ut in aliquo sit vera virtus, nisi sit iustus.' Absit autem, quod vere iustus sit, nisi vivat ex fide; sed virginitas est in infidelibus, sicut patuit de virginibus deae Vestae sacratis, quarum una aquam de Tiberi portavit in cribro in signum virginitatis, sicut recitat Augustinus, De civitate Dei, c.10 et Valerius, libro VIII, c.1. Septimo, sicut omne, quod recedit a medio virtutis, est vitiosum, sic virginitas est huiusmodi, Probatur, dicit enim Philosophus 3 Ethicorum, quod qui omni voluptate patitur, nec quia ab una recedit est intemperatus; qui autem omnes fugit, est agrestis et insensibilis; sed virginitas recedit ab omnibus voluptatibus venereis, ergo etc. Octavo sic: quicquid est contra praeceptum legis divinae, est vitiosum; virginitas est huiusmodi, quia praeceptum est Gen. 1: 'Crescite et multiplicamini et replete terram.' Confirmatur, quia sicut praeceptum de conservatione individui est de praeceptis legis naturae, ita praeceptum de conservatione speciei; ergo sicut peccaret, qui abstineret ab omni cibo, ita peccat, qui ab omni actu generationis abstinet. Nono sic: nulla virtus indiget sacrificiis expiari, sed Plato legitur suam continentiam perpetuam expiasset et sacrificasse diis, scilicet Veneri pro eiusdem continentiae vitio abolendum, secundum Augustinum, De vera religione. Decimo: qui habet unam virtutem, habet omnes, sed qui habet unam virginitatem, quandoque habet alias virtutes, ergo virginitas non est vera virtus." E p. 215-216, B v. 26, p. 161.

²⁵ J. P. Torrell, *Dziewica Maryja w wierze katolickiej* (Poznań: 2013).

temptations of the flesh than a virgin.²⁶ Following Jerome's thought, Hesse asserts that the greater the effort to overcome temptations of the flesh, the greater the reward. Widows, however, do not deserve a special "aureole." The aforementioned considerations are related to questions regarding whether or not a person merits an aureole for remaining a virgin until death.

Hesse presented many instances where virginity is doubtful and supports his arguments with the authoritative writings of Aristotle, Augustine, Peter Lombard, and other writers. He makes a distinction between bodily and spiritual virginity. Hesse notes that there are people who retain their bodily virginity but violate it in their thoughts by savoring and contemplating impure thoughts. Virginity is often associated with making a vow. This vow can be broken through the decision to marry. In another case, a person may be raped and thus physically no longer be a virgin but remains a virgin in thought and interiorly. Benedict also asked: "Can virginity that has been lost be regained?"²⁷ This question will be answered in another section of

²⁶ "Ad quintam videtur, quod non, quia sic tunc, ubi esset perfectior virginitas, magis deberetur aureole; sed perfectissima virginitas fuit in Christo et in beata Virgine, quia nullam pugnam habuerunt et sustinuerunt in continendo, et per consequens nulla fuit in eis victoria spiritus supra carnem, ergo si eis ratione virginitatis non debetur aureole, in quibus tamen fuit potissima virginitas, videtur, quod nulli alteri ratione virginitatis debeatur, Praeterea maiorem difficultatem in abstinendo a venereis sustinent viduae quam virgines, ergo maiores habent victoriam, si bene vivant; sed eis non debetur aureole, ergo nec virginibus. Assumptum patet ex dicto Hieronimi de viduis dicentis, quod quanto maior est difficultas, experte a quibusdam voluptatibus illecebris abstinere, tanto maius est praemium." E p. 218; B v. 26, p. 164.

²⁷ "Et Aristoteles De animalibus dicit, quod iuvenes virgines corruptae magis appetunt coitum propter rememorativam delectationis, ergo etc. Praeterea tanti meriti est castitas coniugalis, sicut virginitas; sed castitati coniugali non debetur aureole, ergo etc. Assumptum patet per illud Augustini De bono coniugali, c.4 et allegat Magister Sententiarum, 4 distinctione, 33 capitulo: si non est impar meritum patientiae in Petro, qui passus est et in Ioanne, qui non est passus, sic non est impar continentiae meritum in Ioanne, qui non est expertus nuptias et in Abraham, qui filios genuit, Praeterea naturali necessitate non correspondet praemium, sed quidam sunt naturaliter impotentes ad generandum, sicut frigidi et castrati a iuventute; ergo in istis saltem virginitas non meretur aureolem. Praeterea secundum Augustinum, De sancta virginitate et allegatum fuit quaestione praecedenti 'Quodcumque gaudium,' quod virginitas est continentia, qua carnis et animae integritas ipsi Creatori vovetur, consecratur et fundatur; ergo nullam mereretur aureolem, nisi quae cadit sub voto, ut videtur, Praeterea ponamus, quod aliqua virgo nubat seu concubetur ante copulam carnalem, moriatur; quaero, an ista habebit aureolem virginitatis, aut non. Si non, qui contraheret cum tali, non foret bigamus; ergo contraheret cum virgine, quia omnis contrahens matrimonium cum vidua vel corrupta, est bigamus, dist. 33

this article. Master Benedict proceeded to explain what he means by heavenly beatitude and the aureole. Heavenly beatitude consists in seeing God face to face in the joy that the soul experience in its victory. However, this is not the ordinary state of heavenly sanctity. He classically makes the distinction between three kinds of aureoles—those given to virgins, martyrs, and doctors of the Church. There is also an aureole for the soul and another for the body.²⁸

Hesse continued by explaining the difficulties associated with virginity. He stated that the aureole of virginity belongs to the Virgin Mary and Christ, even though they did not have to fight against the flesh because they remained sinless from the beginning until the very end of their lives. Both, however, were tempted and their reason was

'Maritum' et Extra, De bigamiis nuptiarum, 'Si tamen aureolem.' Contra illa non est virgo mente, quia secundum Augustinum, De nuptiis et concupiscentiis, virginitas est in carne corruptibili incorruptionis perpetua meditatio; sed ipsa fuit in proposito solvendi virginitatem, igitur perdidit virginitatem. Praeterea ponamus, quod aliquis voveat virginitatem et postea corrumpatur mente, quia vult omnino ex deliberatione committere actum luxuriae, iste est corruptus mente, ergo non habebit aureolem. Contra: est integer carne et postea paenituit, ergo recuperavit virginitatem, ergo habebit. Praeterea habeat aliquis voluntatem nubendi et sic discedat; quaeritur, numquid habebit aureolem." E p. 218-219, B v. 26, p. 165.

²⁸ "Primo, quod praemium dupliciter dabitur beatis, videlicet essenziale et actuale, Praemium essenziale consistit in fruitione essentiae divinae clare in se. Praemium actuale dicitur, quod non est de Deo clare visio, sed de creatura. Secundo nota, quod praemium actuale dicitur dupliciter, Primo modo dicitur specialiter gaudium de aliquo actu animae importante excellentem victoriam habitam meritorie in praesenti. Alio modo dicitur communiter victoria excellens est in triplici materia gaudium de re creata. Tertio notandum, quod actus excellentis victoriae in praesenti potest esse in materia triplici secundum triplicem pugnam quam habemus, videlicet contra carnem, contra mundum et contra diabolum. Contra carnem excellentissima victoria est virginitas, quae est virtus, nam virtuose respuit omnes venereas delectationes, tam licitas quam illicitas, sicut in praesenti lectione dictum est. Contra mundum, id est contra malos homines mundanos, qui bonos persequuntur est contemnunt, perfectissima victoria est martyrium propter Christum. Contra diabolum, qui falsis suggestionibus nos conatur seducere perfectissima victoria est praedicatio sive doctrina, qua homo semetipsum non solum bene regit, sed etiam corrigit et instruit; Et item tribus generibus hominum: virginibus, martyribus et doctoribus, tres aureoles deputantur propter tres actus privilegiatae victoriae. Quarto notandum, quod beatitudo essentialis vocatur metaphorice corona vel aurea, beatitudo vero vel gaudium actuale debitum operis excellentis victoriae vocatur aureole et hoc pro tanto, quod omne gaudium in beato est minus quam gaudium essenziale de Deo. Et ideo per terminum diminutivum oportuit denotari. Quinto notandum: sicut aureole est in anima, ita etiam aureole in corpus per aliquod signum evidens illi correspondens redundat, quod quale erit, non est mihi notum." E p. 219, B v. 26, p. 165-166.

victorious by maintaining mastery over their flesh.²⁹ Hesse explained the difference between a widow and virgin's situation. A widow must overcome the memory of sensual pleasure, while the virgin does not have such memories. A virgin, on the other hand, is also exposed to attacks of the imagination and is moved by curiosity, which is an even greater difficulty and hardship than those that widows experience.³⁰ It is important to recall that an aureole is bestowed on a person not only because he has merited it, but also because he has achieved victory and mastery over the flesh. This is the reason why St. Catherine was given an aureole, while St. Mary Magdalene was not, even though Mary Magdalene had gained greater merit. Chastity and conjugal abstinence are not equivalent to chastity for the time of grace. Those who enter into marriage are not given an aureole.³¹ People who preserve natural bodily integrity and virginity can either maintain it or destroy it. They should maintain purity of thought. If they are interiorly corrupt then they cannot receive an aureole in heaven.³²

²⁹ "Ad primum in oppositum de Virgine gloriosa tenet sanctus Thomas, quod aureolem habuit, tamen nullam pugnam a carne sensit, sed ab hoste habuit tentationes de carne; de Christo dicit, quod non habet aureolem formaliter sub ratione aureolee, quia terminus iste 'aureole' importat victoriam participatam ab alia, quod Christo non convenit, in quo est plenitudo victoriae. Et similiter importat, quod aureole ab aliquo principe conferatur. Potest aliter dicere, quod ille terminus 'victoria' dicit dominium rationis super carnem et notat resistantiam, quae non fuit in Christo, nec in matre, sed quia fuit plenus dominium rationis, inde habent aureolem ex alia causa debitam tam eis quam nobis." E p. 219-220, B v. 26, p. 166

³⁰ "Ad secundum dicendum, quod si attendas unam occasionem tentationis carnalis, quae est recordatio ex parte voluptatis habitae, constat, quod hoc est in viduis et non in virginibus; et tamen in virginibus imaginatio quaedam ex parte lasciviae ex omnibus istis tribus circumstantiis, quae sunt desiderium experiendi de curiositate, sicut homo magis desiderat videre modicum negotium quod numquam vidit quam unum monasterium. Secundo est aestimatio maioris delectationis, quod sit in rei veritate, Tertio ignorantia incomodorum et turpitudinis concomitantis et ideo simpliciter loquendo tentatio seu pugna virginum est difficilior quam viduarum." E p. 220, B v. 26, p. 166.

³¹ "Ad tertium dicendum, quod non ideo datur aureole, quin est maioris meriti, sed quia est indistinctum singularis victoriae vel domini super carnem. Unde Catherina habet aureolem virginitatis et Magdalena non; et tamen Magdalena est maioris meriti. Tamen castitas coniugalis et castitas pro tempore gratiae non aequiparantur. Sed castitas antiquorum potest aequiparari virginitati Novae Legis et excedere et excedi. Sed non sequitur, quod istae duae personae aequiparentur in merito; ergo si una habeat aureolem, ergo et alia, ut frigidi naturaliter nubere non potentes habent aureolem." E p. 220, B v. 26, p. 167.

³² "Ad quartum dicendum, quod vel tales naturaliter casti conformant suum propositum suae necessitati sic, quod si essent dispositi, nollent violare, et tunc

Following the authority of St. Augustine, Hesse stated that the person who has vowed to abstain from all bodily pleasure and perseveres in this resolution until death merits the aureole of virginity. If this vow is broken, then the person will never receive an aureole. If this vow has been broken only through the interior act of desire for bodily pleasure and the physical act has not taken place, then the aureole can be regained through penance.³³ St. John the Evangelist, who regained the virginity that he had lost when Christ called him to be His disciple at St. John's own wedding, is an example. St. John retained his virginity because he had maintained his bodily integrity and his thoughts had always remained pure.³⁴ This view was held during the Middle Ages by such thinkers as St. Thomas Aquinas³⁵ and during the Renaissance by Anthony of Florence and his contemporary Benedict Hesse, who states that St. John, upon witnessing the miracle of water

habebunt aut non; sed sunt menti corrupti et tunc non habebunt." E p. 220, B v. 26, p. 167.

³³ "Ad quintum de dicto Augustini dicendum, quod aureole virginitatis competit cuicumque habenti propositum abstinendi a venerea voluptate, si illud propositum numquam fuerit effectualiter, id est per effectum operis interruptum pro experientiam appositam usque ad mortem, Si fuerit effectualiter interruptum, numquam habebit. Si vero fuerit voluptas interrupta per propositum contrarium sine effectu, sicut si persona forte consensit ex deliberatione in actum venereum, distinguendum est, vel quia postea paenitet de isto assensu quem nullum opus sequebatur, et tunc adhuc habebit aureolem, quia virginitas, quae est virtus, per paenitentiam restituitur; vel non paenitet circa mortem et tunc numquam habebit, etiam dato, quod salvetur." E p. 220, B v. 26, p. 167.

³⁴ "Ad sextum per idem dicitur, quod si idem propositum carnalis commixtionis abluit per paenitentiam dolens, quia discontinuaverat propositum continendi vel non; si sic, habebit, sed non nequaquam. Et sic Ioannes Evangelista virginitatem recuperavit perditam, quando Christus eum de nuptiis volentem nubere revocavit secundum Hieronymum. Et ultra pro argumento nota, quod corruptio inducens bigamiam est solutio integritatis carnis, non corruptio mentis." E p. 220, B v. 26, p. 167.

³⁵ "On the contrary, No one that consents to carnal intercourse is a virgin in mind and body. Yet Blessed John the evangelist after consenting to marriage was a virgin both in mind and body. Therefore he did not consent to carnal intercourse. Further, the effect corresponds to its cause. Now consent is the cause of marriage. Since then carnal intercourse is not essential to marriage, seemingly neither is the consent which causes marriage a consent to carnal intercourse. T. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, "Of the Object of Consent-Whether the consent that makes a marriage is consent to carnal intercourse?" Q. 48, obj. 1, accessed October 4, 2021, <https://sacred-texts.com/chr/aquinas/summa/sum593.htm>.

turned into wine, did not consummate his marriage, left his wife, and became Christ's disciple.³⁶

In heaven there are many people who preserved their bodily integrity but who did not merit the aureole of virginity. There are others, on the other hand, who lost their bodily integrity because they were raped during attacks by barbarians and who received the aureole of virginity because they were faithful to their resolution to preserve abstinence by the purity of their thoughts. Hesse did not seem to think that children who have not gone through puberty could merit the aureole of virginity.³⁷

Carnal Pleasure in Marriage

Benedict Hesse touched upon the complicated matter of assessing the carnal pleasure of sexual intercourse in marriage. He clearly asks whether it is always a mortal sin when the spouses have sexual intercourse purely to experience pleasure and not to fulfill their duty to conceive children.³⁸ Hesse's response to this question is quite radical. Hesse bases his response on Richard's opinion that, if a husband has sexual intercourse with his wife for any other reason than conceiving offspring, faith, or other purpose of marriage, then it is a mortal sin. In such an act, the man's wife becomes a stranger, and sexual intercourse with a stranger is contrary to the marital honesty that the spouses vowed to each other on their wedding day.³⁹

³⁶ Aquinas, T., *Summa Theologica*, Q. 152, Article 4, accessed October 5, 2021, <https://sacred-texts.com/chr/aquinas/summa/sum409.htm>.

³⁷ "Ad octavum similiter ex dictis patet, quod multae virgines secundum carnem carebunt in caelo aureolem virginitatis, sicut illae quae moriuntur cum proposito nubendi. Multae etiam corruptae secundum carnem, manente tamen proposito continendi, sicut fuit de oppressis a barbaris, habebunt aureolem. De pueris autem infra aetatem utriusque sexus, non video, quare aureolem habere debent, in quibus nec fuit virginitas, quae est virtus, nec victoria aliqua super carnem." E p. 220, B v. 26, p. 167.

³⁸ "Sed de concubitu eorum quaero, utrum concubitus coniugum non causa reddendi debitum nec prolis procreandi semper sit mortale peccatum?" C p. 406, B v. 16, p. 75.

³⁹ "Richardus super 4 Sententiarum, distinctione XXXI, articulo ultimo dicit, quod intentio concubentis cum uxore propria non propter bonum prolis aut fidei aut exit finem matrimonii ita, quod hoc vellet facere etiamsi non esset sua uxor, et tunc semper est mortale peccatum ille actus; aut si sit in actu et habitu intra fines matrimonii sic, quod non vellet concubere cum ea, si non esset propria eius uxor et talis concubitus non est mortale peccatum, quia excusatur propter matrimonii honestatem." C p. 406, B v. 16, p. 75-76.

If bodily pleasure is contrary to the purpose of marriage, and if a husband wants to have sexual intercourse with his wife as if she were a stranger, then they commit mortal sin because such pleasure does not arise within the bounds and purposes of marriage. If, however, the couple has sexual intercourse to experience bodily pleasure along with the intention to fulfill their marital obligations, and if they remain open to conceiving a child, then they commit a venial sin, since—after the original sin of Adam and Eve—marriage was instituted not only as a duty to bear children (*officium naturae*), but also as a remedy for concupiscence and the maladies of delight and fornication.⁴⁰ Today such a radical and negative view of sexual intercourse is unthinkable.

According to Hesse, marrying only for pleasure and not to conceive offspring can be evaluated differently, depending on the situation. The inability to conceive offspring may not be the spouses' fault and may be due, for example, to impotence because of advanced age, sickness, or mental handicap. Even though such individuals have carnal desires, they cannot conceive and bear offspring. Benedict stated that many people have animalistic habits arising from disordered and uncontrolled carnal desires. In acting on these desires, they abuse their wives and alter the natural order of human reproduction. Such sexual relations are sinful, but they do not invalidate the institution of marriage. There are also people who love sin and the pleasures of the flesh. They seek to avoid conception by all means, including by withdrawal (*coitus interruptus*). Other people decide to remain infertile or even kill the conceived child. Referring to Augustine, Hesse stated that such relations are not only sinful but also should not be considered conjugal. Such behavior is essentially an obstacle to contracting a

⁴⁰ "Ad secundam est dicendum, quod aliud est quaerere, utrum delectatio libidinosa faciat virum et uxorem peccare mortaliter, et aliud est quaerere, utrum talis delectatio, quam intendunt absque filiorum generandorum intentione faciat inter eos non esse matrimonium. Quia si quaeritur, an talis delectatio libidinosa faciat virum et uxorem peccare mortaliter, dicendum est, quod si talis delectatio tollat ordinem finis ultimi, ita quod talis etiam propter Dei praeceptum non dimitteret, quin vellet sic delectari cum uxore sua vel cum alia, dato, quod uxor sua non esset, peccatum mortale esset, quia hoc modo delectatio ista non stat infra terminos et limites matrimonii. Si autem talis delectatio stat infra terminos et limites matrimonii, ita quod nec cum illa nec cum ista vellet sic delectari, si uxor non esset, tunc dato, quod filiorum generationem non intendat, in actu illo venialiter peccat, sed non mortaliter, quia post peccatum primorum parentum matrimonium non solum fuit in officio naturae propter generationem prolis, verum etiam fuit in remedium causa delectationis et vitandae fornicationis." C p. 43, B v. 8, p. 109. See also: T. Rowiński, "Małżeństwo – lekarstwem na pożądliwość," *Christnianitas* 73 (2018): 39-44.

valid marriage.⁴¹ Today, when secular society considers such perverse behavior acceptable, Hesse's radical position would be deemed unacceptable. On Her part, the Church does reject a purely hedonistic understanding of the purpose of marriage and appreciates the value of sexual intercourse and integral conjugal love.⁴²

Modest Dress in Marriage

The problem of conjugal abstinence is also related to the external appearance, especially manner of dress, and how a person presents himself to other people. In the Middle Ages, the Church recalled that spouses should dress modestly. In this regard, Hesse referred to Gregory, Jerome, and Augustine. Adorning oneself is not a sin in itself, and a person can gain the favor of others in this way. However, care must be taken not to overdo it and not to be consumed by vanity. Wearing solemn garments and adorning oneself are permitted both for spouses and for single persons, but they are not obliged to do so. A husband tries to please his wife, while the single person should strive to please God. Primping and preening as well as sloppiness should be

⁴¹ “Sed si quaeratur, an delectatio libidinosa, quam intendunt vir et uxor absque filiorum generandorum intentione, faciat inter eos esse matrimonium, dicendum est, quod si vir et uxor filiorum generationem non intendunt, sed solum delectationem, vel hoc contingit propter impotentiam, quia forte senes sunt, debiles vel infirmi, ardorem tamen libidinis habent, sed minime possunt generare et hoc contingit propter inordinatam concupiscentiam. Quia multi canino more retro coeuntes et mutato ordine humana propagationis eorum uxoribus abutuntur, ut dicit Augustinus et Gratianus 27, q.1, ex quo sequitur impedimentum prolis generandae, quamvis hoc non intendat. Vel hoc contingit propter affectatam malitiam amborum aut unius ipsorum, quia forte vir semen effundit in terram vel alibi quam loco proprio generationi deputato, sicut fecit filius Iudae, de quo dictum est supra, vel forte ambo, ut eis filii non nascantur, in hac malitia conveniunt. Vel hoc contingit propter promissam nequitiam, quia forte promiserunt venena sterilitatis procurare et prolem conceptam destruere. Primis duobus dictis non intendere generationem prolis non tollit matrimonium quamvis peccatum committatur, quia sicut Augustinus ait et ponitur 32, q.2, sicut habere concubinam causa prolis generandae non facit concubitum esse fornicarium, sed aliis duobus modis coniuges, qui vitant vel nolunt sibi nasci filios vel alio malo opere agunt ne nascantur. Non invenio, dicit Augustinus et ponitur 2, q. supra dicta, quomodo has nuptias appellare possumus, quia iura matrimonii nedum tales servant, sed etiam impediunt.” C p. 43-44, B v. 8, p. 110. For more on the Church's teaching on the impediments to marriage, see Z. Maj, “Przeszkody małżeńskie w świetle Kodeksu Prawa Kanonicznego oraz Kodeksu Rodzinnego i Opiekuńczego,” *Ius Matrimoniale* 28, no. 3 (2017): 35-60.

⁴² K. Knotz, *Akt małżeński* (Kraków: 2001).

avoided. The virgin should be cleanly but modestly dressed.⁴³ It is not easy to maintain marital purity and modesty. In this regard Benedict Hesse referred to Jerome's writings. In marriage, individuals are called to be concerned about many temporal goods and to the pleasures of marriage. It is understandable that a wife would seek to please her husband. A virgin, on the other hand, belongs to God and strives to maintain chastity (1 Cor 7:34). It is difficult for married women to maintain purity and abstinence because they have become accustomed to beautifying their bodies and returning to youthful pleasures.⁴⁴

Usually women dress up to a greater degree and more frequently than men. Benedict Hesse wrote about women adorning themselves and what they wear. Hesse's judgment on the matter is based on several distinctions. If the woman is single or unmarried, then she should not beautify herself or she would be committing mortal sin. If, however, a

⁴³ "Item volens tenere castitatem debet vitare vestem superfluas suspectam lecti mollitiae. Unde Gregorius in Homilia de divite epulone: 'Sunt nonnulli, qui cultum subtilium pretiosarumque vestium non putant esse peccatum, quod si culpa non esset, nequaquam sermo Dei id tam vigilanter exprimeret; quod dives, qui torquebatur in inferno bysso et purpura indutus fuisset.' Et de ornatu mulierum singulariter dicit beatus Hieronymus: 'Si vir vel mulier se ornaverit et vultus hominus ad se provocaverit, etsi nullum inde sequatur damnum, iudicium tamen patietur aeternum, quia venenum attulit, si fuisset qui biberet.' Quae verba mitius sunt intelligenda nubentibus et nubere volentibus, quam non nuptii et castitatem servare volentibus, quia ornatus coniugatis permittitur secundum indulgentiam quamvis non secundum imperium. Unde Augustinus in epistola ad Possidium sic inquit: 'Nolo, ut de ornamentis viri vel mulieris perperem habeas in prohibendo sententiam nisi eis, qui neque coniugati neque coniugari cupientes cogitare debent, quomodo placeant Deo'. Sed nonne expedit ex quo tales inter homines debent vivere et volunt honeste vestitos esse? Unde audi Hieronymum ad Nepotianum: 'Vestes foedas seque devita, ut candidae, quia ornatus et sordes pari modo fugiendae sunt, quia unum delicias, alterum humanam gloriam redolet.' Debet ergo tenera virgo medium in vestitu." C p. 405, B v. 16, p. 73.

⁴⁴ "Item idem dicit: 'Parcus, cibus et venter semper esuriens triduanis praefertur ieiuniis et multo melius est cottidie parum quam raro satis sumere. Cogita te cottidie morituram et nunquam de secundis nuptiis cogitabis.' De puritate coniugatorum et munditia eorundem advertendum, quod tanto difficilior est eos esse mundos, quanto pluribus curis saecularibus et voluptatibus coniugio adhaerentibus sunt deputati, 'quae enim nupta est, cogitat quae sunt mundi et quomodo viro placeat, Virgo autem, quae sunt Dei, ut sit sancta in spiritu,' 1 Cor. VII. Et heu, coniugati raro ita mundi sunt, ut deberent, consueverunt enim se fucare et delectationes iuvenum suscitare. Unde Hieronymus in quadam epistola: 'Quid facit in facie, o Christiane, purissimus et cerussa, quorum alterum ruborem genarum laborumque Vincitur, alterum candorem colli, ornatus iste non Dei est, sed velamen antichristi qua fiducia vultum ad caelum erigit, quam creator non agnoscit.'" C p. 406, B v. 16, p. 75.

woman is married and fulfills all her marital duties, then she should follow the local customs in dress so as not to expose herself to derision. In this case, she does not sin because she strives to please her husband (1 Cor 7:34).⁴⁵ Hesse's judgment of the desire to dress up, especially among women, is rather strict and outdated. It is important to note, however, it was not that long ago that the Holy See published instruction regarding modest Christian dress.⁴⁶

The second distinction that Hesse made is the purpose of dressing up. If a woman dresses up in order to incline a man to debauchery or lust, then she clearly commits a mortal sin (Prov 7:10). Master Benedict quoted Chrysostom in this instance. If a woman adorns herself in order to attract a man's gaze, then she sins because she has prepared a poison, even if the man does not drink it. If, however, a woman dresses up only out of vanity or recklessness and without perverse intentions, then she does not commit a grave sin. Sometimes dressing up is even necessary. In the case that a woman loses her hair or is disfigured by disease, then she should hide her ugliness by adorning her head accordingly so as not to disrespect men. Her actions are dictated by respect and not by licentiousness or luxury. Everything mentioned above also applies to men.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ "Ad tertium est dicendum, quod de ornatu mulieris multiplex distinctio est necessaria. Prima ex parte status, si enim aliquae sunt, quae nec viros habent, nec sunt in statu in quo habere possint, absque gravi peccato se ornare non possunt, ut virorum aspectibus placeant. Sed si sunt in statu coniugali, vel quod viros habere intendunt, dare operam, ut non habeantur in contemptu in statu, in quo sunt considerata consuetudine statu primo et moribus patriae non aliud versetur, in intentione videtur posse fieri sine peccato, quia Apostolus dicit: 'Mulier nupta cogitat, qualiter placeat viro.'" C p. 460, B v. 16, p. 171.

⁴⁶ See D. Olewinski, "Czy ubiór może być grzeszny?," *Teolog Katolicki Odpowiada*, 17 marca 2021, accessed April 7, 2021, <https://teologkatolicki.blogspot.com/2019/02/czy-nieskromny-ubior-jest-grzeszny.html>; Pius XI, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, Vol 22 (Rome: Typis Polyglot Vaticanis, 1980), <http://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS-22-1930-ocr.pdf>.

⁴⁷ "Secunda est necessaria ex parte finis, quia si tale ornamentum fiet, ut homines trahantur ad luxuriam et ut concupiscentur modo, quo dicitur Prov. VII: 'Occurrit iuveni mulier ornatu meretricio, parata ad decipiendas animas,' sine peccato mortali esse non potest, dato etiam, quod nullum decipiant. Unde dicit Chrysostomus: 'Si aliquae mulieres ornando se oculos hominum attraxerit ad se, etiamsi visu plagas non intulerint, poenam patientur extremam, quia venenum confecerunt, etiamsi nullus fuerit, qui biberit.' Sed si ex aliqua levitate vel vanitate, non habendo illam pravam intentionem superius dictam, grave esset dictum, quod superesset peccatum mortale, hoc idem puto esse dicendum de capillis extraneis et fictis coloribus, quia cum turpe sit mulierem sine capillis esse, si ex aliqua infirmitate vel accidenti his careat et ut talem turpitudinem occultet et a viris earum non despiciantur, puto quod mortaliter non peccarent

Castration and Abstinence

Benedict Hesse also raised the question of castration, which he believed is connected to conjugal abstinence. While he brought up this issue in his commentary on Matthew 5:27-30, he focused on it primarily in his commentary on Matthew 19:10-12. In this passage, Jesus speaks about eunuchs who are unfit to marry for various reasons. Some people are eunuchs from birth and others have made themselves eunuchs while having carnal desires within their hearts. Such individuals are not worthy of praise. In this regard, Hesse quoted Jerome, who stated that monks who simulate purity but who are hypocrites because they fantasize about impure pleasures belong to this infamous group. There are also those who choose to be chaste for the Kingdom of Heaven, and they are, indeed, such.⁴⁸ They were victorious concerning what is good because they had righteous and honest intentions. It is commendable to abstain from lust by an act of the will.⁴⁹ Christ did not say that a person should castrate himself, but rather that he should abstain from all evil and impure thoughts. Cutting off one's members does not prevent temptations or provide peace by protecting against

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se ornando, ex quo non propter lasciviam et luxuriam hoc faciunt, et in omnibus, ut dictum est de mulieribus, intelligendum est et de viris." C p. 460, B v. 16, p. 171-172.

⁴⁸ "Sunt enim eunuchi, id est continentes, Et est graecum vocabulum secundum Isidorum: qui sic nati sunt sine instrumentis sive frigidae naturae, qui proprie dicuntur castrati, quasi caste nati, 'Et sunt eunuchi, qui facti sunt ab hominibus,' quibus secantur genitalia, qui proprie dicuntur spadones a spata genere ferri, quo eunuchisantur. Unde Eccl. 2: 'Concupiscentia spadonis devirginat iuvenulam,' Et istae duae non sunt laudabiles et nec meritorie nec demeritorie, quia necessitate fuerint, non voluntate, nec in quantum per voluntatem acceptantur. Secundum Hieronymum inter hoc computantur et hi, qui specie religionis simulant castitatem, scilicet hypocritae et appetentes vanam gloriam ab omnibus ex quocumque suo opere. 'Et sunt eunuchi,' id est continentes, 'qui seipsos castraverunt propter regnum caelorum,' qui proprie dicuntur eunuchi, id est bene viventes, ab 'eu,' quod est bonum, et 'nuchos,' quod est victoria, quasi boni victores." E p. 213, B v. 26, p. 158.

⁴⁹ "Et hi merentur et ratione voluntatis, quia spontanea, et ratione actionis, quia bona, et ratione intentionis, quia recta. Ista enim tria perficiunt meritum. Isaias, 56: 'Haec dicit Dominus Deus: eunuchis, qui custodierunt sabbata mea, etc, dabo eis in domo mea et in muris meis locum et nomen melius a filiis et filiabus.' Ex hac auctoritate videtur, quod aureole sit quaedam fama vel quidam honor amplius aliis. Haec ergo tertia continentia, quae est per voluntatem reprimentem concupiscentiam ab actu venereo victoriosa dicitur et laudabilis et sola est meritoria. Unde Chrysostomus: 'Illa est gloriosa continentia non quam transgredi non potest necessitas debilitati corporis, sed quam complectitur voluntas sancti propositi.'" E p. 213, B v. 26, p. 158-159.

concupiscence. God values the state of chastity more; however, since not everyone can attain it, the Savior encouraged His disciples (warriors): “Whoever can accept this ought to accept it.” Whoever can fight against the flesh must fight until he is victorious and triumphs. Hesse thought that Jesus was encouraging (but not commanding) His followers to practice heroic abstinence here. In this way, chastity is not a commandment but a counsel given to every person; although, not everyone understands and accepts it.⁵⁰ Virginitas is voluntary and is not necessary for salvation. He who can be abstinent should be.⁵¹

Throughout history castrated men have played an important role in society, serving in the courts of rulers, in the Christian world, and even in the Vatican.⁵² Most of these men, however, did not harm themselves voluntarily. Often they were harmed due to violence, slavery, or servitude. In the course of history, some boys were castrated at a young age so that they would be unable to marry and, therefore, useful as eunuchs. Today such practices are forbidden in the civilized world.

Benedict Hesse thought that castrating oneself for the Kingdom of Heaven, meaning for religious reasons, was wicked. While it is true that a man without male his member cannot rape a woman and, thereby, can save his life or avoid the threat of death,⁵³ God gave man a body,

⁵⁰ It is generally believed that Origen took Christ’s counsel too literally and castrated himself. However, he was not opposed to the institution of the sacrament of marriage. M. Szram, “Autokastracja Orygeneses – fakt czy nieporozumienie?” *Vox Patrum* 23, nos. 44-45 (2003): 171-202.

⁵¹ “Et iterum, cum dicit: ‘Qui se castraverunt,’ non membrorum dicit abscisionem, sed malarum cogitationum interemptionem. Etenim concupiscentia habet fontes praecipue a proposito incontinente et mente negligente. Et si ipsa sobria fuerit naturalium motuum, nullum est nocumentum. Nec ita abscisio membri comprimit tentationes et tranquillitates facit ut cogitationes frenum. Sed quia status talis altus est, nec possunt omnes ad hoc attingere, sed solum perfecti, ideo infert Dominus hortando milites suos, dicens: ‘Qui potest capere, capiat’ cum adiutorio Dei, ut sit castus, vel ut intelligat quae dico, vel qui potest pugnare, contra carnem pugnet ac superet et triumphet, Et est vox hortantis ad continentiae bravium, non iubentis. Quasi diceret: unusquisque consideret, an virginitatis et pudicitiae praecepta implere queat, tantum bonum non est necessitatis, sed supererogationis, nec est hoc praeceptum, sed consilium, cui libet offertur, sed nemini imponitur. Qui potest continere, contineat.” E p. 213, B v. 26, p. 159.

⁵² O. de Marliave, *Historia eunuchów* (Warszawa: 2012).

⁵³ “Ad primam est dicendum, quod secundum Augustinum, 1 De civitate Dei, absque speciali consilio Spiritus Sancti non licet alicui facere. Unde sequatur mors sua vel alterius. Unde deberet virgo suum corruptorem interficere, quantumcumque dubitaret de sui consensus complacentia in ipsa experientia operis fornicarii; quia igitur abscisio membrorum virilium absque periculo mortis fieri non potest, ideo tamquam homicida habendus est et maledictione homicidii

and every one of its members is good and necessary. Christ's command, however, refers only to overcoming evil and lustful thoughts.⁵⁴ Hesse referred to St. John Chrysostom, who argued that a man becomes worse through castration because his sperm (*sperma*) have no outlet. The members of the body become impure only through concupiscent movements of the will.⁵⁵

A person can become a castrate in four ways: firstly, through violence perpetrated by others (e.g., by barbarians or by masters of slaves); secondly, through illness or bodily weakness; thirdly, through a birth defect; and fourthly, through harming oneself after taking the advice of idiotic people who believe that a lack of testicles protects a man from

obnoxius, qui membra sua abscidit, ut dicit Chrysostomus super hunc locum. Et dico absque consilio speciali Spiritus Sancti, quia secundum Augustinum aliter non excusaretur ab homicidio Samson et Jephthe, qui filiam immolavit, nisi quia singulari consilio Spiritus Sancti fecerunt, et quaecumque aliae personae hoc fecerunt, sicut dicit Augustinus, quod Romae quaedam virgines videntes eorum corruptores, seipsas in flumen rapidissimum iactaverunt sed quaedam domina Lucretia nomine, cum esset violenter oppressa in tantum fornicationis actum est detestata et de fractione fidei matrimonialis copulae conturbata, quod statim negotio iudicata viro et cuidam nepoti potentibus in actu bellico, ut vindictam facerent, seipsam interfecit. Aliter tales et consimiles excusari non debent ab homicidii crimine, nisi si forte revelatione Spiritus Sancti talia fecerunt." E p. 214, B v. 26.

⁵⁴ "Cum igitur Salvator dicit, quod aliqui se castraverunt propter regnum caelorum, intelligendum est secundum Chrysostomum talem castrationem fiendam esse non per membrorum virili un abscisionem, quia sexus, cum sit natura a Deo facta, bonus est. Sed intelligitur propter malarum cogitationum et malarum concupiscentiarum interfectionem, si enim voluntas nostra est sobria et pudica, motus naturalium membrorum nullum est peccatum." E p. 214, B v. 26.

⁵⁵ "Ad sextam est dicendum, quod hanc dubitationem determinat Chrysostomus super illo verbo Mt. XIX: "Sunt eunuchi, qui seipsos castraverunt propter regnum caelorum" dicens: 'Non est intelligendum propter abscisionem membrorum, sed propter interemptionem et interfectionem malarum cogitationum eunuchos regnum caelorum esse consecutos, quia maledictioni est obnoxius, qui membrum sibi abscidit et qui homicida talis esse praesumit,' nam si dictum est: 'Non occides hominem, procul dubio qui seipsum, nihil aliud quam hominem occidit. Et subdit, quod neque concupiscentia fit melior aut mansuetior per abscisionem membri, quia molestior, quia sperma, quod in nobis est, aliunde habet fontes. Mens ergo nostra sit sobria, quod si ipsa voluntas sit continens macularium muabilem motuum, nullum est nocumentum, non enim membra nostra sunt impudica, nisi propter impudicam voluntatem. Unde si adducerentur ante iudicem et diceret iudex membrum nostris: 'Quare talia fecistis?', responderent: 'Propter voluntatem, quam nobis consituisti dominam et principem, ut in omnibus sibi oboedirerimus,' et sic essent excusata." C p. 462, B v.16, p. 172-173.

lust.⁵⁶ The first three causes of castration are not an issue; the fourth, however, is an irregular situation because it arises from a diabolical temptation. In this situation, lust does not decrease but increases. A man who cuts off a part of his manhood is unable to fulfill the essential obligations of marriage nor can he be admitted to the priesthood.⁵⁷

Benedict Hesse mentioned Origen, who likely underwent castration not to maintain abstinence but to avoid suspicion and disgrace. As a castrated man, he could teach both women and men secretly during the persecution of the Church.⁵⁸ According to Hesse, castration is forbidden and is sinful in every instance, since the person who permits it becomes God's enemy and commits a particular type of murder.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ "Ad secundam dicendum, quod sicut sub dicto capitulo eunuchus quattuor modis potest aliquos castrari. Primo per violentiam et coactionem: sic illi, qui castrantur a suis dominis vel a barbaris, quando capiuntur ab eis. Secundo per infirmitatem et corporis languorem. Tertio per naturam et suam generationem: sic enim homo, quando nascitur sine digittis et cum diminutione aliorum membrorum. Ita dicente Salvatore 'aliqui sunt eunuchi, qui de utero matris sic nati sunt.' Quarto per propriam operationem, credens enim aliquis stultus carere concupiscentiam carnali abscisis membris virilibus." E p. 214, B v. 26, p. 160.

⁵⁷ "Sed secundum Chrysostomum, qui dicit super hunc locum: 'Abscidere membra genitalia causa continentiae diabolicae tentationis est, quia per hoc non fit concupiscentia mansuetior, sed molestior et ardentior; aliunde enim, ut ait, sperma et semen habet suos fontes in nobis. Primis ergo tribus modis non incurritur irregularitas, sed quarto modo solum, ut dicit distinctio supradicta, si quis seipsum abscidit et virilia sibi amputat, non fiat clericus, qui sui est homicida et Dei conditionis inimicus, et hoc intelligitur, quod non fiat sine dispensatione.'" E p. 214, B v. 26, p. 160.

⁵⁸ "Item Origenes legitur hoc fecisse de seipso non propter continentiam, sed propter vitandam infamiam et malam suspensionem, ut posset libere in occulto predicare tam mulieribus quam viris, sicut dicitur sexto libro Ecclesiasticae historiae tempore persecutionis ecclesiae." E p. 215, B v. 26, p. 160.

⁵⁹ "Sed ad oppositum, quod nullo modo sit faciendum, habetur in canone, dist. LV: 'Si quis absciderit sibi virilia, non fiat clericus, quia sui est homicida et Dei conditionis est inimicus.' Si quis tamen clericus fuerit et absciderit semetipsum, omnino damnetur, quia sui homicida est, hoc est fecit tale quid. Ad primum: illa auctoritas non intelligitur de membrorum abscisione, sed nomine membrorum corporis vocantur amici necessarii, qui quantumcumque sint familiares speciales vel necessarii et alliciant ad peccandum, proiciendi sunt a familiaritate nostra. Ad secundum: neganda est consequentia, quia salus mentis non posset praeter talium abscisionem praeparari; immo maius meritum praestat, si per rationem eorum passiones virtuosae domentur. Ad tertium de Origene: mirae devotionis actus fuit, nec fuit propter hoc impeditus, ne esset sacerdos ordinatus, sicut nominat Glossa distinctionis LV 'Si quis absciderit.' Sed factum suum non est trahendum in consequentiam, tales enim decipiuntur et retorquent in facto suo necessitatem peccandi in Deum, naturae suae conditorem." E p. 215, B v. 26, p. 160-161.

A person can neither act against the members of his body, which are called his friends, nor does such conduct serve the salvation of man.

Conclusion

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The issues concerning chastity and conjugal abstinence that Hesse raises can appear silly to the modern reader, since they seem almost anecdotal and basic. Hesse's writings are not a complete and exhaustive lecture on conjugal abstinence; they are casuistic and legal. This is particularly evident when one compares Hesse's writings to extensive contemporary studies on this issue. Nevertheless, studies must take into account the cultural and historical context of chastity and conjugal abstinence. Based on Hesse's writings, he did not want to delve more deeply into a subject matter that had already been discussed thoroughly in the preaching and casuistry of the Middle Ages.⁶⁰ During this era, love was understood in a way that was often contrary to marriage and Christianity. The troubadours propagated the romantic idea of love, a prime example of which is the medieval poem "Roman de la Rose."⁶¹ The knightly ethos was characterized by free courtly love.⁶² Undoubtedly, at that time it was difficult to write positively and theologically by bringing together love, chastity, abstinence, and marriage. It was not until the twentieth century that a decisive breakthrough occurred in this field.

Abbreviations for citations from Benedict Hesse's Lectura cum dubitationibus super Evangelium sancti Matthaei [Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew]:

- C – Hesse de Cracovia, Benedicti. *Lectura cum dubitationibus super Evangelium sancti Matthaei, pars I cum textu, capitula I – VIII*, Biblioteka Jagiellońska BJ 1365.
- D – Hesse de Cracovia, Benedicti. *Lectura cum dubitationibus super Evangelium sancti Matthaei, pars II cum textu, capitula IX – XVI*, Biblioteka Jagiellońska BJ 1364.

⁶⁰ G. Duby, *Rycerz, kobieta i ksiądz. Matężństwo w feudalnej Francji* (Warszawa: 1986); J. Delumeau, *Grzech i strach, Poczucie winy w kulturze Zachodu XIII-XVIII w.* (Warszawa: 1994), 303-316.

⁶¹ G. Mathon, *Le mariage des chrétiens, t. 1: Des origine au concile de Trente* (Paris: 1993), 278-298.

⁶² D. Piwowarczyk, *Obyczajrycerski w Polsce późnośredniowiecznej (XIV-XV wiek)* (Warszawa: 1998), 184-226.

- E – Hesse de Cracovia, Benedicti. *Lectura cum dubitationibus super Evangelium sancti Matthaei, pars III cum textu, capitula XVII – XXV*, Biblioteka Jagiellońska BJ 1366.
- F – Hesse de Cracovia, Benedicti. *Lectura cum dubitationibus super Evangelium sancti Matthaei, pars IV cum textu, capitula XXVI – XXVIII*, Biblioteka Jagiellońska BJ 1368.
The letter “p.” indicates “pagina,” or page number.
- B – The source edition of W. Bucichowski’s commentary on Hesse’s work is: Benedicti Hesse, *Lectura cum dubitationibus super Evangelium sancti Matthaei*. Edited by W. Bucichowski. Warszawa: 1979.
Note: The letter “v.” indicates the volume number in the series *Textus et studia*, while the letter “p.” indicates the page number.

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Charismatic Phenomena and Spiritual Discernment

Within the Church, the living presence of the Holy Spirit fosters dynamism in the spiritual lives of believers who are entrusted with the task to remain faithful to the Gospel message as they carry out their mission in the world. The Holy Spirit awakens in those who believe enthusiasm in professing the faith as well as the courage to follow Christ, strengthens charity and leads the faithful toward greater unity within the community of the Church. In the Holy Spirit's power, individual believers enjoy the charismatic privilege of His influence, which is manifested in their experience of His extraordinary gifts. The ability to discern these gifts is contingent on the ability to conceptualize them. This article, which discusses charismatic phenomena and spiritual discernment, presents how one can understand and interpret both in the spirit of the Catholic Church's doctrine.

Key words: Holy Spirit, charisms, charismatic movement, spiritual discernment, gifts, culture of the soul.

Two years before the celebration of the Jubilee Year 2000, on May 27, 1998 and during the World Congress of Ecclesial Movements in Rome, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger said that the history of the Church is none other than warp and weft that illustrates the Church's changing and unchanging structure. He stated that the Church's supernatural dimension is unchanging and that it is because of this dimension that the Church has Her own identity. The Bible, the sacraments, and the dogmatic nature of faith determine its dynamics. The changing structure points to the Holy Spirit's inspiration, which ensures dynamic

change in the natural dimension and provides color and newness.¹ Like a stormy sea, the Church forms its image through the experience of its vitality and activity. Cardinal Ratzinger distinguishes five waves that have created a movement within the Church. The first wave is the monastic missionary movement, which brought the Catholic faith to Europe. The second wave is the medieval monastic reform that took place at Cluny and contributed to monastic communities' liberation from feudal dependence. The third movement took place in the thirteenth century through the activity of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Dominic Guzman, and the communities that they founded. The fourth wave occurred with the Jesuits who, along with the Dominicans and Franciscans, evangelized Asia and Africa while the Americas were being discovered. The fifth wave took place during the nineteenth century as many new female congregations that ran hospitals, care homes, and orphanages and cared for the poor and suffering were founded. The Living Rosary founded by Pauline Marie Jaricot is included in this wave.²

In the contemporary Church, a certain phenomenon has been taking place with the founding of movements, communities, and associations. At the end of World War II, movements such as Focolare in Italy, the Flame of Love (among others) in France, the Neocatechumenal Way and Cursillo in Spain,³ Light and Life in Poland, and the Charismatic Movement in the United States⁴ were founded. This article discusses the latter. Two distinct movements have arisen in the Church. The first is called the Pentecostal Movement. This movement began during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the United States within the Protestant community, specifically Methodism, in the Holiness Movement.⁵ The second pentecostal movement is known as the Charismatic Renewal or Charismatic Movement within the Catholic

¹ See J. Ratzinger, "Ruchy kościelne i ich teologiczne miejsce," *Communio* 19, no. 6 (1999): 89-91. This is a conference given by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger during the World Congress of Ecclesial Movements in Rome on May 27, 1998 in anticipation of the celebration of the Jubilee Year 2000.

² See A. Siemieniowski, M. Kiwka, *Na fundamencie apostołów i proroków* (Wrocław: 2018), 83-88; G. Bachanek, "Ruchy kościelne w perspektywie teologicznej Josepha Ratzingera," *Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne* 1 (2010): 282.

³ See A. Scherk, *Potężny strumień łaski* (Cieszyn: 2019), 24.

⁴ See B. Dembowski, "Stolica Apostolska wobec Odnowy w Duchu Świętym i innych nowych ruchów kościelnych," in *Ad imaginem Tuam t. II*, ed. W. Irek (Wrocław: 2012), 7.

⁵ See S. Płusa, "Pentakostalizm czy odnowa charyzmatyczna Kościoła?" in *Kwestie dyskutowane w teologii dzisiaj*, ed. M. Jagodziński (Radom: 2017), 274.

Church. The purpose for this movement can be found in the prayer that Pope John XXIII recited on the vigil of the opening of the Second Vatican Council: “Renew in our days your miracles as of a second Pentecost; and grant that Holy Church, reunited in our prayer, more fervent than before, around Mary the Mother of Jesus, and under the leadership of Peter, may extend the kingdom of the divine Savior, a kingdom of truth, justice, love and peace. Amen.”⁶ This council marked the beginning of many changes that took place within the Church thanks to the work of numerous theologians and pastors.⁷ The conciliar work also pertained to charisms within the Church. The Constitution *Lumen Gentium* states that charisms are useful and appropriate and should be received with gratitude.⁸ This seems all the more valuable because the topic of charisms has been included in the context of the Church’s constitution,⁹ as if to suggest that they have moved from hagiography to ecclesiology.¹⁰

The History of the Charismatic Movement in the Catholic Church

Some believe that the Second Vatican Council’s prerogatives were fundamental to the initiation of the Charismatic Movement, even though it did not exist as such and there was no sociological basis for it when the council took place. Others think that these very facts are a sign that the movement itself began because of the Holy Spirit’s assistance.¹¹

The Charismatic Movement began in the United States in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania in 1965¹² or 1967.¹³ At that time, a group of Catholic students and professors at the Catholic University of Duquesne participated in pentecostal prayer meetings where they experienced a

⁶ John XXIII, *Humanae Salutis* (Citta del Vaticano: Libreria Vaticana), sec. 23.

⁷ See E. Garin, “Odnowa charyzmatyczna i nowe wspólnoty: rzeczywistość profetyczna,” in *Duch Odnawiciel*, ed. L. Balter (Poznań: 1998), 283.

⁸ Sec. 12.

⁹ See E. Garin, “Odnowa charyzmatyczna,” 283.

¹⁰ See R. Cantalamessa, *Pieśń Ducha Świętego. Rozważania na temat Veni Creator* (Warszawa: 2003), 229.

¹¹ See B. Dembowski, “Stolica Apostolska wobec Odnowy w Duchu Świętym i innych nowych ruchów kościelnych,” in *Ad imaginem Tuam t. II*, ed. W. Irka (Wrocław: 2012), 9.

¹² See S. Falvo, *Przebudzenie charyzmatów* (Łódź: 2015), 58.

¹³ See B. Dembowski, “Stolica Apostolska ...,” 9.

great revival of faith. Their experience, however, did not lead them to conclude that they should leave the Roman Catholic Church. The movement grew. Every year conventions were organized, which increasingly more people attended. For example, in 1968, more than 100 people participated. By 1971, 4,500 participants attended; in 1973, 22,000 participants came; and in 1974—25,000 people participated. The participants came from different countries.¹⁴ The International Communications Office (ICO) for the movement, which published formational material, was established at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana. Representatives of the Catholic Church's hierarchy generally reacted positively as the Renewal Movement spread and developed dynamically in many countries.¹⁵

Cardinal Leon-Joseph Suenes played an important role in the development of the Charismatic Movement. Through his initiative, the Second Vatican Council discussed the question of charisms. He was also responsible for drafting Section 12 of *Lumen Gentium* and Section 3 of *Apostolicam Actuositatem*.¹⁶ In February 1973, Cardinal Suenes met with Pope Paul VI and informed him in detail about the Renewal Movement. In October of the same year, Pope Paul VI met with 120 movement leaders from 34 countries. The International Conference of Catholic Charismatic Renewal convened the following year, which signaled the pope's approbation of the movement.¹⁷ Cardinal Suenens oversaw the theological side of the movement, publishing six documents from Malines, Belgium. In 1974, the first document was published, the theological consultants of which were, among others: Yves Congar, Rene Laurentin, and Joseph Ratzinger. Cardinal Suenens also traveled throughout the world and spoke about the phenomenon of the Charismatic Renewal Movement to the church hierarchs of different geographical regions.¹⁸

The development of charismatic congregations also swept throughout Europe. These communities arose, however, on the margins of parish life.¹⁹ In Poland, Fr. Marian Piątkowski, Fr. Marian Bronisław Dembowski, Fr. Adam Schulz, Fr. Józef Kozłowski, and Fr. Andrzej Grefkowicz, among others, began Renewal in the Holy Spirit in 1975.

¹⁴ See A. Scherk, *Potężny strumień łaski* (Cieszyn: 2019), 38-42.

¹⁵ See B. Dembowski, "Stolica Apostolska ...," 10.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ See A. Scherk, *Potężny strumień łaski*, 145-151.

¹⁸ See B. Dembowski, "Stolica Apostolska ...," 10.

¹⁹ See E. Garin, "Odnowa charyzmatyczna," 283.

The first gathering of the different Charismatic Renewal groups took place in Izabelin near Warsaw. In 1981, a coordination committee was chosen to serve all of the groups and represent the community before the episcopate.²⁰

Dogmatic
Theology

Charisms in the Charismatic Renewal Movement

Is it possible to say that the Charismatic Movement seems to be characterized by the Holy Spirit's extraordinary presence? Cardinal Leon-Joseph Suenens wrote: "God does not love us with an ordinary love, from which He would make an exception sometimes through by making a gesture of extraordinary, overabundant love. No—extraordinary love is proper to God's essence: our God is the True God who loves people in a miraculous way."²¹ Every action of God is supernatural; theology, however, speaks about the categories of "ordinary" and "extraordinary." Some people consider these categories a temptation because they are a measure determined not by God, but by man.²²

Section 4 of *Lumen Gentium* states that the Holy Spirit equips and guides the Church "with hierarchical and charismatic gifts" that are bound together by a strict yet flexible bond.²³ In every time, the Holy Spirit enriches the Church with charismatic gifts so that She will be equipped to fulfill her mission.²⁴ The word "charism" comes from the Greek word "*charisma*," which is a term that St. Paul introduced and

²⁰ See J. Budniak, "Ruch Odnowy w Duchu Świętym w Kościele Rzymskokatolickim," *Śląskie Studia Historyczno-Teologiczne*, no. 1 (2007): 210.

²¹ L. J. Suenens, *Nowe Zesłanie Ducha Świętego?* (Poznań: 1988), 67.

²² See K. Guzowski, "Nadzwyczajność i nowość w Ruchu Odnowy Charyzmatycznej," *Studia teologii dogmatycznej* 3 (2017): 33-34.

²³ See John Paul II, *Message for the World Congress of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities*, May 27, 1998, accessed October 25, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1998/may/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19980527_movimenti.html; Benedict XVI, *Address to Members of the Communion and Liberation Movement* [On the 25th Anniversary of its Pontifical Recognition], March 24, 2007, accessed October 25, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2007/march/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20070324_comunione-liberazione.html; Francis, Homily of Pope Francis [Solemnity of Pentecost Holy Mass with the Ecclesial Movements], May 19, 2013, accessed October 25, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130519_omelia-pentecoste.html.

²⁴ See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), *Iuvenescit Ecclesia* [Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church Regarding the Relationship Between Hierarchical and Charismatic Gifts in the Life and the Mission of the Church], sec. 1, accessed October 25, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20160516_iuvenescit-ecclesia_en.html.

that generally means “gratuitous gift.” Colloquially, charisms are called “7G,” meaning the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit given freely for the good of others.²⁵ A particular feature of charismatic gifts is that, unlike basic graces (sanctifying grace, love, hope, and faith), charisms are not given to everyone, but only to those who the Spirit chooses (see 1 Cor 12:11),²⁶ “so that sacramental grace may be fruitful in Christian life and in different ways and at every level.”²⁷ These are special graces and “Whatever their character—sometimes it is extraordinary, such as the gift of miracles or of tongues—charisms are oriented toward sanctifying grace and are intended for the common good of the Church. They are at the service of charity which builds up the Church.”²⁸

The Charismatic Renewal Movement’s particular charisms are: of the word, of works, and of knowing. The outpouring of these gifts is called “baptism in the Spirit.” The Doctrinal Commission of the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services (ICCRS) defines this baptism as “a life-transforming experience of the love of God the Father poured out into a person’s heart through the Holy Spirit through the submission of oneself to Jesus Christ’s reign. It is manifested in the renewal of the power of the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, a deeper communion with God and one’s fellow Christians, a rekindling of evangelical zeal, and being equipped with charisms for service and mission.”²⁹ It is not, therefore, a second baptism, but rather—as a symbolic act through the special action of the Holy Spirit—a confirmation of the gift of divine childhood.³⁰

Theologians interpret baptism in the Spirit differently. Thus far, it has been characterized in four ways: two-stage, sacramental, integrated, and top-down.³¹ The “two-stage” approach is present in Pentecostal thought, which designates two stages to baptism. The first stage is conversion/regeneration either through the sacrament of baptism or

²⁵ See Gosia Janicka, “7D, Czyli o Darach Ducha Świętego,” *Moja Niniwa*, accessed June 6, 2021, <http://mojaniniwa.blogspot.com/2017/06/7d-czyli-o-darach-ducha-swietego.html>.

²⁶ See CDF, *Iuvenescit Ecclesia*, 4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, accessed October 25, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/archive/eng0015/_index.htm.

²⁹ See Międzynarodowej Służby Katolickiej Odnowy Charyzmatycznej. Komisja Doktrynalna, *Chrzest w Duchu Świętym* (Kraków: 2014), 13.

³⁰ See S. Płusa, “Pentakostalizm czy odnowa,” 280.

³¹ See K. Guzowski, “Nadzwyczajność i nowość,” 38; see also A. Scherk, *Potężny strumień łaski*, 226-238.

through giving one's life to Jesus. The second stage is an experience of the Holy Spirit's presence, which is confirmed through the reception of the gift of tongues (however, not everyone agrees on this).³²

The baptism in the Spirit is considered a release of "dormant" grace or the graces that exist in believers due to having received the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. The theological meaning of baptism is distinct from the experiential meaning. Theologically, the Holy Spirit descends during the sacraments, while experientially He is present in the realization of His presence and power at work in those who believe.³³

The integrative approach upholds that, in addition to the first coming of the Holy Spirit, there can be new "descents." In this case, baptism in the Spirit is theologically and experientially distinct from the sacraments of initiation. Here, baptism in the Spirit signifies a new coming of the Spirit, a richer experience of God, as well as a spiritual turning point. Several such spiritual breakthroughs can occur in a person's life; therefore baptism in the Spirit is repeatable; it is a renewal of one's friendship with God; and it is the portal through which the charisms are poured out.³⁴

The fourth approach is "top-down" because it entails the top-down perspective of the economy of the Holy Spirit's personal action: "The Father reveals himself through the Son in the Holy Spirit."³⁵ Charismatic activity, meaning the revelation of the power of Holy Spirit and the sanctifying action that is manifested in the fruits of a new divinized life, is part of this perspective. Divine Love is what interconnects these activities. Baptism in the Spirit as if "unlocks" the graces of the sacraments of Christian initiation through authentic faith in God's Presence. The sacraments graft man onto God, and baptism in the Holy Spirit invigorates and develops a person's life.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has spoken about baptism in the Holy Spirit. In the USCCB's statement to the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement, it confirmed the good fruits of the grace of this baptism, which leads to the profession of Jesus as Lord and Savior, deepens people's relationship with the Persons of the Holy Trinity, and brings about an interior transformation that leads people to progress in every area of their Christian lives through an awareness of God's Presence. Baptism in the Holy Spirit "understood

³² K. Guzowski, "Nadzwyczajność i nowość," 38.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid, 39.

³⁵ Ibid, 40.

as the reawakening in Christian experience of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit given in Christian initiation, and manifested in a broad range of charisms, including those closely associated with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, is part of the normal Christian life.”³⁶

The Charism of Tongues

Each charism has its own characteristics. The first charism of the word includes the gift of tongues, the gift of interpretation of tongues, and the gift of prophecy (see 1 Cor 14). The Lord Jesus foretold this gift when He said, “they will speak new languages” (see Mk 16:17). This gift is also called glossolalia, the purpose of which is to glorify God or serve as intercessory prayer.³⁷ It comes to aid in weakness, when we do not know how to pray as we ought (see Rom 8:26-27), which means it preempts our ineptitude. This prayer expresses the language of the heart because, whether consciously or unconsciously, it enables a person to express more easily whatever moves him in relation to God: praise, petition, lamentation, joy, or—most importantly—love.³⁸

Usually speaking in tongues manifests as an ability to speak peacefully to God with the freedom to begin or cease at any moment (see 1 Cor 14:19, 27) while remaining oneself and being completely with God the entire time. Praying in tongues most often takes place on an individual basis, although it occurs sometimes during communal prayer as recitation or singing. Such prayer leads to silence, to the depths, where one can hear God’s voice. During this prayer, a person becomes nothing other than a child before God because, by speaking without understanding what he is saying, man still expresses something. Praying in tongues is considered a meditative form of prayer.³⁹

Studies on this charism indicate that the “tongues” (languages) can be either living or dead (e.g., ancient Hebrew or modern Italian).⁴⁰ Most

³⁶ See United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Grace for a New Springtime* [A Statement from the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops on the Charismatic Renewal], accessed September 15, 2021, <https://www.nsc-chariscenter.org/about-ccr/grace-english/>

³⁷ See A. Scherk, *Potężny strumień łaski*, 81.

³⁸ See Komisja Teologiczna Katolickiej Odnowy Charyzmatycznej w Niemczech (KTKOCN), “Duch daje życie,” in *Wiosna Kościoła*, ed. J. Salamon (Cieszyn: 2019), 190.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 191.

⁴⁰ See S. Falvo, *Przebudzenie*, 79-80.

often, however, the “tongue” is an unknown language.⁴¹ If someone is able to decipher the words of the foreign language, then this is known as the phenomenon called xenoglossia. In this instance, the speech in tongues may convey a message.⁴² An individual in the group may also have the gift to interpret what is being said and share the message with others (see 1 Cor 12:27-28).⁴³ The person interpreting does not relay a literary message, but rather the general meaning of what has been said.⁴⁴ It seems like the gift of tongues has gradually waned within the Church. There are, however, indications that different Catholic saints and mystics were given this gift and that it is expressed even in the liturgy.⁴⁵

The Episcopal Conference of Antilles states that the gift of tongues can be an authentic and true gift of prayer and that individuals should be open to it, but it should not be presented as a sign that is necessary to indicate that the Holy Spirit has “broken through” or “been released,” lest the importance of this gift be overestimated.⁴⁶

The Charism of Prophecy

In 1 Corinthians 14, St. Paul argues that the gift of prophecy is incomparable to the gift of tongues because prophecy builds up the community more. Since it is the inspired message that brings with it the transformative and creative power of the Kingdom of God and since it is communicated through the Gospel message, through the word of knowledge, through the word of wisdom, or through the teaching and preaching inspired by the Holy Spirit, prophecy is present in the Old Testament, in Jesus’ life, and in the life of the early and later Church up to this very day.⁴⁷ Prophecy is a special message that Jesus sends through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It can occur during communal prayer when someone feels the need to spontaneously say something as words readily come one after another.⁴⁸ Prophecy

⁴¹ See A. Scherk, *Potężny strumień łaski*, 84.

⁴² See D. Bergeron, *Charyzmaty* (Kraków: 2015), 17-18.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 19.

⁴⁴ See S. Falvo, *Przebudzenie*, 88.

⁴⁵ See A. Scherk, *Potężny strumień łaski*, 85.

⁴⁶ See Komisja Episkopatu Antyli, “Oświadczenie na temat Katolickiej Odnowy Charyzmatycznej,” in *Wiosna Kościoła*, ed J. Salamon (Cieszyn: 2019), 96.

⁴⁷ See D. Stayne, *Odnów swoje cuda* (Łódź: 2017), 66-84.

⁴⁸ See S. Falvo, *Przebudzenie*, 91.

has three elements.⁴⁹ First, it conveys information given by God. This information comes (is given) as an interior voice, image, vision, or outward gesture.⁵⁰ Second, prophecy necessitates interpretation of the information. And third, what God says must be put into practice.

A prophet must seek to be open unconditionally and completely to God. Such an individual also develops a spiritual sense, which is an ability to see from God's perspective. Such a prophet must verify the quality of the spiritual information received and seek the proper circumstances in which to share the information. Despite human involvement, prophecy always remains a freely given gift from God. The content of a prophecy can be an admonition, a promise, a consolation, or a discovery of what lies within the human heart (see 1 Cor 14:3, 25). Sometimes prophecy clarifies how God is leading a person in the present, and sometimes it pertains to the future.⁵¹ The purpose of prophecy is to edify and comfort (see 1 Cor 14:3), pass judgment (see 1 Cor 14:24), instruct (see 1 Cor 14:31), guide (see Acts 13:2), or foretell the future (see Acts 27:10).⁵²

The Antilles Episcopal Conference stated that the gift of prophecy is still present in the modern Church, but it also warned against false prophets. It lists accordance with Holy Scripture and the Magisterium as the criteria for discerning prophecy, since the Church has the authority to pronounce the authenticity of a given prophecy.⁵³

The Charism of Works

The charism of works includes intercessory prayer as well as prayers of healing and liberation. This prayer arises from the conviction and trust that the Holy Spirit has the power to heal physical illnesses and spiritual wounds. The one who prays hands over all illnesses to the Spirit and leaves them in His hands so that the Spirit can determine whom and to what extent He wills to heal. In a particular sense, this gift manifests when Jesus gives it to a specific person. This charism, however, always remains a gift from God and cannot be ascribed to the skill of the individual to whom the gift is given. A physician should

⁴⁹ See D. Stayne, *Odnów swoje cuda*, 97.

⁵⁰ See D. Bergeron, *Charyzmaty*, 49-52.

⁵¹ See KTKOCN, "Duch daje życie," 191-192.

⁵² See D. Stayne, *Odnów swoje cuda*, 87.

⁵³ See Komisja Episkopatu Antyli, "Oświadczenie ...," 96.

verify the healing, particularly in cases of serious illness.⁵⁴ During prayer meetings, the charism of healing should not be ascribed to a specific group of people (e.g., the leaders of the group). It is important, however, to remember that the Holy Spirit bestows His gifts specifically on some people and in an exceptional manner in order to demonstrate the power of the grace of the Risen Christ. It is also important to recall, however, that even the most ardent prayer cannot bring about the healing of every person from every disease or illness.⁵⁵

The phenomenon of “resting in the Holy Spirit” can take place during intercessory prayer. This rest is a person’s psychosomatic reaction to the action of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁶ It is necessary to distinguish the gift of grace itself from the way in which it sometimes manifests. Authentic rest in the Holy Spirit can be compared to a “spiritual surgical operation” by which the Holy Spirit brings about a restful “cessation.” During this rest, God—with the person’s consent—places him into a state of submission in which a person relaxes so deeply that he collapses. Those who have experienced this phenomenon have testified that they do not feel any pain. Healing takes place during this “visitation” of grace. Most people experience the gift of peace and freedom, even though they cannot move. It is very difficult to verify rest in the Holy Spirit. The criteria by which to determine whether such rest is authentic are the fruits, particularly the development of one’s spiritual life and growth in charity.⁵⁷

In Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement communities, “deliverance prayers” also take place. This prayer is a petition to God to provide His most effective help in healing deep-seated addictions as well as deliverance from demons that literally attack people. This prayer requires an individual to submit himself to the prudent and discrete care of a priest. It is important to avoid any abuses in this regard because exorcisms can be performed only with the consent of the local bishop.⁵⁸ The laity should not address the demons directly or

⁵⁴ See KTKOCN, “Duch daje życie,” 194-195.

⁵⁵ See CDF, *Instruction on Prayers for Healing*, sec. 5, accessed October 25, 2021, <https://www.nsc-chariscenter.org/about-ccr/grace-english/>.

⁵⁶ See Konferencja Biskupów Francji, “Nowe ruchy charyzmatyczne. Podejścia, rozeznanie, perspektywy,” in *Wiosna Kościoła*, ed. J. Salamon (Cieszyn: 2019), 122-123.

⁵⁷ See Sekretariat Generalny Konferencji Biskupów Francji, “Elementy rozeznawania dla Odnowy Charyzmatycznej,” in *Wiosna Kościoła*, ed. J. Salamon (Cieszyn: 2019), 136-139.

⁵⁸ KTKOCN, “Duch daje życie,” 196-197. See Can. 1172, Code of Canon Law, https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/cic_index_en.html.

ask them to identify themselves and state how many are present. It is also forbidden to use the minor exorcism prayers of Pope Leo XIII.⁵⁹

The Charism of Spiritual Discernment

Discerning the authenticity of spiritual experiences that take place in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement is necessary in order to separate the wheat from the chaff; to draw attention away from experiences of God and place it on God Himself; and to ensure that the community does not become a “church within the Church,” which would lead to many divisions and conflicts. The Charismatic Renewal Movement itself requires pastoral care and formation.⁶⁰ It is the role of theologians to discern the criteria that are helpful in these proceedings.

From the beginning, it is necessary to distinguish between spiritual and psychophysical phenomena (e.g., resting in the Holy Spirit vs. shock).⁶¹ Other criteria are: freedom—God never acts against a person’s free will—⁶² and the fruits, meaning how the daily life of a converted and faithful Christian has changed.⁶³

The Episcopal Conference of Germany has listed the following signs that, according to the truths of the faith, would be to some degree indicative of an authentic experience of the Holy Spirit:

- a love and attachment to the person of Jesus;
- a deeper relationship with God as Father (proper image of God);
- a devotion to the Trinity;
- a healthy fear of God;
- a discovery of the truth about sin and the practice of sincere contrition;
- a recollection of God’s care for man;
- a deeper meditation on the Word of God;
- an intensified sacramental life;
- a discovery of one’s self as a part of the community of the Church;

⁵⁹ See *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, December 12, 1985.

⁶⁰ See the text from Malines written by Cardinal Leon-Joseph Suenens.

⁶¹ See Sekretariat Generalny Konferencji Biskupów Francji, “Elementy rozeznawania,” 134.

⁶² See P. Samiczak, “Rozeznawanie i prawidłowe korzystanie z darów Ducha Świętego przez wspólnoty charyzmatyczne według wybranych dokumentów Kościoła rzymskokatolickiego,” *Studia Oecumenica* 20 (2020): 166.

⁶³ See Sekretariat Generalny Konferencji Biskupów Francji, “Elementy rozeznawania,” 137-139.

- adherence to the teachings of the Magisterium of the Church and acceptance of the Church's hierarchy;
- a balanced spirit of criticism regarding matters pertaining to the community of the Church;
- enabling research on the revelation of achievements in the humanities.⁶⁴

When analyzing whether a person has received certain charisms and whether they have had an effect on the person's daily life, the Holy Spirit's action in the life of the person can be identified in the following:

- faith, hope, and charity;
- an openness to God's gifts, through which man realizes his dependence on God;
- clarity of knowledge and judgment;
- prudence, moderation, and wisdom;
- self-acceptance;
- obedience to God;
- conversion and contrition (penance) as well as practicing doing good (asceticism);
- a readiness to learn and to be corrected by others;
- the humility necessary to bear with one's own and others' weaknesses;
- the spiritual strength necessary to respond to God's call;
- the decisiveness necessary to respond to recognized truth;
- fidelity to one's daily duties;
- an ability to serve, to step away from service, and to submit to it;
- a readiness to carry one's cross;⁶⁵
- the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22-23).

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement— An Opportunity or a Danger?

Papal statements and Church documents endorse the gift of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement. The most important benefits of participating in charismatic communities are: commitment to prayer, striving to live a holy life full of charity and permeated by the Word of God, and good works manifested in an ability to share one's

⁶⁴ P. Samiczak, "Rozeznawanie," 168.

⁶⁵ KTKOCN, "Duch daje życie," 176-177.

spiritual and material goods.⁶⁶ The Charismatic Renewal Movement has contributed greatly to the work of the New Evangelization.⁶⁷

Those who view the movement with a critical eye are justified in their concern about the following dangers: its overemphasis on feelings, false directness (thinking that God's action is determined to take on a specific form according to the recipient's nature, or thinking that every negative occurrence has a demonic origin), biblical fundamentalism (literal understanding of the Bible), religious complacency (arrogance in believing that the movement is exceptional and stands out from other communities), and escape from reality (e.g. retreat into prayer at the neglect of one's duties).⁶⁸

The aforementioned issues, among others, are the reason why theologians have different opinions about the movement. Members of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement have been accused, on the one hand, of wanting to create a universal religion for the whole world; of believing that all charisms come from Pentecostalism; and of thinking that they are part of the Pentecostal Movement, which wants to change the Church's Catholic doctrine and practice. These arguments, however, do not seem to be fully substantiated.⁶⁹ On the other hand, this movement is an "awakening"—a sign of the springtime for the Church.

It is important for theologians and Church leaders to maintain the proper balance between ensuring that movements do not persist in a strange and dangerous exhilaration and considering how they contribute to maintaining the Tradition and wisdom of the Catholic Church by remaining aware that God in His Providence uses new methods to bring about the Kingdom of God in the world, which is the Catholic Church's mission.⁷⁰

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⁶⁶ See A. Scherk, *Potężny strumień łaski*, 142-204; A. Siemieniewski, *Na fundamencie apostołów i proroków*, ed. M. Kiwka (Wrocław: 2018), 83-106; B. Dembowski, "Stolica Apostolska," 10-25.

⁶⁷ See M. Kita, "Laboratoria nowej ewangelizacji," *Znak* 9 (2001): 40-46.

⁶⁸ See KTKOCN, "Duch daje życie," 206-209.

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⁷⁰ See E. Garin, "Odnowa charyzmatyczna," 291-293.

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The Influence of the Catholic Church in Cracow on the Cathedral Chapter of Vilnius from the Fifteenth through Eighteenth Centuries

Like the entire Diocese of Vilnius, the Cathedral Chapter of Vilnius drew considerably from the experience of the ecclesiastical environment of the Diocese of Cracow, which had already existed for four centuries when the Vilnius Chapter began and was establishing and organizing its own institutions and structures. Although the Diocese of Vilnius had remained part of the organizational structures of the ecclesial province of Gniezno from the beginning of the fifteenth century, it looked to Wawel and not to Wzgórze Lecha's example. From the fourteenth century onward, Vilnius and Cracow were the capital cities of the Polish-Lithuanian state. For this reason, it was fitting that both of the dioceses, including their cathedral chapters, were organized, looked, and functioned similarly. When the local Church was being established and organized in Lithuania, Cracow naturally served as a model for Vilnius because the local church in Cracow had already existed for more than four centuries and was, therefore, more organized, dynamic, and greatly exposed to the world in every respect than the ecclesiastical environment of Gniezno. This was also due to the fact that the Diocese of Cracow was at the center of royal power: it supported the throne of the Commonwealth directly; it sanctioned the court's actions; it provided the monarch with expert and intellectual help necessary to conduct internal politics and engage in diplomacy. It is also significant that the person responsible for establishing the Church in Lithuania was, in fact, Lithuanian—King Władysław II Jagiełło was the first Jagiellonian to ascend the Polish throne. His successors continued his policies in the religious realm in Lithuania. It is not surprising, therefore, the Jagiełłoes were solicitous to ensure that Vilnius enjoyed the proper place in the hierarchy of Polish-Lithuanian dioceses under their jurisdiction in accordance with the belief that "Vilnius

cannot stand out from Cracow.” The Lithuanian King Władysław II Jagiełło provided materially for the Church in Vilnius, and he ensured that the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania had the proper position within the structures of the Polish-Lithuanian state, which has becoming increasingly more integrated. Although the Diocese of Vilnius drew from the Diocese of Cracow’s example, it did not blindly imitate it. After it had been established and organized, the Vilnius Cathedral Chapter was able to develop its own models, unique identity, and manner of functioning as a completely self-sufficient corporation that no longer needed to refer so strongly to the model of Cracow.

Key words: Catholic Church, Poland, Lithuania, Cracow, Vilnius, Diocese of Cracow, Diocese of Vilnius, cathedral chapter, cathedral, bishop, prelate, canon.

The topic to which the title of this article refers has been discussed very little in both Polish and Lithuanian historiography. In fact, one might argue that it has not been discussed at all. This study was conducted with the awareness that the information that follows will pave the way for an area of history that is hardly known. The reader may be surprised to learn that institutions that played a significant role in the cultural, political, economic, and social landscape of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which was, after all, one of the most powerful countries in Europe at the time, have not yet sparked the intellectual interest of specialists in this field. This does not mean that historians have not been interested at all in the canonical corporations of Cracow and Vilnius; for, the bibliography for this article is quite extensive. What historians have neglected, however, is to consider the mutual relationship between the two capitular chapters—Cracow, for the Crown, and Vilnius for the Grand Duchy of Lithuania—and how these two centers of ecclesiastical and, indirectly, state governance influenced each other. The lack of research in this area is crucial because it has prevented historians from coming to a more complete understanding of such a peculiar, unique, and dynamic political and cultural entity that was the relationship between Poland and Lithuania from the Kievan through Horodło and Lublin up to modern times. On an ecclesiastical level, Vilnius would not have been what it was without Cracow, just as Cracow cannot be fully understood apart from Vilnius.

The Cathedral Chapters of Cracow and Vilnius were both established in radically different conditions. The canonical corporation of Cracow passed through all of the typical stages involved in the formation of cathedral chapters in the Latin Church in Western Europe. It began to function through the establishment of a monastic communal

life (*communis vita canonica*), then monks and diocesan clergy (*clerus regularis et saecularis*) were included, and finally it was made up of diocesan clergy only. This community of clergy gave rise to the Cathedral Chapter of Cracow.¹ With time, property was allocated to bishops and the chapter, which was then divided into prebends, and the internal organization of the chapter was established. The Benedictine monks were removed from the bishop's presbytery at Wawel and a Cracovian chapter made up of members of the diocesan clergy took its place at the end of the eleventh century. After ecclesiastical property was divided between the bishops and canons, and after the canonical goods were separated into prebends and common property, which was the custom at that time, the cathedral chapter began to operate in the modern sense of this term. One might rightfully ask at this point: What kind of rule regulated the common life of the oldest chapter of Cracow? According to Władysław Abraham, this rule can be found in *Collectio tripartite*, which is stored in the Cathedral Library in Wawel. The final edition of this collection dates back to the seventeenth century. The work is a systematic collection made up of three parts, the second of which contains legal treatises on ecclesiastical matters. All three parts are categorized according to people, things, and activities.²

The internal organization of the Cracow Cathedral Chapter took place over a long period of time and formally concluded in the second half of the fifteenth century with the following: *dignitates* (6) and *canonici* (30).³ Then the following order and ranks of prelate dignities was established: dean (1166), prepositor (1179), archdeacon (1166), scholastic (1166), cantor (1166), custodian (1166), and chancellor (1727). It is worth noting that the ranking of the prelate dignities was not determined definitively until the fifteenth century. In many of the previous catalogs, the archdeacon appears second (and not third), while the prepositor appears third.

This is a brief overview of how the Cathedral Chapter of Wawel was organized when the Diocese of Vilnius and its own cathedral chapter entered onto the historical scene in 1388. In that year, on March 12, Pope Urban VI issued the papal bull *Romanus Pontifex*. The pope appointed Bishop of Poznań, Dobrogost, as the executor of the determinations contained in the document, and there are many

¹ C. J. von Hefele, *Conciliengeschichte*, Bd 4, Freiburg in Breisgau 1879, S. 9 u. folg.; W. M. Plöchl, *Geschichte des Kirchenrechts*, Bd 1, Wien 1959, S. 349-352.

² W. Abraham, *Organizacja Kościoła w Polsce do połowy wieku XII, (Początek biskupstwa i Kapituły katedralnej w Krakowie)* (Poznań: 1962), 305-306.

³ *Monumenta Poloniae Vaticana*, vol. 1 (Kraków: 1913), 104-110.

indications that the bishop carried out the papal orders that same year by establishing a chapter college in the newly erected diocese. The chapter was made up of two prelatures and ten canons. The two prelate dignities were: prepositor, which the document defined as “the first clerical dignity after the bishop,” and dean, who had the right to appoint clergy (except canons) to carry out particular services in the cathedral.⁴ The process of establishing who made up the Cathedral Chapter of Vilnius took more than one hundred years. In chronological order, the following *dignitates* appeared: custodian (1397), archdeacon (1435), scholastic (1522), and cantor (1522). At this time, and certainly after 1502, two more canons arrived.⁵ The final composition of the chapter was determined before 1525, since twelve canons are listed in the records that year.⁶ Just like the Cracow Chapter, the ranking of the different groups of prelates came about naturally and was based primarily on the chronological order in which individual dignities were appointed. Like in Cracow, when multiple dignities were appointed at the same time, the importance of the functions as well as the will of the person who created the dignity determined the rank. Therefore, after the dignities of scholastic and cantor were established in 1522, the ranking of prelates was as follows: prepositor, dean, archdeacon, custodian, scholastic, cantor. On the other hand, just like in Cracow generally (but with a few exceptions) the precedence of the canons was based on their seniority. The longer a canon was part of the chapter, the higher was his position in it.⁷

Although none of the documents prepared by the Cathedral Chapter of Vilnius obliged the corporation to follow the model of the Cathedral Chapter of Cracow, it nevertheless gravitated toward following it from its inception, which the Vilnius Chapter openly admitted and outwardly demonstrated. It is important to note that, when the first to prelatures were created, the prepositor was given precedence, followed by the dean, which indicates that the chapter in Vilnius deviated from the chapter in Cracow’s example in this instance. In Cracow, the dean

⁴ *Kodeks dyplomatyczny katedry i diecezji wileńskiej* (KDKDW), vol. 1, book 1, eds. J. Fijałek and W. Semkowicz (Kraków: 1948), 24-26.

⁵ J. Fijałek, “Kościół Rzymsko-katolicki na Litwie. Uchrześcijannienie Litwy przez Polskę i zachowanie w niej języka ludu pod koniec Rzeczypospolitej,” in *Polska i Litwa w dziejowym stosunku*, Kraków 1914, s. 275-276.

⁶ Lietuvos Mokslų Akademijos Vrublevskių Biblioteka [Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences] (LMAB), f. 43-210, *Acta Capituli Vilmensis* (ACV), vols. 1-2 (1502-1546), k. 95.

⁷ *Relationes status Dioecesium in Magno Ducatu Lithuaniae I: Dioeceses Vilmensis et Samogitiae*, arr. P. Rabikauskas, (Romae: 1971), 202.

was the head of the chapter, while the prepositor came second or third. According to the wishes of Bishop Dobrogost, the Cathedral Chapter of Vilnius followed the example of royal chapters (Poznań, Gniezno, Płock or Włocławek.) As more dignities were appointed, the Cathedral Chapter of Vilnius appointed the prepositor to the first place. This ranking endowed him with practically no rights or privileges. The dean, who was always appointed to the first place in Cracow and managed the entire corporation in practice, was appointed to the second place in Vilnius. In this regard, the reformation decree of 1596 that was issued after the Wawel Cathedral underwent a visitation concerns the scope of the dean's role. This document does not impose any new duties on the dean; instead, it simply recalls the duties that had already been determined and established legally long ago. The document clearly conveys that the dean had the most say in the Cracow Chapter:

The Dean... is first and presides over the chapter; he knows all of the prelates' duties, the norms of canon law, and the constitutions of provincial and diocesan synods. He proposes to the cathedral chapter what pertains the growth and beautification of divine service, discipline, and good customs among the cathedral clergy and their life in common, as well as the administration of earthly goods. He has the right to express his judgment first, accept the opinion of others, draw conclusions, and recommend that they be implemented. He is also responsible for pastoral care in the cathedral, due to which he has the duty to supervise pastoral activities. He must also oversee the administration of the holy sacraments. It is his duty to ensure that the choir prayers take place in the prescribed order. ... As the head of the cathedral presbytery, he has the power to institute vicars, to admonish them, and to deprive them of their benefits if they are disobedient.⁸

When comparing this decree with a similar passage from a document confirming the privileges of the Vilnius Chapter that was written by the papal legate Bernardo Bongiovanni around the same period (1561), it is clear that the competences required of the deans of both chapters are completely identical. To be clear, Bongiovanni's document on the dean's duties and powers clearly states "ut habet Decanus Ecclesiae Cracoviensis, ad cuius exemplum Vilmensis Ecclesia fundata est [as a dean of the Cracovian Church, on whose example Vilnius Church was founded]." In English, the text explaining the dean's duties reads:

[The Dean—auth.] must ensure the proper order of divine worship in the cathedral. He should ensure that its mansionaries, chaplains, altarists, and other clergy, especially the chapter vicars, seminarians,

⁸ *Statuta capitularia Ecclesiae Cathedralis Cracoviensis*, ed. I. Polkowski (Cracovia: 1884), 245.

and students of the cathedral school, perform their functions at the prescribed time and in the prescribed order in the temple of the cathedral, as well as all of its chapels, in the choir, during processions, and in other locations. [...] He must oversee that the proper chanting and music is sung in the cathedral and exercise complete authority over the vicars. He has other duties that are the same as the dean of the Cracovian Church, on whose example the Vilnius Church was founded.⁹

These are no more and no less the competences of the dean, the first in dignity in the Cracow Chapter.

What, then were the duties of the prepositor—the prelate who was ranked first in dignity in the Cathedral Chapter of Vilnius? Unfortunately, no normative or other acts elaborate specifically on this subject. The duties of the prepositor of the Cathedral Chapter of Vilnius essentially came down to the fact that he was ranked first, and his only task was to wait for an opportune episcopal *vacat* (vacancy). However, in the eighteenth century, almost every Vilnius prepositor was a titular bishop. An interesting characteristic of Vilnius Cathedral Chapter was the fact that, in the second half of the seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth century, the first prelate in dignity—the preposit—was rarely present at sessions, even general ones, and he appeared even less often in the choir and at processions, despite the fact that he lost his refectio because of this. The protocols of ordinary and extraordinary sessions and lists that meticulously record the amounts of refectios allocated prove this. Even more puzzling is the fact that prepositor was not reprimanded or otherwise admonished for this. It is evident his presence did not contribute much to the chapter, and his absence was not a hindrance.¹⁰ Generally speaking, what the prepositor of Vilnius was known for was simply being part of the chapter and being ranked “first,” whatever that meant. Similarly, the prepositor of the Cracow Cathedral Chapter had little to say. In that chapter, however, he was assigned to only the second or third choir stall, which was a much more modest position than his Vilnius counterpart enjoyed. The Cathedral Chapter of Cracow’s statutes do not give him much of a role. It appears that, up until the sixteenth century, candidates for this prelature were not even required to be ordained

⁹ Rev. J. Kurczewski included the royal privilege granted in 1558 and the document of the papal legate from 1561 in his work *Kościół zamkowy czyli katedra wileńska*, cz. 2 (Wilno: 1910), 77-80.

¹⁰ LMAB, f. 43-673, *Percepta masae (...) Cap. Vilnensis pro consolationibus et omnibus obventionibus, 1685-1686*, k. 4; LMAB, f.43-1128, *Rozdział refekcyjnej summy, 1791-1792*, k. 1.

priests.¹¹ The rights given to the other prelates of both of the chapters were almost identical.

It is also worthwhile to consider more closely something that was equally important to both chapters—namely, their statutes. These statutes consisted of twenty-four paragraphs that the bishops granted to the Cracow Chapter from its inception. The Cracow Chapter accepted and implemented these statutes at the session held on May 12, 1356. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the chapter added an additional thirty-eight points, while the bishops added another twelve points to the statutes. By the middle of the fifteenth century, the statutes consisted of a total of seventy-four points, which were written up into a first edition between 1467-1468.¹²

When the Cathedral Chapter of Vilnius was being established, it did not have any privileges or land grants. Instead, it supported itself exclusively from the Bishop of Vilnius' mensa. At that time, the Cathedral Chapter of Cracow already had codified statutes, upon which the canonical corporation of Cathedral Chapter of Vilnius was organized and systematized, and this was sufficient for a time. Later, however, the Vilnius Chapter began to be more independent, started to give its own privileges and grants, and sought stronger legal legitimacy. This became all the more necessary because, after the first bishop of Vilnius, Andrzej, died in 1398, the Vilnius Chapter elected and preconized Bishop Jakub Plichta to take his place on May 5, 1399. Even before the newly elected bishop's ingress, the chapter hurried to him with acts documenting its privileges and a text containing six postulates, which could be described as statutes in the terminology of that time. Without going into detail, it is sufficient to say that the postulates did not concern essential matters regarding the chapter's organization or systematization.¹³ Why, especially when it would seem that the postulates concerned issues that would necessitate the establishment of the chapter's legal basis? There can be only one answer: the Vilnius Chapter did not see such a need because both politically and organizationally it was still following successfully the proven norms constituting the Cathedral Chapter of Cracow. The relationship between

¹¹ *Kodeks dyplomatyczny katedry krakowskiej św. Wacława*, vol 2, ed. F. Piekosiński, no 476, (Kraków: 1883), 287-291; *Statuta capitularia*, 246.

¹² "Statuta Capituli Ecclesiae Cathedralis Cracoviensis A. 1328-1478 Sbignei cardinalis et episcopi Cracoviensis statutum," ed. H. Heyzmann, in *Staropolskie Prawa Polskiego Pomniki*, vol 4 (Kraków 1875), 115-170; *Statuta capitularia Ecclesiae Cathedralis Cracoviensis mandato et impensis C. Teliga*, ed. I. Polkowski (Cracoviae: 1884).

¹³ KDKDW, no. 35, 63-64.

the Cathedral Chapter of Vilnius as a corporation and its individual members with regard to the ordinary bishop and the scope of both authoritative entities' rights and competences were based on the already-established and well-prepared rights of the Cracow Chapter.

More important than the actual content of the statutes was the fact that this was the first instance where the Vilnius Chapter referred to the Cracow Chapter's statutes and conferred with the bishop by presenting to him so-called "points," meaning postulates, suggestions, or questions pertaining to current issues that required the cooperation of both decision-making diocesan bodies—the bishop and the chapter. Over time, this practice became a law that was implemented in the Dioceses of Vilnius and Cracow until the end of the eighteenth century.

As contentions and conflicts between the bishop and the chapter arose, both sides were forced to compromise. The statutes of the Cathedral Chapter of Cracow were unable to provide solutions to the political and socioeconomic realities of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. For this reason, the Vilnius Chapter expressed more frequently and persistently its need to codify its rights, customs, duties, and privileges.

It is no coincidence that the first edition of the Cathedral Chapter of Vilnius' statutes was created at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The statutes were most likely prepared as the Vilnius community's response to the announcement that the Cracow chapter had prepared its first codex of statutes (1467-1468); from that moment forward, the bishops of Vilnius, beginning with Jan Łosowicz, insisted that the chapter begin working on recording its own statutes, and then intensely mobilized the chapter in every way by requests and even threats to complete the endeavor. The collection of statutes was certainly ready before 1515. In 1518—one year after the closing of the Fifth Lateran Council, Bishop Wojciech Radziwiłł approved and promulgated the statutes in the diocese. By the end of 1520, Pope Leo X confirmed the statutes through his legate, the Titular Bishop of Gardien Zacharias Ferreri.¹⁴ At that time, all of the grants and privileges that were given to the chapter, particularly the papal privileges, were approved: "[I]n this particular regard, the Church of Vilnius and the Chapter were

¹⁴ LMAB, f. 43-152, Summa Privilegiorum, Immunitatis, Exemptionum, Libertatum ceterarum eiusmodi Gratiarum in rem ac favorem Status Spiritualis et respective Cathedrae Vilmensis eiusque Illmi Capituli servientium, ex ipsis originalibus ad promtiorum notitiam: Confirmatio omnium privilegiorum et Immunitatum exemptionum statutorum venerabile capitulo Vilmensi servientium per Zachariam episcopum Gardiensem ad regnum Poloniae et M. Ducatus Lituaniae nuntium apostolicum facta a. 1520 9^{bris} 29 d., k. 3. Fr. J. Kurczewski reprinted this document *in extensor*, see J. Kurczewski, *Kościół zamkowy*, cz. 2 (Wilno: 1910), 35-37.

compared with the Cracow bishopric in its complete and free jurisdiction and possession of power over vicars, mansionaries, altarists, meaning all chaplains and clerics that belonged to this same Vilnius Church.” By virtue of the Holy See’s decision, the curators of the Vilnius Chapter were appointed bishops of Cracow and Łuck” so that “people or the entire Vilnius Chapter would always stand in defense of all of these rights and provide the necessary help.”¹⁵ The minutes of both the ordinary and extraordinary sessions of the Cathedral Chapter of Vilnius reveal that, after the first statutes were codified but did not contain statutory sanctions to resolve issues when disagreements and contentions arose, the chapter referred to the Cracow statutes, a copy of which was available in the chapter house, and then obtained the files that documented their own privileges in the archives.

Cracow’s influence on the Vilnius Chapter is also evident in less important matters. For example, a breviary from that time reveals that, in 1634, Pope Urban VIII granted the Cracow Chapter the privilege of wearing a rochet, mantelletta, and Roman cope during liturgical and official rites on September 13. Upon learning about this, the Vilnius chapter began to strive for the same privileges and ultimately received them in 1649—that is, fifteen years after the Cracow Chapter.¹⁶ Since the Vilnius canons initially were not sure about which rights to which they were entitled and the corresponding duties, and since they had differing opinions regarding how to interpret the privileges, they resorted to the same solution—namely, in May 1653, the cathedral’s master of ceremonies was ordered to copy the relevant provisions from the Cracow Chapter’s files and place them in a visible location in the canon sacristy. In this way, as the chapter session minutes indicate: “if someone does not know something, let him go and read, so that he does know and does not clamor in vain.”¹⁷

Texts documenting this privilege and legal acts in which the Holy See inspired the decision to distinguish first the Cracow Chapter and later the Vilnius Chapter with special attire shed a great deal of light on the ecclesiastical relationship between Cracow and Vilnius. In this regard, one such document states:

We have learned that in the city of Cracow, which is the capital of the Polish Crown and the famous abode of kings, princes, magnates, and eminent men who come and reside there, and that Cracow is the neropolis of many Saints and Blessed, and that there are royal tombs

¹⁵ LMAB, f.43-152, *Summa Privilegiorum*, k. 3.

¹⁶ LMAB, f.43-220, ACV, vol. 12 (1644-1652), 169.

¹⁷ LMAB, f.43-221, ACV, vol. 13 (1652-1663), k. 82.

in Cracow ... that kings often visit Cracow in order to participate in Holy Mass and the Divine Liturgy, and that numerous state dignitaries and princes follow after them, the cathedral of Cracow has become a place where many meetings take place and, for this reason, its canons deserve more honor and glory than other chapters Therefore, we to whom Polish King Władysław has also addressed a request in this matter wish to show our respect to this Chapter with special signs of reverence ... We have decided to grant the requests of this Chapter and pronounce that it, its canons, and their successors have the perpetual privilege to wear the cope, rochet, and mantelletta like the Chapter and canons at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, who wear [these vestments] during solemnities, liturgical functions, and public acts.¹⁸

When comparing this act to the analogous document issued for the Vilnius Chapter, it is clear that the parts of the text that substantiate the decision to grant this privilege are almost identical. In both documents, the phrase “the cathedral of Cracow [Vilnius – 1649] has become a place where many meetings take place and, for this reason, its canons deserve more honors and glory than other chapters” is used. In the document for Vilnius, however, the words: “than other Lithuanian chapters” were added.¹⁹

The Vilnius Chapter's coat of arms was also significant. The coat was based on the “Aaron” coat of arms, which depicts three gold princely crowns in a 2-1 arrangement set against a blue field, taken directly from the Cracow Chapter, and used for the first century and a half of the Vilnius Chapter's existence.²⁰ It was not until the mid-sixteenth century that the Vilnius Chapter changed the coat of arms by adding a golden-colored, two-armed Jagiellonian cross (also called the Anjou) while keeping the other essential elements. Two crowns were arranged symmetrically on both sides of the cross, while the third was moved outside of the heraldic shield and placed on a jewel. Over time, an element from the “Jończyk” coat of arms was added—namely, the bottom half of the cross was partially split down the middle.²¹ The Cracow

¹⁸ Archives of the Metropolitan Curia in Cracow, *Acta Episcopalia*, vol. 48 (*Acta actorum, institutionum R.D. Jacobi Zadzik, episcopi Cracoviensis ducus Severiae ab 8 Februarii 1636 – 20 Decembri 1638*), kk. 82-84. This text was obtained, translated, made accessible, and analyzed by Fr. B. Kumor in *Dzieje diecezji krakowskiej do roku 1795*, vol. 2 (Kraków: 1999), 334.

¹⁹ LMAB, f. 43-220, ACV, vol. 12 (1644-1652), 169.

²⁰ K. Niesiecki, *Herbarz Polski*, vol. 1, ed. J. N. Bobrowicz (Lipsk: 1839-1845), 45.

²¹ A. Znamierowski, *Herbarz rodowy* (Warszawa: 2004), 115; Kurczewski, *Kościół zamkowy*, 314.

Chapter's coat of arms, on the other hand, has remained unchanged to this day.

The question remains: Why did the Vilnius Chapter refer so much to Cracow and not to another diocese such as the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Gniezno when organizing itself. The answer is simple but worth recalling: both Vilnius and Cracow were capital cities. Therefore, it was appropriate that both dioceses, including their cathedral chapters functioned, if not identically, then comparably, and this of course included their prestige and splendor. Cracow served as a natural model because its local church environment had already existed for almost four centuries when the Church in Lithuania was being organized. Another fact to consider is that King Władysław II Jagiełło was responsible for establishing the foundations for the Church in Vilnius, and his Jagiellonian successors continued his policies. They ensured that Vilnius was given the proper place within the hierarchy of the diocese in the lands under their rule in accordance with the principle: "Vilnius cannot stand out from Cracow." Jagiełło and his successors financially supported both the bishop of Vilnius and the Cathedral Chapter of Vilnius and remained their legal patrons. Compared to the royal cathedral chapters, Jagiełło's had incomparably more influence on the designation of prebends; he conferred as many as three prebends to prelates, meaning half of all the prelature prebends, and all twelve of the prebends to canons, which was eighty percent of the prebends of the entire chapter. For comparison, in Cracow the king had the rights of gifts and patronage for two prelatures and one canon, which was slightly more than eight percent of all prebends. The bishop of Cracow had the decisive voice when it came to gifting prelatures and canons, which his Vilnius counterpart could only envy.

The fact that the Cathedral Chapter of Vilnius drew from the Cathedral Chapter of Cracow's experience does not mean that it blindly and uncritically imitated Cracow. Once it had become established, the Vilnius Chapter was able to develop its own models and unique identity, and it could function as a completely self-sufficient corporation. It ceased to refer so extensively to the model of Cracow. This, however, is a different topic that must be treated separately and more extensively.

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The Evolution of the Role of Roman Catholic Monasteries in Belarus from the Nineteenth Century to the Beginning of the Twentieth Century

This article presents how the role of Roman Catholic monasteries evolved in Belarus from the nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth centuries. It defines the traditional internal and external functions of the Catholic monastery and proceeds to convey how, due to Russian policies, Roman Catholic monasteries ceased to fulfill their traditional roles and took on new, unusual, and previously uncommon functions such as serving as prisons and boarding houses.

Key words: Roman Catholic Church, monasteries, Russian Empire, nineteenth century, role of monasteries.

Roman Catholic monasteries and convents were traditionally created to organize the communal life of members of a specific religious order or congregation. Over time, the monasteries served to provide housing for the members of the religious order and space for them to carry out a variety of professions. Generally speaking, the functions of the monastery could be divided into two categories: internal and external. Internal functions were subordinated to the monastery's main purpose: to organize the life of a number of monks in accordance with a religious order's statutes and constitutions. The monastery became a place of residence, prayer, contemplation, religious study, formation (for novices), and the daily rule of life for the religious who lived there. In this way, the monasteries played an organizational, educational, and preparatory role. Monasteries also had lesser (but not less important)

functions such as keeping an archive (a collection of stored texts documenting the history and life of the monastery) and a monastic library. Depending on the order or congregation, elections of superior generals, provincials, priors, and other leaders in the order and province took place at monasteries. These internal roles were exclusive to the members of the religious orders or monastic communities; those outside had no influence on these functions.

The external roles that monasteries played depended on the religious order and the nature of its ministry, which were defined in the order's statutes and constitutions. For example, the monasteries of the Bonifraters and Brothers of St. Roch ran and owned hospitals, while the Jesuits and Piarist monasteries became educational centers. Their external roles also had a social dimension: for example, religious orders ran shelters for the poor and homeless (hospitals). Because the monasteries needed to support themselves financially, they took on an economic role. People outside of the monasteries, such as the founders, often had an influence on the functions of the monasteries.

After Belarusian-Lithuanian lands were annexed by and partitioned to the Russian Empire, the status of the Catholic Church changed dramatically. The Orthodox Church became the “dominant” and “ruling” religious body,¹ while the Catholic Church was simply “tolerated” (терпимого). Political events—namely, the November and January Uprisings—significantly influenced the evolution of the monasteries' roles. According to popular opinion, Catholic clergy played an important part in these uprisings. Even modern historical accounts of the November Uprising refer to Roman Catholic monasteries as “rebel strongholds.”²

The role of the monasteries as places where religious gathered to elect their abbots and provincials was the first to be abolished. In November 1798, the Russian authorities issued “Regulations for Roman

¹ С.В. Миненко, “Российское законодательство по охране господствующей православной веры от прозелитизма иноверческих церквей (XVIII–XIX века)” in *Юридическая наука и практика: вестник Нижегородской академии МВД России* // *Рэжым доступа*, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/rossiyskoe-zakonodatelstvo-po-ohrane-gospodstvuyushey-pravoslavnoy-very-ot-prozelitizma-inovercheskih-tserkvey-xviii-xix-veka/viewer>.

² С.А. Лукьянов, “Удодов А.Г. К вопросу о государственно-правовом регулировании деятельности Римско-католической церкви в России,” in *Государственная служба и кадры*, №2 (2018), accessed September 11, 2021, <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/k-voprosu-o-gosudarstvenno-pravovom-regulirovanii-deyatelnosti-rimsko-katolicheskoy-tserkvi-v-rossii>.

Catholic Churches and Monasteries within the Russian Empire.”³ These regulations confirmed the right of Roman Catholic bishops to oversee monasteries and churches and to make visitations to monasteries within the Russian Empire. Religious were obligated to be obedient to diocesan authorities. The reform was carried out in relation to the decrees of the Council of Trent and papal orders.⁴ Along with the ordinances, the Highly Approved Senate Report was issued, which forbid religious to travel to their chapter sessions for religious elections.⁵ Emperor Paul I temporarily restored this right to religious orders and monasteries in 1800 by signing a series of points entitled “On the Administration of Roman Catholic Clergy in Russia.”⁶ According to these points, broad internal autonomy as well as the freedom to elect provincials was restored to religious orders.⁷ In this way, orders were able to return to the traditional organization of their elections, with the provincials as the heads of religious orders and the priors as the heads of the monasteries. With the decrees issued on November 19 and December 16, 1842, respectively, the position of provincials was abolished once again. The bishop was then granted authority over the religious who worked in his diocese, while one member of each chapter was chosen to govern the monks. In this way, in place of twelve provincials (which reflected the number of religious orders that survived during this period), six visitators (one per diocese) were introduced.⁸

The decree issued on December 18, 1842, endowed bishops with the right to appoint diocesan visitators (“deans of the monasteries”) based on the regulations of 1798, according to which all monasteries were placed under the bishops’ authority. The visitators had direct supervision over all of the monasteries within a diocese and were required to participate on consistories. In addition, they had to maintain contact with the abbots of the monasteries regarding all monastic matters. The monks of the same religious order who resided in different monasteries

³ “Регламент для церквей и монастырей Римско-Католического исповедания в Российской империи,” in ПСЗРИ, №18 734. – Т. 25. – С. 436–438.

⁴ Полное собрание законов Российской империи (ПСЗРИ), №18 734. – Т. 25. – С. 436–438.

⁵ ПСЗРИ, №18 733. – Т. 25. – С. 435–436.

⁶ ПСЗРИ, №19 684 – Т. 26. – С. 43– 437.

⁷ М.А. Попов, “Митрополит Станислав Богущ-Сестренцевич (1731–1826 гг.): роль в формировании правительственной политики по отношению к Римско-католической церкви на белорусских землях (конец XVIII – первая четверть XIX в.).” – С. 65.

⁸ М. Долбилов, “Русский край, чужая вера: этноконфессиональная политика империи в Литве и Белоруссии при Александре I.” – С. 102; M. Valančius, *Namų užrašai* (Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 2003), 152.

within the six diocese of the Russian Empire lost the traditional ties that they had with each other.⁹ In this way, the democratic elements characteristic of religious orders—namely, the election of provincials and priors as well as chapter meetings—were abolished.¹⁰

The abolition of religious studies

When studies intended to prepare candidates for the religious life were abolished, the traditional system of religious formation was likewise abolished. Instead of the novitiate and then studies, the order was reversed, and seminary studies came before the novitiate. As of December 11, 1844, it was decreed:

[I]n order for a candidate to make religious vows, it is irrefutably necessary that the vows be made freely and with conviction. This conviction should be based on experience and knowledge of the very social life that those who enter an order renounce and on the complete validity of the vows that they must make. And since religious have entered and asked to be dispensed from their vows, which they made—as they express, without having experience and without an inner calling—only because of their teachers' religious influence, the Emperor commands the following in order to protect the monks from such exceptions:

1. All religious who have not yet made their vows (*vota solemnia*) and are studying should enter diocesan seminaries to complete their studies.
2. Those who do not wish to enter the seminary should leave their monasteries. If, however, they wish to join the Order once again, they are required to ask for the government's permission as indicated by the law.
3. All monastic studies must cease.¹¹

Abolition of prerogatives

Religious orders also could no longer determine how many religious lived in a given monastery. After the November Uprising, the Holy See ordered that those monasteries with only a few monks close. Pope Benedict XIV's papal bull of 1744 was the pretext for this cassation. In 1832, Emperor Nicholas I issued a decree that resulted in the liquidation of 199 monasteries.¹²

⁹ M. Valančius, *Namų užrašai*, 188.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 276.

¹² Е.Н. Филатова, “Конфессиональная политика царского правительства в Беларуси 1772–1860 гг.” (Минск : Белорусская наука, 2006). – С. 82.

In the list issued on August 6, 1832, which was based on proposals made by the Minister of the Interior of the Roman Catholic Ecclesiastical College, Article Number 1547 states:

His Imperial Majesty commands:

1. Based on the decrees of 1798, diocesan bishops are granted full authority over monasteries to better organize religious practice in monasteries and to establish strict supervision of religious clergy...
2. All monasteries that are not full and lack the means necessary to maintain order and piety among the religious must be abolished. The names of these monasteries will be placed on a special list. Only the monasteries that take in monks from the abolished monasteries will be excluded from this general rule.
3. Monasteries located between Greek-Russian and Uniate villages and/or whose monks are of an alien faith and are not needed to fulfill any spiritual needs also must be liquidated.¹³

On August 12, 1832, a circular from the Office of the Governor of Vilnius, acting Governor of Grodno and Białystok, was sent to Governor Murawiów of Grodno, stating, among other things: “According to canon law, every monastery should have at least 10 monks. It has been observed for some time that Roman Catholic monasteries in western governorates have fewer than 10 monks. In a papal bull issued in 1744, Benedict VIII declared ‘that many monasteries in Polish provinces have reached [a state of] extreme poverty and are barely able to support two or three monks,’ and he ordered several monasteries to be merged into into one....”¹⁴ This was the explanation for the cassation of the monasteries.

¹³ “1. On the basis of the resolutions of 1798, diocesan bishops are granted complete authority over the monasteries to better organize the monasteries within the deanery and to establish the closest supervision of the monastic clergy possible. 2. Immediately abolish and liquidate all monasteries that do not have the means necessary to maintain order within themselves and the in the deanery, designating them by name in a special document. Only those monasteries that provide housing to monks to a greater or lesser degree are excluded from this general rule. 3. Also to abolish monasteries that are in the middle of Greek-Russian and Uniate villages and whose monks serve in parishes using alien rites that are not useful in fulfilling any spiritual need.” *Ін Нацыянальна гістарычны архіў Беларусі ў г. Гродна (НГАБ Гродна) Ф.1. Воп.27. Спр. 233, к. 7–10.*

¹⁴ “According to canon law, every monastery must consist of at least 10 monastics. In the Roman Catholic monasteries of the Western provinces a lack of this many monastics has, for the most part, already been observed for a long time. Back in 1744, Benedict VIII, declared via a bull ‘that many monasteries in the Polish province have reached a state of extreme poverty and are barely able to support two or three monks’ and ordered that several monasteries be merged into one...” *in НГАБ Гродна Ф.1. Воп. 27. Спр. 233, к. 1–6 адв.*

Subsequent decrees mandated a number of restrictive measures. The decree issued on July 30, 1842 ordered all Roman Catholic monasteries within the Russian Empire be divided into two categories: those to be preserved and those to be abolished (the latter were to be liquidated gradually. The orders that resided in monasteries that were to be preserved were not permitted to have a novitiate, which led to their gradual self-demise. In the Russian Empire a quota of 50 (36 male and 14 female) monasteries was set. In addition to categorizing the monasteries, the aforementioned decree also stipulated that the classes within monasteries should be divided so that the proper number of residents could fill it. For example, a male first-class monastery, should have no less than 22 people; a second-class should have no less than 13 people each, and a third-class should have no less than 13 people. In female monasteries, a first-class monastery should have no less than 19 nuns; second-class should have no less than 16 nuns, and third-class should have no less than 11 nuns.¹⁵

If a vacancy arose in a preserved monastery, then a monk from the same order but another monastery was transferred to fill the vacancy. As long as a monastery that was designated to be abolished had resident members, new members were forbidden to enter.¹⁶ Individuals who entered religious orders after 1829 or who worked with parish priests without the Minister of the Interior's approval did not receive financial support from the treasury.¹⁷ Consequently, the number of monasteries steadily decreased. In 1864, there were 16 male monasteries designated to be preserved and 5 male monasteries designated to be abolished as well as 12 female monasteries designated to be preserved and 4 female monasteries designated to be abolished¹⁸ in the 6 western provinces.¹⁹ By 1905, this number had fallen to only 3 monasteries in Belarus: the Franciscans and Brigittines in Grodno and the Bernardines in Słonimiu.

Abolition of economic freedoms

The Russian authorities made another series of decisions to prevent Catholic orders and congregations and their monasteries from performing their economic roles. On December 25, 1841, Emperor

¹⁵ *Католическая Церковь накануне революции 1917 г. Сборник документов.* – С. 45.

¹⁶ M. Valančius, *M. Natų užrašai*, 140.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ В.В. Яноўская, *Хрысціянская царква ў Беларусі ў 1863–1914 гг* (Мінск: БДУ, 2002), 44.

¹⁹ Wileńska, Witebska, Grodzieńska, Mińska, Mohylewska, Kowieńska.

Nicholas I issued a decree that changed how monasteries could make a living. By virtue of this decree, all immovable and settled monastic properties were to be handed over to and placed at the disposal of the Ministry of State Property.²⁰

On January 1, 1842, a second similar decree was issued. This decree divided monasteries based on whether they were designated to be preserved or abolished and class, and then allocated a designated subsistence to each. First-class monasteries received 3,185 rubles annually, second-class monasteries obtained 2,155 rubles, and third-class collected 1,455 rubles. Financing for monasteries designated to be abolished depended on the number of inhabitants; 40 rubles were allocated to each person annually.²¹ On January 15, 1842, all capital belonging to the Catholic Church, including monastic capital and capital designated to maintain educational facilities were confiscated and handed over to the treasury.²²

Abolition of educational and social roles

The Russian Empire began to place limitations on the educational role of monasteries beginning in 1820 when it banned the Jesuits from the empire. Other religious orders, however, were still able to run both primary (parochial) and secondary (district and middle) schools. Changes in the borders of academic districts that took effect during the 1820s played a role in the ban on running educational institutions that was placed on some religious orders (e.g., the Dominicans at Orsha, who had taken over after the Jesuits, were banned). The cassation of monasteries that took place in 1832 naturally caused the educational institutions associated with them to close. In the late 1830s, all male religious orders were forbidden from educating the laity, and by the mid-1840s, the same occurred to female religious orders.²³

Abolition of monastic archives and libraries

Needless to say, the mass wave of cassations negatively affected monastic archives. During the dissolution of the monasteries, documents that were stored in the archives were divided into different categories,

²⁰ Valančius, M. *Namų užrašai*, 142.

²¹ Ibid, 138.

²² Ibid, 146.

²³ Р.У. Зянюк, *Навучальныя ўстановы рымска-каталіцкай царквы ў Беларусі (1772 – 1914 гг.)* (Мінск 2017).

depending on the content: economic-financial and other. The Russian authorities were interested only in documents from the first category, since they provided proof of the monasteries financial and economic supply networks. The Russian authorities took these documents to the Office of the Treasury to ensure that the empire could take over all of the property and confirm its rights to it. For example, during the cassation of the monastery that belong to the Bernardines in Mścisław in September 1832, the monastery archive was described as a separate item in the inventory of the estate and monastic buildings. A special delegate of the State Treasury had to deliver such documents.²⁴ Documents made from hazelnuts, which recorded who owned the land, settlements, peasants, and tertiaries, were of particular interest because the moment that the monastery was liquidated, everything was taken to the treasury and would become the basis for auxiliary capital for Catholic clergy. Such documents were to be handed over to a special delegate of the State Treasury.

In some cases, the second category of documents was transferred to diocesan archives or transported to another monastery of the same religious order. Sometimes these documents were also handed over to secular authorities. In other instances, the documents were not moved at all and were destroyed (e.g. due to poor storage conditions) over time.²⁵

When the institutions that existed at the monasteries were liquidated, their documents were transferred to the appropriate department.²⁶ When the religious communities were cassated, most often their documents were destroyed. For example, on April 20, 1868, the General-Governor of Vilnius, Kaunas, Minsk, and Grodno issued an

²⁴ Нацыянальны гістарычны архіў Беларусі (НГАБ). Ф. 2001. Воп. 1. Спр. 137. Р.У. “Зянюк, Касацыя рымска-каталіцкіх кляштараў у Мсціславе ў XIX ст.,” *Веснік Магілёўскага дзяржаўнага ўніверсітэта імя Куляшова*. – Серыя А. Гуманітарныя навукі 57, № 1 (2021): 35–41. Р.В. Зенюк, “Организация, деятельность и судьбы архивов римско-католических монастырей Беларуси в конце XVIII – XIX веке,” *Вестник Брянского государственного университета* 45№3 (2020): 62–71.

²⁵ Р.У. Зянюк, “Касацыя рымска-каталіцкіх кляштараў у Мсціславе ў XIX ст.,” *Веснік Магілёўскага дзяржаўнага ўніверсітэта імя Куляшова*. – Серыя А. Гуманітарныя навукі 57, № 1 (2021): 35–41, Р.В. Зенюк, “Организация, деятельность и судьбы архивов римско-католических монастырей Беларуси в конце XVIII – XIX веке,” *Вестник Брянского государственного университета* 45, №3 (2020): 62–71.

²⁶ НГАБ. Ф. 1781. Воп. 2. Спр. 2461.

order to close all parish fraternities. All of the fraternities' symbolic signage and books had to be burned.²⁷

The abolition of these monastic roles was the result the Russian authorities' policies, which were intended to preserve and strengthen the position of the Orthodox Church in Belarusian-Lithuanian lands. These policies were meant, for example, to restrict and prohibit education and ban missionary activity, which could at least indirectly affect the Catholic Church's influence on the people's desire to convert to Catholicism. The Russian authorities did not fully understand the essence and peculiarities of the relationship between religious orders and their monasteries; therefore, they often thought of the monastery as independent when performing different tasks. The incorporation of Belarusian-Lithuanian lands into the Russian Empire prompted the authorities to apply their Orthodox understanding of monastic life to the Catholic one. In this way, the manner in which monasteries were organized and not the way of life of the religious orders that inhabited them became the focus. As a result, Catholic monasteries also took over tasks and functions that were characteristic of Orthodox monasteries and not traditional for Roman Catholic religious.

The first function that the secular authorities imposed on Roman Catholic monasteries was to make them serve as penitentiaries.²⁸ In this regard, Orthodox monasteries served as a model for the Catholic monasteries. In Russia, it was common to send people who had socialization issues or other problems with state or church law to monasteries.

The transformation of Roman Catholic monasteries into penitentiaries came about solely through the actions of the civil authorities: They were the ones who chose to "place [offenders] in a monastery" as a means of punishment. At the same time, they did not choose specific monasteries. Instead, verdicts simply noted: "one of the distant monasteries,"²⁹ "Belarusian monasteries," etc. In turn, the clerical authorities (e.g., consistory) selected the monastery. The provincials or priors of monasteries were required to carry out the sentences in the monasteries under their governance.

²⁷ Р.У. Зянюк, "Барацьба з рымска-каталіцкімі брацтвамі як форма абмежавання ўплыву касцёла ў другой палове XIX стт.," *Паўстанне 1863 – 1864 гг. у Польшчы, Беларусі, Літве і Украіне: гісторыя і памяць : зб. навук. арт.*, арт. В.В. Яноўская, А.У. Унучак, and А.Э. Фірыновіч, ed. А.А. Каваленя et. al (Мінск : Бел. навука, 2014), 287.

²⁸ For the purpose of this article, by penitentiary is meant prison or correctional facility.

²⁹ НГАБ. Ф.1781. Воп. 2. Спр. 3157, к. 13.

The role of monasteries serving as penitentiaries became particularly important after the November Uprising. After the uprising was suppressed, those from the Kingdom of Poland and western governorates who were accused of participating in it or had “connections with the insurgents” and were convicted as “rebel sympathizers” (сочувствующие мятежникам) served their sentences in Belarusian monasteries. One such individual, Fr. Kamasiński, from the Kingdom of Poland was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment in a monastery for being “connected with insurgents.”³⁰ He was placed first in the Dominican monastery in Polotsk. In the spring of 1835, he was transferred to the monastery of the Canons Regular of the Lateran in Bychów where he continued his sentence.³¹

According to the confirmation of the Governor-General of Vilnius, Grodno, Minsk, and Białystok in 1834, Fr. Anatoly Szymborski, the parish priest of the church in Eziorosy, was among the “people of various ranks convicted of being complicit and liaising with the emissary Szymański from France.” He served his sentence in the Bernardine monastery in Mogilev. The notes indicate that he had to be placed “under strict supervision.”³² Fr. Szymborski was transferred to the Dominican monastery in Ałtona and placed “under the strict supervision of both the clergy and the police.”³³ He was then moved because of “illegal activities”³⁴ such as unauthorized entry into the city, as reported by the local police. According to the report, “instead of remaining permanently in the monastery, he freely moves about everywhere and even teaches students publicly in Mariawitek and in the home of the former commander Wyłoskow and of councilor Radkewicz.”³⁵ In addition, the prior of the monastery complained about Fr. Szyborski’s behavior, adding that “he has neither honor nor a conscience,”³⁶ and “due to his restless nature, Szymborski cannot be tolerated in the life of the monastic community.”³⁷

The Commission of Investigation of Political Criminals, Fr. Feliks Wyszyński, from the Diocese of Vilnius and Fr. Józef Reniger from

³⁰ НГАБ. Ф.1781. Воп. 2. Спр.546, к. 1.

³¹ НГАБ. Ф. 1781. Воп. 2. Спр. 546, к. 4.

³² НГАБ. Ф. 1781. Воп. 2. Спр. 555, к. 2-2 адв.

³³ НГАБ. Ф. 1781. Воп. 2. Спр. 555, к. 2 адв.

³⁴ НГАБ. Ф. 1781. Воп. 2. Спр. 555, к. 8

³⁵ НГАБ. Ф. 1781. Воп. 2. Спр. 555, к. 10-10 адв.

³⁶ НГАБ. Ф. 1781. Воп. 2. Спр. 555, к. 8 адв.

³⁷ НГАБ. Ф. 1781. Воп. 2. Спр. 555, к. 10 адв.

Żyrmuny to the Bernardine monastery in Mogilev—the former in 1847³⁸ and the latter in 1848—for “a punishable and dangerous way of thinking.”³⁹ Over time, both priest were also permitted to go into the city regularly.⁴⁰

By the beginning of 1844, the Roman Catholic Ecclesiastical College requested that the Minister of the Interior pay a certain amount to support Catholic priests who, by order of the civil authorities, were being detained in monasteries as punishment. In a letter dated February 8, 1844, the minister replied to this appeal, stating that, by virtue of the highest decree issued on October 21, 1843, he agreed that 4 silver rubles from the auxiliary capital for clergy would be issued monthly to every priest detained by order of the civil authorities and placed in a monastery until his case had been reviewed. He entrusted the Roman Catholic Ecclesiastical College with this duty.⁴¹

Most often, “political” priests were sent to following monasteries: the Bernardines in Mogilev, the Franciscans in Grodno, and the Dominicans in Ałona. The authorities’ execution of such sentences was complicated by their own repression of the Catholic Church: after the first wave of closures and liquidation of the monasteries in 1832, the authorities halved the places to which they could exile clergy in Belarus. Of the monasteries that remained, those that could serve as prisons were limited by the number of monks residing in them and the living conditions.

As of May 1, 1851, 5 priests had been sentenced to imprisonment in 3 monasteries in the Mogilev and Vitebsk governorates. Two aforementioned priests were sentenced to imprisonment in the second-class monastery of the Bernardines in Mogilev, which was designated to be preserved. The Commission of Investigation of Political Criminals sentenced Fr. Feliks Wszyński to incarceration beginning on March 22, 1848. He was to receive 16 rubles per month for room and board. The high commander of the army sentenced Fr. Józef Reniger to imprisonment in the Bernardine monastery beginning in December 1848. Like Fr. Wszyński, Fr. Reniger received 16 rubles per month in accordance with Metropolitan Dmochowski’s proposal. One priest, Fr. Adam Szbuniewicz, was imprisoned in the Dominican monastery in Ałona beginning on March 2, 1851, while two priests were imprisoned

³⁸ НГАБ Ф. 1781. Воп. 2. Спр. 3150, к. 1-2.

³⁹ НГАБ Ф. 1781. Воп. 2. Спр. 3150, к. 9.

⁴⁰ НГАБ Ф. 1781. Воп. 2. Спр. 3150, к. 24 адв.

⁴¹ M. Valančius, *Namų užrašai*, 270.

in the preserved Dominican monastery in Zabiały: Fr. Jan Poliński in 1836, and Fr. Kleogas Katkiewicz in 1850.⁴²

The next wave of monastic imprisonments began as a result of the “political” sentences that were issued for those who participated in the January Uprising, which had been suppressed. In 1870, a monk from the Carmelite monastery in Vilnius, Saturnin Budin, was accused of “receiving a circular with criminal content that was sent by Fr. Stanisław Piotrowicz on March 25; of not showing it immediately to his superiors; and of being permitted to show it to others after keeping it for a long time.” For this offense, “by order of the Head of State, he was sent to the Franciscan monastery in Grodno”⁴³ to live “under the priory’s surveillance.” The police escorted such individuals to the monasteries. The governorate authorities had to inform both the local commandant via a special report and the prior when these individuals were brought and admitted to the monasteries.⁴⁴ Such sentences usually lasted one year, as was the case of Saturnin Budin, who was sent to Grodno on April 5, 1870 and was released in May 1871 by the order of the Governor-General of Minsk, Kaunas, and Grodno. The monastery guard, the Dean of Grodno, and the Governor of Grodno were informed about this in writing. After serving his sentence, Fr. Budin had to return to Vilnius.⁴⁵

Monasteries served as penitentiaries until the beginning of the twentieth century.⁴⁶ Even those who had committed non-political crimes were imprisoned in them. Such restrictive and corrective measures were called penance (эпитимия). Most often, those who were incarcerated were alcoholics and mentally ill clergy. Fr. Klemens Mikucki was sent to the Dominican monastery in Zabiały for alcoholism.⁴⁷ Fr. Olszewski was also sent to the Franciscan monastery in Vilnius for alcoholism in the autumn of 1837.⁴⁸ In 1853, the consistory decided to send the pastor of the parish in Faszczów, Fr. Misiewicz, to the Bernardine monastery in Mogilev for drunkenness.⁴⁹ In the autumn of

⁴² НГАБ. Ф. 1781. Воп. 2. Спр. 3150, к. 38-39.

⁴³ НГАБ (Гродна). Ф. 1. Воп. 6. Спр. 2049, к. 1-1 адв.

⁴⁴ НГАБ (Гродна). Ф. 1. Воп. 6. Спр. 2049, к. 4,5.

⁴⁵ НГАБ (Гродна). Ф. 1. Воп. 6. Спр. 2049, 1870 г., к. 6, 8, 9.

⁴⁶ НГАБ (Гродна). Ф. 1. Воп. 18. Спр. 809, НГАБ (Гродна). Ф. 1. Воп. 18. Спр. 808, НГАБ (Гродна). Ф. 1. Воп. 18. Спр. 807.

⁴⁷ НГАБ. Ф. 1781. Воп. 2. Спр. 2292.

⁴⁸ НГАБ. Ф. 1781. Воп. 2. Спр. 2044.

⁴⁹ НГАБ. Ф. 1781. Воп. 2. Спр. 3912, к. 5-6.

1836, the priest of the parish in Leszczyłów, Fr. Jan Wojdak, was sent to the monastery in Zabiały for one month of penance. According to the prior of the monastery, Fr. Donat Olseyko, Fr. Wojdak was duly humble throughout his “month-long retreat.”⁵⁰

The length of the sentences varied: some lasted 10 years, while others lasted one year or one month. The length of other sentences was undetermined (“until rehabilitated”). Catholic monasteries did not adapt well to serving as penitentiaries: first, because they did not have a tradition of forcefully confining people, and second, because they did not have the means (including financial) to do so, especially after 1842. As a result, the monasteries’ role as a penitentiary was completely formal. Priests who were sent to monasteries had virtually no restrictions other than serving as actual clergy: for example, they were banned from preaching or hearing confessions. They had the ability to leave the monastery every day; therefore, their imprisonment was not “corrective” as such. For example, according to the prior of the Dominican monastery in Zabiały, Fr. Klemens Mikucki, who had been sent there in 1841 for drunkenness, went to the local inn every day and even spent the night there on occasion. The lack of control allowed Fr. Mikucki to escape from the monastery twice.⁵¹

“Prisoners” were transferred from one monastery to another, which made it difficult for monasteries to fulfill their penitentiary role. The aforementioned Fr. Klemens Mikucki, who was imprisoned in the Dominican monastery in Zabiały for 3 years (1841-1844), was transferred to the Bernardine monastery in Mogilev in 1844. However, soon after, he was transferred elsewhere because the monks complained that they were unable to keep Mikucki in the monastery due to his mental illness and suicidal tendencies and requested that he be moved to another “institution that is pleasing to God.” When he returned to the Dominican monastery “cured” one year later, he soon began to behave obscenely again; he drank, left the monastery without permission, and roamed the city drunk.⁵²

Sometimes and for different reasons diocesan clergy expressed a desire to live temporarily in monasteries. In principle, this phenomenon was normal; priors or religious leaders would decide to permit a diocesan priest to live at a monastery if he requested. During the second half of the nineteenth century, however, the order of command for making such decisions changed. Therefore, when Fr. Ferdynand

⁵⁰ НГАБ. Ф. 1781. Воп. 2. Спр. 620, к. 6-6 v.

⁵¹ НГАБ. Ф. 1781. Воп. 2. Спр. 2292.

⁵² НГАБ. Ф. 1781. Воп. 2. Спр. 2292, к. 31, 34 v. 35, 60-62.

Sęczykowski wanted to live in the Franciscan monastery in Grodno in the summer of 1882, he sent a request to the Governor-General of Vilnius, Kaunas, and Grodno, asking to be released from his position due to a serious decline in his health and requesting to live in a monastery. It was the governorate authorities that dealt with this problem. After consulting with the Minister of the Interior, the Office of the Governor-General sent an inquiry to the Governor of Grodno about transferring Sęczykowski.⁵³ The Governor of Grodno consulted only with the Commander of Grodno, who decided that there were “no impediments” to this.⁵⁴ Then the situation developed through notification. The Minister of the Interior sent an order to the administrator of the Diocese of Vilnius, Msgr. Żyliński, who then informed the custodian of the Grodno monastery in Steckiewicz. In a letter dated July 31, 1882, Msgr. Żyliński informed the Governor of Grodno about the orders that had been issued and noted that Fr. Sęczykowski had been granted a pension of 500 rubles per year and that, due to the small number of religious living in the monastery in Grodno, the “custodian of the Franciscan monastery in Grodno should be ordered to prepare a room in the monastery.”⁵⁵

However, solving such issues from the top-down did not take into consideration the aspects of the local life both of a small religious community and the broader surrounding community. For example, allowing a famous representative of the polonized church and proponent of its russification to reside in a monastery caused an uproar and was met with hostility, as the head of the Grodno provincial police secretly reported to the voivode in December 1882:

Meanwhile, Sęczykowski’s introduction and use of Russian in this devotion and another Catholic prayer book in the province of Minsk provoked fanatic priests, who did not allow for the possibility that Polonism could be separate from Catholicism, against him. Many priests do not even consider it necessary to hide their anger from Sęczykowski. Thus, the abbot of the Franciscan monastery, Father Steckiewicz, completely ignored Sęczykowski when he was placed in that monastery, refusing even to accept from him the candlesticks that he had donated to the altar and the church. As I recall, on December 7, the Franciscan monk Fr. Lyavnich (?) did not agree to hear Fr. Sęczykowski’s confession and told him that he had been excommunicated from the church. I then contacted the dean of the church in Grodno Garnago, the Archdeacon of Białystok, Fr. Jan Małyszewicz, who explained that Father Lavnichy,

⁵³ НГАБ (Гродна). Ф. 1. Воп. 8. Спр. 811, к. 1.

⁵⁴ НГАБ (Гродна). Ф. 1. Воп. 8. Спр. 811, к. 3.

⁵⁵ НГАБ (Гродна). Ф. 1. Воп. 8. Спр. 811, к. 5.

who is 74 years of age, often suffers from rushes of blood to the head and dizziness, and therefore does not remember whether Fr. Sęczykowski approached him and asked him to hear his confession and whether he told Fr. Sęczykowski that he was excommunicated. Not rejecting the possibility that he could have lied about the above occurrence, and considering it incompatible with the dignity of the authorities to permit such a person whose loyalty to the government is unquestionable to be treated in such a manner, I attribute the antics of Lyavnich to the bad influence of Abbot Steckiewicz, who, moreover, according to the rumors that have repeatedly reached me, taking advantage of the isolated location of the monastery on the outskirts of the city of Cemn, he often travels to the countryside without permission, and the close proximity of the Suwałki Voivodeship makes it possible for him to indiscriminately and excessively hear the confessions of the inhabitants of that area, which ultimately may have negative consequences.⁵⁶

This situation provoked a wave of proceedings that involved the governor, the director of the Department of Foreign Cults, and the monastery's inhabitants. Clearly, the governor was aware of Steckiewicz's character, which he wrote about in his letters. As a result of the trial, the monastery custodian was warned that it was inadmissible to beat Sęczykowski. The governor informed the director of the department of the outcome: "There is no evidence to suggest that Fr. Steckiewicz is politically or morally unreliable, and keeping in mind that Fr. Steckiewicz has a somewhat restless character and, therefore, can get carried away by his emotions, which evokes the hatred of those around him, he does not manifest this in a concrete way. I limited myself, therefore, to convincing Fr. Steckiewicz by warning him that [if I receive] further complaints [I will] remove him from his position as guardian."

Occasionally, the Russian authorities used the monasteries as penitentiaries for laypeople. For example, convicted minors served their sentences there in 1834.⁵⁷ This, however, did not become a permanent practice.

Criminal psychiatric ward

The first recorded abuses took place in Grodno in March 1836. Without the prioress of the Bernardine monastery Dominika Wasilewska's consent and even against her expressed opposition, the policeman Baiczewski placed three mentally ill women in her monastery.⁵⁸ The

⁵⁶ НГАБ (Гродна). Ф. 1. Воп. 8. Спр. 811, к. 12-13 v.

⁵⁷ НГАБ (Гродна). Ф. 1. Воп. 19. Спр. 822.

⁵⁸ НГАБ (Гродна). Ф. 1. Воп. 19. Спр. 1222.

bailiffs and the chief of police sarcastically claimed that they could not find any other rooms with bars on the windows that would be available for the Bernardines.⁵⁹

In 1867, the noblewoman Bronisława Wieczerkowska was ordered to be placed in the Cistercian monastery in Kimbarw “on suspicion of associating with insurgents.”⁶⁰ At first, she was exiled to the city of Chembarý in the Penza Governorate. With time, Mrs. Wieczorkowska exhibited mental problems, and the governors of Penza and Minsk as well as the minister of the interior decided to send her to the Cistercian monastery in Kimbarówka. Bronisława arrived to Kimbarówka on July 18, 1867. However, by 1871 her mental health had worsened (she had phobia of being poisoned in the monastery). As a result, the authorities decided to transfer her to the Dominican monastery in Nieśwież. At that time, however, the only Dominican monastery there was male.⁶¹

Residences for elderly and sick priests

As the number of monasteries in the Russian Empire decreased, so too did the hospitals associated with them. The authorities, however, decided to take advantage of this situation by turning old monasteries into homes for elderly and sick priests. In a decree issued on November 3, 1843 under the pretext of caring for elderly and sick clergy, the Emperor ordered that regular monasteries be designated as housing for elderly and sick clergy. In addition, disabled priests were to receive an annual salary of 50 to 100 rubles, according to their merits. For this purpose, certain sums were taken from the funds for Roman Catholic clergy and given to the bishops based on the number of parishes in a diocese. And so, the Diocese of Mogilev was given 1450 rubles, the Diocese of Minsk was granted 1100 rubles, and the Diocese of Vilnius was allotted 450 rubles. The bishops of every diocese had to send an account to the Roman Catholic Ecclesiastical College detailing how the money was spent.

One of the remaining monasteries in the Archdiocese of Mogilev—the Dominican monastery in Czaszniki—was chosen for the exclusive purpose of housing priests from the archdiocese. The housing was financed from the auxiliary capital for the clergy, which was created after the monasteries were closed and liquidated and their property

⁵⁹ НГАБ (Гродна). Ф. 1. Воп. 19. Спр. 1222.

⁶⁰ Российский государственный исторический архив (РГИА). Ф. 821. Оп. 1. Д. 1186.

⁶¹ РГИА. Ф. 821. Оп. 1. Д. 1186, к. 1, 5, 7-7v.

was consolidated into the treasury.⁶² However, according to the registered complaints of the monastery prior, Fr. Wincenty Spodoba, these payments ceased or were delayed for a significant length of time during the first few years. This delay was due to the fact that the dioceses needed to give a complete account of the funds received both to the clerical and secular authorities.⁶³

The bishops tried to oppose the transformation of monasteries into homes for elderly priests and correctional facilities. On December 27, 1861, Bishop of Vilnius Adam Stanisław Krasiński sent a letter to Metropolitan Żyliński asking him to pass it on to the emperor. In the letter, Bishop Krasiński described the situation of the Roman Catholic Church in his own diocese. In general, the diocese was constantly deteriorating both in the number of clergy, which resulted in a lack of men to serve in parishes, and facilities. In this regard, the bishop proposed that a series of measures be implemented to help strengthen the Church's position. Point 12 of the measure proposes that, "based on the decree of 1832, a sum from auxiliary capital be released for the establishment of an institution for elderly priests and those suffering from incurable diseases," and in point 13 he suggests that "the government build a house for criminal priests."⁶⁴

Boarding houses

Due to the policies that the Russian authorities implemented, Roman Catholic monasteries in Belarus ceased to be religiously affiliated. The Russian authorities turned the monasteries into boarding houses that were run by members of different religious orders who were sent from liquidated monasteries. After the Dominican monastery in Nowogródek was closed for not being "politically transparent" in 1864, some of the nuns were transferred to the Brigittine monastery in Grodno while others (9 nuns) were moved to the Benedictine monastery in Minsk. On September 2, 1868,⁶⁵ Mariavites from the convent in Połock (Katarzyna Michałowska, Anastazja Pogodicka, Anna Łyko, Sołomea Gasperska, Florentyna Kiselewna, Rozalia Weryho, Agnieszka Balewiczóna, Klara Kruszewska, Franciszka Szymakowska, and Paulina Wołkowiczówna)⁶⁶ were sent to the Bernardine convent

⁶² НГАБ. Ф. 1781. Воп. 2. Спр. 1911, without card numeration.

⁶³ НГАБ. Ф. 1781. Воп. 2. Спр. 1911, without card numeration.

⁶⁴ Літоўскі дзяржаўны гістарычны архіў (LVIA). Ф. 694. Воп. 1, Спр. 2162. к. 2, 2v., 42.

⁶⁵ НГАБ (Гродна). Ф. 1. Воп. 6. Спр. 1661, к. 4.

⁶⁶ НГАБ (Гродна). Ф. 1. Воп. 6. Спр. 1661, к. 6.

in Słonim. The following were transferred to the Benedictine convent in Vilnius: 14 Mariavites in 1864, 2 Bernardines in January 1865, and 17 Carmelites in February 1865.⁶⁷

A similar situation occurred in 1867 in the Dominican convent in Nieśwież where 16 Dominicans, 9 Bernardines, 9 Benedictines, 2 Cistercians, and 2 Franciscans lived together.⁶⁸ Both diocesan clergy and religious from different orders were sent to this monastery. Records from December 1885 indicate that nuns from various Bernardine convents (Grodno, Kroże, Vilnius) and Mariavite convent in Połock lived together in the Bernardine monastery in Słonim.⁶⁹

In Grodno, boarding houses were divided into male and female—the female Briggittines and the male Franciscans. Members from almost all of the religious orders in Belarus and Lithuania were living in the Franciscan monastery in Grodno in the 1860s. From 1864-1865, Bernardines from the monastery in Słonim (Klefald Chylkiewicz and Filip Tarasiewicz), Marians from the monastery in Rasnia (Piotr Kryński, Joachim Piotrowski, and Karol Osmulski), the Piarists (Stanisław Jakukiewicz and Tomasz Siemienowicz), the Dominicans from the monastery in Poławeń (Dominik Polijan, Karol Frąckiewicz, and M. Jurewicz), and a Bonifraters from the monastery in Vilnius (Jan Skalski) were transferred there.⁷⁰

In 1980, the Briggittines Eleanora Skrzenewska (71 years old), Antonina Żakiewich (72), Katarzyna Sarasiek (75), Juliana Strzyczaska (70); the Dominicans Teresa Korsak (84), Katarzyna Garkowicz (67); the Benedictines Sofia Odyniec (71), Scholastyka Chodasiewicz (44), and Katarzyna Cwirko (76) lived in the Bridgittine convent in Grodno. The government allocated a certain amount of money to support every person in each monastery, depending on the class of the monastery to which the person was transferred. So, the Grodno monastery received 40 rubles per year for each of the Dominican nuns transferred to Grodno. The Grodno Franciscan monastery received the same amount for every monk who was transferred there. Long delays in payment to support those transferred from other monasteries were a regular occurrence. Because life in common among so many different religious orders was complex, religious often requested to be transferred to a monastery that was run by “their own” order.

⁶⁷ А.И. Ганчар, *Римско-католическая церковь в Беларуси (вт. пол. 19 – нач. 20 вв.)* (Гродно: Исторический очерк, 2010), 112.

⁶⁸ НГАБ. Ф. 937. Воп. 6. Спр. 107.

⁶⁹ НГАБ (Гродна). Ф. 1. Воп. 8. Спр. 1352., к. 16

⁷⁰ НГАБ (Гродна). Ф. 1. Воп. 6. 1661, к. 11-12.

Because of the Russian government's policies from the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, many Roman Catholic monasteries ceased to function as they traditionally had as educational, economic, medical, and charitable centers. Instead, they took over roles that were traditional to Orthodox monasteries: prisons and correctional facilities. In addition, these same Roman Catholic monasteries also lost their religious identity as the members of various different religious orders and congregations were forced to live together under the same monastic roof.

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Models of State Ethical Neutrality in Selected Areas of Social Life

Contemporary societies are increasingly pluralistic, even in terms of their values, ideals, and norms of behavior. What should the state and its institution's attitude be toward citizens who have different and sometimes contradictory views on moral issues? One proposition is the principle of neutrality, particularly in the most controversial areas. This article outlines the characteristics of basic models of ethical neutrality and their practical application in specific areas of social life. A critical assessment of the consequences of introducing this principle sheds light on the need to search for a different definition of the state's role in morality.

Key words: ethical neutrality, morality, family.

Contemporary social life has become increasingly pluralistic and includes a variety of views on moral values, ideals, principles, and ethical norms. In order for society today to function well, it is necessary to determine the state's relationship to its citizens' morality. Among the different approaches, the model of ethical neutrality seems to correspond best to the secular, modern state. The multiplicity of ethical views that citizens uphold today seems to support the idea that the state should remain completely neutral and leave morality up to the choice of the individual. However, is such neutrality possible? In order to answer this question, it is important to recall that neutrality can take different forms and, as experience demonstrates, can be both a positive and negative thing. Moreover, attempts to remain neutral in some areas of social life have already proven very difficult. What is neutrality? What models of neutrality exist? On what is state neutrality regarding marriage and family life, education, culture, law,

politics, economics, medicine, and the media based? What are the true intentions of proponents of neutrality? And finally, what is the Roman Catholic Church's attitude toward neutrality?

Models of Neutrality

Neutrality (from the Latin word “*neuter*,” meaning “neutral, neither one nor the other”) means indifference, impartiality, non-preference, and non-interference in the affairs of others.¹ It can apply to different areas, including social, political, and religious life. An individual or an entire society can be neutral. In the latter case, being neutral means a group or institution's lack of any involvement for other individuals or societies' benefit. If this lack of involvement concerns defense or the promotion of certain norms or values, then it is called ethical neutrality. According to ethical neutrality, each person can choose to live the lifestyle that suits him. The state that is ethically neutral declares that it cannot recommend or prohibit certain lifestyles. Individual citizens decide whether something is good or bad.

In practice, the promotion of state ethical neutrality often corresponds with the rejection of the Christian religion and morality. As a result, different models of neutrality that have different ideas about the role of ethics in the public sphere have been developed. Some of these models refer to materialism and are based in atheism. Others try to define the framework for collaboration between state institutions, the Catholic Church, and other religious associations with regard to promoting certain attitudes and values. There are three basic models of worldview neutrality that reflect a broader relationship between the state and churches.

The American model of separation of church and state is based on the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. This amendment prohibits the federal government from establishing a state religion and limiting religious freedom. The American model also prohibits all state interference in the internal affairs of religious associations and ensures churches' complete independence from the state in managing their affairs. In the USA, churches are classified as institutions of higher public utility.² Europe has not adopted this system.

¹ See P. Borecki, “Państwo neutralne światopoglądowo – ujęcie komparatystyczne,” *Studia z Prawa Wyznaniowego* 9 (2006): 75.

² See M. Gołda-Sobczak, “Systemy relacji między państwem a kościołami i związkami wyznaniowymi,” *Środkowoeuropejskie Studia Polityczne*, no. 1 (2008): 86-89.

The (extremely liberal) system of hostile separation between church and state in the French constitution was formed in opposition to (and not cooperation with) traditional religions. In the French version, the church is not a legal personality and can function only as a religious association. Thus, religion is completely “privatized” in France, which limits citizens’ expression of their religious beliefs as much as possible. For example, in France, where this system arose, it is still prohibited to teach religion in public schools. According to this model of neutrality, all religious instruction has been removed from school curricula programs, religious values have been removed from education, and religion is treated as a manifestation of intellectual underdevelopment. This mode was introduced into schools in France in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In reality, this is not actual neutrality, but rather the depreciation of one worldview in favor of another. Currently, this radical stance on religion has been waning.

The third model, known as the coordinated separation system, the open system, or the German model, was determined based on open dialogue between the state and the dominant Christian sects in Germany. This model features a functional and institutional symbiosis between state structures and traditional religions. The model was established under the provisions of the Weimar Constitution of 1919, which explicitly states that Germany has no official state church, but that it recognizes and ensures religious freedom as a fundamental human right. Unlike in France, the churches have legal personality in Germany. Each church, therefore, can decide on its activities within the state. In addition, churches can collaborate with the state to address and resolve all types of issues.³ This system is prevalent in Europe.⁴

An analysis of the constitutional regulations of contemporary European countries shows that these countries use the following models in order to resolve the issue at hand: a religious state,⁵ a secular state that is neutral by remaining closed to religious values (radically secular), as well as a secular state where neutrality is open (moderately secular). In light of these distinctions, two concepts are often mistakenly used interchangeably: “neutrality” and “secularism.” A state with a

³ See T. Kamiński, “Relacje państwo–Kościół w obszarze usług socjalnych na przykładzie Stanów Zjednoczonych, Francji i Niemiec,” *Nurt SVD* 2 (2017): 365-368.

⁴ See K. Orzeszyna, “Neutralność wyznaniowa,” in *Encyklopedia Katolicka*, vol. 13, 965-966.

⁵ P. Borecki describes the different features and versions of a religious state. See “Znamiona państwa wyznaniowego. Uwagi na kanwie dorobku współczesnego konstytucjonalizmu,” *Studia Prawa Publicznego* (2018): 33-53.

neutral worldview does not promote a particular religion or worldview. Such a state does not value religions but it treats them all equally. The public forum is open to any religion or religious symbolism. A state with a neutral worldview has a liberal (in the most universal sense of the word) attitude toward religion. In a state that has a neutral worldview, every person can practice whichever religion he pleases, be it agnosticism or atheism. No one can pressure, command, or prohibit others to profess or denounce a certain worldview. National axiology in this type of state is the subject of a living tradition that is continually enriched as it works toward social harmony. The United States of America, Germany, and Great Britain are examples of states with neutral worldviews.

The secular state, on the other hand, removes all manifestations of religiosity from the public sphere. The difference between a secular and atheistic state is essentially quantitative, not qualitative. The atheistic state seeks to remove religion from the private realm of its citizens. The secular state, however, does not think that religious worship should take place at all within political, social, or public spaces. The secular state creates its own axiology based on currently accepted philosophical and social doctrines, which it imposes on its citizens. The same type of state also creates its own rituals and symbols based around the axiology that it has invented and imposed, and these rituals and symbols resemble religious rituals and symbols. France is an example of a secular state.⁶

The liberal model is currently the dominant model in the contemporary world. According to this model, morality should be forced onto citizens' private lives. This is especially true in the case of those who provide social services. Because of the social role that they play, these individuals are expected to uphold and promote the morals that the state and society propose within the public sphere. If such individuals have any of their own moral convictions, then they should keep these private, "leave" them at home, and be guided at work (hospital, school, office) by the requirements formulated by state institutions, since the state and the community are the ones that assign them to the specific roles that individuals must fulfill. In this spirit, the public servant (doctor, teacher, official) must change his moral convictions and support official social beliefs.⁷

⁶ See F. Szymanek, "Formy prawnej instytucjonalizacji rozdziału państwa i Kościoła," *Studia z Prawa Wyznaniowego* 11 (2008): 50-52.

⁷ See T. Biesaga, "Zagrożenia sumienia lekarza," *Medycyna Praktyczna* 7-8 (2005): 20.

Within the liberal model, the state harbors a hidden desire to blur the lines between what is legal and what is moral. This is the reason why the liberal state seeks to push morality onto its citizens within their private lives. The reverse, however, is prohibited: individuals cannot impose their private beliefs in the public realm. No one can impose rules of conscience on the state and society. This is particularly true for those who perform social functions; they are expected to remain morally and religiously neutral.

Which model does Poland follow? What type of state is the Republic of Poland? The Constitution of the Republic of Poland states: “Churches and other religious organizations shall have equal rights. Public authorities in the Republic of Poland shall be impartial in matters of personal conviction, whether religious or philosophical, or in relation to outlooks on life, and shall insure their freedom of expression within public life.”⁸ Article 53 states that “Freedom of conscience and religion shall be ensured to everyone,”⁹ and continues by stating,

Freedom of religion shall include the freedom to profess or to accept a religion by personal choice as well as to manifest such religion, either individually or collectively, publicly or privately, by worshipping, praying, participating in ceremonies, performing of rites, or teaching. Freedom of religion shall also include possession of sanctuaries and other places of worship for the satisfaction of the needs of believers as well as the right of individuals, wherever they may be, to benefit from religious services.¹⁰

Poland, therefore, is not a secular country. One cannot legitimately invoke the Polish Constitution to remove religion from the Polish people’s social and public life.¹¹ When speaking about Poland, it is also illegitimate to refer to its inclusion in the European Union (EU) and claim that it must follow so-called “European standards,” because these standards simply do not exist. Within the EU there are countries that have chosen to follow the neutral model, while other countries have opted to follow the secular model. The countries that follow the secular model are in the minority. Poland follows the coordinated separation model. In Poland, both Christian and secular worldviews

⁸ The Constitution of the Republic of Poland, art. 25 in *Dziennik Ustaw* No. 73, Item 483, accessed September 30, 2021, <https://www.sejm.gov.pl/prawo/konst/angielski/kon1.htm>.

⁹ *Ibid*, art. 25.1.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, art 25.2.

¹¹ See J.Szymanek, “Przepisy wyznaniowe w Konstytucji RP (uwagi porządkujące),” *Studia z Prawa Wyznaniowego* 14 (2011): 5-23.

exist side by side; they affect social life significantly; and, more recently, the two worldviews have increasingly clashed.

Areas of Neutrality

The areas that appeal to ethical neutrality most often are: marriage and family life; raising and educating children (particularly, sex education); culture; law;¹² politics; economics;¹³ medicine; and the media. All of these areas are presumably meant to be ethically neutral (i.e., to be independent of values, of the realm of moral good and evil, and especially of the Christian moral tradition).

Moral
Theology

The areas of life most affected by so-called neutrality are marriage and family, especially the “neutral” state’s attitude toward life and education. Most recently, clauses pertaining to the protection of doctors’ consciences have been called into question in the name of the state’s “ethical neutrality” towards human life. While this clause permits physicians to defend themselves against state or patient interference to defend themselves against actions that they, in conscience, consider wrong or morally unacceptable (e.g., abortion, assisted suicide, euthanasia, eugenic selection, etc.),¹⁴ so-called neutral states have tried to force doctors to perform acts that violate their conscience. Conscience clauses are inconvenient to a so-called “neutral state” because they prevent doctors from submitting to the state and society. As a result, attempts are made to undermine this clause by, among other things, requiring physicians to be axiologically and morally neutral. When neutrality is understood in this way, doctors are forced to perform abortions because they would be considered biased if they refused to do so.

Another area where the state imposes itself in the name of ethical neutrality is education. This interference can be seen, for example, in proposals to remove religion from schools or limiting parents’ influence on school curricula.¹⁵ State neutrality toward education—just as toward life—is an illusion. When religion is removed from schools and education, then some other anthropology or vision of man replaces it.

¹² The assertion that the relationship between the law and morality is not necessary is one of the fundamental claims of positive law.

¹³ In economics neutrality would mean a lack unscrupulous behavior and moral principles.

¹⁴ See M. Gałązka, “Odmowa przerywania ciąży a klauzula sumienia lekarza,” *Studia z Prawa Wyznaniowego* 16 (2013): 23-42.

¹⁵ See J. Falski, “Prawo do nauki a prawo rodziców do zapewnienia wychowania i nauczania zgodnie z ich przekonaniami w orzecznictwie Europejskiego Trybunału Praw Człowieka,” *Studia z Prawa Wyznaniowego* 17 (2014): 151-172.

Even if it were possible to remain completely impartial in this area, such neutrality would be a manifestation of a lack of responsibility. All environments in which education takes place must be concerned about the human development of children.

The internal contradictions of so-called “ethical neutrality” are perhaps most evident in certain sex education proposals. Proponents of permissive sex education claim that they do not have a position on moral values—that they avoid lecturing others. In reality, however, they impose their own hierarchy of values on others, inculcate children and adults with the principles that they uphold, and criticize (and sometimes even mock) the Christian vision of sex education. The greatest irony is that proponents of morally neutral sex education demand that parents, churches, etc. not impose their morality (especially any prohibitions) on students. This attitude, however, betrays none other than the “morality” that the proponents of ethical neutrality promote because they encourage children to follow morally illicit lifestyles. It is, therefore, absurd to call such sex education (or other education) neutral.

In today’s world, the media is one of the primary and most influential educators. The media’s impact on children and youth is more effective than the influence of parents or school, and it is for this reason that the media’s approach to ethical issues is crucial. Of course, every modern medium declares that it is ideologically and ethically neutral. In reality, however, the media has largely become a tool in the hands of ideologues whose vision threatens the religious state. Their slogan about the state’s ideological neutrality is only a cover for spreading a different worldview: secularism. By imposing secularism, the state breeds unjust discrimination: it deprives believers of the opportunity to present their arguments in the public square, while permitting non-believers to freely proclaim their views.

Economics is another area that affects family life. Needless to say, most people agree that an economy unguided by ethical principles forgets about man and that profit at all cost violates human rights.¹⁶ Equally common today, however, is a spirit of extreme economism, which upholds that the purpose of economic activity is to satisfy man’s material needs without any consideration for human life as such.¹⁷ This economism (and even economicism) is manifested in the absolutization

¹⁶ Grzegorz Kołodko includes such a thesis in his work *Wędrujący świat* (Warszawa: 2008).

¹⁷ See A. Zadroga, *Katolicka myśl ekonomiczno-społeczna wobec fundamentalnych założeń ekonomii głównego nurtu* (Lublin: 2018), 112.

of economic expediency,¹⁸ which originates in the postulates of the ethical neutrality of the economy and economic activity. The effect of this approach is that only a certain social strata manage all material goods.

“Neutral” policies also have a negative impact on the family and social life as a whole. The Catholic Church appreciates democracy. At the same time, She warns, “a democracy without values easily turns into open or thinly disguised totalitarianism.”¹⁹ While it is true that political community life has its own autonomy,²⁰ this autonomy cannot be synonymous with independence from moral principles. Politics devoid of morality lead to the degeneration of social life and to the violation of human dignity and rights. Such politics turn against the family as the most basic community. As St. Paul exhorted, any politics that are worthy of the name should genuinely serve man and society: “serve one another through love” (Gal 5:13), and “No one should seek his own advantage, but that of his neighbor” (1 Cor 10:24). An ethically neutral politician is certainly incapable of such service.

Does an Ethically Neutral State Exist?

Contemporary democracies claim that the state should be both ideologically and religiously neutral. In such democracies, everyone can supposedly choose the lifestyle that suits him. A democratic state allegedly does not promote or prohibit certain lifestyles. It is up to every citizen to determine what is good or bad. The aforementioned examples, however prove that neutrality is only a façade behind which lurk questionable moral principles. For this reason, it is necessary to remain skeptical about the creation and existence of so-called “ethically neutral” states.

A state is not ethically neutral if and when it seeks to replace marriage and family morality with its own laws; redefine marriage; pass legislation that is opposed to life; interfere in educating and raising children; and promote ideologies that are hostile to religion. In these

¹⁸ See T. Zadykowicz, “Czy ekonomia może obyć się bez etyki?,” in *Człowiek – etyka – ekonomia*, eds. R. Horodeński and E. Ozorowski (Białystok: 2001), 25.

¹⁹ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* [Encyclical] (Citta del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1991), sec. 46, accessed September 30, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html.

²⁰ See Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* [Constitution on the Church in the Modern World], sec. 36, accessed September 30, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

situations, ethical neutrality is closer to atheistic secularism than to a democracy based on values.

A lack of neutrality, even in states that claim to be neutral, is evident in attitudes toward the conscience clause mentioned above. It is difficult to justify why the state considers proponents of abortion to be ethically neutral and those who oppose abortion not. The reason for this, however, is rather straightforward. The so-called “neutral state” is based on a hidden anthropology. Contrary to what the state claims, it ascribes to a specific understanding of man and promotes this understanding through issues such as when human life begins, the status of the embryo, the criteria for being human. Under the guise of neutrality, the state imposes its relativistic, situational, and often outright anti-Christian vision of morality on its citizens.

A lack of neutrality is also evident in the state’s vision for education. Behind the state’s claim that it behaves neutrally toward children by allowing them to develop spontaneously is an attitude of dangerous indifference hidden under the guise of respecting their personalities. Such indifference toward and exemption from fulfilling ones duty to children are unacceptable. Children need help in developing and maturing. The great richness of life resides in the heart of every child. Children, however, are unable to understand what is going on within them. It is, therefore, the responsibility of adults—parents, educators, and those who work in media—to help children discover this. In this regard, Pope John Paul II asks: Is not every child like little Samuel, who—as the Bible states—is unable to understand the divine call and asks his guide for help—the very guide who tells him at first: “‘I did not call you,’ Eli answered. ‘Go back to sleep’” (1 Sam 3:5-6). Calling to mind the obligations of parents and educators, the Pope indicates an alternative: “Now, shall we adopt this kind of attitude and smother the inspirations that impel the child to higher things? Shall we not rather help him to understand and respond, as the priest Eli eventually did with Samuel: ‘If he calls you again, you shall say: Speak Lord, for your servant is listening’ (ibid. 3:9).”²¹

In this day and age, so-called neutrality in schools is anything but indifferent. Proof of this can be found by the changes made to Poland’s core curriculum Family Life Education classes in 2015. These alterations made it possible for unscrupulous ideological groups and those who represent the specific interests of sexual educators to influence

²¹ John Paul II, *Message for the 13th World Communications Day* [Social Communications for the Development of the Child], accessed September 30, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/communications/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_23051979_world-communications-day.html.

children. These changes confirm that, whether openly or not, education is also influenced by a specific worldview. The only solution to this problem is to clearly expose the worldview upon which schools base their programs. Education, as John Paul II reminds us, is never morally indifferent, even when attempts are made to proclaim that it is ethically or religiously “neutral.” The manner in which children and youth are formed and educated inevitably reflects these values that influence their way of understanding others and society as a whole. For this reason, school curricula should be developed in accordance with the nature and dignity of the human person and with God’s law in order to help young people “discern and seek the truth, accept its demands and limits of authentic freedom, and respect the right of others to do the same.”²²

Even in the realm of economics so-called “neutrality” and essentially extreme economism easily transform people into slaves to possessions and instant gratification; they see no other prospect than to multiply the goods that they have or continually replace them with other better ones.²³ Individuals as well as entire environments, societies, or nations fall victim to the desire to dominate other individuals, environments, or societies.²⁴ Economic competition and rivalry between nations and states contribute to even greater divisions, social inequalities, and disparities in wealth. The gap between the rich North and the backward impoverished South is expanding, and not only a third but also a fourth world is emerging. And all of this is happening because economics has abandoned ethics in the name of so-called “neutrality.”

* * *

²² See John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace* [“If You Want Peace, Respect the Conscience of Every Person”], sec 3, accessed September 30, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_08121990_xxiv-world-day-for-peace.html.

²³ See John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* [Encyclical], sec. 28, accessed September 30, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html.

²⁴ See John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia* [Encyclical], sec. 11, accessed September 30, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30111980_dives-in-misericordia.html. See also Francis, Video Message to Participants in the “The Economy of Francesco—Young People, A Commitment, the Future,” November 21, 2020, accessed September 30, 2021, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2020/documents/papa-francesco_20201121_videomessaggio-economy-of-francesco.html.

In principle “neutrality” with regard to how the state acts towards its citizens appears to be a good tool to order the relationship between individuals and communities within pluralistic societies. The application of this principle, however, is very problematic. Declared neutrality often veils hidden intentions and actions that are based on an anthropology and value system that is anything but neutral. Therefore, an open worldview and guarantee of religious freedom, especially in the areas of life indicated above, are better than neutrality.

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Parish Renewal in Light of the Congregation for the Clergy's Instruction *The Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community in the Service of the Evangelizing Mission of the Church*

This article presents the Congregation for the Clergy's reflection on the state of the parish and conditions for pastoral care. The congregation's most recent instruction entitled *The Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community in the Service of the Evangelizing Mission of the Church* presents the authors' vision for renewal of the parish community and pastoral care within the parish setting.

This article is the first of its kind to present the bases for, the conditions of, and the direction that such renewal should take. The need for renewal stems primarily from ongoing cultural changes that are taking place in the modern world. The renewal should transform the parish into a sanctuary where the Word of God is proclaimed in a way that the faithful understand. The parish should become a place of deep devotion to the Eucharist and a shelter for every person in need. In order to renew the parish, it is necessary to change parish structures. It is also fitting to introduce changes concerning the agents of pastoral care and to engage the laity in pastoral care of the parish.

Through textual and comparative analysis as well as textual criticism, the author presents the model of parish pastoral care according to the Instruction *The Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community in the Service of the Evangelizing Mission of the Church*.

Key words: parish, parish community, parish renewal, pastoral conversion, evangelization.

The Code of the Canon Law states that “[a] parish is a certain community of the Christian faithful stably constituted in a particular church, whose pastoral care is entrusted to a pastor (*parochus*) as its proper pastor (*pastor*) under the authority of the diocesan bishop.”¹ Ecclesiastical law emphasizes the communal nature of the parish and bases this distinction on the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, which understands the Church in a twofold manner: as the universal sacrament of salvation and as God’s people.² Perceiving the Church as the people of God gives rise to understanding the parish mainly as a community of believers. This community of believers both institutionally and organizationally serves the community of the parish, which constitutes a group of God’s people.

Fostering the parish as a community of believers who strive for salvation is a difficult task. The difficulty lies mainly in the fact that parishes, which are predominantly institutional in their dimension due to the secularization to which they have been subjected, must undergo a transformation. Attempts to renew parishes began in South America in the 1960s and then proceeded to take place in Western Europe.³ In 1970s and 80s, Italy introduced such projects as: “The new image of the parish”, RENEW, “God’s people divided into small groups,” “Small servant communities,” “The parish as the community of communities,”⁴ or “The method of basic evangelizing parish cells.”⁵ Many of these groups and ideas were later introduced in other countries, including Poland.

The rapidly ongoing cultural and religious transformations that have taken place have necessitated a thorough reflection on the parish and its ministry. This is the main aim of the Congregation for the Clergy’s Instruction *The Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community in the*

¹ Code of the Canon Law, c. 515 § 1, accessed August 23, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/cic_index_en.html

² Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium* [Dogmatic Constitution on the Church], sec. 9-17, accessed August 23, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

³ A. Żądło, “Współczesne próby odnowy parafii,” in *Teologia pastoralna*, vol. 2, ed. R. Kamiński (Lublin: Atla 2), 94-108.

⁴ A. Żądło, *Parafia w trzecim tysiącleciu* (Kielce: NOTUS, 1999), 93-99.

⁵ G. Macchoni, “Ewangelizacja w parafii metodą ‘ewangelizacyjnych komórek parafialnych,’” *Program duszpasterski na rok 2000/2001*, eds. E. Szczotok, R. Kempny, and A. Liskowacka (Katowice: Wydział Duszpasterski Kurii Metropolitalnej, 2000), 187-204.

Service of the Evangelizing Mission of the Church (July 20, 2020).⁶ This document reflects the Holy See's pastoral concern for the parish as well as for priests and their pastoral ministry. The Vatican Dicastery has already published such documents as: *The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium: Teacher of the Word, Minister of the Sacraments, and Leader of the Community* (March 19, 1999),⁷ The Instruction *The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community*

(August 4, 2002),⁸ and the *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests* (February 11, 2013).⁹ The document from 2020 is the Holy See's response to the contemporary needs of the parish and contains indications that will help renew the parish community.

The bases of, reasons for, and directions of the renewal

Pastoral
Theology

The Congregation for the Clergy emphasizes the importance of the Second Vatican Council's understanding of ecclesiology, which serves as the basis for proper insight into the parish. The concept of the Church as God's people highlights the communal aspect of the parish, its religious life, and of the pastoral ministry that takes place within it. In traditional societies, which are based on direct relationships, the parish was a source of religious socialization and the ecclesial mission of salvation.¹⁰ The authors of the document indicate that most parishes no longer function in this way. Due to ongoing cultural changes, especially globalization, territorial affiliation has become less important in the everyday and religious life of parishioners, especially

⁶ Congregation for the Clergy, *The Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community in the Service of the Evangelizing Mission of the Church* [Instruction], Accessed August 23, 2021, <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2020/07/20/200720a.html>. Abbreviated hereafter as Instruction.

⁷ Congregation for the Clergy, *Priest and the Third Christian Millennium: Teacher of the Word, Minister of the Sacraments, and Leader of the Community*, accessed August 23, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cclergy/documents/rc_con_cclergy_doc_19031999_priest_en.html.

⁸ Congregation for the Clergy, *The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community* [Instruction], accessed August 23, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cclergy/documents/rc_con_cclergy_doc_20020804_istruzione-presbitero_en.html

⁹ Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, accessed August 23, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cclergy/documents/rc_con_cclergy_doc_31011994_directory_en.html.

¹⁰ See A. Żądło, "Modele organizacji duszpasterstwa parafialnego," in *Program duszpasterski na rok 2000/2001*, eds. E. Szczotok, R. Kempny, and A. Liskowacka (Katowice: Wydział Duszpasterski Kurii Metropolitalnej, 2000), 180-181.

youth. Catholics satisfy most of their basic and religious needs digitally outside their parish communities, which calls into question the utility of parishes in their most important aims and whether they adequately meet the needs and expectations of parishioners.

The Congregation for the Clergy indicates that the two most significant cultural changes that have transformed the religiosity of contemporary Catholics, the parish, and pastoral care are mobility and the development of transportation. The parish is no longer the place where modern man satisfies his existential needs. Other areas such as work, education, recreation, free time, etc. take place primarily outside of the parish and/or affiliation with it. Satisfying religious needs also extends beyond territorial ties through listening to God's Word, receiving sacraments, involvement in religious associations that often meet outside the local parish and require territorial affiliation with the parish to a lesser extent.¹¹

According to the Instruction *The Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community in the Service of the Evangelizing Mission of the Church*, the development of media, especially digital media, has led to a decrease in community bonds within the parish setting. Due to universal and quick access to information, territorial limitations are no longer important because everybody can participate in other people's lives, even if they live in remote locations. Therefore, even the place where one lives ceases to be relevant with regard to events. Because of mobility and digital communication, the world has become a global village in which everybody can access and obtain information from around the world, and distance is no longer a limitation. Perceived in this light, the parish has ceased to be the center of a man's daily and religious life. The authors of the instruction claim that contemporary people do not comprehend traditional ceremonies, so these rites no longer provide them with important content and they satisfy the needs of only a small group of people who still understand them.¹²

According to its title, the Congregation for Clergy's document *The Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community in the Service of the Evangelizing Mission of the Church* indicates the direction that parish renewal should take. Such renewal should stem from the idea of pastoral conversion and involve reforming all parish structures in a missionary spirit. The first and the most important step of this reformation

¹¹ Congregation for the Clergy, Instruction, sec 10.

¹² Ibid, sec 17.

is to make the parish a community that lives by the Word of God and proclaims It.¹³ God's Word

...is the food that nourishes the Lord's disciples and makes them witnesses to the Gospel in the various circumstances of life. The Scriptures contain a prophetic impetus that makes them into a living force. It is necessary to provide instruction on how to listen and meditate on the Word of God through a variety of different approaches to proclamation, adopting clear and comprehensible means of communication that announce the Lord Jesus according to the ever new witness of the kerygma.¹⁴

The other aims of renewal in the missionary spirit are transforming the parish into a sanctuary. The Instruction indicates, "...mere repetitive action that fails to have an impact upon people's concrete lives remains a sterile attempt at survival, which is usually welcomed by general indifference. If the parish does not exude that spiritual dynamic of evangelization, it runs the risk of becoming self-referential and fossilized, offering experiences that are devoid of evangelical flavor and missionary drive, of interest only to small groups."¹⁵ The parish—and the parish church, in particular—must be the center of spiritual life, the focus of which should be the administration the sacraments and prayer. The Eucharist and its celebration are the most important and should be understood and considered the center and the source of spiritual life of every believer and of the entire parish community. The Eucharist should serve primarily to unite all the parishioners and those who visit the church when they receive Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.¹⁶ In the parish-shrine, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is of the utmost value because it enables those who seek it to re-enter into full communion with God and be reconciled with others.¹⁷

Prayer fosters closeness with God; therefore, a parish that serves as a sanctuary must provide an atmosphere that is favorable to prayer. The proper arrangement and decoration of the church as well as the proper organization of parish life should foster a prayerful atmosphere. The external structures must serve to create an atmosphere that promotes prayer, which is an encounter with God and a conversation with Him.

¹³ See M. P. Domingues, "Parafia jako miejsce ewangelizacji," in *Program duszpasterski na rok 2000/2001*, eds. E. Szczotok, R. Kempny, and A. Liskowacka (Katowice: Wydział Duszpasterski Kurii Metropolitalnej, 2000), 135-149.

¹⁴ Congregation for the Clergy, Instruction, sec 21.

¹⁵ Ibid, sec 17.

¹⁶ Ibid, sec 20.

¹⁷ Ibid, sec 30.

The authors of the document point out that not everyone is able to understand all of the rites and celebrations that take place at a parish. For many people, these rites seem mysterious or magical. For this reason, the Instruction indicates that religious formation that resembles Christian initiation should be introduced and offered in the parish setting.

The Church perceives here the need to rediscover Christian initiation, which generates new life, as it is placed within the mystery of God's own life. It is a journey that is ongoing, that transcends celebrations or events, because, in essence, it is defined, not as a duty to fulfill a 'rite of passage', but rather as a perpetual sequela Christi. In this context, it would be useful to establish a mystagogical itinerary that genuinely affects existence. Catechesis needs to be presented as an ongoing proclamation of the Mystery of Christ, the objective of which is to foster in the heart of the baptized that full stature of Christ (cf. Eph 4:13) that is derived from a personal encounter with the Lord of life.¹⁸

The third aim of parish renewal in the missionary spirit is to make the parish a place of encounter. "A Shrine, then, is analogous to a Parish in that it encompasses all the characteristics and services that ought to be found in the parish community, as it represents for the faithful the desired goal of their interior searching and a place where they can encounter the merciful face of Christ in a welcoming Church."¹⁹ Moreover, "A 'sanctuary' open to all, the Parish, called to reach out to everyone, without exception, should remember that the poor and excluded must always have a privileged place in the heart of the Church."²⁰ This is necessary because

...[o]ftentimes, the Parish community is the first place of personal human encounter that the poor have with the face of the Church. Priests, deacons and consecrated men and women are among the first to have compassion for the 'wounded flesh' of their brothers and sisters, to visit the sick, to support the unemployed and their families, thereby opening the door to those in need. With their gaze fixed upon them, the Parish community evangelizes and is evangelized by the poor, discovering

¹⁸ Ibid, sec 23. See P. M. Zulehner, *Pastoraltheologie. Bd 2. Gemeindepastoral* (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1991), 148.

¹⁹ Congregation for the Clergy, Instruction, sec 31. See A. Petrowa-Wasilewicz, "Parafia przyszłości – dom otwartych drzwi," in *Program duszpasterski na rok 2000/2001*, eds. E. Szczotok, R. Kempny, and A. Liskowacka (Katowice: Wydział Duszpasterski Kurii Metropolitalnej 2000), 168-174.

²⁰ Congregation for the Clergy, Instruction, sec 32.

anew the call to preach the Word in all settings, whilst recalling the 'supreme law' of charity, by which we shall all be judged."²¹

In this way, the parish should be renewed in all its basic functions in the missionary spirit.

The reformation of parish structures

To guide the parish in its aim to meet both the spiritual needs of believers as well as the necessary pastoral requirements, the Instruction requires that previously existing parish communities be transformed into new bodies. The document favors two ways in which this transformation can take place: first, by creating a single parish by canceling a few currently existing parishes and merging them into one, and second, by appointing supra-parish bodies, such as pastoral regions or vicariates. The Instruction's indications are based on the 1983 Code of Canon Law, which foresees such situations and indicates the means of introducing such change. The Instruction points out that the reasons for such reformations can be only pastoral in nature. It clearly states:

[T]he suppression of Parishes by extinctive union is legitimate for causes directly related to a specific Parish. Some causes are not sufficient, for example, the scarcity of diocesan clergy, the general financial situation of a Diocese, or other conditions within the community that are presumably reversible and of brief duration (e.g., numerical consistency, lack of financial self-sufficiency, the urban planning of the territory). As a condition for the legitimacy of this type of provision, the requisite motivations must be directly and organically connected to the interested Parish community, and not on general considerations or theories, or based solely 'on principle.'²²

The authors of the document also state insufficient reasons for reorganizing a parish. The first is scarcity of diocesan clergy. It seems that this motive has been one of the main reasons for reorganizing many particular churches in Western Europe, especially in Germany. The decreasing number of clergy has prompted ecclesial authorities to assign individual priests to more than one parish. To help them manage this situation, a few individual parishes have been combined into an association and, where possible, groups of smaller parishes have been combined into fewer larger parishes.²³

²¹ Ibid, sec 33.

²² Ibid, sec 48.

²³ See R. Kamiński, "Parafia miejscem realizacji duszpasterstwa," in *Teologia pastoralna vol. 2*, ed. R. Kamiński (Lublin: Atla 2, 2002), 26-27.

According to the Instruction, another insufficient reason to transform a parish is because a diocese finds itself in a serious general financial situation. The Holy See requires that a parish be constant, stable, and independent. While the parish is not an independent unit within the Church, and although it exists as a part of a diocese, its constancy nevertheless is necessary for the realization of the saving ministry of the parish as well as of the universal Church that consists of parishes. This constancy is also necessary for the spiritual good of the faithful, the members of the parish community. Consequently, sacrificing a parish for diocesan business is forbidden. The Congregation for the Clergy supports the principle upheld by Canon Law: “*salus animarum suprema lex*” (The salvation of souls is the supreme law).

The Holy See’s Instruction mentions that structural reform of the parish system should stem from the state of the parish’s religious life and pastoral care. A lower number of the faithful in a parish, however, is not a sufficient reason for reform. When there is a lower number of parishioners, then there is the danger that several small parishes will be merged into a fewer larger parishes in order to “optimize” the financial circumstances of pastoral care. These include not only the financial expenses necessary to maintain the facilities and pastoral activity, but also and primarily personnel expenses—that is, the number of people employed in pastoral care and the time and effort they dedicate to providing such care at the parish. The personal politics of the diocese is given due consideration in order to properly manage the priests so that they can minister most efficiently. Priests should serve and impact the greatest number of parishioners possible. For this reason, the Congregation for the Clergy unequivocally states that pastoral care within the parish setting does not have to be profitable as far as the personnel are concerned. Moreover, fewer faithful likely enables more frequent contact and deeper relationships, which results in a better quality of pastoral care.

Financial problems must not be the reason behind the structural transformation of a parish. A poor parish community can live out its faith well despite a lack of funds, which hinders only the development of infrastructure. It is possible to provide pastoral care without facilities, with modest housing, or other such limitations; in fact, such conditions can foster fraternal love among the parishioners and deepen their sense of responsibility for each other’s salvation. The Instruction clearly indicates that personal and material difficulties should be considered temporary and that parish communities should be supported in their efforts to overcome them.

The concept of pastoral conversion includes the transformation of a parish into a missionary community.²⁴ However, changing parish structures by creating vicariates or nullifying or appointing new parish communities should only take place when the existing pastoral needs of certain ecclesial units necessitate it. According to the guidelines included in the Instruction, the reformation process should be introduced gradually. Changes must not be initiated in parishes when they are not necessary. Furthermore, the Instruction specifies that these changes should occur gradually and take into account the opinions of the faithful in each parish. The faithful receive faith from the Holy Spirit, Who enables them to express responsible opinions concerning the communities that they create. Their feedback should concern the current condition of the parish as well as the parish's history and tradition. With regard to the spiritual wealth of parishes, the faithful are often reluctant to nullify or transform their parishes. Instead, they want to preserve their identity and their community's independence, since the history and heritage of their parish have fostered the parish's spiritual development. In such cases, changes should lead to the creation of new units that resemble federations because this will allow them to preserve their own independence and identity.²⁵

The subject of parish pastoral care

New pastoral supra-parish bodies require proper pastoral care.²⁶ This primarily concerns the relationships of many parishes that are merged into a kind of federation. Preserving their previous identities, the parishes also appoint their separate pastors. However, it is also possible to entrust the pastoral care of the parish to several presbyters in order to intensify and increase efficiency. The bishop entrusts priest with pastoral care *in solidum*, meaning as a group.²⁷ The Instruction *The Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community in the Service of the Evangelizing Mission of the Church* advises that this solution should be introduced whenever the spiritual good of the faithful requires it. Such an approach has been introduced widely throughout Western Europe,

²⁴ See M. Polak, "Misyjna odnowa parafii w nauczaniu papieża Franciszka," in *Duszpasterstwo w świetle nauczania papieża Franciszka*, ed. D. Lipiec (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2015), 120-121.

²⁵ Instruction, sec. 36.

²⁶ See D. Lipiec, "A Parson in the Era of Transformations," *Diacovensia* 22, no 2 (2014): 201-218.

²⁷ See R. Kamiński, "Parafia miejscem realizacji duszpasterstwa," 29.

including Germany, for example, where, due to a lack of priests, groups of several priests pastorally care for several or several dozen parishes that are joined together.

In the aforementioned instance, one of the pastors becomes the moderator *primus inter pares* (first among equals) of a group of parishes. The moderator exercises jurisdiction over the group of parishes and has unique responsibilities particular to his role: “The Moderator is responsible for coordinating the joint work of the Parish or Parishes entrusted to the group. Moreover, as their juridical representative, he is to coordinate the exercise of the faculty to assist at marriages, grant dispensations, as would Parish Priests, and give a report to the Bishop on all the activities of the group.”²⁸ Due to the priests’ communal pastoral ministry and life, the Instruction recommends that a group of priests establish certain internal rules of collaboration. These rules must be described properly and detail in print the functions of the members of the pastoral team. These functions must be rooted in a spirituality of communion among priests, which serves as the basis of their pastoral collaboration.

Furthermore, the Instruction also asserts that the diocesan bishop can entrust responsibility for certain parishes within the pastoral zone not only to presbyters but also to deacons as well as to lay or consecrated men and women. The Instruction stresses that such people are only pastoral assistants, not pastors. Only a consecrated man can be designated a pastor, while other titles should indicate the proper roles that those other than priests play in pastoral ministry. After priests, deacons have priority because the nature of their vocation and profession is strictly related to the Church and to responsibility for Her. After priests and deacons, lay Catholics can be involved in pastoral care according to their own mission in the world, which is rooted in the secular nature of their vocation. The laity should not be given priority or entrusted with the care of the parish community for any non-theological reasons (e.g., out of courtesy).²⁹

²⁸ Congregation for the Clergy, Instruction, sec. 77.

²⁹ “In that vein, it is the responsibility, first of all, of the diocesan Bishop and, as far as it pertains to him, the Parish Priest, to see that the appointments of deacons, religious and laity that have roles of responsibility in the Parish, are not designated as ‘pastor’, ‘co-pastor’, ‘chaplain’, ‘moderator’, ‘coordinator’, ‘Parish manager’, or other similar terms reserved by law to priests, inasmuch as they have a direct correlation to the ministerial profile of priests. In referring to the aforementioned faithful and deacons, it is likewise illegitimate, and not in conformity with their vocational identity, to use expressions such as ‘entrust the pastoral care of a parish’, ‘preside over the parish community’, and other

In addition to explaining the proper role of lay Catholics in pastoral functions in parishes and vicariates, the document of the Holy See explains that the laity can be assigned to individual apostolates or instituted as acolytes. Acolytes are particularly important in cases where diocesan clergy are scarce. This concerns not only the laity's role as common lectors, acolytes, or lay extraordinary ministers of the Eucharistic, but also (and in rare circumstances) their role in the administration of Baptism, the celebration of Christian funeral rites, and assistance at marriages as delegates appointed by the Bishop.³⁰ The Instruction highlights issues concerning the lay apostolate of Catholics and explains them based on information contained in other church documents in order to foster the proper interpretation and implementation of the Church's teaching on pastoral ministry.

The Instruction *The Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community in the Service of the Evangelizing Mission of the Church* primarily discusses the lay apostolate of Catholics in parishes and vicariates. It indicates that lay parishioners exercise responsibility for their parish mainly through their participation on parish finance councils and parish pastoral councils. The laity share responsibility with the clergy, who are entrusted with pastoral care for the spiritual and material good of the community.³¹ The Vatican document states that both of these councils serve as consultative bodies that support the pastor in his responsibilities and pastoral care. The fact that the pastor oversees both councils emphasizes the consultative nature of these bodies. Consequently, these councils do not serve a jurisdictional function. Taking into account the ongoing changes in parish structures that occur in the process of renewing a parish, the document asserts that every parish should appoint a parish finance council. Whether a parish pastoral council should be appointed in the parish depends on the local conditions—that is, with regard to the real good of each parish community. Where it is necessary, one local parish pastoral council should be appointed per parish or for the vicariate. The Instruction asserts that pastors should not appoint these councils only *pro forma*;

similar phrases, that pertain to the distinct sacerdotal ministry of a Parish Priest.” Congregation for the Clergy, Instruction, sec. 96.

³⁰ See W. Przygoda, “Laikat i formy apostołstwa świeckich,” in *Teologia pastoralna* vol. 1, ed. R. Kamiński (Lublin: Atla 2, 2000), 412-416.

³¹ See D. Lipiec, “Bariery w komunikacji i poprawa jej skuteczności we wspólnocie parafialnej,” *Roczniki Teologiczne* 66, fasc. 6 (2019): 147-159.

rather, the council members must be able to influence religious life in the parish and what pastoral care looks like.³²

Conclusion

The idea of renewing the parish community presented in the Instruction *The Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community in the Service of the Evangelizing Mission of the Church* refers to the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council, which conceptualizes the Church as a mission. In light of the contemporary crisis of parishes as institutions, the Church's primary aim is to transform parishes into missionary communities. The missionary spirit as a feature of the parish reflects its inner dynamism and renewal of the religious life of its members. Externally, a missionary spirit is connected with the outward dynamism that fosters proclaiming the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. Through pastoral conversion of the parish community, pastoral care shifts away from being devoted to the few most faithful members of the parish community toward all the baptized and unbaptized in order to lead all members to full union with God. This requires adapting the parish structures to new challenges, a renewed relationship with the agents of pastoral care, and transforming the forms and methods of pastoral ministry in order to bring them into alignment with Christian mystagogy.

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³² “So that the service of the Pastoral Council might be efficacious and fruitful, it is necessary to avoid two extremes: on one hand, that of the Parish Priest presenting to the Pastoral Council decisions already made, or without the required information beforehand, or convoking it seldom only pro forma, and on the other hand, that of the Council in which the Parish Priest is only one of the members, deprived de facto of his role as Pastor and Leader of the community.” Congregation for the Clergy, Instruction, sec. 113.

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Pastoral Care of Vocations and Personal Identity

In its mission of evangelization, the Church has focused on pastoral care of vocations in recent years. Confronted with the many challenges facing civilization and the progressive secularization of the societies of materialistic Europe, the Church has been seeking appropriate methods, means, and formation strategies to help young people recognize their vocation. Undoubtedly today many formators and vocation animators are aware of the significant role that the psychological sciences play in the understanding human identity. God is always calling, but man alone can respond.

In the human formation and maturation process, a person has the opportunity to come to know himself and understand his own history. A person who has responded to God's call must also agree to ongoing long-term formation. From this point of view, personal accompaniment plays an important role, since no person is capable of progressing towards human and spiritual maturity alone.

Key words: personal identity, vocational ministry, psychology, pedagogy, counseling, self-narrative, education, accompaniment, *Gaudete et Exsultate*.

Pastoral ministry for vocations faces many challenges today. Recognizing a vocation and accompanying a young person in an individualized and personalized manner requires concrete preparation and adequate skills. Today especially, when the Church is experiencing a crisis in vocations, we are invited to focus on how to recognize a vocation and how to help foster its development. The central—and, indeed, indispensable—element in this process is to develop the entire personality. Those who care pastorally for vocations help an individual recognize the truth about himself and answer the question: “Who am I?” The proper response to this question depends on

what a person wants based on his personal development. This paper attempts to illustrate the role of pastoral care for vocations in aiding the individual in identifying and developing his personal identity during the formation process. This document examines what identity is from the point of view of Christian anthropology. The first part of this work deals with the topic of pastoral ministry for vocations and the human development of personality. In the second part, we present a series of pedagogical tools to aid in identity formation: the personal life project, personal accompaniment, self-narration, and the growth group. The conclusion discusses educational interventions that foster vocational maturation and assist the individual in reaching the objectives of formation, which are acquiring concrete competences and strengthening the human resources of the person responsible for the pastoral care of vocations. This research investigates in depth some constitutive elements of personal identity such as: encounter with one's self, the ability to create mature relationships with others, as well as an authentic intimate and spiritual relationship with God.

An Analysis of Human Development

We begin by studying the fundamental role of human development in a person's growth. Human development is a gradual process that encompasses personality development, which continues within the context of pastoral ministry for vocations. In order to proceed properly, it is necessary to have a thorough understanding of what constitutes the person, since he is both a human and a spiritual being. The human sciences, especially psychology, will help us in understanding what identity is.

The construction of identity

All pastoral activity is based on the proper understanding and image of man. Every life is a vocation, but pastoral ministry for vocations entails a particular way of life. The purpose of educational and formative intervention is to propose not a subjective but objective concept of man. An absolutely necessary and, indeed, imperative element of this task is to present the meaning of life as it is discovered in the realization of one's vocation.¹To begin, one might ask: "What is identity, and why has it become such a vital issue today?" The word "identity"

¹ See M. O. Llanos, *Servire le vocazioni nella Chiesa: pastorale vocazionale e pedagogia della vocazione* (Roma: LAS, 2005), 209–2011.

derives etymologically from the Latin adjective “idem,” which means “the same:” I am myself because I am not another. Identity is

...a personal achievement as well as a social attribute. ... Society does not exist without individuals, nor do individuals exist without society. Identity is the answer to the question of who I am and who we are. Who I am also means to whom I belong, from where I come, and where I belong, thus [implying] dependence on a community as well as autonomy.²

A very important task is to define the end identity toward which identity should be formed and whether or not identity is subject to transformation. In his research, R. Regni proposes an identity of dialogue, since we cannot realize ourselves outside of a relationship with both ourselves and with others.³ Identity as the image of one’s own self as a person who has achieved emotional equilibrium and a fair degree of social recognition plays a fundamental role in the way all of the processes and functions of the personality take place. The “I” structure plays the primary and constitutive role of identity. According to Gordon Allport, the ego expresses itself in seven ways: bodily sense, self-identity, ego-enhancement, ego-extension, rational activity, self-image, and propiarte striving.⁴ Psychology makes a distinction between the actual ego and the ideal ego. The former concerns the way in which a person manifests and presents himself, and this applies to emotions, behavior, hidden feelings as well as the way in which a person perceives himself according to the opinion of others. As far as the latter, it is the vision of oneself according to the ideal self, which can be divided into personal and institutional. In the former, a person chooses values and projects who they want to be.⁵ Amedeo Cencini explains that by identity “we mean the sense of inner unity and continuity that persists over time and in different circumstances combined with the ability to maintain solidarity with a realistic system of values. ... The opposite of identity is a lack of self-esteem, which manifests in shame; a lack of trust, which manifests in doubt; a lack of stability, which manifests in indecision; and a lack of value reference, which manifests in existential emptiness.”⁶ Personal identity “is a complex and multidimensional

² R. Regni, “Identità e educazione. Nuove sfide per la pedagogia interculturale,” *Pedagogia e vita. Rivista di problemi pedagogici educativi e didattici* 78 (2020): 17.

³ See *Ibid.*, 24–27.

⁴ See A. Cencini and A. Manenti, *Psicologia e formazione* (Bologna: Centro Editoriale Dehoniano, 1985), 111–114.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 117–118.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 119.

phenomenon. Psychologists have tried to clarify the various aspects of this reality and, to this end, have studied psychosexual identity a lot recently. They have also stressed the importance of psychosocial identity. Questions about psycho-affective identity, national identity in an increasingly multi-ethnic and multi-racial Europe, as well as the identity of the immigrant, etc. have been raised. Rarely, however, do we encounter the concept of personal identity, and even less so do we hear about the concept of psycho-spiritual identity. And yet, this idea is an indispensable stage in the construction of man's image."⁷

Identity development in pastoral ministry for vocations

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A critical examination of society today reveals that it is highly efficient. The development of new information technologies and the possibility to travel anywhere make it possible to live at a fast pace and with every comfort. Yet, the need to discover (or re-discover) the meaning of life is more pressing than ever. At times, we observe that man seems to have lost the "need to live" and is driven by a kind of "thirst for learning" and a search for life's deeper meaning. Man seeks authenticity and self-development through values.⁸ In the pastoral care of vocations, especially and primarily of young people,

...the challenge that pedagogy faces today is precisely enhancing the construction of the self, but always within a community. The community can no longer represent a place where members feel trapped by the will of their superiors and the group, or where their destiny is decided without due regard for their freedom. Instead, this community should be the space vital to every person to live out an authentic relationship with other human beings.⁹

Every community, every environment where growth occurs—the family, church, work, school, peers, social centers, and gathering places—have a duty and mission to support, foster, and form the individual. Only in this way can a young person develop his own vision of the world and of himself, and then find his place and role in life. Every person needs support and direction. The human person is like an unknown realm. Pastoral ministry for vocations must help people

⁷ M. Szentmártoni, "Volto e volti: aspetti psico-spirituali dell'identità personale," *Gregorianum* 82, no. 3 (2001): 457.

⁸ See V. Balzano, "Educazione e welfare: la persona e la sua identità come antidoto alla deprivazione antropologica dell'era postmoderna," *Pedagogia e vita. Rivista di problemi pedagogici educativi e didattici* 78 (2020): 144–145.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 147.

understand who they are and then give them the necessary tools to present and relate their individual vocations to themselves. Pastoral ministry can become a bridge and means of communication to feel within oneself—in the depths of one’s soul—where the voice of conscience is and the only place where it is possible to rediscover God’s election and call.¹⁰

A Selection of Pedagogical Tools for Identity Formation

Various helpful tools that assist in the process of identity development exist. Man shapes his personality through self-awareness and in his relationship with others, in social life. The discovery and realization of one’s vocation, which occur over time, are essential elements. This realization takes place in relation to others, meaning within the family or social group, at school, or in church. Below are only a few means by which a person can develop his identity.

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Personal life project

The Church wants to put Christ’s mission into practice by offering a formation adapted to the needs of our times. This project is implemented by a formation plan that points toward the path to be followed. In fact, certain formation processes that are indispensable in preparing young people well contain the following key elements: a clear concept that welcomes suggestions, ideas, recommendations, requests. The need for a project that encompasses formation and training becomes evident when one analyzes a situation that involves both theoretical and practical levels. Without a well-organized structure and specific methodology, young people cannot be trained properly. Above all, good guides are needed as well as specific measures, effective methodologies, and useful teaching tools. The project entails the training structure, while the pathway indicates the direction. The project and the pathway both serve to organize the community and are a useful framework in which to implement educational policy and training strategies.

¹⁰ See E. Giuseppe; A.D. Savino, “L’educazione all’identità come scoperta della coscienza e della cultura della persona,” *Pedagogia e vita. Rivista di problemi pedagogici educativi e didattici* 78 (2020): 161–170.

Personal accompaniment

Mario Oscar Llanos stresses that vocational discernment and accompaniment must involve the whole person. The development process is and must be integrated. The four dimensions of man: “human, spiritual, cultural, and missionary are not ‘independent areas; they are interdependent, intercommunicative, interconnected and, therefore, should never be considered individually, but rather together, in the unity of the person.’”¹¹

In our society, real in-person relationships are being supplemented (and even supplanted) by virtual relationships that take place through digital channels. The use of the Internet and social media is a real challenge for formators, who must be vigilant about this dimension of communication and who must pay particular attention to moral and socio-psycho-pedagogical aspects of these means of communication. The human sciences, particularly psychology and Christian anthropology and pedagogy, are of help in this regard because they provide numerous tools for formation such as personal accompaniment, communal accompaniment, psychological assessment, therapeutic accompaniment, and personal work. Needless to say, the human dimension requires the utmost consideration today.

Self-narration

Self-reflection plays a very important role in every person’s life. Everyone seeks the meaning of life. When identified properly, both positive and negative past experiences can give value and meaning to life itself. Self-narration is a helpful tool in this process because it enables “otherwise silent experiences to speak. Sometimes we understand our experiences better if and when we tell others about them not only because the listener can interpret them back to us better than we can, but also and simply because we have articulated these experiences. Narration liberates our experience from silence, from communicative isolation, and this means freeing them from their hidden meaning and releasing their vitality. Storytelling can ‘bring life into focus.’”¹²

Narrating one’s life is not a narcissistic or purely subjective act. Rather, it is an opportunity to see one’s reflection in the mirror, so to speak, and to open up about one’s life to others. Mutual trust, intimacy, and kindness between the one being accompanied and the

¹¹ M. O. Llanos, *Servire le vocazioni nella Chiesa*, 252–253.

¹² A. Spadaro, “La narrazione come principio di libertà,” *La Civiltà Cattolica* 158, no. 3765, 5 maggio 2007, 227.

accompanier are crucial in this process. Self-understanding as well as identifying one's emotions, struggles, and human relationships—in essence, interpreting one's life—are all very important. All of this must take place in an atmosphere of complete freedom and total trust. The following retrospective methods can be used to help a person achieve self actualization: narrating one's autobiography, the use of literary texts such as the Holy Scriptures, and a diary in which a person can record and interpret his experiences through the experience of others.¹³

A person needs a space to express his different emotions, inner life, and personal thoughts and reflections. If an individual has repressed and relegated inner conflicts or negative experiences to the subconscious, then narration provides a means by which he can discover the truth about himself. A lack (or inability) of self-reflection often leads to psychological problems. Yet, inner struggles are often the source of a wealth of information: "Some forms of psychic discomfort can also be interpreted as the ego protesting against an inner imprisonment. Affectivity, imagination, and relationships are powerfully present in man from his earliest years, but without adequate instruction, they tend to go astray."¹⁴

Pastoral
Theology

Growth within a group

Modern psychology has developed various theories about the role of peer groups in personality formation and development. Pastoral ministry for vocations takes place primarily within a group and among other people. As a social being, man can develop only in a group. The human person grows through experiences and events. Being in a formation group, for example, in church or at school, helps one to grow in self-awareness. There are several factors that aid in an individual's personality development, especially in forming healthy relationships with others. Peer groups teach shared responsibility and foster the ability to recognize the needs of others through feedback from others. Without a group that helps a person grow, relate to others, and build interpersonal relationships, the human person cannot develop

¹³ See G. Tacconi, "La narrazione di sé," in *Formazione affettivo-sessuale: itinerario per seminaristi e giovani consacrati e consacrate*, eds. P. Gambini, M. O. Llanos, and G. M. Roggia (Bologna: EDB, 2017), 303–309.

¹⁴ G. Cucci, "Narrazione e senso della vita," *La Civiltà Cattolica* 161, no. 3848, 16 ottobre 2010, 166.

psycho-emotionally.¹⁵ Every person who is involved in pastoral ministry for vocations must help young people in their self-realization because “In adolescence, the young person cuts ties from the safe harbor of the habits of childhood and, endowed with a sense of omnipotence, ‘sets out to sea’ on a voyage full of promise and unexpected possibilities. Separation from first ties and the creation of new ones through the social family (i.e. the group) are characteristic elements of this process. The adolescent thus reworks his identity in relation to categories that qualify his vital experience: space, body, sex, time, interiority, abstract thought, search for meaning, and planning. The adolescent rides his life, which is based on these categories, like a ‘surfboard’ on the intoxication waves of the sea of life with the sense of freedom that has been achieved with difficulty. The orientation of the surfer presupposes that he has assumed responsibility little by little, embodies a matured solidarity, and has directed his energies to personal fulfillment according to coordinates that are constantly fluctuating in daily life.”¹⁶

Educational intervention

The main objective of educational intervention is to help the person discover his vocational path for himself. The person, however, is not alone on this path. Educators and formators are always aware that the development of a young person’s identity regardless of age is a complex process that occurs gradually and at different times for each person. The educational intervention presented below speaks of the three aspects that are essential for vocational formation: personal transformation, a relationship with others, and a personal relationship with God.

Personal transformation

Every formation activity seeks to achieve a specific objective. Formation provides the means and methods for growth, and pastoral ministry for vocations, in particular, is meant to help the person being formed to discover who he is and where he is going: the more he discovers the meaning of his vocation, which is to set out on the path

¹⁵ See R. Mastromarino, “Il gruppo esperienziale,” in *Formazione affettivo-sessuale: itinerario per seminaristi e giovani consacrati e consacrate*, eds. P. Gambini, M. O. Llanos, and G. M. Roggia (Bologna: EDB, 2017), 295–302.

¹⁶ M.O. Llanos, „Giovani, Vocazione, Realizzazione personale,” *Salesianum* 79 (2017): 303–304.

towards holiness, the more he experiences happiness and personal fulfillment. Formation contributes to a person's development, to his so-called "transformation" to maturity. This must always take place in an atmosphere of freedom.

In explaining what freedom is, A. Cencini and A. Manenti claim that total freedom does not exist because man is conditioned by various factors, among which are determinism and relative freedom, throughout life. The relationship between these two factors depends on environmental conditions and above all on conscious and unconscious attitudes.¹⁷ We must remember that freedom is a means of preserving both physical and mental health. Allowing sufficient space so that a person can act freely as a means of growth is something that educators must always respect at every stage of education.¹⁸ In our post-globalized world, where there is a great deficit of lasting and valuable relationships, the educator (or vocations promoter) should further the pedagogical aims to be authentic; to foster a sense of transcendence; to activate a young person's potential; to educate so as to enable the person to make mature decisions that will help him grow; to provide formation in ethics; and to cultivate a sense of beauty.¹⁹

Encounter with others

Every vocation can only develop within a community and is always for others. The vocational project comes to fruition through the love of neighbor, which is inextricable from the love of God. Man, as a relational being, needs a social life.²⁰ The capacity to create interpersonal relationships is always connected with the capacity to love because: "it is a simple adventure of the heart that is never fully complete. Love has to grow and expand according to the capacity and depth that each person develops. Therefore, education in love is indispensable. Each person's story, after all, is driven by his or her own equal needs to love and be loved."²¹

¹⁷ See A. Cencini and A. Manenti, *Psicologia e formazione* (Kraków: WAM, 2002), 336.

¹⁸ See J. Dewey, *Esperienza e educazione* (Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore, 2014), 53–54.

¹⁹ See M. O. Llanos, "Giovani, Vocazione, Realizzazione personale," 313–318.

²⁰ See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Roma: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1999), sec. 1878–1879.

²¹ See G. M. Roggia, "Si può fare...5 – Accettare di essere amati," *Vocazioni*, 5 ottobre 2011, 5.

Relationship with God

Religious experience plays a significant role in the discovery of one's identity. Human life is not only what we can describe as the material world. Human development also takes place through a person's experience of God—"a certain contact that human consciousness can have with God: in a derivative sense, it is the awareness of God's action in the soul, of the soul's aspiration and movements toward union with God."²² Spiritual discernment is also necessary to discover one's vocation. It is not enough to make strenuous efforts—always and only human—to develop educational and self-development programs because

[s]piritual discernment does not exclude existential, psychological, sociological, or moral insights drawn from the human sciences. At the same time, it transcends them. Nor are the Church's sound norms sufficient. We should always remember that discernment is a grace. Even though it includes reason and prudence, it goes beyond them; for it seeks a glimpse of that unique and mysterious plan that God has for each of us, which takes shape amid so many varied situations and limitations. It involves more than my temporal wellbeing, my satisfaction at having accomplished something useful, or even my desire for peace of mind. It has to do with the meaning of my life before the Father Who knows and loves me, with the real purpose of my life, which nobody knows better than He. Ultimately, discernment leads to the wellspring of undying life: to know the Father, the only true God, and the One Whom He has sent, Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 17:3).²³

All endeavors related to vocations must take place on three levels: anthropological, educational, and pastoral. The first is based on the image of man, which prompts a person to ask himself: "Are we able to discover man's true face in God?" The educational area, in turn, serves to help young people discover the meaning of life and gradually enable them to evaluate reality correctly. Today, in our society, which is permeated by subjectivism, people are often unable to find true and objective values such as transcendence and ethics. Young people in particular need spirituality that gives meaning to life and serves to integrate. The experience of God takes place in community and in relationship with others.²⁴ Everyone wants to find the path to happiness, especially the happiness that God offers because

God has a plan for each person. Discovering this divine plan for one's life means finding one's mission, one's charism. On a psychological

²² J. M. Garcia, *Teologia spirituale* (Roma: LAS, 2013), 339.

²³ Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate* (Roma: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2018), sec. 170.

²⁴ See M. O. Llanos, "Servire le vocazioni nella Chiesa," 211-218.

level, the meaning of vocation is articulated on three levels: who I must become according to God's plan; how to become what I must become; and, what I must do for God and for others. The first question refers to the acceptance of our selves. No one exists by chance; no one is a man or a woman by chance, etc. The second question refers to 'how' to realize God's creative plan and is usually articulated in three 'states of life': marriage, consecrated life, or singlehood. All three states are equal, since they are capable of guaranteeing the fulfillment of the whole person.²⁵

Conclusion

Man is a complex being made up of body and spirit. According to the old adage "*in medio virtus* [virtue lies in the mean]," man cannot be considered from a purely psycho-sociological or spiritual point of view. Just as man is complex, so too is pastoral ministry. Today's formators and educators are called to help young people discover their own identity. This paper attempts to show how pastoral care can aid in the development of a person's identity. Rather than presenting a detailed analysis of how the personality is formed, this paper focuses on illustrating what the personality is and pointing out possible educational means to develop the personality adequately, such as personal accompaniment and support. Young people are seeking a life project, but they need space and resources that will foster their growth and maturation. Personal accompaniment plays an invaluable role in this process. Self-narrative is another very important tool in pastoral ministry for vocations; for, today's postmodern and post-globalized society makes it difficult to reflect on one's life. Only by living consciously can a person assess events, ascribe meaning to them, and discover the purpose and value of life.

Pastoral work never takes place in isolation. The community of the family, church, school, peer groups, and other centers and gathering places are privileged environments where formation and education occur. Man is called to enter into human relationships and can develop best only if he is rooted in a network of relationships: remaining outside a peer group, which provides opportunities for personal development, often proves destructive. The formation and education process leads to personal development, which is called "conversion" in spiritual language. The process of self-formation always takes place not only in relation with oneself and others, but also in a personal and

²⁵ M. Szentmártoni, "Volto e volti," 465.

intimate spiritual relationship with God. This paper conveys how the field of research on identity is broad and how the concept of identity itself is an indispensable tool in vocational accompaniment. Psychology possess the proper expertise and tools of which pastoral ministry for vocations should make ready use in order to better understand young people and, thereby, accompany them effectively on their formative journey.

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Grief and Mourning During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Psychological and Pastoral Perspective

This article considers the difficulties associated with grief, mourning, and healing during the COVID-19 pandemic. The current pandemic has affected the way individuals overcome grief, since the bereaved must grieve without the usual social, cultural, and religious supports. Due to the ban on visiting the sick in hospitals as well as gathering and mourning in funeral homes, many people are experiencing pathological grief. This article indicates the importance of pastorally accompanying people who are going through the complicated process of mourning,¹ and it emphasizes that, through spiritual help and psychological accompaniment, this period can lead to healing that results in posttraumatic adaptation (resilience) and inner development.²

Key words: grief, mourning, COVID-19 pandemic, psychological aspects, pastoral accompaniment.

Grief and mourning naturally go together. Grief is an intense yearning for what has been lost that manifests emotionally, cognitively, physically, and behaviorally.³ Mourning is the outward expression of grief. When we lose someone we love, we need to mourn in healthy ways in order to grieve healthily. Grief is a universal phenomenon and a normal response to loss and bereavement. Manifestations of grief

¹ See J. C. G. Corpuz, "Beyond death and afterlife: the complicated process of grief in the time of COVID-19," *Journal of Public Health* 43, no. 2 (2021): 281-282.

² See R. G. Tedeschi and L. G. Calhoun, *Trauma and transformation: Growing in the aftermath of suffering* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1995).

³ See D. Carr, K. Boerner, and S. Moorman, "Bereavement in the time of coronavirus: Unprecedented challenges demand novel interventions," *Journal of Aging & Social Policy* 32, nos. 4-5 (2020): 425-431.

can range from normal to diagnosable psychiatric conditions.⁴ For this reason, it is important to discuss the concept of grief.

During pandemics, people experience different types of loss. A review of literature on the experiences of grief during previous pandemics, along with what we have learned thus far during the COVID-19 pandemic, indicates that risk of complicated grief is particularly high during this time.⁵

The nature of grief

It is important understand the nature of grief. When a loved one dies, grief manifests as deep sadness and a yearning to be with the person who passed away. Grief typically follows a wavelike pattern, which tends to ease over time as people adapt to their changed circumstances and regain a sense of control. Grief is unique, so there is no right way to grieve. It is important to accept that a death has occurred and to give oneself time to grieve. During this time, it is normal to experience a variety of emotions, including sadness, anxiety, loneliness, regret, anger, guilt, or a sense of not having done everything possible to prevent the person's death.

Dealing with grief means passing through different stages of bereavement. In 1969, the Swiss psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross first introduced the five common stages of grief, popularly referred to as DABDA: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance, in her book *On Death and Dying*.⁶ These stages do not occur chronologically and some people who grieve may experience none of them. In addition, some people may skip one stage, while others may get stuck in another. In general, however, most people who are bereaved experience to a greater or lesser degree the following five stages of grief:⁷

Stage 1: Denial

Denial is the conscious or unconscious decision to refuse to admit that something is true. Denial makes it impossible to accept the news

⁴ See R. A. Bryant, "Grief as a psychiatric disorder," *British Journal of Psychiatry* 201, no. 1 (2012): 9-10.

⁵ See C. R. Mayland et al., "Supporting adults bereaved through COVID-19: A rapid review of the impact of previous pandemics on grief and bereavement," *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management* 60, no. 2 (2020): 33-39.

⁶ E. Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (New York: Macmillan, 1969).

⁷ See E. Kübler-Ross and D. Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005).

of a sudden loss, something unforeseen, or even something imagined. In the case of grief, it becomes impossible for the grieving person to accept death.

Stage 2: Anger

Once a person has come to terms with loss, anger manifests in an emotional or physical act by which people try to place blame. The deep pain and resentment that an individual experiences can manifest as anger directed towards others or even towards God. Not everyone goes through this stage. Anger can make the grieving person seem unapproachable to others and, paradoxically, keep others at a distance even when the grieving person needs help.

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Stage 3: Bargaining

Bargaining is negotiation by which a person tries to postpone or distance himself from the loss of a loved one. With regard to grief, bargaining often entails asking a higher power or God to bring back the person who has died in exchange for something else. The grieving individual has a false belief that he can change the situation through negotiation. It is a way to seek false hope and postpone feelings of hopelessness.

Stage 4: Depression

Depression is the feeling of loss of control or hopelessness in the midst of grief. This stage occurs when the initial stages of denial, anger, and bargaining have been exhausted. As soon as a bereaved person realizes that he cannot change things, he becomes still, and the period of separation from others and isolation begins. Feelings of emptiness and loneliness become strong even when a person's family and friends surround him. Nothing seems to change this feeling of emptiness and deep sadness.

Stage 5: Acceptance

Acceptance is a feeling of inner stability and resignation in the face of circumstances that cannot be changed and the fact that the person who has died continues to live in one's memory of the heart. Acceptance occurs when the bereaved person comes to terms with reality

and agrees to move forward in life, which he or she sees a precious gift for him or herself and for others.

A popular misconception arose from Elisabeth Kübler-Ross' presentation of death and dying as a process with distinct stages—namely, people thought that the process of grieving took place in a series of sequential steps. In addition, there was the misunderstanding that the grieving process supposedly resolved when a person who has lost a loved one could “draw” energy from the one who had died and redirect it to relationships with those who are living. These ideas did not turn out to be true in the lives and experience of actual grieving people, who reported that they continued to experience a connection with the loved one whose passing they mourned.

Those who experience the death of a loved one often continue to grieve while also moving on with their lives. Contemporary studies involving bereaved people clearly reveal that the process of grieving is neither linear nor stage-like. Moreover, grief certainly does not “resolve” if it means letting go of one's love for the person who has died or ignoring a continual sense the deceased person's presence in the concrete reality of the physical absence that comes with death. The pastoral theologian Rogers-Vaughn noted that there is plenty of evidence that love persists beyond death among those who grieve. Grief is essentially love present in absence.⁸

The role of funerals in mourning

The mourning process is a protective factor against complicated grief. Funeral rites are an important part of mourning, but for those living during a pandemic, it is often impossible for these rites to take place. Funerals are an expression of pain and passage into an unknown future without a loved one. These rites are also significant for children because they help little ones to better understand the concept of death and the fact that someone they love is gone.

From the point of view of faith, funeral rites mark the end of life on earth and the beginning of life in Christ. At a funeral, the human labors of the deceased are placed into God's hands, and the person who has died awaits His merciful judgment. The Christian funeral liturgy is a celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ the Lord. During a funeral, the Church prays that the deceased believer, who was incorporated

⁸ B. Rogers-Vaughn, “Recovering grief in the age of grief recovery,” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 13, no. 1 (2003): 40.

into Christ's death and resurrection through Baptism, passes with Him from death to life and, duly purified in soul, will be welcomed with the saints and the elect into heaven, while the body awaits the hope of the second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead.

During the pandemic, the inability to grieve in the presence of family members and to see and touch the deceased have complicated the mourning phase.⁹ Government-imposed travel restrictions and forced separations have impaired how people can express and work through the pain of loss. Social distancing, stay-at-home orders, and limitations on the size of in-person gatherings enforced during this time have changed the way friends and family can gather and grieve.¹⁰ The risk of contagion has also necessitated that the remains of the deceased be disposed without family and friends seeing the remains and celebrating the final rites. The lack of funeral ceremonies such as face-to-face mourning and closing the coffin potentially cause survivors to feel helplessness and grieved.

To consider what a funeral is and what can take place during a pandemic, we must look at the basic elements of a funeral. If a public funeral for a loved one is not permissible due to the pandemic, or if an entire family cannot gather together, a funeral mass and burial can be broadcast on the Internet so that those who cannot be present at the burial site or prevented from gathering due to quarantine or illness can participate remotely.

To circumvent the issue of ambiguous loss, digital photos of the deceased are a viable alternative to an in-person embrace. The use of such services gives family and friends, who would have otherwise been unable to participate due to travel restrictions and/or being at high risk for contracting the infection and developing complications, the opportunity to offer their condolences and participate.¹¹

Grief during a pandemic

The processes of loss and grief can vary in intensity and duration. Although acute grief is usually self-limiting, grief never fully ceases. Grief that remains intense and impairs individuals for more than one

⁹ J. C. Bermejo, *Duelo Digital* (Bilbao: Desclée De Brouwer, 2020).

¹⁰ See M. J. Byrne and D.R. Nuzum, "Pastoral closeness in physical distancing: The use of technology in pastoral ministry during COVID-19," *Health and Social Care Chaplaincy* 8, no. 2 (2020): 206–217.

¹¹ See I. Muturi, S. Freeman, and D. Banner, "Virtual funerals: A feasible and safer option during the COVID-19 pandemic," *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* 68, no. 11(2020): 2472–2473.

year is considered prolonged grief disorder¹² (PGD) or complicated grief¹³ (CD), both of which are described as an intense and extended form of persistent yearning and grief that impairs individuals by making them indefinitely unable to process the loss and move on in life.¹⁴ Risk factors for complicated grief are a sudden and unexpected death,¹⁵ witnessing a difficult death, and an inability to let go of the person who has passed away.¹⁶

Deaths due to COVID-19 have been labeled negative deaths as they are marked by physical and psychological suffering, physical separation from family members, lack of preparation for death, disrespectful treatment, unwanted medical interventions, an inability to access medical services, sudden disease progression, and sometimes unexpected patient death.

When faced with a major loss such as the death of a loved one due to COVID-19, those left behind often imagine “alternative scenarios;” in other words, they almost automatically think about what could have been different so that the person would not have died. This is called counterfactual thinking, and it is a natural reaction to a significant loss even when the rational mind realizes that alternative scenarios are not real. This is one way that individuals cope with the acute pain of loss. Under ordinary circumstances, these thoughts are not as prominent. They can be more intense and more difficult to resolve, however, when a loved one dies in a sudden and unexpected way. In the case of

¹² The condition of persistent grief known as Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD) was recently included in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11). See: World Health Organization, “2020 International statistical classification of diseases and related health problems,” <https://icd.who.int/>.

¹³ M. C. Eisma, R. Rosner, and H. Comtesse, “ICD-11 Prolonged grief disorder criteria: Turning challenges into opportunities with multiverse analyses,” *Frontiers in Psychiatry* 11 (2020): 752.

¹⁴ Grief therapy, which facilitates grief management, may act as a template for developing a specific intervention for complicated grief. Complicated grief psychotherapy (CGT) is the best-studied intervention for prolonged and recalcitrant grief disorders. It facilitates progression through stages of mourning and checks for any derailments. CGT has been found to be more effective than interpersonal psychotherapy and antidepressants. See J. S. Goveas and M. K. Shear, “Grief and the COVID-19 pandemic in older adults,” *American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* 28, no. 10 (2020): 1119–1125.

¹⁵ S. Nakajima, “Complicated grief: Recent developments in diagnostic criteria and treatment,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B, Biological sciences* 373, no. 1754 (2018): 20170273.

¹⁶ See E. van Ee, “Samen rouwen: over sociale steun aan nabestaanden gedurende de COVID-19-pandemie,” *Tijdschrift voor Psychiatrie* 63, no. 1 (2021): 13-15.

COVID-19, it is very easy to imagine alternatives! For example, people may question: “What if the deceased person had not gone where he did? Maybe he would not have gotten infected? If he had not gone to that particular supermarket, attended that party, or traveled to that location, then he would not have been exposed to the virus!” This type of thinking can occur even if it is unclear where or how the person contracted the virus. The ease of imagining alternative scenarios can sometimes make it more difficult for people to accept reality as it is and increases their risk for PGD.

The natural process of bereavement can be disrupted further when some of the complexities of bereavement go unresolved. A variety of factors may be at play in this type of situation, including the bereaved person’s characteristics, the dynamics and nature of the person’s relationship with the deceased loved one, and the circumstances and context of the death. These factors increase the possibility that one or more aspects of the meaning or experience of pain will disrupt the person’s bereavement and adaptation to a new reality.

Another component is that the bereaved person may not have had the opportunity to say goodbye to his family member, leaving many words unspoken and things unresolved. The inability to be at the person’s side as she die can increase the grieving person’s sense of disbelief and make it more difficult to accept that the death actually happened.

Social distancing related to COVID-19 impacts the grieving process significantly in several ways. Social distancing has affected religious and cultural aspects of the mourning process, depriving those who mourn of the comfort of community support and ritual. Especially at the beginning of the pandemic, but even now, people often could not be present with loved ones while they were dying. This generated a series of emotional reactions in the survivors.

In the case of COVID-19, the circumstances surrounding the person’s death increase these reactions. For example, knowing that the deceased person suffered and died alone is distressing and can increase feelings of personal guilt. Survivor’s guilt, which is a common, is the sense of distress at being spared from the hardship that the deceased person endured. Such guilt is often manifested in the question: “Why was I spared while he or she died?”

Sometimes the sheer number of deaths that have occurred in a given family leads to a lack of recognition of each member’s grieving experience. Society often overlooks or downplays the death of those who are chronically ill, especially the elderly. When such repressed emotions

are not treated properly due to a lack of adequate resources and financial constraints following the pandemic this can produce devastating emotional effects in the future. The above factors can cause what is known as disenfranchised grief and interfere in a person's ability to cope. All of these factors have increased the possibility of prolonged bereavement disorder arising during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁷

Strategies to pass through the mourning process

To help individuals better understand the difficult journey of grief, Dr. William Worden developed four tasks of mourning.¹⁸ It is important to note that many people experience loss or its intensity in their own way. This experience is not linear and every person's journey is unique. However, the steps that take place in the process of grieving and healing are similar and include the following tasks:

- To accept the reality of loss. While the final stage of Kubler-Ross' model is acceptance, Worden believes that acceptance of the reality of the loss and death is the foundation of healing. There are a couple of ways to start this process. Seeing the body of the person who died is one way. Participating in rituals such as planning the funeral, preparing the eulogy, or caring for the gravesite are ways to begin this first task. Turning to spirituality or religion can also foster quicker acceptance.
- To search for a personal way to express grief. Many people have different and often unique ways of dealing with their pain. Some need to talk, some cry, others keep busy with work or a hobby. Some people cope with the sudden pain of loss by finding a way to commemorate the person who died by investing in a cause close to their loved one's heart or by helping other similar groups of survivors. It is appropriate to process pain through action as long as the aim is to navigate one's way through the pain and not to avoid it or hide from it.
- To adjust to the world without the deceased person. It is important to point out that different people adapt to new realities in different ways. In the case of the death of a loved one, for example, this could mean removing the person's phone number from one's

¹⁷ See C. K. Kokou-Kpolou, M. Fernández-Alcántara, and J. M. Cénat, "Prolonged grief related to COVID-19 deaths: Do we have to fear a steep rise in traumatic and disenfranchised griefs?" *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy* 12, S1 (2020): 94–95.

¹⁸ J. W. Worden, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner*, Fourth Edition (New York: Springer, 2009).

address book or making new life plans without the deceased. Either way, the survivor must start living in a new world without the deceased's affection.

- To find an enduring connection with the person who died in the years to come. Many people may find themselves exploring how to remain emotionally connected with the deceased while simultaneously moving forward in their lives. It is important to note that this does not entail forgetting the deceased but of shifting one's attention from the past to the present and then to the future. Worden points out that there is no fixed time frame in which to complete this task; this period, however, often lasts for months and years, rather than days or weeks. Bonding with the deceased person through prayer or, in the case of non-believers, taking time to write in a journal and acknowledge the things about the deceased for which one is grateful are helpful.

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The Christian meaning of death

The Christian faith-filled response to death is Christ's birth, death, and resurrection. Jesus did not articulate a theory on pain and death; He did not explain the reason for these human realities. Instead, He experienced and lived out in Himself all of the suffering of the world and accepted to die in anguish like all men. He did not immediately say that pain is valuable; rather, Christ taught that it is wrong to reject God and His faithful love for man when one experiences pain, illness, and death. In Christ we can interpret the complete meaning of every person's life and death. Without physical death we would not be able to access real life: the encounter with God.

Physical, earthly life is important, but it is not the end. Early life entails joys and sorrows, health and sickness, but it is always precious as the path to divine, eternal life. Beyond the final obstacle that is death, salvation—the triumph over man's creaturely condition as well as full and definitive life in God—awaits. All of this is possible because Jesus became man like us. He took on our sufferings and diseases, and He experienced human tragedy and helplessness in the face of death. He cried out from the cross to God and abandoned Himself to the Father with the utmost confidence. In His acceptance of death, Christ saved man and triumphed over death, giving us hope for the impossible and faith in His Paschal Mystery: "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live; whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (Jn 11:25-26). By participating in the suffering

of Christ, the one who believes knows that he also participates in the fullness of Christ's life as the Risen One.

Through His passion, Jesus not only frees us from the radical evil of death, sin, and every other misery, but He also gives meaning to every suffering, which is a sign and instrument of salvation. He died for everyone; no one is rejected by God's love for Him.¹⁹ Death is the very place of love and hope. From the point of view of faith, death becomes a mysterious experience rather than a simple problem to manage. Living it humanly involves the utmost respect for the dignity of the human person; a "*meditatio mortis*" is transformed into an understanding of the ultimate value of life in view of its end in the midst of the dynamism of hope.²⁰ Death gives life its ultimate meaning. Characterizing death entails doing what is necessary to make others understand that the dying process is a dimension of life.²¹ Seen through the lens of faith, the Christian claim that love is stronger than death (cf. Song of Songs 8:6-7) is proven true. The loss is real, as is the suffering that it generates, but the bonds of love are not broken by loss.

An ongoing sense of connection with the deceased or with a lost experience does not mean that the bereaved person cannot invest in life. Rather, he acknowledges that life has changed forever due to loss and, yet, life still goes on. In situations of death, then, the bond and process of closure are endless. There is the certainty of both the end of physical life and the love that continues even after death. In situations of less tangible loss, such as death from COVID-19, pain involves processing the loss of hopes and those things that give life meaning. Such desires surely express love in the midst of pain. It does not seem a stretch for Christians to reorient themselves away from the idea that suffering must be resolved and put aside toward recognizing that pain manifests love, that all authentic love is of God, and that nothing—not even death—can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus.

Overcoming the fear of the pain caused by death begins with an awareness of one's own fragility, which we all experience so strongly during the pandemic, and accepting that we depend on God, Who ultimately reveals Himself as Love and Mercy.

¹⁹ See *Discorsi, Messaggi, Colloqui del Santo Padre Giovanni XXIII, Vol. V* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1964), 618.

²⁰ See J. C. Bermejo, *La esperanza en Tiempo de Coronavirus* (Santander: Sal Terrae, 2020).

²¹ See J. C. Bermejo, M. Magaña, "*Modelo Humanizar*" de *Intervención en Duelo* (Madrid: Sal Terrae, 2014).

Pastoral accompaniment during the COVID-19 pandemic

Life in the midst of a pandemic reconfigures the way we approach the problem of loss theologically. Mourning is the bodily, cognitive, emotional, and spiritual process through which we deal with the loss of something or someone significant. It is the soul's cry of protest against broken ties and severed connections. It is the body's appeal of resistance to the terror of being existentially alone. For creatures whose very beings require relationships, connections, and community, pain is part of the struggle to relearn how to be fully human in the face of loss, and the coronavirus has, unfortunately, allowed us to experience considerable bereavement.

Faith communities have developed centuries of wisdom to help people cope with death, dying, and pain. Yet, the sheer scale of the COVID-19 contagion and death in the last year defies the imagination and easily overwhelms even those who are accustomed to it. In many cases, death due to COVID-19 occurs quickly, but the most troubling component of the pandemic is that so many people have died alone or in the presence of only one healthcare worker. They are isolated from the comforting presence of family members and faith communities.

Although the Catholic Church knows how to be a witness to the loving presence of God when confronted with another's suffering, She is prevented from doing so fully and in the usual ways. This not only affects those who are dying but also greatly distresses their family members and healthcare workers. In light of this disaster, every concrete gesture, even the most humble and seemingly irrelevant, is very valuable! In this particular circumstance, death can teach us to accompany others during their own death and be present to those who are in the process of mourning.²²

Accompanying others in dying, even by telephone or video call, can teach us to live because it involves valuable gestures that can be easily relegated to everyday life, gestures evoked more by feeling than by reason, gestures based on values that demand relationship and accompaniment. Accompanying others in the process of dying reveals the value of our silent presence, the value of the metaphorical embrace, and the value of an outstretched hand that has replaced the now impossible caress.²³ It reveals the power of small and simple gestures, the need for the symbolic to survive, to continue living.

²² See V. Paglia, *La hermana muerta. La dignidad del vivir y del morir* (Santander: Sal Terrae, 2017), 43.

²³ See Bermejo, J. C. *Duelo Digital* (Bilbao: Desclée De Brouwer, 2020).

Conclusions

The COVID-19 pandemic is still affecting individuals across countries and cultures, and the death toll continues to rise. As of September 30, 2021, there have been 233,136,147 confirmed cases of COVID-19 globally, including 4,771,408 deaths reported to the World Health Organization.²⁴

In addition to the undisputed direct effect of the pandemic on mental health worldwide, this article seeks to highlight the secondary impact of the death of loved ones due to this disease, the consequences of which are likely to be felt in the coming months and years.

The death of a loved one is a major life stressor and often described as one of the most painful experiences that a person will undergo in his lifetime.²⁵ During the pandemic the grieving process of the sudden death of a loved one has become complicated by all the restrictions caused by COVID-19. This article points out the importance of psychologically accompanying the bereaved so that they can avoid developing complicated grief²⁶ and of the consoling value of pastoral accompaniment, which helps the grieved to continue living, to reconnect with others and life with a sense of purpose and meaning, and to find ways to honor the deceased loved ones and keep their memory alive within the heart.

Accompaniment demonstrates that much can and must be done to help the bereaved. Participating in such “joys and hopes, the grief and anxieties of the people of this age, especially of those who are poor or in any way afflicted” is the call of those who follow Christ. For, “[i]ndeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts.”²⁷

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²⁴ See WHO, <https://covid19.who.int/>

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²⁶ See G.A. Bonanno, “Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience: Have We Underestimated the Human Capacity to Thrive After Extremely Aversive Events?” *American Psychologist* 59, no. 1 (2004): 20–28.

²⁷ See Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* [Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World], accessed January 10, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

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The Christian Attitude Toward Physical Death Based on Gregory the Great's *Homilies on the Gospels*

Man is the only earthly creature who is aware of himself and of the inevitability of his death. Death, as a mystery and inescapable reality, has always been the subject of reflection and research. Popes have also discussed this issue in their teaching.

The aim of the article is to present human attitudes toward death in Gregory the Great's homilies from the fifth and sixth centuries. A textual analysis of these homilies reveals that man should prepare himself for death in such a way that death arouses not fear, but rather joyful entrustment to God. Gregory's homilies also convey that the decisions that a person makes throughout his lifetime have a powerful impact on the moment of his death. Pope Gregory demonstrates the interdependence of the free decision that man makes at the moment of death and the gift of eternal life with God. The pope proclaims that if someone lives a sinful life, then evil spirits will fight for his soul at the moment of his death. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to put one's life in order before death and to be safeguarded by the prayer of the community of the Church at the moment of death.

Key words: death, dying, Gregory the Great, fear of death, preparation for death.

Because death is a universal experience, man is generally aware of the fact that every person dies. Death is the natural consequence of sinful human nature. "Man is also the only creature in the world that is aware of his death and, therefore, can determine his attitude toward it. Man can either ignore death, or he can anticipate it; he can ascribe a certain meaning to death, or he can reflect metaphysically

on his eternal future.”¹ Man has reflected on the reality of death since the dawn of time. In the ancient world, depending on the culture and community, death was connected to different beliefs that involved various rites.² Many philosophers discussed this subject. The Holy Scripture presents man’s struggle with death through the example of the Chosen People, who God created and led out of the land of Egypt. Death is not proper to man; it is the result of sin. This understanding of death serves as the foundation of early Christian eschatology that the Fathers of the Church discussed in their writings. Gregory the Great (540-604)³ is one such father, and he offers a variety of thoughts on death, especially in his *Homilies on the Gospels*. This article explores the main ideas about death that Gregory the Great presents in his homilies. He spoke of death as a great inscrutable mystery that man must face in order to arrive at the proper attitude toward it. His emphasis on preparing to die well is timeless.

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Fear and the Witness of the Living

With every passing hour of his life man ages and his death approaches. However, not every person is aware of this reality or accepts it. Awareness or ignorance of death is due to many aspects of human existence. Faith is one such aspect. A believer—a Christian—who anticipates eternal life and resurrection after death considers death simply one stage of life. Gregory the Great expresses such an attitude in his teaching, which leads to certain assumptions in the light of this unavoidable reality. A Christian can die peacefully in God because his faith makes him certain of eternal life.⁴ In this way, his death becomes both a witness and a lesson for those who witness it. However, not all people who have faith are certain of their eternal life. The two most common ways that people respond when they are confronted with the

¹ B. Mielec, “Śmierć,” in *Encyklopedia Bioetyki*, ed. A. Muszala (Radom: 2009), 581-582.

² See C. Zuccaro, *Teologia śmierci*, trans. K. Stopa (Kraków: 2004), 9.

³ See M. Dal Santo, “Gregory the Great, the Empire and the Emperor,” in: *A Companion to Gregory the Great*, ed. B. Neil, M. Dal Santo (Leiden: 2013), 57-81.

⁴ See John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis* [Encyclical Letter], sec. 10, accessed October 20, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_04031979_redemptor-hominis.html; M. Tarnowski, “Człowiek wobec śmierci,” *W drodze* 123, no.11 (1983): 88; Z. J. Kijas, “Najważniejsze jest życie,” in *Brama śmierci. Pytania o sprawy ostateczne*, ed. J. L. Franczyk (Kraków: 2007), 55.

inevitability of death is to push it out of sight or mind,⁵ on the one hand, or to make a public spectacle of it, which evokes strong emotions as an antidote to the boredom of everyday existence, on the other.⁶ Pope Gregory noticed these different attitudes, and he discussed them. He stated, "If, indeed, the death of the righteous is a help to the good ones, it bears witness against the wicked, so that even that which serves to bring the elect to good so that they live, removes all excuses from the wicked when they perish."⁷ The quality of a person's life and his attitude toward God explain the broad range of attitudes that people have toward death. For those who live righteously on earth, their death is so good that it is a witness to others and an example for them to follow. The teaching of Gregory the Great clearly indicates that the person who spends his life preparing for death experiences it calmly or even anticipates it with hope.⁸ The opposite, however, is true of the sinner who never listens to God's admonitions; Gregory indicates that such a person should fear death.⁹ Those who do not believe in God and who live perverse lives approach death with dread, since they will be damned. In one homily, Pope Gregory recalls Jesus' parable about the talents, and he summons people to live good active lives, to prepare for a holy death, and to examine their consciences based on their entire life.¹⁰ He then says,

The Lord comes when he approaches to judge; he knocks on the door when he warns us of the proximity of death by the attacks of an illness. We open it immediately if we welcome it with love. We do not want to

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⁵ Man's attitude toward death changes with time and circumstances. See J. Jarco, "Współczesna problematyka śmierci," *Życie i myśl* 24, no. 10 (1974): 41-42.

⁶ See A. Nichols, *Mysł Benedykta M. Wprowadzenie do myśli teologicznej Josepha Ratzingera*, trans. D. Chabrajska (Kraków: 2005), 226; see M. Tarnowski, "Człowiek wobec śmierci," 87-88.

⁷ Gregory the Great, Homily 35, *Homilies on the Gospels*, accessed October 27, 2021, <https://sites.google.com/site/aquinasstudybible/home/luke-commentary/gregory-the-great-homily-35-on-the-gospels>.

⁸ See Gregory the Great, Homily 13, *Homilies on the Gospels*, accessed October 27, 2021, <https://sites.google.com/site/aquinasstudybible/home/luke-commentary/gregory-the-great-homily-13-on-the-gospels>.

⁹ See Gregory the Great, Homily 38, *Homilies on the Gospels*, accessed October 27, 2021, <https://sites.google.com/site/aquinasstudybible/home/matthew-commentary/gregory-the-great-homily-38-on-the-gospels>.

¹⁰ See R. Buliński, *Program pracy duszpasterskiej papieża Grzegorza Wielkiego w świetle ekshortacji pastoralnych zawartych w „XL Homiliarum in Evangelia”* (Pelplin: 2008), 27-34.

open to the Judge who knocks, if we are afraid of dying and we dread to see the Judge that we remember to have despised.¹¹

According to the pope, contempt for God and the indifference to His will that results from it in one's present life cause a person to fear death and God's justice at the hour of death: "It is necessary to consider what terror will accompany the hour of our death, what a trembling of mind, what a memory of all our bad actions! It will be well forgotten, then, happiness passed! But what fear, what apprehension before the Judge!"¹² While the teaching of the Second Vatican Council presents this idea and acknowledges fear of death, the conciliar documents claim that anxiety in the face of death is a natural manifestation of man's vocation to live: "Not only is man tormented by pain and by the advancing deterioration of his body, but even more so by a dread of perpetual extinction. He rightly follows the intuition of his heart when he abhors and repudiates the utter ruin and total disappearance of his own person."¹³ Cardinal Ratzinger also recalled this thought of Gregory the Great when asserting, "if the mystery of life is identical to the mystery of love, it is also connected with all that happens after death."¹⁴

Saint Gregory the Great frequently mentions that man usually begins to think about his sins and the mistakes that he made during his life when he must confront death. Only then, according to Gregory, does a person begin to prepare for death: "Let a sickness seize us, let the symptoms of this sickness announce a near death to us, and seek an extension of life to mourn our sins; but this delay, which we then ask with a very ardent desire, we enjoy, at this moment, without making any case."¹⁵ It is careless for an individual to avoid thinking about

¹¹ Gregory the Great, Homily 13.

¹² Gregory the Great, Homily 39, *Homilies on the Gospels*, accessed October 27, 2021, <https://sites.google.com/site/aquinasstudybible/home/luke-commentary/gregory-the-great-homily-39-on-the-gospels>.

¹³ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* [Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World], sec. 18, accessed October 20, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html; see W. Półtawska, "Katecheza o śmierci," *Ateneum Kapłańskie* 430, no. 2 (1980): 211.

¹⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Służyć prawdzie. Myśli na każdy dzień*, 42; see B. Chyrowicz, "Chorzy na śmierć," *Znak* 9 (2000): 60.

¹⁵ Gregory the Great, Homily 12, *Homilies on the Gospels*, accessed October 27, 2021, <https://sites.google.com/site/aquinasstudybible/home/matthew-commentary/gregory-the-great-homily-12-on-the-gospels>; S. Kowalczyk, "Rozumienie

death.¹⁶ Those who believe must also reject the desire to die suddenly, since death is the most important moment of life when a person matures and readies himself for real life—eternal life. Every attempt to penetrate the reality of death reveals the mystery of life. Gregory the Great emphasizes this idea when stating, “The Lord comes when he approaches to judge; he knocks on the door when he warns us of the proximity of death by the attacks of an illness.”¹⁷ According to Pope Gregory, every sickness or suffering that man experiences is an expression of God’s concern for his salvation. God speaks in this way in order to encourage man to sort out his life. Death is woven throughout man’s life like the resurrection is woven throughout the life of Christ. Consequently, the fundamental goal of living righteously is to find the path that leads not to emptiness and absurdity, but to eternal life.

The Need to Prepare for Death

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Every person will have to face death, regardless of who he is and what he possesses, says St. Gregory, “And while death awaits us all with certainty, do not trouble yourself to foresee the uncertain future of this ephemeral life. Do not be bothered by concern for the things of the earth.”¹⁸ It is necessary for man to prepare for the moment of death. The pope warns the faithful of the tragic consequences of living a careless life that can end at any moment. He indicates the negative consequences of such a life by recalling the Gospel parable of the thief who comes unexpectedly in the night:

...the thief pierces the house: indeed, when our soul sleeps instead of watching over itself, death, rising unexpectedly, breaks our house of flesh, and having found its master asleep, it kills it; and when our souls do not foresee the chastisements to come, death brings them to torment because of their ignorance.¹⁹

This torment can be understood in different ways. St. Gregory the Great probably saw it as eternal condemnation or as the inner anxiety and suffering that a person experiences at the very moment of death. It is, therefore, important to always be prepared. However,

śmierci w głównych kierunkach filozoficznych,” *Ateneum Kapłańskie* 72, no. 1 (1980): 374.

¹⁶ See D. Adamczyk, “Chrześcijańska postawa wobec misterium mortis jako źródła niepokoju i nadziei,” *Communio* 26, no. 6 (2006): 89.

¹⁷ Gregory the Great, Homily 13.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

preparedness does not mean living in sadness and being depressed because death is approaching. Life should be joyful; it is filled with victories and defeats, struggles and rich experiences, including the death of different people.²⁰ The man who lives his life in a good way is happy when he dies because he is going to meet God. He longs for eternal life and prepares for it.

Gregory the Great warned his listeners about death out of his concern that they die peacefully and enter into eternal life. He also speaks about God's great mercy for man, who He calls to conversion away from his sinful life through certain signs:

Almighty God is accustomed to visit every sinful soul in many ways. He visits her relentlessly by his commandments, sometimes by a trial, sometimes even by a miracle, so that she hears the truths she did not know, and – if still she remains full of pride and contempt – that she returns to God in the pain of compunction, or else, overcome by the benefits, that she blushes for the evil she has committed.²¹

St. Gregory's words are realistic.²² Any sickness is a potential cause to reevaluate one's life and validate it. Sickness is, therefore, a good opportunity to change one's sinful life and to prepare for the final meeting with God, the Just Judge. In this regard, St. Gregory recalls the example of a young man who lived a sinful life and who, because of his iniquity, suffered from a terrible disease:²³

Behold, a young debauched man saw at his death the demon he had served during his life; and this vision, far from making him lose his life, allowed him to know him whose slave he had made, that he might resist him, and that if he resisted, he would triumph over them. He, who before possessed him without seeing him, was finally given the

²⁰ See L. Knabit, *Najważniejszy dzień mojego życia. Refleksje o życiu i śmierci* (Kraków: eSPe, 2007), 64.

²¹ Gregory the Great, Homily 39.

²² J. Pleskaczyński confirms that this still holds true. Based on his numerous experiences and conversations as a hospital chaplain, he states that patients, especially those in the intensive care unit, often thoroughly reflect on their lives. They frequently discuss their need to change their life radically. They say things like, "Why are you in such a hurry, chaplain? I used to live in a hurry as well." Close contact with the sick reveals that these seemingly simple reflections convey much deeper insight. See J. Pleskaczyński, "Kryzys sensu życia w doświadczeniu choroby i śmierci," *Życie Duchowe* 3, no. 5 (1996): 25-39.

²³ Gregory the Great considers illness a warning of approaching death: A man is sick, and then he dies. See. Gregory the Great, Homily 13.

opportunity to see him, so that he would no longer be possessed by him.²⁴

God's mercy is so great that He gives man the chance to cling to Him and to choose Him even in man's very moment of agony. A person who encounters death and survives often changes his life and conduct. Conversion, however, which is a gift from God, is not just a formal declaration or simply an emotion. Conversion must be manifested in the ecclesial and sacramental rejection of sin and in choosing God. The First Person of the Holy Trinity then enters into the history of man's life and seeks his good in every possible way. God the Father wants to prepare man for death and warns him of any possible threats to his salvation.

The Battle Between Good and Evil

When describing the moment of death, Pope Gregory the Great recalls the ongoing battle between good and evil and writes about the ultimate decision that man must make between God and condemnation. Gregory speaks about how God permits man to choose or reject Him through a free act of the will. The pope recalls the dragon that symbolizes the devil. Satan appears before the dying in order to take his soul to hell: "But because this soul has not recognized the time of its visitation, it is delivered at the end of its life to enemies whom it will be obliged, by a judgment of eternal damnation, to share forever society."²⁵ At the moment of death, man begins a new and eternal life. At this point, he enters into a state of complete freedom and perfect consciousness. This is the final moment when man, who experiences such freedom and consciousness, is able to genuinely choose or reject Christ.²⁶ He makes a decision using his free, full, and perfect will, and this choice determines his eternal fate.²⁷ Many scholars and believers

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²⁴ Gregory the Great, Homily 19, *Homilies on the Gospels*, accessed October 27, 2021, <https://sites.google.com/site/aquinasstudybible/home/matthew-commentary/gregory-the-great-homily-19-of-the-gospels>.

²⁵ Gregory the Great, Homily 39.

²⁶ Contemporary theology also reflects Gregory the Great's thought as the basis for its theology on death. For example, when drawing from Karl Rahner's theology of death, L. Boros develops it further and claims that man is given the possibility to choose Jesus at the moment of his death, and he can be saved regardless of how he behaved throughout his life just like the impenitent thief who was crucified next to Jesus. See L. Boros, *Mysterium mortis* (Warszawa: 1974), 58

²⁷ This is called particular judgment. See L. Boros, *Mysterium mortis*, 58; C. Zucaro, *Teologia śmierci*, 70; R. Rogowski, "Śmierć jako sakrament życia," *Ateneum*

think that such a decision takes place; however, not everyone agrees on the particulars surrounding it. Some people claim that a good life guarantees a good death.²⁸ Those who support this line of thought also espouse preserving a certain balance between a good life and a good death. To this end, they treat life as a preparation for death and period when man makes less important decisions which will prepare and lead him to the final decision that he must make at the moment of death.²⁹ Therefore, it is necessary to meditate peacefully on one's life, on the fact that it is passing, and on death.

Gregory the Great emphasizes the importance of the moment of death and considers it the most significant moment in human life. Death is also a trial and examination of how one lived one's earthly life. Saint Pope Gregory claims that, after the soul leaves the body, evil spirits that seek to enslave the soul and take it to hell will immediately surround it:³⁰

Are there any greater enemies of the human soul than the evil spirits who come to besiege it as it goes out of her body, after having excited her by deceptive delights when she lived in the love of the flesh? They surround her with trenches, putting the faults she has committed under the eyes of her soul, and endeavoring to drag her into their common damnation, so that she is surprised at her last moments, while seeing by what enemies she is surrounded on all sides, yet she can not find a way to escape, because she can no longer do the good she refused to do when she could.³¹

When preparing for death, every person should look retrospectively at his life. This entails the risk of losing everything that a person considered important. Such an examination may also evoke fear that everything for which one sacrificed his life and valued most during his life will become worthless.³² These types of things, which depend

Kaptańskie 72, no. 1 (1980): 424; A. Nossol, "Historiozbawcze znaczenie śmierci," in *Teologia bliższa życiu* (Opole: 1984), 220-221.

²⁸ See G. Moiola, "Doświadczenie chrześcijańskie a sens umierania," trans. L. Balter, *Communio* 26, no. 6 (2006): 35.

²⁹ When asked if he followed the theory that one makes a final decision at the moment of death, one contemporary theologian responded: "I think that death is the end... It is always possible to experience wonderful and radical conversions even at the moment of death, but this occurrence is rather miraculous." J. L. Franczyk, *Brama śmierci. Pytania o sprawy ostateczne* (Kraków: 2007), 67.

³⁰ Gregory the Great, Homily 39.

³¹ Ibid.

³² See J. Misiurek, "Ars moriendi – sztuka umierania," *Homo meditans*, no. 13 (1992): 243.

on the person, should be worked out. In fact, this endeavor plays a significant and helpful role in the struggle that Pope Gregory the Great describes. Everything must be put in order, especially a person's interpersonal relationships with family and friends. This preparation process also necessitates disposing of one's possessions; amending for all the wrong that a person committed during his life; and reconciling with one's enemies. If it is possible, a person must bring to completion all of the tasks that he began during his lifetime. Hopefully, this will be possible and manageable with the help of eschatological hope, which is rooted in Jesus Christ and in His victory over death.³³ During his lifetime, man should resolve to seek to love God in everything that he does. During his lifetime, which from an eternal perspective is but a brief time of trial, man can choose good or the evil, virtue or the vice, love or hatred. The battle between good and evil takes place at the moment of death. Choosing the good throughout one's life will make it easier ultimately to choose good at the final moment of death.³⁴ While the aforementioned are only a few aspects of preparation for death to consider, they are the most significant because they will ensure that a person will approach the moment of death peacefully.³⁵

Patrology

When describing death, Pope Gregory recalls the attacks of evil spirits that take place. This battle occurs when man had not sorted out his sinful life before death. Pope Gregory states that enemies surround such a soul who cannot find escape. This means that the soul itself is unable to be victorious in the battle against Satan. For this reason, as St. Gregory points out, it is very important to live a good and moral life on earth. The saint also indicates the deceptive power of evil spirits:

So we must take care to meditate every day in tears with what fury and under what terrifying aspect the prince of this world will come, the day of our death, to claim what in us belongs to him, since he dared to address even to our God when he died in his flesh, to seek in him something [which belonged to him], without being able to find anything.³⁶

³³ See S. C. Kessler, "Gregory The Great," in: *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, ed. D. J. Bingham (Leiden-Boston: 2006), 1345-1346.

³⁴ See C. Kudroń, *Do domu Ojca* (Warszawa: 1983), 56.

³⁵ See D. Adamczyk, "Chrześcijańska postawa wobec misterium morus jako źródła niepokoju i nadziei," *Communio* 26, no. 6 (2006): 87.

³⁶ Gregory the Great, Homily 39.

The Importance of the Community of the Church at the Moment of Death

In His graciousness, God does not abandon man at such a decisive moment. Recalling an event that took place in one of the monasteries, Pope Gregory shows how the prayers of those who surround the dying person are important and helpful. Specifically, St. Gregory tells the story of the monk Theodore, who, thanks to the prayers of his fellow monks, was snatched from Satan's grasp:

However, during the plague epidemic that devoured a large part of the population of this city [of Rome], a groin tumor quickly dragged him to death. When he was about to die, the brothers came together to protect his end with their prayers. His body was already dead in his extremities, and he kept only a little vital heat in his chest. All the brothers began to pray for him all the more urgently as they saw him already leaving quickly. He suddenly screamed as loudly as he could, interrupting with great clamor the prayers of the brothers around him: "Get away! Withdraw! Here I have been fed to the dragon. Your presence alone prevents him from devouring me; my head is already in his mouth. Move away, so that he does not torture me more, but does what he has to do. If I have been given to him for food, why do I have to wait because of you?" Then the brothers began to say to him, "What are you talking about here, brother? Make the sign of the holy cross on you." He answered as he could: "I want to sign myself, but I can not, because the dragon crushes me." On hearing this, the brothers prostrated themselves on the ground, and all in tears, they began to pray with even more fervor for his deliverance. And suddenly the patient began to get better and to express his joy as much as he could, saying, "God be praised! The dragon who had received me in pasture is on the run. Your prayers chased him away, and he could not stay."³⁷

The evil spirit departed from the dying monk when he asked his brethren to pray for him and to beg God to forgive his sins. When Theodore's soul departed his body after he spent a few days praying for forgiveness for his sins, the dragon disappeared because Theodore had defeated it through his conversion of his heart.

The moment of death does not deprive man of the ability to choose God and to make the final decision that most frequently follows naturally from all of a person's previous decisions. If a person lived his earthly life for God and in God, then naturally he will choose God's mercy at the moment of death.³⁸ The problem arises when man disre-

³⁷ Gregory the Great, Homily 38.

³⁸ See J. Misiurek, "Ars moriendi..." 239; C. Kudroń, *Do domu Ojca*, 44.

gards divine matters and lives a sinful life. St. George confirms that, in this case, an evil spirit will demand the sinful soul as its own property and take the soul into his kingdom of evil.³⁹ The only hope for such a soul is to depend on God's mercy and on the prayers of family and the entire community of the Church. Once a person has died, he is no longer able to change his decision. He is not able to make a personal act in order to secure his salvation, even if he regrets his sins with all his heart. Only the living can help him through their persistent prayers. A person who has died is completely helpless and unable to determine his fate, so he is at the mercy of others. It is for this reason that St. Gregory the Great mentions the very significant role of prayer at the moment of death. According to Orthodox tradition, a sick or a dying person must not be left alone before or at the moment of death. His family and friends accompany him, read Holy Scripture to him, and pray for him.⁴⁰ "A sick and helpless man in the condition of biological decay is unable to think or decide for himself; he has become indifferent and distant from the world."⁴¹ In the Orthodox Church, friends and family consider accompanying the dying an important task and pray in order to help their loved one to reject the temptations and whisperings of the evil spirit and to choose God. Accompaniment can also be salutary for those present at the deathbed. When describing the moment of Abbot Steven's death, St. Gregory the Great says, "When the day of death came to force him out of his body, many came to recommend their souls to that holy soul who was leaving the world."⁴²

Patrology

Conclusion

Studying the teaching of Pope St. Gregory the Great, which considers man's attitude toward death, leads one to the conclusion that Christians, like other men, adopt various attitudes toward death. According to this great saint, death remains a great mystery even though it accompanies man throughout his entire life and is present in his mind. Pope Gregory the Great discusses the issue of death in many of his homilies in an effort to quell his listeners' fear of death. He indicates that people fear death when their health deteriorates severely or when they must involuntarily accompany a dying person. One of the

³⁹ See Gregory the Great, Homily 39.

⁴⁰ See W. Hryniewicz, "Misterium śmierci w tradycji prawosławnej," *Ateneum Kapańskie* 72, no. 1 (1980): 42.

⁴¹ C. Kudroń, *Do domu Ojca*, 44.

⁴² Gregory the Great, Homily 35.

factors that influences man's attitude toward death is how he lived his life. Those who live good lives anticipate death with hope, while those who have done wrong are frightened of death, which evokes disgust. Faith—both practiced and lived out every day—greatly influences man's attitude toward death. Those who live a life full of evil, separated from God, and far from His commandments usually fear death. Since the quality of one's earthly life has such a significant effect on how one dies and the moment of one's death, Gregory the Great repeatedly points out the importance of preparing for death. The person who is not prepared to leave this world not only subjects himself to serious difficulties in the process of dying, but also and more importantly puts himself at risk of eternal damnation. Such an individual is not ready to leave all of his earthly possessions, which he had accumulated with great effort. The pope encourages his listeners to be alert and aware of signs through which God reminds man about life's transience, the final judgment, and eternal life. These signs can manifest as warnings present in certain events, suffering, or miracles sent by God's grace. Such dialogue with God should help man have the proper attitude at the moment of death.

In his homilies, the pope also speaks about God's unfathomable mercy. God can forgive man even at the very moment of his death. However, it is man who may not be able to accept God's mercy. St. Gregory the Great teaches about the battle between good and evil that occurs at the moment of death. This struggle culminates in man's free decision, which is independent from worldly influence and the natural result of all of his previous life decisions. At the moment of death, man is able to either accept or reject God in a free and independent act of will for the very first time. If he sought God throughout his earthly life, then it will not be difficult for him to choose God at the moment of his death. However, if man lived a life far from God's will, then evil spirits will accompany him and attack him by reminding him of all of his sins and acts of wickedness in order to prompt him to choose eternal condemnation. Pope Gregory also adds that, regardless of how a person lived his life, God does everything in His power to help man in his struggle at the moment of death. In addition, the community of the Church, which prays for man's soul, can also help him. This earnest prayer on the part of the community can bring salvation to a person who had already given up and who no longer has the strength to make an act of repentance and regret the evil that he committed.

In conclusion, the Christian attitude toward death involves accepting God's will and the unavoidable circumstances of one's death. The

factors that affect the moment of death include the life a person led and the decisions that he made in (or not in) accordance with God's will. It is important to live among a community of people who can assist one to accept God's mercy at the moment of death and in the struggle against evil.

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Transcendent Images and *Semina Verbi* in Carlos Reygadas' Films

This article is an analytical and interpretive reading of the Mexican film director Carlos Reygadas' work in light of "*semina Verbi*" (seeds of the Word). In his films, Reygadas explores the alienation and confusion that man, who has rejected traditional values and faith in God, experiences in the modern world. At the same time and like his characters, Reygadas seeks transcendence and the possibility of spiritual rebirth. His films are not strictly religious, but they do contain faint echoes the Gospel or *semina Verbi*, meaning "seeds of the Word" that are present in non-Christian cultures and secular works of art. As John Paul II said, the Spirit sows seeds of the Word in different rites and cultures that open them up to the fullness of meaning in Jesus Christ.

Viewers can find *semina Verbi* in different elements of Reygadas' films, including: the characters' motivations, aspirations, and actions; the symbolic structure of the film's space and time; and in the specific narrative style that invites viewers to meditate and contemplate. This Mexican director's films echo man's hidden longing for the spiritual world and for union with the sacred, with nature that surrounds him (which is "divinized" in many films), with himself, and with his spirituality that has been lost.

An essential element of Reygadas' work is the pursuit of transcendence understood in a specific way. The director does not seek metaphysical order in his works. Instead, he uncovers the biological and bodily dimensions of the world and recalls the eternal cycle of death and rebirth in nature. This is why transcendence often has a sexual dimension in Reygadas' films; his characters experience a renewed physical interaction by which they transcend themselves. This type of experience leads the characters from passivity, stagnation, and death to the vitality and life. Reygadas' characters' search for metaphysical and spiritual transcendence and their experience of bodily transcendence are motivated and characterized by something similar: the desire to transcend

their own limitations and barriers—an experience of contact with the One Who surpasses man, or that which man surpasses.

The presence of images of transcendence and hidden *semina Verbi* are important determinants of Reygadas' creative works. The cinematic reality that he creates is a distant sign of a higher order established by something other than man, and, yet, it is an order over which man has an overwhelming influence.

Key words: film, transcendence, *semina Verbi*, Carlos Reygadas.

„Religious films” and the works of Carlos Reygadas

Is modern cinema interested in telling the story of God, religion, or the supernatural dimension of reality? Judging by the popularity of so-called “religious” films and the number of works that deal with broadly understood sacred themes (these phenomena mutually reinforce and influence each other) produced in recent years, one can answer affirmatively. The number of Polish film scholars interested in this subject has also increased,¹ even though a deeper body of academic work has yet to be produced in this area due to the fact that it is difficult to arrive at a synthetic and uniform approach to this genre because this phenomenon is multidimensional and multithreaded.

The difficulty arises when one tries to define what a religious film is. Some researchers such as Marek Sokołowski² claim that the religiousness of a film is determined by the issues that the film raises and the ways it presents them, and not by sacred themes and content. Others, however, like Mariola Marczak,³ have asserted that religious films follow certain rules. Tomasz Kłys⁴ mentions that there are three ways

¹ For further information on this subject, see M. Marczak, *Poetyka filmu religijnego* (Kraków: 2000); I. Kolasieńska, “Film biblijny,” in *Wokół kina gatunków*, ed. K. Loska (Kraków: 2001); *Poszukiwanie i degradowanie sacrum w kinie*, eds. W. Przyłipiak and K. Kornacki (Gdańsk: 2002); M. Sokołowski, *Kościół, kino, sacrum. W poszukiwaniu definicji filmów o tematyce religijnej* (Olsztyn: 2002); T. Kłys, “Filmy (nie)religijne,” in *Między słowem a obrazem*, eds. M. Jakubowska, T. Kłys, and B. Stolarska (Kraków: 2005); *Światowa encyklopedia filmu religijnego*, eds. M. Lis and A. Garbicz (Kraków: 2007); M. Kempna-Pieniążek, *Formuły duchowości w kinie najnowszym* (Katowice: 2013); *Sacrum w kinie dekadę później. Szkice, eseje, rozprawy*, eds. S. J. Konefał, W. Zelent, and K. Kornacki (Gdańsk: 2013); *Blask religii. Media w poszukiwaniu sacrum i autorytetów*, ed. M. Sokołowski (Toruń: 2016).

² M. Sokołowski, *Kościół, kino, sacrum*.

³ M. Marczak, *Poetyka filmu religijnego*.

⁴ T. Kłys, “Filmy (nie)religijne.”

that one can understand and differentiate the current phenomenon: firstly, religious films can be stories taken from Old and New Testament or hagiographies; secondly, religious films also include artistic works and expressions of film writers' religiosity or metaphysical interests; and thirdly, religious films can be "paradoxically religious," meaning they have a particular impact on viewers, who are inclined to classify these works as sacred because of the religious experiences and reflections they evoke. In her book on current cinematic expressions of spirituality, Magdalena Kempna-Pieniążek⁵ narrows the scope of religious cinema to those works that draw on the beliefs, worldviews, and religious symbols of those who follow specific religions. By deliberately defining the research field in this way, Kempna-Pieniążek is able to analyze specific expressions of spirituality in contemporary feature films.

Both Tomasz Kłys and Mariola Marczak highlight that definitions of a religious film should include the attitude of the viewer, whose disposition and religious competences determine whether or not the viewer will notice the film's sacred meaning. Magdalena Kempna-Pieniążek comes to similar conclusion:

The broad scope of the definitions of these trends usually boil down to the observation that every work from which it is possible to interpret additional meaning that directs the viewer's attention to the mystery of life, the meaning of existence or metaphysics is religious if the viewer views the film through the proper lens of the worldview and attitude of a specific spirituality.⁶

The authors of the *World Encyclopedia of Religious Film*⁷ include various categories that take into account the audience's attitude and fall within the broad definition of religious cinema, including the following feature, documentary, and animated films:

1. biblical-themed films, 2. adaptations of literary works that are widely considered religious, 3. hagiographies and biographies whose main characters are relevant to particular religions or denominations, 4. films about people who have dedicated themselves to God and serving others; 5. films whose creators struggle in different ways with the moral tenets of their faith, 6. films that contain hidden religious messages, themes, symbols, etc. that convey deeper spiritual or metaphysical meanings,

⁵ M. Kempna-Pieniążek, *Formuły duchowości*.

⁶ Ibid, 54

⁷ M. Lis, ed., *Światowa encyklopedia filmu religijnego*.

and 7. selected films that only superficially use religious themes (death, afterlife, hell, etc.) but that many viewers consider religious.⁸

Based on the trends and tendencies of the latest films, the last three categories are of greatest interest here. The creators and viewers of these types of religious films pose questions about man's relationship with himself and others, as well as with the world and the cosmos. They also present metaphysical questions and transcend the rational worldview of science, which is unable to provide satisfactory answers to questions about the deepest essence and meaning of human existence.

Living in a "disenchanted world,"⁹ modern man often rejects transcendence and the sacred sphere in favor of a one-dimensional and empirical understanding of reality. Because of the postmodern revolt against metaphysics, many contemporary people consider faith insignificant and meaningless or, at best, completely private and separate from everyday existence. This does not mean, however, that questions about spirituality, especially those concerning the essence and meaning of life, no longer interest modern man. Lost in the rubble of the postmodern deconstruction of values and meanings, contemporary man still asks himself fundamental questions about the essence of being: Who am I? How should I live? What values should I have? What should I believe? The tragedy for modern man is the fact that he cannot find definitive answers to these questions. As a result, he is unstable and insecure; he feels lost and out of place in the society in which he lives; he feels alienated from himself and others; and he finds himself confused and searching in a hostile, unintelligible, technologized, and depersonalized world.

Carlos Reygadas presents such a world and throws¹⁰ such characters into his films. In his work, the Mexican director and contemporary creator of auteur cinema portrays how people feel lost in a culture of alienation, consumerism, rejection of tradition (including religious tradition) as a sphere that has lost all of its influence on forming the senses. At the same time, however, Reygadas (like the characters in his films) shifts from the real world to the immaterial, spiritual realm because, as Rafał Syska aptly points out, "he considers the search for transcendence to be man's natural, existential objective."¹¹

⁸ M. Lis, ed., "Od redakcji," in *Światowa encyklopedia*, 8

⁹ M. Weber, *Racjonalność, władza, odczarowanie* (Poznań: 2004).

¹⁰ I use this word deliberately here because it recalls the deterministic fate of Reygadas' protagonists.

¹¹ R. Syska, "Nostalgia za Tarkowskim. Kino Carlosa Reygadasa i Aleksandra Sokurowa," in *Strefa filmu. Kino Andrieja Tarkowskiego*, eds. I. A. Diaye and

Reygadas' cinematic films tell about life and death, about love and its absence, about the protagonists' loss of faith and spiritual emptiness, and about their almost desperate search for transcendence. In the realistic and concrete world that he presents in his films, there are glimmers of another spiritual, immaterial world that exists in another space and a different time. On the periphery of the real world—the profane, the director creates a variety of unreal spheres and sacred realms that are invisible at first glance but crucial in order to understand the protagonists' actions and choices.

In his article “Redemption, Religion, and Reconsideration with Director Carlos Reygadas,”¹² Scott Foundas asserts that the Mexican director's films are about characters who experience a dichotomy between what they believe—or, rather, what they have been taught to believe—and what they feel in the depths of their hearts. Foundas quotes Reygadas as agreeing with this statement and adds that he himself has a similar attitude toward faith. According to Reygadas this approach is a particular tension with which he has come to terms, but that still has a significant influence on his ambivalent view of the world. Reygadas emphasizes that feelings and values often evade each other and rarely coincide, and, when they do, it is only in some respects, and not in others. This is especially evident with regard to questions of faith and religion, which were once so important to the people of Mexico and which today have been forgotten, rejected, or treated at best very superficially as empty ritual passed down from parents and grandparents.

It would be wrong to define Carlos Reygadas' films as strictly religious, even though studies on his works connect them with faith, the sacred, and transcendence.¹³ The Mexican director's films contain a

M. Sokołowski (Toruń: 2013), 363

¹² S. Foundas, “Redemption, Religion, and Reconsideration, with Director Carlos Reygadas,” January 7, 2009, *The Village Voice*, accessed September 21, 2016, www.villagevoice.com/2009/01/07/redemption-religion-and-reconsideration-with-director-carlos-reygadas/.

¹³ See T. de Luca, “Carnal Spirituality: the Films of Carlos Reygadas,” *Sense of Cinema*, July 2010, accessed November 12, 2020, <https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2010/feature-articles/carnal-spirituality-the-films-of-carlos-reygadas-2/>; M. O'Shea, “‘Are You There God?’ Secularization of Religious Narratives in Contemporary Cinema” (master's thesis, Carlton University, 2014), <https://curve.carleton.ca/f5d52685-7e55-451d-b563-481c891d658e>; A. Jablonska Zaborowska, “El campo simbólico-religioso en el cine mexicano actual,” accessed October 17, 2020, <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=5503118>; J. Semley, “Director Paul Schrader and Cinema's Relationship with Religion,” *The Globe and Mail*, March 30, 2017, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/film/>

hidden longing for the spiritual world, for man's lost union with the sacred, with nature (which is "divinized" in many works), with himself, and with his spirituality. The cinematic reality that Reygadas creates seems to be a distant trace of a higher order that man did not establish but that has an overwhelming influence on him.

Semina Verbi in culture: the meeting of the Gospel with film art

Post-conciliar theological documents on the relationship between the Christian faith and culture mention "*semina Verbi*" (seeds of the Word).¹⁴ This expression refers to the interaction between the Gospel and the cultures of different peoples. Proclaiming Christ's teaching, the Church embodies the Gospel within different cultural traditions and, at the same time, adopts what She considers good and beautiful from them. The encounter between the Gospel and culture takes place through *semina Verbi*, which are present in the cultural heritage of different peoples and societies. John Paul II used this metaphorical expression to convey that the Spirit sows the "seeds of the Word" that are present in various rites and cultures, thereby opening them to fullness (maturity) in Christ.¹⁵

Semina Verbi are elements of Christian truth present in non-Christian cultures as well as secular works of art. Bishop Robert Barron, among others, has been identifying such fragments of the Christian faith in postmodern popular culture.¹⁶ His essays on the art of film

paul-schrader-examines-cinemas-relationship-with-faith/article34497602/; A. Piotrowska, "W stronę światła," *Tygodnik Powszechny* 21, no. 10 (2008), <https://www.tygodnikpowszechny.pl/w-strone-swiatla-132434>; J. Atehortúa Arteaga, "Carlos Reygadas: Trascender la realidad para no ser esclavos de ella," *Pajarrera del Medio*, December 14, 2016, <https://pajarreradelmedio.blogspot.com/2016/12/carlos-reygadas-trascender-la-realidad.html>.

¹⁴ See Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium* [Dogmatic Constitution on the Church in the Modern World], https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html; Second Vatican Council, *Ad Gentes* [On the Mission Activity of the Church], https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html; John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* [Encyclical on the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate], http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/pl/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio.html.

¹⁵ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 28.

¹⁶ R. Barron, *Seeds of the Word: Finding God in the Culture* (Des Plaines: Word on Fire, 2019), Kindle Ebook.

are particularly brilliant. Barron states that, with a little good will the Christian interpreter

... can see images of Jesus in Superman, Spider-Man, and Andy Dufresne; he can sense the play between divine love and divine mercy in the strong arms of Rooster Cogburn; he can hear an echo of Augustine's anthropology in the protagonist of *Eat, Pray, Love*; he can discern the powerful teaching on the danger of concupiscent desire in *The Great Gatsby*; he can sense a longing for the supernatural in *The Exorcist* and the *Twilight* series; he can pick up overtones of Jeremiah and Isaiah in Bob Dylan; he can hear the voice that spoke to Job out of the whirlwind in the Coen Brothers' *A Serious Man*; and he can appreciate one of the most textured presentations of Christian soteriology in Clint Eastwood's *Gran Torino*. [He then he adds:] Are any of these adequate presentations of the Word as such? Hardly. But are they all *semina Verbi*, seeds of the Word? Absolutely.¹⁷

Interestingly, in the context of Barron's considerations and analyses the question of artistic, written, and innovative works arises. It is not difficult to imagine that the superheroes of so-called "new adventure" feature films or cinematic genres such as science fiction, horror, crime, melodrama, or thriller are based to some degree on the Person of Jesus Christ, reproduce "attractive" biblical themes, or refer to the broadly understood idea of saving the world or redeeming sinful humanity. But, is it just as easy to find *semina Verbi* in artistic films with clear authorial strategic outlines, whose creators avoid pop-cultural themes and common and uniform interpretative associations? I think that it is definitely possible, but tracking down fragments of transcendence and traces of God in such works is more challenging (but all the more satisfying to researchers when they are found) than in mainstream cinema.

Perceiving *semina Verbi* as interpretative tropes seems to be an appealing approach to decipher how Carlos Reygadas' films have been received. The works of the Mexican director present a realistic, pragmatic vision of the world today and of the people lost in it. At the same time, however, they echo a longing for the sacred. These are stories about the intertwining of life and death, about love and its absence, about the protagonists' spiritual emptiness and their (sometimes desperate) desire to experience transcendence, even if it is secularized and devoid of contact with a personal God.

¹⁷ Ibid, 10-11.

Transcendence in Reygadas' films as an act of transcending the moral fall of man

Reygadas does not think very highly of the spiritual condition of modern man. In an interview about his film *Post Tenebras Lux* (2012), he stated:

Like my characters, we are all placed in similar situations in life. I will say, however, that Juan in *Post Tenebras Lux* is constantly dissatisfied, lonely, suffering. He treats everyone condescendingly; he complains and harangues and, in this way, destroys others and himself. He represents the status quo of people in the West today who are isolated from nature and others. ... In the finale, though, he has an epiphany, feels something for his wife, and mentions his childhood... Juan's children are filled with an intense love for their parents, nature, and their home, but they lose this when they are grown due to the western paradigm of the world, which prevents people from being happy. Mexico, like the rest of the world, is also dominated by this paradigm. Bloody narcotic wars do not arise because of poverty or political repression, but because of spiritual despair.¹⁸

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In his films, Reygadas accurately diagnoses the modern world in which man—disconnected from nature and from God who creates it—is confused and deeply frustrated. The Mexican director's characters are torn between the bodily sphere, requiring instant gratification, and the spiritual sphere, striving for a transcendence that is impossible to attain for different reasons. They long to overcome the fruitless difficulties of daily life and ascend to something higher, but they have lost the possibility to be spiritually renewed because they reject faith and deny God's existence. The religious ritual acts that they perform at times are empty to them, so these acts no longer have the strength to heal, which only increases the characters' frustration. The sacred and transcendent realm is, therefore, very inaccessible to the protagonists. And yet, in Reygadas' films this spiritual and transcendent realm exists and influences his characters' behavior. The viewer can observe it in the metaphysical fragments that appear in the world that Reygadas creates, in scenes that present the characters' behavior, and also in the landscapes that are saturated with meaning and serve as the symbolic backdrop of their actions. The spiritual and transcendent occur in the films as *semina Verbi*, bringing to mind the Word that proclaims the evangelical truth about man and his connection to the invisible God, who is not depicted on screen.

¹⁸ C. Reygadas, "Reżyser o filmie," accessed April 23, 2017, <https://archiwum.stopklatka.pl/news/rezyser-o-filmie-16568>.

Sacred motifs appear in Reygadas' first feature film *Japón* (2002). The intriguing title of this work, the action of which does not even take place in the Land of the Rising Sun but in the harsh landscape of the interior of Mexico, refers to the East, which the director identifies with the sun, rebirth, and spirituality. The plot and themes, however, contradict this symbolism because the characters experience violence as well as physical and predominantly spiritual death. Shocking images appear in the very first scenes of the film: the main character twists off the head of a pigeon he has caught, the dark sounds of pigs squealing desperately as they are slaughtered can be heard, and a decomposing horse in a mountain landscape is shown. As the finale, a main character dies. The protagonist, whose name is not mentioned, arrives at a village hidden in the mountains where he intends to commit suicide for reasons unexplained by the plot.

And yet, the main character paradoxically experiences the possibility of spiritual rebirth and passage from death to life when he goes to the mountains to shoot himself. He hikes to the edge of a canyon in the pouring rain, which—in contrast to the protagonist's intention to commit suicide—clearly symbolizes purification, rebirth, and new life. In the following scenes, dark clouds hover above and then a decomposing corpse of a horse with a rotting member is shown a moment later. In the next scene, which takes place in a village at the foot of the mountains, a long veristic shot shows a stallion mounting a mare. The director juxtaposes images of life and death, the beginning and end of existence, which shock the viewers. This is the leitmotif of the entire film, which synchronistically opens up its ideational meaning toward metaphysical symbolism.

As the main character hikes closer to the edge of a cliff, he pulls out a gun. He does not shoot himself, but lifts the gun and points it above his head at the sky. As the camera follows this movement, it pans upward to show an impenetrable blanket of clouds and then stands still depicting a prolonged view of the sky. The clouds seem to be silent; if God exists somewhere behind the clouds, then He is very far away. And yet, the heavy rain within the scene conveys the clear symbolism of being washed and grace.

In the following scene, the main character leaves his weapon and walks away from the edge of the cliff. He falls to the ground and lays on his back next to the corpse of the horse as the aria "Erbarme dich Mein Gott" from Johann Sebastian Bach's *Saint Matthew Passion* plays in the background. The words of the aria are a supplication for God's mercy. The aerial shot shows the main character lying on the ground

and then circles around him and the corpse of the horse, after which it pans back to a grey sky illuminated by a faint glow. The camera pulls away, showing the man recede into the ever-greater distance until he blends into the landscape and becomes as if a part of nature. From the aerial placement, the viewer can see trees, ravines, and rivers—in other words, the breathtaking beauty of the world. The light and silence manifest the sublime, a clear sign of transcendence. In the following shots, the viewer sees the protagonist descending to the bottom of the canyon to return to the village; he abandons his suicidal thoughts and begins an interior, spiritual journey from death to life.

The main character of Reygadas' film *Battle in Heaven* (2005) makes a similar journey up a mountain, at the peak of which he comes face to face with God. The protagonist, Marcos, hikes to the top of the mountain during a trip with his family and friends. His journey is symbolic; there is no rational explanation for why he abandons them during a picnic and hikes alone to the top of the mountain through thickets and thick fog that covers the landscape. The fog appears suddenly, and the viewer gets the impression that it prompts Marcos to climb to the top of a steep hill that towers above the surrounding area. In the Bible, clouds and fog are frequently used a symbol for the presence of God, who has descended to meet with man. The cloud hides God from man's sight, which symbolizes God's inaccessibility and transcendence. Both the Old and New Testaments contain this motif. For example, the column of cloud accompanied the Israelites during their escape from Egypt¹⁹ and covered the tent of meeting²⁰ as well as the Temple of Jerusalem after the Ark of the Covenant was brought into it.²¹ In the New Testament, a cloud of light cast a shadow over Jesus during the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor.²² In addition, during Christ's ascension, "a cloud took [Jesus] from their sight," and all nations "will see the Son of Man coming upon the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" at the final judgment.²³ In this way, the repeated symbol of clouds in Sacred Scripture call to mind events wherein God encounters man.

Additionally, the symbolism of the mountains is associated with expressions of the sacred. In his work *Słowniku symboli* [*A Dictionary of*

¹⁹ Exodus 13:21. These and the following passages come from the *The New American Bible: Revised Edition* (Charlotte, NC: Saint Benedict Press, 2010).

²⁰ Ex 40,34-38.

²¹ 1 Kgs 8:10-12.

²² Mat 17:5.

²³ Ibid 24:30.

Symbols],²⁴ Juan Eduardo Cirlot states that a mountain, like the cross and the cosmic tree, mark the center of the world and a place where the sacred (hierophany) or divinity (theophany) are revealed. The hero climbs to the top of the mountain and – like the protagonist of *Japón* – looks into the abyss. There is no more fog at the peak. A long, static shot exposes the main character standing next to a large votive cross that is erected on the rock. As the camera pans, the viewers' gaze shifts away from the protagonist to the blue sky above him. Again, like in *Japón*, the camera's lens is pointed perpendicularly upward: the angle clearly connects the subjective point of view of the camera and the gaze of a man who has raised his face to the sky to see the Most High. The sun and the wind that blow at the peak symbolize God's presence. In the New Testament, the Hebrew word “*ruah*,” means “wind, breath, spirit” and is synonymous with the Holy Spirit. Like Elijah on Mount Horeb,²⁵ Marcos enters the sacred realm and encounters God face to face. Pious Jews covered their faces when they encountered God or even an angel, and, in covering his eyes with his hands, Marcos does the same.

Both scenes from *Japón* and *Battle in Heaven* do not show the main characters' encounter with God directly on screen. In both films, the viewers only see how the protagonists climb to the peak of the mountains, look up to the sky, then descend down the mountains, and their lives play out differently from this moment on. The symbolism is clear—all the more so because, as the films unfold, both protagonists want to go beyond their bare tedious, and dissatisfying existence and experience transcendence.

The desire for transcendence that gnaws at the films protagonists, which expresses their longing for metaphysicality, is a topical thread that runs throughout of all Reygadas' works, starting with his debut short films and ending with the most recent work *Our Time* (2018). This transcendence, however, is depicted onscreen in both a special and specific way. Rafał Syska characterizes it well, stating: “The metaphysical aspect of Reygadas' films derives from the two different forms in which his characters' experiences take place: either from an intense relationship with another human being and the intimacy of bodily contact that accompanies it, or from nearness to the natural world and a sense of severe pantheism.”²⁶

²⁴ J. E. Cirlot, *Słownik symboli*, trans. I. Kania (Kraków: 2006), 141.

²⁵ 1 Kings 19:11-13.

²⁶ R. Syska, “Nostalgia za Tarkowskim,” 363.

The transcendence that Reygadas' characters experience is not so much metaphysical as biological, occurring within the bodily space of the world. It evokes the biological dimension of nature's rebirth, which occurs through cyclical death and re-flourishing. This type of experience leads the characters from passive stagnation and death to vitality and life.

The images of corporeality that open the characters to transcendence that appear in Reygadas' films can be associated with Yves Leduc's philosophical ideas.²⁷ The French thinker claims that the human body naturally leads a person toward the transcendent, opening him to the Absolute. First, however, this transcendence leads downwards, not upwards, because corporeality focuses man's attention on the negative absolute—that is, on death. Then, through desire and longing, it leads him to the positive Absolute, which is God, Who is fullness of life. Traces of divinity are always found in human corporeality because God comes to man in the history of the world as an embodied being and reveals Himself to man through the incarnation. In Carlos Reygadas' films, man experiences the negative absolute not in death, but in his sexuality. Corporeality (and man's sexuality associated with it) enables him to move from negative to positive transcendence. In the sexual act, vital forces are activated along with the biology and dynamism that are dormant in them. These experiences end, however, with the triumph of corporeal life over the forces of destruction; therefore, although they draw the main characters upwards, they cease at the earthly level and do not reach the heavens.

The transcendence that Reygadas' characters experience consists in their self-transcendence and not in the transition from the physical sphere to the spiritual sphere. The mechanism, however, is similar; perhaps this is why the Mexican director juxtaposes sexual images against sacred stage props. In the film *Japón*, the character Ascen is often shown with images of Christ hanging in the background on the walls of her home and in the village church. A portrait of Jesus hangs above the bed on which she and the man have sexual intercourse. The elderly woman agrees to have sex with the man when he requests it in order to give her body as an offering that will redeem him, draw him out of his desire to die, and give him life. Ascen's participation in Sunday Mass underscores the sacrificial and redemptive character of her act. After giving the Sign of Peace to those around her who are participating in the celebration of the Eucharist, Ascen looks at the figure of the crucified Christ and smiles. In his interpretation of this

²⁷ Y. Leduc, *Transcendances: essai sur Dieu et le corps* (Paris: 1989).

scene, Rafał Syska notes that it is not the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is so popular and venerated by Mexican Catholics, who religiously inspires Ascen's actions, but rather Her Son:

Marian devotion leads to religious passivity and a purely emotional experience. Meanwhile, Ascen, who is often portrayed against the background of images of Christ, is associated with active redemption that is accomplished through the sacrifice of one's own body. For the protagonist, the sexual proposition that he makes to the woman was, therefore, a decision to live, and Ascen's [acceptance of this proposal is] a Christian act of redemption.²⁸

For the reasons mentioned above, Salvador Velazco claims that Reygadas' film can be interpreted as a biblical parable that calls to mind the fundamental truths of the Christian faith because Ascen, like Jesus, dies to save the life and soul of another person.²⁹

In the film *Battle in Heaven*, the act of sexual intercourse between Marcos and his wife is juxtaposed against a reproduction of Antonello de Messina's painting *The Dead Christ Supported by an Angel* that hangs on the wall. From Jesus' pierced side flow streams of blood. However, the image of the Savior, which no longer has a sacred influence on the characters, has become a meaningless decoration in the bedroom. At some point, the spouses lost a sense of living faith—or, rather, they likely never had it. Traditional expressions of religiosity that have been cultivated in their lives (the wife proposes to her husband that they go on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe as reparation for the kidnapping of her cousin's infant for ransom) have become empty gestures and rituals from the past just like their selfish sexual spectacle from which the marital bond, love, and support have long since evaporated.

Although the main character of *Battle in Heaven*—Marcos—obstinately strives for transcendence throughout the film, his efforts are desperate and fruitless because traditional values and personal faith are no longer meaningful to him. Having experienced the kidnapping of a child for ransom and blaming himself for inadvertently causing it, the protagonist longs for redemption while simultaneously rejecting the path that the Christian religion proposes because it seems barren and empty to him. Instead of having faith, Marcos chooses his own rituals (e.g., sex with his boss' daughter, Anna, who he desires

²⁸ R. Syska, "Nostalgia za Tarkowskim," 362-363.

²⁹ S. Velazco, "Eros y Tanatos en *Japón* de Carlos Reygadas," in *El ojo que piensa. Revista de cine iberoamericano*, no. 4 (2011), accessed March 12, 2016, <http://www.elojoquepiensa.cucsh.udg.mx/index.php/elajoquepiensa/article/view/63>.

and considers unattainable due to social and class barriers, placing Mexico's national flag on a mast, or making a pilgrimage to a sanctuary while wearing a jute sack on his head), which ultimately leads to his defeat. Within the context of the protagonist's desire to experience transcendence, Piotr Więcek interestingly points out Marcos' loss of visual acuity is depicted onscreen:³⁰ Marcos loses his glasses in the subway and, from that moment forward, moves uncertainly but with greater inner determination. Więcek rightly comments:

Unable to see the surrounding world clearly, the protagonist can concentrate on the tiny movements of his soul or, put differently, he can perceive a second transcendent layer of reality. In these moments of "second sight" he does a variety of irrational things; he decides to admit his guilt to Anna, climb the holy mountain, and crawl on his knees to the temple. He also engages in ritual sex, which (in Marcos' opinion) transcends social barriers, which enables him to 'transcend himself.' In the final analysis, however, every ritual proves to be empty because Marcos, who is torn between two worlds, does not belong to either of them—neither to the traditional world filled with religiosity, because it means nothing to him since it does not bring about his purification, nor to the modern bourgeois world to which Anna belongs but to which he has no access because he belongs to a different class.³¹

The main character of *Battle in Heaven* (note that the film's title also clearly has a biblical connotation) loses his struggle to overcome the barriers that hinder him. In Marcos' case, as Więcek rightly highlights, his actions are performed in vain and condemn him to failure:

...every ritual, whether sexual or religious, means nothing anymore; it has become only an empty form or, even more, the manifestation of an institution's power (flag, pilgrimage) over the individual, of man over woman. A dead ritual that has lost its power to renew and has no effect on [a person's] individual experience only increases frustration and alienation. This, Reygadas seems to say, is the experience of the contemporary Mexican.³²

Reygadas also reminds his audience, however, that this is also the experience of modern man in general. The widespread culture of ubiquitous consumerism and the desire to be someone of importance without competence, which are artificially driven and promoted by advertising, do not satisfy or fulfill man but only increase his hunger

³⁰ P. Więcek, "*Bitwa w niebie*, reż. Carlos Reygadas," *Nowe Horyzonty*, accessed November 20, 2014, <https://www.nowehoryzonty.pl/artykul.do?id=1307>.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

for ever-new, unrivaled experiences. The discovery or rediscovery of a forgotten spiritual sphere within one's self could satisfy this longing, but often Reygadas' protagonists no longer know how to achieve this, as is evidenced in his most recent films: *Post Tenebras Lux* (2012) and *Our Time* (2018). The protagonists of these films are unable to experience transcendence through the movement from death to the vitality of life, even in a bodily sense, and the sexual aspect of their lives is a clear sign of their destruction and decline: the main character of *Post Tenebras Lux* is addicted to pornography and is unable to please his wife, while the protagonist of *Our Time* changes from a tolerant husband into a jealous pimp.

In another of Reygadas' films, *Silent Light* (2007), transcendence that leads upwards to God and is achieved through overcoming the biological sphere of corporeality and death in a morally scandalous manner is depicted not in a sex scene, but rather in a resurrection scene. In this film, Reygadas presents the main character's resurrection as something completely natural; the current order of existence in the Mennonite community remains entirely undisturbed after the death and resurrection of a woman. After dying, Esther returns to life simply as a natural turn of events: no one is surprised, and it is as if her sudden death and the subsequent miraculous return to life are the logical culmination of the events that precede them. Wonder, as Reygadas states when commenting on his film, is a natural element of the world that occurs often and yet almost always goes unnoticed. In an interview with Paweł Urbanik, Carlos Reygadas said:

Every day everything is ceremonial, mysterious, and marvelous; an inexplicable miracle is something ordinary. I think that's what life is like: It is full of miracles that we do not see probably because something arouses our interest only when it is scientifically difficult to explain. I wanted to blur the line between miracle and life and show life as a miracle in itself. That is why the film's opening scene of dawn, children in the water, or simply a car in movement are as significant to the story as the closing scene that is filled with wonder but treated as ordinary.³³

The transcendence that leads the protagonists of *Silent Light* to the sacred and transforms their struggle and suffering into an encounter with God's mercy comes from everyday life, from the country landscape saturated in a still, omnipresent, unearthly light, which is an obvious sign of the presence of the Most High. It is also a consequence of the choices of the protagonists, who have mutual empathy for each

³³ Paweł Urbanik, "Zycie Jest Cudem," Polskie Radio PL, accessed October 27, 2019, <https://www.polskieradio.pl/24/286/Artykul/167214,Zycie-jest-cudem>.

other. In the film, the director successfully tells about the power and essence of true love in the Christian sense of renouncing oneself for the good of the beloved. Because of such love, the sinful love triangle and affair with his neighbor in which Johan had become entangled is broken. True love, which Reygadas talks about in his film, is a miracle; it suspends the order of nature and is able to turn back time, thus restoring the world's balance as well as its cosmic and divine order. In both *Japón* and *Silent Light*, merciful *caritas*, known as the willing sacrifice of one's self for others and their good, is the choice that saves the protagonists.

Reygadas based his film *Silent Light* on Carl Theodor Dreyer's famous work *Ordet* (*The Word*, 1955). Reygadas and Dreyer's films are united by the final scene, in which the deceased protagonist is miraculously and inexplicably resurrected. In *Ordet*, Johannes brings his sister Inger back to life through a prayer and petition to Jesus and through Inger's little daughter's trust-filled faith. Johannes, who everyone considers mentally ill, represents indomitable faith that moves mountains. In *Silent Light*, Marianne, who similarly believes in the possibility of redeeming forgiveness through the transformation of *eros* into merciful *caritas*, restores life to the wife of her recent lover with a kiss.

In Dreyer's work, Johannes' bitter observation, which he expresses when he asks those gathered at the vigil why not a single one of them really believes, conveys the film's credo. The question seems strange when considered in light of the entire plot, during which issues pertaining to faith in Jesus and disputes about the essence of God often arise. In Reygadas' film, on the other hand, the Mennonites rarely talk about God, but their faith seems deep, sincere, and connected directly to their everyday lives. But even the deepest faith, adherence to strict moral principles, and knowledge of the Bible are not able to protect the protagonists from what is human and sinful. The final scene depicting the resurrection of the protagonist of *Silent Light's* does not provide a clear answer to the question of whether God or human love, compassion, and forgiveness bring about supernatural intervention. Both possibilities are not mutually exclusive and could have occurred simultaneously. Reygadas does not depict God acting directly, but, by interpreting Esther's resurrection from the dead in the spirit of the Christian parable of a miracle performed through the power of merciful love, he clearly seems to suggest it.

The presented world and its space-time components of Reygadas' films as an invitation to the viewer to contemplate

The world presented in *Silent Light*—the cinematic planes of space and time—also seems to evoke subtly but purposefully a supernatural order. The film begins and ends by bringing together the events depicted in it, drawing forth the metaphysical order hidden in them. The long, static shot that begins the film captures dawn, while the parallel final shot shows the descent of twilight. The film's prologue presents contemplative images of a starry sky that slowly brightens in the east. The camera, which is pointed toward the firmament, clearly suggests God's presence—a "silent light"—that makes everyday, ordinary reality holy and accompanies the protagonists in all of their actions. The image of the sun emerging on the horizon is accompanied by the sounds of night and the approaching dawn: crickets chirping, dogs barking, cattle mooing, birds chirping, and wind blowing through the trees. The opening scene of the film seems to suggest the biblical account of the creation of the world, especially the verses that speak about God separating the darkness from the light.³⁴ Maria Kornatowska describes things in this way:

The film's framework—the vision of the star-studded sky—evokes Kant and suggests other, including metaphysical, meanings. Conflict of conscience and passion are the essence of *Silent Light*. Here, however, passion has less to do with the body and more to do with the soul. It is an expression of the human need to transcend boundaries and limitations. It is a force that can destroy, kill, and restore life. This story of amorous passion, death, and even resurrection has a deeply religious meaning.³⁵

The light that divinizes the cinematic reality also plays an important role in Reygadas' work, as the title of his film *Post Tenebras Lux* suggests. This title is taken from a fragment from the Book of Job in the Latin Vulgate: "*Post tenebras spero lucem*" ("Light comes after the darkness; I hope for the light"). The prologue of this film includes a scene that symbolically introduces the audience to the mood and meaning of the film's different threads. In the work's initial shots the viewer sees a little girl running around a country playground with dogs

³⁴ "Then God said: Let there be light, and there was light. God saw that the light was good. God then separated the light from the darkness. God called the light 'day,' and the darkness he called 'night'" (Gen1:3-5).

³⁵ M. Kornatowska, "Ciche światło," *Kino*, no. 10 (2008): 76.

that are chasing cows. The child is cheerful, jumps through puddles, and calls out to the animals. Slowly, however, the landscape darkens under the impending clouds and evening twilight. The sounds of an approaching storm can be heard as the girl calls her mother who does not come. Slowly, imperceptibly, but clearly horror approaches; the cows are restless and the dogs are aggressive in the darkness. Lightning lights up the sky, animals look ominous like demonic creatures, and the title of the film appears against the backdrop of a landscape that emerges fitfully from the darkness.

In the next scene, a demon comes to the house where everyone is sleeping. The figure is naked, which reveals that he is male (this is significant because the male characters in the film represent demonic attitudes). He also wears a dog muzzle and has a goatee, horns, hooves, and a nervously-moving tail. He carries a mysterious suitcase. He walks quietly but confidently, as if he knows precisely why and to who he is paying his visit. The juxtaposition of these two images: an innocent, joyful child and an emaciated, grotesque, neon-red glowing demonic figure suggests the film's main theme: the entanglement of purity and villainy, innocence and sin, good and evil. The subsequent scenes are not arranged chronologically; they jump freely from one stage of the characters' lives to another. The protagonists' fantasies, dreams, and memories are as real and significant as their actual lives, and both are depicted on the same plane. Time jumps, flashbacks, and futuroscopings disturb the narrative order and time frame of the plot. This perhaps suggests that the cinematic timeline and characters are determined not by *chronos* but by *kairos*.

The ancient Greek word "*kairos*" means a turning point or moment when a person is forced to make a decisive decision that will completely change his life as he has known it. In theology, the word *kairos* means a definitive moment in history when God performs a saving action. It is also a time of grace that is given to man so that he can seize his relationship with God. Man can take advantage of God's proposal, or he can bypass, ignore, or reject this opportunity. This is generally what happens to Reygadas' characters: they are unable to be open to the breath of transcendence and go beyond their own frustrations, emptiness, and loneliness. The protagonist of *Post Tenebras Lux* is the most obvious example of this, which makes the title of the film perversely ironic. Perhaps, however, the light that follows the darkness will transform the lives of the main character's children insofar as they are able to remain pure of heart as well as sensitive and empathetic toward others.

In fact, empathy is what saves the main character of *Silent Light*, Marianne. She does not waste the *kairos* that is given to her—a time reordered according to the divine that had been disrupted beforehand by her sinful affair. Immediately after the opening scene begins, Marianne is seen climbing onto a chair to stop the pendulum of the clock hanging on the wall. The clock that the protagonist stops is a clear reference to Dreyer's film *Ordet*. In the Danish film, however, the stopping and restarting the clock after Inger's resurrection reflects a traditional European cultural practice of stopping a clock, the ticking of which measured the hours a person's earthly life, after a person has died to signify that his earthly life has ended. It was commonly believed that if the clock is not stopped, then the ticking would disturb the deceased unnecessarily and call him back to earth. In Reygadas' film, however, the clock is stopped at the beginning of the story, rather than at the moment of Esther's death. In this way, the clock plays a different role and symbolizes that time in the film and the main character's choices are ordered not by *chronos*, but by *kairos*, which enables Marianne to undo the effects of her sinful actions. Marianne takes advantage of this time of grace, which gives her the opportunity to reverse choices that she made that were contrary to God's plan. By having an affair with his neighbor, Johan breaks taboo and rejects religion, the Decalogue, the customs of his community, and his family. When his wife dies, it seems like chance has come to his aid and relieved him of his duties as the head of the family. Johan, however, does not feel free; on the contrary, he falls into despair as he becomes aware of the sin that he has committed and its consequences. He misinterprets the signs from heaven and wastes his time of grace. Marianne restores harmony to his ruined world by being aware of God's prompting. Thanks to her sacrifice, the characters experience a miracle. Anita Piotrowska says the following about the end of the dramatic story:

The unstable order was completely destroyed with one blow. Only on these ruins do the characters experience a miracle—a grace given only to those who believe. Armed with the cold and almost motionless eye of the camera, Reygadas films this purifying, luminous finale as if one of the protagonists—a member of the Mennonite community, someone who believes implicitly—were standing behind the camera.³⁶

Carlos Reygadas' films are examples of neomodernist and slow cinematic styles. In accordance with the principles of slow cinema, Reygadas uses specific stylistic and narrative elements to introduce

³⁶ A. Piotrowska, "W stronę światła," *Tygodnik Powszechny*, accessed October 30, 2019, <https://www.tygodnikpowszechny.pl/w-strone-swiatla-132434>.

his audience to a specific state of contemplation. Contemplation is the art of mindful, pure vision; it can be described as a simple sensory perception of reality as it is. Reygadas presents the sacral dimension of cinematic space and time in his films through long, aesthetically beautiful, slow-motion shots of the setting in order enable his audience to “absorb” these extraordinarily impactful images through their perception and senses. As a result, the viewers experience a kind of transcendence similar to what occurs during mystical contemplation, in which the contemplative “I” identifies itself with the object contemplated. But is modern man, who rejects mystical experience in favor of a rational and cold view of reality, really able to experience the contemplation that would unite him with God and the world? Even more, is it possible to invite others to such contemplation through the plot of a film, or is this just a substitute for contemplation? Joanna Gruca describes the feelings of the viewers of Reygadas’ films as follows:

What does one do in a situation where, after the postmodern revolt against Western European metaphysics of presence that is based on dualisms, the religious consciousness of modern times has negated the categorical opposition of concepts and, thereby, deprived them of the meaning that ennobles them? In a world without God, in which man who follows the burned-out reflex of “divinity” in nature, the ever-increasing perspective of non-presence continually dominates, and questions concerning man’s condition in the fragility of time are processual. They point to variability, fluctuation, and transgressing the boundaries of rational cognition in favor of contemplation, of bringing one into a state of hypnotic meditative feeling of that which “occurs” without a specific cause, while bypassing the expected effect.³⁷

In this case, the reference to the sacred contained in the cinematic image occurs as a special, unexpected, immeasurable, and symbolic element that points to the divine realm of God Who transcends it. The film’s ability to lead the audience to experience *numinosum* is a manifestation of the sacred in art.³⁸ The sacred and the images of transcendence that lead to it are *semina Verbi*, the hidden seeds of truth contained in God’s Word, which proclaims the Good News to man.

In his work *Seeds of the Word: Finding God in the Culture*, Robert Barron recalls his professor Monsignor Robert Sokolowski who once told him that the “integrated icon of Christian doctrine... exploded at

³⁷ J. Gruca, “Post tenebras lux, reż. Carlos Reygadas, a po światłości, śmierć,” *Magazyn Filmowy Cinerama*, accessed March 28, 2018, <http://mfcinerama.pl/post-tenebras-lux-rez-carlos-reygadas-a-swiatlosci-smierc/>.

³⁸ Władysław Stróżewski writes in this way about the sacred in art in “O możliwości sacrum w sztuce,” in *Wokół piękna. Szkice z estetyki* (Warszawa: 2002), 215–217.

the time of the Reformation and the Enlightenment, and its charred and distorted fragments have landed here and there, littering the contemporary cultural environment.”³⁹ We can find these charred remains in many places insofar as we track them down and perceive them. Such burnt fragments of the truths of the faith and the Gospel appear often in Carlos Reygadas' films, which recall and evoke the realm of the sacred, thereby inviting the viewers to meditate and contemplate. Whether the viewers perceive *Imago Dei* in Reygadas' cinematic images and recovered depictions or only the remains of religious traditions that are empty and have lost their ability to have any real influence in today's world depends on whether they are paying attention and able.

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³⁹ R. Barron, *Seeds of the Word*, e-book.

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Crime and Punishment: The Selected Tenets of the Decalogue in the Polish Television Series *Ojciec Mateusz* [Fr. Matthew]

This article considers whether the popular Polish drama-crime television series *Ojciec Mateusz* [Father Matthew], which is directed by Maciej Dejczer and has been broadcast on TVP1 since 2008, prompts viewers to reflect on Christian moral norms. This research includes the fields of cultural studies and moral theology. From the point of view of moral theology, the theme of *Ojciec Mateusz* is the battle between good and evil, the basis of which is the tenets of the Decalogue. This study attempts to answer the questions: Is the religiosity hidden in this series, which does not assume the religiosity of the series' viewers, evoke religious sentiments among those who believe? And, does the series affect the moral formation of those who do not believe?

Key words: Decalogue, television series, moral theology.

Introduction

This article considers whether the popular Polish drama-crime television series *Ojciec Mateusz* [Father Matthew], which is directed by Maciej Dejczer and has been broadcast on TVP1 since 2008, prompts viewers to reflect on Christian moral norms. This series is the Polish version of the Italian series *Don Matteo*, which has been broadcast on the public television station Rai Uno since 2000. In *Ojciec Mateusz*, the main character is the Catholic priest Fr. Matthew Żmigrodzki (played by Artur Żmijewski), who, after years on the mission field of Belarus, returns to Poland and becomes the pastor of a small parish on the outskirts of Sandomierz. In addition to caring for his parish and ministering to his people, Fr. Matthew has a talent as a detective

and helps the local police solve the most difficult criminal cases. Fr. Matthew's collaboration is made possible through his friendship with the local policeman and aspirant, Mieczysław Nocul, who reveals the details of his investigations to Fr. Matthew.¹

The priest is the main character of the series, and, as someone associated with the institutional Church, he not only determines the religious aspects of the series, but also is a characteristic element of a religious film. According to the genre of religious film, three types of works can be categorized as religious: film adaptations of the Bible, hagiographic films, and stories about the lives of clergy and religious. When understood more broadly, religious films can also include works that explore the search for the meaning of existence.² Tomasz Kłys includes outstanding artistic cinema among religious films, since these works express the religiosity of their authors or metaphysical questions related to the search for truth. Kłys also proposes that “paradoxically religious” works can be analyzed as religious films, even though they do not belong in this category, because they evoke “experiences and reflections of a religious nature”³ in the viewer. I would add to this group “paradoxically religious” television series whose protagonists are priests, religious, or others who incline viewers to entertain reflections of a religious nature. One such series is *Ojciec Mateusz*, since it presents simplified pop-cultural considerations on the main tenets of the Decalogue. This raises the question: Does the series' hidden religiosity, which does not necessarily imply that the viewers are pious themselves, arouse religious sentiments in viewers who believe and influence the moral formation of both believers and unbelievers alike? It is important to note that the characters in the series frequently express their religious indifference directly. However, the fact that the protagonist is a priest may provoke in viewers a desire to explore transcendent realms or, more broadly, spirituality.

Cultural studies and moral theology are the points of view from which this reflection will take place. From the perspective of cultural studies, *Ojciec Mateusz* is a popcultural text produced by the television industry in Poland. After the cultural transformation that took place in Poland, when it was officially possible to speak about people in the

¹ The series is filmed primarily in Sandomierz, which is reminiscent of Gubbio, a city in central Italy where the series *Don Matteo* takes place.

² M. Kempna, “Religijność jako paratekst. Na obrzeżach teorii filmu religijnego,” in *Pogranicza audiowizualności. Parateksty kina, telewizji i nowych mediów*, ed. A. Gwóźdź (Kraków: 2010), 243-244.

³ T. Kłys, “Filmy (nie)religijne,” in *Między słowem a obrazem*, eds. M. Jakubowska, T. Kłys, and B. Stolarska (Kraków: 2005), 186.

Church, several television series with Catholic priest protagonists were produced, including: *Plebania* [*The Rectory*] (2000-2011), *Ranczo* [*The Ranch*] (2006-2009; 2011-2016), as well as series where priests played supporting roles, including: *Blondynka* [*Blondie*] (2010; 2013-), *Korona królów* [*The Kings' Crown*] (2018-), *M jak miłość* [*L as in "Love"*] (2000-), and *Złotopolscy* (1998-2010). All of these productions depict priests stereotypically and rather sympathetically. In *Ojciec Mateusz*, the priest Fr. Matthew and other priests, including the archbishop, are presented positively and humorously. They play an essential role in the life of the community in which they are readily involved. The manner in which the character Fr. Matthew is presented in *Ojciec Mateusz* follows the same scheme and format of the Italian series *Don Matteo* but is adapted to Polish culture. In addition, *Ojciec Mateusz* is broadcast on public television; therefore, the series has a kind of missionary element and social purpose. Above all, however, the series is entertainment that should be attractive in order to reach the widest audience possible.⁴ The characters and locations in which the show is filmed serve this end. The series takes place in the police station and parish rectory, which serves as a second "command center" where Fr. Matthew solves crimes often over tea or a game of chess while the people who gather around the priest's housekeeper form an extended family. Not only those who love crime novels but also families can enjoy the series.⁵ The visual attractiveness is another important element that draws in viewers. For example, the image of Fr. Matthew in a cassock blowing in the wind as he rides his bicycle through the town square of Sandomierz is charming. The pop-cultural image of a Catholic priest who rides a bike, plays chess, has a talent for solving crimes, and hurries to the aid of every person in need is far from the typical image of a priest celebrating Mass at the altar. Although the elements of the character of Fr. Matthew are drawn from the world of pop culture and secular reality, he is also a consecrated person and,

⁴ To this end, the series uses a variety of marketing strategies: product placement (e.g., Inka coffee), city placement (e.g., the plot of *Ojciec Mateusz* takes place in Sandomierz which encourages set-jetting, or the trend of visiting destinations seen in television series or movies). See <https://depot.ceon.pl/handle/123456789/16620>, accessed May 1, 2021.

⁵ The series is popular and had approximately 2.13 million viewers as of autumn 2020. See Michał Kurdupski, "2,13 mln widzów *Ojca Mateusza* w nowym paśmie, TVP1 liderem," *Wirtualnemedial*, accessed May 1, 2021, <https://www.wirtualnemedial.pl/arttykul/ogladalnosc-ojciec-mateusz-serial-ma-2-13-mln-widzow>.

therefore, a hero of religious cinema who, for both his creators and the viewers, is a “natural indicator of Christian spirituality.”⁶

From the point of view of moral theology, the main theme of *Ojciec Mateusz* is the battle between good and evil, which is based on the tenets of the Decalogue. According to Christian doctrine, the Decalogue is the Ten Commandments that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai. These commandments set forth the principles by which societies should live.⁷ At the same time, the Ten Commandments are not only a set of “shall” and “shall not,” but also incentives to live happily in communion with God and man.⁸ “The clear direct, and unconditional ‘thou shall’ and ‘thou shall not’ distinguish the Decalogue from all other biblical casuistic law, which is conditional.”⁹ In the New Testament sense, the Decalogue is the moral law that God gave to man for man’s own good.¹⁰ “According to Karol Wojtyła, the [Decalogue] is the foundation of later Christian morality.”¹¹

In the series *Ojciec Mateusz*, the main character, Fr. Matthew, establishes the Christian moral system, particularly the Ten Commandments which prohibit certain acts, as the reference point. The “shall not” refer to the fifth through the tenth Commandments that define the moral obligations that people have toward each other and toward that which belongs to each person.¹² According to moral theology, which “formulates norms based on the truths of the faith,”¹³ the moral

⁶ M. Marczak, “Postać filmowa jako nośnik religijnego znaczenia. Ekranowe obrazy osób konsekrowanych w polskim kinie i telewizji od 2000 roku w funkcji socjokulturowego przekazu na temat współczesnej religijności,” *Media – Kultura – Komunikacja Społeczna* 2, no. 12 (2016): 50.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁸ W. Harrelson, “Dziesięcioro Przykazań,” in *Słownik wiedzy biblijnej*, eds. B. Metzger and M. Coogan, (Warszawa: 1996), 135-136.

⁹ F. Rienecker and G. Maier, eds., “Dziesięcioro przykazań,” in *Leksykon biblijny*, trans. D. Irmińska (Warszawa: 2008), 192.

¹⁰ See A. Kraska, “Wj 20,13-14.16.12,” *Wymiar transcendencji Dekalogu Krzysztofa Kiesłowskiego wobec dylematów współczesnego człowieka* (doctoral dissertation, Adam Mickiewicz University, Department of Theology, 2017), 18, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://repozytorium.amu.edu.pl/handle/10593/20687>.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹² “You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, his male or female slave, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor” (Ex 20:13-17).

¹³ O. C. J. Wichrowicz, *Zarys teologii moralnej w ujęciu tomistycznym* (Warszawa: 2016), 9.

good, which motivates the characters' actions, is essential. Fr. Matthew and other characters personify the good, while the different criminals in each episode personify evil. The virtue of social justice, which Fr. Matthew embodies, plays a special role in the plot. According to Cyprian Wichrowicz, social justice "directs human life to the common good and often makes it perceptive to different social issues."¹⁴ Ideological oppositions to the virtues presented in the series are "flaws" arising from the morally evil actions of certain characters. In the series, the most common opposition to the virtue of justice occurs through: murder, theft, fraud, and slander.¹⁵ Since the twenty-fifth season of *Ojciec Mateusz* is currently being aired, and since each episode within the series is a contained whole, this article will focus on analyzing a selection of episodes in order to substantiate the thesis.

Fr. Matthew is a very good priest and spiritual guide to his faithful. Many people would like to have such a parish priest. As both a priest and a person he is good, prudent, and just. Justice is of particular value because it is connected with social order and the proper relationship between people. "Many commandments pertain to justice, which indicates that [justice] is a deontological value, meaning that the individual should be just and act justly (it is a moral doctrine). This pertains to the Decalogue in particular, since the entirety of it concerns justice. [The Decalogue] demonstrates how natural law regulates how people should relate to each other."¹⁶ It is important that the main character follows the principle of justice and demonstrate how one should behave in specific situations, i.e., how to live out the moral good. In the first episode of the series, when the plot is being laid out, the main moral directives that guide Fr. Matthew's decision and actions are also set forth. During the first Mass that he celebrates in his parish church, Fr. Matthew says to the faithful: "Clearly God wanted me to celebrate this Holy Mass with you and for us to seek the Lord together. I am here to serve you, but I also want you to treat me as a friend and brother to whom you can always come with your problems and your concerns, so that we can solve your problems together."¹⁷ The first opportunity to serve appears just after Mass when a woman dressed in black approaches Fr. Matthew and asks him to celebrate the funeral Mass for her husband who supposedly committed suicide (although the wife does not believe that he did). As a result of his own investigation,

¹⁴ Ibid, 53.

¹⁵ Ibid, 56.

¹⁶ Ibid, 149.

¹⁷ *Ojciec Mateusz*, season 1, episode 1, "Obcy."

Fr. Matthew discovers that the man's death was an accident that was covered up initially by claims that he committed suicide and then that he was murdered. In the process, Fr. Matthew comes to the aid of Azer, an Armenian who works in the paper mill and was falsely accused of murdering the woman's husband. The person guilty of the accident—or, rather, murder—turns out to be the owner of the paper mill who tried to save money by evading implementing safe working conditions for his employees. The police detained the perpetrator who felt no remorse for his actions. Fr. Matthew celebrated the funeral mass, which was an occasion to share deeper moral reflections. In his homily, he spoke about prosperity that led to indolence. He also presented the Christian hierarchy of values, according to which: "...it is not important what is on the outside of a person [what he wears], but rather what is within him." He also spoke about how the conscience reproaches a person even when it is dormant, which becomes unbearable; "it is hell—the hell of rebuff."¹⁸

Subsequent seasons of the series show the consequences of rejecting the tenets of the Decalogue. Questions concerning the reasons why people violate moral norms usually arise in the background of the crime stories. In *Ojciec Mateusz*, it is customary for people who are lost in some way to commit the crimes. In every episode there is a battle between good and evil, which—in a sense—Fr. Matthew animates. The most important element, however, is that good prevails and evil is punished through the execution of justice and by Fr. Matthew and other characters' moral judgment. In the series, narration takes place through dialogue; the characters often discuss events, which is part of the conventions of this genre. In this regard, Fr. Matthew's different commentaries are particularly important. The most common violation of the Ten Commandments takes place through sins against the virtue of justice.

You Shall Not Kill

In the series, evil is part of banal everyday life and occurs in beautiful surroundings that are both characteristic of the genre and a general indication of the culture. Most often, evil takes place in the form of a serious crime, i.e., murder. The criminals in the series are seemingly ordinary people. It is very rare for habitual offenders to appear in *Ojciec Mateusz*. The criminal stories presented in the series contain a hidden religious message. Every episode follows the same characteristic

¹⁸ Ibid.

scheme: a crime is committed; an investigation is conducted; and the perpetrator is found. Fr. Matthew then speaks with the perpetrator, who is persuaded to admit his or her guilt. While these conversations prompt moral reflection and are an essential element of the series, the primary mode of reflection that takes place onscreen is through Fr. Matthew's witness, which serves as a reminder that a transcendent reality, the center of which is God, exists.¹⁹ In his witness, the viewer sees vocation as serving others in the name of charity, of which God is the source.

Murder is the topic of many episodes of *Ojciec Mateusz*—murder committed for two different reasons. In the first instance, the characters commit murder in order to gain some sort of profit from it. The victims are wealthy people. For example, lawyer of Polish descent who lives in Germany blackmails and then murders Mr. Borowski, a businessman who lived in a luxurious mansion.²⁰ In another episode, a desire for money also drives a young man and con artist to trick older wealthy women into killing the owner of the florist shop.²¹ In yet another episode, the owner of an art gallery murders a security guard in order to obtain a large payment from insurance.²² Another interesting example is an episode where the action takes place in a house that an elderly woman left to the Archbishop of Sandomierz's curia. The house had formerly been a social agency. The owner of the agency had killed one of his female workers—a Ukrainian woman who recorded and then blackmailed customers.²³ The home later became a center for the autistic, and another Ukrainian woman—a friend of the murdered woman—who was a pedagogue by education, worked there. This episode demonstrated how a moral good can arise from the darkness of a crime. In a different instance where greed is the motive and the criminals are not remorseful, Fr. Matthew offers no consoling words; instead, the murders are found and imprisoned. In a legal sense, punishment is meted out, and in a moral sense, Fr. Matthew sometimes makes a judgment or the viewers are left to make their own judgment.

The situation differs when people commit murder but unintentionally. For example, in one episode a former dancer, who sewed costumes for artists after suffering an injury years earlier, murdered another dancer. The murdered dancer owed the costume designer a large sum

¹⁹ M. Marczak, "Postać filmowa," 50.

²⁰ *Ojciec Mateusz*, season 16, episode 210, "Reggae."

²¹ *Ojciec Mateusz*, season 16, episode 212, "Wahadelko."

²² *Ojciec Mateusz*, season 25, episode 321, "Woda sodowa."

²³ *Ojciec Mateusz*, season 25, episode 320, "Spadek"

of money that the designer had planned to use to pay for an operation. When the designer asked the dancer to repay the loan, he began to deride her, and she stabbed him with scissors. As the designer told Fr. Matthew, she only wanted to hurt the man, not kill him. The priest spoke with the woman for a long time, after which she admitted her fault and expressed remorse for what she had done.²⁴ At the end of the episode, Fr. Matthew stated that, because the man had died, the woman would have made atonement. But he also added that God forgives a person when He sees that the person is truly contrite. In a morally similar episode, a mentally ill man commits murder out of love. The man kills Ewa Wiślicka, the wife of a rich businessman and the man's former girlfriend.²⁵ It was left up to the viewers to judge the act.

A priest solving crimes can serve as an opportunity to bring up modern man's moral principles. In the series, the moral dilemmas that characters face are connected with many important and different social issues. For example, one episode touches on the in vitro fertilization, but the plot does not offer any broader reflections on the issue. Another topic that appears repeatedly in the series concerns temptations related to consumer culture; in the episodes young people often steal in order to get the money they need to buy name brand clothing and fashionable gadgets. In a conversation with the father of a young girl who had stolen something, Fr. Matthew tells the father to speak with his daughter about what the most important things in life are. The main statement that Fr. Matthew makes in many episodes is: "One should trust God and people."²⁶

You Shall Not Steal

The ordinary and seemingly calm residents of Sandomierz commit the thefts in the series *Ojciec Mateusz*. The motives for stealing are as difficult as the things stolen, which can be both material and immaterial goods. Often the stolen items are valuables taken from the homes of the wealthy residents of Sandomierz. Although, some episodes involve items such as an archeological find, cows, a valuable icon, a portable safe with money, or money from the poor box at church. Intangible goods are also stolen such as, for example, an idea for a crime story.

Sometimes the thieves commit petty theft for different reasons. A school janitor steals, claiming that she does not make enough to live.

²⁴ *Ojciec Mateusz*, season 11, episode 143, "Gorące rytmy."

²⁵ *Ojciec Mateusz*, season 11, episode 145, "Kurtka."

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Fr. Matthew usually listens to these individuals and, when possible, gives them the opportunity to correct their mistakes or admit their guilt and incur the appropriate punishment. In the series, theft also serves as an exciting adventure. In one episode, the main characters—three retired women—start a “gang” and steal items from stores just for the thrill of it. When talking to the three thieves, Fr. Matthew tries to help them understand how their behavior is immoral. He also does not report the case to the police and offers the culprits financial support to pay the stores for the items that they stole. In addition, he gives the women the opportunity to correct their mistakes and make up for their faults by working for a charitable foundation that helps those in need.²⁷

In many episodes, the sixth commandment—You shalt not steal—is violated due to a consumerist lifestyle. The protagonists of these episodes are constantly seeking new sensations and pleasures and are ready to transgress the commandments and violate moral norms to achieve them. These scenes depict what can be called the subjectivization of morality. According to Flora Michaels, in the economics of the monoculture in which we live, economic efficiency and individual happiness, even at the expense of others, is what matters most.²⁸ Consumerism disrupts value systems; “to have” takes precedence over “to be,” even for believers, who are ready to violate God’s commandments in the name of such a worldview. One example of this can be found in an episode where the protagonist—a young man named Rafał—steals in order to get money to buy luxury items that his parents cannot afford. He, along with two other young criminals, robs a truck and takes goods from it that actually belong to other bandits. The robbed smugglers take Rafał’s younger brother hostage; Rafał decides to rescue him and goes to Fr. Matthew for help. Rafał regrets confesses what he has done during his conversation with Fr. Matthew in the church.²⁹ Fr. Matthew does not instruct Rafał, but he helps him. Fr. Matthew continues to encounter criminals, but he does not stigmatize them. Instead, he follows the philosophy that every encounter with another person is an encounter with God. He tries to show God in interpersonal relationships, in daily life. Through his daily tasks, such as sitting beside the sickbed of someone in the hospital, Fr. Matthew brings the viewers closer to God’s Love, which is part of every person’s life.³⁰

²⁷ *Ojciec Mateusz*, season 16, episode 205, “Gang.”

²⁸ F. Michaels, *Monoculture: How One Story is Changing Everything* (San Diego: Red Clover Press, 2011).

²⁹ *Ojciec Mateusz*, season 11, episode 138, “Trefny towar.”

³⁰ A. Kraska, *Wymiar transcendencji...*, 115.

You Shall Not Bear False Witness Against Your Neighbor

In the series *Ojciec Mateusz*, priests also commit crimes. Fr. Matthew's friend, Fr. Antoni Waluś, is an alcoholic who causes a car accident while drunk, injures a woman, and then attempts to hide it. In the end, however, through the persuasion of a friend, an old priest and his spiritual guide, Fr. Antoni Waluś admits his guilt. Throughout the series, criminals who confess what they have done (or who Fr. Matthew persuades to do so) often say moral maxims. At the end of the episode, the aforementioned alcoholic priest states: "There is guilt, so there must be punishment."³¹ Bearing false witness against one's neighbor also occurs in another episode where a phony priest, who arrives to Fr. Matthew's rectory on a motorcycle, says to Fr. Matthew that he wants "to serve God and help those in need."³² The "priest" then joins in raising funds for the parish's charitable activities and then proceeds to steal the money and commit fraud. The man, however, is found out and arrested.

The other commandments against, for example, adultery, coveting one's neighbor's wife or things, are rarely featured in the other episodes of *Ojciec Mateusz*.

Conclusion

In *Ojciec Mateusz*, one can see the Decalogue mediated and shown through a pop-culture television series. Each episode revolves around a crime that Fr. Matthew and the viewers solve. In the background of the storyline lies a religious message about following Christian moral principles. The series is not a story in which a priest engages in theological discourse and directly draws the viewers to a transcendent realm. In the series and according to the conventions of the genre, the viewers do not watch the protagonists' moral dilemmas because the characters' psychology is depicted only superficially. The viewers can only guess when, for example, the camera shows Fr. Matthew praying or, more often, playing chess. At the same time, the way in which Fr. Matthew is depicted is faithful to the way in which consecrated persons live and serve God and others. Fr. Matthew's actions are quintessential of the axiology of Christian social life, which focuses on charity and responsibility for others in accordance with the tenet to conquer

³¹ *Ojciec Mateusz*, season 11, episode 141, "Wypadek."

³² *Ojciec Mateusz*, season 14, episode 184, "Sekretny układ."

evil with good.³³ In the series, Fr. Matthew is a tool by which moral principles are formed, and he also gives witness to these principles in how he lives. To the viewer, it is important that Fr. Matthew is a modest man who does not consider material goods important (he does not even own a car). This attitude and example are particularly important due to the rapid secularization of Polish society and the proliferation of religious and moral indifference.³⁴ In this way, Fr. Matthew is an emissary of the Church as a cultural institution, which plays a very positive role within society and supports all that is good and noble that arises from human charity, Her great “apostle.”

A pop-cultural adaptation of a Polish priest may evoke religious feelings in *Ojciec Mateusz*'s viewers. The series is a kind of morality play, since the good prevails and evil is punished in every episode. In the world that the series presents, unlike in real social life, there is a clear distinction between good and evil. The characters' actions, which often violate the Ten Commandments and are the natural consequence of the choices that they make, can be judged morally. However, the extent to which the series is perceived as a religious statement depends to a large degree on the viewers' attitudes toward religion.³⁵ “The religious viewer moves [...] within an interpretive universe that is determined by a specific narrative, a set of narratives, or a range of social (religious) practices.”³⁶ For the believer who watches *Ojciec Mateusz*, the series can be a source of reflection on Christian moral norms, while for the unbeliever, it can be an opportunity to hear weekly about a good and gracious God and, without too much didacticism, simple moral guidelines by which to live.”

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³⁴ J. Zabielski, “Degradacja życia religijno-moralnego jako zagrożenie ładu społeczno-cywilizacyjnego,” *Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej* 17, no. 3 (2018): 346.

³⁵ M. Kempna, “Religijność jako paratekst. Na obrzeżach teorii filmu religijnego,” in *Pogranicza audiowizualności. Parateksty kina, telewizji i nowych mediów*, ed. A. Gwóźdź (Kraków: 2010), 253.

³⁶ C. Marsch, “Audience Reception,” in *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Film*, ed. J. Lyde (London-New York 2009), 267, cited in M. Kempna, “Religijność jako paratekst,” 254.

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Sprawozdanie z działalności Katedry Teologii Katolickiej Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku w roku akademickim 2020/2021

Kadra

W Katedrze Teologii Katolickiej UwB w roku akademickim 2020/2021 zatrudnione były cztery osoby. Trzech pracowników naukowo-dydaktycznych: ks. dr hab. Andrzej Proniewski (p.o. kierownika KTK) na stanowisku profesora nadzwyczajnego – cały etat, ks. dr Tadeusz Kasabuła na stanowisku adiunkta – ½ etatu, ks. dr Marek Kowalczuk na stanowisku asystenta – ½ etatu oraz ks. mgr lic. Leszek M. Jakoniuk na stanowisku administracyjnym – cały etat.

Działalność dydaktyczna

W ramach działalności dydaktycznej pracownicy naukowi KTK przeprowadzili następujące wykłady:

Ks. dr hab. Andrzej Proniewski, prof. UwB

- *Początki międzykulturowości Europy* (konwersatorium – 30 godz.), Instytut Studiów Kulturowych;
- *Podstawy filozofii* (konwersatorium – 14 godz.), Wydział Ekonomii i Finansów;
- *Tajemnice Wszechświata. Dialog wiary z nauką* (wykład – 30 godz.), Wydział Nauk o Edukacji;
- *Tajemnice Wszechświata. Dialog wiary z nauką* (ćwiczenia – 15 godz.), Wydział Nauk o Edukacji;
- *Wybrane zagadnienia z etyki* (wykład – 10 godz.), Instytut Informatyki;

- *Seminarium magisterskie* (100 godz.), Wydział Nauk o Edukacji;
- *Seminarium magisterskie* (60 godz.), Instytut Studiów Kulturowych.

Ks. dr Tadeusz Kasabuła

- *Chrześcijańskie dziedzictwo Europy* (wykład – 30 godz.), Wydział Historii i Stosunków Międzynarodowych;
- *Europejskość Europy. Ewolucja idei* (konwersatorium – 30 godz.), Wydział Historii i Stosunków Międzynarodowych;
- *Europejskość Europy. Ewolucje idei* (ćwiczenia – 30 godz.), Wydział Historii i Stosunków Międzynarodowych;
- *Kultura życia codziennego w Polsce w okresie przedrozbiorowym* (konwersatorium – 30 godz.), Instytut Studiów Kulturowych.

Ks. dr Marek Kowalczuk

- *Bogowie i ludzie na Starożytnym Bliskim Wschodzie* (konwersatorium – 30 godz.), Instytut Studiów Kulturowych;
- *Ciało i dusza w historii* (wykład – 15 godz.), Wydział Nauk o Edukacji;
- *Ciało i dusza w historii* (wykład – 30 godz.), Wydział Biologii.

Konferencje naukowe

Katedra Teologii Katolickiej UwB w okresie sprawozdawczym była:

- organizatorem konferencji naukowej:
 - „Wspólnota parafialna w służbie wiary” (Białystok, 10 kwietnia 2021).
- współorganizatorem konferencji naukowych:
 - Międzynarodowa Konferencja Naukowa: „Dziecko w historii – między godnością a zniewoleniem”, organizowana przez Katedrę Historii i Teorii Wychowania Wydziału Nauk o Edukacji UwB (Białystok, 24-25 maja 2021).
 - Konferencja o wychowaniu: „Wychowywać tak! Ale jak? Aktualizacja nauczania bł. ks. Michała Sopočki” (Białystok, 25 września 2021).

Działalność naukowo-badawcza

Pracownicy naukowci KTK UwB w ramach działalności naukowo-badawczej opublikowali następujące efekty swojej pracy:

Ks. dr hab. Andrzej Proniewski, prof. UwB**Rozdziały książek:**

- A. Proniewski, *Fundacja Spe salvi*, w: H. Ciereszko (red.), *25 lat Archidiecezji Białostockiej*, Białystok 2020, s. 461-464.
- A. Proniewski, *Katedra Teologii Katolickiej Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku*, w: H. Ciereszko (red.), *25 lat Archidiecezji Białostockiej*, Białystok 2020, s. 192-203.
- A. Proniewski, *Archidiecezjalne Wyższe Seminarium Duchowne w Białymstoku w latach 1992-2017*, w: H. Ciereszko (red.), *25 lat Archidiecezji Białostockiej*, Białystok 2020, s. 157-186.
- A. Proniewski, *Godność dziecka nieredukowalną wartością ontyczno-wychowawczą*, w: *Dziecko w historii – między godnością a zniewoleniem*, tom 1, *Godność jako fundament praw człowieka*, Białystok 2021, s. 115-134.

Artykuły naukowe:

- A. Proniewski, *Ratzinger's Reflections on the Staurological Foundation of the Resurrection*, „Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej” 19 (2020), s. 115-132.
- A. Proniewski, *Duch Święty w magisterium papieża przełomu XIX/XX wieku*, „Studia Teologii Dogmatycznej” 6 (2020), s. 97-106.

Ks. dr Tadeusz Kasabuła**Artykuły naukowe:**

- T. Kasabuła, *The Statutes of the Cathedral Chapter of Vilnius Before the Partition of Poland*, „Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej” 19 (2020), s. 67-81.

Ks. dr Marek Kowalczuk**Artykuły naukowe:**

- M. Kowalczuk, *How to Gain Wisdom of Heart: The Meaning of the Rhetorical Structure of Psalm 90*, „Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej” 19 (2020), s. 145-158.

Udział w konferencjach, zjazdach naukowych i wydarzeniach kulturalno-naukowych, referaty

W roku akademickim 2020/2021 pracownicy naukowcy, oprócz uczestnictwa w wydarzeniach organizowanych lub współorganizowanych przez KTK, wzięli udział w sympozjach, zjazdach, wernisażach, wystawach:

Ks. dr hab. Andrzej Proniewski, prof. UwB

- Konferencja naukowa w Archidiecezjalnym Wyższym Seminarium Duchownym w Białymstoku. Referat: *Epistemologiczne podstawy Niepokalanego Poczęcia* (Białystok, 8 grudnia 2020).
- Międzynarodowa konferencja naukowa: „Dziecko w historii – między godnością a zniewoleniem”. Referat: *Godność dziecka nieredukowalną wartością ontyczno-wychowawczą* (Białystok, 24-25 maja 2021).

Ks. dr Tadeusz Kasabuła

- Konferencja międzynarodowa: „Polonica zagraniczne. Stan wiedzy i perspektywy badawcze z cyklu: Archiwa kultury polskiej XX wieku: Londyn – Białystok – Turyn”. Referat: *Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Białymstoku. Powstanie i ewolucja zasobu*, organizowana przez Wydział Filologiczny UwB, Uniwersytet w Turynie, Archiwum Państwowe w Białymstoku, Bibliotekę Polską POSK w Londynie.
- Wystawa plenerowa: „Kapelani Wojska Polskiego w Katyniu” – współorganizacja (Białystok, 27 listopada 2020).
- Wystawa rzeźby: „W kręgu sacrum” – współorganizacja (finisaż Białystok, 10 października 2020).
- Wystawa: „Dziedzictwo do życia przywrócone. Odsłona druga” (prezentacja pergaminów i zbiorów muzealnych poddanych konserwacji w ramach projektu „Ochrona i cyfrowe udostępnienie obiektów dziedzictwa kulturowego znajdujących się w zasobach Archiwum i Muzeum Archidiecezjalnego w Białymstoku”) – organizacja, on-line (Białystok, 1 lutego – 31 marca 2021).
- Wystawa: „Chorągwie procesyjne w zbiorach Muzeum Archidiecezjalnego w Białymstoku” – organizacja, on-line (Białystok, 1 marca – 30 kwietnia 2021).
- Wystawa: „Ornaty «maryjne» w zbiorach Muzeum Archidiecezjalnego w Białymstoku” – organizacja, on-line (Białystok, 1-31 maja 2021).
- Wystawa: „Prymas Wyszyński w Białymstoku” – organizacja (Białystok, 1-24 września 2021).
- Międzynarodowy festiwal sztuki fotograficznej „Interphoto”, wystawa fotograficzna Guido Kajonsa „Theme 011” – współorganizacja (Białystok, 23 września – 16 października 2021).

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- Udział w Komitecie organizacyjnym międzynarodowej konferencji naukowej: „Dziecko w historii – między godnością

a zniewoleniem”. Referat: *Dziecko jako wzór w nauczaniu Ewangelii* (Białystok, 24-25 maja 2021).

Wydawnictwo

Nakładem Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku w ramach działalności KTK ukazały się następujące pozycje:

- „Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej” 19 (2020) – 40 punktów;
- „Studia Teologii Dogmatycznej” 6 (2020) – 5 punktów.

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General Rules for Submission and Publication of Articles

1. *The Annual of Catholic Theology* [Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej] is an English-language magazine promoting theological sciences published by the Chair of Catholic Theology.
2. The Editorial Board requires scientific reliability and fairness from the authors of the articles submitted for publication in the Annual of Catholic Theology. 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 in both Polish and English (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 in both Polish and English including: *aim, research method, results* and *originality* of the topic listed in separated paragraphs. Each summary should not exceed 1200 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 the Annual of Catholic Theology volume. The editor-in-chief of the magazine takes the final decision whether to publish the article in the Annual of Catholic Theology.
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.

Ogólne zasady przyjmowania i publikowania artykułów:

1. „Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej” jest czasopismem teologicznym redagowanym przez Katedrę Teologii Katolickiej w języku angielskim.
2. Redakcja czasopisma wymaga rzetelności i uczciwości naukowej autorów w przedkładanym materiale do druku. Redakcja stosuje procedury „ghostwriting”, „guest authorship”. Każdy tekst jest analizowany przy pomocy programu antyplagiatowego. Wykryte przypadki nadużyć będą demaskowane włącznie z powiadomieniem odpowiednich podmiotów, których dobro zostało naruszone.
3. Do artykułu powinna być dołączona afiliacja autora, krótki biogram w języku polskim i angielskim (do 400 znaków ze spacjami każdy) oraz aktualny adres mailowy autora.
4. Każdy artykuł winien zawierać streszczenie w języku polskim i angielskim, zawierające w oddzielnych akapitach: *cel, metodę badań, wyniki, oryginalność zagadnienia*. Streszczenie w każdym z języków nie powinno przekraczać 1 200 znaków ze spacjami. Do artykułu należy dołączyć także słowa kluczowe (do 5 słów) w języku polskim i angielskim oraz tytuł artykułu w języku polskim.
5. Objętość artykułu, łącznie z ewentualnymi tablicami, rysunkami itp., nie powinna przekraczać 30 000 znaków ze spacjami. Artykuł powinien także zawierać tzw. bibliografię załącznikową.
6. Artykuł powinien być sprawdzony pod względem językowym. Pisownia powinna być zgodna z normami języka angielskiego. Jeśli język angielski nie jest językiem rodzimym autora należy zadbać, aby osoba, dla której jest to język rodzimy (native speaker), dokonała korekty tekstu. Dane tej osoby powinny być przesłane wraz z artykułem.
7. Przesłany tekst powinien być zapisany w jednym z następujących formatów: *.doc, *.docx zaś wszelkie ryciny, wykresy, symbole graficzne w formacie PDF.
8. Każdy artykuł jest recenzowany przez dwóch rzetelnych recenzentów z krajowych lub zagranicznych ośrodków naukowych. Artykuł recenzowany jest poufnie i anonimowo. Stosowany jest model, w którym autor(zy) i recenzenci nie znają swoich tożsamości (double-blind review proces).
9. Artykuły do publikacji w danym roku należy przysyłać w wersji elektronicznej poprzez system OJS czasopisma najpóźniej do 31 marca. Tylko artykuły nadesłane w terminie, spełniające powyższe wymogi redakcyjne, oraz które uzyskają pozytywne recenzje będą brane pod uwagę przy redakcji tomu „Rocznika Teologii Katolickiej”. Ostateczną decyzję o publikacji artykułu w „Roczniku Teologii Katolickiej” podejmuje redaktor naczelny czasopisma.
10. Szczegółowe wskazania dotyczące tekstu głównego artykułu i zamieszczanych w artykule przypisów oraz zasady recenzowania znajdują się na stronie internetowej: www.rtk.uwb.edu.pl.