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TRANSLATION AND “ESPRIT DE FINESSE” THEOLOGY IN THE SERVICE OF A CULTURALLY PLURAL CHURCH IN EUROPE

TŁUMACZENIE A „ESPRIT DE FINESSE”. TEOLOGIA W SŁUŻBIE
WIELOKULTUROWEGO KOŚCIOŁA W EUROPIE

ABSTRACT

The following article reflects on a redefinition of theological work in Europe in times of synodality. The new synodal processes make it clear that theology cannot be anything other than “local”; it grows out of the various places where theologians are active. In the plurality of these places, in continuous processes of inculturation, theology must reflect the message of faith, and so its task includes the “art of translation” in and between the diverse spaces. Theology thus places itself at the service of a Church that is a “sacrament of the peoples”, an emblematic image from the Second Vatican Council that requires fresh expression in this era of synodality.

In this sense, the article addresses the question of a theology in the service of a culturally plural Church in Europe. The philosophical approach of Paul Ricœur is – on a methodological level – the reference for the approach to cultural pluralism in Europe and the search for a Christian unity. Theology can only address the question of the identity and truth of Christian faith by means of translation and recognition and with an “esprit de finesse.” These are the foundations for the current search for a theology that traces synodal paths.

Poniższy artykuł stanowi refleksję nad redefinicją aktywności teologa w Europie w czasach synodalności. Nowe procesy synodalne jasno pokazują, że teologia nie może być niczym innym jak „lokalną”; wyrasta ona z różnych miejsc, w których działają teologowie. W pluralizmie tych miejsc, w ciągłych procesach inkulturacji, teologia musi odzwierciedlać przesłanie wiary, a zatem jej zadaniem jest „sztuka tłumaczenia” w różnych przestrzeniach i pomiędzy nimi. Teologia stawia się zatem w służbie Kościoła, który jest „sakramentem narodów”, symbolicznym obrazem z Soboru Watykańskiego II, wymagającym nowego wyrażenia w erze synodalności.

W tym sensie artykuł porusza kwestię teologii w służbie kulturowo pluralistycznego Kościoła w Europie. Podejście filozoficzne Paula Ricœura jest – na poziomie metodologicznym – punktem odniesienia dla podejścia do pluralizmu kulturowego w Europie i poszukiwania jedności chrześcijańskiej. Teologia może zająć się kwestią tożsamości i prawdy wiary chrześcijańskiej jedynie poprzez tłumaczenie i rozpoznawanie oraz z „esprit de finesse”. Są to podstawy dla obecnych poszukiwań teologii, która wytycza ścieżki synodalne.

1. “When Europe went under...” – or: Europe as a peace project? Searching for a theology in cultural pluralism in Europe

“It is not possible to give an exact date. It happened at dawn, or perhaps at sunset, when the sea off Lampedusa took the lives of another boat and swallowed them up. It then released the flotsam and corpses. This is how Europe sank, after entrenching itself behind ever higher walls, video-monitored borders and fences equipped with electronic sensors – as often as the number of shipwrecked people can be measured... It seems that Europe can only be spoken of in conditional terms...” – writes the Italian philosopher Donatella di Cesare in her “Philosophy of Migration” (Di Cesare ²2022, 285), published in Italian in 2017 and in a German translation in 2021.

In the context of socio-philosophical and political science studies on globalisation in the second half of the 20th century, which gained new momentum after the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) and were linked in Europe with new post-national perspectives and a cosmopolitanism based on Kant’s writings on “perpetual peace”, the questions associated with the increasing global phenomenon of migration have moved to the centre of thought. Thinkers committed to “broken” modernity such as Jürgen Habermas and Paul Ricœur and postmodern philosophers such as Jacques Derrida are laying the groundwork for a new way of thinking in a world on the move. The view of the “European project”¹ was characterised by hope in these years; according to Donatella di Cesare, Europe was seen as a “laboratory” “in which new forms of citizenship, detached from descent and birth, were to be tested and the toxic myth of the nation was to be shed”, but, according to her pessimistic assessment 30 years later, “Europe has not become this, it has not kept these promises” (Di Cesare ²2022, 286). Wars, civil wars, climate catastrophes, dictatorial and marginalising political regimes, poverty, hunger and a lack of educational opportunities in many countries of the South, especially in Africa and the Middle East, are accelerating the phenomenon of migration; xenophobia, racism and the associated nationalist and fundamentalist political movements are growing in European countries. Even if the borders in the European “internal space” have been opened, borders to the “outside”, borders between North and South, are being demarcated in a sharp way. Europe is increasingly forgetting the world, but a “worldless”² Europe that closes itself off from the broken world is losing itself – as the Jewish philosopher Hannah Arendt pointed out back in the late 1950s. Donatella di Cesare wrote her reflections before Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine. With reflections by Hannah Arendt and Michel Agier on the camps of the 20th century – internment, labour, concentration and extermination camps (Di Cesare ²2022, 250) – Donatella di Cesare takes a look at the refugee camps in southern

¹ Cf. Hasse 2021; Kirschner 2022.

² Cf. Eckholt. In: Kirschner 2022, 73-96. On the phrase “worldless”, see Hannah Arendt, *Von der Menschlichkeit in finsternen Zeiten: Rede am 28. September 1959 bei der Entgegennahme des Lessing-Preises der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg* (1960).

Italy, on the Greek islands, in northern France and in many other places. They point out that the confrontation with the guilt of the violent history of the 20th century goes deeper and that Europe today must be “retold” with a view to the violence associated with the “conquistas” of the early modern period and the colonialism of the 19th century, which was deeply inscribed in the life stories of the conquered peoples. Migration in a globalised world from South to North, taking the route across the Mediterranean which has become a cemetery, reveals these stories of violence.

I deliberately place Donatella di Cesare’s “Philosophy of Migration”, one of the central works of contemporary European philosophy, at the beginning of my reflections; addressing the question of cultural pluralism in Europe and “Christian unity” is only possible with a view to the current world situation. Christian faith is always “inculturated”, embedded in concrete cultural contexts, specific moments in time and spaces in which people live, love and suffer. Thirty years ago, one of Europe’s greatest philosophers of the 20th century, Paul Ricœur, posed the question of a “new ethos for Europe”³ in view of the new plurality of a Europe that was changing after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. In the footsteps of Husserl’s phenomenology, Ricœur is convinced that only a definition of identity from and in the diverse structures of alterity can break down self-centredness, which leads to demarcation – the current identitarian movements and developments in politics, society and culture in the various European countries, but also worldwide, jab a finger right in the wound of such a self-referential and history-forgotten identity. In the context of the political developments following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the expansion of the European Union to include the states of Eastern Europe, Ricœur identified this threat with impressive clarity. The history of 20th-century violence is inscribed in Ricœur’s reflections; a look at history exposes violence, conflict, marginalisation and discord, but that is not all; in thinking about this abyss – in the presence of the past, in the difficult processes of forgetting and forgiving – possibilities can open up as what paths to peace are viable. Thus his theory of “memory” and his philosophical approach to the “recognition” of the others lays the foundations for leading Europe’s heritage into the future of the world community. His essay on a “new ethos for Europe”, published in 1992, is such a reflection on the European peace project, a reflection on this “new ethos” in the service of living together in just institutions and in peace. Ricœur’s philosophy grows out of the roots of European traditions of thought; in this sense, it is a concrete way of thinking embedded in the cultural and religious traditions of Europe. Precisely because it takes seriously this contextuality – the history that revealed itself in the 20th century, especially in its abysses – bringing it into thinking, carrying with it a “universal” claim that is of central relevance for the global world society of the 21st century; it can draw the legacy of a humanism understood as a way of thinking that centers on the “capable human being” and “living together in

³ Ricœur. In: Koslowski 1992, 108-120.

just institutions” and is borne by a hope that grows out of the unexploited stories of life and love, even in the abysses of history.⁴

I deliberately place the philosophical approaches of Paul Ricœur and Donatella di Cesare at the beginning of the following reflections on a redefinition of theological work in Europe in times of synodality. The new synodal processes make it clear that theology cannot be anything other than “local”; it grows out of the various places where theologians are active. “Local theologies”, a term coined in the 1970s and reflected on in depth by missionary theologian Robert Schreiter (Schreiter 1985), among others, are not only to be understood as those that have emerged in the countries of the South. New life forms of faith are developing in all the turbulent contexts of the globalised world in an exciting and creative plurality. This is where new “*loci theologici*” are formed, in the midst of the dynamics and fluidity of life and in the fragile, plural, tense spaces in which people live, love and suffer. In the plurality of these places, in continuous processes of inculturation, theology must reflect the message of faith, and so its task includes the “art of translation” in and between the diverse spaces. Theology is then at the service of a Church as a “sacrament of the peoples”, the emblematic image of the Second Vatican Council that needs to be further developed today in synodal times; theology is at the service of an “ecclesio-genesis” that is reorientated towards the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is above all an announcement of mercy and forgiveness, of a merciful God who stands by his promise of a “good life” for the whole of creation.

In the following brief reflections, I will use this background to address the question of a theology in the service of a culturally plural Church in Europe. The philosophical approach of Paul Ricœur is the reference for the approach to cultural pluralism and the search for a Christian unity. These reflections also fit into the context of the current search for a theology on synodal paths. Theology can only address the question of the identity and truth of Christian faith by means of translation and recognition and with an “*esprit de finesse*.”

2. Cultural pluralism – translation, recognition and hospitality

If I briefly explore the complex concept of “culture” with Paul Ricœur, this is certainly an understanding of culture that arises from the European tradition, but in my opinion it is an approach in which is inherent the openness to the many “flip sides of history” (“*desde el reverso de la historia*”).⁵ Culture is not a “static” or “ontological” concept, but is to be understood historically; culture as such always implies cultural pluralism, diversity, change, even the ruptures that pervade cultures, determine what culture is and what – with Ricœur – is implied in the “understanding” of culture itself. Culture manifests itself in the various institutions of human coexistence; in its deepest dimension, it expresses the ethical-mythical core of

⁴ Cf. Eckholt. In: Liebsch 2024, 2067-2104.

⁵ The term “reverse of history” was coined by liberation theology (Gutiérrez 1977).

reality in its very different symbolic – aesthetic and religious – forms. Greek heritage combines with the Jewish and Christian traditions of Europe, a living process that is certainly continuing to develop today, about all taking in account the Islamic traditions, especially those of the medieval and premodern period and, sure, many other religious expressions of today. The reality of culture is expressed across different layers of human coexistence, where it appears as a concrete “civilisation” shaped by specific historical and geographical contexts. It is, according to Ricœur (1946, 425), the “common adventure” that takes place in a limited field of humanity. Culture is constituted in ever new processes of “trans-lation”, in the encounter with the many “others”, an encounter that is also characterised by drama and tragedy, but in which the possibility of dialogue and true “recognition of the other” is inherent in the exchange of traditions and in ever new forgiveness, so difficult it may be.

If culture, according to Ricœur’s perspective, is understood in its deepest dimension from a relationship of recognition, then all forms of the “conquest of the other” are perversions of culture, in which the fragility of the mediation of self and other, the evil and tragedy at the root of history are expressed.⁶ In the dynamic interrelatedness of civilisation and culture, the concept of culture, which can be developed with Ricœur, is “alive” and open to change. Any culture that closes in on itself loses its creative potential; what culture is, is always “on the way.”⁷ In the encounter with other cultural traditions, the interpretation of what culture is, is triggered anew, the “noyau créateur” of each culture is activated anew; in the process, the unfulfilled promises of the past, the forgotten and the hidden can be uncovered. In this way, the images, conceptions and ideas of a culture are also criticised, which have hidden the histories of entire peoples and groups of people from the culture or still hide them today – anti-Semitism, all forms of racism, but also misogyny, exclusion of the elderly, disabled, foreigners, etc. are all part of this. Through such criticism, history can be rediscovered and rewritten, what “culture” is can be reinvented and redefined, this is the decisive reorientation that allows culture – in the sense of becoming one human family and living coexistence in dignity and justice – to become truly and genuinely “universal.”

In this respect, what culture is can only be determined from specific and concrete perspectives, from where plurality is inscribed in the concept of culture. This is a transcendental philosophical definition that ties in with considerations from the philosophy of language. The philosopher of religion, Bernhard Welte, for example, says that language is always already “translation” (Welte 1981). This requires a special skill that far exceeds instrumental reason; what is needed is an “esprit de finesse” (Welte 1981, 84), which allows us to acquire the ability to “transform one thing from one language in such a way that it will be the same in the other language, but not at all the same” (Welte 1981, 84). It is crucial that in this process of translation

⁶ Among a multitude of cultural criticisms “from the flip side of history”, reference should be made here to: Todorov 1985; León-Portilla 1985. Cf. Gruber 2013.

⁷ Cf. Ricœur 1986, 78: “...la dignidad del hombre itinerante está en los valores eternos que descubre al inventarlos históricamente.”

a new “third” does not emerge, the two poles or partners remain; what is important are the transitions, the crossing over into the other. “What is decisive for this process is the realisation that the type of translation or transformation required here cannot be carried out in such a way that the two competing language levels are reduced to a third, to a lowest denominator, so to speak. For the difference to be overcome here consists precisely in the fact that this common level does not exist. So the translation must be realised through an immediate vision of the possibilities and correspondences in the transition from one level to the other” (Welte 1981, 85). This vision is possible because there is a “common field”, a “horizon of the perception of language.”⁸ In times of identitarian movements and post-colonial negation of this “common field”, these are challenging remarks – but from a Christian perspective, which starts from the vision of the common human family as the guiding horizon of the pastoral constitution “*Gaudium et spes*”, this is a philosophical approach without which hope is not possible in a world characterised by violence, war and hatred. In speaking, which is always related to another – a listener – a commonality is formed; sure, it can be negated, but this also violates what constitutes the dignity of the other who has addressed me. Thus, an understanding of culture includes the most diverse processes of translation, the exchange of memories and forgiveness, including an “*esprit de finesse*”,⁹ as Bernhard Welte calls it.

Understanding the self and understanding of the others are interrelated; identity – and religious identity – is not constituted without a processes of translation. Christian identity grows via the exchange of memories, which in its depth goes through forgiveness, because it is precisely in the entanglement in the stories of others that I can become guilty, just as I myself can become the victim of others. The universality to which the truth of Christian faith is committed is linked to the horizon of hope that there is a time of forgiveness and reconciliation.¹⁰ For Christians, this time is the time of God’s salvation, who has given Himself for reconciliation in his Son, Jesus Christ. If culture – in the sense of the cultural pluralism it implies – becomes a “*locus theologicus*”, then this means developing an understanding of faith by translating it into the stories of others and, as “leaven”, permeating the dough of the world in such a way that times of salvation can open up anew.

In his texts on Christian charity and “The meaning and blessing of poverty”, Bernhard Welte (1951, 213) introduces us to this profound dimension of intercultural dialogue “in the spirit of the Gospel.” It is precisely in the encounter with the

⁸ Welte 1981, 84: “The very fact that, with careful interpretation, it is possible to perceive the epochal difference of the languages with possibly the same words shows that there is a horizon of language perception that spans the epochal differences and can therefore have both competing linguistic patterns in their own way in view...”

⁹ On the significance of the translation, see also: Welte, *Festrede Meßkirch*, 15; cf. also *Der Christ als Zeuge*, 3.

¹⁰ Cf. Ricoeur 1992, 119: On the “debate about the universal and the historical”, Ricoeur notes that “the universal has no other justification than the historical and ... the only way to avoid the accusation of ethnocentrism is to fall back on the best arguments of the other.” This means that “contextuality” is not to be equated with ethnocentrism and is not to be understood in isolation from universality.

poor – in the becoming poor of the two partners, the poor and the rich – that the love of Jesus Christ can open up space in hearts in an excellent way and the heart of human persons can be formed “in the poverty of the cross of Jesus.” Only in this – in the depth of the event of redemption – is it possible to find what love is,¹¹ what is the perspective of every over-setting, of every dialogue: the “living testimony of living life” (Welte 1978, 211). Here a depth of dialogue is achieved, a heart-to-heart encounter in which theological work and the essence of the Church are founded.

3. Theology on synodal paths: topical dialectics and translations¹²

Sixty years after the Second Vatican Council, this new “localisation” of theology is still a long way from reaching the heart of the theological epistemology and methodology developed in the Western – European – tradition, despite new drafts such as those presented in Hans Waldenfels’ “contextual fundamental theology” or in approaches to “intercultural theology.” (Cf. Waldenfels 1985) More recently, studies on post-coloniality, decoloniality and racism have revealed the ruptures in the global world society in a new and deeper way, emphasising the need for “contextual” and “intercultural thinking.”¹³ A new form of thinking is called for, a historically and culturally integrated way of thinking that is capable of naming the dark sides of coloniality and Eurocentric-exclusive thinking and drawing consequences from them.

With Paul Ricœur, thinking can be conceptualised in the tension between “self” and “other.” This is a philosophical approach that breaks open the Cartesian philosophy of subjectivity and allows thinking to emerge from the tense relationship with the many others. The tension between self and other becomes concrete at different levels; these are the stories in which the self is “entangled” with itself, with others, with the “world” – economy, politics, society and culture – and also with different religions.¹⁴ The other or stranger, to whom the self is always already related in the process of thinking, is not an “alter ego”, nor an abstract stranger, but a concrete stranger towards whom and to whom I have to behave at the respective moment and in the respective place. Such a form of thinking is aware of its own “positioning”, its embedding in a concrete – geographical and cultural – space. When reference is

¹¹ Welte 1951, 217: “There the general human poverty gathers in its truest and most deceptive and therefore most alienating form in a single heart, that of the Lord. ... The most profound poverty of this holy death was that Jesus penetrated it to the root of all poverty, which is guilt.” And Welte 1951, 218: “Jesus, as Head and Lord of poor humanity, in whom all its poverty has been gathered, is embraced and caught up by the riches and love of the Father and by the splendour and riches of that kingdom which is not founded on human strength. This is the foundation of the blessedness of all the poor.”

¹² Cf. These reflections are further developed in: Eckholt (2024b).

¹³ Cf. e.g. Silber 2021; Jürgensen/ Bussmann 2023. – Margit Eckholt has developed these considerations in different occasions (2002; 2007; 2015; 2018; 2024a).

¹⁴ Ricœur took the motif of “being entangled in stories” from Schapp 1976; cf. Ricœur 1988, 119.

made to Ricœur as a reference for the further development of Western theological epistemology, this thinking is aware of its embedding in the European context, but it does not see itself as “Eurocentric” thinking, but rather as thinking in the dynamics of self and other, which does not incorporate the “other” into its own, but rather perceives it in its independence and resistance. In this interrelatedness of self and other, a process of recognition must be imprinted in thinking, which combines the truth of philosophical-theological thinking related to universality with an epistemology embedded in forms of life-world rationality. Recognition is always “concrete”, related to the other person that I encounter at a particular moment and in a particular place. According to the French philosopher Paul Valadier, “universality”, if we can speak of it, is a “constant and demanding labour, thanks to which the fragile web of mutual understanding is woven” (Valadier 1997, 55).¹⁵ This is a “universality” that overcomes any Eurocentrism at the level of thought; it arises in the form of topical dialectics from and in different contexts that are brought into a dynamic coexistence. Theological topology stands for emphasising the specific localisation in individual contexts and making clear the necessity of “translation” into the other or from the other context. In this way – in diverse intercultural dynamics – a lively and performative process of theological knowledge takes shape. It is precisely in the “between” that spaces open up for the topical dialectic as an inner structure of thought, in which the truth – to be found – becomes ever new as an “event” and enables new practice in performative acts.

Theological thinking in synodal times can only be understood as a common search for truth by the many; it takes place in diverse intercultural contexts and opens up the truth of Christian faith from these dynamics. In doing so, it grows out of and in concrete spaces, and these are central components of topical dialectics as hermeneutic places, as one of the Latin American founding figures of intercultural philosophy and theology, the Jesuit Juan Carlos Scannone, already made clear in the 1980s (Scannone, 2011). What means thinking, can only be defined in its concrete realisation, in the encounter with others, and in diverse historical-social and cultural embeddings. The form of intercultural exchange is part of the basic process of thinking and must be further developed as the foundation of a “synodal” form of theology.

Theological work, which on the one hand takes place intra-, inter- and transdisciplinary in a variety of translation processes, and on the other hand is developed from a variety of places, is local, plural, fragmented, but creative and dynamic from each new opening towards its “founding date” – the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. In the diversity of translations and the new spaces that open up here and into which God also “translates” and “gives” Himself anew, theology itself is repeatedly “evangelised” and “converted.” Theology’s thinking about faith is constantly being “converted” anew by its newly “given”, and this can take place precisely in the diversity of translations. Evangelisation is then no longer understood

¹⁵ Valadier refers to universality as an “opening to the other” (ibid., 53). Cf. also recent developments in political theology that refer to approaches of the philosophy of alterity: e.g. Manemann (1998, 226); cf. the study by Ricœur 2006.

as the “proselytization” of the other, but as a ministry of translating God’s speech *ad intra* (in the different ecclesial areas) and *ad extra* (in the academic and public sphere) and as a provision of spaces in which God gives Himself. In the diversity of “translations” of the word of God, the “apologetic” task of theology today in a globalised society and world Church can also be understood anew. In this translation and in and from the diversity of dialogues, new spaces can be opened up in which God “gives himself” and thus breaks through the “basic date” of theology. This can also take place in the perspective of the “others” and their questions.

4. Conclusion: Europe as a horizon – living together in peace

The Italian philosopher Donatella di Cesare speaks of the “demise” of Europe with regard to the many refugee camps on Europe’s borders; the camps “bear witness [...] to the failed promise of ‘never again’” (Di Cesare ²2022, 252); but it is precisely the many foreigners who symbolise the “horizon” of Europe, which can also make it possible today to develop a new vision of Europe and to rethink the idea of Europe in the sense of “living together as a community” (Di Cesare ²2022, 309). Europe is a “project in the name of social justice, solidarity and hospitality” that “must be constantly relaunched and updated” (Di Cesare, 309). After the two world wars of the 20th century, Europe was a peace project under the umbrella of the Convention on Human Rights adopted on 10 December 1948; today, according to di Cesare, it is a matter of defending human rights “against the old lovers of sovereignty, against the nostalgics of identity and its rites” (Di Cesare ²2022, 308), because human rights are being “swept off the table” with the new borders that the North is drawing and the walls it is building against immigrants (Di Cesare ²2022, 239). This is precisely what it means to defend Europe and not to lose sight of Europe’s horizon. This will only be possible if space is made and room is given to others: “Proximity to the foreign always means a demanding test, because it is first and foremost a matter of conceding space.” (Di Cesare ²2022,290) If space is given, it will be possible to rebuild – together – after all the destruction.

The prophet Isaiah is aware of this destruction; in his visions of peace in relation to the city of Jerusalem, he speaks of “building”: “Your people rebuild ancient ruins, / You restore the foundations of past generations.” (Jes 58,12). God himself is described as the “mason”, “who closes the cracks”, “who restores paths to remain” (Jes 58,12). Then there can be peace: “I will establish peace as your guardian and justice as your ruler. No more violence will be heard in your land, no more ruin and destruction in your territory. You call your walls Salvation, and your gates Glory.” (Jes 60,17-18). Martin Heidegger laid this bridge to peace in his text “Building Dwelling Thinking” (1951), which Donatella di Cesare also referred to: “The essence of building is letting dwell. The essence of building is the construction of places by joining their spaces. *Only if we are able to dwell can we build...* Dwelling is the basic feature of being, according to

which mortals are.” (Heidegger 1954, 162).¹⁶ This then is the meaning of peace: “The word peace,” says Heidegger, “means the free, the frye, and fry means: preserved from harm and threat, preserved – from ... i.e. spared.”¹⁷ (Heidegger 1954, 160/161). In Old High German, “buan” means “to dwell, to remain, to stay” (Negele 2004, 184), and “dwell”, the Gothic word “wunian” has exactly the same meaning: “to be content, to be brought to peace, to remain in it” (Heidegger 1954, 149). Dwelling “means being human. This is partly given, partly to be accomplished by man himself. To accomplish it means to ‘build’, to create spaces in which being human can unfold” (Negele 2004, 187). Such “spaces of peace” are created in the perspective of the biblical texts – the prophetic texts to which Jesus of Nazareth also refers – when those who are down are recognised, when reconciliation is achieved, when prisoners are set free, when what is sick is healed, when what is crooked is made straight (cf. Jes 58,6; 61,1ff, Lk 4,16-27) (cf. Eckholt 2018; 2023). These spaces of peace are never closed spaces, but make it possible “to be different in one place and to pass over to the other” (De Certeau 1988, 207/208); they are spaces that are built from bridges (cf. Günzel 2014, 43) and where the most diverse processes of overcoming can take place and where there are people who have become such overcomers. In them, “dwelling together” becomes concrete, which is an “eschatological” or “messianic”¹⁸ (Theobald 2023, 81) vision of peace that is named in the prophetic texts and to which Christians have given the name Jesus Christ.

The Christian belief is that Christ himself is the “peace”, that he tears down the dividing walls in humanity and builds a new common house of life: “He came and proclaimed peace to you who are far off and to us who are near. Through him we both have access to the Father in the one Spirit” (Eph 2,17/18). Faith in this “Prince of Peace” is inscribed in the cosmic and eschatological visions of biblical shalom and in faith in the God of Israel, who “makes the ruins habitable again” (Jes 58,12). (cf. Kamphaus 1997). This “Prince of Peace” is the one who appeared in the powerlessness of the child in the manger and thus “disempowered” the power of the world, who himself shared the fate of homelessness and expulsion, who had no place where he could “lay his head” (Lk 9,58), no house that could offer him a home. And yet this “Prince of Peace” is precisely the one who builds and makes new homes and coexistence possible in the fragility, vulnerability and homelessness of our world.

If we can speak of “Christian unity” in cultural pluralism, then it is characterised by precisely this vision of biblical messianism as a “pre-political resource” for the path to a future Europe.

¹⁶ Donatella di Cesare refers to this text by Heidegger in her “Philosophie der Migration” (190).

¹⁷ The German citation of Heidegger (“Bauen Wohnen Denken”, 150/151): „Das Wort Friede“, so Heidegger, “meint das Freie, das Frye, und fry bedeutet: bewahrt vor Schaden und Bedrohung, bewahrt – vor ... d.h. geschont.” – In view of the abundance of literature on the term “peace”, reference is only be made here to: Senghaas (1995; 2004).

¹⁸ For Theobald the “biblical messianism that has decisively shaped the European continent” is a “pre-political resource” for the path to a future Europe (2023, 81).

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Keywords: Europe, theology, cultural pluralism, hospitality, peace

Słowa kluczowe: Europa, teologia, pluralizm kulturowy, gościnnność, pokój