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The Drama of Two Hopes: The Secular Versus the Christian Project for Europe

Abstract: Europe is a community of people and nations with a still-to-be-determined identity. The project of European unity is a work in progress, and under the influence of historical circumstances it undergoes successive changes and looks for new inspirations. One of the key moments in the European history in the third millennium was broadening the EU in 2004 to include ten more countries, among them the Republic of Poland. Each of the new countries entered the community with its own set of hopes and expectations. In Poland, shortly before accession, the basic question was posed: what kind of Poland in what kind of Europe? Answers to this question were shaped by two types of inspiration: the first was based on the vision of the new evangelization of the continent, in which Poland could participate creatively thanks to its faithfulness to Christianity preserved through the centuries (*Polonia semper fidelis*); the second referred to secular traditions and the idea of a rational, just, free and democratic Europe, maintaining axiological neutrality. The text shows the dramatic divergence between these two projects for the Europe of the future, seen from the Polish perspective.

Keywords: Europe, Poland, hope, Christianity, values

"In the beginning there was no Europe. All there was, […] was a long, sinuous peninsula with no name, set like a figurehead of a ship on the prow of the world's largest land mass. […] To the east lay the land-bridge to the rest of the world, whence all peoples and all civilizations were to come."[1] With these words Norman Davies begins his story of

[1] N. Davies: *Europe. A History.* Oxford 1996, p. XV.

Europe. Later, however, when the Hellenistic culture arose and developed, "Europa was the subject of one of the most venerable legends of the classical world."[2] It concerns the myth of Cadmus and his sister named Europa, kidnapped and abducted into the unknown by Zeus, who took the form of a snow-white bull. Among the many associations that (according to a British historian) the legend of Europa evokes,[3] the most important are those that can be considered as symbolic characteristics of European identity: "Europa's ride […] captures the essential restlessness of those who followed in her footsteps […] the civilization of the Mediterranean Sea was stimulated by constant movement. Movement caused uncertainty and insecurity. Uncertainty fed a constant ferment of ideas. Insecurity prompted energetic activity."[4] Towards the end of a short chapter on the Greek legend, Davies concludes: "Europa's curiosity may have been her undoing. But it led to the founding of a new civilization that would eventually bear her name and would spread to the whole Peninsula."[5]

Curiosity, restlessness and permanent mobility are the qualities that distinguish Europeans from other people — similar opinion is voiced by the great traveler Ryszard Kapuściński: "In the march of civilization, Europe will be an exception. Since it is the only one which, from its very Greek beginnings, has manifested curiosity about the world and a desire not only to master and dominate it, but also to know, and in the case of its best minds — [also] to understand, to come together and to form a human community."[6]

Another testimony to thinking of Europe as something unique by its fluid identity is Zygmunt Bauman's book *Europe. An unfinished adventure*. Starting, like Davies, from a Greek myth, the author argues that the "Euripides and Sophocles enabled Oediphus to practise what was to become the common frame for the character, torments and life dramas of the Europeans,"[7] and quotes Denis de Rougemont's opinion: "To seek Europe is to make it! Europe exists through its search for the infinite — and this is what I call adventure."[8] Bauman comments: "Europe is not something you discover; Europe is a mission — something to be made, created, built. And it takes a lot of ingenuity, sense of pur-

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[2] Ibidem.

[3] See ibidem.

[4] Ibidem, p. XVI.

[5] Ibidem, p. XVII.

[6] R. Kapuściński: *Ten Inny*. Kraków 2006, p. 13.

[7] Z. Bauman: *Europe. An unfinished adventure*. Cambridge 2004, p. 1.

[8] D. de Rougemont: "L'aventure mondiale des Européens." In: Idem: *Les Chances de l'Europe* (1962), https://www.unige.ch/rougemont/livres/ddr1962ce/2 [accessed 10.02.2024].

pose and hard labor to accomplish that mission. Perhaps a labor that never ends, a challenge always still to be met in full, a prospect forever outstanding."[9]

According to the unanimous opinion of the quoted authorities, Europe is an *ens in statu nascendi,* whose essence is a permanent search for identity, or "unfinishedness," and whose qualities are mobility, curiosity, ferment of thoughts, uncertainty, creativity, restlessness and leaning towards the future. The history and present of this particular civilizational formation is an intense search for a "patent for Europe," a constant testing of constitutive formulas oscillating between unity and multiplicity and involving ever new models of ties of community.[10] That is why such an important dimension of the European spirit is hope, which expression could be found, for example, in the philosophy.[11] Hope, as a hypothetical idea of a better future, is usually combined with disappointment with the present, perceived as a state more or less distant from expectations. A way of thinking about the shortcomings of everyday life, typical of a specifically Polish sense of humor, is presented in the following fragment of a monologue by Wiesław Dymny, a satirist from the Kraków cabaret Piwnica pod Baranami, parodying the style of speeches by Władysław Gomułka: "There is only what is. And because what is — this is not it, so there is nothing. That what is, is nothing; but that which is absent, is something!"[12]

Poland is a part of Europe whose inhabitants have had more than one occasion in history to train themselves in the virtue of hope. Let us take as examples some of the key events that all Polish children learn about at school during history lessons:

— the hope for the healing of the crisis situation in the state and the Church in the Polish lands, as expressed in Andrzej Frycz-Modrzewski's work *Commentariorum de Republica emendanda libri quinque* from 1551;
— the hope for building the foundations of a modern, enlightened and liberal society, included in the text of the 3rd of May Constitution, that is, the Governance Act of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, adopted on 3 May 1791 in the face of an imminent threat of loss of independence;

[9] Z. Bauman: *Europe. An unfinished adventure…*, p. 2.

[10] See *Więzi wspólnoty. Literatura — religia — komparatystyka / The Ties of Community. Literature, Religion, Comparative Studies*. Eds. P. Bogalecki, A. Mitek-Dziemba, T. Sławek. Katowice 2013.

[11] Cf. E. Bloch: *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*. Berlin 1954; G. Marcel: *Être et avoir.* Aubier 1968; J. Tischner. *Świat ludzkiej nadziei*. Kraków 1975.

[12] Quote from memory from a cabaret show in Kraków in the 1960s.

— the hope for stopping the annihilation of the institutions of the Polish state and for thwarting the intentions of the neighboring powers planning the partition of the lands of the Republic; in the name of this hope, the Bar Confederation was formed, and in 1794 the Kościuszko Insurrection broke out;
— the hope for regaining of independence, discussed in endless political discussions and publications, such as Józef Pawlikowski's famous pamphlet *Czy Polacy wybić się mogą na niepodległość?* ["Can Poles win their independence?"], published in 1800 in Paris;
— the hope for the rebirth of an independent Polish state at Napoleon Bonaparte's side in 1795—1813;
— the hope for throwing off the yoke of the partitioning countries by way of armed action, which lay at the root of all Polish national uprisings and patriotic uprisings in the 19th century;
— the hope for the re-emergence of a great, strong, powerful Poland as a result of the radical changes to the political map of Europe following the end of the First World War;
— the hope for building a new, just, democratic Polish People's Republic with the support of a powerful ally, the Soviet Union, after the Red Army liberated the Polish lands from Nazi occupation in 1945.

The years following the Second World War were a particularly important and difficult lesson in hope. Two generations of Poles, living under the oppressive system of Stalinist and post-Stalinist communism, learnt to live drawing strength and encouragement from the idea that nothing is eternal and that even the strongest empires experienced their end. Sometimes it was hope against hope (*spes contra spem*) when, after a great collective effort, it turned out that the wheels of history had turned the other way. This was the kind of drama that Central and Eastern Europe experienced as a result of the political decisions taken at the Yalta Conference in February 1945. As victorious Red Army troops pushed towards Berlin from the east, ambivalent feelings arose further and further to the west as the Nazi occupying forces were pushed out. One part of the population, liberated from the Nazi terror, felt a huge sense of relief, coupled with the hope that the possibility of building a new, democratic and just people's state under the auspices of the USSR would emerge. The other part, based on historical knowledge and daily observation of the methods of the encroaching Russian forces, expected nothing good. History conceded the latter, despite the fact that supporters and sympathizers of the new regime, euphemistically called "people's democracy," still engaged in activities actively supporting the regime for many years. Paradoxically, however, the weaker the communist terror became, the more the disillusionment with the state-forming offers of the socialist system grew.

According to the most frequently repeated assessments by researchers of recent history, the most important reason lay in the economic inefficiency of the system, which, due to the fact that the mechanisms of the market economy and competition had been replaced by a so-called planned economy, the lack of currency convertibility on the international market and the rapidly growing economic backwardness, after 30 years began to decline.[13] Objective economic mechanisms were then joined, especially from the 1970s onwards, by a second major factor of a more subjective nature. This was the hunger for value.

The basic value, the lack of which was the most serious problem for the citizens of the Polish People's Republic, was truth. As the level of general education increased (which, incidentally, was one of the priority objectives of the new regime), the awareness of the fact that socialism (this was the name given to the communist system on the eastern side of the Iron Curtain), as practiced in the countries that were satellites of the USSR, was based on a monstrous, total lie became widespread. What struck hardest at the deepest human spiritual needs were not the small, everyday lies, which abounded in the propaganda omnipresent in the media, and which were effectively mocked by satirists, but the whole elaborately constructed system of alternative reality,[14] constantly sustained by the state ideological-propaganda apparatus, which monopolized the official media coverage.

The monopolization of public discourse by the party-state authorities amounted to depriving citizens not only of political but also of personal subjectivity. Official propaganda maintained that real power in the

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[13] See W. Skrzydło: "Z problematyki zmian w ustroju Polski Ludowej." In: *PRL czyli Polska w drugiej połowie XX wieku*. Eds. J. Gryz, E. Kirwiel, E. Maj, M. Wichmanowski. Lublin 2013, pp. 17—26.

[14] "In propaganda, totalitarianism generally uses not mere lies, but a whole system of its own language in which all the most important concepts of human speech have been thoroughly re-evaluated [...] because the totalitarian state is built on the assumption that human nature is not what it is, namely what it should be according to the theses of the doctrine." Z. Kubiak: *Nowy brewiarz Europejczyka*. Warszawa 2001, p. 23. This description is supplemented by Józef Tischner as follows: "The common reason is convinced that truth consists in the conformity of cognition with reality, [...] but in social life there are no fixed and unchangeable things. In a fluid so crises on various levels, is one family of nations based on a common Christian tradition. [...] European reality, that which does not yet exist, but is just becoming, has a greater 'force of existence' and is 'more real' than that which still subsists, but is already doomed to death. Hence the new proposition of political reason: the truth is that and only that which, taking into account historical development and progress, can produce the expected results. [...] What the [politician] says is more true than the truth of common reason entangled in 'metaphysical superstition'." J. Tischner: "Kłamstwo polityczne." In J. Tischner: *Polski młyn*. Kraków 1991, pp. 126—127.

socialist state was held by the "worker-peasant masses,"[15] and the institutional state apparatus is only a tool of this collective power. However, already in the very word "mass" was hidden the intention of depersonalization. In fact — as Zygmunt Kubiak had already pointed out in 1956 — the model of a system invoking the power of the people was a great political experiment, based on the fundamentally false idea of objectifying the human being. "The [communist] system is a gigantic attempt to build an artificial world, to replace natural laws with laws derived from intellectual construction. [This attempt] was born when intellectuals wanted to transform human nature, treating it merely as an object, an object of action, an object of experiment [and in this way] they wanted to make 'human material' happy."[16]

The false and anti-humanist face of the system began to come to light simultaneously (albeit for independent reasons) with the progressive pauperization of society. The hopes of an increasing part of the population then turned away from the increasingly discredited idea of a "developed socialist society" in two other directions; at first perceived as converging, but as they became more concrete, revealing the fundamental differences between them. The first trend is strongly inscribed in the centuries-old tradition of the Polish national community, expressed by the slogan *Polonia semper fidelis*, known to every Pole, which emphasizes the deep bond between Polishness and Christianity. Pope John Paul II referred to this bond in his address to the Poles on 19 May 2003, when he uttered the following words: "We cannot think of Poland without thinking of Europe. Nor can one think of Poland or Europe without thinking of Christianity. [...] Poland has always been an important part of Europe and today it cannot exclude itself from this community, which, although it is experiencing crises on various levels, is one family of nations based on a common Christian tradition. [...] Europe needs Poland. The Church in Europe needs the testimony of faith of the Poles. Poland needs Europe. From the Union of Lublin to the European Union! [...] This is the challenge that modern times pose to us and to all countries."[17] The second trend is based on a secularized vision of replacing the lame and inefficient Eastern European system with a formula that has worked well in Western culture. The turn of some elites in this direction is described by Richard

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[15] See J. Bralczyk: *O języku polskiej propagandy politycznej lat siedemdziesiątych*. Kraków 1988.

[16] Z. Kubiak: "Natura i obłęd." *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1 (1956), reprinted in Z. Kubiak: *Nowy brewiarz Europejczyka*, pp. 12—25.

[17] John Paul II: "Przemówienie Jana Pawła II do uczestników Narodowej Pielgrzymki do Rzymu (19 maja 2003 r.)." *Wrocławskie Wiadomości Kościelne* 56/2 (2003), pp. 135—136. https://dbc.wroc.pl/Content/74335/WWK_2003_2.pdf [accessed 10.02.2024].

Barbrook as follows: "having rejected the failed social experiment of the Soviet communists, sensible and wise people acceded eagerly to a new experiment: to American-style neoliberalism."[18]

The tension between the two projects of hope for a new systemic model and a new relationship with the surrounding world survived the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and carried over into the period of systemic transformation. The more real and closer in time the formal incorporation of the Polish state into the structure of the European Union became — which finally took place on 1 May 2004 — the more frequently the question arose in public discourse: what kind of Poland in what kind of Europe? It was no longer just about a new shape of the political system, but about broader and deeper issues: about a new social ethos in post-communist Poland[19] and, at the same time, to assess — from an ethical and axiological perspective — the spiritual condition of the Europe, the part of which Poland was to become, and indeed has become, an integral part, that is, the Europe of the first decades of the third millennium. In the committed and passionate discussions sweeping across the country, and especially in academic circles, two topics were raised in parallel. The first concerned what benefits — and, according to the more skeptical discussants, also what possible dangers — await Poland in the process of integration into Europe. The second focused on the question of what values Poland could bring to a united Europe. In the background of these discussions there was an important motif: whether Poland will manage to renew and defend its historical status as *antemurale christianitatis* in the new cultural and geopolitical conditions, and whether contemporary Europe will be interested in the testimony of faith and fidelity to Christian values brought by the new member of the community.

At a time when the discussion took its liveliest turn, the side in favor of a Europe of values was able to invoke an undisputedly strong argument: it is Poland that is this "far country"[20] from which John Paul II came to the See of Rome — the Pope at the turn of the millennium, who

[18] R. Barbrook: "Przedmowa do wydania polskiego, Londyn 12.06.2009." In: R. Barbrook: *Przyszłości wyobrażone. Od myślącej maszyny do globalnej wioski* [*Imaginary Futures. From Thinking Machines to the Global Village*]. Trans. J. Dzierzgowski. Warszawa 2009, p. 12.

[19] The public discussion about the new shape of ethos was already initiated by Józef Tischner in the 1980s with the article entitled "Myślenie o ethosie społecznym." In: J. Tischner: *Myślenie według wartości*. Kraków 1982, pp. 453—465.

[20] The first words that Karol Wojtyła uttered from the balcony above the main entrance to St Peter's Basilica, known as the box of blessings, after the official announcement of his appointment as Pope, were: "Io sono venuto da un paese lontano" (I have come from a distant country).

breathed new life into the dusty and anachronistic Catholic structures and environments of the whole world, including — last but not least — the Old Continent. What Karol Wojtyła succeeded in doing could be confirmed and strengthened by millions of his compatriots, restored after decades to the status of fully-fledged citizens of Europe and with the same right to vote as others — such was the thinking behind, among other things, the hope for the creative and constructive participation of Poles in building the kind of Europe described by "their" Pope in the apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*.

In the period immediately preceding the enlargement of the EU to include the new member states, Polish society was clearly polarized but not divisive. Throughout the entire post-war period in Poland there was fierce rivalry between the two worldview camps — Catholic and secular. As a result of the post-1945 geopolitical situation, those with a left-wing orientation were mostly (though not 100%) concentrated around political parties, which took power in the state and monopolized the apparatus of violence and the mass media. Adherents of the Catholic worldview, on the other hand, found their place in the Church, which had strong structures and high social authority in Poland. The position of the Church was so strong that even the communist authorities, who officially proclaimed a program of atheization of society and removal of religion from public life, did not dare to launch an open fight against the Church, limiting themselves to individual actions and carefully planned persecutions aimed at selected targets.[21] Moreover, as the course was softened and terror was gradually abandoned, a climate began to take shape that was conducive to the search for common ground for Marxist-Catholic dialogue. Józef Tischner's book The Polish Shape of Dialogue, published in 1981 by the émigré publishing house Editions du Dialogue, is an insightful study of the evolution in mutual relations between Christian circles and supporters of the socialist system. The book begins with the following words: "For more than thirty-five years now, a unique encounter has been taking place in our country between Christianity, Marxist socialism and the world built by this socialism — an encounter between two opposing concepts of making man happy. [...] The meeting is of universal interest. Christianity and socialism today focus the hopes of millions for the betterment of man's lot on earth. [...] The historical conditions in Poland have so arranged themselves that the two ideas must live together and together determine the history of the nation."[22]

[21] See *Stosunki państwo—Kościół w Polsce 1944—2010. Studia i materiały* [State—Church Relations in Poland 1944—2010: Studies and Materials]. Ed. R. Łatka. Kraków 2013.

[22] J. Tischner: *Polski kształt dialogu*. Paris 1981, p. 9.

Despite numerous tensions and understandable distrust, attempts at dialogue and mutual understanding continued even after the period described by Tischner. A particularly surprising and elsewhere unprecedented dimension was assumed by this movement during the martial law declared by the state authorities on 13 December 1981. The unintentional result of this last, desperate and ultimately unsuccessful attempt by the ruling party to salvage its hegemony was a mass turning of society away from the authorities and a search for a space enabling the realization of the desire for freedom in the face of the mass repression facing society. Such a space of freedom became the sphere belonging to the Church. Most of the initiatives independent of the authorities, encompassing cultural and intellectual life in the broadest sense of the term, took refuge under the wings of the Church, whose lay and clerical representatives took up this challenge with courage and commitment, consciously reckoning with the risk of repression from militarized state structures. The result was not only a tactical, but also a partly ethical rapprochement between the Catholic community, which showed exceptional openness and hospitality in this difficult time, and representatives of non-Catholic worldviews, including non-believers and adherents of left-wing values.[23]

This is the historical background to the situation that took place immediately before Poland's accession to the EU. On this background, there was a radical confrontation between two hopes, each of which was built on a considered set of arguments. In the briefest terms, these arguments can be divided into three main areas: historical, epistemological and ethical. Here is a recapitulation of them.

Those who hope for the success of the new evangelization of the European continent and wish to take part in this process themselves invoke the following rationales:

Historical. Europe has been and remains Christian for more than a dozen centuries. As Andrzej Muszala writes, Europe was co-formed by "the model of the Church that had taken shape since the Edict of Milan in 313, when Christianity emerged from the catacombs and over time became the official, privileged religion. Over the next dozen centuries, *civitas christiana* was built — a society in which God's law was the guiding principle. [...] Christianity also shaped our country, where this model of the Church is still, and to a large extent, in operation."[24]

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[23] A personal account of this rapprochement process was provided by, among others, the left-wing anti-communist activist Adam Michnik in his book: A. Michnik. *Kościół, lewica, dialog*. Warszawa 1998.

[24] A. Muszala: "Czy chrześcijaństwo ma jeszcze jakąś przyszłość?" *Więź* 3 (2022), https://wiez.pl/2022/03/09/czy-chrzescijanstwo-ma-jeszcze-jakas-przyszlosc/ [accessed

Epistemological. The Church is the depositary and indefatigable proclaimer of the most important truths for every human being about the creation of the world, revelation, resurrection and redemption. These are universal truths, they apply to all people throughout the world, and they constitute the good news that carries the power of liberation from sin, points out the right way of life and allows for the healing of interpersonal relationships,

Ethical. The Church's teaching contains the most profound and universal moral indications by which all people should be guided in their lives in order to be able to count on the grace of salvation in the future and, in the present, to create a harmonious community of people living in peace, loving and respecting one another, capable of forgiveness and mercy. The spread of evangelical morality is the only way to recognize and consolidate the principles by which Europe can become an international community of free and happy people.

Representatives of the second type of hope, focused on the need to respect democratic freedoms and pluralism of worldviews, counter the above arguments with the following:

Historical. The principles of democracy in European civilization predated Christianity, as far back as the Greek *poleis*. And when Christianity was introduced, it took place in a world arranged on principles very distant from democracy. For centuries, the historical systems of the European states, with the approval of the Church, were a hotbed of oppression, injustice and harm. Moreover, the Church has not only failed to prevent wars and conflicts, but has itself actively organized, supported and participated in countless armed campaigns bringing death and destruction.

Epistemological. The idea of absolute truth was finally discredited in the tragic times of fanaticism and totalitarianism. Today, a man who claims to have possessed the truth and to have the right to oblige others to respect it absolutely arouses fear, distrust and aversion because of the still vivid memory of the times of terror exercised in the name of the "only right truth." Modern man feels safer in such a social system, which does not require anyone to respect a top-down imposed canon of true beliefs, but leaves freedom of choice of worldview principles within the limits set by the overriding principle of the common good of citizens.

Ethical. Political domination by adherents of one worldview, for example Christianity, threatens with discrimination and undermines the basic principles of democracy. A mature democracy is formal rather than substantive, that is, it seeks to regulate the rules of coexistence through

10.02.2024]. Cf. D. Alonso: *¿Qué es la Universitas Christiana?*, http://historiapolticaysocial.blogspot.com/2011/10/que-es-la-universitas-christiana.html [accessed 10.02.2024].

legal and political mechanisms without interfering with the freedom of conscience and opinions of citizens.

During the European conference on the topic: "Die Zukunft Europas und das Problem mit den Werten" (Europe's Future and the Problem with Values), one of the contributing speakers was Joanna Byrska. In her speech entitled "Freedom of values versus arbitrariness of values — an unavoidable conflict?" she drew attention to the potential conflict between democracy as a social value and other values. Starting from Hans Kelsen's definition, according to which democracy "is a formal structure, a set of rules and principles of conduct that guarantees to every individual entitled a series of rights and privileges,"[25] concluded that "a democratic order is not necessarily a kind of ethocracy, that is, a socio-political order that would seek to realize the chosen values considered good by the majority or the authority endorsed by that majority."[26] Thus, just as the term "socialist democracy," commonly used in communist propaganda, was considered contradictory in political science discourse, so it would be pointless to opt for "Christian democracy" understood and practiced as an attempt to combine democratic principles with the dictates of values. Janusz Majcherek takes an analogous view, according to whom "the non-democratic aspiration to establish an ethical state means the thwarting or destruction of democracy."[27] Referring additionally to the views of Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde and Hermann Heller, the author notes that "in the literature on the subject, one can come across voices arguing that democracy is an axiologically neutral order, since it does not realize specific values and the content present in the socio-political sphere of a democratic state depends on the worldview and the aspirations and life goals of the citizens."[28]

Is it really possible to defend such a thesis? It seems obvious that a state — democratic or otherwise — that is not based on the foundation of any system of values will have no authority or basis for creating a collective identity for its citizens. The quoted author goes on to note that "inherent in the essence of democracy [...] is a set of specific values, tacitly assumed, whose presence is responsible for spreading a positive valorization of democracy as a system of government and as an order of life in society,"[29] which set can be described as the axiological

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[25] J. Byrska: "Wolność wartości versus samowola wartości — nieunikniony konflikt?" In: *Die Zukunft Europas und das Problem mit den Werten*. Ed. H. Badura. Wien 2011, p. 129.

[26] Ibidem, p. 130.

[27] J. Majcherek: *Demokracja, przygodność, relatywizm*. Warszawa 2007, p. 166.

[28] J. Byrska: "Wolność wartości…," p. 130.

[29] Ibidem, p. 131.

minimum of democracy. The question remains as to which specific values are included in this set and whether it really has to be the case that they are worldview-neutral.

One speaker on this issue is Anna Drabarek, who, in her text "Values in European democracy," lists just four axiological foundations that constitute the tradition of European democracy. These are: "justice, order, progress, diligence."[30] She then goes on to conclude her speech by adding "then society can organize and integrate itself both through the operation of the free market and through the civic activity for the benefit of the community that is characteristic of democratic structures."[31]

Further pieces of the puzzle can be found in Zygmunt Bauman's book *Europe. An unfinished adventure*. In his search for the key to understanding a European identity that escapes all discourses, the author concludes that "in the case of Europe, always struggling to come nearer to a state it believed to be good and desirable, rather than settling for the state it was in […] the link between values and identity is arguably still more intimate than in other cases: identity is more fully defined by the values Europeans cherish than by any other of their characteristics."[32]

Apparently, Bauman sees no contradiction between the fact that contemporary Europe is a conglomerate of democratic states, of which as many as 27 form an overarching structure based on democratic governance, and the fact of a shared commitment to a particular set of values. We are left to ask, what are these "distinctly European" values? Bauman answers: "These values are 'distinctly European' because they were thought out, articulated and refined in the part of the planet that tends to be described as 'Europe proper,' and their articulation and refinement cannot be separated from the course of Europe's history."[33] This is a general characterization; for topographical details of the axiological map of Europe, Bauman refers to Tzvetan Todorov's work *Le nouveau désordre mondial*[34] from which he takes out the following thoughts: "Rationality comes first on Todorov's list. […] the belief that all habits and their breaches need to justify themselves in the court of reason was and remains one habit that Europe has hardly ever broken. […] 'Really existing Europe' being always some way behind the Europe that Europe craved to be, that belief made Europeans inherently critical and self-critical. […] Justice is listed second on Todorov's list. […] It is a value that underlies all solidarity and thereby

[30] A. Drabarek: "Wartości w demokracji europejskiej." In: *Die Zukunft Europas und das Problem mit den Werten*. Ed. H. Badura. Wien 2011, p. 77.

[31] Ibidem, p. 84.

[32] Z. Bauman: *Europe. An unfinished adventure*…, p. 125.

[33] Ibidem, p. 125.

[34] T. Todorov: *Le nouveau désordre mondial*. Paris 2003.

makes society possible. Justice primes the human habitat for peaceful and friendly togetherness. […] Next on the list of Europe's foremost, indeed defining values is democracy […] The essence of an autonomos society […] has been embodied in the [Athenians] preamble 'edoxe te boule kai to demo'. […] [The] liberty is another value — though unthinkable in separation from the value of democracy. […] I suggest that it was the combination of all the named values that set Europe on its continuous, unfinished and hopefully unfinishable adventure."[35]

In the above enumeration, we are struck by a characteristic feature: if we were to apply to the listed values a measure taken from Max Scheler, they would all turn out to be formal values, while missing here are those that Scheler called material ones.[36] This means that in a society belonging to a democratic Europe, basically any values can appear as ethical regulations of the practical behavior of citizens, as long as they can be inscribed into the abstract forms reconstructed on the basis of Todorov's considerations by Zygmunt Bauman. In particular, this means that Europe as an axiological project is pluralistic in nature, open to many different value systems. Among them, there is also — equal to many others — a place for Christian values. It follows only that Catholics and other Christian communities acquire the formal status of one of many social groups, constituting a numerical minority or majority depending on the denominational structure of a given society, and endowed with relative autonomy within a democratic and pluralistic society based on the principle of freedom of thought, expression and religious belief. The constitutional principles grant them the right to freely practice their religion and profess and proclaim beliefs consistent with their faith, and exactly the same rights apply to atheists and all other non-Christians. Consequently, all political decisions, including those that concern the most important rules governing the life of people within the community (including — legal norms), should be made regardless of religious beliefs and worldviews, so that they are acceptable to everyone — believers, doubters and non-believers.

In practice, however, the question arises as to how many norms and principles there are whose content and ethical consequences can be detached from the metaphysical foundation from which they could derive their legitimacy. And even if such are found, in what to anchor their legitimacy? On what basis would the state insist on their observance, beyond purely administrative-legal means? If the only basis for the social acceptance of the state system were to be the social contract, modeled

[35] Z. Bauman: *Europe. An unfinished adventure…*, pp. 188—194.

[36] M. Scheler: *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik*. Halle a. d. S. 1921.

on the Greek maxim ἔδοξε τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ ('what the council and the people deemed good'), such a state would be constantly exposed to the fluctuations and disorders associated with the vacillation and volatility of citizens' beliefs, with the result that democracy could easily fall prey to populism, which sometimes takes authoritarian forms.[37] This is because the formal idea of democracy itself does not refer to any established and unrelatable values. Such a weakening of the foundations of democratic statehood would be irrational — contrary to the principle that Bauman proclaimed the first of the overriding values of the European way of being human.

However, in the history of European political thought, other patterns of links between politics and morality can be found. One thinker whose project of thinking about ethical duty in political life is still relevant is Immanuel Kant. Karol Wojtyła's disciple, Jerzy Gałkowski, argues that according to Kant "there is a real and strong connection between morality and politics"[38] with the understanding of morality as an objectified practice, determined by unconditionally binding laws.[39] Consequently, "Kant does not accept the possibility of excluding politics from the bracket of morality or adopting different principles for these domains."[40] What is the source of moral obligation, obliging also those in political power? It cannot be nature or human nature, since they are "subject to the laws of necessity, determinism,"[41] while the sense of duty is an appeal to freedom. Kant, in Gałkowski's interpretation, "not only shows freedom as a property of man necessarily connected with duty, but the cognition of this obligated freedom is for man both an experience and an imposition of duty."[42] Duty does not refer to historically variable convention, it is not a duty to someone - such as a ruler, or to a human-established instance, but "demands reaching to the very foundations of being."[43] In the search for these foundations, "Kant proposes [...] not to predetermine the goal, but to determine by reason capturing a priori laws, the necessary laws of our action. [...] These laws are simply moral principles, and thus determine

[37] See *Autorytarny populizm w XXI wieku. Krytyczna rekonstrukcja*. Ed. F. Pierzchalski, B. Rydliński. Warszawa 2017, https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/warschau/13931.pdf [accessed 14.02.2024].

[38] J. Gałkowski: "Kant o związku moralności z polityką." In: *Kant wobec problemów współczesnego świata* [Kant and the Problems of the Contemporary World]. Eds. J. Miklaszewska, P. Spryszak. Kraków 2006, p. 168.

[39] Ibidem.

[40] Ibidem, p. 169.

[41] Ibidem.

[42] Ibidem, p. 168.

[43] Ibidem, p. 170.

the moral value of every action, including political ones."[44] And since, as has been shown, the deepest basis of morality cannot be a naturalistically and therefore deterministically understood order of being, because this would contradict the principle of freedom of the will, then, Gałkowski concludes, "Kant's claims are inspired by a religious view."[45]

Indeed, what could be more natural for a "distinctly European"[46] way of thinking and valuing, than to base reflection on the foundation of axiology derived from the religious tradition of Christianity? It is worth taking another look at Zygmunt Bauman's arguments at this point of consideration. He writes that: "identity is more fully defined by the values Europeans cherish than by any other of their characteristics"[47]; further that "the distinctive feature of European values is to believe that values 'make sense' only if seen as all-inclusive, and are indefensible unless applied to all humanity"[48]; and finally that "[t]hese values are 'distinctly European' because they were thought out, articulated and refined in the part of the planet that tends to be described as 'Europe proper', and their articulation and refinement cannot be separated from the course of Europe's history."[49]

But if this is the case, why does the author of such an ambitious attempt to define European identity not once mention in his book the deep bond between European culture and the history of faith and the Church?

Bauman's stance seems to blatantly contradict the call of the Final Declaration of the First Synod of Bishops on Europe: "Europe today must not simply appeal to its former Christian heritage: it needs to be able to decide about its future in conformity with the person and message of Jesus Christ."[50] Perhaps this is the result and also a testimony of "the loss of Europe's Christian memory and heritage, accompanied by a kind of practical agnosticism and religious indifference whereby many Europeans give the impression of living without spiritual roots and somewhat like heirs who have squandered a patrimony entrusted to them by history."[51]

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[44] Ibidem, p. 172.

[45] Ibidem, p. 169.

[46] Bauman: *Europe. An unfinished adventure…*, p. 125.

[47] Ibidem.

[48] Ibidem.

[49] Ibidem.

[50] First Special Assembly for Europe of the Synod of Bishops: *Final Declaration*, no. 2 (13.12.1991), http://secretariat.synod.va/content/synod/en/synodal_assemblies/1991---special-assembly-for-europe--so-that-we-might-be-witnesse.html [accessed 10.02.2024].

[51] John Paul II: *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation "Ecclesia in Europa"* (28.06.2023), no. 7, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_20030628_ecclesia-in-europa.html [accessed 10.02.2024].

This kind of historical amnesia leads to ignoring the extremely important circumstance that "the Church has to offer Europe the most precious of all gifts, a gift which no one else can give: faith in Jesus Christ, the source of the hope that does not disappoint; (30) a gift which is at the origin of the spiritual and cultural unity of the European peoples and which both today and tomorrow can make an essential contribution to their development and integration."[52]

Juxtaposed with scarcity of the axiological offer brought by the formal version of democracy discussed earlier, the spiritual and intellectual openness to the Christian tradition makes it possible to fill this axiological void, disturbingly close to moral nihilism. In paragraph 19 of his apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, Pope John Paul II lists the most important values of which the Church is the source and advocate: "Many are the spiritual roots underlying the recognition of the value of the human person and his inalienable dignity, the sacredness of human life and the centrality of the family, the importance of education and freedom of thought, speech and religion, the legal protection of individuals and groups, the promotion of solidarity and the common good, and the recognition of the dignity of labour. These roots have helped lead to the submission of political power to the rule of law and to respect for the rights of individuals and peoples […] these inspiring principles have historically found in the Judeo-Christian tradition a force capable of harmonizing, consolidating and promoting them. This is a fact which cannot be ignored; on the contrary, in the process of building a united Europe there is a need to acknowledge that this edifice must also be founded on values that are most fully manifested in the Christian tradition. Such an acknowledgment is to everyone's advantage."[53]

Rejecting or ignoring all this richness, coupled with an attempt to identify European identity solely with the tradition of secular rationalism and its associated principles of justice, solidarity, freedom and democracy, seen as embedded solely in a voluntary social contract, becomes a cause of confusion and disillusionment more than a source of hope. In *Instrumentum laboris*, a document summarizing the Synod of Bishops it was noted: "There are many troubling signs which at the beginning of the third millennium are clouding the horizon of the European continent, which despite great signs of faith and witness and an atmosphere undoubtedly more free and unified, feels all the weariness which historical events — recent and past — have brought about deep within the hearts of

[52] *Ecclesia in Europa*, no. 18.

[53] Ibidem, no. 19.

its peoples, often causing disappointment."[54] In reference to these words, John Paul II noted with concern: "This is the context for those attempts, including the most recent ones, to present European culture with no reference to the contribution of the Christian religion which marked its historical development and its universal diffusion."[55]

The result of such actions is certainly not strengthening of hope, but rather deepening of uncertainty and loss of clear criteria for judging people's behavior. This situation places a particularly heavy responsibility on people who know what they believe in and have clear criteria for right and wrong. It is they, not the proponents of a morally indifferent balance between conflicting worldviews, who should become the conscience of the nation. This was noted more than half a century ago by Gilbert K. Chesterton. In his book *A Miscellany of Man*, he wrote, among other things: "A fixed creed is absolutely indispensable to freedom. For while men are and should be various, there must be some communication between them if they are to get any pleasure out of their variety. […] If we all start with the agreement that the sun and moon exist, we can talk about our different visions of them. […] But if once it be held that there is nothing but a silver blur in one man's eye or a bright circle (like a monocle) in the other man's, then neither is free, for each is shut up in the cell of a separate universe. But, indeed, an even worse fate, practically considered, follows from the denim of the original intellectual formula. Not only does the individual become narrow, but he spreads narrowness across the world like a cloud; he causes narrowness to increase and multiply like a weed. […] Instead of the liberty of dogma, you have the tyranny of taste."[56]

Elsewhere, Chesterton argues unequivocally in favor of clear and precise thinking, one form of which is dogma, and at the same time against vague and ambiguous thinking, vacillating between extremes and most willingly giving heed to the most varied superstitions. In an argument vividly reminiscent of Plato's distinction between ἐπιστήμῃ (episteme) and Δόξα (doxa), the author writes: "Some people do not like the word 'dogma.' Fortunately, they are free, and there is an alternative for them. [But] there are two things, and two things only, for the human mind, a dogma and a prejudice. […] Our age is, at its best, [...] an age of prejudice. A doctrine is a definite point; a prejudice is a direction. […] Now a direction [of thought] is always far more fantastic than a plan. […]

[54] Ibidem, no. 7.

[55] Ibidem, no. 9.

[56] G. K. Chesterton: "The Sectarian of Society." In: G. K. Chesterton: *A Miscellany of Man* (1912), https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/2015/pg2015-images.html#link2H_4_0017 [accessed 13.02.2024].

And this is a [truth] about the effect of our modern vagueness in losing and separating men as in a mist. It is not merely true that a creed unites men. Nay, a difference of creed unites men—so long as it is a clear difference. A boundary unites. […] But our age would turn these creeds into tendencies. [That is why people are] far more unfit to understand each other than before."[57]

Europe of values — as an object of hope for all those who are uncomfortable with a project built on an axiologically unfilled framework of formal democratic principles — is a cultural environment similar to the one imagined by Chesterton: Europe united by difference of faith, in other words — an ecumenical Europe in the broadest possible sense. The source of this kind of hope is the effort to promote and spread such attitudes that take the attitude of faith seriously, not to say fundamentally. This is by no means fundamentalism in the sense of meaning the intolerant absolutization of an arbitrarily chosen hierarchy of values, but rather an existential maturity consisting in the conscious and deliberate choice of such values that have a foothold in a reality that is more durable and solid than the rules of the social contract, which depend on historically changing circumstances. Such a foothold can only be found in transcendence. Choosing this hope means siding with the Europe of the future, which will be Europe of mature people, strong in faith, open to the voice and needs of those who believe differently, sincerely concerned with the fate of those who have lost their faith and are stuck in the superstitions mass-produced by the modern culture.

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[57] G. K. CHESTERTON: *What's Wrong with the World*, chap. III, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1717/1717-h/1717-h.htm#link2H_4_0004 [accessed 13.02.2024].

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Krzysztof Tomasz Wieczorek

Le drame de deux espérances : le projet séculier contre le projet chrétien pour l'Europe

Résumé

L'Europe est une communauté de peuples et de nations dont l'identité reste encore en grande partie indéfinie. Le projet d'unité européenne est en cours, et sous l'influence des circonstances historiques, il subit des changements successifs et de nouvelles inspirations. L'un des moments clés de l'histoire européenne au troisième millénaire a été l'élargissement de l'UE en 2004 avec l'adhésion de dix nouveaux pays, dont la République de Pologne. Chacun des nouveaux pays est entré dans la communauté avec ses propres espoirs et attentes. En Pologne, peu avant l'adhésion, une question fondamentale se posait : quelle Pologne dans quelle Europe ? Les réponses à cette question se sont formées sous l'influence de deux types d'inspirations : la première reposait sur la vision d'une nouvelle évangélisation du continent, dans laquelle la Pologne pourrait participer grâce à sa fidélité chrétienne séculaire (*Polonia semper fidelis*) ; la seconde faisait référence aux traditions séculières et idéaux d'une Europe rationnelle, juste, libre et démocratique, tout en maintenant une neutralité axiologique. Ce texte présente, du point de vue polonais, le déchirement dramatique entre ces deux projets pour l'Europe de demain.

Mots-clés : Europe, Pologne, espoir, christianisme, valeurs

Krzysztof Tomasz Wieczorek

Il dramma di due speranze: il progetto secolare contro il progetto cristiano per l'Europa

Riassunto

L'Europa è una comunità di popoli e di nazioni con un'identità ancora non pienamente definita. Il progetto di unità europea è in corso, e sotto l'influenza delle circostanze storiche, subisce cambiamenti continui e nuove ispirazioni. Uno dei momenti chiave della storia europea nel terzo millennio è stato l'allargamento dell'UE nel 2004 con l'adesione di dieci nuovi paesi, tra cui la Repubblica di Polonia. Ciascuno dei nuovi paesi è entrato a far parte della comunità con il proprio pacchetto di speranze e aspettative. In Polonia, poco prima dell'adesione, si poneva una domanda fondamentale: quale Polonia in quale Europa? Le risposte a questa domanda sono state plasmate da due tipi di ispirazioni: la prima si basava sulla visione di una nuova evangelizzazione del continente, in cui la Polonia avrebbe potuto partecipare grazie alla sua fedeltà secolare al cristianesimo (*Polonia semper fidelis*); la seconda faceva riferimento alle tradizioni secolari e agli ideali di un'Europa razionale, giusta, libera e democratica, che mantenga la neutralità assiologica. Il testo presenta, dalla prospettiva polacca, il drammatico contrasto tra questi due progetti per l'Europa del futuro.

Parole chiave: Europa, Polonia, speranza, cristianesimo, valori

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What Apologia of Christianity Does Contemporary Europe Need?

Abstract: The purpose of this article is to answer the question: What kind of apologia of Christianity does modern Europe need? In the first part, the author, using the analytical method, refers to the works of three apologists (A. E. McGrath, G. Koukl, O. Guinnesse) and shows by their example how to practice apologia in the modern European context. The second, synthetic part is a presentation of the key features of apologia that should characterize the current defense of Christianity. The analyses carried out allow us to draw the following conclusions: first, modern apologists in their works show the topicality of apologetics, their analyses are primarily concerned with methodological issues. They pay attention not so much to the content that apologetic justification should contain, but are concerned with the form that modern apologetics should take; secondly, the apologists in question evidently link the issue of defending Christianity with evangelization. This is because they believe that apologetics plays an essential role during the preaching of the kerygma. The proclamation of the Gospel, its presentation, in order to be effective, must be combined with apologetics; finally, the most essential features of the modern defense, which remain necessary in the contemporary European context, are contextuality, supra-confessionalism, dialogicality, rationality, and cultural orientation.

Keywords: apologia, apologetics, Christianity, Europe, context, rationality, culture, trans-confessionalism, dialogicality, A. E. McGrath, G. Koukl, O. Guinnesse, T. Halik, Ch. Delsol, T. P. Terlikowski, Pope Francis

Introduction

The context in which Christianity finds itself today, including in Europe, does not seem to inspire optimism. Tomáš Halík, a Czech theologian and insightful researcher of ecclesiastical reality, notes that "the situation of the Catholic Church today in many respects resembles the time before the Reformation."[1] Therefore, any reform, in his opinion, "cannot remain at the level of changes in institutional structures and a few paragraphs in the catechism, code of canon law or moral textbooks. The effectiveness of the reform and the vitality of the Church depend on reaching once again the spiritual depth and existential dimension of faith."[2]

French philosopher Chantal Delsol, in her famous lecture "The End of the Christian World," rallies that the twilight of a civilization that is sixteen centuries old is looming. "I believe," she states, "that we should understand the moment we are living in as a revolution in the strict sense, that is, as a turning of the wheel, both in the area of morality and ontology. Since the second half of the 20th century, and especially since the 1960s, our moral hierarchies have literally reversed. Within a few years, with regard to the behavior of individuals and social acts, evil not infrequently became good, and vice versa, once-rejected patterns are now praised, while former ideals are questioned."[3]

Tomasz P. Terlikowski, in turn, notes that very difficult times have come for the Church. "A thoroughly secularized society does not even want to hear about God, although there are still communities and individuals who want to preach Him."[4] According to the Polish columnist, the changes are not only due to ineffective preaching of the Gospel, hypocrisy of Christians or sex scandals. Rather, it is about something far deeper. Terlikowski suggests a revision of thinking and feeling, a philosophical and ideological revolution taking place in the modern world. Here the commentator invokes the term of Marcin Kędzierski, who calls the whole phenomenon "the disintegration of the Catholic *imaginarium*."[5]

Recognizing the contemporary context in which Christians come to live and act, according to Pope Francis, must be a special kind of discernment. "Today [stresses the Bishop of Rome in the Apostolic Exhortation

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[1] T. Halík: *Popołudnie chrześcijaństwa. Odwaga do zmiany.* Trans. T. Maćkowiak. Kraków 2022, p. 10.

[2] Ibidem, pp. 10—11.

[3] Ch. Delson: "Koniec chrześcijańskiego świata." Trans. M. Szczurowski. In: *Myśląc z Janem Pawłem II.* Ed. D. Karłowicz. Rzym—Warszawa 2021, pp. 178—179.

[4] T. P. Terlikowski: *Koniec Kościoła, jaki znacie*. Warszawa 2022, p. 11.

[5] Quoted in ibidem.

Evangelii gaudium], it is customary to speak of 'diagnostic exaggeration', which is not always accompanied by conclusive decisions that can be applied."[6] Therefore, it would be appropriate to walk "rather on the line of evangelical discernment. It is the outlook of a missionary disciple, 'animated by the light and power of the Holy Spirit'."[7] In studying the signs of the times, one must be particularly sensitive. "It is a matter of grave responsibility, as if some aspects of the present reality do not find the right solutions, they may give rise to processes of dehumanization from which it will not be easy to withdraw later. It is appropriate to clarify what can be the fruit of the Kingdom, as well as what opposes God's intentions. This presupposes not only recognizing and interpreting the stirrings of the good spirit and the evil spirit, but — and this is decisive — choosing the stirrings of the good spirit and rejecting those from the evil spirit."[8]

How to practice apologia in such a context, and what kind of apologia of Christianity does contemporary Europe need?[9] The search for answers to both questions will constitute the content of the article. In the first part, using the analytical method, I will refer to the works of three apologists (A. E. McGrath, G. Koukl, O. Guinnesse) and show on their example how to practice apologia in the modern European context. The second, synthetic part will be a presentation of the key features of apologia that should characterize the current defense of Christianity.

By apologia we will mean an intellectual and practical defense of Euro-Atlantic civilization, carried out in the current context of the time, founded on "the Christian concept of the human person, respect for human rights, recognition of the natural difference between the sexes, the unquestionability of marriage between a man and a woman and the family they created, and respect for the supreme value of human life from conception to natural death."[10] Modern apologia, called the new apologia,

[6] Francis: *Apostolic Exhortation "Evangelii gaudium"* (24.11.2013), no. 50.

[7] Ibidem.

[8] Ibidem, no. 51.

[9] On the contemporary defense of Christianity, see *Bronić czy dialogować? O pewnym dylemacie chrześcijaństwa dzisiaj*. Eds. H. Seweryniak, P. Artemiuk. Płock 2016; P. Artemiuk: *Renesans apologii*. Płock 2016; P. Artemiuk: *W obronie sprawy najważniejszych. Szkice o apologii*. Poznań 2019; P. Artemiuk: "Nurty współczesnej apologii." *Studia Theologica Varsaviensia* 1 (2020), pp. 10—45; P. Artemiuk: "Obrona chrześcijaństwa dzisiaj: kierunki i metody współczesnej apologetyki." *Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne* 34/2 (2021), pp. 7—24; *Nowa apologia. Co, wobec kogo i jak bronimy?* Ed. P. Artemiuk. Płock 2020; H. Seweryniak: "Apologia wiary i nowa ewangelizacja." *Communio* 185 (2014), pp. 5—20; H. Seweryniak: *Apologia i dziennikarstwo*. Warszawa 2018; H. Seweryniak: "Teologia fundamentalna i renesans apologii." In: *Nowa apologia. Co, wobec kogo i jak bronimy?* Ed. P. Artemiuk. Płock 2020, pp. 9—26.

[10] H. Seweryniak: *Apologia i dziennikarstwo*..., p. 16.

wants to save man by defending his identity, argues for the meaning of Christianity's presence in the world and, while grappling with the charges against Christ's faith, provides the rationale for it. In carrying out its own mission, it goes decisively beyond the typically religious space and moves perfectly also in "secular" reality. In this way, it becomes a broader current, trans-confessional or non-denominational, but it always treats Catholicism as its source, its life-giving ground, appearing in the horizon of justification. The main task of the new apologia invariably remains the defense of the supernatural character of Christian revelation in the current context, but also the clear discernment of this context. In carrying out its own mission, it formulates rationales in the face of accusations coming from outside (apologia *ad extra*) and seeks the necessary arguments so that its own certainty of faith can be built up (apologia *ad intra*).

Apologetics, on the other hand, takes the form of deepening and systematizing reflection on apologias. In the course of the procedures, it wants to organize the apologetic argumentation born in haste, subjecting it to analysis in order to develop a methodical interpretation. This is also how Władysław Hładowski defined the difference between apologia and apologetics. In Christian literature, he argued, "the term apologia usually meant a defense of a particular truth or person, or a defense of religion from a particular angle of view, in the face of accusations. Apologetics, on the other hand, was always understood as a systematized defense of the Christian religion or a theory of defense giving its principles."[11]

Apologia and apologetics, having different shades of meaning, differ, but there is also transitivity between them. For it is impossible to do apologetics without apologia, for where to take the content of the rationale and subject it to systematization? It is also impossible to create apologia without being aware of the strength of arguments and their systematization. The transition from apologia to apologetics seems to be natural.

What apologia?

How to practice apologia in the contemporary European context? Let us refer to the intuitions of the most important contemporary apologists.[12]

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[11] W. Hładowski: *Zarys apologetyki. Analiza chrześcijańskiej refleksji nad wiarogodnością objawienia*. Warszawa 1980, p. 11.

[12] In this section of the article I refer to my text "Odcienie współczesnej apologetyki." *Studia Elbląskie* 23 (2022), pp. 299—318.

According to Alister E. McGrath,[13] apologetics is that branch of Christian thought "which focuses on justifying the basic issues of the Christian faith and communicating them effectively to the non-Christian world."[14] Its goal is "to transform believers into thinkers, and thinkers into believers. It engages our reason, our imagination and our deepest longings. It opens hearts, eyes and minds."[15] Moreover, it "glorifies and proclaims the intellectual validity, imaginative richness and spiritual depth of the Gospel in ways that can reach our culture."[16] According to McGrath, "Apologetics should be seen not as a defensive and hostile reaction against the world, but as a welcomed opportunity to show, praise and present the treasury of the Christian faith. It encourages the faithful to realize their faith, as well as to explain and praise it to people outside the Church. It aims to present the intellectual, moral, imaginative and relational riches of the Christian faith — in part to encourage the faithful and help them develop their faith, but above all to enable those outside the faith community to see the thrilling perspective that occupies the center of the Christian Gospel."[17]

While defining the modern form of defense of Christianity, McGrath notes that apologetics "is about defending the truth with gentleness and respect. The purpose of apologetics is not to alienate or demean people outside the Church, but to help them open their eyes to the reality, credibility and adequacy of the Christian faith."[18] McGrath also points to three tasks facing apologists today. These are defense, praise and translation. In the case of defense, apologetics detects obstacles to the faith and provides answers to overcome them. First, however, answers must be found concerning faith for its own sake. "Apologetics is to enter further and deeper into the Christian faith, discovering its riches."[19] In this task facing apologists, it is important "that Christians show that they understand these concerns, and do not regard them merely as arguments to be easily and simply dismissed."[20] According to McGrath, personal attitude and character are as important in apologetics as argu-

[13] Alister E. McGrath (b. 1953) — theologian and Christian apologist, professor at Oxford University and King's College in London, author of numerous works on theology and apologetics, who has been debating with representatives of the new atheism for years, for more information visit http://alistermcgrath.weebly.com/.

[14] A. E. McGrath: *Apologetyka po prostu. Jak pomóc poszukującym i sceptykom w odnalezieniu wiary*. Trans. D. Krupińska. Poznań 2020, p. 11.

[15] Ibidem.

[16] Ibidem.

[17] Ibidem.

[18] Ibidem, p. 15.

[19] Ibidem, pp. 17—18.

[20] Ibidem, p. 18.

ments and analysis. After all, one can "defend the Gospel without taking a defensive stance."[21]

The second task is to praise. In carrying it out, the audience is to realize "the truthfulness and meaningfulness of the Gospel."[22] Apologetics should bring out its strongly positive dimension. It involves "presenting the whole attractiveness of Jesus Christ, so that those outside the faith can begin to grasp why He deserves such special attention."[23]

The third task is translation. It stems from the observation that "many of the core ideas and issues of the Christian faith are probably unknown to a sizable audience."[24]

According to McGrath, apologetics deals with three important issues. First, it recognizes objections or difficulties regarding the Gospel, responds to them and helps overcome these obstacles to the faith. Second, it communicates and shares the delight of the Christian faith so that others may discover its power to transform people. Thirdly, it translates, that is, interprets and explains, thus performs a hermeneutic of the basic ideas of the Christian faith into the language of modern man.[25] What, then, is the point of apologetics, what is its guiding idea? The Anglican theologian stresses that Christian apologetics is about seriously and continuously dealing with "ultimate questions" posed by a culture, a group of people or an individual in order to show "how the Christian faith can provide meaningful answers to such questions."[26] Moreover, "apologetics clears the ground for evangelization, just as John the Baptist prepared the way for the coming of Jesus of Nazareth."[27]

McGrath, emphasizes that in practicing apologetics the following are important: understanding one's own faith, understanding one's audience, a clear message, finding points of contact, presenting the whole Gospel, and practice. One's own understanding of the faith is to have an "apologetic tinge."[28] Which means that the apologist is to "relate the most important issues of the faith to people"[29] and "incorporate their experiences and ideas."[30] "This means that we should try to look at the faith from the perspective of an outsider, asking how non-believers might respond to essential aspects of the Gospel, rather than focusing on the discus-

[21] Ibidem.
[22] Ibidem.
[23] Ibidem.
[24] Ibidem, p. 19.
[25] Cf. ibidem, p. 21.
[26] Ibidem.
[27] Ibidem.
[28] Ibidem, p. 35.
[29] Ibidem.
[30] Ibidem.

sion that Christians might have among themselves."[31] Understanding the audience is the second element of the apologetic strategy. Each person, notes the English theologian, "has his or her own questions, objections and difficulties that need to be addressed, just as they have their own 'touch points' and opportunities to communicate the faith."[32] Another issue is clear communication. It means translating the faith into a language that is clear to the audience, that is, presenting the Gospel in a way that is understandable to the era. Finding points of contact is the fourth point of the apologetic method. It involves finding what is common in contemporary culture and human experience, tangential to the Gospel. "Our task, explains McGrath, is to try to intensify these testimonies (in nature, society or moral code) and use them as a point of contact to proclaim the Christian Gospel."[33] Presenting the whole Gospel, the fifth element of the strategy, is to take care that the message of the basic content is not impoverished. The apologist should scrupulously distinguish what is the Christian message and what is his or her own views. "If we fail to do this, we will be presenting to our audience not the Christian Gospel, but only those aspects of it that we happen to consider important and interesting."[34] The last, sixth element, is practice. This is what apologetics is primarily about. Apologetic actions should be taken in everyday life. "Apologetics is both a science and an art. It is not about knowledge, but about wisdom."[35]

McGrath understands apologetics very broadly. Its role is not only to defend, but also to praise and translate the truths of faith. Therefore, dealing with the methodology of the modern defense of Christianity, he proposes to first deeply understand one's own faith, in order to then invite others to it and, in the face of misunderstanding and accusations, effectively defend it. Apologetics, according to McGrath, deals with both the defense of Christianity and introduces the depth of faith and justifies it.

Gregory Koukl,[36] on the other hand, proposes an original method for the modern defense of Christianity: "although there is a real battle going on, our skirmishes should resemble diplomatic talks rather than a landing in Normandy. [...] I would like to learn diplomacy and propose a method I would call the ambassador model. This approach is based

[31] Ibidem.

[32] Ibidem.

[33] Ibidem, p. 36.

[34] Ibidem, pp. 36—37.

[35] Ibidem, p. 37.

[36] Gregory Koukl (b. 1950) — lecturer in apologetics and philosophy at Biola University. He has been involved in apologetics for many years. Founder and chairman of Stand to Reason (str.org), which aims to educate Christians in Christian apologetics.

more on friendly curiosity — which is a kind of calm diplomacy — than on confrontation."[37]

What would the method consist of according to this apologist? According to Koukl, it requires three basic skills. First, "Christ's ambassadors should have the elementary knowledge necessary for this task. They must know the most important content of the Good News about the kingdom of God, and they must also know something about overcoming the obstacles they may encounter in carrying out their diplomatic mission."[38] Second, information about Christianity alone is not enough. It still takes wisdom to make the message credible. "This requires the tools of a diplomat, not the weapons of a warrior, tactical skills, not brute force."[39] Third, the character of the apologist-diplomat is also important. "Knowledge and wisdom are attributes of a particular person. If he or she does not temper the attributes of the kingdom he or she serves, this will cast doubt on their words and thwart their efforts."[40] According to Koukl, in dialogue with non-believers, all three skills — knowledge, wisdom and attitude — play an important role.

Apologetic activities should also pay attention to strategy. Its subject "is the totality of the situation, a large-scale operation, the deployment of forces before the assault."[41] The Koukl understands strategy as follows: "as followers of Christ, we have a great strategic advantage, for our starting position is based on the very content of what we preach. What we believe will defend itself under the most thorough investigation, especially when alternative views are taken into account."[42] Moreover, the strategy contains two distinct areas. The first is offensive apologetics. Its task is to prove the validity of Christianity. In this area, the apologist proves the validity of Christianity, presents an argument for the existence of God and the resurrection of Jesus, and justifies the Christian faith. The second area is defensive apologetics, which focuses on challenges, responses and defenses of Christianity. The themes most often claimed by apologia are the authority and truthfulness of the Bible or the presence of evil in the world.

Thus, strategy indicates the merits of apologetics. Alongside it comes tactics, which play an important role in apologetics efforts. "Although our approach has the character of diplomacy and not of an armed clash,

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[37] G. Koukl: *Taktyka. Plan gry, czyli jak rozmawiać o wierze chrześcijańskiej.* Trans. M. Wójcik. Warszawa 2020, p. 25.

[38] Ibidem, p. 30.

[39] Ibidem.

[40] Ibidem.

[41] Ibidem.

[42] Ibidem.

a military comparison may prove helpful in distinguishing strategy from tactics. Tactics, literally 'the art of action', focuse on a specific, current situation, and is concerned with the practical choreography of individual details. It is not uncommon for a skillful commander to gain an advantage over a better-equipped or numerically stronger opponent through skillful tactical maneuvers."[43]

Tactics in the apologist's perspective are the study of "maneuvering techniques in conversations on difficult subjects."[44] According to Koukl, "it will be helpful in organizing resources in such a way that we can use them skillfully. It will suggest approaches that each of us can put into practice to become more persuasive."[45] The American apologist stipulates that the tactics are by no means manipulations, tricks or, even less, underhanded ploys. "They are not devious fortes designed to embarrass the other person and force him to concede to you. They are not used to belittle others or humiliate those who have a different opinion than you so that you can win more spiritual trophies."[46] The tactical approach of Koukl explains as follows: "it requires as much attentive listening as thoughtful responses. You have to strain your attention and be prepared to respond appropriately to new information. This method is more like a one-on-one game of basketball than a game of chess."[47]

Closing with a reflection on the essence of his own apologetics, Koukl proposes a ten-point credo of the apologist/ambassador.[48] It is to be:

First, ready, that is, open to the possibility of presenting faith in Christ.

Second, patient, that is, first of all, he listens to understand the other side, politely and respectfully talking to anyone who has a different opinion.

Third, reasonable — his convictions are not based on feelings, in conversation he presents rationale, reasons, in discussion he is active, seeking answers.

Fourth, tactically prepared — he recognizes the interlocutor, adapts to him, maneuvers, all in order to challenge his erroneous thinking, and present his own argument in a clear, understandable and convincing way.

Fifth, comprehensible — this means that he cares about the language he uses, not just the rhetoric or jargon itself.

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[43] Ibidem, p. 31.
[44] Ibidem
[45] Ibidem, p. 32.
[46] Ibidem.
[47] Ibidem.
[48] Cf. ibidem, pp. 190—200.

Sixth, fair — he approaches the adversary with respect, listens openly and with understanding.

Seventh, honest — that is, facts count for him, he truthfully presents his own arguments without understating his opponent's voice.

Eighth, humble — he does not overstep his own boundaries, but is aware of the conditionality of the statements he makes.

Ninth, attractive — there is class in his attitude, expressed in courtesy, politeness and manners.

Tenth, dependent — he is aware that he will do nothing good without God.

Koukl sees apologetics as the art of balanced diplomacy, which cannot exist today without appropriate tactics. To this end, he proposes that the apologist becomes an ambassador with the right strategy and adequate tactics. With these, the disputes conducted and the defense of Christianity can be more effective.

Os Guinness[49] wonders what apologetics is for Christians today. According to him, "on the one hand, our era offers the greatest opportunity for Christian witness since the time of Jesus and the apostles."[50] On the other hand, "we have to deal realistically with the many challenges of the new era of communication, because some of its peculiarities actually hinder communication instead of facilitating it. We also have to deal with the fact that the era of globalization has exposed weaknesses in our current approach to faith sharing, and these need to be rectified — above all, many attempts at Christian apologetics have gotten into the rough waters of the great clash between the philosophies of modernism and postmodernism."[51] Guinness proposes "to heal a basic and serious deficiency in contemporary Christian communication."[52] What is it? According to the Anglican apologist, the art of persuasion, which Christians have lost. "The combination of the disengagement from evangelism, the dispersion of evangelism, apologetics and discipleship, and the ignoring of human diversity is a serious problem. This is probably what is behind the fact that many Christians, having grasped the ineffectiveness of contemporary approaches and sensing the unpopularity and unreliability of Christian witness, have simply fallen silent and abandoned evangelism altogether, sometimes relieved

[49] Ian Oswald Guinness (b. 1941) — English writer, social critic and apologist, author or editor of more than thirty books, founder of the Trinity Forum organization, for more information visit http://www.osguinness.com.

[50] O. Guinness: *Mowa błazna. Odkrywanie sztuki chrześcijańskiej perswazji*. Trans. A. P. Wyszogrodzka-Gaik. Warszawa 2020, p. 14.

[51] Ibidem.

[52] Ibidem.

to hide their prevarication behind the mask of a newfound passion for social justice, which is allowed to forget the already unpolished style of the Gospel."[53] According to Guinness, by losing persuasion, Christian communication has lost the core essential to its mission. He explains this phenomenon as follows: "Christian apologia has had many partners in discussion over the centuries — in particular, the great tradition of classical rhetoric initiated by the Greeks and Romans. It has also had numerous opponents and sparring partners — the most recent refreshing call has been the new atheists. All of these challenges have undoubtedly brought benefits, but among their unfortunate side effects is that many apologists have lost touch with evangelism and focused on 'arguments' and especially on winning arguments, with not winning the hearts and minds of the people."[54] Therefore, Guinness proposes, "we need to reconnect evangelism with apologetics, and ensure that our best arguments are directed at winning people over, not just winning arguments. At the same time, we should pursue this in a way that agrees with the Gospel itself."[55]

Restoring persuasion to its place, Guinness is convinced that this is the only way Christians can confront the weaknesses they experience. He states: "almost every one of our testimonies and expressions of communication assumes that people are receptive to our words, or at least interested, even if they don't feel the need to hear them. Meanwhile, most people are simply not open, or interested, or in need, and in much of the developed modern world there are fewer open-minded people than a generation earlier. In fact, more people are presenting hostile attitudes, and Western Christianity has not faced such hostility in centuries."[56] Faced with the explosion of pluralism, culture war and increasing secularization, Christians should begin to speak many languages, not just the Christian one. It is necessary "to speak persuasively to the hearts and minds of people who at first often listen to us with prejudice, contempt, impatience and sometimes anger."[57] This was the attitude of both the Old Testament prophets,[58] and Jesus himself. In his actions "there is a wonderful style of creative persuasion — which could be called prophetic persuasion — and a deep understanding of why such persuasion is needed and how it works."[59] Reaching out to the Bible, explains the English apologist, in its context, he cannot help but notice the contemporary condition of the

[53] Ibidem, p. 15.
[54] Ibidem, p. 16.
[55] Ibidem.
[56] Ibidem, p. 20.
[57] Ibidem, p. 21.
[58] Cf. ibidem, pp. 21—24.
[59] Ibidem, p. 24.

world: "[…] too many people don't want to believe what we share, or even listen to what we have to say, and our challenge is to help them see it against their will."[60]

According to Guinness, the art of persuasion stands in opposition to Western methods of communication. These are often one-dimensional, mundane, and overly ineffective. Rebuilding creative persuasion can help Christians in two ways. First, it will help get out of the tragic impasse Christianity has found itself in. Second, the art of persuasion itself will restore Christians' self-awareness. In addition, the method of persuasion must be related to the cross of Jesus, centered on it, that is, it is to take the form of the cross. It is also to show that "decisions do not belong to us, but to God. For God is his own? chief defender, his own? best apologist, and the one who challenges the world to 'present his case'. And, as Jesus says, it is his Spirit, the Spirit of truth, who does the crucial part of the work of persuasion and proving."[61]

At the heart of the lost art of persuasion is Christian apologia, understood as "the art of Christian truth and Christian truths."[62] Guinness points out that "the first apologists for Christianity from the time of the Roman Empire faced the challenge of presenting a message so new as to be foreign to the first audiences, as well as defining what that message meant in the classical era and its sophisticated and established ways of thinking. In the case of the modern world, the challenge is to present something so familiar to the point of being unfamiliar in general, while at the same time giving rise to the belief that people are tired of it."[63] Guinness situates the Christian art of persuasion within apologetics and states that it is an important part of it. Its task is to convince people of the Christian faith. However, "there is no macro-theory in the case of persuasion."[64] Moreover, "reclaiming the art of persuasion will not be easy because of the confusion and controversy that contemporary Christian apologia is stirring up."[65]

Three issues, according to Guinness, have special significance. The first remark is related to negation. There is no single way to practice persuasion. Since "Jesus never addressed two different people in the same way, so neither should we. Every person is unique and special and deserves an approach that respects that uniqueness."[66]

[60] Ibidem.
[61] Ibidem, p. 26.
[62] Ibidem.
[63] Ibidem.
[64] Ibidem, p. 30.
[65] Ibidem.
[66] Ibidem, p. 31.

The second remark concerns the definition of persuasion. It is an art, not a science. "It has more in common with theology than with technology."[67] Therefore, in creative persuasion, faithfulness to the Bible is important. It is supposed to characterize the apologist. Moreover, it is related to truth. "Creative persuasion is the art of truth, the art inspired by truth."[68] In the case of creative persuasion, we are dealing with verbal fencing, not smart talk. "Yes, one should be aware of the huge debt that apologetics has incurred in classical rhetoric."[69] Nevertheless, "Christians must never leave persuasion at the level of technique; Christian apologia must be full of faith."[70] Guinness notes, "to see in apologetics only technique is an insult to the Gospel and the immense importance of what God says and does through Jesus. From the simplest joke to the greatest paradox of all time — the incarnation — the Bible is full of stories, parables, dramas, fortes and jokes that serve the highest purpose — the proclamation of the Gospel — and are shaped by the truth and logic of the message of the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Apologetics must always know the best and worst thoughts of the world, but at the same time must always remain faithful to the One we know and want to present to others."[71]

The third issue is related to the object of Christian persuasion. It is for those "who love God and who want to defend what they know and love, who appreciate that love is a fundamental part of the knowledge derived from the truth sought and found. Persuasion is for followers of Jesus who love Him because they know Him, and therefore do not need to be persuaded as to the unspeakable privilege of knowing Him and making Him known."[72] Christian persuasion, Guinness stresses, "is not for salesmen, propagandists, practitioners of proselytism, PR consultants, lobbyists, press officers, propaganda specialists, loss mitigation experts and the like."[73] Who, then, is its target audience? "It is for those who wish to share the way of Jesus because of their love for Him, and who know that love plays a key role in the human search for knowledge and truth. It is for those whose hearts respond to the words of the prophet Isaiah about the beauty of the herald running through the mountains to proclaim the good news, and those who know something of what the great French apologist Blaise Pascal experienced during

[67] Ibidem.
[68] Ibidem, p. 32.
[69] Ibidem, p. 37.
[70] Ibidem, p. 39.
[71] Ibidem, p. 40.
[72] Ibidem, pp. 42—43.
[73] Ibidem, p. 43.

his mystical 'night of fire' when he experienced the presence of God directly."[74]

Guinness, advocating the practice of apologetics, suggests that it return to the forgotten art of Christian persuasion. Therein lies the strength of the modern defense of Christianity. Apologetics, to be effective, should regain its lost creative persuasion. Thanks to it, it is possible to gain for the Christian faith people who, for various reasons, are indifferent or even resistant to the words of the Gospel.

Features of apologia

In answering the second key question, I will point out the most essential features of a contemporary defense of Christianity that remain essential in the modern European context. These are contextuality, transconfessionalism, dialogicality, rationality, and cultural orientation.[75]

The new apologia is carried out in the current time and space, so recognizing the context of Christianity proves to be a necessary condition for its effective operation. Modern apologists accurately diagnose the spirit of the current times, reading the leading ideas and intellectual currents. They pay special attention to all activities that overtly or covertly take an anti-Christian form. So, they stand in opposition to the dictate of political correctness, which often reveals itself in the actions of institutions that impose the will of a secular minority. While disagreeing with the deconstruction of basic Christian concepts and values, they come to their defense, justifying the superiority of Christianity over postmodern philosophy. Apologists also point to the permanence and immutability of Christ's religion, against which attempts are made to dilute or discredit it. The creators of the new apologia, recognizing the expansiveness of secularization, which is revealed in attempts to build societies without God, states that are completely secularized and devoid of any reference to Christianity, see in a living community of faith a rescue for a world that rejects the sacrum. Supra-confessionalism or nondenominationalism means the presence of a new apologia in a completely secular space. Apologists, practicing the defense of fundamental matters, take the side of common sense, truth, honesty or justice. In doing so, they treat Christianity as their natural ground, the foundation on which all civilization

[74] Ibidem.

[75] For more on this topic, see P. Artemiuk: *Renesans apologii*. Płock 2016.

is built. Therefore, they appeal to it. Christian values always appear in the horizon of justification.

Although one of the reasons for the return of apologia was the fatigue of dialogicality, this does not mean that its creators completely excluded this kind of attitude. On the contrary, dialogicality is present in many dimensions of modern apologia. First, it appears in the apologetic method itself. It signifies curiosity, desire to know, openness, interest in the world. The new apologists appear as artists who are well versed in modernity. They move freely in diverse areas of culture. Their conservatism has nothing to do with closing themselves off, retreating into the "silence of the cloister," but is a voice of defense resounding through the noise of this world. Reality does not frighten them, nor is it just a place for the forces of evil to operate, so they do not build walls to keep them pristine. They look for traces of God in the world and point to the existence of an inner logos, with the help of which man can order created reality. They avoid the alternative: either dialogue or apologia. They do not want to just defend or just dialogue. For them, the new apologia is "apologia in dialogue." And only in this way, according to them, can it be practiced today. Such an attitude allows them to "avoid associating the apologist with a certain form of obstinacy, fundamentalism; what Fr. Janusz Pasierb called 'a face bracing and fierce'. In any case, the great apologists of modern times: Chesterton, Frossard, Żychiewicz, Messori, Weigel are famous for: their intellectual astuteness, and at the same time their sense of humor, intelligent irony and distance to themselves, their joy of life and openness. One feels that they love this world, are knowledgeable about it and its changes, understand it, know how to enter into dialogue with contemporary culture, do not condemn, remember that the world — even a world like ours — remains not in the hold of Satan, but in the embrace of God's providence and mercy. All this was expressed in them in: a cheerful faith, an understanding of modern culture and the ability to dialogue with it, solid argumentation, a certain Anglo-Saxon joviality and a 'French' wit, glamourising their world."[76]

The defense of reason finds a special place in the new apologia. Standing up for rationality, apologists first see it as a constitutive element of human identity, which fundamentally shapes man. In defending reason, they not only speak out against irrationalism or fideism, but by emphasizing rationality, they show that man is able to discover the phenomenon of his existence, its depth and finitude. Through reason, as Blaise Pascal suggested, one can see both one's own greatness and misery. It is the rationality of existence that prompts apologists to defend the gift of life, from

[76] H. Seweryniak, P. Artemiuk: "Apologia w dialogu. Wstęp." In: *Bronić czy dialogować?...*, p. 8.

the moment of conception to natural death. Ultimately, reason prompts fundamental questions and the search for depth, which is God. In defending rationality, the creators of the new apologia recognize its constant presence within Christianity. Even in the early days of the Church, the interrelation of *fides et ratio* was discussed. Reaching back to these early Christian disputes, as well as to ancient Greek studies, modern apologists point to the rationality of faith itself. Contemplation of God does not come at the expense of reason, but *fides and ratio* complementarily elevate man to discover God's truth.

Modern apologists, when they take it upon themselves to analyze any work, do not only evaluate its objective value, merit, artistic craftsmanship or novelty of form, but first and foremost look for depth in it that will direct and point to another space of human existence. Reflection on culture thus becomes a path to cognition, an expedition upstream to the very source. Apologia, carried out in this space, guards the traditions of the old masters, exposes the shallowness of the fake role models, public intellectuals cherished by the modern-day salon and the spiritual emptiness of their artistic forms. Defending culture from ideological entanglement, it sets its task, which can be defined as showing the other space. Apologists, looking at artists, first of all, are perfectly familiar with the contemporary currents of culture and art, accepting them and feeling very comfortable in them, able to ask pertinent questions about the source of their inspiration and the purposefulness of the resulting works. They do not measure the greatness of artistic achievements by the shock of the audience or the scandal of the premiere performance. The discovery of the spiritual dimension of a work, the inspiration that provokes metaphysical questions or the search for the inner Logos that is born under the influence of art, these are, according to the apologists, the real consequences caused by contact with the work. The apologia of culture, therefore, is the consistent unveiling of the other space, showing Beauty dwelling in the cathedral, making a pilgrimage to the source.

Conclusions

1. Methodology of apologia/apologetics. In their works, contemporary apologists show the topicality of apologetics. Their analyses are primarily concerned with methodological issues. They pay attention not so much to the content that ought to substantiate an apologia, but are concerned with the form that modern apologetics should take.

According to A. E. McGrath, apologetics today has three tasks to fulfill. They are defense, praise, and translation. In the case of defense, apologetics detects obstacles to faith and provides answers to overcome them. Praise concerns the truthfulness and meaningfulness of the Gospel. Apologetics should bring out its strongly positive dimension and make a presentation of the entire attractiveness of the message of Jesus Christ. The task of elucidation, in turn, involves explaining the essential ideas and issues of the Christian faith to audiences to whom Christianity is almost unknown.

Koukl, while undertaking a reflection on apologetics, seeks first of all its adequate form. He sees an effective defense as the art of balanced diplomacy rather than the art of warfare. Without adequate tactics, apologetics cannot exist today. Koukl believes that an apologist should become an ambassador with the right strategy and the right tactics. He proposes several of them, giving each of them original terms. With the right tactics, the defense of Christianity can be more effective.

Guinness, dealing with apologetics, postulates that it should return to the art of Christian persuasion. According to him, for the defense of Christianity to be effective, it should regain its lost strength. Through the art of persuasion it is possible to win for the Christian faith people who, for various reasons, are indifferent or even resistant to the words of the Gospel.

2. Apologetics and evangelization. The analyzed apologists evidently link the issue of defending Christianity with evangelization. This is because they believe that apologetics plays an essential role during the preaching of the kerygma. The proclamation of the Gospel, its presentation, to be effective, must be combined with apologetics. The strength of the argument, the rationale for the credibility of Christianity is essential in the evangelization process. Each of the presented apologists draws attention to the close relationship between evangelization and apologetics. Important issues concerning the Christian faith already at the stage of preaching call for apologia. Therefore, in one voice, the apologists combine defense with presentation and translation. The art of Christian persuasion or apologetic tactics also serve this purpose. Each of the proposed apologetic methods is ultimately intended to turn an opponent into a friend, an indifferent man into an ardent follower, and a faithful thinker, and vice versa.

3. Features of the new apologia. The most essential features of modern apologetics, which remain essential in the contemporary European context, are contextuality, trans-confessionalism, dialogicality, rationality and cultural orientation. Recognizing the context of Christianity proves to be a necessary condition for its effective operation. Supra-confessionalism or

nondenominationalism is apologia's entry into a completely secular space. The new apologia is characterized by openness and a desire to understand the addressee. Apologists stress the importance of listening to the voice of all those situated outside of Christianity. Standing up for rationality, they see it as a constitutive element of human identity that shapes man. By defending reason, they not only speak out against irrationalism or fideism, but by emphasizing rationality, they show that man is able to discover the phenomenon of his existence, its depth and finitude. Reflection on culture in modern apologia becomes a path to cognition, an expedition upstream to the very source. The defense, carried out in this space, guards the traditions of the masters, exposes the shallowness of popular public intellectuals and artists and the spiritual emptiness of their forms of expression.

Modern Europe needs a rational and profound apologia that understands the modern world and enters into dialogue with it, without forgetting the Christian roots of Western civilization.

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Przemysław Artemiuk

De quelle apologie du christianisme l'Europe contemporaine a-t-elle besoin ?

Résumé

L'objectif de cet article est de répondre à la question : quel type d'apologie du christianisme l'Europe moderne a-t-elle besoin ? Dans la première partie, l'auteur, en utilisant la méthode analytique, se réfère aux travaux de trois apologètes (A.E. McGrath, G. Koukl, O. Guinness) et montre, à travers leurs exemples, comment pratiquer l'apologie dans le contexte européen moderne. La seconde partie, de nature synthétique, présente les caractéristiques clés de l'apologie qui devraient caractériser la défense actuelle du christianisme. Les analyses menées permettent de tirer les conclusions suivantes : premièrement, les apologètes modernes dans leurs travaux montrent l'actualité de l'apologétique, leurs analyses concernent principalement les questions méthodologiques. Ils ne se préoccupent pas tant du contenu que l'apologie devrait contenir, mais de la forme que l'apologétique moderne devrait prendre ; deuxièmement, les apologètes analysés associent manifestement la question de la défense du christianisme à l'évangélisation. Cela est dû au fait qu'ils considèrent que l'apologétique joue un rôle essentiel pendant la prédication du kérygme. L'annonce de l'Évangile, sa présentation, pour être efficace, doit être combinée avec l'apologétique ; troisièmement, les caractéristiques les plus essentielles de la défense moderne, qui restent nécessaires dans le contexte européen contemporain, sont la contextualité, la supra-confessionnalité, la dialogicalité, la rationalité et l'orientation culturelle.

Mots-clés : apologie, apologétique, christianisme, Europe, contexte, rationalité, culture, trans-confessionnalisme, dialogicalité, A.E. McGrath, G. Koukl, O. Guinness, T. Halik, Ch. Delsol, T.P. Terlikowski, Pape François

Przemysław Artemiuk

Di quale apologia del cristianesimo ha bisogno l'Europa contemporanea?

Riassunto

Lo scopo di questo articolo è rispondere alla domanda: di quale tipo di apologia del cristianesimo ha bisogno l'Europa moderna? Nella prima parte, l'autore, utilizzando il metodo analitico, si riferisce alle opere di tre apologeti (A.E. McGrath, G. Koukl, O. Guinnesse) e mostra, attraverso i loro esempi, come praticare l'apologia nel contesto europeo moderno. La seconda parte, di natura sintetica, è una presentazione delle caratteristiche principali dell'apologia che dovrebbe caratterizzare la difesa attuale del cristianesimo. Le analisi effettuate permettono di trarre le seguenti conclusioni: in primo luogo, gli apologeti moderni, nelle loro opere, mostrano l'attualità dell'apologetica; le loro analisi riguardano principalmente le questioni metodologiche. Non prestano tanta attenzione al contenuto che la giustificazione apologetica dovrebbe contenere, ma alla forma che l'apologetica moderna dovrebbe assumere; in secondo luogo, gli apologeti analizzati collegano evidentemente la questione della difesa del cristianesimo all'evangelizzazione. Questo perché ritengono che l'apologetica svolga un ruolo essenziale durante la predicazione del kerigma. La proclamazione del Vangelo, la sua presentazione, per essere efficace, deve essere combinata con l'apologetica; in terzo luogo, le caratteristiche più essenziali della difesa moderna, che rimangono necessarie nel contesto europeo contemporaneo, sono la contestualità, la sopra-confessionale, la dialogicità, la razionalità e l'orientamento culturale.

Parole chiave: apologia, apologetica, cristianesimo, Europa, contesto, razionalità, cultura, trans-confessionalismo, dialogicità, A.E. McGrath, G. Koukl, O. Guinnesse, T. Halik, Ch. Delsol, T.P. Terlikowski, Papa Francesco

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Synodality and the Subjectivity of the Laity in the Church

Abstract: The XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, initiated by Pope Francis on 9—10 October 2021 in Rome, under the watchword: "Towards a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission," involves lay people on an unprecedented scale in co-creating the synodal process. Why is this voice of lay people so important that it should be heard not only in the synodal process but — more broadly speaking — in the entire synodal style of functioning of the Church? This is connected with the fact that lay people are by no means an inferior part of the Church, what is more — the foundation of their subjectivity in the Church is not first of all the division into clergy and laity, which has a secondary meaning and specifies the nature of the vocation realized in the Church, but the Christian identity received with holy baptism. This article shows how Pope Francis, by developing the concept of synodality, consistently continues the council's intuition of restoring lay people's subjectivity in the Church and deepening the understanding of their Christian identity.

Keywords: synodality, laity, Church, subjectivity, identity

Evolution or revolution? A question of this kind is often asked by those contemporary theologians, philosophers and researchers of the recent history of the Catholic Church who are closely observing the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, initiated by Pope Francis on October 9—10, 2021 in Rome, on the theme *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission*. It is not only about the very formula of the synod itself, which is different from all previous synods, because it is extended for three years and intended to involve the entire community of the Church — from the bishops and cardinals to the ordinary faithful. The most burning issue is the direction of changes which this synodal process implies. Some people, as Tomasz Wielebski remarks, believe that the pope wants to implement the plan of liberal modernists striving to introduce changes in the moral teaching of the Magisterium of the Church, who, unable to count on the convening of the Third Vatican Council, want to decree synodality as a way of the Church's existence, so that in the future no councils or synods of bishops are needed anymore.[1] Opinions like these are hardly marginal. The so-called synod on synodality gives rise to many anxieties of this kind, which may be noticed, for example, in the Polish synodal national overview — a document summarizing the first stage of synodal consultations, that had taken place in practically all Polish dioceses. One can read in it that one of the reactions to the Synod initiated by Francis is the attitude of "fear, distance and mistrust of entering the synodal way associated, for instance, with the so-called German way (among other things proposals for doctrinal changes) and the awakening of a demanding attitude towards the Church."[2] Can these opinions be considered valid?

The heritage of Vatican II

It seems that the most of the strongly negative and even hostile opinions expressed about the Synod on synodality are largely dictated not so much by factual, substantive reasons, but rather by certain stereotypes, simplifications, and prejudices both against the pope and — more generally — against the entire heritage of the Second Vatican Council. A more adequate approach in assessing the synodal process appears to be the one that sees in it not a striving for revolutionary changes but rather an evolutionary continuation of certain fundamental ideas of Vatican II. Tomasz Wielebski notes that "according to the opinions of some theologians (Hervé Legrand, Giacomo Canobbio, Roberto Repole, Hermann Pottmeyer), Francis, who devotes so much attention to the issue of synodality, wants to implement the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and Paul VI on this important dimension of the realization of the Church, which was to some extent halted during the pontificate of John Paul II. This restraint is expressed in the specific centralism of the Roman Curia and the development of the top-down governance of the Church.

[1] Cf. T. Wielebski: "Droga synodalna wyzwaniem dla Kościoła w Polsce." *Ateneum Kapłańskie* 676/3 (2021), pp. 534—535.

[2] *Synod 2021—2023. Synteza Krajowa*. Eds. K. Kaźmierska, M. Jewdokimow, W. Sadłoń, L. Organek. [no place] 2022, p. 3.

They believe that the pope, emphasizing the need to strengthen synodality, wants to enhance the role of bishops and the local Churches they lead, and that he returns to the authentic thought of the fathers of the Second Vatican Council, making the transition from 'the universalist ecclesiology to the ecclesiology of the local Church'."[3] This is also noted by Janusz Bujak, who writes: "French Dominican Hervé Legrand believes that the third chapter of the Constitution *Lumen gentium* — 'On the Hierarchical Structure of the Church and in Particular on the Episcopate' — has not been properly implemented, because after the Council it was interpreted in the perspective of the universalist ecclesiology, which made it impossible to reveal what the Constitution says about the Church as *communio Ecclesiarum*. According to Legrand, an example of the remnants of the universalist ecclesiology in the conciliar documents is a sentence from the Article 22 of *Lumen gentium*: 'One is constituted a member of the Episcopal body in virtue of sacramental consecration and hierarchical communion with the head and members of the body'. This formulation allowed, after the Council, to separate *collegium episcoporum* from *communio Ecclesiarum*, that is, the lack of correlation between the bishops and their Churches, between the college of bishops and the communion of Churches."[4] What is the conclusion? Above all, if it is really the goal of Pope Francis to shift the emphasis in ecclesiology towards the local Church and in this way bring to the fore the relationships between bishops and their Churches, then synodality, as a way of carrying out this process, must have features that not only make this shift of emphasis possible, but they directly indicate the way to its implementation. The question then arises whether the way in which synodality is presented in the papal teaching supports this kind of conclusion.

The key elements to understand Francis' vision of synodality are revealed in 2015, in the papal address at the ceremony commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the institution of the synod of bishops. It was then that the pope made the famous statement: "The world in which we live, and which we are called to love and serve, even with its contradictions, demands that the Church strengthens cooperation in all areas of her mission. It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium."[5] The pope explains in this context

[3] T. Wielebski: "Droga synodalna wyzwaniem dla Kościoła w Polsce...," p. 535.

[4] J. Bujak: "Nauczanie papieża Franciszka o synodalności w kontekście współczesnej refleksji teologicznej i ekumenicznej." *Collectanea Theologica* 91/1 (2021), p. 55.

[5] Francis: *Address at the Ceremony Commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops* (17.10.2015), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco_20151017_50-anniversario-sinodo.html [accessed 30.07.2023].

that from the beginning of his activity he wanted to give significance to the synod, which is one of the most valuable legacies of the Second Vatican Council, among other things because it reflects the spirit and method of the ecumenical council[6] — it is therefore, in a special way, its extension and way of implementing it. This was also pointed out by the International Theological Commission in the document published in 2018, entitled *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, emphasizing that "although synodality is not explicitly found as a term or as a concept in the teaching of Vatican II, it is fair to say that synodality is at the heart of the work of renewal the Council was encouraging."[7] What is more, the Commission notes that it is exactly Pope Francis, following the line drawn by Vatican II and developing the ideas of his predecessors, who invites the Church to cross another threshold in the process of making the Church more synodal,[8] that is, to adopt a more biblical and patristic vision of the ecclesial community, in which local Churches cease to be an insignificant background for the Roman Curia, but — in union with the pope — they begin to play the first fiddle. Francis himself interprets this process as a form of remaining faithful to the discernment of his predecessors, beginning with Paul VI, who "foresaw that the organization of the Synod could 'be improved upon with the passing of time'. Twenty years later, Saint John Paul II echoed that thought when he stated that 'this instrument might be further improved. Perhaps collegial pastoral responsibility could be more fully expressed in the Synod'."[9] How can it be? The International Theological Commission directs attention above all to the fact that "in this ecclesiological context, synodality is the specific *modus vivendi et operandi* of the Church, the People of God, which reveals and gives substance to her being as communion when all her members journey together, gather in assembly and take an active part in her evangelizing mission."[10] This way of understanding synodality — in the spirit of communion of the whole People of God, and not just its selected members — sets the right context for understanding collegiality. According to the document of the International Theological Commission, the theological significance and the form of the exercise of the ministry of bishops in the local Churches entrusted to them and of the communion between local Churches are defined by means of the hierarchical

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[6] Cf. ibidem.

[7] International Theological Commission: *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church* (2.03.2018), no. 6.

[8] Cf. ibidem, nos. 7—9.

[9] Francis: *Address at the Ceremony Commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops* (17.10.2015).

[10] International Theological Commission: *Synodality in the Life*…, no. 6.

communion of the College of Bishops with the Bishop of Rome,[11] and therefore — precisely in the spirit of the fundamental idea of Francis to shift the emphasis towards the local Churches. "Collegiality is thus the specific form in which ecclesial synodality is manifested and made real through the ministry of Bishops on the level of communion of the local Churches in a region, and on the level of communion of all the Churches in the universal Church. An authentic manifestation of synodality naturally entails the exercise of the collegial ministry of the Bishops."[12] Therefore, in order to understand how this dependence works in practice and, at the same time, how synodality enables a shift of emphasis towards the local Church, one needs to have a closer look at its manifestations.

Journeying together

So what does synodality mean in practice in the ministry of bishops in the local Churches entrusted to them, a ministry that also includes an essential aspect of collegiality? First of all, that this service acquires a new, synodal dimension in its form. "The synodal dimension of the Church — writes Janusz Bujak — expresses the subjective character of all the baptized, and at the same time the specific role of the episcopal ministry in the collegial and hierarchical communion with the Bishop of Rome. This ecclesiological vision invites us to promote the development of the synodal communion between 'all', 'some' and 'one'."[13] In other words, it means that in the synodal understanding of the Church, her essential part is not only the bishops ("some") maintaining a bond with the pope ("one"), and even not only presbyters and deacons, but also these "all" — the faithful, including, of course, the laity. Moreover, it is synodality which brings to light their subjectivity in the Church. The *Instrumentum laboris* for the first session of the General Assembly of the Synod on Synodality in Rome underlines that the synodal process "enables us to understand the importance of taking the local Church as a privileged point of reference, as the theological place where the Baptised experience in practical terms 'walking together'."[14] This "walking together" presupposes that the synodality

[11] Cf. ibidem, no. 7.

[12] Ibidem.

[13] J. Bujak: "Nauczanie papieża Franciszka o synodalności…," p. 63.

[14] *"Instrumentum laboris" for the First Session of the XVI General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome* (10.2023), no. 11, https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/

occurs as an experience involving not only a narrow, selected part of the Church, but all the faithful. This is clearly emphasized in the Preparatory Document of the Synod on Synodality, which underlines: "In the first millennium, 'journeying together' — that is, practicing synodality — was the ordinary way in which the Church, understood as 'People united in the unity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' acted [...] Here are the roots of the broad development of a synodal praxis at all levels of the Church's life — local, provincial, and universal — that reached its highest manifestation in the Ecumenical Council. Within this ecclesial horizon, inspired by the principle of the participation of all in the life of the Church, St. John Chrysostom was able to say that 'Church and Synod are synonymous'."[15] The point is that the very composition of the word *synod*: σύν (with) and ὁδός (path), indicates the path along which the People of God walk together, and that already since the first centuries it has been applied to ecclesial assemblies convoked on various levels — diocesan, provincial, regional, patriarchal or universal — in order to discern in the light of the Word of God doctrinal, liturgical, canonical and pastoral questions by listening to the Holy Spirit.[16] Moreover, this discernment was connected with a special style of meeting and forming relationships in the ecclesial community, which also concerned the laity, especially it referred to the synods of the local Churches, in which they participated from the very beginning. This style, the way of practicing the synod, and in a broader sense — the functioning of the Christian community, is today referred to as synodality, and although the word itself is a neologism that appeared in the theological, canonical and pastoral literature only in the recent decades, it essentially refers to the most profound tradition, which has always been a constitutive dimension of the Church.[17] "I will not dare — writes Grzegorz Strzelczyk — to give a formal definition of synodality. However, I think that it is reasonable to say that it is a certain sensitivity and style of functioning of people and ecclesial communities. The point is to take into account the opinion of all interested parties in the decisions taken by the Church communities, being convinced that the Holy Spirit can speak through each one of them [...]. Synodality understood in such

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common/phases/universal-stage/il/PAGINATED_ENG_INSTRUMENTUM-LABORIS-A4.pdf [accessed 30.07.2023].

[15] *Preparatory Document for the XVI General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission"*, no. 11, https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/common/preparatory-document/pdf-21x21/en_prepa_book.pdf [accessed 30.07.2023].

[16] International Theological Commission: *"Sensus fidei" in the Life of the Church* (2014), nos. 3—4.

[17] Cf. ibidem, no. 5.30.

a way can and should — because only then it is meaningful — refer to every level of the church organization, from the small community in the parish to its special 'place', which is the college of bishops (regardless of whether at particular moment, it acts directly collegially or not)."[18]

If, therefore, in the spirit of collegiality understood as the ministry of bishops for the communion between local Churches and unity with the Bishop of Rome, Francis places such a strong emphasis on the local Church, it means that it is his will that the relations within her — especially the basic relationship between the bishop and faithful — are cultivated in accordance with the idea of synodality. Moreover, it is precisely this perspective which reveals the vital role of the laity in the dynamics of these relations. Describing the way in which the participation and co-responsibility of the faithful in the synodal practice should be properly understood, Tomasz Wielebski emphasizes that "the People of God, by participating in the synodal consultations, respond to the call of the Lord, listening to what the Spirit says to the Church through the Word of God working in them. The pastors, moving on to formulating their own decisions, are to listen carefully to the wishes of the faithful, distinguishing preparing decisions with the participation of the laity from taking them."[19] Why is the voice of the laity so important that it should be highlighted and listened to both in the synodal process and, in a broader perspective, in the entire synodal style of the Church's functioning? Because, as it is clearly emphasized by Pope Francis, it is wrong to make "a rigid separation between an *Ecclesia docens* and an *Ecclesia discens*, since the flock likewise has an instinctive ability to discern the new ways that the Lord is revealing to the Church."[20] This is connected with the fact that the laity are by no means a worse part of the Church, and what is more, the foundation of their subjectivity in the Church is not at first the division into the clergy and the laity, which has a secondary meaning and specifies the nature of the vocation lived in the Church, but the Christian identity received in the baptism. Pope Francis wrote about it in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* in the following way: "In all the baptized, from first to last, the sanctifying power of the Spirit is at work, impelling us to evangelization […] In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient

[18] G. Strzelczyk: "Synodalność: musisz iść przez to, czym nie jesteś." *Więź* 685/3 (2021), p. 75.

[19] T. Wielebski: "Droga synodalna wyzwaniem dla Kościoła w Polsce…," p. 539.

[20] Francis: *Address at the Ceremony Commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops* (17.10.2015).

to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients."[21] However, it should be mentioned that the words of Francis are in fact no revolution. On the contrary, it is rather a consistent continuation and development of the idea clearly expressed in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, reminding in the *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* that "the laity likewise share in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ and therefore have their own share in the mission of the whole people of God in the Church and in the world. They exercise the apostolate in fact by their activity directed to the evangelization and sanctification of men and to the penetrating and perfecting of the temporal order through the spirit of the Gospel."[22] Francis develops this thought, not limiting evangelization only to the way of giving the testimony through work, but directly encouraging to preach the Gospel, what he expects from all the baptized — including the laity — by convincing that whoever has really experienced God, does not need a lot of training to start preaching God and that everyone has to find a way of preaching that is appropriate to their existential situation.[23] It can be said that by developing the concept of synodality and referring to its roots dating back to the first centuries of Christianity, the pope goes a step further in restoring the subjectivity of the laity in the Church and deepening the understanding of their Christian identity. The laity are no longer only called to evangelize by acts, not only encouraged to preach the Gospel by words, but they are also invited to the communal discernment of the future paths that the Church will take. In this context, the International Theological Commission draws attention to the fact that "in this perspective, the participation [in the synodal process — A. R. B.] of the lay faithful becomes essential. They are the immense majority of the People of God and there is much to be learnt from their participation in the various forms of the life and mission of ecclesial communities, from popular piety and generic pastoral care, as well as their specific competency in various sectors of cultural and social life. Consulting them is thus indispensable for initiating processes of discernment in the framework of synodal structures. We must, therefore, overcome the obstacles created [...] by a clerical mind-set which runs the risk of keeping them on the edges of ecclesial life."[24]

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[21] Francis: *Apostolic Exhortation "Evangelii gaudium"*, nos. 119—120.

[22] Second Vatican Council: *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity "Apostolicam actuositatem"* (18.11.1965), no. 2.

[23] Francis: *Apostolic Exhortation "Evangelii gaudium"*, nos. 119—121.

[24] International Theological Commission: *Synodality in the Life...*, no. 73.

Voice of the People of God

Both the synodality itself and its practical implementation in the life of the Church, and at the same time learning the synodal style — because this is what the synodal process initiated by the pope is all about — focus on a fundamental issue that is the very heart of the synod: discernment. From the very beginning, consistently, the synodal documents present discernment as the essence of the local, continental and in the end the final stage of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, also stating its method, which directly refers to the Ignatian model of communal discernment. Small wonder. The Ignatian model contains basically all the features which the pope associates with the concept of synodality because it is based on mutual listening and sincere, open communication of one's feelings, impressions, opinions and convictions, in the atmosphere of prayer, trust, transparency and acceptance; it does not assume unanimity, but kindness and openness, freedom from prejudice or attachment to classify others by one's own patterns, and from the need to defend one's interests and nurture various concerns.[25] For this reason, the *Instrumentum laboris* for the first session of the General Assembly of the Synod on Synodality in Rome defines the proposed method of discernment as "conversation in the Spirit," with the reservation that it is not about a simple conversation, but a dynamic in which the spoken and heard word builds familiarity, enabling the participants to be close to one another — a kind of dialogue between brothers and sisters in faith that opens the space for *con-sentire*, that is, a listening together to the voice of the Spirit, who is the true protagonist of the whole process of discernment.[26] This fact explains the following observation expressed in the *Instrumentum laboris*: "In the local Churches, conversation in the Spirit has been accepted and sometimes 'discovered' as providing the atmosphere that makes possible the sharing of life experiences and the space for discernment in a synodal Church. In the Final Documents of the Continental Assemblies, it is described as a Pentecostal moment […]. Bearing in mind the significance of conversation in the Spirit to animate the lived experience of the synodal Church, formation in this method, and in particular of facilitators capable of accompanying communities in practising it,

[25] Cf. J. Augustyn: "Rozeznawanie duchowe." In: *Rozeznawanie duchów.* Ed. K. Osuch. Czechowice-Dziedzice 1991, p. 54; B. Steczek: "Zastosowanie rozeznawania duchów we wspólnotowym rozeznaniu apostolskim." In: *Rozeznawanie duchów*…, p. 10.

[26] Cf. "*Instrumentum laboris*" *for the First Session of the XVI General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome* (10.2023), nos. 32—33.

is perceived as a priority at all levels of ecclesial life and for all the Baptised, starting with ordained Ministers in a spirit of co-responsibility and openness to different ecclesial vocations. Formation for conversation in the Spirit is formation to be a synodal Church,"[27] since it assumes that the will of God is most fully revealed to the discerning Church when she searches for it as the People of God as a whole and not only as its chosen part. So while until now the voice of the laity has been treated marginally — as a kind of additional guidance more or less useful in the process of discernment, now it appears as its indispensable element, without which understanding what the Holy Spirit says to the Church will not be adequate. This is why "a synodal Church — underlines Francis — is a Church which listens, which realizes that listening 'is more than simply hearing'. It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the 'Spirit of truth' (Jn 14:17), in order to know what he 'says to the Churches' (Rev 2:7)."[28]

So what should this mutual listening lead to? What final effect does the Church expect from the process of discernment in which lay people are involved together with the clergy, both at the level of everyday life of the local Church — to help their bishops make good decisions — and on a macro scale, by participating in the synod on synodality? To put it simply: the unveiling of the sense of the faith which, as the *sensus fidei fidelium* — the sense of the faith of all believers — will reveal the voice of the whole People of God and, at every level of the Church's life, will shed light on her future paths in varying degrees and intensity. Therefore, as the International Theological Commission stresses that "the entire People of God is challenged by its fundamentally synodal calling. The circularity of the *sensus fidei* with which all the faithful are endowed, the discernment carried out at the various levels on which synodality works and the authority of those who exercise the pastoral ministry of unity and governance shows the dynamic of synodality."[29] Consequently, the understanding of synodality that Pope Francis proposes is based on the concept of spiritual conversation — the idea of communal discernment in which the entire People of God is involved in various ways. The purpose of this process of discernment is a kind of specific, spiritual knowledge taking the form of an individual awareness of each believer, correlated

[27] Ibidem, nos. 34—42.

[28] Francis: *Address at the Ceremony Commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops* (17.10.2015).

[29] International Theological Commission: *Synodality in the Life…*, no. 72.

with the communal awareness of the Church as a whole.[30] This is the sense of the faith. Already in his speech in 2015, Pope Francis emphasized its importance, referring to the statements of the Second Vatican Council. "After stating that the People of God is comprised of all the baptized who are called to 'be a spiritual house and a holy priesthood' — the pope reminded — the Second Vatican Council went on to say that 'the whole body of the faithful, who have an anointing which comes from the holy one (cf. 1 Jn 2:20,27), cannot err in matters of belief. This characteristic is shown in the supernatural sense of the faith (*sensus fidei*) of the whole People of God, when "from the bishops to the last of the faithful" it manifests a universal consensus in matters of faith and morals.' These are the famous words *infallible* '*in credendo*'."[31] Of course, this voice varies in its strength. It sounds differently on the level of the local Church, where the bishop meets with his faithful, for example at the local synods, to listen to their advice on important matters for the development of the local community, differently on the episcopal level, when important issues for the Church are discerned together by a group of bishops, and even more differently within the synodal process initiated by Francis, in which the lay people are included in the most extensive, three year-long process of meetings, consultations, dialogue and common prayer. Regardless of this, the International Theological Commission argues that "by means of the *sensus fidei*, the faithful are able not only to recognise what is in accordance with the Gospel and to reject what is contrary to it, but also to sense what Pope Francis has called 'new ways for the journey' in faith of the whole pilgrim people. One of the reasons why bishops and priests need to be close to their people on the journey and to walk with them is precisely so as to recognise 'new ways' as they are sensed by the people. The discernment of such new ways, opened up and illumined by the Holy Spirit, will be vital for the new evangelization."[32] It is for this reason that the document *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church* concludes: "It is possible to go deeper into the theology of synodality on the basis of the doctrine of the *sensus fidei* of the People of God and the sacramental collegiality of the episcopate in hierarchical communion with the Bishop of Rome. The synodal dimension of the Church expresses the subjective and active character of all the baptized […]. The dynamic of synodality thus joins the communitarian aspect which includes the whole People of God, the collegial dimension that is part of the

[30] Cf. L. Siwecki: "*Sensus fidei* jako dar Ducha Świętego dla Kościoła." *Studia Theologica Varsaviensia* 43/1 (2005) no. 1, pp. 80—81.

[31] Francis: *Address at the Ceremony Commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops* (17.10.2015).

[32] International Theological Commission: "*Sensus fidei*"…, no. 127.

exercise of episcopal ministry, and the primatial ministry of the Bishop of Rome."[33]

Mutuality

Although the roots of the concept of the *sensus fidei* go back to the very sources of Christianity and it is important for understanding the historical process of shaping dogmas, this concept has been more intensively analysed, primarily in connection with the contemporary development of the theology of the laity. Leon Siwecki remarks that "theologians describe the *sensus fidei* as a supernatural ability to understand the truth contained in the Revelation, even if it has not been expressed explicitly [...]. The sense of faith is perceived as a form of an instinct, a kind of intuitive perception which is deeply rooted in the reality of the Mystical Body of Christ. The *sensus fidei*, guided by the Holy Spirit, on the one hand leads to the rejection of an error, on the other hand, it is able to 'synthesize' various aspects of a particular truth of faith. A believer who lives his faith intensely does not really notice a specific, 'dry' number of statements or intellectual formulas, but rather encounters living Gospel [...]. Therefore, we must speak of an internal coherence between the sense of the faith and the life of grace. The *sensus fidei*, as a capability to have contact with the revealed things, aims by its nature at the object of the revelation and convinces the faithful of its credibility. However, one has to remember — Siwecki reminds us — that it does not absolutely protect from creating false visions about what constitutes a deposit of faith."[34] Therefore, the Magisterium of the Church is obliged to listen to the sense of the faith, especially when it is expressed not only in the individual and personal dimension, as the sense of the faith of individual believers (*sensus fidei fidelis*), but above all as the *sensus fidei fidelium* — the sense of the faith of all believers. The International Theological Commission in the document "*Sensus fidei*" *in the Life of the Church* underlines that "the magisterium is responsible for nurturing and educating the *sensus fidelium*. Of course, those who exercise the magisterium, namely the pope and the bishops, are themselves, first of all, baptised members of the people of God, who participate by that very fact in the *sensus fidelium*,"[35] but as

[33] International Theological Commission: *Synodality in the Life*..., no. 64.
[34] L. Siwecki: "*Sensus fidei*...," pp. 85—87.
[35] International Theological Commission: "*Sensus fidei*"..., no. 76.

the document further states, "the magisterium also judges with authority whether opinions which are present among the People of God, and which may seem to be the *sensus fidelium*, actually correspond to the truth of the Tradition received from the Apostles […] Thus, judgement regarding the authenticity of the *sensus fidelium* belongs ultimately not to the faithful themselves nor to theology but to the magisterium."[36] Reminding this truth has crucial importance for understanding the role of the laity in the synodal process and, more broadly, for understanding the meaning of the synodality itself. Indeed, in the *Instrumentum laboris* for the first session of the General Assembly of the Synod on Synodality in Rome, one can find an explicit reservation that the synodal assembly cannot be understood as representative and legislative, analogous to a parliamentary structure with its dynamics of majority building[37]; so it does not work on the principles of parliamentary democracy or social debate, where the mechanisms of eristic, the art of mutual persuasion and building influence, and often the political game played to gain the advantage necessary to win the vote, turn out to be decisive for the final effect. The synodal assembly does not operate according to such mechanisms, because the very idea of synodality has nothing to do with implementing within the Church ways of functioning characteristic of parliamentary democracy or social and political organizations. Similarly, the synodal and ecclesial involvement of the laity does not come down to any form of direct or indirect exercise of power or putting pressure on the ecclesiastical decision-makers through public or majority opinion. "It is clear — the International Theological Commission emphasizes — that there can be no simple identification between the *sensus fidei* and public or majority opinion. These are by no means the same thing."[38]

What, then, should be the relationship between the *sensus fidei* of the faithful and the Magisterium of the Church? Its proper model does not apply only to the synod on synodality, but it arises from the essence of synodality as such, and at the same time it depicts the proper attitude of the laity towards the doctrinal and disciplinary authority in the Church. Leon Siwecki writes about it in the following way: "The sense of the faith, as a special capability to understand and define the revealed truth, should be seen as an assistance in recognizing the authentic doctrine, and not as an act that ratifies the teaching of the Magisterium of the Church on the juridical level. The magisterium, by virtue of its office, is the only guide of the sense of the faith in the Church. It is within its competence to

[36] Ibidem, no. 77.

[37] Cf. "*Instrumentum laboris*" *for the First Session of the XVI General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome* (10.2023), no. 48.

[38] International Theological Commission: "*Sensus fidei*"..., no. 118.

defend the authenticity of the revealed doctrine, and in particular those truths which are related to the piety of the faithful […]. Solely the magisterium has the dignity of an authority which decides about the 'fruits' of the sense of the faith. The authoritative intervention of the magisterium is necessary to determine whether a doctrine considered in the Church belongs to the revealed deposit [of faith]. The lay people, per se, or individuals, have no active doctrinal authority in terms of *de fide et moribus*. They cannot by themselves reach those results to which the development of dogmas moves forward."[39] This does not mean, obviously, that the place and role of the laity in the Church are insignificant. This kind of thinking, which marginalizes the role of the laity and at the same time absolutizes the power of the clergy, is a false extreme, standing in opposition to another mistake — striving to grant the laity the competence to determine by means of the democratic mechanisms the shape of the doctrinal teaching of the Church. So how to find the right balance between these extremes? By accepting an integral approach to the sense of the faith, "as a supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit given to all the faithful (both the clergy and the laity), revealing itself in the universal agreement on matters of faith and morals, and allowing the People of God, in unity with the magisterium and under its guidance, to stand firm in the faith."[40] As Antoni Nadbrzeżny highlights, "since the Second Vatican Council, there have been church institutions that give the official hearing for the lay faithful's opinions and discern to what extent their voice is a manifestation of an authentic sense of the faith. These institutions include: local synods, diocesan synods and pastoral councils on the diocesan and parish level. The condition for a fruitful dialogue is mutual respect, consideration for the received offices and charisms, as well as attentive and humble listening to the content of the spoken testimonies, which express genuine concern for the good of the Church."[41] The laity's voice, understood in this way, is more than mere advice; it is an active participation in the process of discernment, in which this voice is a necessary condition, although not sufficient in itself, and therefore, bringing light to the understanding of the reality of the Church, it needs at the same time verification and acceptance of the highest ecclesial authority, which in turn must be correctly embedded in the broadly understood tradition of the Church. Therefore, as Leon Siwecki remarks, "the distinction between 'infallibility *in credendo*' or passive infallibility, and 'infallibility *in docendo*' or active infallibility, does not mean a separation or division

[39] L. Siwecki: "*Sensus fidei…*," p. 94.

[40] A. Nadbrzeżny: "Zmysł wiary jako zjawisko eklezjalne. Kontekst teologiczno-historyczny." *Theological Research* 5 (2017), p. 58.

[41] Ibidem, p. 62.

between the hierarchy and lay Catholics. It is about a common relationship of exchange, a relationship in which a higher order is realized in mutual cooperation. There is an interpenetration between these types of infallibility [...]. Between the *sensus fidei* and the teaching of the magisterium of the Church there are reciprocal relations. The *sensus fidei* needs the magisterium, just as the teaching of the magisterium must take into consideration the fruits of the *sensus fidelium*. So we can speak about the interpenetration of these two realities. 'The mutuality' — coordination between the laity and the pastors of the Church should lead to many benefits, including the proclamation of the revealed truth."[42]

Conclusions

Good cooperation between clergy and lay people, built on mutual trust and respect, determines the right way of understanding the subjectivity of the laity in the Church. Without losing their own identity and without denying the specificity of their vocation, they become an authentic partners of the clergy in the work of evangelization, apostolate and mission, and in discerning the way in which God wants to shape the future of God's Church. Moreover, one may be tempted to say that in the near future these Church communities will develop and grow, in which the relations between their members will be based on the synodal model of the Church. Synodality is not a threat to the Church, but an opportunity — provided it is properly understood and wisely implemented. Trying to find an adequate answer to the question of how this implementation should be achieved is today one of the most urgent tasks facing the ecclesial community.

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[42] L. Siwecki: "*Sensus fidei*...", pp. 95—96.

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Aleksander Ryszard Bańka

La synodalité et la subjectivité des laïcs dans l'Église

Résumé

La XVI[e] Assemblée générale ordinaire du Synode des évêques, lancée par le pape François les 9 et 10 octobre 2021 à Rome sous le thème : « Pour une Église synodale : communion, participation et mission », engage les laïcs dans la co-construction du processus synodal à une échelle sans précédent. Pourquoi cette voix des laïcs est-elle si importante qu'elle devrait être entendue non seulement dans le cadre du processus synodal, mais, de manière plus large, dans tout le style synodal de fonctionnement de l'Église ? Cela tient au fait que les laïcs ne constituent en aucun cas une « partie inférieure » de l'Église. Leur subjectivité dans l'Église repose avant tout sur leur identité chrétienne reçue lors du baptême, et non sur la distinction entre clercs et laïcs, qui est secondaire et définit la nature de la vocation vécue au sein de l'Église. Cet article met en lumière comment le pape François, en développant la notion de synodalité, poursuit de manière cohérente l'intuition conciliaire de redonner aux laïcs leur pleine subjectivité dans l'Église et approfondit la compréhension de leur identité chrétienne.

Mots-clés : synodalité, laïcs, Église, subjectivité, identité

Aleksander Ryszard Bańka

La sinodalità e la soggettività dei laici nella Chiesa

Riassunto

La XVI Assemblea Generale Ordinaria del Sinodo dei Vescovi, avviata da Papa Francesco il 9 e 10 ottobre 2021 a Roma con il tema: «Per una Chiesa sinodale: comunione, partecipazione e missione», coinvolge i laici nella co-costruzione del processo sinodale in una misura senza precedenti. Perché questa voce dei laici è così importante che dovrebbe essere ascoltata non solo nel processo sinodale, ma — più ampiamente — in tutto lo stile sinodale di funzionamento della Chiesa? Ciò è legato al fatto che i laici non costituiscono affatto «una parte inferiore» della Chiesa. La base della loro soggettività nella Chiesa non è la distinzione tra clero e laici, che è secondaria e definisce la natura della vocazione vissuta nella Chiesa, ma la loro identità cristiana ricevuta nel battesimo. Questo articolo mostra come Papa Francesco, sviluppando il concetto di sinodalità, porti avanti in modo coerente l'intuizione conciliare di restituire piena soggettività ai laici nella Chiesa e di approfondire la comprensione della loro identità cristiana.

Parole chiave: sinodalità, laici, Chiesa, soggettività, identità.

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Aiming at Good Work: The Conference of European Churches in the Face of the Global Changes in the Area of Work

Abstract: The future of human work is one of the crucial issues the ecumenical movement reflects on. For example, the question plays an essential role in the social teaching of the Conference of European Churches. Apart from issuing many documents and statements, the organisation established the Church Action on Labour and Life (CALL), a working group called to promote a Christian viewpoint in European and global discussions about a just socio-economic order, including employment and labour. The article outlines the teaching on human work developed by the CALL, setting it in the broader context of the current debate on the future of work. It also briefly considers similarities between the CALL's concepts and the approaches of Churches in Europe, with emphasis on the Evangelical Church in Germany. Finally, the article discusses the concept of good work and the guidelines for sustainable digitisation, which are CALL's primary area of focus and its biggest achievement.

Keywords: Conference of European Churches, Church Action on Labour and Life, good work, digitisation, wellbeing

Introduction

Since its very beginning, social involvement and social problems have been crucial field of study in the ecumenical movement. The largest ecumenical organisations and bodies, such as the World Council of Churches and the Conference of European Churches (hereafter: the CEC), dedicated much of their efforts and time working out a society concept which would be as close as possible to the Gospel teaching. The ecumenical search for a better, more just, and more peaceful society is a fascinating intellectual adventure, as ecumenists must always balance confessional, theological, cultural, and geographical peculiarities. It is sometimes extremely difficult to find a common places in many worldviews, stances and everyday experiences; however, as many reports and programmes show, it is feasible.

Among many topics, the future of human work is one of the crucial issues the ecumenical movement reflects on. For example, the question plays an essential role in the CEC's agenda of social teaching. Apart from issuing many documents and statements, the organisation established the Church Action on Labour and Life (hereafter: the CALL), a working group that "addresses employment and related economic and social issues from the perspective of Christian theology and a Christian way of life and seeks to promote a Christian viewpoint in debates about European economic and social policies."[1] The CALL is a network of theologians from different Churches belonging to the CEC, many of whom have expertise in the Christian approaches to work. As embedded in their Churches, the group not only produces the teaching on its own, but also collects and brings together their respective Churches' teaching. Thus, it is a conceptual meeting point that represents Churches outside the theological framework and inspires the Churches for a more intensive reflection on profound transformation and related crises taking place in the field of work.

The article outlines approaches to human work developed by the Church Action on Labour and Life, setting them in the broader context of the current debate on the future of work. It also briefly considers similarities between the CALL's concepts and the approaches of Churches in Europe, with emphasis on the Evangelical Church in Germany. Finally, the article discusses the concept of good work and the guidelines for sustainable digitisation, which are CALL's primary area of focus and its biggest achievement. The literary analysis is the main method used in this article.

1. The Conference of European Churches

Before reading about the CALL's teaching, one needs a short introduction to the Conference of European Churches, which along with the

[1] The Conference of European Churches: "Church Action on Labour and Life (CALL) Network." Available online at: https://ceceurope.org/employment-and-social-issues/call-network/ [accessed 25.06.2023].

World Council of Churches constitute the ecumenical mainstream. The organisation, founded during a meeting in 1959 in Nyborg, Denmark, gathers 114 Churches of different confessional traditions: Orthodox, Protestant and Anglican from all over Europe. It is a body coordinating Church councils in individual countries. The Conference main purpose is to constitute various spaces of encounter and cooperation among the Church representatives, such as working groups, think tanks, seminaries and dialogue groups that focus on specific targets. An essential field of the CEC's involvement is also the cooperation with other ecumenical bodies, such as the WCC and the Catholic Council of the Bishop's Conference of Europe, and political and social organisations, first and foremost with the European Union and the Council of Europe.[2] In addition, the CEC contributes to the most crucial issues of the contemporary political and ethical discussions, such as human rights, economic and ecological justice, peace and reconciliation, bioethics, civic education, labour, unemployment, and precarious work.

The CEC's constitution (in the preamble) enacted in 2018 in Novi Sad, Serbia (first version of the constitution was adopted in 1964) defines the organisation's nature and purposes as follows: "The Conference of European Churches is an ecumenical fellowship of Churches in Europe which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Member Churches of the Conference seek, by the grace of the Triune God, to pursue together the path of growing conciliar understanding on which they have set out. In faithfulness to the Gospel, as witnessed in Holy Scripture and transmitted in and through the Church by the power of the Holy Spirit, they seek to continue to grow in a fellowship of faith, hope and love. Faithful to this Gospel, they also seek to make a common contribution to the mission of the Church, to the safeguarding of life and the well-being of all humankind […] In its commitment to Europe as a whole, the Conference seeks to help the European Churches to share their spiritual life, to strengthen their common witness and service and to promote the unity of the Church and peace in the world."[3]

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[2] S. Losansky: *Öffentliche Kirche für Europa: eine Studie zum Beitrag der christlichen Kirchen zum gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhalt in Europa*. Leipzig 2010, p. 154.

[3] "Constitution of the Conference of European Churches." In: *And now, what are you waiting for? CEC and its Mission in a Changing Europe, Report of the 14th General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches Budapest, Hungary 3 to 8 July 2013*. Ed. C. Balan. Geneva 2014, p. 99.

2. The Church Action on Labour and Life

The CALL proves this emphasis on human work as one of the Conference's most significant fields of interest. Set up in 2010 during the CEC General Assembly in Brussels by the Commission "Church and Society," the CALL network was dedicated to the problem that, for many years, has been occupying a central place in the political, sociological and economic discussions that seek the best ways to avoid the crises brought about by the changes in human labour. The final report of the founding assembly enumerated several network's crucial tasks: it "will address employment and related economic and social issues from the perspective of Christian theology and Christian way of life and promote a Christian perspective in the debate on Europe's economic and social policies. It will provide a platform to exchange views and experiences on economic questions in different parts of Europe and, thereby, to bridge gap between European societies. It will build a capacity of European Churches to act on these issues, for instance, by offering educational and information materials and training."[4] The same document initiated five network's key and more detailed working areas: work-life balance, precarious work, religion in the public sphere, sustainable economy, and information on economic ethics. It is worth mentioning that all these areas overlapped with the crucial concerns of social politics rather than appealing to the then sociological and philosophical discussions on the nature of labour transformations. This, however, was changing in following years.

3. The fears about the future of human labour

The sociological scenarios of the future of labour have dominated many socio-political discussions at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries. Suffice it to mention the widely referenced book *The End of Work* by Jeremy Rifkin, who summarised many forecasts of technological unemployment and claimed that the world is approaching a clash between the rise of population and a decrease in job places due to the automa-

[4] The Conference of European Churches: "Churches Launch CALL Network for a Just Economy in Europe." Available online at: https://ceceurope.org/storage/app/media/uploads/2010/04/Report_on_the_CALL_Conference.pdf [accessed 14.09.2024].

tion of production. Rifkin, however, switched from a pessimistic view to the more positive vision of the future of labour, which he hoped, would be more democratic, humanistic, and prosperous. Twenty years after publishing his famous book, he predicts a new era, without labour coercion and labour commodification. This great shift he views as "a half-century from now, our grandchildren are likely to look back at the era of mass employment in the market with the same sense of utter disbelief as we look upon slavery and serfdom in former times" and adds that "the very idea that a human being's worth was measured almost exclusively by his or her productive output of goods and services and material wealth will seem primitive, even barbaric."[5] Of course, he knows that such a brave new world needs a preparatory period during which a considerable number of skilled and professional workers will lead the global economy to fit better with the intelligent technology and he even estimates that this transition period will last fifty years.

But Rifkin seems to be in the minority. Most experts are much less optimistic about the future of human labour, and, consequently, about the stability of social systems. The reasons are different. Some claim that diminishing employment will bring about social turbulences and deepen the economic gap between the well-off and the poor within and between societies. Some predict that the world is approaching the date of technological singularity, which means crossing a boundary beyond which humanity will not be able to control technological progress. Some fear the rise of new destructive ideologies, like communism or fascism in early capitalism, as a response to inequalities and changes in social life. Some are concerned about the growing phenomenon of deskilling, that "may result when a job is automated or when a more complex job is fragmented into a sequence of easily performed units and less mental labour is required of workers and jobs become routinised and boring."[6] Some worry about the psychological and anthropological consequences of enforced idleness which would be caused by the lack of real need of work. Finally, some accuse a global meritocratic elite of being reluctant to change this situation which this very elite profits from.[7]

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[5] J. Derbyshire: "Jeremy Rifkin: Intelligent Technology and the Future of Human Labour." *Prospect* 28 May (2014), pp. 4–5.

[6] M. L. Andersen, H. L. Taylor: *Sociology. Understanding a Diverse Society*. Belmont 2008, p. 484.

[7] Z. Bauman: *Płynna nowoczesność*. Kraków 2006, p. 23.

4. The CALL's "orientation aid"

The CALL network addresses many of these concerns and anxieties. But it is worth noting that the question of human labour is of great importance for many Churches' social teachings. Perhaps it would be too obvious to reference the classic Encyclical *Laborem exernces* by John Paul II, about an inherent interdependence of human labour and human dignity. However, a significant contribution to the Christian concept of labour came from the Evangelical Church in Germany (*Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland* – EKD), which has recently considered this issue in several cohesive and up-to-date statements. The EKD, while enumerating many causes of the contemporary labour transformation, states that societies fail to adapt to the new circumstances brought about by the rapid technological progress, just because of different reductionist policies and ideologies, neglecting the influence of social institutions, such as state, education, family, culture, and the Church. Therefore, the world needs a profound transformation, occurring in the systems and hierarchies of values. Thus, it should be a moral-ethical transformation, that would embed human labour in the axiological foundation of two values: solidarity and self-determination, which refer, in turn, to human freedom and responsibility. This value system is based on human self-defining as being created and saved by God: "Through work, people participate in the forming of the world, and through their actions people carry out the responsibility for the world mandated to them by God. People, as God's creatures, created in his image, are freed and commissioned to further develop God's creation in an ongoing process, particularly when it comes to carrying out the biblical commandment to protect it. Ideally people carry out this work in a profession, in which they are able to cultivate their talents. This can only succeed, however, by cooperating with others, since work is something communal, for which people bear individual responsibility in the freedom that they are granted. Self-determination and solidarity are inextricably interconnected and therefore, from a Christian point of view, need to be taken into consideration by both employers and trade unions."[8]

The CEC, in a comprehensive study on the future perspective of the European Union, when considering the current socio-economic situation of the continent, conveys a similar teaching on human work: "Work is

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[8] Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland: *Solidarity and Self-determination in a Changing Working World. A Memorandum of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) on Work, Social Partnership, and Trade Unions*. Hannover 2015, p. 49.

part of God's calling, the mandate given to human beings. The way to fulfil your calling is to engage in work in the broadest sense: not only in paid work, but also in family work, neighbourhood obligations and so on. Through daily work, one cares not only for one's own needs but also contributes to meeting the needs of others. All work is, in principle, done in a communal spirit."[9]

5. The concept of good work

These examples of the EKD's and CEC's teaching help introduce the concepts worked out by the CALL network, basically because the Action appeals to a need for axiological change, accentuated by the EKD. Most of the proposals precede a thorough examination of political and sociological trends with an outline of the axiological and ethical foundations of a given concept.

Over the fourteen years of its operation, the CALL network studied the issues regarding human labour which could be classified into two main topics: contemporary conditions of good work and the future of work and social relationships in the face of digitisation and technological progress.

The first theme refers mainly to the concept of good work, which was born in Finland, and then spread among theological circles in the UK, Germany and Austria. Finally, in 2012, it was elaborated by the Action during the CEC General Assembly. In the presence of the members of the European Parliament and the delegates of many NGOs, the CALL's group presented ten criteria of good work in the reality of changes brought about by technological progress. It is worth noting that they are a sort of Christian counterpart to the ten decent work indicators listed by the International Labour Organization.[10]

The starting point to define these criteria is a holistic view of human labour, grounded in the Bible which regards human beings as living in a field of integrated relationships with God, other people, and creation. This is, however, not a mere sum of "contacts," but a dynamic field of moral/ethical commitments stemming from the Christian faith and

[9] The Conference of European Churches: "Seeking and Prosperity for our Common Future." In: *Beyond Prosperity? European Economic Governance as a Dialogue between Theology, Economics and Politics*. Ed. P. Pavlovic. Geneva 2017, p. 86.

[10] J.-M. Servais: *International Labour Organization*. Alphen am den Rijn 2011, p. 174.

human individual recognising oneself as being created by God and living in God's promise of salvation and blessing. Human work can only be fully comprehended when considered within this field.

Therefore, the sphere of human work needs a moral and ethical transformation, led by Christian Churches, in cooperation with civic society organisations. The axiological foundation of this transformation is the value of human dignity. Christians should resist regulations or their lack, practices and ideologies that do not protect human labour against injustice, instability, exclusions and exploitation which impair human dignity.

So, the criteria for good work should be read out in light of such a theological, Christian concept of human labour. Since their formulation is rather concise, I will quote their shorthand, ten-point version: "1. Good work produces things of real value. 2. Good work respects the dignity of every human being, women and men of all ages, as made in the image of God. 3. Good work gives service to your neighbour. 4. Good work gives the opportunity to fulfil your vocation and to get training. 5. Good work does not make too many demands on creation (minimising pollution and the wasting of natural resources. 6. Good work gives at least a subsistence income and good working conditions. 7. Good work brings the possibility of influencing working practices and the rhythm of work. 8. Good work enables adequate rest and relaxation, health and safety. 9. Good work affirms for each member of the working community the right to participate in decision making. 10. Good work balances family life and paid work and gives lifelong security to both women and men."[11]

The declaratory nature of this list may give the impression of being too general, idealistic, and somewhat vague, but it plays its indicative role in helping to consider human labour in all its references: it cannot be reduced to mere paid work, but must be considered one's vocation. This is all the more important, the more commodified labour becomes; the more it becomes an object of a pure economic calculation. So, of course, the CALL network does not stop at this list of criteria for good work, but, based on these, proposes legal regulations and economic measures to bring the reality of work in line with "good work." The network focuses, in particular, on issues such as precarious conditions of work, work intensity and workload, unemployment, an increasingly competitive labour market, labour mobility and Euro-orphanhood, to mention a few. The Action discerns the Churches role mainly in building awareness among Christians, including recognising oppressive structures on the local level

[11] The Church Action on Labour and Life: "Paper Policy on Good Work." Available online at: https://ceceurope.org/storage/app/media/uploads/2015/12/1-_CALL_Policy_Paper_on_Good_Work_-fin.pdf [accessed 10.07.2023].

and teaching the Biblical approach to human labour, as well as practical help and interventions in individual situations when human dignity in labour is threatened.[12]

6. Advancing digitisation and the future of human work

The criteria for good work have become a substantial foundation for the Action's further fields of interest. A particularly studied topic is advancing digitisation and its impact on human labour, which was discussed during the network gathering in Berlin "Digitisation and the future of work and social relations," and then in CALL's project "Wellbeing of digitalized societies and workplaces."

Basically, the Action refers to the future scenarios of human labour from the perspective of technological progress. Thus, the CALL's theologians are about to produce a Christian approach to the threats and chances predicted by sociologists, economists or politicians. Such an approach must result from a fundamental Christian belief, already outlined above: that people are created by God, endowed with dignity and called to cooperate with God for the sake of creation. Hence the theologians discern an ambiguity: on the one hand, Christians should affirm technological progress as a manifestation of cooperation in God's creative work; on the other, they should take care for those who are excluded or suffering due to this progress.[13]

Having noticed differing views on the future consequences of technological advancement on human labour, the Action focuses on the threats caused by these changes, mainly increasing precarious work. When asking about solutions, the theologians discern a decisive role played by the state's social politics. Technological progress, including digitalisation, raises great expectations for improving human well-being, but it creates anxieties as well, related mainly to the future of human labour. The appearance of many new professions and the disappearance of old ones bring about rapid upheavals in the sphere of work. In addition, the proliferation of new forms of work, such as work on demand via apps and crowdworking, increases social instability, exacerbated by a growing

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[12] The Church Action on Labour and Life: "Paper Policy on Good Work…," p. 12.

[13] P. Kopiec: "Ruch ekumeniczny wobec współczesnych przemian w sferze pracy i ich konsekwencji dla rodziny: diagnozy i propozycje Konferencji Kościołów Europejskich." *Forum Teologiczne* 20 (2019), p. 85.

scope of precarious work, usually related to self-employment. A dream of work-life balance becomes unattainable. This has severe consequences for social bonds and psychological, mental and spiritual well-being, especially among young people. Such a social diagnosis mobilises Churches to intensify efforts to demonstrate and explain the Christian model of work structures, based on human dignity and social justice. Besides building axiological foundations, the Churches take more specific actions, such as creating the crowdworking platforms.[14]

Finally, the Action extends its focus to other processes and phenomena in the realm of human work, such as the widening wage gap, technological unemployment, and the increasing polarisation of marked by the decline of medium-skilled occupations. These trends are undeniably contributing to growing social fragmentation. In this context, the CALL urges Churches to establish a network of meeting places for active reflection on values and social relations, just to help to overcome social isolation."[15]

7. The guidelines of sustainable digitisation

The hitherto Action's fields of involvement and its axiological foundation meet in the recently completed project entitled "Wellbeing of digitalized societies and workplaces." The project was co-funded by the European Union and supported by many Church' organizations and agencies cooperating in and with the Council of European Churches.

Upon reading the project's description, one can easily discern recurrent key ideas that influence the hierarchy of values of the European Union, such as sustainability and well-being. Even though they have already been explained, defined, and used in a thousand documents, declarations, and programmes, the Action offers a novel approach, linking a more technical and legal perspective of the European political institutions with a Christian view on human work and happiness.

The most significant result of the project are the guidelines for digitisation serving life and wellbeing. The CALL team thus followed the tradition of many Churches' organisations, producing a document that can be regarded as something that the Evangelical Church in Germany

[14] Church Action on Labour and Life: "Digitalisation and the future of works and social relations." Available online at: https://ceceurope.org/storage/app/media/uploads/2018/05/2018-CEC-CALL-Berlin-Conference-on-digitalisation-Final-Conclusion.pdf [accessed 15.12.2023].

[15] Church Action on Labour and Life: "Digitalisation and the future of works and social relations...," p. 2.

calls *Orientierungshilfe* – an orientation aid. It is about finding oneself in the dynamic, unstable and often unintelligible world of digital revolution. The guidelines are based on several tenets, frequently repeated in various Christian studies on current socio-economic and cultural phenomena: that the results of digitisation must not be left to mere market regulation and individual choice and that digital tools, though bringing new chances for human wellbeing, must be constrained by relevant ethical norms and be people-oriented. In addition, the guidelines' authors reference the concept of good work and perceive that digitisation will play a key role in future successes and failures of the striving for better human work. Yet, the first and foremost is the fundamental Christian truth that God created the world and that creation "needs to be treated with care and consideration," and that we are called for sustainable management over creation.[16]

When defining, the CALL's team distinguishes between ethical and practical guidelines. Referring to the first, however, the theologians are relatively modest in seeking the cornerstones for the future ethical foundation of sustainable digitisation. Somewhat disappointingly, they appeal to several documents produced by international political organisations concerning issues such as climate change or data protection (e.g., the Declaration "Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade," the European Union's Digital Compass, and the Paris Agreement, to limit global warming to 1.5°C. Climate and data protection goals are put under the umbrella of the principle of sustainability in its three dimensions: ecological, social, and economic. Only at the end of this chapter the theologians appeal to more "comprehensible" values, such as inclusion, freedom of choice, participation, security and "putting people at the centre of all decisions," all of which they put together with the "pillars of Christian ethics": dignity, justice, solidarity, and equality.[17]

The practical guidelines are explained more specifically. The document addressed three points: inclusivity in design, data protection and individual sovereignty and ecological aspects. As in the previous case, sustainability is also an axiological point of reference here.

Inclusivity in design includes the five aspects. First, all stakeholders should participate in design processes, which are eventually supposed to lead to sustainable digitisation. Second, each digital design process must include people with disabilities, and those who have difficulty using digital solutions and tools. Third, digitisation must counter social exclusion while, at the same time, addressing its causes. Fourth, digitisation cannot

[16] Church Action on Labour and Life: "Call for a Digitisation which Serves Life and the Wellbeing of Societies and Workplaces." Available online at: https://call-for-digital-wellbeing.eu/ [accessed 12.01.2024].

[17] Ibidem.

mean the negligence or disappearance of analogue solutions, rather, it should remain a matter of choice. Fifth, political and legal structures safeguard positive digitisation as well as its evaluation and improvement.

The guidelines concerning data protection and individual sovereignty address not only legal regulations, but are supposed to be regarded as the common good and foundation of social order.

Finally, digitisation's impact on ecology must be taken into account and thought of from a long-term perspective. It means that the cost of pro-ecological solutions or reducing ecological risks must not succumb to sheer economic calculations. In this regard, the theologians propose a whole list of specific solutions such as green and lean coding (even though the declaration does not address critical voices against these concepts); limits imposed on data storage, to reduce the need for data centres; reducing, as much as possible, energy consumption; using only renewable energies to run systems; re-using and transmitting waste heat from servers centres; durability of digital products and solutions, including "reparability, regular updates, modularity and recyclability as essential elements in the design and use process."[18] The ecological aspect of the practical guidelines also encompasses paying attention to the working conditions during the production process.

Conclusions

The guidelines for digitisation serving life and wellbeing may seem to be unfeasible and even too "dreamlike." They also may be seen as a kind of theological "wishful thinking." However, such an opinion would be unfair and unjustified, if we consider the concepts by the CALL as an "aid orientation," *Orientierungshilfe*, as documents that are intended to help readership to become familiar with an issue, the risks involved and possible solutions to overcome these risks, even when these solutions appear as too idealistic and too distant. After all, demonstrating the Christian ideal in culture, society, economy, technology, etc., is one of the Christian missionary tasks. In this context, a criticism can be raised: the concepts of CALL are conveyed in the declarations and documents written in somewhat technical and sociological language. This is justified for the sake of better comprehensibility. However, given that CALL is a theological, Christian think tank, more references to Christian ethics/moral theology

[18] Ibidem.

and more theological language are missing, at least in the parts where a Christian foundation is declared. Nevertheless, notwithstanding this criticism, the CALL is a valuable initiative that can help join Christian Churches in the global debate on the future of human labour, and can help clarify the difficult sociological and political issues related to human work for theologians and Christians in general.

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Piotr Kopiec

En quête d'un bon travail : la Conférence des Églises européennes face aux transformations globales du monde du travail

Résumé

L'avenir du travail humain est l'une des questions clés abordées par le mouvement œcuménique dans sa réflexion sociale. Cette question joue un rôle important dans l'enseignement social de la Conférence des Églises européennes (CEC). En plus de publier de nombreux documents et déclarations, cette organisation a fondé l'Action de l'Église sur le travail et la vie (CALL), un groupe de travail dédié à promouvoir une vision chrétienne dans les débats européens et mondiaux sur un ordre socio-économique juste, notamment en matière d'emploi et du travail. Cet article présente l'enseignement élaboré par CALL sur le travail humain, en le situant dans le contexte plus large du débat actuel sur l'avenir du travail. Il examine brièvement les similitudes entre les concepts de CALL et les approches des Églises en Europe, avec un accent particulier sur l'Église évangélique en Allemagne. Enfin, l'article explore la notion de travail décent et les lignes directrices pour une numérisation durable, qui représentent le principal domaine d'intérêt de CALL et sa plus grande réalisation.

Mots-clés : Conférence des Églises européennes, Action de l'Église sur le travail et la vie, bon travail, numérisation, bien-être

Piotr Kopiec

Verso un lavoro dignitoso: la Conferenza delle Chiese europee di fronte ai cambiamenti globali nel mondo del lavoro

Riassunto

Il futuro del lavoro umano è una delle questioni fondamentali su cui si concentra il movimento ecumenico nella sua analisi sociale. Questo tema svolge un ruolo significativo nell'insegnamento sociale della Conferenza delle Chiese europee (CEC). Oltre a pubblicare numerosi documenti e dichiarazioni, l'organizzazione ha istituito l'Azione della Chiesa sul lavoro e la vita (CALL), un gruppo di lavoro dedicato a promuovere una visione cristiana nei dibattiti europei e globali su un ordine socio-economico giusto, incluso il mercato del lavoro. Questo articolo presenta l'insegnamento elaborato da CALL sul lavoro umano, inserendolo in un contesto più ampio del dibattito attuale sul futuro del lavoro. Vengono anche analizzate brevemente le somiglianze tra i concetti di CALL e gli approcci delle Chiese in Europa, con particolare attenzione alla Chiesa Evangelica in Germania. Infine, l'articolo discute la nozione di lavoro dignitoso e le linee guida per una digitalizzazione sostenibile, che rappresentano il principale campo d'interesse di CALL e il suo maggiore contributo.

Parole chiave: Conferenza delle Chiese europee, Azione della Chiesa sul lavoro e la vita, lavoro dignitoso, digitalizzazione, benessere

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The Influence of Technology on Human Thinking and Values

Abstract: This article argues that the contemporary world has transitioned from a natural to a "technical world," following Paul Tillich's terminology, dominated by technology. To understand this shift, we must differentiate between mere technique, technology as a system, and the underlying technological thought. However, the central concern lies not in technology itself, but in its profound impact on human values, language, and modes of thinking. This paper aims to elucidate technology as a human product and, crucially, to examine its subsequent, transformative influence on humanity, particularly within the realm of ethical and axiological frameworks.

Keywords: axiology, ethics, ontology, technology, technics

Introduction

The world in which we live has long ceased to be a world of nature and has become a world of human culture, dominated by technology. Human thought must grapple with the world that was given form by human being, that is, technology. Similarly, theological thought, trying to answer the question about the meaning of existence, must grapple with technology. In doing so, it must communicate in the language of technology and science. The Holy Scripture provided answers to the question of what the natural world is for human person in soteriological and axiological categories. Axiological evaluation is based on the concept developed by Arno Anzenbacher and concerns the hierarchical arrangement of values according to the categories of animality, humanity, and faith. The justification for the value hierarchy will be presented in the next part of the article. Reading the Holy Scriptures and scientific investigations, one can notice many differences that separate the world of religion from the world of science. The most distinctive aspect is the axiological dimension of the language of the Bible and scientific papers. Science since the time of Max Weber has not sought to evaluate either the world or the knowledge of what we call the world. Positivism and neo-positivism deny the possibility of axiological evaluation of what we call scientific knowledge. The world has become neutral to positivists, because it is neither good nor beautiful.

Following Bertrand Russell, one could argue that scientific knowledge presents neither a good nor a beautiful world. And even one of the main terms of ontology and science — truth — has become a problematic term in relation to the knowledge of the world conceived of as an ontological unity. The language of religion is completely different, which deliberately uses axiological terms as well as ontological terms. The purpose of biblical language is to show man the meaning of his existence, his place in the universe and his relationship with the Creator. The Holy Scriptures refer to the world using axiological terms already in the first chapter of its first book, Genesis. The world is good. This is what distinguishes biblical language from neutral science. The language of the Holy Scriptures is a poetic language, which is beautiful in itself. The Holy Scriptures, through language, simultaneously tell about the beauty of life and existence, because God not only created being, but at the same time wants this being to continue to multiply. The Bible glorifies life and not only life eternal, but also temporal life. In the theology of the Old and New Testaments, earthly life is not understood as preparation for eternal life, as a kind of prelude to what is prepared for man. For the Holy Scriptures, life is a blessing that was created for man, and he has the task of guarding, protecting and multiplying this life. Therefore, the process of creation did not end with the work of creation itself, but this work is constantly perpetuated. Man continues the work of creation. Man's work differs from that of nature's in that it is made with a certain intention. And it is this aspect that gives us a lot to think about. Is the world that man shapes in his own image really axiologically neutral because it is created through scientific knowledge and technology? In this article, I put forward the thesis that no work of man is axiologically neutral and the same is true for technique and technology.

Technology as an instrument of man's rebellion against fate

Human work is fundamentally distinguished from God's work already in the first book of the Bible. In biblical language, God works while creating, and his action is defined by the word ברא.[1] However, when man begins his work, his action is characterized by the word עבד.[2] Such a difference is not only surprising, because it shows the qualitative difference in how God creates and how man creates, but it also shows us the unattainable aspect of God's action, which man has no way of grasping and achieving. This aspect of God's action is creation through the construction of that which originally exists only as an idea, as a thought, and whose shapes and substance are called into existence. Such an action can only be done by God, and man can only do one thing: work with what has already been created. Such an action by God equally becomes that which is envied by man, who in his work encounters obstacles such as uncertainty, risk, and chance. Many religious myths, including the Holy Scriptures, tell of man's rebellion against God or the gods. Man rebels to possess the same agency that God possesses. In the Bible, this is described in the sentence "That we might be like God." The text is not only about man living like the gods, but also about excluding from his existence or his being what Plato in his work *Laws* calls that which controls all human affairs. Plato calls that which is steering human affairs τυχή[3] and καιρος,[4] translated as 'chance' and 'luck'. A man who wants to act in the same way as God wants to act in such a way as to precisely control his own existence — to free himself from uncertainty, risk, chance and luck. It also means to create not by simply duplicating καινος,[5] but by producing νεος.[6] And here, at this point, we move from religious thought to philosophical thought, from the mythological rebellion of man against the limits of his own existence to transcending these very limits. We enter philosophical thought, which first calls such efforts of man κυβερνετικη[7] τεχνη.[8]

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[1] ברא means 'to create', but also 'build' or 'supply'. W. Baumgartener, L. Koehler: *Hebräisches udn Aramäisches Lexicon zum Alten Testament*. Leiden 1967, pp. 146 ff.

[2] עבד means 'to work' and also 'to serve'. Ibidem, pp. 730 f.

[3] Τυχή 'fate'. V. Prach: *Řecko-český slovník*. Praha 1993, p. 531.

[4] Καιρος here means 'chance' or 'accident', but it can also be translated as 'time'. J.B. Souček: *Řecko-český slovník k Novému zákonu*. Kalich—Praha 1987, p. 130.

[5] Καινος means 'new, completely new, new as opposed to old'. Ibidem.

[6] Νεος means 'new, new in reference to the old'. Ibidem, p. 174.

[7] Κυβέρνησις in translation means 'leading, steering', or 'managing something'. Ibidem, p. 151.

[8] Τεχνη means 'skill, knowledge, craft', or 'art'. Ibidem, p. 257.

The word τεχνη plays a very important role here, because it is an oxymoron for fate and luck. It is Plato who uses this word to emphasize that man is a being who — with his τεχνη, or his skill — can counteract fate and luck. Τεχνη can be translated as technology, and at the same time as human skill. We can also say a technological skill of man. Plato emphasizes that a man who has the necessary τεχνη can reverse fate, chance and luck. He can even calculate the percentage of uncertainty, that is, risk. He can even do something more, such as calculate the amount of risk and say what is the chance for this or that to happen in a person's life. There is, however, a condition here, and this condition is the control not only of one's own existence, but also the control of nature, things, and the entirety of human society. That is why Plato invokes a term that was well known to all ancient Greeks, κυβερνετικη τεχνη, and gives this term a new meaning. The term κυβερνετικη τεχνη meant 'the ability to steer a ship'. Robert Piotrowski wrote about the term κυβερνετικη τεχνη: "Knowledge of steering has been accumulated since the dawn of humanity, but it was only the Greeks who gave it its current name. The term τεχνη means the art of steering a ship, so the first of more general considerations concerning cybernetics bears clear traces of the origin of this term, which was introduced to philosophy by Plato."[9] In the same article, Piotrkowski lists three classes of systems in which steering processes occur: organisms, mechanisms, and social systems.[10] Plato uses the term τεχνη as a human skill. In *Laws*, Plato highly values τεχνη. However, in the Socratic dialogue *Gorgias*, τεχνη is also described by Plato as a danger. It was in this work that Plato opposed technology to virtue, in Greek αρετή.[11] The term τεχνη is understood by Plato as a means to achieve goals.

Jan Patočka,[12] a Czech philosopher, in his interpretation of *Gorgias* claims that complete nihilism is the foundation of τεχνη.

Technical thinking implies that there is no ethical reasoning or virtue in technical cognition and does not attempt to answer questions concerning the meaning of all human actions. Τεχνη as a way of thinking knows only the will to power.

So, we have the oxymorons τεχνή and αρεθή, two words that are the opposite of each other. What they have in common is their origin; this is because neither technology nor virtues are natural phenomena, but are artificialities of human thinking. And we have to work very carefully with human products, because the domination of one over the other leads to

[9] R. Piotrkowski: "Filozoficzne założenia cybernetyki." *The Peculiarity of Man* 16 (2012), p. 134.

[10] Ibidem.

[11] Αρετή means 'virtue, ability'. J.B. Souček: *Řecko-český slovník*..., p. 45.

[12] J. Patočka: *Platon. Přednášky z antické filozofie*. Praha 1991, p. 154.

disaster. Heraclitus of Ephesus knew about this and perhaps even wrote about it, but to this day only fragments of his writing, Περι φυσεον,[13] have survived. However, we know from fragments of other Greek philosophers that technology did not earn a high esteem in the eyes of Heraclitus, because he feared the domination of technical thinking over man. Greek culture and its fruit, philosophy, found in technology attributes that can dominate thinking and *de facto* dehumanize man.

But let there be no misunderstanding. Philosophy does not refer to technology only pejoratively. In Platonic thought, we do not find an *a priori* negative attitude towards technology. Plato emphasized the balance of the relationship between technology and virtues. Plato was not a representative of the Cynicism school, so he did not reject culture or its achievements. However, Plato subordinated culture and its achievements to critical thinking. And here he saw the meaning of philosophical work in the assessment of the technical development of culture. He did not accept the achievements of culture jointly, but subjected them to critical philosophical thought. He feared that technical thought would dominate the entire area of thought and consequently also values. He gave us an example of critical thinking, and in this way, technology became a problem that must be thought through critically, and so does the domination of technical thought over axiological thought.

The problem of axiological valuation

One of the great premises of science is the belief in the axiological neutrality of the world, scientific knowledge, cultural achievements and technological development. Neutrality means that the world is neither good nor evil. The external world — that is, the object — has no subjectivity, that is, no moral basis. Only man has moral subjectivity; in other words, he meets the basic criteria that constitute a morally responsible being. The attributes that can describe a moral subject can be derived from the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. We will define a moral subject based on four fundamental premises. The subject must be endowed with free will, must be endowed with reason and must have a conscience. Only such a being can be morally responsible for his work. The subject is distinguished from the object precisely by attributes such as freedom, conscience and thinking. According to Immanuel Kant, man is a rational being

[13] V. Jaksicová, M. Suchý: *Antologia z diel filozofov.* Vol. I. Bratislava 1991.

because he can connect his thoughts with objective reality. Human being is also an axiological being, meaning that human being can judge or assign value to the universe.[14]

The scientific basis is the radical separation of the knowing subject from the known object. The scientist, just like the technician, is supposed to stand at a distance from the object that knows or constructs reality. This neutrality was described by Max Weber, who, in his work *Verein für Sozialpolitik*,[15] shows that separating the subject from the object of knowledge leads to the objectification of cognitive results. In this way he created the axiological neutrality of science and technology. He concluded that scientific and consequently also technical thinking cannot be judged axiologically. After all, one cannot evaluate scientific knowledge and technological solutions. There is no good or bad axiological knowledge. Likewise, there is no such thing in the world of technology. Science and technology are axiologically neutral. Therefore, we can agree at the outset that the moral subject who considers, acts and bears responsibility for his actions is man. The world is an object that neither considers nor acts according to free will and therefore cannot bear moral responsibility for what ensues.

From an ethical and axiological perspective, neither knowledge itself nor, as Max Weber argued, technological solutions can be inherently judged. Thinking that values knowledge or its methods cannot, by that very fact, make ethical judgements of the knowledge or technology. Value judgments cannot be applied to technologies *per se*, because science investigates the world in its natural state, as Max Weber so eloquently put it. Furthermore, technology aids in the exploration of this very world. Philosopher and ethicist Arno Anzenbacher explains why this is the case in his book *Introduction to Ethics*, stating, "Of course, moral assessment primarily concerns actions and secondarily persons and social formations. We judge persons morally on the basis of their actions, and we evaluate social formations because they are the result of actions and can be shaped by actions."[16] Anzenbacher's argument seems very logical, because only a subject who is endowed with free will, a mind and a conscience can both value and be valued. As a consequence, one can conclude from this argument that science, knowledge and technology stand despite the possibility of any axiological valuation.

Technology, being a non-sentient artifact without inherent will, cannot be the subject of axiological valuation. It is a man-made tool, primarily subject to economic valuation — its utility for human purposes.

[14] I. Kant: *Základy metafyziky mravů*. 2024.
[15] M. Weber: *Verein für Sozialpolitik*, 1913.
[16] A. Anzenbacher: *Úvod do etiky*. Trans. K. Šprunk. Praha 2001, p. 14.

Axiological meaning, the assignment of value to a technological object in relation to humans and nature, remains the sole province of the human creator. Humans, who both generate knowledge and develop technology, bear the ethical responsibility for their use.

Therefore, one may construct a very basic logical argument from Max Weber's premises. To be more precise: technologies and the world are axiologically neutral. They do not have the possibility of defining the value of themselves or the world around them. But is this a correct judgment? Before we answer this question, let us ask another one that will help us define human action axiologically: *Is it possible to separate a human-made object from the human who made it? Is the natural world, whatever this term means, the same as the world that man created?* Let us first try to answer this question theologically.

The work of God and the work of man

The Book of Genesis speaks of the creation and work of God, and in categories that are very clearly distinguished from those that describe the work and works of man. This difference is quantitative and qualitative. We recognize the work of God by the fact that it was called into existence, as if from matter, or primal matter, as some translate the word ברא. Marcin Majewski writes about the formation of nature from chaos: "In Genesis 1, God resembles a tailor who cuts out a beautiful dress from material (ברא). The idea of divine creation through the chapter can be summed up in these words: in the beginning God created distinction, form from formlessness, structure from a turbid mass, composition from blurred chaos."[17] The natural world was called into existence and this existence continues to multiply. In God's work, we can therefore observe a certain fundamental aspect that can simply be called life. God's creation is full of life. In the language of the Bible, which is a very beautiful language full of poetry, this fact is recorded in the Book of Genesis in verse 21 as follows: "And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good."[18] The waters teemed. A characteristic sign of God and his work is that life multiplies.

[17] M. Majewski: *Pięcioksiąg odczytany na nowo. Przesłanie autora kapłańskiego (P) i jego wpływ na powstanie Pięcioksięgu*. Kraków 2018, pp. 120—121.

[18] See: https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Genesis-1-21/ [accessed 26.09.2024].

Man's work is different. The Book of Genesis presents two types of man's work here. The first one in the Garden of Eden is described with the word "guard." Man was to guard what God had begun — that is, he was to protect life. He had authority over creation, and this authority is described in the Book of Genesis in terms of care and guarding. The Bible thus conveys to us a very important message that man is not to have the authority to create life, but to take care of what is.[19] It is only after the fall of man that we encounter the term defined by work. But this work does not bring man the same use as God's work. Man's work brings hardship and the results of this work are short-lived. In other words, man was to first protect and then work. Both of these terms differ from each other in the very meaning of what man is to do. The second term is significantly different, because man is to tear his own existence out of the earth with his work. Here, the value of man's work changes, and what Martin Heidegger calls "forcing into being?" begins. However, this is a philosophical category. Nonetheless, in the biblical description, the unity of God's creation and the world of human culture is questioned. The first is the purpose of God's action, which can be briefly described as life. In the Holy Scriptures, God calls everything into existence and life. Man's work is different. It is not for life, but rather, to be better said, for survival and at the price of negating life. And here an instrument appears, which is technique and technology. Furthermore, these advancements in technology are tools that help humans impose their will on the means of survival.

Work as coercion

Philosophy also questions the unity of the natural world and the cultural world. There are reasons for this. The first is the difference between the natural world, which has its own form, and the world dominated by human culture, which also has its own form. The second reason was justified in Martin Heidegger's work *Science, Technology, and Meditation*.[20] Man coerces his own existence on nature using the *instrumentum*, or technology, for this purpose. Heidegger writes, "Technology encompasses the

[19] See Z. Gleaser, W. Skomudek: *Teologia — technologia — ekologia. Ku integralnej odpowiedzialności za dzieło stworzenia*. Opole 2019.

[20] M. Heidegger: *Věda, technika a zamýšlení*. Eds. and trans. J. Michálek, J. Kružíková, I. Chvatík. Praha 2004, p. 7.

production and use of tools, devices, and machines, encompasses this 'I' created and experienced, encompasses those needs and goals that these means serve. The totality of these devices is technology. It itself is certain of this device, in Latin: *instrumentum*."[21] The world of human culture is a world that was created by coercing resources from nature to build the world. Human action is possible through instrumentalization, or new technologies. However, the fundamental moment that enables man to instrumentalize this is the opposition of the world to man as an object. Hans Ebeling finds in Heidegger the phenomenon of the existence of the world as an object: "Heidegger considered a very important feature of self-esteem in traditional theory to be that 'subjects' were set against objects, and this was supposed to be the only significant result of people's self-esteem as people learning about the 'world'."[22] Martin Heidegger criticizes the idea of the neutral world. Man as a subject is not completely separated from the object, especially when man is the creator of an object that was created for a certain purpose and this purpose is fulfilled. Knowing the world and enforcing means through technology is not axiologically neutral. In his more famous work *Being and Time*,[23] Martin Heidegger argues that the world always relates in some way to the existence of man. Science that studies the world approaches it as if man were not in the world, as if the subject that studies and knows the world were suspended in a vacuum, and looked at the world through a lens. But man is constantly in the world and in the universe, and all this — time, space and things in the outsmarting and the whole universe — somehow relates to the existence of man. Vice versa, man existing in the universe somehow relates to the existing universe. The surrounding reality relates to the existence of man. Following Anzenbacher,[24] we can state that the reality of the existence of the world and things in it do not bear moral responsibility for what happens to man. However, what cannot be ruled out is the axiological sphere. The being of the entire universe is a value for man. The first thing is the question of the moral responsibility of being, which in itself does not bear any moral responsibility. The second thing is the value of existence in relation to man.

The existence of things in the world is not axiological in itself. But at the moment of the existence of a being that can linguistically formulate its existence, things in the world cease to be axiologically ambivalent. Post-positivism takes up such a view, and this can be seen in the considerations

[21] Ibidem, p. 7.

[22] H. Ebeling: *Martin Heidegger. Filozofie a ideologie*. Praha 1997, p. 22.

[23] M. Heidegger: *Bytí a čas*. 3rd edition. Trans. I. Chvatík, P. Kouba, J. Němec. Praha 2018.

[24] A. Anzenbacher: *Úvod do filozofie*. Trans. K. Šprunk. Praha 1990.

of Karl Raimund Popper and Thomas Kuhn, as Břetislav Fajkus reports: “However, the development of scientific theories and the deepening of their significance in scientific research has caused in the post-positivist philosophy of science (Popper, Kuhn) the question of whether observation as such exists, whether and to what extent are observable facts (independent of the accepted theory or vice versa theoretical assumptions, paradigms) infiltrated (theory in facts, burdened with theory).”[25] We thus encounter a certain feature of axiological judgments that result from the fact of man’s existence in the world. This feature is the reference of things to human existence. The study of these things and, above all, the study of the impact of these things on man is no longer as neutral as Weber thought.

However, the question arises whether human culture and technical achievements are also axiologically neutral. Has not the world of human culture changed the face of the natural world to such an extent that we can now speak only and exclusively of the anthropological face of the world? And if man has changed the face of the earth, has man, by his work changing the face of the earth, not created the basis for the possibility of axiological valuation? For what we can value axiologically is human thinking, speaking and action. If man has changed the face of the earth, then in such a council, can we value his action? Technology and the technification of the world belong among the cultural achievements of man. In connection with the technification of the world, we must ask the following questions: In what way does technology change the world, but also in what secondary way does it affect human thinking and human values? In order to answer these questions, let us apply a few partial questions:

- What is technology?
- How can we grasp the existence of technology through philosophy?
- How can we grasp the existence of technology through theology?
- How does technology relate to the value of man?

These questions are interconnected, for it is man who, through his thinking, through the possibility of language and action, creates technology. However, his work, through innovation, slowly blurs the boundary between human thinking and technology. The question of “how does machine thinking affect human thinking?” is no longer an unfounded question. Technology changes not only the face of the world but also man himself.

[25] B. Fajkus: *Současná filozofie a metodologie vědy.* Praha 1997, p. 83.

Technology

We therefore have terms that need to be defined more closely — namely, technique and technology. These terms cannot be understood as synonyms. Martin Heidegger was interested in the differences in the meanings of these terms and wrote in his work *Věda, technik a zamýšlení*[26]:

- Technique is a means to perform a certain activity.
- Technology is a process that leads to a certain goal.

To further describe the process by which technology dominates the world, we introduce the term "technification." Technification is defined as the implementation of new techniques and technologies within a specific activity or domain.

- Technification is a process that implements new techniques and technologies for a certain activity.

Technique is understood in philosophy as an method that can be used, and technology is a process that leads, using technique, to a certain goal. Defining technique as an instrument that leads to a specific goal is equally problematic. The mutual reference between technique and technology is very important, and its description points to technology as a general term under which technique falls. By technique we mean all individual activities such as methods, procedures but also skills, for example how to handle individual tools.

One of the problems concerning the definition of technique and technology lies in the fact of their temporality and changeability. Therefore, we cannot talk about technique and technology as one internally defined structure. Robert Piotrkowski lists twelve postulates defining cybernetics. Among them is postulate number seven, which defines this property not only of cybernetics, but of all technology as a principle of system characterization: "There are certain properties of created systems, which control alone cannot change without disturbing the 'identity' of the system (or even its existence). Sets of such properties are 'cybernetic natures' or 'characters' of systems. They are also called 'rigid' control properties — rigidity means independence from control and environmental influences, not immutability. If the character of the system changes, it does so spontaneously, for instance, when its properties change as a result of ageing."[27] Any system that is created as a certain instrument ages through changes occurring in it.

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[26] R. Piotrkowski: *Filozoficzne założenia cybernetyki…*, pp. 142 ff.

[27] Entry: "Industrial Revolution," https://www.britannica.com/event/Industrial-Revolution [accessed 9.08.2024].

Rather, we can speak of techniques and technologies that are developed and in the last three decades have been developing by themselves. Technology is a variable phenomenon. Technology, when changing, shows a certain feature that is a non-human feature. When developing, it negates previous stages of development. The stages of technological development differ from each other, and the older previous period is negated by new periods. Technology from the beginning of the 18th century is spoken of differently than in the 21st century. Innovation entails the obsolescence of prior technical achievements, replaced by entirely new ones. Technologies and devices from earlier stages of development are often relegated to museums or, more frequently, discarded as scrap. In connection with technology, we speak of phases of technological development. How may we define these phases of development? In this case, industry and the main phases of technological development can help us. So, we can divide industry into four phases of development[28]:

1. The first phase of technical development is associated in philosophy with the appearance of philosophers focused on empiricism, namely, Francis Bacon, John Locke, and David Hume. Their considerations are partially concurrent with the first experiments in the field of computing machines, which were performed by Blaise Pascal. We can therefore propose the dating of the first development to be from the second half of the 17th century until the end of the 18th century, when in England we encounter the first weaving loom which is driven by the power of water and steam.
2. The second phase of technical development is related to the invention of the electric current and its application in industry. Machines are driven by electricity. The invention that was used on a large scale in the production line. This phase took place in the 19th century.
3. The third phase of technical development (the 20th century) is related to the invention of nuclear energy and its application in industry, and to the invention of the programmable logic system, that is, the computer. The first computer was created by Alan Turing at Bletchley Park, with which he cracked the code of the German Enigma cipher machine.
4. The fourth phase of technical development is in the process of expansion, and technologies are characterized by a slow blurring of the boundary between autonomous human thinking and machine thinking, which is slowly acquiring the features of autonomous thinking. We call this phase the Industry 4.0 and. it is characterized by:

- an internet of people, or the internet that connects people through social networks;

[28] M. Heidegger: *Věda, technika a zamýšlení*..., p. 7.

- an internet of things, or machines that operate on the basis of software, can collect data and share data via the internet to achieve better results (e.g. smart vacuum cleaners);
- an internet of services, or the internet that is related to logistics;
- an internet of data, which is related to the management of large complexes, for example large constructions, which are managed through big data, that is, through operations on extremely large data sets.

The third and fourth phases are interconnected; namely, computers that were created at the beginning help in the construction of newer, more advanced computers. However, in this example it is very clear that progress in this field means the termination of older types of computers. Specifically, a computer that helps create a better model is doomed to destruction after the introduction of a better model. This technology thread is one of the very significant characteristics of technology. One of the steps that can be identified is Industry 4.0. Industry 4.0 is defined as the industry of AI, or artificial intelligence. However, we will look at technologies that have a relationship with Industry 4.0 — that is, technologies that we refer to as artificial intelligence. These technologies learn one of the aspects that we refer to the subject, that is, the aspect of independent thinking in the external world. If technology that learns to think and makes independent decisions is able to do so, then this is a step towards assessing such thinking and the decisions related to it. This is therefore a step towards evaluating such thinking.

Ontology of technology

Now we need to ask ourselves a question. Do these phases of development have anything in common? Do they feature something that constitutes the foundation of technological thinking? Can we define something that can be regarded as common ontological basis of technology? This question may not seem very sensible. After all, why should we look for the essence of technology? Why look for something that is not fundamentally the same in what is variable? After all, the development of technology has shown that technology is a variable phenomenon, and is therefore relative. However, technology is a human product, and if there is a certain human achievement, we must also say in meaningful sentences what technology is.

Martin Heidegger is one of the philosophers who tried to understand the problem of technology. Namely, his book, which was published in

2004 in Czech translation is entitled *Věda, technik a zamýšlení*.[29] Heidegger managed to open up a topic that is certainly not easy, but is very necessary and contemporary. Heidegger himself says at the beginning that we suffer the worst consequences as humanity when we posit technology as a neutral phenomenon.[30] In Heidegger's words, we are at the mercy of technology when we think that it is something neutral for us.[31] At the same time, he emphasizes that the existence of technology is not technical. What does this mean? Heidegger wrote: "We know two sentences about technology that answer this question. One defines technology as a means serving certain goals. The second sentence says technology is human activity. Both of these definitions belong together. For to constitute goals, to find means to them and to use them means to act as a human being."[32] We find two characteristics of technology here:
1. Instrumental character, and
2. Anthropological character.

Ad 1. The first is the instrumental nature of technology. It is an *instrumentum*, or that which can improve the human body and its senses and help it conquer the world. Heidegger says that in order to do that, man needs an adequate instrument. An instrument is nothing more than an extended human body, an extension of the hand. Agree. an instrument that allows him to see, hear, etc. better, further and more. The instrumental nature of technology does not include existence. In instrumentality, we should distinguish two moments: the means and the goal. The goal is the same as the cause. The means is that with the help of which something is realized.[33] Heidegger referred to the Aristotelian causes of existence, and said that instrumentality is characterized by four causes of the existence of the universe. But causes, or *causa*, mean the implementation of certain goals. The instrumental nature of technology is discovery. In particular, man discovers such means that help him live.

Ad 2. The second is the anthropological nature of technology. This is no longer characterized by discovery, but by coercion. With the help of technology, man coerces energy, raw materials and natural food deposits. Coercion is more dangerous than discovery, because with the help of technology understood in this way, man rules the world. Heidegger notes that technology first served to take care of the world. However, the anthropological nature of technology tends towards domination of the world and

[29] Ibidem, p. 7.
[30] Ibidem, p. 7.
[31] Ibidem, p. 7.
[32] Ibidem, p. 9.
[33] J. P. Tillich: *Systematic Theology*. Volume III. Chicago 1963, p. 58.

its slow annihilation. In technology understood in this way, man does not take care of the world, but by claiming the right to enforce obedience on earth, he transforms it into his dominion. This is coercion, extraction and accumulation of energy, which will later be consumed through culture. And in this way of thinking Heidegger criticizes the anthropological nature of technology. It is not the instrumental way of using technology, but its anthropological approach that is more dangerous. It is a way of thinking in which man coerces and takes away nature's foundations. He changes nature and its structure into culture.

If we define technology in this way, we must also mention the aspect of faith that is present in this definition. Technology defined in this manner is linked to the belief that the anthropologization of technology can change the world into a better place to live. This belief is equally dangerous. If we accept the axiom that technology changes the world into a better place to live, then we also assume that the natural state of the world is not good for life. Nature, living and non-living, fauna and flora, and finally man, are understood as objects that need to be improved. The question that needs to be asked here is this: will this way not make man and nature only a certain phase in the development of technology, and thus only a certain stage that will be negated in the process of innovation in favor of the new man? The tragedy of such a development of technology is only the technological state. It will be necessary to create technological possibilities that will be able to create a better man — that is, a man who, thanks to technology, will free himself from his "imperfections." A better life, or an axiological category, is derived here from the state of technological advancement. Good is no longer hidden in the existence of man, but from the state of technology. The tragedy of technology becomes visible when what is instrumental begins to transform into anthropologized technology, when technology takes not only nature's ontological structure, which it later transforms into another form of energy, but when it takes away man's humanity by turning/transforming him into a cyborg. Technology then ceases to be an instrument, and it becomes anthropologized technology. According to Heidegger, it is not the instrumental nature of technology that poses a threat to man and the world. It is the anthropological nature of technology, in which man no longer discovers the possibility of using the world, but seeks to transform the reality of the natural world into the technical world. Said in the terms of Paul Tillich, the human person builds the Technical City.

Technology and theology

Theology has also become concerned with the problem of technology. First of all, there is the Protestant theology of the 20th century, and this is due to the scientific work of Paul Johannes Tillich. He assumes that man cannot help but change the natural world in his actions. By changing the world, he gives it new forms, and he does so through technology. It is therefore about changing form, theory, and practice. Here, Tillich uses the terms perception for theory and reaction for practice. Technology is a combination of ways of perceiving the world and, consequently, ways of grasping the world through language. Technology is primarily related to the way of knowing the world and expressing this knowledge through language. It is through language that man grasps the world and the world is given through language. Tillich writes in *Systematic Theology*, "Man is conscious of language because he is in the world. He is conscious of the world because he is in language."[34]

According to Tillich, technology itself is within the capabilities of man to express his thoughts through language. Through language he expresses his goals and ways of achieving goals. And here comes technology. In order to survive in the world, man must create a convenient place to live. Tillich, as a theologian, recalls here the First Book of Moses, in which man was given two tasks: to name all animals and to cultivate the earth. In other words, these two abilities were given to man: language and technology. According to the Holy Scriptures, man is to use both abilities to cultivate the earth. However, modern technology no longer cultivates the earth. Modern philosophical concepts prepare man's thought for domination over the earth. Tillich mentions pragmatism as a philosophical trend that justifies every innovation within technological possibilities. In other words, every idea that can be technologically implemented must be implemented. In other words, what is technically possible is axiologically justified. What is technically possible is good. In his book *Auf Der Grenze*, Tillich wrote a chapter entitled "Die Technishe Stadt als Symbol."[35] Tillich writes that every man produces objects — technical objects — and if he does not produce them, he uses them. He writes thus, "One human work is a symbol. Either the symbol is a work and the best through which it is done. Either the symbol is a work and the best through which it is done."[36] Technology has two meanings for man:

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[34] J. P. Tillich: *Systematic Theology*. Volume III. Chicago 1963, p. 58.
[35] J. P. Tillich: *Auf der Grenze*. Stuttgard 1962, p. 220.
[36] Ibidem.

1. Technology as an instrument, and
2. Technology as a symbol.

Ad 1. As a technical thing it serves a certain purpose, and is determined by this purpose.

Ad 2. As a symbol, it is that through which man expresses something about his own existence. Human existence is directed towards death. Technology as a symbol is an attempt to rebel against what man considers evil, that is, against death. Technology was created by man not only for the extraction, enforcement and domination of the world, as Heidegger wrote, but it was created by man so that through technology man could save himself by perfecting his own body. Tillich defined the modern aspirations of technology in theological language, showing technology in soteriological categories. In this case, technology becomes the aspiration to guarantee life, without being too modest, we will say to guarantee eternal life.

Technology and axiology

The positivist assumption is that technology is excluded from axiological evaluation, because just as science cannot be good or bad in itself, in the same way it seems to be wrong to look at the development of technology from the same perspective. From the point of view of ethics, this is a correct assumption, because technologies do not (in the meantime) have moral autonomy. But from the point of view of axiology, this is a wrong assumption. Human products cannot be excluded from evaluation. They acquire values by the very intention of the man who produces them. Heidegger explains that the instrumental nature of technology helps man in his existence in nature. However, the anthropological nature of technology releases forces that can ultimately become the cause of man's death. This is a certain paradox, because technology was created with the intention of life, and a good life for man in the universe. This intention contains an axiological aspect in itself, speaking of a better world and man's life in it. These axiological categories exclude the basic thesis of positivism, which excludes technology from the sphere of axiology. Technology is a profound subject of axiological inquiry, demanding deeper evaluation than mere judgment. As Tillich shows, technology has also crossed the threshold of religion, desiring to save man from the worst evil, that is, death. Philosophy and theology show technology as man's rebellion against fate and evil.

The thinker who took up the challenge of technology in relation to axiology was Józef Stanisław Tischner. In his work *Filozofia dramatu* he dedicated a chapter to contemporary technology. Tischner reaches similar conclusions as Heidegger in philosophy and Tillich in theology. He noticed the fact of the double influence of technology on human thinking. He noticed that man, when building technologies, builds them under the influence of a certain thinking. This thinking has its philosophical foundations and also has axiological foundations. And when he creates this technical object, this object influences human behavior and human values. Tischner writes, "We are all under the influence of technical sciences. The consequences of technology affect the coexistence of man with objects, but also the coexistence of man with other people."[37] According to Tischner, this is a secondary influence on man, which affects not only the existence of man in the multitude of technical objects, but also the existence of man in the multitude of people. The question is whether this is still the world of human hope.

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Lucjan Klimsza

L'Influence de la technologie sur la pensée et les valeurs humaines

Résumé

Le monde naturel, en réalité, n'existe plus. À sa place, a émergé un monde que nous pouvons, suivant Paul Tillich, appeler *la ville technique*. C'est un monde qui devient une ville globale unique dominée par la technique. Cette domination de la technique impose à l'homme des défis entièrement nouveaux. Pour définir avec précision le monde de la technique, il est nécessaire de distinguer la technique de la technologie, ainsi que les technologies de la pensée technologique. Cependant, la question la plus importante par rapport à la technique n'est pas la technique elle-même, mais son influence sur les valeurs, le langage et la pensée humaine. L'objectif principal de cet article est de présenter la technique comme une création humaine et d'examiner l'impact de la technologie sur l'homme, et en particulier sur le monde des valeurs humaines. Cet article avance la thèse que le monde des valeurs, ainsi que la science qui l'étudie, l'axiologie, ne font pas partie intégrante de la technique, ni même de la pensée technologique.

Mots-clés : axiologie, éthique, ontologie, technologie, technique

Lucjan Klimsza

L’Influenza della tecnologia sul pensiero e sui valori umani

Riassunto

Il mondo naturale, di fatto, non esiste più. Al suo posto, è emerso un mondo che possiamo, seguendo Paul Tillich, chiamare *la città tecnica*. Si tratta di un mondo che sta diventando un’unica città globale dominata dalla tecnica. Questa dominazione della tecnica pone all’uomo delle sfide completamente nuove. Per definire con precisione il mondo della tecnica, è necessario distinguere la tecnica dalla tecnologia e la tecnologia dal pensiero tecnologico. Tuttavia, la questione più importante rispetto alla tecnica non è la tecnica stessa, ma il suo impatto sui valori, sul linguaggio e sul pensiero umano. L’obiettivo principale di questo articolo è presentare la tecnica come una creazione umana e analizzare l’impatto della tecnologia sull’uomo, in particolare sul mondo dei valori umani. L’articolo sostiene la tesi secondo cui il mondo dei valori e la scienza che lo studia, ossia l’assiologia, non fanno parte integrante della tecnica, né del pensiero tecnologico.

Parole chiave: assiologia, etica, ontologia, tecnologia, tecnica

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"The Night of the Churches" — a Pastoral Response to the Challenges of the Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*

Abstract: This article presents the Night of the Churches as one of the possible and effective responses to the challenges discussed in Pope John Paul II's 2003 post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, and introduces the history, spread and purpose of this activity. It focuses in detail on its implementation in the Czech Republic since 2009, with special emphasis on the years 2000—2002, marked by the pandemic of COVID-19. It also tries to show its positives (chances) and negatives (pitfalls). In this way, it can serve not only as a recapitulation of past actions, but also as an inspiration, especially for countries where this activity is not widespread and often not even known.

Keywords: Catholic Church, Christian Churches, evangelization, Night of the Churches, ecumenism, John Paul II, exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*

Introduction

In this article, we would like to present the Night of the Churches, one of the possible responses to Pope John Paul II's challenge in the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*,[1] all the more so in this periodical published in Poland, where this activity is not widespread and often not even known.

[1] John Paul II: *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation "Ecclesia in Europa"* (28.06.2003), https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_20030628_ecclesia-in-europa.html [accessed 18.07.2023].

In the first section, we want to introduce the history, extension and basic goal of the Night of the Churches. In the second and third, we will focus on its implementation in the Czech Republic: in the second section from 2009 to 2019, in the third from 2020 to 2022, marked by the epidemic of COVID-19. In the fourth section, we will discuss in more detail the positives and negatives of the Night of the Churches, which will help to show its multidimensional importance, especially evangelization-related one.

As these are very recent facts, we have to rely almost exclusively on internet sources. Besides these, there are the non-public minutes of the meetings of the Night of the Churches coordinators from the Catholic dioceses of the Czech Republic, which were kindly made available to us for the preparation of this article. The article therefore does not include the usual bibliography.

1. The origin, development, and the aim of the Night of the Churches

In 2003, Pope St. John Paul II issued the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, which, among other things, aims to revive the life of faith in Europe. In it, the Pope stresses in a very practical way the importance of primary evangelization, including through culture; it is therefore appropriate to recall the most important sections of the exhortation relating to this theme:

> 46. In various parts of Europe *a first proclamation of the Gospel is needed*: the number of the unbaptized is growing, both because of the significant presence of immigrants of other religions and because children born into families of Christian tradition have not received Baptism, either as a result of the Communist domination or the spread of religious indifference. Indeed, Europe is now one of those traditionally Christian places which, in addition to a new evangelization, require in some cases a first evangelization. […]
>
> 58. The proclamation of Jesus Christ must also reach contemporary European culture. The evangelization of culture must show that in today's Europe too it is possible to live the Gospel fully as a path which gives meaning to existence. To this end, pastoral practice must undertake the task of shaping a Christian mentality in ordinary life: in families, in schools, in social communications, in cultural life, in the workplace and the economy, in politics, in leisure-time, in health and in sickness. What is needed is a calm critical assessment of the current cultural situation of Europe and an evaluation of the emerging

> trends and the more significant contemporary events and situations in the light of the centrality of Christ and of Christian anthropology. […]
>
> 60. Nor should we overlook the positive contribution made by the wise use of the cultural treasures of the Church. These can be a special element in the rekindling of a humanism of Christian inspiration. When properly preserved and intelligently used, these living testimonies of the faith as professed down the ages can prove a useful resource for the new evangelization and for catechesis, and lead to a rediscovery of the sense of mystery. […] and because artistic beauty, as a sort of echo of the Spirit of God, is a symbol pointing to the mystery, an invitation to seek out the face of God made visible in Jesus of Nazareth.

The Night of the Churches is one of the ways of responding to this challenge. It has its origins in Germany,[2] even before the exhortation in question: it was first held in 1995 in Frankfurt am Main as a joint activity of the Protestant and Catholic Churches, in 2001 in Halle, in 2003 as an annual event in Hannover, in 2004 in Hamburg and then in other German cities and their surroundings, and to this day as a regional activity under the name *Lange Nacht der Kirchen* (corresponding to similar events such as *Lange Nacht der Museen*, *Lange Nacht der Forschung*, etc.). It usually takes place in autumn and the cities or regions stick to their own concepts and dates. The popularity grows year by year, as well as the organizational and technical support, for instance, its own YouTube channel and its own mobile app.

A new dimension has been added to the Night of the Churches in Austria, where it has been held in the Archdiocese of Vienna since 2005 and nationwide since 2008, on a single date in late May and early June, in cooperation with the Bishops' Conference and the National Ecumenical Council of Churches. Its popularity grows year by year.[3]

Since 2009, the Night of the Churches has been held in the Czech Republic (see the next section), and since 2011 in Slovakia in the Archdiocese of Trnava and the Diocese of Nitra,[4] since 2012 in the whole Slovakia[5]

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[2] Summary historical data could not be found elsewhere than on Wikipedia: *Lange Nacht der Kirchen*, https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lange_Nacht_der_Kirchen (18.07.2023); and in: *„Nacht der Kirchen" im Elbe-Weser-Raum, in Hannover und in Lüneburg* (6.08.2004), https://www.landeskirche-hannovers.de/evlka-de/presse-und-medien/nachrichten/2004/08/06-1997 [accessed 18.07.2023].

[3] *Die Lange Nacht der Kirchen in Europa*, https://www.langenachtderkirchen.at/ueber-die-lange-nacht/in-europa/ [accessed 18.07.2023].

[4] *TRNAVA: Prvá Noc kostolov otvorí neznáme zákutia v chrámoch* (10.11.2010), https://www.netky.sk/clanok/trnava-prva-noc-kostolov-otvori-nezname-zakutia-v-chramoch [accessed 20.07.2023]; *Noc kostolov 2011 v Nitre*, https://www.nitralive.sk/kam-v-nitre/podujatia-v-okoli/1224-noc-kostolov-2011-v-nitre [accessed 20.07.2023].

[5] See e.g. *Noc kostolov 2012*, https://www.vyveska.sk/noc-kostol-2012.html [accessed 18.07.2023].

also in ecumenical format,[6] but still in the Catholic Church with significant restrictions[7]; since 2012 also in Hungary and Estonia (although in Estonia for the first time on a different date), since 2014 also in South Tyrol in Italy in German and Italian-speaking churches, since 2016 in Switzerland every two years.[8]

In Vienna, a Night of Mosques was also held for the first time in 2011 on a separate November date, not under the auspices of the Islamic Religious Society in Austria (Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich), but organized by the Islamic Federation in Vienna[9]; since 2012, also in Berlin as part of the *Lange Nacht der Religionen* event, which, in addition to Christian churches and mosques, also opens sacred places of other religions such as synagogues, temples, meditation centres and prayer rooms — offering encounters with Jews, Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Pagans, Alevis, and Sikhs.[10]

The purpose of the Night of the Churches is (similarly to the Night of the Museums) a kind of "peek behind the scenes": not only to open spaces that are usually not accessible to the public, but above all to "taste" the meaning, atmosphere, beauty and history of sacred places. From a secular point of view, this is primarily a cultural event; this is why a tradition of close cooperation with local government officials has developed. In Berlin, in the form of the Long Night of Religion, the declared aim is friendly coexistence and tolerance of different religions.[11]

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[6] See e.g. Evanjelická cirkev augsburského vyznania na Slovensku: *Noc kostolov 2012*, https://www.ecav.sk/archiv/archiv-2012/noc-kostolov-2012 [accessed 20.07.2023].

[7] The *spiritus movens* of the Night of the Churches in Slovakia was Archbishop Róbert Bezák of Trnava, appointed in 2009 and dismissed in 2012, the Archdiocese of Trnava was the national coordinator. After the dismissal of Archbishop Bezák, there is no national coordination in the Catholic Church in Slovakia, and the action depends on local activities, which vary a lot in scale; see *Noc kostolov: Bezákov projekt stále žije, jeho popularita však upadá*, https://svetkrestanstva.postoj.sk/4594/noc-kostolov-bezakov-projekt-stale-zije-jeho-popularita-vsak-upada [accessed 20.07.2023]; *Tohtoročná Noc kostolov bude komornejšia: Vieme, ktoré chrámy sa zapoja* (13.05.2019); https://trnava.dnes24.sk/tohtorocna-noc-kostolov-bude-komornejsia-vieme-ktore-kostoly-sa-zapoja-330309 [accessed 20.07.2023]; *Počas Noci kostolov zostanú niektoré kostoly otvorené dlhšie* (1.06.2023), https://mytrnava.sme.sk/c/23176598/pocas-noci-kostolov-zostanu-niektore-kostoly-otvorene-dlhsie.html [accessed 20.07.2023].

[8] *Über die Veranstaltung: Geschichte & Gegenwart*, https://langenachtderkirchen.ch/v/mQksCNib/ueber-die-veranstaltung [accessed 19.07.2023].

[9] *Erste „Lange Nacht der Moscheen" in Wien* (19.11.2011), https://wien.orf.at/v2/news/stories/2509893/ [accessed 19.07.2023].

[10] *Die Lange Nacht der Moscheen*, https://www.berlin.de/kultur-und-tickets/archiv/3020988-2805649-die-lange-nacht-der-moscheen.html; *Lange Nacht der Religionen*, https://www.buendnis-toleranz.de/arbeitsfelder/anlaufstelle/initiativen/175906/lange-nacht-der-religionen [accessed 19.07.2023].

[11] *Lange Nacht der Religionen*, see the previous note.

From the point of view of Christian churches, it is a way of "low-threshold" invitation to people who do not normally attend church, although for most of them the primary reason is either a cultural experience or simple curiosity: to get to places they cannot normally visit. It is important not to dwell only on the cultural and historical dimension, but to gently and non-violently point to the religious significance — in this way, Church Night also becomes an instrument of first evangelization. In doing so, it is advisable to make sure that the invitation of the Night of the Churches can continue throughout the year.[12]

2. The Night of the Churches in the Czech Republic until 2019

In this section, we rely mainly on the minutes of the meetings of the diocesan coordinators of the Catholic Church, which are non-public documents. These meetings are held twice a year: the first time in June to evaluate the previous year and to prepare for the coming year, and the second time at the beginning of the calendar year to fine-tune the preparation for the next year. References to sources in the footnotes will therefore be added only if other sources are used.

2.1 Predecessor of the Night of the Churches on the basis of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Czech Republic

The Night of the Churches in the Czech Republic had its predecessor in the Night of Open Churches, organized by the Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Czech Republic. It was held in many places in the Czech Republic at different times of the church year, in Prague always at the beginning of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January. The first edition took place in 2007, when the main focus of attention in Prague in January was the signing of the European document *Charta Oecumenica*, a document on the strengthening and growth of cooperation

[12] See e.g. *Informace pro pořadatele noci kostelů (rok 2019)*, https://nockostelu.cz/informace/cile/ [accessed 18.07.2023].

between churches in Europe.[13] Representatives of the Catholic Church also attended the opening of the Open Church Night in Prague. A total of four editions were held until 2010.

2.2 First edition in 2009 — pilot project

The Night of the Churches, following the Austrian model and on the same date with Austria, was held in the Czech Republic for the first time on 29 May 2009 with the motto "yours is the day, yours also the NIGHT; you established the luminaries and the sun" (Ps 74:16).[14] Because of the novelty of this activity in the Czech Republic, it was preceded by a press conference at the Bishopric of Brno on Friday 22 May 2009, a week before the Night of the Churches.[15] The event was still held on a relatively limited scale: the first edition of the Night of the Churches in 2009 involved 25 churches in the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Brno and 9 churches in the Diocese of Plzeň; despite the bad weather, 90,000 visitors were recorded in Brno and its surroundings, and another 10,000 in Plzeň. Following the example of Austria, the Night of the Churches had an ecumenical dimension: six other Christian churches in the Czech Republic joined this first edition of the Night of the Churches in 2009.[16] It can therefore be said that this first edition was a kind of "pilot programme."

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[13] Ekumenická rada církví: *Tisková zpráva z Noci otevřených kostelů* [Ecumenical Council of Churches. Press release from the Night of Open Churches] (21.12.2010), https://ekumenickarada.cz/in/1620/tiskova_zprava_z_noci_otevrenych_kostelu [accessed 20.07.2023].

[14] The motto of the individual editions of the Night of the Churches is mentioned rather sporadically in the minutes of the coordinators' meetings, it was necessary to search for it on the Internet in the images associated with the Night of the Churches. Due to the complementary function of the motto information, we do not list the individual websites where the motto was found.

[15] Biskupství brněnské: *Tisková konference k Noci kostelů 2009 v Brně*, https://www.biskupstvi.cz/2009-05-22-tiskova-konference-k-noci-kostelu-2009-v-brne [accessed 20.07.2023].

[16] Ekumenická rada církví: *Noc kostelů 2010*, https://ekumenickarada.cz/in/1667/noc_kostelu_2010 [accessed 20.07.2023].

2.3 Second edition in 2010 — for the first time on a national scale

The second edition of the Night of the Churches was held on 28 May 2010 with the motto “All day and all NIGHT they shall never be silent” (Isaiah 62:6), in all dioceses of the Catholic Church and in many Christian churches associated in the Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Czech Republic, and a separate website www.nockostelu.cz was created for it; the national coordination was carried out in the Diocese of Brno. As the Night of the Churches was held on a much larger scale than in 2009, it was again preceded by a press conference at the Brno diocese on Tuesday 18 May 2010.[17]

The official patronage was assumed by the Czech Bishops’ Conference and the Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Czech Republic[18]; in many cases, local authorities, especially municipalities and towns, have also assumed official patronage. Thus, there was a risk of undue politicization of this activity, which is why the meeting of diocesan coordinators in January 2011 stated that the organizer must be the church entity itself (public benefit associations, municipalities and towns can join, but not be independent organizers), and that it is not allowed to present any political party in connection with the Night of the Churches, neither on the nockostelu.cz website nor in the Night of the Churches programme in individual locations. It was emphasized that the term Night of Churches will be used exclusively for activities that meet the aims, thesis, unified term and unified visual style. The Night of the Churches cannot be used for other activities.

The broader scope was also reflected quantitatively: 418 churches, chapels and places of worship were open and there were approximately 252,000 visitor entries.[19]

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[17] BISKUPSTVÍ BRNĚNSKÉ: *Tisková konference k Noci kostelů 2010 v Brně*, https://www.biskupstvi.cz/2010-05-18-tiskova-konference-k-noci-kostelu-2010-v-brne [accessed 20.07.2023]. The press conference before the Night of the Churches in Brno became a traditional part of the event, and press conferences were also held in other cities, usually under the auspices of the respective diocese.

[18] EKUMENICKÁ RADA CÍRKVÍ: *Noc kostelů 2010*, https://ekumenickarada.cz/in/1667/noc_kostelu_2010 [accessed 20.07.2023].

[19] *Noc kostelů v číslech*, https://www.dltm.cz/noc-kostelu [accessed 20.07.2023]. The number of visitor entries (or more accurately, an estimate, as organizers are rarely able to record completely accurate numbers, although some have attempted to do so, e.g. with electronic counters) is reported by the organizers of individual places immediately after the event to their coordinators designated along church lines, from which broader summaries are then created.

2.4 Third edition in 2011 — cooperation with Slovakia

The third edition was held on 27 May 2011 with the motto "I commune with mine own heart in the NIGHT; I meditate and search my spirit" (Ps 77:7). In the Catholic Church, it was marked by the extension to Slovakia, especially by the merit of the then Archbishop of Trnava, Róbert Bezák.[20] In the Czech Republic, it was held under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture. As many as 939 churches, chapels and houses of prayer from seven Christian churches (Roman Catholic Church, Czechoslovak Hussite Church, Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, Church of the Brethren, Old Catholic Church, Unity of the Brethren, Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands) participated and more than 300,000 visitors were recorded. At the same time, it was agreed on the ecumenical platform that churches that are not members or associate members of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Czech Republic cannot participate in the Night of the Churches.

2.5 Fourth edition in 2012 — underlining the Christian character

The fourth edition took place on 1 June 2012 with the motto "For you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the NIGHT or of darkness" (1 Thes 5:5), again under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture. Nine Christian churches participated (Roman Catholic Church, Czechoslovak Hussite Church, Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, Church of the Brethren, Old Catholic Church, Unity of the Brethren, Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Baptist Brethren).

More than 1,200 open churches, chapels and houses of worship were involved and there were over 400,000 visitor entries.

At the meeting of the coordinators of the Catholic Church, the necessity to take into account the religious character of the event was recalled, also in view of the statement of the Liturgical Commission of the Slovak Bishops' Conference[21] and that in the context of the statistics, we cannot expect a further significant increase in the number of churches and

[20] More about the Night of the Churches in Slovakia in section 1.
[21] This topic is discussed more extensively in the final section 4.

visitors, and therefore it will be necessary to emphasize other qualities of the Night of the Churches and to focus on their development. At the same time, the coordinators agreed that the Night of the Churches is first and foremost a presentation of Christianity and that Christian parishes, religious orders, congregations or church communities can participate with their churches; since Jewish and Muslim communities do not fulfil this basic objective, they cannot participate in the Night of the Churches.

2.6 Fifth edition of 2013 — pilgrim passports and cards

The fifth edition was held on 27 May 2013 with the motto: "The light is succeeded by the NIGHT, but against wisdom evil does not prevail" (cf. Wis 7:30). This time the patronage was held by the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic Petr Nečas and other top politicians, in regions by governors and in cities by mayors.

More than 1,300 open churches, chapels and houses of prayer were involved, and there were more than 450,000 visitor entries, despite frequent inclement weather.[22]

Nine Christian churches participated (Roman Catholic Church, Czechoslovak Hussite Church, Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, Church of the Brethren, Old Catholic Church, Unity of the Brethren, Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Unity of the Brethren Baptists).

The organizers noticed that in preceding years visitors had not been coming to churches randomly, but rather particularly to specific programmes that they had chosen in advance from the offer, and the interest in spiritual programmes had been increasing. Pilgrimage passes and possibly even collector cards were prepared for the participants, and information brochures on the Night of the Churches were published in several cities and distributed both in churches and in city information centres.

[22] The interest therefore surpassed the forecasts of the coordinators of the Catholic dioceses that a quantitative increase could no longer have been expected.

2.7 Sixth edition in 2014 — pexeso, magnets, mobile apps

The sixth edition was held on 23 May 2014 with the motto: “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the NIGHT; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years” (Gen 1:14).

More than 1,400 sacred buildings were opened, with approximately 450,000 visitors. Ten Christian churches participated (Roman Catholic Church, Czechoslovak Hussite Church, Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, Church of the Brethren, Old Catholic Church, Unity of the Brethren, Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Unity of the Brethren Baptists, Apostolic Church).

New features were the publication of a pexeso with prayer houses, churches and temples involved in the project, magnets with the logo of the Night of the Churches and the mobile application iKostel, which provided interesting information about the project and the churches themselves.

2.8 Seventh edition in 2015 — improvements to the web application

The seventh edition was held on 29 May 2015 with the motto: “The darkness is not dark to you; the NIGHT is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you” (Ps 139:12). The event was held under the auspices of the Prime Minister and of Presidents of both chambers (the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate) of the Parliament of the Czech Republic.

Quantitatively, the year in question did not differ significantly from the previous one: more than 1,400 open sacred objects, 450,000 visitors.

Ten Christian churches participated again (Roman Catholic Church, Czechoslovak Hussite Church, Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, Church of the Brethren, Evangelical Methodist Church, Unity of Brethren, Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Unity of the Brethren Baptists, Apostolic Church). The web application for registration was gradually improved, where it was also possible to order printed materials. Current anniversaries were considered: 70 years since the end of World War II, 600 years since the burning of Master Jan Hus and the Year of the Eucharist.

2.9 Eighth edition in 2016 — plus morning entries for schools

The eighth edition took place on 10 June 2016 with the motto: “His gates shall remain open by day, NIGHT shall be no more there” (cf. Rev 21:25). The Archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal Christoph Schönborn OP, the spiritual father of the Austrian Night of Churches, expressed his support for the event in the Czech Republic and sent his greetings.

There was another quantitative increase: more than 1,400 open sacred buildings and 500,000 visitors.

Eleven Christian churches participated (Roman Catholic Church, Czechoslovak Hussite Church, Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, Church of the Brethren, Old Catholic Church, Unity of the Brethren, Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Unity of the Brethren Baptists, Apostolic Church, Church Christian Communities).

The web application included the holding of morning entries for schools. The 700th anniversary of the birth of the Roman Emperor and Czech King Charles IV, known in the Czech lands as the Father of the Fatherland, and the Holy Year of Mercy were given as appropriate themes.

2.10 Ninth edition in 2017 — further improvements to the web application

The ninth edition was held on 9 June 2017 with the motto: “She became a shelter to them by day, and a starry flame through the NIGHT” (cf. Wis 10:17).

Quantitatively, it was close to 2015: more than 1,400 sacred objects opened, more than 450,000 visitor entries.

Eleven Christian churches participated (Roman Catholic Church, Czechoslovak Hussite Church, Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, Church of the Brethren, Old Catholic Church, Unity of the Brethren, Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Unity of the Brethren Baptists, Apostolic Church, Church Christian Communities).

At the coordinators’ meeting, additional functionalities of the web application were discussed (confirmation e-mail after login, addition of recommendation to editors to copy the password sent by e-mail, order of greetings when inserting, warning about exceeding the number of characters when inserting the programme of a given place). For next year's event, converting the web application to a new responsive platform with the addition of a category for foreign language programmes and how to use the Church Night Facebook page were discussed.

2.11 Tenth anniversary edition in 2018 — a variant for cyclists

The tenth anniversary edition was held on 25 May 2018 with the motto: "They would spend the NIGHT near the house of God" (cf. 1 Chron 9:27). There was again a quantitative increase: more than 1,500 churches and houses of worship and over 500,000 visitor entries.

An interesting novelty in the Diocese of Hradec Králové was the variant for bicyclists the "Night of the Churches on a Bicycle."

2.12 Eleventh edition in 2019 — new webhosting

The eleventh edition was held on 24 May 2019 with the motto: "Sing as on the NIGHT of the dedication of the feast" (cf. Is 30:19). Quantitatively, this edition did not differ significantly from the previous one: more than 1,600 open sacred objects, for 460,000 visitor entries.

The web application migrated to a new webhosting while maintaining all existing functionalities. As a specific topic, activities were proposed at the coordinators' meeting aimed at the mission month of October 2019.

3. Night of Churches in the Czech Republic during the coronavirus epidemic 2020—2022

3.1 The Night of the Churches in 2020 — twelfth edition — uncertainty, postponement, online broadcasts

Preparations for the twelfth edition of the Night of the Churches, originally planned for June 5, 2020, with the motto: “You have made the moon to tell the time... You make darkness, and it is night... The sun rises... People go out to their work” (Ps 104:19—23), proceeded as usual until February 2020. However, the measures associated with the COVID-19 disease epidemic since March have brought great uncertainty to the whole situation. In Austria, the organizers have decided not to hold the event and to postpone it to 2021.[23]

There was also uncertainty in the Czech Republic. Some of the originally registered churches, which numbered over 1,000, opted out. Epidemic restrictions were eased from May 2020 and the state of emergency ended on 17 May 2020.[24] As it was not necessary to be tied to the date of the event in Austria, the organizers in the Czech Republic decided in mid-April to postpone the date to 12 June in connection with the release schedule and finalized the preparations with regard to the still valid but ever-changing hygiene measures: a maximum of 300 people were finally allowed to participate at the same time both indoors and outdoors, and relatively strict hygiene rules applied, for instance, wearing masks, hand disinfection, etc. The motto remained the same. Some churches that had originally opted out re-registered in the changed circumstances.[25]

Due to the limitations to public gatherings, accommodations have been made for transmissions via multimedia means and the Internet. At the national level, this was in collaboration with the Christian private television station TV NOE, where live broadcasts were made from 7.00 pm to 11.00 pm for 30 minutes each from each of the eight dioceses of the Roman Catholic Church on the day of the Night of the Churches.

[23] *Die Lange Nacht der Kirchen in Europa*, https://www.langenachtderkirchen.at/ueber-die-lange-nacht/in-europa/ [accessed 21.07.2023].

[24] Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic No. 219/2020 Coll., on the extension of the state of emergency in connection with the SARS CoV-2 virus pandemic.

[25] Biskupství brněnské: *Noc kostelů 2020*, https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwig2ufI85-AAxVNgv0HHdp4CRYQFnoECBEQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.biskupstvi.cz%2Fstorage%2Fakt%2F12458.pdf&usg=AOvVaw2YxwhgEW1Kp_0RYDHfQt1L&opi=89978449 [accessed 20.07.2023].

At the local level — based on the experience gained with the transmission of the services — some churches made it possible to follow the programme of the Night of the Churches online (fully or partially); centrally, information about these transmissions was available on the national website nockostelu.cz. Many organizers also moved some activities to outdoor areas near churches, which they announced, among other things, via the same website.[26]

Despite so many limitations and the use of online space, the decline was not as significant as estimated: more than 1,100 churches and houses of worship participated and more than 205,000 visitor entries were recorded.[27]

3.2 Night of the Churches in 2021 — thirteenth edition — emphasis on ecology while maintaining hygiene measures

In the autumn of 2020, the epidemic situation worsened (not only) in the Czech Republic, so the Government of the Czech Republic declared a state of emergency from 5 October 2020, which, after several extensions and a new (legally disputed) declaration, lasted until 11 April 2021.[28]

The experience of the first "coronavirus" year in 2020 and the earlier end of the state of emergency allowed better preparation for the next, already thirteenth, edition of the Night of the Churches, despite all the uncertainties connected with the current hygiene situation and the changing measures that had to be observed (e.g. hand disinfection, wearing of masks, distances, etc.). The possibilities of online transmissions and outdoor events were also used.

The Night of the Churches was again held on 28 May 2021, together with Austria and other countries, with the motto: "You bring darkness, the NIGHT descends, the whole forest is swarming with beasts" (Ps 104:20). It was also necessary to respond to the current hygiene measures by changing the programmes, which is why the programme brochures were not printed (especially in the cities) and why the information on the nockostelu.cz website became all the more important. The mobile application Noc kostelů for Android also facilitated orientation.

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[26] Ibidem.

[27] *Noc kostelů 2020* (24.06.2020), https://www.nockostelu.cz/aktuality/863 [accessed 21.07.2023].

[28] *Nouzový stav v Česku*, https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nouzov%C3%BD_stav_v_%C4%8Cesku [accessed 21.07.2023].

The main theme (originally intended in Austria for 2020) was ecology, for which a discussion by experts was broadcast on Christian TV NOE. Ecology in Prague was underlined by the company Rekola Bikesharing, which allowed free bike sharing in the centre of Prague for 20—30 minutes.[29]

A gradual increase in the number of participants became apparent, although the situation was still very uncertain: More than 223,000 people visited 1,230 churches across the Czech Republic.[30]

3.3 Night of Churches in 2022 — fourteenth edition — a gradual return to normal

In the autumn of 2021, there was another significant wave of COVID-19 infections, with a state of emergency in the Czech Republic from 26 November to 25 December 2021. However, another state of emergency from 4 March to 30 June 2022 was related to another fact: the refugee wave from Ukraine after Russia invaded Ukraine at the end of February 2022 (and by then the news regarding the COVID-19 epidemic had died down).[31] Hygiene measures were phased out by the end of April 2022 and the state of pandemic alert ended on 5 May 2022.[32]

The fourteenth edition of the Night of the Churches took place on 10 June 2022 with the motto "By day may the Lord give his grace, all NIGHT I will sing to him and praise him" (cf. Ps 42:9), still marked by the receding pandemic of coronavirus (at least in the minds of part of the Czech population). A more stable situation allowed the use of traditional printed advertising materials (programme brochures, etc.), and a mobile app was also extended for Apple iOS.[33]

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29 Arcibiskupství pražské: *Tisková zpráva Noc kostelů 2021 — první festival 2021 v celé ČR*, https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjiqJOJlqCAAxWhQuUKHfQ5AwUQFnoECAYQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fapha.cz%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2021%2F05%2Ftiskova-zprava-nockostelu-2021.pdf&usg=AOvVaw2aj4fS6Jv07-CKd2aIFLvm&opi=89978449 [accessed 21.07.2023].

30 *Noc kostelů v číslech*, https://www.dltm.cz/noc-kostelu [accessed 20.07.2023].

31 *Nouzový stav v Česku*, https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nouzov%C3%BD_stav_v_%C4%8Cesku [accessed 21.07.2023].

32 *Kompletní přehled právních předpisů Sbírky zákonů, Ministerstva zdravotnictví a dalších zdrojů souvisejících s koronavirem SARS CoV-2*, https://www.fulsoft.cz/33/prehled-pravnich-predpisu-sbirky-zakonu-a-dalsich-zdroju-souvisejicich-s-prokazanim-vyskytu-koronaviru-oznacovaneho-jako-sars-cov-2-zpusobuje-onemocneni-covid-19-uniqueidgOkE4NvrWuMkmaNigtjQulrL-J1k5knUT6QOQea68B8/ [accessed 21.07.2023].

33 *Mobilní aplikace Noc kostelů*, https://www.nockostelu.cz/informace/aplikace/ [accessed 21.07.2023].

It is understandable that in this situation the statistics have increased significantly: 1,729 sacred spaces were involved in the event and there were 408,800 visitor entries.[34]

4. Pastoral positives and pitfalls of the Night of the Churches

The Night of the Churches brings with it a number of opportunities and positives, among which are:
— common term — the adoption of the Austrian model leads to a concentration of forces and attention;
— a common motto — this gives a common focus that is positive for participants and organizers so that their efforts do not revolve around the preferences of individuals or small groups;
— uniform corporate design — leads to easier orientation of participants and is a guide for the organizers;
— one common website and Facebook page — prevents the fragmentation of basic information, but does not impede appropriate additions on the websites of individual sacral places;
— unambiguous support from the churches — the patronage of the Czech Bishops' Conference and the Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Czech Republic, including extensive information mainly on the websites of these institutions and their components (in the Catholic Church, the dioceses of the Roman Catholic Church and the Apostolic Exarchate of the Greek Catholic Church);
— use of other communication tools — especially mobile apps for Android and Apple iOS;
— ecumenical dimension — mutual cooperation and information, but deliberately limited to the framework of Christianity;
— involvement of local communities — not only active participation in the organization and course, but a true presentation of the life of the communities of believers without trying to create an illusion (e.g. by hiring musicians and singers from elsewhere);

[34] *Hodnocení Noci kostelů v pražské arcidiecézi* (24.06.2022), https://www.cirkev.cz/hodnoceni-noci-kostelu-v-prazske-arcidiecezi_10401 [accessed 21.07.2023]. For comparison: in 2024, in the fifteenth anniversary year, there were already a record 1,806 sacred spaces and more than 454,000 visitor entries; see *Noc kostelů 2023 uzavřelo setkání diecézních koordinátorů* (15.06.2023), https://www.cirkev.cz/noc-kostelu-2023-uzavrelo-setkani-dieceznich-koordinatoru_24654 [accessed 21.07.2023].

— openness — individual Christian communities often give the impression of a “closed club”; here the universality of God’s call is emphasized, which is not limited (like good pastoral care) to regular worshippers;
— social impact — the event is implemented in cooperation with representatives of state and local government;
— cultural impact — it shows the roots of culture in praising God, that is, in the focus on goodness and beauty;
— spiritual “breathing in” — meeting with the *genius loci* imbued with a spiritual atmosphere;
— the aspects of evangelization — enrichment for believers, non-violent and gentle presentation of the truth about the Christian life and the breaking down of prejudices, which is important both in the new evangelization (especially towards people with prejudices) and in the first evangelization (many people in the Czech Republic have not yet encountered questions of faith, and many of them are yet to enter a church thanks to the Night of the Churches).

Besides these many positives, the Night of the Churches also has certain pitfalls and dangers:
— a mere one-off — it is necessary to show and offer in a non-violent way other, usually ordinary activities of the community of believers, especially those aimed at seekers (e.g. Alpha courses, possibilities of thematic meetings during the year);
— abuse for political purposes — despite cooperation with local government in particular, it is necessary to resist overt or covert political agitation;
— agitational evangelism or proselytism — the call to faith is given by God, not by us, hence the need for our humble service;
— the absorption or usurpation of the church by visitors — it is necessary that the *genius loci* of the church be perceptible, namely, that the sacredness of the church persist and prevail;
— inappropriate agenda items — not everything befits a sacred space.

Especially these last two points were the subject of an official critical statement in Slovakia: the document of the Liturgical Commission of the Conference of Bishops of Slovakia entitled *Noc kostolov — upozornenie ohľadom rešpektovania posvätného prostor* (The Night of the Churches — A Notice Regarding Respecting Sacred Space) of 18 May 2012.[35] It calls

[35] *Noc kostolov — upozornenie ohľadom rešpektovania posvätného priestoru* (18.05.2012), https://www.kbs.sk/obsah/sekcia/h/dokumenty-a-vyhlasenia/p/dokumenty-komisii-a-rad-kbs/c/noc-kostolov-upozornenie-ohladom-respektovania-posvatneho-priestoru [accessed 22.07.2023].

for the conscientious preservation of the sanctity of the space, since it is permanently reserved for worship (can. 1210 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law), and the only other use regulated by the universal Church is for concerts (Circular Letter of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments to the Presidents of the Conferences of Bishops, *De concertibus in ecclesiis*, November 5, 1987). Therefore, the consent of the local Ordinary is required for any other use of the church. The final paragraph of the Slovak document relates to the Night of the Churches and states: "Especially in the context of the forthcoming event the Night of the Churches, which will take place on 1 June 2012, we must be aware that it would be a mistake to make our churches into multipurpose halls or houses of culture on this occasion. We must strive to offer participants and visitors the very sacredness that many people are seeking today. And in preserving the identity of the church as a place where God dwells among people, the upcoming event can also convey such sacredness and contact with God."

On the one hand, this general remark is true; on the other hand, it illustrates the reservations of the Slovak Episcopate towards Archbishop Róbert Bezák of Trnava, the promoter of the Night of the Churches in Slovakia, who was removed from his office shortly afterwards on 2 July 2012.[36] After his dismissal, there is no national coordination and support for the Night of the Churches provided by the Catholic Church in Slovakia and the website nockostolov.sk, the equivalent of the Czech and Austrian websites, is still not functional.[37]

These positives and pitfalls must always be taken into account not only on a national scale, where they are the subject of meetings of diocesan coordinators in the Catholic Church, but especially on a local level. In this way, the Night of the Churches can become a good instrument of God's action, especially of the new evangelization and the first evangelization.

Conclusion

It turns out that the Night of the Churches, if well prepared and implemented, can be a good tool for new evangelization and first evan-

[36] *Archbishop Róbert Bezák, C.Ss.R.*, https://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bbezak.html [accessed 22.07.2023].

[37] Cf. footnote 7.

gelization, namely, for people who either have some kind of, but often very distorted, awareness of Christianity, or for those who have hardly or not at all encountered Christianity. Such persons are becoming more and more numerous in Europe, especially in the German-speaking area. From there comes this activity aimed at encountering and learning about lived Christianity, which has had an ecumenical dimension from the beginning. It originated in Germany, where it is usually called *Lange Nacht der Kirchen*. The Austrian modification with the same name is significant, characterized by a nationwide ecumenical coordination with a unified term and motto.

In 2009, the Austrian version was transferred to the Czech Republic, where it was widely disseminated and publicly appreciated. Unlike in Austria and some German regions, it has not been interrupted even in the years marked by the COVID-19 epidemic, that is, from 2020 to 2022, albeit with necessary restrictions.

Experience demonstrates the opportunities and pitfalls of this activity, which are discussed in the article. In this way, the article can serve not only as a recapitulation of past actions, but also as an inspiration, especially for countries where this activity is not widespread and often not even known.

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« La Nuit des Églises » — une réponse pastorale aux défis de l'exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*

Résumé

Le présent article présente la Nuit des Églises comme l'une des réponses possibles et efficaces aux appels contenus dans l'exhortation apostolique post-synodale *Ecclesia in Europa* de saint Jean-Paul II, publiée en 2003. Il retrace également l'histoire, l'expansion et la mission de cette initiative. L'étude se concentre en particulier sur sa mise en œuvre en République tchèque depuis 2009, avec une attention particulière aux années 2020—2022, marquées par l'épidémie de COVID-19. L'article tente aussi de mettre en lumière les aspects positifs (opportunités) et négatifs (pièges) de cette initiative. Il peut ainsi servir non seulement de bilan des actions entreprises jusqu'à présent, mais aussi de source d'inspiration, notamment pour les pays où cette activité n'est pas encore répandue, voire reste largement méconnue.

Mots-clés : Église catholique, Églises chrétiennes, évangélisation, Nuit des Églises, œcuménisme, Jean-Paul II, exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*

Damián Němec

«La Notte delle Chiese» — una risposta pastorale alle sfide dell'esortazione *Ecclesia in Europa*

Riassunto

Il presente saggio presenta la Notte delle Chiese come una delle risposte possibili ed efficaci agli appelli contenuti nell'esortazione apostolica postsinodale *Ecclesia in Europa* di san Giovanni Paolo II, pubblicata nel 2003. Il testo ripercorre la storia, l'espansione e la missione di questa iniziativa. In particolare, l'articolo si concentra sulla sua messa in atto nella Repubblica Ceca a partire dal 2009, con una particolare attenzione agli anni 2020—2022, segnati dalla pandemia di COVID-19. L'autore si propone inoltre di evidenziare sia gli aspetti positivi (opportunità), sia quelli negativi (insidie) legati a questa iniziativa. In questo modo, il contributo può servire non solo come bilancio delle attività svolte finora, ma anche come fonte d'ispirazione, specialmente per i paesi in cui l'iniziativa non è ancora diffusa o risulta ancora poco conosciuta.

Parole chiave: Chiesa cattolica, Chiese cristiane, evangelizzazione, Notte delle Chiese, ecumenismo, Giovanni Paolo II, esortazione *Ecclesia in Europa*

Part Two

Reviews

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Janusz Mariański: *Religious Identities in Polish Society: A Sociological Study* Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2024

Janusz Mariański published his book entitled *Religious Identities in Polish Society: A Sociological Study* in 2024 as the summary of his earlier research. Identity is a basic concept and key notion in sociology. Having an identity is one of the most universal of human needs. It manifests itself in the need to belong to groups and communities, to be accepted and to feel secure, with lasting social bonds and structures; these things mean stability. Identity is socially assigned and must also be socially confirmed. The problem of one's identity is written into a given community's annals and individual biographies.

Yet, one can point out that question of identity becomes a topic in certain circles, generations, and environments, in periods of cultural crises and religious breakthroughs. These are times when the ruthlessness of confrontation increases and one's sense of security decreases, when the awareness of identifying with one's community becomes an important criterion of social activities undertaken by a person and a source integrating one's personality. An identity is the expression of people orientations toward symbols and values that determine the specificity and distinctiveness of one's community and personality profile. The search for one's identity is a kind of protest against the anonymity of the life of mass society, which tends to blur the differences between people and social groups. It also arises from the desire to mark one's presence in social life subjectively and personally.

An identity is a task that every person and society is faced with, but it is also cloaked in formulas of everyday practices that actualise cultural and religious norms and expectations concerning an identity's profile: a normative and behavioral identity. An identity is created in a construction process that ensures the integrity of the basic code, allowing one to experience the continuity and relative durability of the personality traits of an individual or a community's culture. It allows a person to reconcile the opposition between continuation and duration and the different features resulting from the acquisition of new experiences in individual or collective life.

The question of continuity and change have always *fascinated sociologists*, as Janusz Mariański writes in his book. "A community has a more strongly (and therefore unproblematically) defined collective identity to the extent that it is subject to change more slowly and that it can reproduce more precisely the codified rules of the actions of its members."[1] Anthony Giddens claims that the expression of collective identities, which is the signature of the currently ongoing technological revolution, is accompanied by the expansion of the "I," which in the postmodern world is supposed to be active and self-reflective.[2] The dynamics of social development are determined by the processes of cultural integration, understood as a *consensus* based on the basic principle or principles, pluralistic unity of norms, values, symbols, and patterns of behavior. This situation is conducive to maintaining one's identity.

Identity is threatened by the cultural crisis and historically formed model of religiosity, loss of a personalistic perspective, or ideologization of social awareness initiated by opportunistically attractive political interests additionally facilitated by axiological instability. The category of *identity*, one of the basic dimensions of a personal and community social life, is currently one of the most frequently invoked sociological concepts. It is the subject of numerous sociological empirical studies and theoretical analyses presented in various contexts and aspects. The most important point concerns the community's and human person's identity. Identity is shaped by the fundamental principles of the relationship between culture and religion. The presence of religious values in social life practices primarily depends on the processes of upbringing and socialization that ensure experiencing the ontological reality of the social world.[3] "People treat as real everything that they were convinced was real during

[1] Z. Bokszański: *Tożsamości zbiorowe*. Warszawa 2005, p. 52.

[2] A. Giddens: *Nowoczesność i tożsamość. „Ja" i społeczeństwo w epoce późnej nowoczesności*. Warszawa 2001.

[3] M. Świątkiewicz-Mośny: *Konstruowanie nowych tożsamości w warunkach globalizacji*. Kraków 2015.

socialization. In turn, beliefs about reality are based on belief systems that shape ‘popular ontologies’.”[4]

From the Christian perspective, this dependence, in its deepest dimensions, is also rooted in man’s autonomy and freedom, which also allows for the possibility of resigning from religious search for justifications for the obviousness and naturalness of the social world. Man can resign from searching for religious references concerning one’s life. In his encyclical *Vertitatis splendor*, John Paul II proclaimed the existence of the *cultural issue* that essentially “we find the *moral sense*, which is in turn rooted and fulfilled in the *religious sense*.”[5] In a contemporary society that is strongly marked by the tendency to sever truth from freedom and faith from morals, the result is that the “moral sense” is separated from the “religious sense.” Thus, the experience of multiple crises and axiological turmoil often goes beyond an individual’s ability to adapt, including entire communities.

In his book, Janusz Mariański presents an analysis of the rapid identity changes in contemporary culture through the lens of four dimensions: social differentiation, deinstitutionalization, axiological-normative pluralism, and structural individualism. Approaching the issue of identity in the context of Polish society’s religiosity, the author places his analyses in the theoretical paradigm of a *society of choice*, in which religion and religiosity cease to be part of the natural, obvious, and unquestionable social world of everyday life practices and cultural heritage. These are subject to syncretic choices and individual conscious decisions, sometimes described as hybridization of the religious identity of the individual and, consequently, of entire communities.

Multiple empirical sociological studies carried out by Janusz Mariański show the extent of the secular phenomenon in social life and the scale of laicization processes in people’s thinking, especially of the younger generation. This primarily refers to the area of daily life practices and marriage and family morality. Legitimizing the Christian doctrine by moral values and norms is undergoing relativization and marginalization; these are now deconstructed, questioned, and rejected.

Referring to the canon of Polish traditional sociological research concentrating on cultural models of religiousness that Józef Majka and Władysław Piwowarski worked out in the mid-20th century, in which the theoretical categories of the *nation’s religiosity* and *daily life religiosity* were distinguished, Janusz Mariański notes the contemporary deep cracks

[4] T. Parsons: “Motywacje wierzeń i zachowań religijnych.” In: *Socjologia religii*. Ed. F. Adamski. Kraków 1984, p. 191.

[5] John Paul II: *Veritatis splendour*, no. 98.

in the model of the *nation religion* with its historical merits in shaping the religious and cultural identity of Polish society.

These cracks are expressed in attitudes of being far from Church institutions, in the pluralization of religious beliefs and the appearance of a so-called new spirituality phenomenon inscribed in religious semantics, pictures and symbols found in various *profane* sectors of social life (economy, sports, politics). It is incorporating popular religion into the heritage of traditional Churches, aiming to change their doctrinal shapes and social functions. “The Catholic Church has been made to feel (institutionally and otherwise) on the defensive. Various social and political forces attempt to remove it from public life, and we face a strong wave of secularism, the effects of which are difficult to predict” (p. 323).

Janusz Mariański’s opinions comprise a kind of summary of his impressive, long-term creative activity, whose fruits are tens of academic books and hundreds of articles in the area of religious sociology and moral sociology. The biographical note included in the book points to the author’s many works, whose citations were used in this reviewed publication. This bibliography alone is 62-pages-long, which indicates the author’s obvious competence in the field of the issues he deals with and proves the extensiveness of bibliographic searches, truly *Benedictine diligence* aimed at a reliable and comprehensive collection of literature, both theoretical and empirical, so that every thesis presented in the book and every conclusion has its documentation.

The book is very extensive, just like previous books by this scholar, both those in the field of the sociology of religion and those dealing with sociological or socio-pedagogical issues of morality. Mariański’s readers are accustomed to the breadth of the issues discussed, rich in detail in the presented empirical data, masterfully incorporated into the literature on the subject. He presents an original theoretical model for explaining the phenomena and processes taking place in the cultural landscape of Polish religiosity.

The book is comprised of eight chapters, including an introduction and conclusions. It systematically presents the most important conclusions and results of the analysis of the theory of religious sociology, with many cited results of empirical studies carried out in the book. The book’s well thought-out structure reflects its substantive coherence. The chapters have readably formulated titles, their internal structures are elaborate and complex, and their content strictly corresponds to the issues announced by the titles and subtitles. Every chapter provides a conclusion, making it easier for readers to quickly identify a given issue in the introduced results of studies and the procedures the author undertook in his conclusions to justify the set research assumptions.

The subjects of detailed sociological analysis are the following: denominational and religious self-identifications in Polish society, faith and religious beliefs, religion and morality in the consciousness of Poles — interdependence and autonomy, marital and family morality, religious practices in Polish society in decline, the Catholic Church as a social and religious institution in the consciousness of Poles, and the Catholic parish in Poland in the process of transformation.

What may attract Readers' attention is the book's communicative language, which abounds in sociological terminology specific to the sociology of religion, original theses, and conclusions, yet its style is far from obfuscating and hermetic, let alone pretentious. Janusz Mariański's book can also be treated as a kind of sociological textbook necessary to study the cultural changes in Polish religiosity, its various endogenous and exogenous conditions, allowing for a better understanding of the phenomenon of the lasting identity of Polish religiosity in the European context.

The leading trend of the narrative about the changes in the religious and cultural identity of Polish society is well illustrated by the following fragment of the book: "In Poland — in addition to secularisation processes — there are robust counter-secularisation processes at work due to the influence of the Catholic Church and other religious communities. It is impossible to study religiosity and ecclesiality in Poland, as well as the condition of the Polish family, without taking into account the evangelisation thesis. It refers to the manifold activities of the Catholic Church (and other Christian communities) aimed at communicating religious faith and religious morals to individuals, families and society as a whole. In the most general terms, one would mention catechetical formation in schools and parishes, pastoral formation in parishes and in the various Catholic movements and associations, family formation (pastoral care for families), training through the Church's means of social communication and many others. They counterbalance the strong 'creeping' secularisation and individualisation processes in Polish society. There is a continuous socialisation into mature faith and religious morality ('ecclesialisation') in Polish parishes, although its strength seems to wane. The weakened religious socialisation in the family, in particular, does not guarantee the permanence of bonds with the parish and the Church" (pp. 452–453).

The author's statement defining the social functions of sociology in terms of an "early warning system" is extremely accurate. Sociology allows us to see what others do not yet perceive. Despite the clear and focused process of religious identity transformation in Polish society, the author sociologically interprets not only the secularization and laicization, pluralistic and individualistic tendencies but also the opposing evangelization and anti-secularization forces. *Secularization cannot be buried in* *a Polish graveyard of prematurely dead theories*, nor can we do so with *religious deprivatization*. Social trends do not occur inevitably, independent of people's ideas and actions, according to the logic of cultural determinism. Modernity is the result of the life practices of thinking people who are not devoid of religious sensitivity.

Modern societies do not have to be essentially secular, which does not mean that the traditional model of church religiosity is not subject to radical transformations. What will happen to us in the future also depends largely on us now. As we read in the book's conclusions: "There is no unidirectional evolution in religious and moral matters, as in human affairs in general, nor is there a single rule by which religious and moral processes proceed" (p. 477).

The book *Religious Identities in Polish Society: A Sociological Study*, similarly to Mariański's earlier works, will enjoy warm welcome by wide circles of readers, not only sociologists of religion, sociologists in general, and morality educators, but also those circles to which it is close in a cognitive sense, as well as practical issues of changes in the religious and cultural identity of Polish society.

Janusz Mariański's work undoubtedly has a personalistic dimension. It is founded on clearly defined axiological premises, and the methodology of the conducted research respects the principle of *Wertfreiheit*, well established in the sociological tradition and formulated by Max Weber.

This reliable, competent, and exhaustive diagnosis is founded on sociological theories, interpretations, and assessments of the studied phenomena, social processes, structures, and institutions. It considers human attitudes and patterns of behavior based on empirical data that allow us to read and reconstruct the premises of possible strategies determining the directions of transformation of religious and cultural identities in Polish society from the perspective of the next decades of the 21st century.

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Andrzej Siemieniewski: *O doświadczeniu mistycznym i obecności Maryi* [On the Mystical Experience and the Presence of Mary], Zielonka: Wydawnictwo Sumus, 2023

Andrzej Siemieniewski, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Legnica, professor of theological sciences specializing in the theology of spirituality, and a teaching and research fellow at the Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław, is a leading expert in contemporary spirituality, particularly in its charismatic, evangelical, and ecumenical dimensions. His notable contributions to this field include several influential publications, such as *Ewangelikalna duchowość nowego narodzenia a Tradycja katolicka* (Evangelical Spirituality of the New Birth and the Catholic Tradition; Wrocław, 1997), *Ochrzczeni w jednym Duchu: Perspektywy integracji mistycyzmu pentekostalnego z duchowością katolicką* (Baptized in the Same Spirit: Perspectives on the Integration of Pentecostal Mysticism with Catholic Spirituality; Wrocław, 2002), *Boży płomień. Chrzest w Duchu Świętym* (God's Flame: Baptism in the Holy Spirit; Wrocław, 2017), *Chrześcijańskie Ruchy Charyzmatyczne. Nowość czy kontynuacja tradycji?* (Christian Charismatic Movements: Novelty or Continued Tradition?; Poznań, 2019). In addition to his academic work, Bishop Siemieniewski actively engages with interdenominational dialogue through organizations like the Polish Christian Forum and regularly participates in meetings, conferences, and congresses at both national and global levels, fostering collaboration among Christian community leaders.

In this context, it is important to note Andrzej Siemieniewski's most recent book entitled *O doświadczeniu mistycznym i obecności Maryi* (On the Mystical Experience and the Presence of Mary) published by Sumus Publishing House in 2023. The book contributes to the dispute on the role of broadly understood mysticism and religious experience in spiritual growth. The dispute can see the lingering notion that mysticism is limited to extraordinary phenomena or is accessible only to a select group of devout individuals, such as monks or nuns in contemplative orders. The work emphasizes that while the teachings of figures like St. Teresa of Jesus, St. John of the Cross, the representatives of Hesychast tradition in Orthodox Christianity and Rhineland, Dutch, and English mystics, as well as the so-called *devotio moderna*, remain vital, the Church's historical approach to mysticism has often been marked by a certain reserve and distance — in the post-Tridentine Church, as well as the Churches that emerged from the Wittenberg and Swiss Reformations. A significant shift occurred with the rise of the Holiness Movement, drawing chiefly on John Wesley's experience and teachings, and more prominently, the Pentecostal revival of the early 20th century. Pentecostalism, along with charismatic experiences in traditional churches, especially the Catholic Church, and their greater openness to spiritual charisms and manifestations of the Holy Spirit sparked debate about the authenticity and legitimacy of such experiences. At the same time the Pentecostal and charismatic communities' emphasis on experience sparked concerns that personal spiritual experience might overshadow and stifle or at least severely undermine the intellectual and volitional dimensions of faith. However, because it is rather difficult to dismiss experiential faith, a proper balance between all components of the religious act is advocated. It would also be inappropriate to treat experience as merely a stepping stone for the immature, while those considered spiritually mature view it as redundant.

The increasing globalization of modern life — marked by travel, broader interpersonal interactions, and migration — has brought questions about diverse religions into the lives of ordinary people, not just scholars or participants in official interfaith dialogues. This trend coincides with rising secularization, where many individuals drift away from traditional forms of religious practice and even the foundational tenets of their faith, often turning their attention toward other religious traditions and cultures.

In this theological and social context, Bishop Andrzej Siemieniewski's publication bears particular relevance. It explores the multidimensional nature of religious experience and its significance in contemporary life, including with respect to the shifting definitions of spirituality, religiosity, and the challenges posed by the growing secularization.

The book is divided into eight chapters. The first one, entitled "Experiencing the Presence of God: An Elitist Experience or the Foundation of Mature Faith?," examines different perspectives on mystical experience. One view, a minimalist stance, suggests that rather than deepening one's relationship with God such experiences merely register it in psychological consciousness. Proponents of this view argue for caution, as even if one cannot deny the feeling of God's presence (psychological aspect of faith), it remains difficult to confirm the reality of encountering God directly. Eventually, "in the human psyche, God is more often a tragic absence than a joyful presence" (p. 24). The second view is theological optimism about mystical experience. Siemieniewski draws on Polish theologian Wincenty Granat's work *Personalizm chrześcijański* (Christian Personalism; Poznań, 1985), which argues that "since love, as a theological virtue, is uniformly present in those with sanctifying grace, mystical experiences rooted in this love are not distinct from the broader life of grace" (p. 25). The first chapter also highlights two theological perspectives. The first one has been developed by Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky, who emphasized the sensation of faith's light and the gradual process of divinization as normative elements of the spiritual journey. The second perspective was developed by German theologian Heribert Mühlen, who said that the presence of the Holy Spirit can be perceived with senses. This optimism makes mysticism a constitutive element of the Church's life and identity.

Chapter Two, "Step into the Postmodern Future or Awakening the Spectre of the Past? Postmodern Mystical Spirituality according to Don Cupitt," explores the ideas of Anglican theologian Don Cupitt, who views mysticism as a literary construct (no superiority of experience over language), framing it as a reaction against religious oppression and a path to reclaiming the joy of primitive religions. Cupitt draws parallels between mysticism and Marxist class struggle, suggesting that mysticism represents the search for an idealized, primordial religious community. Just as Marxism identified private property as the alienating factor (private property and feudalism were seen as roots of social conflict), Cupitt sees religious orthodoxy as the alienating force within faith traditions. Consequently, mysticism emerges as a form of rebellion against religious orthodoxy and dogmatic theology. The promotion of practices like Zen meditation is part of this, with religious anarchy being an ideal to strive for (like Marxism's utopia of a property-free society). Don Cupitt's worldview proposes Darwinism in the vein of Richard Dawkins.

Chapter Three, "Mysticism — The Universal Religion of Humanity?," begins by examining mystical syncretism, which encompasses a variety of meditative practices such as Zen, yoga, and *satipatthana*, under the claim that meditation techniques transcend religious boundaries (as pointed out by Bede Griffiths). Then the author goes on to report on the key questions and answers about mystical irenicism, exploring the idea of the Holy Spirit's universal presence and influence. He seems to oversimplify comparisons between Western and Eastern mystical traditions. Siemieniewski references theologians like Louis Bouyer, who opposes reducing mysticism to a universal phenomenon divorced from specific religion, and Karlfried Graf Dürckheim, who claims that "Jesus was the first to experience God's indwelling presence [...] this can be replicated in every human being through the imitation of Christ..." (p. 57). A crucial element was recalling William Johnston's assertion that the life of ancient Christian monks was not solely meditative but deeply rooted in Scripture and liturgy. It is also important to recognize the intentionality of meditative practice (Rudolf Otto). While some aspects of mystical practice are shared, the theological content carried by faith is significant.

Chapter Four: "Christian Mysticism and Non-Christian Mysticism — Defining the Limits of Similarity," first advocates a balanced approach to various religions and their mystical experiences. Siemieniewski then delineates the foundational sources of Christian mysticism, including numerous biblical passages that articulate the expected unity of God and humanity, the transformative experience of God's love, and writings by influential Christian thinkers (such as Dionysius Pseudo-Areopagite, the Cappadocians, Evagrius, John Cassian, Augustine, Gregory the Great, Bernard of Clairvaux, John Gerson, the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* John Ruysbroeck, Teresa of Ávila, John of the Cross, and Michael Palamas). Siemieniewski also presents 20th-century views on mysticism (citing figures like Augustine Poulain, Abbé Saudreau, Alois Mager, and Karl Rahner). In addition, the chapter addresses several challenges articulated in the modern era, including claims that mysticism begins where rationality ends, or that it is what psychological sciences discovered about the subconscious, or that it has evolved toward esoteric interpretations. The chapter ends with a strong appeal for preserving Christian mysticism's distinctive nature (distinguishing it from Buddhist or Sanjuanist emptiness; Christian non-discursive meditation is preceded by discursive prayer, deeply rooted in Scripture and the celebration of the liturgy).

Chapter Five, "Theology of Spirituality in the Face of Religious Diversity — A Challenge at the Threshold of the Third Millennium," highlights the positive value of learning about different religions as a foundation for meaningful dialogue. For theology, this entails attempting "to gain an overview of the world of diverse religions in their mystical aspect using the language of the Bible" (p. 95). Siemieniewski quotes John Paul II, who emphasized the need for a *dialogue of religious experience* to complement other forms of dialogue, such as the dialogue of life, the dialogue of deeds, and theological dialogue. Siemieniewski also answers the question whether different religions represent distinct paths to the same ultimate summit or rather entirely different paths to separate goals. He draws on the perspective of John B. Cobb, who argues that each religion has a unique essence and destination, and Joseph Augustine Di Noia, who emphasizes that Christianity's focus on a personal relationship with God sets it apart from traditions like Buddhism. Therefore, as Louis Bouyer asserts, mystical experience always involves an intentional object. Contrary to the popular opinion, the phrase "different paths to the same summit" is true about various religions, not only Christianity. It is therefore difficult to maintain the religious pluralism postulated by thinkers like John Hick. This does not preclude mutual openness and appreciation of mystical values across different religions. It is necessary to beware of ideological pluralism. For syncretism ultimately leads to the alienation of individual religions.

Chapter Six, "The Relevance of the Testimony of Consecrated Persons at the Threshold of the Third Millennium," explores the core truth for Christian spirituality about the Church, which is one (spirituality of communion), holy (prayer), universal (spirituality of the Great Dispersion), and apostolic (the zeal of the apostles). Siemieniewski emphasizes the prophetic role of communities dedicated to consecrated life.

Chapter Seven, "Pursuing Holiness in the Example of Mary," reflects on the realism of incarnational spirituality through the life of Mary, who exemplifies openness to the work of the Holy Spirit. Marian spirituality underscores the primacy of God's initiative and God's triumph in the life of the believer. By embracing God's action, the faithful embark on a lifelong journey toward holiness.

Chapter Eight, "Experience of Faith — A Matter Serious Enough?," serves as conclusions of the book, emphasizing that the Catholic spiritual life is deeply rooted in the official teachings of the Church, and balancing both conceptual and affective dimensions. Siemieniewski quotes the *Directory on Popular Piety*, which underscores the value of extra-liturgical practices (e.g. prayer meetings and the Rosary).

Andrzej Siemieniewski's *O doświadczeniu mistycznym i obecności Maryi* is a significant contribution to the fields of theology of spirituality, ecumenism, and interreligious dialogue. Its strengths lie in its accessible and communicative language, concise presentation of its ideas, and clear presentation of the issues (to engage both scholars of religious experience and general readers who may lack a theological background). The work is distinguished by its extensive use of source materials in Polish, English, Italian, German, and Latin. The bibliography offers readers a valuable resource for further study and in-depth research. Siemieniewski's book calls contemporary Christians to pursue a deeper spiritual life, encouraging them to explore forms of faith expression beyond liturgical practices, conceptual prayer, or rational Bible study. This is particularly relevant in an era of increasing secularization of societies, which does not translate simply into a decline of spirituality. As Czech philosopher and theologian Prof. Tomáš Halík observes, people, including those who identify as "nones" with no formal religious affiliation, still express profound spiritual needs. In fact, one can speak of a crisis of the existing forms of religiosity rather than an elimination of religious life in general. Siemieniewski suggests that the Church should respond to this evolving landscape by engaging with such individuals through non-liturgical forms of spirituality, at least as a starting point. Deepening the understanding of mystical experience offers a meaningful path for pastors and spiritual leaders. This approach also includes fostering interreligious dialogue centred on shared inner and mystical experiences.

Bishop Siemieniewski's book holds particular significance for one more reason: since — as numerous thinkers, including Pope Francis, believe — the renewal of the Church cannot occur without spiritual renewal, the theological understanding of mystical experience needs to be deepened and the inalienable importance of spiritual (or religious) experience in pastoral practice needs to be recognized. Both the Bible and the Tradition of the Church serve as primary sources for embracing mysticism in its broadest sense. The theological reflection on this topic is crucial to ensure it is not relegated solely to the domains of psychology or cultural studies. Mystical experience is a vital *locus theologicus* for both theology and the lives of the baptized. Andrzej Siemieniewski's publication emphasizes the necessity of integrating mysticism, broadly understood, into the everyday lives of Christians. Moreover, it inspires readers to explore innovative forms of Christian engagement in contemporary societies.

From a holistic perspective, the book's key content lies in Chapters One through Five. The final three chapters, while valuable, take — in my opinion — a more confessional, dogmatic and pastoral approach (focusing on the role of the Church, Mary, and piety in the lives of believers). This latter section feels somewhat loosely connected to the book's main arguments. One notable editorial drawback is the use of endnotes instead of footnotes, which could hinder readability.

Considering all these observations, it can be said that *O doświadczeniu mistycznym i obecności Maryi* can be highly recommended to a wide audience, and researchers studying contemporary shifts in Christian spirituality may be inspired by Bishop Siemieniewski's work for further scholarly exploration.

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Martin Ebner: *Czy Kościół potrzebuje księży? Perspektywa biblijna* [Does the Church Need Priests? A Biblical Perspective]. Translated from German by Arkadiusz Ziernicki, Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2024

In 2024, publishing house WAM of Kraków released a Polish translation of *Braucht die katholische Kirche Priester? Eine Vergewisserung aus dem Neuen Testament* [Does the Catholic Church Need Priests? A New Testament Scrutiny], a thought-provoking book by Martin Ebner. The publication in question plays a significant role in the ongoing discussion about the nature of the ministry of presbyters and bishops in the Church, particularly the clerical estate, and the division of the faithful into clergy and laity. It also examines the use of the term "priest," which is absent from the language of the New Testament.

In the theological research it is interesting to see the theories concerning the transition from biblical indications to the monarchical model, as noted in the writings of Ignatius of Antioch. Among the hypotheses explored is Gregory Dix's finding that initially local presbyteral colleges elected the leaders and over time these delegates began overseeing multiple communities. As urban Christian populations grew, the idea emerged that these leaders should be successors of the apostles. It is also important to see the diversity of organizational structures among Christian communities in the early 2nd century, although in some churches the monarchical episcopate exists as a matter of course. Importantly, the early Church viewed presbyters and bishops as leaders tasked with guiding local communities, presiding over prayers (the liturgy), and teaching. Notably, until the First Council of Nicaea, presbyters often ordained bishops locally.

However, the term "priest" (Greek *hiereus*) was not applied to these leaders, as Christ was seen as the one true priest and bishops and presbyters presided over the Eucharist as a collective sacrifice of Christ's body — the Church. In some regions (such as Gaul), deacons also presided over the liturgy. The first recorded use of the term priest to refer to presbyters appears in the writings of Cyprian of Carthage. The problem of identification in other texts is that only Latin translations (such as those by Origen) are available. The shift toward associating clergy with the term priest became more pronounced after Christianity was declared the state religion by Emperor Theodosius the Great in 380 CE. This period saw a rise in the social status of presbyters and bishops. The development of the Church and theology brought deeper reflection on ordination. Among the key documents addressing the priesthood of presbyters and bishops are the *Bull of Union with the Armenians Exsultate Deo* (1439), the *Doctrine touching the Sacrament of Holy Orders* from the Council of Trent (1563),[1] the decree *Lamentabili* (1907),[2] and Constitution *Lumen gentium* of the Second Vatican Council (1964).[3]

With clear testimonies of the Tradition, the importance of presbyters' and bishops' ministries is rarely questioned today. However, critical questions are raised about terminology. Should the term priest (Latin *sacerdos*) be maintained? Is it appropriate to define the Church in terms of *states*, where the clerical estate (bishops, presbyters, and deacons) has specific legitimacy in the canon law? These questions gain urgency in light of ongoing concerns about sexual abuse, power dynamics, relation-

[1] "Sacrifice and priesthood are, by the ordinance of God, in such wise conjoined, as that both have existed in every law. Whereas, therefore, in the New Testament, the Catholic Church has received, from the institution of Christ, the holy visible sacrifice of the Eucharist; it must needs also be confessed, that there is, in that Church, a new, visible, and external priesthood, into which the old has been translated. And the sacred Scriptures show, and the tradition of the Catholic Church has always taught, that this priesthood was instituted by the same Lord our Saviour, and that to the apostles, and their successors in the priesthood, was the power delivered of consecrating, offering, and administering His Body and Blood, as also of forgiving and of retaining sins" (chap. I).

[2] "When the Christian supper gradually assumed the nature of a liturgical action those who customarily presided over the supper acquired the sacerdotal character" (no. 49).

[3] "Bishops, therefore, with their helpers, the priests and deacons, have taken up the service of the community, presiding in place of God over the flock, whose shepherds they are, as teachers for doctrine, priests for sacred worship, and ministers for governing" (no. 20).

ships among the baptized in the Church and the functioning of communities. They are further amplified by the challenges of mission work and the Church's role in increasingly secularized societies. Therefore, there is a growing need for a thorough discussion on the Church's structures and mechanisms.

Taking these considerations into account, Martin Ebner's book offers an engaging exploration of this pressing topic. The author, born in 1956, is a presbyter of the Diocese of Würzburg and professor emeritus of New Testament exegesis at the Universities of Münster and Bonn.

The book is structured into fifteen concise chapters, each focusing on a specific issue. The opening chapter, "'The Parish Priest Must Be Abolished!'," serves as an introduction, laying out the contemporary challenges facing the Catholic Church. Ebner examines the declining number of presbyters and the resulting impact on Church communities. It is increasingly difficult to see the Eucharist as central to the overall life of the Church, as many communities do not have it on a daily basis. Scandals within the Church also contribute to the erosion of its integrity. Ebner references the German *Synodaler Weg*'s General Assembly, during which the legitimacy of the priestly ministry was questioned, with the discussion culminating in the document *Priesterliche Existenz heute* (*Priestly Existence Today*). The central question Ebner frames in his book is: "What do we do if what we consider typically Catholic is not even typically Christian, and is therefore not supported by the testimonies of the New Testament, and may even contradict them?" (p. 13).

The second chapter, "No Priests in the Early Christian Communities," explores the early Church's structure, which did not include a distinct clerical estate. Presbyters, or elders, worked collectively, similar to the way municipal councils operated. They were not referred to as priests, which does not mean that early Christian communities lacked organization or designated roles. The testimony of the communities founded by St. Paul shows a division of tasks based on individual charisms. In some instances, a group of communities was overseen by an *episcopos*, a role inspired by the Roman *pater familias*.

The third chapter, "Priests in the Old World Are Managers of Worship," takes the readers to the topic of ancient religious practices. In antiquity, the title "priest" was linked to temple worship. In the Roman world, priests were often municipal officials who personally funded their priestly duties. Women, too, could hold these roles. In Jewish society, priests formed a distinct group within the Israelite community, performing their duties on assigned days. Outside their priestly service, they worked regular jobs but were entitled to tithes for their support. The core purpose of the priestly ministry was to act as mediators between God and the people.

Chapter Four, “Something Only Priests in the Jerusalem Temple Could Do: Forgive Sins Through Animal Sacrifices,” explores the Old Testament understanding of the purification of sins, which took place through ethical conversion (as emphasized by the prophets) and the liturgical and sacramental system of atonement (which involved priests offering expiatory sacrifices in the Temple). Particularly significant was the high priest’s role on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), especially his entry into the Holy of Holies.

The fifth chapter, “Ideas of Purity Lead to Distinctions Between People,” examines the structure of the Jerusalem temple and its concept of holiness, which created divisions among the Israelites (high priests, priests, men, women, and gentiles). Ebner also discusses the tension between the ethical focus (inner conversion) and an adherence to ritual practices only.

In the sixth chapter, “Opposition of the Early Christians: the Baptised Enter a Barrier-Free Social Space,” the author highlights how early Christianity dismantled identity dichotomy — in Christ, all are one (Gal 3:27—28).

Chapter Seven, “The Forgiveness of Sins Also Takes Place Among Christians, But Without the Mediation of Priests,” delves into the New Testament teaching on the forgiveness of sins. Jesus died for our sins. There is no place for liturgical (or financial) efforts. Jesus is the means of propitiation (Rom 3:25—26) and the meeting point between humanity and God. Freedom from sin is granted freely by faith.

Chapter Eight, “Jesus Acts as the Unforeseen Priest,” explores the Letter to the Hebrews, where Christ is depicted as the heavenly high priest. True salvation occurs in the heavenly temple, which the Jewish temple and worship merely prefigured. In this view, the ultimate sacrifice is a life fully dedicated to God. At the same time, it must be remembered that Jesus was not a priest according to Jewish law, as he did not belong to the priestly lineage, but is instead positioned as priest like Melchizedek.

The ninth chapter, “All Believers Live a Common Priesthood,” highlights the New Testament teaching that all baptized Christians have access to the spiritual temple and offer spiritual sacrifices. The author points out that the idea of the priesthood of believers (the concept of priestly people in the First Epistle of Peter) has its origins in Exodus: “I will count you a kingdom of priests, a consecrated nation” (Ex 19:6). The ethical dimension of priestly dignity, which involves keeping God’s commandments, is crucial. The author also refers to the Apostle Peter’s depiction of the Church as a house, with believers as the living stones of the spiritual temple.

Chapter Ten, "The Future City of God Is Without a Temple, Yet Filled with Priests," shifts focus to the Book of Revelation, with its apocalyptic vision of the heavenly city (Rev 21—22). The lack of a temple and the enormous size of the city (12,000 stadia is over 1,200 kilometres in length, width, and height) are provocative to Jewish thought. Its cubic shape mirrors the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem temple. In this vision, all inhabitants serve as priests and reign forever, a reality that, Ebner argues, should inspire how Christian communities live today.

Chapter Eleven, "The Roots of the Historical Jesus," examines Gospel accounts of Jesus challenging priestly purity laws, assuming priestly roles, criticizing the priesthood, and foretelling the destruction of the Temple. The author offers a compelling insight: a prediction of the destruction might not have been seen as blasphemous if it had been regarded as prophetic. However, Jesus was not granted this status during his lifetime, though his followers later recognized it.

Chapter Twelve, "'In Remembrance of Me': Not a Sacrifice but a Meal," explores the Christian practice of the Lord's Supper. Modelled on the Jewish sacred meal with the blessing of bread, this gathering of the baptized was a sacred feast. The author examines 1 Corinthians 11:23—25, which provides both a narrative outline of the rite and its deeper meaning. The ritual reflects Jesus' saving death and his pro-existence. In this sense, the Lord's Supper is not a sacrifice in the Old Testament sense of the word.

In Chapter Thirteen, "How 'Priests' Appeared in Christianity," the discussion moves beyond the biblical era. The author traces how the term "priest" (Greek *hiereus*, Latin *sacerdos*) gradually came to be applied to presbyters and bishops. Ebner argues that the term's adoption was driven by the need to financially support these ministers by the faithful, as the growth of Christian communities and the number of duties made it impossible for the clergy to sustain themselves through other professions. The author also highlights Cyprian of Carthage's writings, which framed clergy primarily in terms of their role at the altar, emphasizing a cultic rationale. Ebner also notes that this shift elevated the status of presbyters and bishops in the Roman world, aligning them with the priests of other religions.

Chapter Fourteen, "Conclusion," argues that the adoption of the title of priest was more a matter of practicality than theology or sacraments. Ebner explains that while the New Testament attests to leadership roles within Christian communities, it does not establish a distinct clerical class. He concludes: "The priest in the current conception — as a central leadership and sacramental-mediation figure — contradicts the essential structural requirements of the New Testament and the organizing principles of the life of the community of believers" (p. 117).

The fifteenth chapter, “Perspectives: What’s Next?,” addresses the need for various reforms within the Church. The author points out that it is inappropriate to focus all ministries on ordained persons. The challenge remains to discover and utilize the charisms God bestows on the faithful. Ebner draws on the insights of Karl Rahner, suggesting that meaningful Church-wide reforms require “micromutations” in the present.

The content of the reviewed book offers significant inspiration for further scholarly, historical, and theological exploration. Its strong biblical foundations make it a vital resource for theological reflection. Martin Ebner’s publication should inspire patrology scholars, Church historians, and dogmatic theologians to delve deeper into the theology of ordination, Church offices, and the overall structure of the Church. The historical dimension of the book is particularly valuable for understanding the multifaceted development of the clerical estate, especially in the context of the medieval concept of societal divisions. Additionally, the historical evolution of the doctrine of ordination provides crucial insights. In dogmatic theology, there is a pressing need for in-depth studies of the theology of the diaconate, presbyterate, and episcopate, as well as the sacramental and charismatic (or synodal) structure of the Church. Such research and future publications could serve as essential follow-ups to the questions raised in Ebner’s work.

The greatest strengths of *Braucht die katholische Kirche Priester?...* include concise content, accessible language, cultural context of the analyzed texts and the fact that the biblical analysis is put in the context of the challenges faced by the contemporary Church. The book’s structure is another asset, with its division into fifteen short chapters, each preceded by a brief summary that introduces the main themes. This format enhances readability and sustains the reader’s interest. The explanatory and supplementary endnotes further enrich the content. However, the book does have some drawbacks. The said endnotes (instead of footnotes) disrupt the flow of reading and hinder deeper reflection. Additionally, the bibliography is relatively sparse, consisting of merely fifteen items. A more extensive bibliography would have strengthened the work further.

In conclusion, Martin Ebner’s book is a much-needed addition to the field of theological studies. It is highly recommended for its potential to spark dialogue among theologians and provide a foundation for further questions and research.

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