Dilemmas of the Catholic Church in Poland

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INTRODUCTION

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We live in a world of unprecedented social, economical, political, cultural and religious changes. In some regions and countries change has accelerated more than in others in the last decades. In the region of Central and Eastern Europe it is particularly remarkable. The fall of totalitarian systems has caused the transformations of all spheres of collective and individual life in this region. But the transformation of religions has specific features. In the Western countries the process of rapid secularization took place in the 1960s. In Central-Eastern Europe, in the first decades after the fall of communism the number of believers went up significantly. Increased political significance of religion and its presence in public sphere was also noted. Churches made attempts at regaining the social status from before communism. They aspired to make religious identity a constituent part of the national identity. But in more recent years some phenomena have weakened the traditional religions and their social and political position. The religious life in some societies in this region begins to resemble the religious life in western societies. Public and personal morality is detached from religious morality. The number of clerics studying in seminaries is decreasing along with the number of priestly vocations. Political democratization and liberalization forces traditional churches to implement internal democratization though they are not always ready for this process.

Religion is most important in Poland, owing mainly to the Catholic Church. More than 90% of Poles still claim to be Catholic and about 40 % regularly attend Sunday services. The Catholic Church played the most fundamental role in the fight against communism. After the fall of communism, the Church, aware of its social power and authority, started public activity aimed at the introduction of standards of religious morality in public and political life. But the present situation of the Church in Poland is paradoxical. On the one hand, the Church became the basic social institution, capable of exerting influence upon the society, government, and politics. It is a force based on traditions, customs and beliefs of people as well as on doctrine and fidelity to its principles. On the other hand, the Church is weakening due to some external and internal factors. The former are in the sphere of public relations, and can be described as politicization and pluralisation. The strong position of the Church in the society is a temptation to being used for political purposes as the Church exerts influence on legislation and politics. In this spirit it campaigned against abortion, homosexual

marriages, euthanasia, capital punishment, pornography, in vitro fertilization etc. But more and more people are against the involvement of Church in political life and imposing religious morality as the basis of legislation. As internal in the Church this could be described as lack of democracy. Believers now often reject not only the Church political activity but also Church authority. They are critical of the hierarchy, its way of life (especially sexual scandals and materiality) and its authoritarian style of teaching. Privatization and individualization of beliefs are processes which are taking place within believers. Personal morality, and particularly sex life, is the sphere with the most individualization. In Poland two-thirds of Catholics could be labeled "unknowing or knowing heretics," because they accept only some dogmas of the Church. In this sense they do not belong to either dwellers or seekers.

This volume contains nine articles about current and important religious issues. The authors present, on the one hand, a description of the religious' situation in Poland and in the world, on the other hand, they try to formulate the issues and theses theoretically and normatively.

All articles refer in a way to the disjunctions stated by Charles Taylor. The first article presents the attitude of students toward the Church on the basis of sociological research, and as the model of the tendencies present today in Polish society in general. The next four papers concern the problem of dwellers and seekers and stress especially the need to find a new language, which opens the Church to the people and to dialogue in a time of accelerated cultural and scientific transformations. Three papers then concern the issues of the status of the body and sexual life in Church doctrine today and in the past. The last paper analyzes the opportunities and obstacles in the ecumenical dialogue with non-Christian religions.

Maria Libiszowska-Żółtowska's paper "Why are They Leaving? Students say 'No' to the Catholic Church: Analysis of Empirical Study Results" presents the opinions of students about the Church. She states, that an increasing number of students are losing the emotional ties with the Church and cease to consider the Church as a community of faith. The aversion to the Church and priests is rising in the last years, but does not discourage the young people from seeking God. The relationship with God, however, acquires a direct and individual dimension. It is a form of private faith which distances itself from the model of Church religiousness. The Church, as the institution especially the clergy is gradually losing confidence and authority with the young people. They search for spirituality outside the Church. What is more, young people become their own authorities on matters of faith and morality.

Rafał Nizinski's paper "Alternative Forms of Spirituality and the Role of the Catholic Church as Spiritual Guide" interprets the personal

experiences of the author as an active member of many social groups and movements. The author notices a paradox: many famous artists in Poland are very sensitive towards problems of contemporary society and interpret them in terms of moral values and norms crucial for religious morality (love, justice, honesty, ethos). But as they are critical of the Church and do not believe in God, the Church treats them as alien. According to the author, the Church should support these artists. Because they preach a moral good to people who do not want to listen the Church. In this way the Church could offer society some moral teaching and thus influence society. The Church should adopt a similar attitude to other unbelievers (philosophers, economists), if their views are somehow compatible with the general outlines of the Christian revelation. The paper describes the author as a monk cooperating in the environmental movements, birdwatching and sports. He sees these activities of unbelievers as representing a secular spirituality and a sign of God's influence, if they strive towards goodness, rightness and peace. The priests should contact them and cooperate in order to help honest lay people to reject their prejudices about the Church. In this context the author suggests that the gap between *sacrum* and *profanum* is not as wide as the institutional Church presupposes.

The fascination of the young people with eastern religions is explained in the paper as a means to escape from materialistic life and anonymity, which are also present in the Catholic Church. The Church should also practice, in parishes, the spirit of contemplation as the sign of the times. The parish life should become more open to honest people in search of orientation in their life.

The paper explains the degradation of the moral authority of the Polish Church by two factors: the hostility of the media and the public reciprocal criticism between various factions within the Church. But the deeper reasons for this situation is a lack of democracy and internal dialogue inside the Church (between bishops, priests and lay people).

Jozef Majewski's paper "The Church in the Media Age" describes the role of media in the process of the return of religion to the public sphere. The Catholic Church in Poland usually treats the media as a threat. In fact, media have become the religion of our time and fulfill several typical roles of religion: interpreting the world, being the arbiter of the importance and truthfulness of the news. They create the specific spirituality offering participation in the virtual lives of the heroes of television. The public media are critical of the Church and religion, reducing traditional religion to entertainment or to obscurity. There is no place for the sublime, invisible, eternal, goodness. Democratic systems and present-day media contribute to the increased importance of individualism and subjectivism in the sphere of religion. Religious spirituality is commercialized and becomes eclectic and hybridized.

Oftentimes the image of a transcendent God is rejected for the sake of divine immanence.

But the Church should be conscious of the role played by the media today. Mass media are not lifeless instruments, which could be used to communicate any news and available for both good and evil. Media and religion are two of the many sectors of culture which incessantly overlap, interact and change. Today the language of the media has a dominant impact on popular culture and religions must take it into account; therefore the Church has to change its language to be open to problems, concerns and questions of the seekers and believers in the contemporary world. Living in the media age religion must adjust to the technical, stylistic and formal demands of media; the Church must accept these new conditions for its activity. In Poland the Church is going to be more and more conscious of this situation, and while new Catholic media (television, radios, newspapers) are created, they are still not sufficiently sophisticated to compete with the lay or secular media.

Aleksander Gomola's paper "Conceptual Disjunctions as a Challenge for the Church: A Cognitive Linguist's Perspective" analyzes the language used in the liturgy and preaching suggesting that it plays the crucial role in affecting people's attitudes, especially the seekers. The language used in the Church in Poland is out of fashion. Christian thought is not able to present itself by means of conceptualizations that correspond with the worldview of natural sciences and the individual and social experience of both believers and seekers. The author concentrates especially on the old conceptualization of God as Father. He explains that God as Father metaphor is a derivative of the patriarchal Jewish culture where father was seen as a life-giver, protector, and the one who decide about the death and life of the members of his family. Today this idea is alien to many cultures. The mother plays a more important role than the father in families. Therefore conceptualization of God as Mother loving human beings is more familiar to common experience and more acceptable by people today. This conceptualization was developed in the feminist movements. According to the author it has the justification in the Bible and in Matthew's Gospel (23,37).

Przemyslaw Strzyzynski's paper "Problem of Authority of the Catholic Church in Poland" explores the crisis of the authority of the Church after the fall of communism in Poland, showing that it is not the same kind of crisis as in Western countries. Despite the collapse of some of the authorities in the last two decades, the Church has retained a considerable degree of social trust. The problem is whether this trust can be kept in the future. The author underlines that the Church should aim to improve the level of religious communication and education. The need to justify religious faith is particularly urgent, considering the fact

that the religiousness of the younger generation will not be as strongly supported by the transmission of family traditions, as before. Authority cannot be constructed any more on the foundation of references to the martyrological history of the Polish nation and the myth of the Catholic Pole. Claims to holding institutional or moral authority just because of being a priest may also turn out to be ineffective. Reinforcing authority calls for certain prerequisittes: financial transparency, keeping the vow of poverty, sufficient response to sex scandals among priests as well a reasonable media policy and a shift of focus from human faults to God's love. The future authority of the Church depends on the perception of the Church by contemporary young people. The parish should be the area of potentially meaningful contacts and informal relations which create identity. Priests however focus primarily on the fulfillment of their obligations towards the Church as an institution instead of creating community, because they do not know how to attract believers and unbelievers. In seminaries there is no place for discussion and reflection, authority prevails.

Tadeusz Buksiński's paper "Contemporary Moral Issues in the Light of Gospel Teaching" states that the Gospel's normative ethics is relative to the moral consciousness of the people. Notably, two kinds of ethics are mentioned: one for the followers of Jesus (more severe) and other for the rest of the people. The author seeks to answer the questions whether contemporary proposals to discuss or alter the moral doctrine of the Catholic Church (by accepting divorce, extramarital sex, homosexuality, paedophilia, abortion, euthanasia, in vitro fertilisation, ordination of women) might be justified in the light of ethics for the followers of Jesus. Jesus sees divorce as acceptable in the case of adultery or promiscuity of the spouse. But the term "porneia" is quite equivocal and its connotations are, to a certain extent, culturally motivated. Therefore there is an area of indeterminacy to this question. What is more, marriage requires some preconditions such as being an adult person of sound mind, responsible for one's actions, having a reproductive capacity. If the preconditions are not fulfilled, the marriage is not valid. Jesus never directly confronted the topic of homosexuality, however it can be surmised with a good amount of confidence that he would have had a negative view of homosexual marriage and regarded it as a serious violation of God's fundamental moral norms. Jesus provides marriage with a metaphysical dimension which imposes on it the duty to continue the act of creation such that all other types of sexual relations (paedophilia, zoophilia) would be condemned. Jesus spoke very harshly about those who harm children.

The status of women deserves a separate review. Women did play a major role in Jesus' public life and teaching. They were always present among the followers of Jesus and travelled with him. The gospels do not

contain any explicit arguments why woman should not enjoy equivalent status and hold similar positions to men in the community of believers, and hence in the contemporary Church.

The Gospels contain no direct references to abortion and euthanasia, but the position of Jesus on the two issues can be inferred from his general outlook on life and his principle "Do not kill" (*me foneuses*). Therefore suicide is a forbidden act. Abortion may be deemed acceptable or unacceptable depending on the definition of a human being, whether embryo/foetus satisfies these criteria, and if so at which moment conception happens.

Dariusz Dobrzanski's paper "Theology of the Body and the Technicization of Human Corporeality" describes the status of the body and problems of human sexuality, especially homosexuality in Catholic doctrine. He states that a full exposition of the issue is included in the Pastoral Constitution "Gaudium et Spes" which Popes Paul VI and John Paul II repeated in their encyclicals. "The Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics (Persona Humana, 1975) and "Catehism of the Catholics Church" explain the problem of homosexuality more broadly. Homosexual practices are presented in them as a grave depravation and a sign of personality disorder, but they underline that the people with homosexual tendencies must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. The author stresses that there is not unanimity among psychiatrists and scientists about the causes of homosexual orientation and the possibility of reparative therapy in which most scientists do not have confidence. Dobrzanski suggests that the sexual orientation is not a value in itself, and is not a factor determining salvation. Therefore the Church should offer homosexual Catholics the words of mercy and forgiveness and assure peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Łukasz Tischner's paper "Excarnation: A Rebuttal" refers to the idea of excarnation presented in Charles Taylor's book *A Secular Age* and in the poetry of Czesław Miłosz. The author accepts that in the past the concept of excarnation played a positive role in religious life. Freeing the people from understanding God according to human patterns of behavior, it meant doing good and bad things. But in the process of excarnation the spiritual life was disemboded and placed "in the head" while God was conceived as causing only goodness for man. But this tendency went too far in history of religion and philosophy so that the role of body was ignored. With this process the idea of God's incarnation became one-sided and was falsely interpreted. The author proposes to establish the new balance between the body and spirit, between excarnation and incarnation. Taylor proposes the concept of agape to reach this aim. Łukasz Tischner supplements the concept of agape with concept of hope. Jesus Christ as God who become flesh

makes possible our lived experience based on love of particular persons in particular situations and hopes that this activity will be good, without referring to a universal ought (as some modern philosophers stress). This way the senses are represented in the sphere of the religious experience directly and could express specific Christian self-awareness.

Włodzimierz Wilowski's paper "Problems of Ecumenical Dialogue between the Catholic Church and Non-Christian Religions" discusses the problems arising in the debate between Catholics and representatives of eastern religions, especially Zen-Buddhism. The author analyses the documents and instructions announced by the Holy Office admitting from one side the will to unite all Christians and the will to continue dialogue with non- Christian religions, and from the other side points to the more or less urgent problems rising during the dialogue. If the focus of dialogue is solely on similarities, the discussion leads in the direction of accepting the thesis that all denominations and religions are a manifestation of one and the same faith. This approach would not be acceptable to the Church because it infuses the Church with symbols and signs of other religions and creates the impression of equality of all denominations. This way it negates the message of the Christian Churches as the unique road to salvation. If the dialogue concentrates on the differences, than the representatives of every particular religion demonstrate that their religion is universal and absolute, at least, or better than other religions. Therefore it should play the function of a complement or common basis for many (or all) religions as they use their own religion for criticizing the different elements of other religions. These theses are justified by interpretations of the theological discussions held between Christians, Buddhists and Taoists at the Kyoto Symposium in 1985. The experience of interreligious discussion and dialogue justify the opinion that it is impossible to understand fully the other religion without practicing it and giving up some essential elements of one's own faith. Therefore it is better to replace the word "dialogue" with "encounter" as Hans Waldenfels suggested.

CHAPTER I

WHY ARE THEY LEAVING? STUDENTS SAY 'NO' TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH: ANALYSIS OF EMPIRICAL STUDY RESULTS

MARIA LIBISZOWSKA-ŻÓŁTKOWSKA

Poland's transformation from state socialism to the democratic state of law, and its associated rapid change in people's awareness, have triggered a shift in the status of the Catholic Church both in the public and private spheres. The social role of the Church in the Polish society is variously perceived – especially in the context of the Church's declining moral authority. Opinions about the Church in the context of its involvement in social and political problems are divergent, ranging from approval to disapproval. A growing number of young people express the view that the Church fails to provide satisfactory answers to social problems affecting the individual, the family and the nation as a whole. The positive evaluation of social and religious activities of the Church, which used to be quite widespread, is now starting to wane, particularly if the assessment is performed at the level of concrete everyday actions. The trend, however, does not entail that the Catholic Church in Poland has lost its viability and meaning for social life, for consensus building and consolidation of the collective consciousness. It remains an integral part of the nation's cultural heritage, an important constituent of the Polish identity, a source of many social values and a major partner on the Polish public scene. The assessment of the Church's concrete activities is more varied and distinctively moderate.

The perception and evaluation of the position and role of the Church in public life are affected by two conflicting processes: secularization and its associated individualization of religion, on the one hand, and revival of religiousness and enhancement of the role of religious values and standards in public life (de-privatization of religion), on the other[1]. Current debates among sociologists are focused more on the role and place of the Church in public life than on the extent of secularization of the Polish society. The social standing of the Church

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[1] See E. Firlit, M. Hainz, M. Libiszowska-Żółtkowska, G. Pickel, D. Pollack (eds.), *Pomiędzy sekularyzacją i religijnym ożywieniem. Podobieństwa i różnice w przemianach religijnych w Polsce i w Niemczech* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2012).

is not immediately obvious. Some Catholics claim that liberal attitudes promoted in democratic societies jeopardize the Church – just as the communist political system once did. In comparison to communism, however, liberalism is a tougher opponent because it is much more difficult to overcome. Others expect that the Church will champion the democratic and civil society, as well as tough political and economic reforms. The expectations of believers with respect to the Church-State relationship vary greatly, too. On one end of the spectrum, there are demands for a fully secular state, on the other – a thoroughly confessional one. By the same token, there are both calls for the disestablishment of the Church and calls for its repoliticization. There is a sizeable group expecting active participation of the Church in public life which, however, still seems outnumbered by those who demand total expulsion of the Church from the public realm. Many people believe that religion and the Church play an excessive role in the modernizing Polish society.

The present study, which is based on survey results, seeks to determine the nature of attitudes held by Polish students towards the Catholic Church. An attempt is also made to explore reasons and motives underlying the reluctance felt by students about the institution of the Catholic Church and their declining confidence in priests.

Characteristics of Respondents

In the spring of 2011, I conducted a survey on a nationwide sample among a total of 1,347 students, and collected written interviews from 100 students from the University of Warsaw. The survey, called *Students on Religion*, was carried out by the Research Institute of the Polish Sociological Association using the auditorium questionnaire method. In the survey which was conducted at the University of Warsaw students were asked to submit their free written statements on the topic of *My Attitude to Religion.* Seeking an answer to the question why contemporary students are leaving the Church, I will rely on both sources of data. Surveys offer the possibility of presenting results in the form of quantitative distribution. Written statements, which are a specific type of free interview, will be used for qualitative illustration purposes and for enrichment of the statistical data set.

In spite of the presence of worshippers of other religions, and the fact that 170 churches and religious associations are formally registered in Poland, the country is 95% Catholic[2]. Percentage distributions of the

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[2] See Maria Libiszowska-Żółtkowska, *Kościoły i związki wyznaniowe w Polsce* (Warszawa: Verbinum 2000); see also M. Libiszowska-Żółtkowska,

students' confessional self-identifications are almost consistent with religious denominations declared in the nationwide[3] sample of the Polish population. The qualifier "almost" in the preceding sentence refers to the 13 percentage point difference in the Catholic denomination category which is noted between CBOS (Centrum Badania Opinii Publicznej – Research Centre of Public Opinion) respondents and students. Also, the number of respondents declaring their lack of identification with any denomination is five times greater in the student group. What this means is that the percentage of areligious individuals is higher among students than in the general Polish population.

Table 1. Declared religious denomination in the general Polish and student samples.

	CBOS 2009 N=1048	Students N= 1344
Catholic	94.7	81.9
Protestant	0.4	0.7
Orthodox Christian	0.7	1.6
Other denominations	0.4	1.0
Non-believer, atheist, agnostic/no denominational identification	2.1	11.4
Other responses	2.0	3.1

I have been a non-believer basically ever since I remember. I come from a generally Catholic family – with Catholic baptisms, weddings, etc. Such ceremonies have never been deep spiritual experiences to me. When I was a child, going to church was something I was told to do. The First Communion – everyone received it, so I did, too. God to me is a being in which all alcoholics believe – and their faith is the strongest when they are afraid of being sick – as in the saying: "When in fear, God is near." I've never felt the urge to turn to any higher power for support."

Religious denomination seems less a matter of individual choice than a specific family background, a continuation of family tradition. This is precisely how University of Warsaw students perceive the motives of their religious involvement and confessional identification.

When I was a child, my religiousness was something natural, i.e. faith in God seemed natural to me because I saw the religiousness of my

"Churches and Religious Associations in Poland," *Przegląd Religioznawczy* 2002. No. 1, pp. 13-32.

[3] *Wiara i religijność Polaków dwadzieścia lat po rozpoczęciu przemian ustrojowych. Komunikat z badań, Warsaw – March 2009*, developed by Rafał Boguszewski.

parents. My mother especially was religious. She taught me common Catholic prayers.

I've always been a Catholic believer. My parents and grandparents believe in God, too. I have become a believer through the process of socialization.

My faith is an effect of being brought up in a traditional Catholic family. This is the faith of my grandparents, my parents and now also mine. I was baptized, I received the First Holy Communion and Confirmation. I think that in the future I will have a church wedding. However, this will be rather a consequence of tradition, the fact that in my family things have always been that way.

I was born and raised in a family in which religion had an important place. From the youngest age, me and my siblings were taught that Sunday Mass was obligatory, and our grandmother taught me prayers. As a result, religion, faith and the Church became very important to me as well.

My parents chose religion for me. I had no say in the matter, however deep down I feel that this faith is right for me.

You are always born into a particular family, which has an impact not only on your initial material status but also on the transmission of a specific system of values, usually based on the principles of the religion which is practised in your family. During childhood, people have no free will in terms of choosing their beliefs.

When the category named "I do not feel a member of any religion denomination," which was used in the surveys of the student group, was correlated with the attitude of mothers towards religion, it turned out that over a half (56.5%) of those who considered themselves non-believers had religious mothers. A consistency in world views between non-religious mothers and their non-religious children was confirmed in 43.5% of families. The proportions are reversed when the religious attitudes of fathers are correlated with the declared confessional identification of their children. In the group of students who stated they did not identify with any religious denomination 35.3% of fathers were religious. An agreement of 64.6 percentage points was noted in the group of non-religious respondents and their fathers.

My mother, a deeply religious person, took me to church services from a very early age. My father, on the other hand, was rather reluctant towards the institution, and only attended church during major holidays, e.g. at Christmas. So, on the one hand, church attendance was almost mandatory in my family and on the other – quite the opposite. The situation disrupted my view of religion.

In my family it was the mother who was the most ardent supporter of religious tradition. My father was allegedly quite religious in his youth (which I know from my grandmother) but with age he has gradually turned away from the Catholic Church. Over the past several years, he has never attended Sunday Mass and, what is more, he has been blasting the clergy.

When I go back to my earliest memories, I associate church mainly with an unpleasant duty: every week I would go out with my mother and go to a crowded place which smelled funny and where I was bored stiff for an hour, usually standing during the whole service. I never enjoyed church-going and I always tried to wriggle out of it. I turned for support to my dad who never went to church with us. My family has always been divided: my mother's relatives were very religious, my father's – exactly the opposite.

Parents who left the Church are unable to give their children a stable and consistent religious attitude even if they opt for raising them in a religious tradition. The converse is also true. Religious parents show with their own attitude of faith that it is justified to continue the family tradition ("My parents are believers and so am I"). Sociologists agree that children largely share the views of their parents, and regard their family as a reference group and a support unit. The nature of emotional bonds existing between family members can either reinforce or weaken worldview transmission. Family strategies sometimes backfire, and their final outcomes are not always possible to predict. Sometimes it is hard to prevent negative effects of the family's educational mission. Confrontation with reality can also provoke a revision of the family tradition and decomposition of the original system of values and beliefs.

Survey results corroborate the correlation between sex and religious attitude which is revealed in all studies: men are generally less religious than women. The relationship is also evident in two generations (parents and children) in the present study. Students, acute observers of family life, have attributed their parents with appropriate religious attitudes. Greater religiousness is found both among female students and respondents' mothers. On the other hand, male students and respondents' fathers are clearly less religious.

Table 2. Sex vs. attitude to religion among parents and their children.

Sex	Believers	Non-believers
Female students N=884	72.6	27.4
Mothers N=1281	86.2	13.8
Male students N=409	60.1	39.9
Fathers N=1177	72.9	27.1

In addition to the correlation with sex, a comparison of data listed in the table above demonstrates that the index of religiousness declines with age. Students are aware of the fact that their generation is not as religious as that of their parents. Only 4.7% of respondents answered positively to the question "*Are students more religious than the generation of their parents?*", whereas in 84.4% of cases the answer was negative.

Asked for a self-declaration of their present and past attitudes to faith, the study participants were divided into types indicated by the researcher. A comparison of present and past accounts of their views on religious faith helped to determine the direction of world view transformations.

Table 3. Religious attitude: now vs. during secondary school (in %, with no missing data).

Types of attitudes towards religion	At present N=1310	In secondary school N=1296	Difference between the present and the past
Deep believer in conformity with the tenets of my religion	12.5	14.6	−2.1
Believer in conformity with the tenets of my religion	49.4	53.5	−4.1
Undecided, doubting, searching	14.9	14.0	+0.9
Indifferent, religion is of no importance to me	7.5	6.3	+1.2
I believe in the existence of a supernatural causative power, but I do not identify with any particular religion	6.9	3.9	+3
Non-believer, attached to religious tradition	4.1	4.3	−0.2
Non-believer, unattached to religious tradition	4.7	3.4	+1.3

Shifts in religious view declarations over a time span from secondary school to university education are not significant, as shown by the numerical dataset. The overall picture changes with a more detailed exploration of life paths – to the extent this is allowed by the respondents. Free written statements, though quite concise, still clearly show the confusion and disappointments experienced by young people, along with mood swings and dilemmas accompanying the process of defining their identity in the context of religious faith.

From my perspective, my attitude to religion can be divided into two phases. During the first phase, I was sort of fascinated with the unknown, and during primary school I attended church with pleasure and enthusiasm. Then I gradually moved away from all that until I reached the stage of complete indifference towards the institution of the church.

Growing up, when I was in middle school, that is around 13-15 years old, I began to rebel openly against going to church every week, and I refused to accept my Confirmation. I was discouraged mainly because I felt bored during mass, retreat or religious classes. I did not understand the things I was told, and I started to lose my uncritical belief in God's existence.

It was quite early on that I started asking questions, searching, doubting. Incidentally, there was a major alternative within my own family – in the person of my father. However, the more questions I asked, the more uncertain I felt. I could see no sense, no coherence, no rationality. Although the latter attribute is not really fitting because how can you confront rationality with religion?

Towards the end of secondary school education my priorities changed. I thought my final exams were something horrible and unknown, so I was slightly afraid of challenging God and not going to church. However, when I passed my final exams and I was admitted to the university, I realized that every man was the architect of his own fortunes, and that I should not rely on any higher power in all my endeavours.

When I was at the university, my attitude to religion changed by 180 degrees. I started doubting religion, and I became more critical about the clergy. I noticed that they did not practise what they preached (I got information about that mainly from the media).

The percentage of students declaring themselves as non-believers, religiously indifferent or undecided in matters of faith was significantly higher (32.2%) than the percentage declaring lack of any confessional identification (11.4%). What this means is that two thirds of a-religious people still appreciate being a part of the Catholic Church community despite their total (non-believers) or partial (undecided, doubting, searching, indifferent) negation of faith in the religious truths taught by the Church. In this way, they emphasize their Catholic roots and family tradition. The sense of belonging and identification with the community has been preserved in spite of non-acceptance of the content of the religious message.

Reflecting on the evolution of attitudes toward religion among young people, one of the students wrote the following remark: My observations show that changes in this respect mainly occur among

teenagers with a different baggage of "educational experiences" who are, at the same time, bombarded with a variety of "explosive" media reports.

The surveys also demonstrated that, in statistical terms, the greater the town/city of origin (socialization), the lower the index of religiousness.

I come from a small town in which the Church is the main and the most active organization bringing together almost all members of the community.

Table 4. Size of the place of origin vs. attitude to religion.

Size of the place of origin					
Attitude towards religion	Village N=322	Town up to 20,000 inhabitants N=141	Town between 21,000 and 50,000 inhabitants N=201	City between 51,000 and 100,000 inhabitants N=122	City over 100,000 inhabitants N=505
Deep believers	14.0	11.3	11.9	10.7	12.5
Believers	61.5	51.8	50.7	49.2	40.0
Undecided	13.0	14.9	18.4	12.3	15.0
Indifferent	4.3	9.9	8.5	8.2	8.5
Deist	3.4	7.1	5.0	6.6	10.3
Non-believer, pro-Church	1.9	2.1	4.0	6.6	5.7
Non-believer, against Church	1.9	2.8	1.5	6.6	7.9

People coming from a village background are more religious than those raised in the largest cities. A comparison of the extreme attributes of the above table, i.e. village vs. city with over 100,000 inhabitants, in the category of faith ("deep believers" and "believers"), reveals a 23 percentage point difference: 75.5% of people coming from villages consider themselves believing or deeply believing, compared to 52.5% of those born in big cities. The proportions are reversed for the lack of faith declared by the students. The index of non-believers is 9.8 percentage points higher in towns and cities (13.6%) than in rural areas (3.8%). Religious beliefs and values acquired during the period of childhood socialization are so strong that they are not undermined by big city life and separation from the parents.

Faith of Believers

A statistical analysis of percentage distributions of faith declarations and confessional identification gives rise to further questions about the depth of faith and its orthodox correctness. The foundation of any religious outlook on the world is the belief in God, the Absolute, the Higher Power, Transcendence, etc. The pillar of Catholicism is faith in the existence of a personal God. The respondents were presented with several concepts regarding faith in God, and requested to indicate a statement which, in their view, was the closest to their own beliefs.

Table 5. Declared attitude towards faith vs. formula of faith in God.

Faith in God	Deep believers N=161	Believers N=639	Undecided N=195	Deists N=91
I believe in personal God and I do not have any doubts	76.4	52.0	10.8	6.6
I believe in personal God despite certain doubts	13.7	32.9	30.3	7.7
Sometimes I believe in personal God and sometimes I think that personal God does not exist	1.9	6.3	21.5	4.4
I do not believe in personal God but I believe in the existence of a supernatural causative power	3.7	1.4	10.8	51.6
Hard to say – it is an unresolved matter to me	1.9	3.4	18.5	16.5
Hard to say – I have never really thought about it	0	2.8	3.6	1.1
I do not believe in God or in any causative powers	0	0.2	0	0
God does not exist – he was created by humans	0	0	1.5	6.6
Other responses	2.5	1.1	3.1	5.5

The following distributions were obtained for replies submitted by believing and doubting students:

In the group of students who declared faith, all except one (a Buddhist who, in line with Buddhist tenets, is not a believer) believe in

God, although their faith is not always orthodox and unshaken according to the understanding of the Catholic Church. The stronger the declaration of faith, the less doubt and uncertainty of belief in personal God.

Table 6. Attitude to faith vs. acceptance ("definitely agree" and "quite agree") of Catholic dogmas (in %).

Dogmas	Deep believers N=161		Believers N= 639		Undecided N=195	
	Definitely agree	Quite agree	Definitely agree	Quite agree	Definitely agree	Quite agree
Jesus is both God and man	82.6	12.3	70.8	24.2	30.9	52.7
There is life after death	78.7	12.9	55.0	39.4	26.9	62.5
God exists in three persons	89.3	5.7	71.2	27.2	27.7	53.9
Mary was a virgin	80.5	12.3	65.2	27.3	30.9	41.7
Man has an immortal soul	84.2	11.4	57.1	38.2	26.6	60.4
The Pope is infallible in matters of faith and morality	21.5	38.9	10.3	33.5	4.6	13.9

As it turns out, faith in selected dogmas is not unconditional even among students declaring themselves as deeply believing. A percentage of the respondents chose the safe option of "quite agree" with respect to the dogmas. The following tendency was identified: the weaker the declaration of faith, the greater the percentage of "quite believing" and the smaller the percentage of unhesitating replies. Interestingly, however, in the "Deep believers" category there is a 5.5 percentage point inconsistency in questions concerning eschatological dogmas, namely between declarations of faith in the immortal soul and life after death. The two dogmas are inextricably linked to each other, as the idea of life after death "automatically" predicates the dogma of the immortal soul.

Students' Opinions about the Church

The respondents were asked to take a position on a list of statements concerning the Church and the clergy according to their own beliefs. Distributions of acceptance, rejection and lack of position thus obtained are listed in the table below (N=1347).

Table 7. Opinions about the Church voiced by the respondents (in %)

Statements about the Church	I definitely agree	I quite agree	Acceptance	I quite disagree	I definitely disagree	Rejection	No opinion, no response
The Church is an element of national identity and tradition	38.5	43.5	**82.0**	6.5	3.6	**10.1**	7.9
The Church is a moral authority	16.1	37.6	**53.7**	22.2	15.4	**37.6**	8.8
The Church is an educational authority	13.1	34.7	**47.8**	25.5	17.0	**42.5**	9.7
The Church is a political authority	2.4	10.2	**12.6**	29.8	44.8	**74.6**	12.7
The Church should not interfere with the state's policy	57.5	19.6	**77.1**	9.4	6.7	**16.1**	6.8
The Church contributes to the division of the society into believers and non-believers	17.0	22.7	**39.7**	28.4	13.4	**41.8**	18.5
The Church is oriented towards its own material gain	21.4	29.4	**50.8**	26.1	10.2	**36.3**	12.8
In the sphere of morality priests fail to set a good example for their congregations	25.2	29.5	**54.7**	23.6	5.3	**28.9**	16.4
The Church should allow contraception	49.7	25.2	**74.9**	5.7	6.9	**12.6**	12.5
I trust the Church	12.8	34.1	**46.9**	19.4	20.2	**39.6**	13.6
The Church does a lot for the poor and the needy	16.6	47.9	**64.5**	19.4	5.8	**25.2**	10.4
I feel a member of the Church	22.9	35.9	**58.8**	12.1	18.3	**30.4**	10.8
State authorities should consult the Episcopate on important decisions	4.5	14.0	**18.5**	20.7	41.5	**62.2**	19.4
"Radio Maryja" radio station tarnishes the image of the Church	57.9	20.0	**77.9**	5.6	4.0	**9.6**	12.5
The Church should not interfere with people's intimate matters	42.2	25.6	**67.8**	13.8	6.0	**19.8**	12.3
A growing number of young people are leaving the Church	40.4	37.8	**78.2**	7.7	2.4	**10.1**	11.7
The majority of students believe in God, however turn away from the Church	18.3	56.6	**74.9**	8.2	0.6	**8.8**	2.7

The Church understood in ecclesial terms – as a religious institution composed of the clergy and laity – is perceived as an element of national identity and tradition by the majority of respondents (82%) regardless of their own attitude towards faith. The history of the Polish nation has been linked to the Catholic Church by strong factual and emotional bonds for over a thousand years. In the common consciousness, the Church is perceived as a stronghold of Polishness and a factor determining the continuity of the national tradition. Students are convinced of this important role of the Church on the Polish soil. This knowledge and belief are passed on from one generation to the next, and are reinforced through the learning of the history of the Polish nation at school, in the family setting and in churches.

One of the most important tenets of Christianity is love for the fellow human being. A practical manifestation of respect for the dignity of every person is helping the poor and those in need. The respondents declared that, in their view, the Church performed the obligation as required: 64.5% agreed with the statement that *The Church does a lot for the poor and the needy.*

A half of the respondents also consider the Church to be a moral authority (53.7%) and an educational authority (47.8%). The percentage is slightly higher (75.9%) in the group of believers (N=744). One quarter of those declaring themselves as believers (24%), however, reject the statement that the Church is a moral authority. Interestingly, though, the same percentage (25%) of non-believers and members of the religiously indifferent group (N=191) do see the Church as a moral authority. In this aspect, the assessment of the Church cannot be unambiguously correlated with the declared attitude towards religion. Not all students are of the view that assigning a moral priority to the Church should be regarded as equivalent to observing the Church's moral commandments. To compound the picture, nearly a half of those who consider the Church to be a moral authority (47.7%) at the same time note that *In the sphere of morality priests fail to set a good example for their congregations.*

A correlational analysis between the recognition of the Church as a moral authority and the assessment of selected moral problems by the students who replied to both questions shows that the students generally (88.7%) oppose the interference of the Church in people's intimate sphere. They think that contraception is acceptable (76.8%) and that the Church should allow it (75.2%). Rejecting the Church's teachings, they accept sex between unmarried people (66.9%). A smaller percentage (44.8%) believes that the only legitimate form of matrimony is sacramental marriage in church. They do not accept an unconditional ban on abortion (45.8%), and they support IVF (71.8%).

Morality underpinned by the Church's ethical system with *ex cathedra* orders concerning intimate behaviours (sexual contacts) and procreation (contraception, in-vitro fertilization, abortion) has attracted opposition and distancing from the Church's teachings. The problems are also featured importantly in the students' free written statements. In general terms, young people oppose the Church's intrusion into their public life, while moral standards imposed by the Church are viewed by the young population as an attack on their freedom.

Contraception, in-vitro fertilization, premarital sex – these are all very private matters and the Church should, for its own good, keep away from them. Everyone enjoys privacy, and the Church, by disrespecting this principle, in fact drives many people away.

Young people think that the position of the Catholic Church on abortion, in vitro or sex before marriage is ridiculous and off-putting at the same time.

The Church uses medieval methods in the 21st century. It says 'no' to everything. 'No' to contraception, 'no' to abortion, 'no' to in-vitro fertilization, 'no' to cohabitation, 'no' to civil partnerships. Maybe also 'no' to love, 'no' to tolerance, 'no' to health? It is no surprise, then, that this is not working out. The world has changed, so perhaps it's high time for some reforms in the Church. Young people stop believing in priests because they seem to do everything to make our lives difficult. They don't understand us; they don't even try to understand.

As for contraception, I am for using it. Looking at contemporary women, who know that there are means allowing them to decide when they want to have children, the Church should accept contraception. Even now, on many Internet forums you can find tips on which priest you should go to if you want absolution for using birth control.

Students disapprove of the Church's involvement in politics and preoccupation with its material status. They also state that the Episcopate should not have any mandate to act as a consulting body to the state authorities in matters that are important for the country. A total of 78% of respondents say that the "Radio Maryja" radio station taints the image of the Church. Most of the respondents agree that the number of young people abandoning the Church is growing, and that the majority of students believe in God, yet turn away from the Church as an institution. They are mainly discouraged by the Church's moral admonitions. Also, young people increasingly put into question the authority of the Church in the so-called "life problems," intimate aspects connected with relations existing between two close people.

Priests as teachers of God's word do not always fulfil their tasks as dutifully they should. Frequent press and television reports on violations of law or immoral conduct in priests and higher clergy to a certain extent destroy the perfect image of the Church as a highly moral institution which sets the example for others, teaches how to live and how to be, and preaches the word of God to convert and educate. Sometimes I get the impression that the Church as a community was created only to get financial benefits from faith.

In my view, it is hypocritical for priests to talk about celibacy. They teach about premarital purity, and yet so often you hear that priests sexually abuse minors or have children themselves but conceal them from their church superiors.

As it is, I can't trust the Church – too many of its proclaimed opinions contradict my world view or even trigger my hostility. The position of the Church on homosexuality or contraception separates me from the Church as an institution.

I can't tolerate the double standards and the hypocrisy in the Church. I can't stand it when a place which should teach the word of God instead focuses on condemning or praising one of the political parties. I hate it when priests talk about the virtue of poverty, yet after celebrating mass get into brand new cars. I don't even want to go into details about paedophilia, homosexuality, gambling, alcohol abuse and other pathologies pervading the Church. Generally speaking, the Church is sick. Instead of talking about all that openly, and trying to remedy the situation, Polish authorities do everything to hide the problems. I believe that God does not need churches with sky-reaching towers and swanky clergy houses, and does not direct his call to usurpers who dare regard themselves as His servants.

In the course of time, I've started noticing mistakes made by the Church as an institution. Interfering in politics, the radio station from Toruń, financial scandals. Some members of the clergy are driven by a great thirst for power. Some of them want to be gods, but in reality they are just ordinary people with a huge amount of weaknesses.

In 80% of cases I regard the Catholic Church as an institution full of hypocrisy, bizarre mysteries and quite unnecessary rituals (e.g. kneeling, penance). Churches in Poland are vast cold buildings full of elderly people singing sad songs – this is why going to Sunday mass is fast becoming just a duty that is duly fulfilled by the congregation.

My attitude towards the Church is becoming increasingly negative. I think this is partly caused by today's activities of the Polish Catholic Church. In the time of the communist regime, the Church was a mainstay of the Polish society. At present, it is becoming increasingly marginalized, mainly due to crises that shake the foundations of the institution (multiple scandals, desire for material gain seen among many

members of the clergy). I think that the Church has become lost in the current cultural and political situation. It has forfeited the most important thing – the confidence of its believers.

What I feel about priests is growing distance and disillusionment. My feelings are not a consequence of media backlash but personal experience. This is what has shaped my negative attitude to the Church as an institution. I guess that my life's disappointments and unpleasant experiences will never bring back my faith to the strength it once had.

God in Students' Life

The Church, which conveys the knowledge of God, teaches how to love God and worship him with prayer in the early period of people's life, and then gradually loses its important status. Young people become increasingly independent and autonomous in their spiritual decisions. They come to rely on themselves rather than the anonymous parish community. They choose whatever they consider important and whatever helps them become better people and live with dignity and respect for others and themselves. They drift away from the Church also in the cultural dimension. Collective church services and the obligation to attend Sunday mass every week cease to be the main indicators of their faith. By their own account, "migration" from the Church, negation of the need for intermediaries (priests) in forging and maintaining relations with God are impulses stimulating individual spiritual experiences.

I never turned my back on God, but I seem to have parted ways with the Church. I prefer religion to be my personal matter, and I want to talk to God directly, without any "earthly intermediaries."

I believe in God and his teachings, but not in priests or bishops.

God has a presence in my life but I don't need the Church hierarchy. I don't want to attend mass with "worshippers" of the Radio Maryja radio station who usurp the right to call themselves "true Catholics."

I don't need any intermediaries or rituals in my contact with God.

I believe that God exists, and I pray to Him, but I don't attend church.

I believe in my own perception of God, not that taught by priests.

I talk to God in my own way and to do this, I don't need the Church or a priest who says the same things every Sunday.

Formalized religion is of no importance to me and I don't really feel the urge to be a part of formal institutions or attend religious ceremonies to "meet" with God.

I feel that I have a strong bond with God, and I believe in God, however I only have negative opinions about the Church as an institution.

Some have emphasized the importance of faith in their life, and mentioned the graces which they have received from God.

I owe God a lot, and I try to pay Him back by giving up pleasures and by being good to others.

God is an important figure in my life. I've often felt His presence in difficult moments. His presence has also manifested itself through people whom I've been encountering in my life. God gives meaning to my life. I treat Him as a friend who is always by my side. At some point in my life I realized that all I needed to do was to place confidence in God and trust Him with my life to achieve happiness and stability.

Faith in God features prominently in my life. It lets me tackle adversity, and helps me cope with problems of daily life.

I believe in transcendence. I believe in one God who is perceived differently by various people. Reincarnation seems a very probable concept to me. I believe that every day is a lesson, and that you learn all your life as well. I believe in magical forces and spirits, in the law of karma, in the ghosts of ancestors and mysterious powers. Often, despite all the turmoil, I feel the harmony and presence of God.

Aversion to the Church and priests has not discouraged many young people, from belief in God who continues to be a prominent feature in their lives. The relationship with God, however, acquires a direct and individual dimension. The students have lost the emotional and identificational ties with the Church, and stopped considering the Church as a community of faith. Their attitude to religion is autonomous. It is a form of private faith which distances itself from the model of Church religiousness. The Church, taken as synonymous with the clergy, is gradually losing confidence and authority in the student population. Young people, however, turn their back on the model proposed by church institutions rather than abandoning God. Increasingly, the religiousness of youth takes the form of searching for spirituality outside the Church. Young people become less religious and more spiritual. The younger population needs spontaneous spiritual experiences and private relations with God. A growing proportion of students seek their own God, and grows indifferent towards the Church as an institution. They trust their own religious experiences rather than practices imposed by the institutions of the Church. What is more, young people become their own authorities on matters of faith and morality.

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ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF SPIRITUALITY AND THE ROLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AS SPIRITUAL GUIDE

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SEEKERS AND DWELLERS. ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF HUMAN SPIRITUALITY AND THE CHURCH'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THEM

Culture as a Tool Used by the Church

When we speak of human spirituality, or more precisely forms of the human relationship with Transcendence, we should take into consideration certain anthropological issues. As a fundamental starting point I take Saint Augustine's understanding of a human being. Based on his own mystical experience, Augustine introduces a special quality of the human soul, which he calls *spirit*. Augustine's notion of spirit expresses a special ability of the human soul, whereby the soul opens up to God. When we talk about the human spirit, which is also called the higher part of the soul, we think about the passive openness of the soul to the direct influence of God. God influences the human spirit directly, without the mediation of the body, i.e. our senses, and without the mediation of concepts, which are the "stuff" of our intellect. What is the content of the divine action on the human soul? In general terms – God is attracting every person towards goodness, justice, truthfulness, love. Expressing it more precisely, God is luring us implicitly or explicitly towards himself. A person can be very submissive to this divine attraction, or can be insensitive to it.

We can identify a wide range of different human attitudes towards divine action in the human spirit. For example, on one hand there can be complete hostility, while on the other there may be a great openness which develops into total mystical union with God. An important role is played by two factors which shape the expression of the spirit motivated by God or touched by God. These factors are the cultural environment one lives in, and one's personal history. Let us suppose that God's action in the human soul is constant, that is, God lures everybody to Him, attracting them towards love, justice and honesty. However, human feelings towards this luring and the consequent expression of this divine action in the soul vary from person to person.

I consider these two factors to be a kind of filter, which shapes both sensitivity to and expression of the divine action in humans. In a materialistic, hedonistic and secular society, a person is less sensitive to the divine luring, because society uses different keys to interpret reality. A secular society, which prefers only horizontal expressions of the human spirit, does not understand religious intuitions and therefore does not help to center explicitly on God.

In a society which has only a loose connection with the Gospel, people are driven by God to look for the aforementioned values. They do not look for God explicitly. Some people are highly sensitive, and discover and describe with great agility complex areas of our life, but they give solutions to problems that are far from the solutions inspired by the Gospel. They do not look for God, but they seek values in life. We can say that they have some deep insights into our world and its contemporary problems. Among the most important artists in Poland we might mention the poet Tadeusz Różewicz and the moviemaker Krzysztof Kieślowski. They have sufficient sensitivity to see the problems of modern Polish society very clearly. At the same time, the Church does not seem to notice these problems or at least is slow in coming forward with solutions. The two persons mentioned are prepared to talk about such problems as the godless modern society and the moral consequences of a lack of God. Różewicz describes the fall of the labor ethos. He is very critical towards changes in the mentality of modern Polish society. At the same time he asks a lot of metaphysical questions. Kieślowski, in his movie plots based on the Ten Commandments, presents the effects of the confusion generated by the fall of morality, echoing the absence of God's teaching in modern society.

The answers to modern problems given by these two artists are very often ambiguous as regards the Church, and far removed from the Gospel. They find inspiration for solutions to such problems in quite different areas than those in which the Church is active. The answers given by them have a significant influence on Polish society, because they are skilful artists capable of conveying a powerful message. Hence, we can say that the Church should listen to such artists, because they present problems that we as a Church are afraid to talk about.

This simple conclusion leads to another. The Church should somehow support artists who feel at home with the Church. Their voice reaches places where other ways of preaching the Kingdom of God are absent. The Church could somehow play the role of a patron, supporting artists. In this way they might become more open to the message of the Gospel and begin to spread it through their art. There are many artists nowadays who do not fit into the modern scheme of culture in Poland. A good number of them understand the role of Christian values in personal and social life. Taking advantage of the need of these artists to find a

place to perform, and by giving them some financial support, the Church could engage their help to offer society some new expressions of the Gospel.

There are various other expressions of culture, one of which is philosophy. This is a secular form of rational thinking. It expresses the spirit of the search for metaphysical truth. A large part of this search is done away from God. How should the Church relate to this metaphysical searching? At the beginning of Christianity there was debate among Christians about the right attitude towards pagan philosophy. Pagan philosophy was not only a human expression of the desire to find truth, but in some cases it also had some soteriological, i.e. religious, aspects. Christians had the full right to reject such philosophy, because they could say that they possess fullness of truth through Christian revelation and fullness of salvation in Jesus Christ. In fact, some Christian thinkers rejected pagan philosophy as useless or even dangerous. If there is fullness of truth in Christian revelation, there is no sense in using pagan ideas. It could even be harmful. This point of view was shared by Tertullian, Tatian the Assyrian, and Hernias.

On the other hand, fortunately, there were other Christian thinkers who adopted a quite different strategy. In their opinion, everything that was right and true in pagan philosophy also belonged to Christian heritage. This point of view was shared by Justin and Clement of Alexandria. In their opinion, the truth which pagans found in their philosophy was a true preparation for the Christian revelation. Clement and Justin were thus able to pick up philosophical ideas that were coherent with Christian doctrine, and use them to strengthen Christian teaching. Even today the Church still profits from this positive attitude towards pagan philosophy, creating and using different philosophies which deepen our understanding of Christian revelation. Therefore I am of the opinion that the Church should take advantage of the wisdom of unbelievers if it is somehow compatible with the general outlines of the Christian revelation. I would say that philosophy, if done honestly, is somehow an expression of the divine luring towards truth.

Tacit Teaching Emanating from Other Spiritualities

One entirely secular expression of human spirituality might be the so-called ecological or environmental movements. Having various forms of contact with ecological movements, I notice that there are many people who are very much involved in such movements, but who are completely insensitive to religion and sometimes even anticlerical. I nonetheless admire their mentality of dedication to the protection of nature and readiness for sacrifice in order to save parts of the natural ecosystem. Is this not a sign of the influence of God in the human spirit

– or in other words, is it not an instance of God's luring towards goodness, rightness, justice and harmony?

I also observe the very slow reaction of the Church in Poland, which can hardly be said to be keeping pace with the actions of such environmental movements, which are very important to humanity. Only one ecological movement promoting the protection of nature receives support from the Catholic Church in Poland, namely REFA (the Ecological Movement of Saint Francis of Assisi). The ideas of environmental movements are simply out of the sight of the Church. This attitude of the Church also results from the widely varying spectrum of ecological motivations, which is far from clear and can be viewed from different angles. But there is no doubt that at the base of all these movements lay a motivation for saving God's work.

Having contact with many birdwatchers in Poland, I can say that this hobby is regarded by many of them as a highly emotional activity, which engages the whole person. What I notice is that this hobby is regarded by many birdwatchers as a kind of secular religion, and somehow substitutes even for God. In fact birdwatching can be so emotionally engaging that it can challenge religion. Therefore I would dare to talk about the spirituality of free time or the spirituality of hobbies. Do birdwatchers have something to tell the Church directly? No. They do not say anything explicitly. But there is a lot said without words.

The Church's attitude towards birdwatching is just an example of its broader attitude towards the many kinds of hobbies that constitute a large part of our life. It seems that this part of our life is simply neglected by the Church, because it is regarded as purely secular. This should not be so. The gap between *sacrum* and *profanum* is simply too wide. Somehow the secular aspects of our life should be promoted as an area where we can find God. There are of course numerous initiatives where *sacrum* mingles with *profanum*. This concerns for example sports and all sorts of outdoor activities; but still there is a lot to be put together. The protection of nature, at least, seems to have been abandoned by the Church, perhaps because the environmental movements are sometimes dominated by activists with extreme views.

There is a shift in modern mentality with regard to *sacrum*. On one hand the younger generation is driven more to increase its ability to do things instead of thinking in terms of the metaphysics of contemplation of truth. This deepens the gap between *sacrum* and *profanum* in their lives.[1] Simple explicit preaching of the Gospel does

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[1] Janusz Mariański, "Emigracja młodzieży z Kościoła?" *Socjologia religii*. 2005. Vol. 3, p. 169.

not suffice in modern times. There are groups that exist permanently away from the Church and do not have any chance to hear the Gospel. There is a need for some kind of presence of people from the Church in these groups. The Jesuit model, where priests of different professions, apart from being priests, work in completely lay areas, is one to follow. In this way the priests help seekers, through personal contact with them, to get in touch with the Church and with the Gospel first of all. Some people are hostile to the Church not because they had bad experiences, but because they inherit the prejudices of the environment in which they live. Just simple contact with priests in neutral areas helps lay people to reject some of their prejudices. What is necessary is not to judge their morality. They are not in touch with the Church's teaching. Their conscience has been shaped in a different way than the Church teaches. More important is to be witnesses of God in their environment. Nowadays people seek mystics more than morality. There are also models of consecrated life where consecrated people work together with lay people, with the intention of someday inviting those lay people into the life of prayer that they live at their homes.

There is another piece to be added to this puzzle, one that was mentioned by Pope Benedict XVI. Our modern times are dominated by consumerism, which is also reflected in the religious sphere. Much modern spiritual seeking has less to do with religion and more with consumption. People are not looking for salvation, but trying to find a new kind of spiritual experience.[2] This kind of spirituality is by definition non-institutional, and is sometimes a kind of self-made way to spiritual experience. The paths proposed by this kind of spiritual search do not always have to do with looking for truth, love and God. Nowadays, people are less bound to institutions, communities, orthodoxy and right methods. They just do spiritual experiments that

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[2] "Il disgregamento del cristianesimo a opera del pensiero secolarista ha portato in Occidente a nuove forme di religiosità, che si celano dietro la cangiante etichetta di 'New Age'. Non si cerca la fede ma l'esperienza religiosa, si va alla ricerca dei sentieri che conducono all'unione 'mistica', e in tal modo si giunge anche a una riscoperta delle religioni precristiane, si assiste a un ritorno di dèi e riti precristiani. La madre terra e il padre sole, se considerati insieme, corrispondono alle idee egualitaristiche dell'epoca più che la fede nel Dio unico; le immagini mitiche sono in auge e i rituali semimagici appaiono più promettenti della sobria ebbrezza della liturgia cristiana, per non parlare delle sue atrofizzazioni razionalistiche dei tempi recenti." "Interview with Card. J. Ratzinger." V. Possenti et al. (eds.), *Il monoteismo* (Milano: Mondadori 2002). http://www.ratzinger.us/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=226

seem to them attractive. People regard spirituality as a private issue.[3] This is so because these modern times introduce a deep subjectivity into the notion of *sacrum*. *Sacrum* does not have anything to do with the Church. People are easily driven to magic, the esoteric, occultism and witchcraft.[4] They understand *sacrum* only on the level of *fascinosum*, omitting the aspect of *tremendum*. *Sacrum* is being modeled in accordance with human needs, and not vice versa.[5]

As an exorcist, I talk to a large number of people who have gone down the abovementioned paths and found all kinds of unimaginable and catastrophic results. The people who come to me include not only regular churchgoers, but also people who have been away from the Church for years. They were, of course, free and made their choices, but what I have to deal with is the results of those choices. Usually it is the case that I am the last step they undertake to rid themselves of the terrible consequences of their so-called spiritual journey. They come after visiting psychologists, psychiatrists and all sorts of natural and magical healers. I talk to people who have really come as low as they can go, and are willing to do anything to escape from the disastrous consequences of their choices. I know, not only from books but from my own experience, that there are many kinds of spiritualities that seem attractive at first, but are in some cases simply dangerous. An extreme case is that of Satanism; however there are many others which seem to be purely methods or meaningless rituals, but they are not.

There is a movement of Christians, also present in Poland, who hope to find something special in eastern religions or techniques. People mingle Christianity with Buddhism, for example. From my own pastoral experience I can say that as Church we are obliged to warn these people. If we substitute a mantra for Christ, we fall into apostasy even if we are not conscious of it, and this has deep religious consequences. I am trying to stress here that not every kind of spirituality is safe, and the Church has a duty to warn people against certain spiritual dangers. In my 22 years of pastoral experience as a priest, one year working as an exorcist provided the experience that the role of the Church is to protect people from spiritual dangers, and not merely to listen to those who enter into eastern or other spiritualities. We are often afraid of being accused of being medieval when talking about spiritual dangers, but the Gospel

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[3] Libiszowska-Żółtowska, 2006. "Sekularyzacja – wróg czy sprzymierzeniec Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce." *Socjologia religii.* Vol. 4, p. 279

[4] Jerzy Szymołon, "Kulturowe uwarunkowania religijności." *Socjologia religii.* 2004. Vol. 2, p. 266.

[5] Mariański, "Emigracja młodzieży z Kościoła?," p. 170.

would not be preached with all of its power if it were not for references to the devil as our enemy.

I am not claiming that these people are dishonest in their search, but that they are pursuing an unsafe spiritual path. We do not say that these people have nothing to teach the Church? The question is not whether their path is safe, but why they pursue this kind of spiritual experiment.

What is the lesson we can take from these eastern-inspired trends in Christian spirituality? People are turning to eastern religions, with greater or lesser commitment, as a means of escape from today's hectic and materialistic life, which is also present in our Church. Even if we preach salvation, we do not offer spiritual harmony for right now. We play a charitable, educational and socializing role in the community, but we have lost the spirit of contemplation in daily life, and turned towards activism. We might say that we inherit from our society the capacity for doing things, but we are losing the taste for metaphysics or contemplation. All of this is a sign of a lack of deep spiritual life, which results in a lack of witnessing of our bond with Christ. This bond provides spiritual harmony and peace amid troubles and suffering. We are missing happiness and harmony right here and now which can be fruits of our relationship with God.

There is another similar problem with which we have to deal. A decade ago there was a clearly visible trend in our society – a large number of sects became active, and many Christians abandoned the Catholic Church in order to find something important through one or other of these sects. What was that "important" thing that motivated them to do this? A sect offers things which are very often absent in modern society, and somehow also in the Catholic Church at the level of parish life. Let us list them explicitly. A sect provides a community. There is also spiritual guidance. Members of a sect have unquestionable spiritual leaders, who say univocally what is good and what is wrong. In their teaching there is one safe way of life and others are excluded. There is no margin for doubt and the choices are straightforward. Everything is univocal and safe. The members of a sect nonetheless have to pay an enormous price for these spiritual "benefits." They are totally controlled, terrified, punished for disobedience, and very often economically exploited. The high price people are willing to pay for belonging to a sect shows how deep their needs are in modern society. Sects are filling this vacuum. By analyzing the structure of the needs that the sects fulfill, we can come to realize what is important for people and what we in the Church are missing.

If we look at the structure of a parish, we realize that there can be strong feelings of anonymity and loneliness. In fact, sociological research shows that in 2002 in Poland 53.57% of students felt

anonymous in their parish, and 21.43% of students felt that there was too great a degree of anonymity. In addition, 35.9% indicated a lack of authentic contact with other parishioners. To sum up: this shows that the Polish parish does not integrate people.[6] The reasons include not only a lack of support from the parish. There is also a trend in Polish society which could be described as an increasing emotional detachment of the younger generation from the parish.[7] People are driven towards more impersonal contact, which results in a deeper feeling of anonymity in an anonymous society. A remedy to this trend among young people, and to anonymity itself, might be for example prayer groups, which attract young people and provide a kind of support. In a society where people are feeling more and more lonely, it is important to create such meeting points. People also look for spiritual guidance, but priests are very often afraid of being spiritual leaders in the personal lives of their parishioners. Very often they do not feel in a position to guide somebody spiritually. This also indicates an educational path which future priests should go through. A priest should, among other things, be able to act as a spiritual guide in parishioners' personal lives.

We live in a very talkative world. There are too many words, too many discussions and questions. We discuss everything and we are overwhelmed by the discussions of other people, who can publish their views online. Therefore it is necessary for the Church to show correct discernment in questions and discussions that have to do with the Church and its mission. Not every discussion and question is honest. Not everybody who asks questions and discusses wants to know the truth. Some people are not enquiring for the truth. They just like to ask questions; that is the way they live. Sometimes the discussion has a hidden premise, which aims to ridicule the Church. If so, it is necessary to make an effort to discern serious discussions and honest questions. This effort towards discernment is one that the Church has to make.

Not every kind of spirituality involves an honest search for God. There are other intentions which drive people to look for something spiritual. Looking at the whole spectrum of movements, we include also Satanism and those who treat spirituality as an extension of the consumerist style of life, as I mentioned above. They are not looking for any kind of sacrifice in order to gain spiritual proximity to

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[6] Ewa Wysocka, "Parafia w percepcji i doświadczeniach młodzieży studenckiej. Postrzegane funkcje w życiu codziennym i w kreowaniu tożsamości religijnej." *Socjologia religii*. 2003. Vol. 1, pp. 124–125.

[7] A sociological survey carried out in Poland in 1991–1998. Elżbieta Filrit, "Postawy społeczeństwa polskiego wobec parafii rzymskokatolickiej na przełomie wieków." *Socjologia religii*. 2003. Vol. 1, pp. 170–171.

Transcendence. They just want to experience something different from the materialistic world. It would go against reason to expect from these people serious questions or proposals in the spiritual sphere. Those who have something important to say to the Church are generally not connected with these movements. There must be some honesty in the search, which opens up to God, which guarantees that a person is able to ask honest questions that are important to the Church. We also have to accept that we have already answered many questions, and that because of the completeness of Christian revelation, we are not necessarily able to give new answers.

In these modern talkative times, we need a special ability to listen. When people leave the Church they very often do not say anything. They just go away. This leaving is a means by which they communicate a great deal. We have to learn to listen also to this kind of silent message. I would say more: there is a fear in the Church of hearing what people are thinking nowadays. They have gone very far from the teaching of Church, and we are afraid to listen to them because they live in a quite different way. Sometimes living away from the Gospel makes them unhappy and they look for help in different places, where there is no help for them. Eventually someone may turn to the Church in order to be free from the slavery of sin into which he or she has fallen. But some never return.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AS SPIRITUAL GUIDE IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

How We Destroy the Authority of the Church

After the collapse of communism and the death of John Paul II, the Polish Church followed the way of the Catholic Church in Western democracies. The leading role of the Church as a moral authority suffered a decline. There were different factors, which I am not going to examine now, that pushed the Church towards its present-day role. Two factors which contribute to the steady degradation of the role of the Church as a moral authority in Polish society. The first factor, now clearly visible, is the hostility of the media, which aim explicitly to destroy the authority of the Church in Poland. They present true facts, mostly relating to pedophilia or other moral scandals, but with a huge degree of disproportion. The second factor is public reciprocal criticism between various factions within the Church.

The first factor is more complicated. There is a steady attack from media hostile to the Church, which take advantage of certain weaknesses of the Church. One of these weaknesses is a tacit acceptance of the sins of clergy in the Polish Church at the level of the Church hierarchy and in

the Catholic media. The truth about one bishop was used by hostile media to achieve the goal of deliberate erosion of the moral authority of the Catholic Church in Poland. The Catholic media which had been supported by the bishop claimed to see hostility and lack of honesty in the attacks on the bishop, despite knowing that the allegations were true.

The second factor has to do with different factions within the Church. It is one thing if there is open criticism against the Church from people outside it, but if one Church faction publicly accuses another faction, this destroys the confidence of ordinary churchgoers and intimidates those who are considering approaching the Church to find there a spiritual haven. If before the collapse of communism the external critics of the Church caused consolidation among the faithful and clergy in Poland, now we have lost the meaning of community in the Church. Sometimes particular interests mean more than the community. I believe that one of the reasons for these public accusations, apart from a lack of responsibility towards other Catholics, is the absence of opportunities to discuss or quarrel over matters within the Church's internal forums.

Probably we have lost confidence in Church mechanisms which would facilitate such internal dialog or the exchange of even very distant ideas. The Church's institutions seem to represent more the local hierarchy, especially the bishop, than the mass of the faithful or ordinary priests. Why is this so? The Church's clerically run institutions are hardly objective in cases of conflict between the diocesan bishop and priests or faithful. Priests working in such institutions, because of their vow of obedience to the local bishop, are in a very difficult situation. There have been two cases in Poland in which these institutions and their procedures failed completely. In the first case, only personal contact with the Pope helped to resolve the problem. The priests were forced to use this means because all other procedures run by the Church locally had completely failed. In the second case involving conflict between the local bishop and clergy, described above, only one priest, who had already moved to a different diocese, dared to talk to the nuncio about the problem.

The Church is a great means which Jesus uses to save the world. The Church is so effective partly thanks to the vow of obedience to the bishop made by priests. On the other hand, this bond of obedience may introduce feudalism into the Church in case of moral conflicts between the bishop and priests or lay people, or in cases when the bishop is tempted not to resolve a serious moral problem concerning one of the priests from his diocese. Therefore I suggest that there should be created in dioceses a mixed institution, composed of priests and lay people, that would have to deal with the most delicate matters. In cases of conflict between priests and the bishop, lay Christians would attempt to resolve the problem.

After a presentation of John Paul II's *Fides et ratio* at the Catholic Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, by professors of theology and philosophy the final conclusion as summed up in the words of one of the students was that it is a political document of the Vatican seeking to ban any kind of scientific research. If I personally hear very often that lay people are scandalized by the sins of priests, this time it was I who was scandalized. There should be a sound balance between discussion, criticism and obedience to the magisterium emanating from faith. But if we criticize the Vatican because of the role it has as magisterium, we scandalize ordinary churchgoers and challenge their faith. As a Church we are not simply an extension of modern society, where the majority is right and can decide what is truth. This criticism was made within the Church's internal forum, but very often such criticism is made publicly, without considering the impact it can have on the faithful.

I therefore postulate that we should resort to public criticism of the Church or of people in the Church only as the last resort, when other procedures have failed. Media hostile to the Church are ready to prey on our quarrels. These quarrels, if carried on without prudence and discretion, challenge the faith of ordinary churchgoers. One of the opportunities for such discussion should be the synod that functions in the local churches. We should provide more opportunity for talking between different factions of the Church, in order to include representatives of a broader spectrum of faithful.

In order to lessen the possibility of manipulation of the truth about the Church, it is necessary to be in touch with ordinary priests and above all with lay people, who are very sensitive to injustice in the Church. This could facilitate some kind of preventive reaction on the Church's part, in order to avoid scandals and media attacks. It is necessary to reduce the distance between the hierarchy of the Church and regular churchgoers. A special role here is played by parish priests, who are a kind of nexus between the regular faithful and the hierarchy. They could help the hierarchy to realize how disastrous it might be to fail to address the sins or even crimes that exist in the Church, but are still unknown to the public. Parish priests are also responsible for the post-seminarian education of curates and other young priests. They should be politically independent, because there is sometimes a kind of arrangement between local politicians and parish priest. In this way people would trust them more. I would personally stress the importance of the right choice of parish priests.

Also, the way in which bishops are chosen should involve more deliberation and awareness. I do not know how far the opinion of lay people is taken into consideration during such consultations, but in any case, without knowing the opinions of different groups, it is very difficult to find the right person.

The Catholic Church as Moral and Spiritual Guide

There is a relationship between mystery, i.e. truth, and dogma. Dogma is a verbal formulation of mystery. We can distinguish between the verbal formulation of a dogma and its content, which is mystery. Mystery always exceeds the communicative ability of language. This is why we may say that dogma is *a* verbal formulation of mystery. Because language reflects the actual status of humans' ability to verbalize a human state of mind and human culture, there is a link between humans' current sensitivity and language. Because human sensitivity evolves, the same happens to the language. Once again, we can say that dogma is a *historical* formulation of mystery. It is no surprise that there have always been attempts to express mystery in other terms, which may be better suited to the present times.

I recall a case of accommodation of terms of the dogma of the Eucharist. Initially the dogma was described with the old scholastic term *transsubstantiatio*, which describes a deep, i.e. essential, change of bread and wine into Christ's body and blood. Because this Latin term seems antiquated and meaningless for modern people, someone suggested that instead of *transsubstantiatio* there might be used the terms *transfiguratio* and *transsignificatio*. These two terms emphasize the change in the significance of the bread and wine, omitting the change of essence.

The above example reveals two problems which reflect the tension between language and mystery expressed in dogma. The first one can be expressed with the question: to what part of dogma should we give priority, its content or its verbal expression? The answer seems to be quite straightforward – priority should be given to the content, that is, to mystery. The example shows that the content of the dogma would be profoundly changed by replacing *transsubstantiatio* with *transfiguratio* and *transsignificatio*. This raises a second question: who decides how far we can change the content of dogma? Or, in other words, who has access to the mystery in order to discern whether a shift in the meaning of terms still describes the mystery? Who can authoritatively say that new terms make the dogma still true? In this way we touch on the very important issue of the role of magisterium in the discernment of dogmatic formulations.

We might think that magisterium is a kind of restraint, which slows down – if not stops – the accommodation of dogmatic expressions to modern times. Though it can also be seen from this angle, I sometimes hear from people in Protestant Churches that they are lacking a single way of looking at or thinking about important moral or dogmatic issues, while Catholics have one point of reference, which guarantees unanimity in dogmatic or ethical matters. This unanimity,

which we might say is imposed, allows us to avoid confusion in things which are very important in our life. It is not always the case that if the Church stops us doing certain things, we leave the Church because it is limiting our freedom. Sometimes we are looking for something quite different, namely we want to know what is right and what is wrong, because we have abused freedom before and we are afraid of getting lost again. If we live in a society which overestimates freedom and subjectivism and undermines the value of truth, this does not mean that the Church should give in to the pressure of decreasing numbers of faithful[8] and accept a liberalization of moral standards.

There is a difference between the right moral teaching of the Church and sinful acts of members of the Church – either explicit sexual crimes or negligence by the hierarchy in failing to prevent further such crimes. The sinfulness of some members of the Church does not destroy the Church's ability to discern what is morally right or wrong at the level of teaching. On the other hand it is clear that the gap between teaching and action, as is sometimes seen to exist, is scandalous and seriously damages the Church's credibility. What can be changed or improved about the Church's moral teaching may have to do with vocabulary, argumentation or way of communicating things, but the core fact, namely that the Church has this competence, is a matter of faith.

I recall a discussion with a lesbian woman. My argument against homosexual acts was based on the notion of human nature and lack of coherence between these acts and nature. The woman's answer was that a human being does not have a fixed nature. If so, I would ask the question: if we remove the notion of nature, what point of reference could be there for us to judge human acts as moral or immoral? There must be something stable which can serve as an unquestionable objective point of reference. This stable point of reference should embrace core features of a human being.

Maybe we are sometimes tempted to obfuscate truth in order to attract more people to the Church by making the truth more accessible. It is one thing is to have the right strategy to attract people, and another to remain faithful to the truth, which should be preached with full clarity. What we can improve is the way in which we teach people how to follow Christ. Morality is something which follows after knowledge of Christ. We must therefore emphasize the role of the personal bond with God. The second step will be morality.

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[8] Mariański, "Religijność i moralność w różnych kontekstach społeczno-kulturowych." *Socjologia religii*. 2009. Vol. 8, p. 162.

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CHAPTER III

THE CHURCH IN THE MEDIA AGE

JÓZEF MAJEWSKI

A mere five decades ago sociologists would not be so willing to examine the phenomenon of faith. After all, what sense did it make to look into religion which, according to the prophecies of the day, was to have been wiped out both in the public sphere and in private life. The dominant belief was that the death of religion, faith and the Churches, i.e. the ultimate "disenchantment of the world" (M. Weber) under the burden of the steam-roller of secularization was but a question of time, first in the West, and subsequently elsewhere in the world. However, things have taken on a different turn: the world, rather than becoming "disenchanted," has become "enchanted." Peter Berger, the prophet of secularization of the 1960s, wrote at the end of the 21st century:

> My point is that the assumption that we live in a secularized world is false. The world today, with some exceptions … is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever (1999: 2).

Let us add at the same time that the many and varied currents and streams of this faith depart more or less distinctly from the preferred patterns in the traditional religions and Churches, and are not infrequently treated as deviation, sickness, competition, and threat. In addition, traditional faith itself transforms and evolves before our very eyes.

THE RETURN OF RELIGION

> Over the last few decades religion has sneaked into the surrounding world, even if does not occupy the innermost nooks and corners of our thoughts. Newspaper and magazine headlines as well as TV news constantly remind us of religion in Paris and New York, Beirut, Baghdad, Istanbul, Moscow, New Delhi, and Jakarta (G. Corm 2007: 7).

Let us recall the media coverage of the September 11, 2001 attacks or media "stories" about the pilgrimages of John Paul II across the globe, and finally about his suffering, old age, passing away, death,

and funeral. It was clear at the same time that religion did not need to return to or rise from the dead in many parts of the world, Poland included, since it never actually departed from there.

"The return of religion" undermined the dual "dogma" of the secularists, i.e. that modernization and the separation of state and religion are the drivers of the "disenchantment" of the world. The causal link between the "disenchantment of the world" and the separation of state and religion was addressed by Hans Joas:

> The assumption shared by radical secularists and anti-modern religionists that a strict separation of state and religion forces religion into the private sphere and leads in the long run not only to a privatization of religion, but also its decline – this assumption is wrong. Radical secularists would welcome such a development, anti modern religionists abhor it – but the assumption is wrong. Religion can flourish under conditions of separation if, on the one hand, this separation encourages the participation of believers and of religious organizations in political life and if, on the other hand, the believers and their organizations develop their own theological reasons for such a separation (2006: 25-26).

The very idea of modernization, to follow Berger again,

> has turned out to be wrong. To be sure, modernization has had some secularizing effects, more in some places than in others. But it has also provoked powerful movements of counter-secularization (1999: 2-3; see J. Casanova 2013).

Today the sociology of religion, i.e. religion in the Western world which is the topic of these reflections, in fact, develops at a neck-breaking pace.

Interestingly, the above observation by Georges Corm puts "the return of religion" in the context of the media. Others scholars, like Hent de Vries and Samuel Weber in their book *Religion and Media*, share this point of view:

> The latter part of the twentieth century saw an explosion of new media that effected changes in human categories of communication. At the same time, a "return of religion" occurred on the global scale (2001: VII).

The historical convergence of the return of religion and the development of the media, revolutionary progress, the crowning achievement of contemporary modernization that generates new forms of social communication offers ample food for thought. It provokes questions like: "Is it a pure coincidence that media and religion go hand in hand today? What can be the link between religion and media?" Such questions are hard to answer, only because the worlds of religion and media, in particular the communications media, are subject to constant change and are, to use a metaphor coined by Zygmunt Bauman, fluid. They are subject to numerous, more or less rapid and unpredictable metamorphoses and transformations. We find ourselves in a melting pot of an ongoing transformation of the media and communications, without a chance for the distance indispensable to look objectively at the reality of both media and religion, to weigh matters adequately, come up with answers, evaluations, etc. One thing remains certain, however; over the past few years the media, both old and new, or even "new new" (see P. Levinson 2010), have finally, but not without difficulty, assumed their rightful place in the sociology of religion. This is most evident in the changes introduced in the textbook of this particular discipline published by Wiley-Blackwell. The 2003 *The Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion* edited by Richard K. Fenn (2003) gives media short shrift[1] and did not even provide a separate report on them. Seven years later, however, *The New Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion*, this time edited by Bryant S. Turner (2010), devotes far more attention to the media[2]. More importantly, this edition includes a separate chapter dedicated to media and religion: *Religion, Media, and Globalization* by Jeremy Stolow (2010). Moreover, in his introduction to the volume, the editor devoted separate reflections to the media under a much telling title: *Media and the Future of Religion*.

THE CHALLENGE FOR THE CHURCH

We are actually just embarking on studying and trying to comprehend the relation between media and religion. The road ahead seems somewhat indistinct and blurry. There are more places of indeterminacy than fixities, more uncertainty than steadfast conviction.

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[1] There is no reference whatsoever to "digital media" and "new media," while terms like "Internet," "media," "mass media," and "television" appear a total of merely 30 times.

[2] Here "digital media" and "new media" are discussed, although summarily, while terms like "Internet," "media," "mass media," and "television" are referenced a total of 90 times.

Let us indicate three of the undisputable things that are important in the context of these reflections: first of all, religions, Churches, religious events and objects are present in the media (since they provide information about religions, their advantages and, in particular, drawbacks and because the Churches, religions, religious groups and individuals themselves take advantage of media, appear in them and communicate by their means with one another and the world). Second of all, the changes in the media world trigger changes in the world of religion and religious faith. Therefore, thirdly, media today, as has happened in the pasts, are a great challenge for the Churches and religion. Pope Francis:

> The revolution taking place in communications media and
> in information technologies represents a great and thrilling
> challenge (2014).

However, people connected with religions and Churches do not always devote due attention to media and may often perceive them through the prism of stereotypes, prejudice, simplifications, unwholesome emotions, resentments. This is a sense of superiority with respect to the allegedly pitiably low-brow media culture, especially when the yay bare the darker sides of the life, people and institution of the Church. First and foremost, however, only too often do people of religion and of the Church, including the Catholic Church which interests me the most here, treat media as a threat rather than as a challenge.

It is therefore somewhat surprising that in his introduction to *Church and People. Disjunctions in a Secular Age*, of book of prime importance for the "four disjunctions project," George F. McLean did not mention media among the challenges for the Church today; in general media do not enjoy the pride of place in this text[3]. The very term appears only eight times in the book, as many as five times in a text by one author, Tomáš Halík from the Czech Republic. He was the only author to pay attention, albeit meager, to the role of the media that is significant for culture, religion and spirituality. This role in itself justifies the need for a more in-depth analysis of the media–religion relation in a reflection on the present day and future of the Church.

The Czech sociologist and theologian observes that today media play a role which religion played for whole centuries:

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[3] There is no reference to "the Internet," "digital media" or "new media," and "television" is mentioned only in passing (3 times).

The media have become the "religion of our times," while Christianity has ceased to be a religion. Nowadays the media fulfill several typical social and cultural roles of religion: interpreting the world, being arbiters of truthfulness and importance (what is true is what people see "with their own eyes" on the TV screen, and what is important is what makes front-page news), offering large symbols and shared stories, influencing the way of thinking and lifestyle of millions of people. Is this a matter of form or does it also concern content? Of course the media of our times do not convey any single *doctrine* – they represent a plurality of views and are very diversiform. But does this diversiform "entertainment industry" not offer a certain very influential *spirituality?* Suffice it to mention just one example: For many people who regard their own lives as empty, banal and worthless, TV offers *participation mystique* (mystical participation) in the virtual lives of celebrities or heroes of television serials (2012: 193-194).

Halík is not alone in his religious or quasi-religious perception of media. Similar observations, albeit put forth on the basis of other, diverse theoretical and methodological assumptions, can be found in works by scholars such as Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz (2008), Günter Thomas (2005), George Gerbner and Larry Gross (1986), Józef Majewski (2010), and Gregor Goethals (1993). The last author identified the similarity between the media, especially television, and religion, in the following manner:

> The genres of television – soap operas, commercials, news, and sports, ritualized events – teach us what is "real" and what we value. In many countries throughout the world people are experiencing competing symbolic orders: those generated by various religious traditions and those shaped by mass media phenomena, particularly television (1993: 28).

MEDIA VERSUS THE CHURCH?

The above symbolic, cultural and spiritual tensions and rivalry between media and religion often make people of the Church, also in Poland, believe in a kind of natural enmity between the Church and media, or even about the hatred harbored by media to the institution of the Church, her doctrine and first and foremost to her ethic and moral teaching. This conviction is widespread at least among more

conservative bishops, priests and the faithful. Some believe that the causes of the tensions are not purely incidental, although they can also emerge, as in the case of the (alleged) ill will of the people of media, who relish a critique of the institution of the Church. Some identify the reasons to be more profound, *de iure*. This position was taken by Neil Postman (see 2006), whose view seems popular especially among the religious and clerical elites. According to him, religion belongs to the cultural world dominated communications-wise by the word (Greek *logos*), the conveyor of logical discourse, idea, thought, and of the rational. On the contrary, contemporary media belong to the image world (Greek *eikon*), characteristic of the emotional sphere, the irrational and thoughtless emotions. Logos, in particular in the form of writing and print, is the cornerstone of high-brow culture and the world of the sublime spirit. By contrast, low-brow culture or entertainment and play is based on images. Contemporary media, with images as their element, are a great entertainment factor, where religion, too, is naturally adjusted to their format and thus simplified, mystified and perverted.

> Everything that makes religion an historic, profound and sacred human activity is stripped away; there is no ritual, no dogma, no tradition, no theology, and above all, no sense of spiritual transcendence (*ibid.*: 116-117).

Avery Dulles, a US Jesuit appointed cardinal by John Paul II in 2001, put forward his own version of Postman's position:

> Many of the difficulties between the church and the press can be explained if one takes account of the nature of the church's message and the communicative powers of journalism. The two are, I believe, in necessary tension (1994).

This is because what is the core of the Church is respectable, sublime and holy, while media by their very nature are iconoclastic and tend to focus on evil things – bad news is good news. The Church proclaims what is aged and was revealed centuries ago, while media seek what is new and can be sold as news. The arguments used by the Church in matters of faith and morality are often complex, subtle, multifaceted, and simply difficult, while media have a predilection for what is easy, simple and free of nuances. The message of the Church promotes harmony and peace, whereas media are interested in conflict, struggle and discord. At bottom, the Church is propelled by the invisible and spiritual, while media feed on the visible, eye-catching and sensational.

The destructive cultural, religious, ethical and moral ramifications of the dominance of images and the marginalization of words in contemporary media has for years been the conviction of Polish bishop, Adam Lepa, former Chairman of the Commission for Communications Media of the Conference of Polish Bishops, and in 1989 appointed to the European Bishops' Media Commission. Here are some of the adverse consequences: "inability to build community (with others)," "an impassive attitude to the major problems of the human being and humanity's dramas (misfortunes and disasters, family tragedies, etc.)," "a gradual dissipation of sensitivity," "a callousness of the viewer in the deepest layers of his or her identity," "arrest of creative activity," "deficit of empathy," "a consciousness … removed from reality and therefore false," "a passive attitude," "anti-religious actions resulting in apostasy" (see 2003: 80-88). Bishop Lepa's statements, similar to those of Postman, give the impression that the advent of iconic media struck the earth with a previously unknown ailment, as if the time of the dominant word, be it verbal, written and printed, was free from impassivity in the face of people's tragedies and dramas, callousness, deficits of empathy, heresy and religious apostasy. Suffice it to mention in response to the above that the promoters of religious wars from the past, the apostles of crusades, witch hunters, and council fathers who relegated whole communities of the heathen to hell, popes and theologians condemning unchristened children or the inquisitors neither watched television nor surfed the Internet. The "Postman School" uses far too many general quantifiers. More importantly, it lacks the methodological humility in the face of the short period of existence of mass media or new new media. The technological and institutional revolution in the media world has taken place for too short a time to apply to it in scientific media studies the stylistics of the evangelical speech: "yes, yes – no, no."

The arguments put forth by A. Dulles are equally unconvincing. After all, we can imagine and actually *do* know media, including those of mass communication, their programs, projects or films, where religion is treated and shown in a manner reflecting all that is respectable, sublime and holy in it. Suffice it to mention here online portals and websites of Church institutions such as the Vatican or bishops' conferences of individual countries, religious televisions, broadcasts of Holy Mass and church events, etc. Bishop Lepa himself is one of those in Poland who demand most vociferously the exercise of the right of Trwam Television, an iconic religious medium founded by Catholic clergymen, to become part of a digital broadcasting multiplex. Technological, editorial, ideological and world view plurality is a characteristic feature of present-day media, whether old, new or new new. Perhaps it is precisely this plurality that counters the contention of

the natural – *de iure* – tension between media and religion, which does not need to mean, however, that present-day media are but innocent tools and exclusively instruments in our hands. The problem is that it is this instrumental treatment of the media that is characteristic of the documents issued by the headquarters of the Catholic Church in Rome.

MEDIA IN THE EYES OF THE VATICAN

In his 1991 Message for the 25th World Communications Day *Communications Media and the Unity and Progress of the Human Family* John Paul II wrote as follows: "The communications media are "lifeless instruments" (*mezzi inanimati*)" (1991). It is interesting to observe the ironclad consistency with which the Vatican highlighted the instrumental perception of media. The communications media were addressed in the same spirit in 2000 by Archbishop John Patrick Foley, the then President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications. He did this first in his book *God in the Global Village*:

> Each new technology is always but a technology. Each new tool is but a tool. Television is a medium by means of which one can do a lot of good or a lot of evil. Television, is at our service like other tools, provided we use them responsibly … be it a book, the Internet, television, radio, or newspaper. All depends on how we will make use of the medium (2002: 17 and 109).

That same year the archbishop signed a document of his Council titled *Ethics in the Communications Media*, where we read among others:

> The media do nothing by themselves; they are instruments, tools, used as people choose to use them. […] But despite their immense power, the means of communication are, and will remain, only media – that is to say: instruments, tools, available for both good and evil uses. The choice is ours (2000: no. 4, 28).

In themselves, tools are neither good nor bad; they are axiologically neutral yet can be used for good or evil purposes. The Pontifical Council again: the media

> are not blind forces of nature beyond human control. […] People choose whether to use the media for good or evil ends, in a good or evil way (*ibid.*: no. 1).

A religious message in the communications media may do a lot of good or a lot of harm to religions. It does a disservice to religion when e.g. it unreliably presents the doctrine, symbols, rites, practices, law, theology, and ethic codes of a particular religion. On the contrary, it is of immense value when it does the above reliably.

We may take a closer look at three of the key factors of the instrumental model of perceiving the media–religion relation. First of all, all things religious are understood here in narrow terms, as historically and institutionally stable religions which use fixed, "ready-made," principally invariable doctrines, theologies, authority, rites, practices, law, and ethic codes. Such a perception of religion allows one to easily establish whether or not a particular religion-related media message does justice to religion. This is because it is more or less clear what can or cannot be adulturated: the content of a "ready-made" doctrine, theology, worship, etc. Second of all, a religion-related media message is unidirectional: it is fed by means of media chanells to recipients and attains its target when it does so in the meaning assumed by the broadcaster. Third of all, under the instrumental approach media and religions are treated as autonomous and independent "entities," separated by a chasm or a wall; they are "entities" which may, but do not need to interact. They do interact when they wish to do it, when e.g. a secular broadcaster decides to televise a religious program or when a religious broadcaster decides on a religion-related media message.

The above model has serious drawbacks. By far the most fundamental of them is that it perceives religion and media as lonely islands or autonomous beings. In fact, however, media and religion are two of the many sectors, parts or dimensions of culture, such as societies, people and nations, their languages, custom and tradition, education, policies, economies, arts, ethics, means of social communication, religions, etc. None of them operate in isolation, independent of one another. On the contrary, willingly or otherwise, they incessantly overlap, interact with and impact one another. They are interconnected rain or shine in multidirectional direct and mediated relations and reactions. This huge, complex, diversified, and dynamic historical process of interaction is a living culture and constitutes an ever changing, developing, evolving cultural environment of human life.

Contemporary media play a special role among the sectors which make up culture in their diverse multidirectional interactions; after all the other sectors communicate and interlink via media. The sectors themselves and the relations between them are mediated by and dependent on the communications media, which provide "a primary language of shared, cultural experience through stories, images and ideas" (L. Schofield Clark 1998). Nevertheless, their relations with the media – let us stress it again – are not unidirectional and do not proceed

from media towards them. The operation of the media and all the other culture sectors takes place in the network of multidirectional interdependencies and mutual influence, and the media–religion relation can be singled out within this network exclusively theoretically, which at the starting point is a methodological truncation, simplification, distortion, and impoverishment of reality. "The media are … a primary language for meaning, thanks to which "religion" is experienced, comprehended and made meaningful on the part of those in traditional religious contexts" (L. Schofield Clark 1998). The language of the media, which has a dominant impact on popular culture today, is taken up by religions, influences them, co-determines religious experience, the language of religion, consciousness and subconsciousness. Under the influence of the media religion, or more broadly all things religious, transform and acquire a new meaning, are fed by new and changing questions and problems, joys and concerns. In addition, institutional and non-institutional forms of faith change and new ones are born. In the media age religion/faith is subject to a complex transformation process, which we are merely trying to recognize and learn today. I will come back to this issue later on.

All of the above does not mean that only the media has changed religion; religion has changed the media, too (see S. M. Hoover 2006; 2008).

> They [media] actually *interact* with religion in ways that are changing both the media *and* religion (S. M. Hoover 2012: 3).

In this respect let me only say that the very presence of religious issues and events in the press, radio, television, or on websites and in social networking sites changes the media and impacts them. It goes without saying also that religions, "living" within the media, adjust to their technical, stylistic and inherent specifics but also, by analogy, the media readjust to cater to the unique character of religions and the things religious. By way of example, we may refer at this point to the media coverage of 9/11 (see Hoover 2012: 3 and 4). In this respect the most important of the many events in Poland will be John Paul's pilgrimages to his homeland and then the last day of his life which, we can safely say, rocked the media on many grounds, both as to content and as to their formal, technical and format-related aspects. People of the media learned first-hand, before the very eyes of the viewers and not without problems and mistakes, to cover religious events and issues, speak about them and show them in the communications media. Not only, then, are media a challenge for religion; conversely, religions and faiths constitute a challenge for media, in particular for journalist media.

NEW CONDITIONS OF FAITH

Benedict XVI wrote in his Message for the 43rd World Communications Day:

> The new digital technologies are, indeed, bringing about fundamental (*fondamentali*) shifts in patterns of communication and human relationships. These changes are particularly evident among those young people who have grown up with the new technologies and are at home in a digital world that often seems quite foreign to those of us who, as adults, have had to learn to understand and appreciate the opportunities it has to offer for communications (2009).

The pontiff's statement seems patently obvious, but it has problems reaching the consciousness of the Church and her practical life and is not readily translated into inculturation strategies, catechesis and evangelization programs, ways of administering the sacraments, pastoral outreach methods, theological interpretations, forms of proclaiming the Good News, and methods of governance and being a teaching authority. The difficulties in question arise not only from the fact that the fundamental decisions about the life of the Church are taken – to refer to Benedict XVI's words – exclusively by adult males. They are also dependent on the fact that the Church perceives and treats the media instrumentally. Still, if present-day revolutionary changes in media technologies trigger changes of fundamental models of interpersonal communications and relations, they must perforce relate to religious communications and religious interpersonal relations. This reflection provokes questions that are significant for the life and future of the Church: "How deep are and will be the changes at the level of religious life? Which areas, levels and aspects of religious life are affected by these changes? To what extent and how the changing media technologies and new means of communication may foster religious life, and how are they detrimental to it? What are the changes in religions and faith that determine, trigger, support, and foster them and which slow down, block, frustrate, and hinder them? What is the profit-and-loss account in this respect of traditional religions? How do they impact the comprehension of notions such as God, death or sin and the experience of the reality they stand for?"

The rapid and seemingly limitless revolution of media technologies makes answers to the above questions lag behind the ongoing changes, which incessantly generate new problems and questions. It is hardly surprising that the replies are incomplete,

temporary and fluid, even if some consider them as definitive, immutable and unquestionable. This unique never-ending "headlong rush" of questions and answers that try to catch up with ever new changes in the world of media, greatly cuts short the time necessary for a proper discernment of the new situation, for reflection and development of an adequate methodology and an adequate language. In a conversation with Antonio Spadaro Pope Francis observed:

> This discernment takes time. For example, many think that changes and reforms can take place in a short time. I believe that we always need time to lay the foundations for real, effective change. And this is the time of discernment (A. Spadaro 2013).

The problem is that time is continually shrinking in the media world and that… time is scarce and the virtue of patience is out of place here. Problems with an objective discernment of the transformation processes is additionally complicated by the fact that those who put the questions and seek answers are in the midst of the world of ongoing changes. Importantly, media studies increasingly demonstrate that the transformations in the area of media technologies trigger and determine anthropological and cultural changes that are more profound and more fundamental than those on the communication level only. This approach to the media is taken in particular by the literacy theory, which addresses the ramifications of the historical transformation of the oral society into a literate one.[4]

Studies of the culture of writing and the oral culture trigger an observation that communications systems

> should be seen not as autonomous instruments, isolated settings, albeit of a high degree of perfection… but because of their comprehensive impact on the human being and his

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[4] The foundations of this theory were laid by Marshall McLuhan (*Zrozumieć media. Przedłużenie człowieka*, transl. N. Szczucka, Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Naukowo-Techniczne, 2004), Eric A. Havelock [*Preface to Plato*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963], Jack Goody and Ian Watt ["The Consequences of Literacy," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 5/3, Cambridge University Press 1963, pp. 304-345] as well as Walter J. Ong [*Orality and Literacy. The Technologizing of the Word*], London–New York: Routledge, 2012). The history and subsequent progress of the Theory of Literacy are addressed by Grzegorz Godlewski (*Słowo – pismo – sztuka słowa. Perspektywy antropologiczne*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2008).

culture. The living word and writing as well as successive, advanced media, are not only autonomous forms of communications that trigger unique communications behaviors and practices, but also generate their unique roles and cultural institutions. Moreover, they model the very foundations of culture: starting from culturally conditioned principles of perception, cognition and thinking, through patterns of interpersonal relations and ties, to the principles of organization of collective life. Radiating towards all the above spheres, the communications media, which in this approach would be better called cultural media, are in fact capable of generating holistic culture types (G. Godlewski 2006: 11-12).

On the basis of field studies in Africa, Jack Goody, a UK anthropologist, demonstrated in his book *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society* (2006 [1986]) the fundamental difference between the organization of the oral/illiterate society and the society of writing, a difference that becomes apparent at the level of state, economic, legal, and religious life. Let me refer briefly to the last category.

Oral religions, whose past, continuity and identity are principally contingent on the elusive and fallible memory only, are local in character and do not wish to expand and convert other people. They are eclectic and flexibly adjust their beliefs and practices, going as far as to radically transform or actually "annihilate" some of their myths, adjusting them to the changing situations and circumstances. A different thing happens in the literate religions, which preserve and cherish identity, past and continuity in the strong "memory" in their books, especially in the Holy Scriptures, treasures of the Divine word, which, when written down, seem immutable and eternal.

In the literate churches, the dogma and services are rigid (that is, dogmatic, ritualistic, orthodox) by comparison; the creed is recited word for word, the Tables of the Lord learnt by heart, the ritual repeated in a verbatim fashion. If change takes place, it often takes the form of a break-away movement (the verb 'break away' is used for sects that separate from the mother church; the process is deliberately reformist, even revolutionary, rather then the process of incorporation that tends to mark the oral situation (Goody 1986: 9-10).

In the literate Churches flexibility and eclecticism are supplanted by orthodoxy, which at any point may invoke the valorizing criterion of

truth forever fixed in the scripture, which as such becomes universal and common. Hence the literate religions are missionary and aim at converting others to the right and proper path of faith. Priests, guards and principal interpreters of the Holy Scriptures due to their knowledge of writing, play a special role in these religions. In Christianity the Latin term *clerici*, or "clergy," was for whole centuries synonymous with the term *litterati*, "the literate," contrasted with the *illiterati*, or illiterate secular plebs who did not know writing.

From an anthropological perspective, the historical transition from the era of primary orality towards the era of writing in the theory of literacy is a paradigm of a holistic cultural transformation in a society which changes the media dominant of communications. According to Walter J. Ong, a US Jesuit, there are successive periods in the history of the human race, i.e. that of the culture of primary orality, alive prior to the invention of writing, then the culture of writing, in time enhanced by the culture of print, and finally the present-day culture of the audiovisual and multimedia. All of them, based on the communicative dominance of a particular medium (word, writing, print, or image) linked with an adequate sensory system, have each their unique psychodynamics and develop their specific mental and cognitive patterns, generating characteristic types of culture (1992). The culture of primary orality is audial, with the dominant sense of hearing – this culture was a fertile soil of religious life and reigned at a time of a fully "enchanted" world.

Following the era of primary orality, the culture of writing is dominated as to communication by the sense of eyesight. Still, this is no emotional and empathic "image-related" or "iconic" eyesight which perceives whole shapes of things and figures of animate and inanimate nature and the world of culture; it focuses exclusively on the form of one product of human culture, i.e. letters. This is a "linear" eyesight which seems to be following a line: letter after letter, word after word, sentence after sentence, conducive to an "analytical and intellectual" and "hierarchical" thinking (since written texts, especially printed ones, have a hierarchical structure, e.g. are composed of parts, chapters, subchapters, etc.). In western history this was a time of processes and phenomena of "disenchanting" the world, somewhat cumbersome for religious life.

In turn, the audiovisual culture of multimedia sees the return of the audial, even if of a different type. This is the tele-audial, hearing irrespective of the distance, without the earlier need for temporal and spatial communications immediacy. A new kind of the visual emerges in the audiovisual culture. It is the tele-visual, seeing without the need for direct communication. In this era we deal with the dominance of two senses simultaneously, i.e. the sense of hearing and sight. This sight has previously unknown qualities and incorporates in various proportions

"iconicity" and "linearity" – according to Ong's nomenclature this is a culture of secondary orality. A question arises whether the "enchantment" of the contemporary world is not based precisely on the return in communications of the audial and the encounter of the senses of hearing and sight which played such a significant role in the "enchanted" culture of primary orality. Secondary orality, however, does not copy primary orality; the former is by its nature a mediatized culture of writing and is based on the culture of writing.

The phenomena, processes and mechanisms of "enchanting" the world in the audiovisual culture of multimedia acquire their characteristic shapes and character. To my mind, the fundamental task of the people of the Church is to try and recognize and comprehend them, get to know the paths, meanders and secrets of contemporary "enchantment," define in it the position of Christian spirituality, religious practices, faith and the Church, find an adequate inculturation key responsive to the transformation processes or even, given the dynamism of the transformations, more than one inculturation key. The above matters are important since the psychodynamic and mental and cognitive properties and elements of the culture of secondary orality, to stick to Ong's terminology, generate present-day conditions for religious life. These are the conditions that people live in and believe in God, in Jesus Christ and the Church. It seems that they can be entered on Taylor's list of preconditions of belief, indicating a situation "where new forms of spirituality appear and where people discover a sense of the Christian faith: they can arrive at faith because it somehow makes sense for them" (2010; see 2007: 3-4 and the chapter *Conditions of Belief*).

MEDIA-RELATED INCULTURATION

The aforementioned religious critique of contemporary media is often underpinned by a nostalgia for the past of Christianity without blemish, an ideal, or the *societas perfecta*. The past, especially the very origins of the Church and the Middle Ages, are seen as a "paradise lost," when the world was to be Christian, the Church, faith and religious practices flourished and the faithful participated en masse in liturgy and religious practices. In general, all was supposedly better in the past, unlike in our godless time, when the world enters deeper and deeper the cave of evil, relativism and nihilism, primarily due to the fault of the media. However, as historical studies demonstrate, a Christian "paradise" on Earth has never actually existed, even at the time of the New Testament. This is evident in the epistles of St. Paul, who admonishes many a community for wanton conduct, a lack of religious zest and errors in the faith. Successive periods were no better.

Prior to the Edict of Milan of 313 AD which introduced religious freedom in the Roman Empire and ushered in a bond between state and Church, Christians made up less than one percent of global population. Under the novel circumstances, when Christianity became a state religion, new kinds of

> membership in the Church [emerged], which were underpinned not only by individuals' beliefs but factored in all kinds of oppression, calculation and convention. St. Augustine observes that the inhabitants of the north-African town of Hippo in the 4th c. did not attend services regularly and bemoans the fact that a large group of people go to church only on more important religious feasts (J.A. van der Ven 2001: 189).

Things did not improve much in the Middle Ages. In reality the image of ideal Christianity of the period developed in full in the second half of the 19th century and in the first half of the following one. It was a concept and a weapon brandished by those people of the Church who – in defense against anti-Christian socio-political trends, such as liberalism and socialism – had hoped to recreate in the West an ideal society of those who believe in Christ still before the end of the second millennium.

> The modern trends, expressed by the motto of the French revolution: "liberty, equality, fraternity," were treated as the source of religious apathy, agnosticism, pantheism, and atheism, which grew ever more widespread. In order to fight off those tendencies, the medieval image of [...] a "paradise lost" was fostered in the hope it might fulfill the role of the utopia of a "paradise regained" […]. Secularization may be seen as a failure of the offensive of Christianization, which for the first time since the onset of modernity was taken up jointly by the Protestant Churches and the Catholic Church." Ultimately we come to the conclusion that "secularization is nothing else but the collapse of the religion of the elite rather than a popular religion, which has for a long time been less Christian" (J.A. van der Ven 2001: 189-191).

This is precisely the situation of the Church today, in a world which is subject to "enchantment" within the audiovisual multimedia culture. By way of example, Fr. Władysław Piwowarski, a sociologist of religion from the Catholic University of Lublin, used to say in reference to the

"Catholic" Poland[5] of the last two decades of the 20th century that two-thirds of Poles are "unknowing heretics" (1984: 31; see also 1992), his words being a conclusion of studies on the faith of Polish Catholics in the dogmas of the Church[6]. A question arises whether the inculturation strategies of the Church as to catechesis and evangelization pay due attention to and factor in this state of "unknowing heresy" of a large number of the Church's members and whether they cater for it. It seems that the "heretics" – is it a group limited solely to the laity? – make up one more group of the faithful apart from the two proposed by Taylor, i.e. dwellers and seekers. "Unknowing heretics" do not belong to the former group as they do not believe that all is clearly and adequately defined in the Church and that one simply needs to faithfully observe this (see G. F. McLean 2010: 1). "Heretics" do not seem to fit the latter group, either, since it is hard to agree that they were from the start deeply-rooted in the Church and that their faith is profoundly influenced by the spirituality of saints such as Teresa, Ignatius and Francis de Sales (Ch. Taylor 2012: 18).

Inculturation strategies, both as to catechesis and evangelization, and the daily reality of religion, let us reiterate, should assume and take into account the existence in the Church of a large group of "unknowing heretics," rather than reminisce the good old times. Moreover, the strategies and daily life have to assume, take into account and respond to the trends and directions of changes that affect religions in the media age and because of the media. We mean here institutional and non-institutional religion of all the faithful without exceptions, lay and clergy, the groups of "unknowing heretics" as well as "dwellers" and "seekers." We are all without exceptions the children of the media age, even if we are affected by and subordinated to them to a different extent and in a different intensity.

The current anthropological and sociological religious and media studies identify certain tendencies in the world of religion and suggest

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[5] On the threshold of the third millennium 96% of Poles said they believed in God. The vast majority admitted they were Catholics. 58% of Poles attended Holy Mass at least once a week (see Z. Nosowski, "Czy Polska jest (jeszcze) krajem katolickim?," *Więź*, 5 (2005).

http://laboratorium.wiez.pl/teksty.php?czy_polska_jest_jeszcze_krajem_katolickim&p=3 (access date: 27 February 2014).

[6] Statistical research conducted in Poland in the early 21st c. showed that, for instance, "a mere 72% of Poles believe in the existence of heaven, 41% – of hell, 66% – in the resurrection; while 75% use contraception and 68% accept premarital sex. Sometimes the number of people who believe in the divinity of Christ are lower than those who believe that Virgin Mary gave birth to God…" (Z. Nosowski, "Czy Polska jest (jeszcze) krajem katolickim?").

the directions of its evolution and change in the future (see B. S. Turner 2010; S.M. Hoover 2006 and 2008; H.A. Campbell 2012; P.H. Cheong, P. Fisher-Nielsen, S. Gelfgren, C. Ess 2012; L. Christoffersen, H.R. Iversen, H. Petersen, M. Warburg, 2013). These are the most significant and still fluid development lines of religion in the audiovisual multimedia culture: we currently deal with a crisis of traditional religious authority; faith decentralizes and becomes democratic; religious spirituality commercializes and becomes eclectic and hybridized; religious and spiritual diversity and plurality becomes a fact; rational arguments lose their potency in religious life for the sake of the irrational, emotional and empathic. More and more important in religious life is a special kind of individualism and subjectivism, which seems to be accompanied by a new understanding of the community; oftentimes the image of a transcendent God is rejected for the sake of Divine immanence.

While in the foundation period of religion, the time of revelation, communication was vertical, hierarchic, uniform, and authoritative, in the era of new media communications acts and actions tend to be horizontal, diverse and fragmentary and the authority of the messages conveyed is "constantly negotiable," which can be seen in public in innumerable places of the new media, especially on the Internet.

> The modern growth of diverse foci of interpretation in a global communication system has produced a general crisis of authority at least in the formal system of religious belief and practice (Turner 2010: 17).

The authority of leaders, guides, institutions, traditions, norms, dogmas, and religious doctrines is being eroded, as is trust towards them. The importance of clergy for the development of the faith of the faithful and their religious practice is on the wane.

> In the establishment religions in the West, in Islam, in Buddhism, and even the conservative religions of American evangelicalism adherents are less and less loyal to the directives of clerics, doctrines and histories (Hoover 2008: 5).

Present-day media contribute to the increased importance of individualism and subjectivism (see S. Grotowska 1999). "In the new individualism, people invent their own religious ideas giving rise to the new forms of spirituality. The result has been a social revolution flowing from both consumerism and individualism" (Turner: 18). Styles of religious life are patterned on consumer habits: individuals try out

religions and sample them the way they sample fashion. In turn, new industries cater to such religious needs, which leads to the emergence of new spiritual and religious practices; interestingly, believers see no discrepancy between faith and consumerism.

The culture of the new media identifies processes that lead to the democratization of information and as a result to the democratization of religion. This is a result of e.g. interactive properties of contemporary media which obliterate the distinction between the sender and the addressee. Those who in the era of old media were allowed to merely receive unidirectional messages and communications without interfering into their content, can now freely assume the roles of senders (websites, blogs, social networking sites, YouTube, etc.). Individuals (more or less consciously) assume responsibility for their religious life, hence the variety and plurality of spirituality and faith. "Pluralism is recognized as a process which affects the consciousness of an individual and consists in the fact that religion loses its objective status, which is in large measure a matter of views and preferences" (S. Grotowska 1999: 73).

The present-day crisis of the authority of religious leaders, traditions and doctrines triggers a tendency towards religious hybrydity, fragmentariness, short life, and eclecticism, which is fuelled by the globalization processes and the possibility of borrowing ideas from different religions and spiritualities within a hand's reach in a global "supermarket." The religion of individuals becomes a "mixture" of elements, images, symbols, practices, and truths found at one's own responsibility in the communications media outside one's own religions, or even outside the religious world.

> From an orthodox perspective, such hybridity also appears to be iconoclastic. We live increasingly in a communication environment: where images and symbols play a more important role in public life than the written word. This visual world is therefore iconic rather than one based on a written system, and this iconic world requires new skills and institutions that no longer duplicate the hierarchies and institutions of the written world (Turner: 18).

According to some scholars, the intensification of individualism and subjectivism today triggers an erosion of communal religious life. Others, however, speak about the birth of new communities that may be aptly defined by terms such as "tribe" or "tribalization," as prophesied by Marshall McLuhan (2001: 327-384). Michel Maffesoli, an anthropologist from France, in his book *The Time of the Tribes* from the late 1980s openly proclaimed *The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society* (1996). Today we can hear about new tribes that "inhabit" social

networking sites and discussion forums and about websites subscribed to by people who share interests, passions, beliefs, etc. It seems that new kinds of communities, including religious ones, slowly emerge in the multimedia audiovisual culture.

PROVOCATIVE QUESTIONS

While religious practices in the media age tend towards plurality and diversity, their different types share an increasing conviction that God's nature is not transcendent, as in the traditional approach, but immanent. Moreover, God is seen as an impersonal and amorphous entity (see Pawluczuk 2004: 91; see J. Mariański 2010: 208-209).

Johannes A. van der Ven, a Dutch sociologist of religion and theologian indicates that empirical research shows that the image of God changes profoundly in the postmodern society, such as the Dutch one. The scientist identified four characteristic directions of change in this respect (see J. A. van der Ven 2001: 195-215):

1. The most significant change is that "the image of an absolutely transcendent God is rejected outright." God is no longer seen as the direct and directional cause of events in the life of an individual, community and the natural world. Instead, God is assumed to be immanent or is experienced as an inherent transcendence. The other side of this transformation is a suspicious treatment or outright rejection of such traditionally theological metaphors as "Providence," "Divine intervention," "God's omnipotence," "God's destiny," or even "God's action," especially that the God of these metaphors is traditionally defined via symbols of hierarchic, monarchic and patriarchal authority.

2. At present, when Christianity has ceased to be a force that unites society, we observe a reemergence of belief in spiritual and supernatural powers: "old gods have left their graves and have become actively present." This means that God is no longer a decision-making center for people and the world in the sense of monocentrism: "the divine has become polycentric."

3. As van der Ven observes, the above two "characteristic features of contemporary Christianity" are linked to a third one: we are increasingly positive about the impersonal nature of God.

4. Finally, the belief in the impersonal God "gradually leads to the acceptance of an a-iconic nature of God," which can be summarized as: "I believe in God yet do not perceive Him in any particular way" or "I have devoted my child/ren to God and this is important for me, but do not ask me what it means."

Significantly, the four characteristic changes in the perception of God were adopted in relevant research also by some members of the Catholic Church, even practicing ones[7] and we may safely assume that Fr. W. Piwowarski would include them all into the category of "unknowing heretics."

The new situation triggers new questions for theology and the traditional perception of God of the Christian faith. Van der Ven himself puts forth such questions in reference to each of the above changes. His questions are both provocative and thought-provoking. Their type, style and importance are evident already in reference to the first, fundamental change: the disappearance of the image of a transcendent God for the sake of an immanent God. Let me confine myself here to these questions only:

> Is there any theological reason to sustain this [transcendent] image of God? […] We should asks ourselves whether the metaphors ["God's interference," "God's omnipotence," "God's action" – J. M.] in the empirical sense, i.e. in line with human experience, can be so intensively identified with God's absolute transcendence that they stand in the way of the mystery of God's immanent transcendence, which seems characteristic of the transformation of contemporary faith […]? […] Is it possible to come up with an interpretation of God's transcendence so that His immanence would not negate or oppose His transcendence, or even be a kind of critique of it [?]. Wouldn't it be proper […] not to use traditional metaphors of Divine providence in a specific way […], without a loss to the economy of His gift […]? Wouldn't it be more proper to refer to God's influence rather than about His action?" (pp. 198-199).

Van der Ven's questions are both provocative and thought-provoking. They fit perfectly well the transformations taking place in the media age as to faith in God, religion and religious practice. For all intents and purposes, the transformations are radical and, hardly surprisingly, trigger equally radical questions. There is no use taking offence at reality, censuring it and rejecting it with the problems it provokes, which is sometimes the response applied in the Church. At

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[7] For instance, as to the last aspect, the belief in the a-iconic nature of God was expressed by the entire representative group of subjects, students of Catholic schools: an average of 3.1 points on a five-point scale; a subgroup of students who admitted that they were religious had an average of 3.7.

any rate, it is clear that theology, unlike anthropological and social science, has yet to open up the gates of its reflection to the media. The changes taking place in the era of the audiovisual multimedia culture and the attendant questions and problems should be treated rather as a chance, opportunity and inspiration, albeit difficult, for a rethinking of the traditional perception of God, religion and faith.

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CHAPTER IV

CONCEPTUAL DISJUNCTIONS AS A CHALLENGE FOR THE CHURCH: A COGNITIVE LINGUIST'S PERSPECTIVE

ALEKSANDER GOMOLA

COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS AND RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

In the first volume of *Disjunctions in a Secular Age* Charles Taylor, posing the question how the Church speaks to the people of the West today, points to the fact – among other things – that the reason why so many seekers seem to be discouraged from what the Church is offering them lies in the language the Church uses to express its message. Taylor's perspective is that of a historian and a sociologist and he explains this lack of communication between the postmodern secular world and the Church referring to the dramatic social and cultural changes that took place in the West in 1960s and earlier.[1] I would like to take up the problem of language of the Church, especially in its kerygma and preaching, and expand it from the perspective of a cognitive linguist. More specifically, I would like to address the problem to what extent conceptualizations of the Christian doctrine, being part of the language the Church uses both *ad extra* turning to seekers and *ad intra* in the liturgy or preaching, correspond with the mental frameworks of the secular, post-Enlightenment minds of Westerners shaped by the natural sciences.

The post-Cartesian perspective that is still present in modern thinking makes us take for granted the radical separation of body and mind ignoring the fact that as humans we are actually "embodied minds" and whatever we learn and grasp of the reality is accessible to us only through our bodily experience. This neglected truth was obvious to medieval Christian thinkers including Thomas Aquinas, who wrote that "it is natural to man to attain to intellectual truths through sensible objects, because all our knowledge originates from sense. Hence in Holy Writ, spiritual truths are fittingly taught under the likeness of material

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[1] Charles Taylor, "The Church Speaks: To Whom," *Church and People: Disjunctions in a Secular Age. Christian Philosophical Studies*. Vol. 1, edited by Charles Taylor, José Casanova and George F. McLean (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2012), p. 17.

things."[2] The principle of "embodiment" is also the basis of modern cognitive sciences including cognitive linguistics. According to cognitive linguistics, all abstract ideas expressed by means of language are conceptualized on the basis of our bodily and social experience as humans.

Cognitive linguistics stresses the inherent relation between the way we perceive reality and how we verbalize our knowledge of the world. Cognitive linguists repeat after Wittgenstein that "limits of my language mean the limits of my world" and rephrase his words adding that language speakers use to describe and conceptualize the world (including everything abstract in it) decides how they eventually understand it. In other words, such an abstract idea as time may be understood in terms of a fluid (time "flows") or a line along which events are located ("timeline"). Similarly, the most abstract of all ideas, such as that of God, has to be conceptualized in terms that will be comprehensible for believers and related to their experience.

That the way abstract ideas are conceptualized may affect people's attitudes and have serious social and political consequences is well-known. It is confirmed both by Victor Klemperer's study of the language of propaganda of the totalitarian Third Reich and by the works on language of politics of democratic America by George Lakoff.[3] That the problem of conceptualization of God lies in the centre of human experience may be also confirmed by the recent Vatican document on Christian monotheism.[4] The observations concerning language made by cognitive linguists are therefore valid and insightful with reference to the Church and that is why Mary Therese DesCamp and Eve Sweetser point out that "if a liturgy is intended to help worshippers reach an appropriate state of mind for spiritual relationship with God it is important to

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[2]   Thomas   Aquinas,   *Summa   Theologiae*,   I,   q   1   a   9, http://www.newadvent.org/summa/1001.htm.

[3] Victor Klemperer, *Language of the Third Reich* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2006); George Lakoff, *The Political Mind* (Penguin Books, 2009); G. Lakoff, *Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Vision*, (Farrar: Strauss and Giroux, 2006).

[4] The document prepared by the International Theological Commission and entitled *God the Trinity and the unity of humanity. Christian monotheism and its opposition to violence* is an official reply of the Church on accusations that monotheistic vision of God leads to religious conflicts and wars. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_ 20140117_monoteismo-cristiano_en.html#PRELIMINARY_NOTE.

consider what we know about the human mind, and how it may be affected by particular kinds of input."[5]

Cognitive linguistics underlines the fact that all our statements concerning abstract ideas such as God, conscience, moral life, etc., are conceptualizations created by and filtered through our embodiment and our individual and social experiences. This means that these conceptualizations may change in time and depend on the culture that creates and deploys them. They will also highlight some aspects of what speakers wish to express ignoring some other aspects. Therefore, from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, in order to understand or to express an abstract idea better, it is more useful to use a greater number of more varied conceptualizations, since a single conceptualization while highlighting a certain aspect of an abstract idea overshadows some other aspects at the same time. For example, conceptualizing God as father stresses God's authority yet does not express God's caring love satisfactorily enough since due to our biology and social experience we more often and more directly experience mother's caring love than that of father's. That is why we associate father figure with authority and mother figure with caring love.

What was said above means also that whenever cognitive linguists use the term "metaphor" with reference to religious language, including language of the Christian kerygma and preaching, they do not use the term in the traditional Aristotelian sense according to which a metaphor is a kind of linguistic ornament and that it is possible to express some ideas non-metaphorically ("Achilles is brave") and metaphorically ("Achilles is a lion"). Rather, the approach taken by cognitive linguistics with reference to God corresponds closely with what we learn from classical theology: "whatever we say of God is metaphorical" in the sense that it is not possible to predicate anything about God or attribute to God any qualities in the same way it is predicated about the creature. The term "metaphor" is also not related directly with the truth value of the religious statements, since cognitive linguistics stresses the fact that metaphors are not verifiable empirically and also the language of sciences is abundant with conceptualizations/metaphors without which it would not be possible to grasp any abstract ideas.[6]

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[5] Mary Therese DesCamp, Eve Sweetser, "Metaphors for God: Why and How Do Our Choices Matter for Humans? The Application of Contemporary Cognitive Linguistics Research to the Debate on God and Metaphor," *Pastoral Psychology.* Vol. 53. No. 3. January 2005, p. 207–208.

[6] Cf. "black hole," "superstring theory," "electro-magnetic/gravitational field," etc. "Metaphorical concepts are not limited to poetic flights of fancy but

OLD AND NEW CONCEPTUALIZATIONS IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE CHURCH

When Christianity was born, its revolutionary character manifested itself, among other things, through a series of attractive religious conceptualizations, so compelling to a potential convert that it took the Mediterranean world by storm. Among them there were the crucial conceptualization of God as Father and its extensions in Christian texts and theology[7] or depicting the relation of sinful humanity to God in terms of balancing of accounts, with Christ who "canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness" (Colossians 2: 14). We should also bear in mind that all those conceptualizations harmonized with pre-Copernican view of the world constituting a comprehensive and cohesive mental framework for Christians for many centuries.[8]

What was however once revolutionary, may become in time a cliché, and what was intended to communicate specific insights, may mean entirely different things while transferred to a different culture and time. The problem for Christianity today is whether the conceptualizations that permeate its texts, both the scriptures and theological works, still possess the same compelling potential they had in the past. Because even if what Christianity has to offer is still valid and attractive, what matters is whether it may be grasped by modern people in its traditional form. To borrow yet another biblical conceptualization, Christianity needs new wineskins for its wine.

Therefore the challenge Christianity is facing today may not be reduced to secularization processes or a rise of "new atheism" only. As regards atheism, Christianity had to confront it as early as in the fourth century or even earlier. For example Gregory of Nyssa in his treatise on

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are central and essential to our everyday thinking. Human beings need metaphor both to reason and to speak about time, causation, states, and other common abstract concepts," DesCamp, Sweetser, "Metaphors for God," p. 215. Actually cognitive linguistics uses the term "conceptual metaphor" to point to the fact, that all our thinking concerning abstract entities is metaphorical and conceptualizations in our language are simply manifestations/verbalizations of this thinking. See George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2nd edition 2003), p. 23.

[7] "Our Father," to whom we pray; Merciful Father in the Prodigal Son Parable; God as Father as one of conceptualizations of Persons of the Holy Trinity; all people as children of one Father –"that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" – Matthew 5: 45, etc.

[8] "Our Father who is in heaven; *Descensus Christi ad Inferos* (*Harrowing of Hell) in the Apostle's Creed*, etc.

the soul and the resurrection, makes his sister Macrina say the following words:

> For indeed I hear that Epicurus especially was led in this direction by his assumptions. He conceived the nature of beings to be fortuitous and automatic because he believed that there was no providence pervading events. In consequence therefore he thought that the human life was also like a bubble, inflated by some kind of breath from our body, as long as breath is held in by its container; but when the swollen bubble bursts, then the contents are extinguished along with it.[9]

Macrina's words are similar to opinions of many modern atheists. Yet in the ideological conflict between the ancient atheism and Christianity, the latter eventually won the day because – among other things – its conceptualizations provided better and more convincing framework than the ancient atheist thought. The question is whether today the Christian thought is going to be able to present itself by means of conceptualizations that will correspond with the worldview of natural sciences and the individual and social experience of both believers and seekers.

The problem of conceptualizations through which Christian ideas are expressed was for the first time addressed in the twentieth century by Rudolf Bultmann who wanted to separate claims of cosmological and mythic character from "objective" Christian teachings in the scriptures. Bultmann's approach was hermeneutical and theological, based on the belief, that it is possible to separate the mythic elements from non-mythic ones and to demythologize the scriptures. Our approach in this paper is more radical, because we claim that the overwhelming majority of the Christian teachings concerns abstract ideas that are necessarily conceptualized in linguistic phrases and expressions referring to specific aspects of human experience (God is Father, Christianity is Way – cf. Acts 9: 2; Christ is the Good Shepherd; sins are debts redeemed by Christ, etc.). We will not be separating then "myths" from what is "non-mythic" but rather look at some crucial conceptualizations to see whether they are understood by people in the same way they were understood two thousand years ago and whether they are still comprehensible to believers in the way they should be. The conceptualizations we would like to focus on are metaphors of God as

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[9] *Gregory of Nyssa*, *De anima*, trans. C. Roth, *On the Soul and the Resurrection* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), p. 31.

father, the relationship between God and creation and some notions connected with the history of salvation and moral theology.

OLD AND NEW CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF GOD

God conceptualized as father is the most important metaphor for God in Western Christianity. It is omnipresent in Church documents (the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* refers to God the Father 627 times), and it is deployed widely in liturgy and religious discourse. The metaphor is rarely used in the Hebrew Bible where it appears merely 11 times, while God the Father is mentioned in the New Testament more than 170 times, which means that this is a decidedly Christian metaphor.[10]

God as father metaphor is a derivative of the patriarchal Jewish culture where father was seen not only as a life-giver and a protector, but also as the one who decides about the death and life of his family. A Jewish father was *baal* or *adon* (the lord) to his wife and children (Gen 20, 3; 18, 12). If it was necessary, he might sell his own children as slaves or even condemn them to death (Ex 21, 7; Gen 42, 37). A family in Israel is also called *beyth ab* viz. "the house of father."[11] Similarly in the New Testament father is known as οἰκοδεσπότης ("the lord of the house").[12] Since father did not participate in everyday child care, the affective aspect of father's role was not as clear as it is today.[13] The prototypical Jewish father was strict and authoritarian, while the prototypical Jewish mother was sympathetic and tender.[14] Yet the most important role of father was that of a life-giver. The ancient biology saw a male as an active while a female as a passive factor in conception. Therefore biblical genealogies enumerate generally fathers (Gen 10; Matthew 1, 1–17; Luke 3, 23–38). The "term" father makes sense only with reference to the term "child/children." It presupposes an asymmetric relation of God with humankind in which humans are perceived as God's children which means that God protects them but it may mean at the same time some level of immaturity on their part.

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[10] Robert Hamerton-Kelly, "God the Father in the Bible and the Experience of Jesus. The State of the Question," *God as Father?* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981), pp. 95-102.

[11] Xavier Leon-Dufour (ed.), *Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Frederick, MD: Word Among Us Press, 1995), p. 340.

[12] Henri Daniel-Rops, *Daily Life in Palestine at the Time of Christ* (London: Phoenix Press, 2002), p. 180.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 97.

[14] John J. Pilch, "Parenting," *Handbook of Biblical Values*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), p. 147.

The conceptualization of God as father is the cornerstone of Christian doctrine without which it is not possible to approach the idea of Trinity in its classical understanding or the concept of salvation or Christian discourse in general. Although theologians warn us that seeing God as father must not mean ascribing God maleness, yet the overwhelming majority of the Christian iconography has been ignoring this for centuries depicting God-Father as an elder bearded male.[15] The category of maleness also comes to the surface when God is depicted as Israel's husband (Hos 2: 4; Ezk 23) or when Christ (not Jesus!) is presented as the bridegroom of the Church (2 Cor 11: 2–3; Eph 5: 25).

As the metaphor of God as father originated in a culture very different and very distant from ours, the question arises to what extent it remains convincing to modern Christians and potential converts and whether it carries with it the same meaning it had to the members of the early Christianity. The role of father in the Western societies has changed dramatically in the recent decades; what is more, a lot of children in the developed countries grow up in families with single mothers and do not see their fathers everyday or simply do not have good relations with them. All this means that once convincing metaphor of God as father may today convey values and connotations contrary to what it communicated in the past. Another aspect of God as father metaphor involves possible interpretation of God as an authoritarian and strict father. The problem of course is not new and many theologians have pointed out that the essential role of the Marian cult in Catholicism may be explained by the fact that compassionate and loving Virgin Mary is a counterbalance to God seen as a strict and authoritarian ruler and father. The Church Magisterium has also promoted for centuries other conceptualizations of God, stressing God's love to people. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Christ going back to Middle Ages and officially recognized by the Church in the nineteenth century, is an example of such conceptualization with regard to the Second Person of the Trinity. In the twentieth century two most prominent and related with examples of conceptualizing God as merciful father are John Paul II's encyclical *Dives in Misericordia* and devotion to Divine Mercy that grew from sister Faustyna Kowalska's mystical visions.

In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, three crucial aspects of father figure are highlighted: the fact that God is source of everything, God's authority, and God's love:

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[15] That some kind of maleness is ascribed to God is visible even in the English version of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* from which we learn that "God transcends the human distinction between the sexes. *He* is neither man nor woman: *he* is God" (239; italics – A.G.).

> By calling God 'Father', the language of faith indicates two
> main things: that God is the first origin of everything and
> transcendent authority; and that he is at the same time
> goodness and loving care for all his children.[16]

Associating the idea of origin only with fatherhood is not very
convincing in the light of modern science and reflects pre-scientific
Aristotelian biology that saw father as the only life giver while mother
simply as a "container" for his semen. Also identifying father's role first
of all with that of transcendent authority may be a difficult
conceptualization for those who either have/had authoritarian fathers or
who lack/ed a father figure at all because fathers are/were absent from
their lives. As to ascribing goodness and loving care first of all to father,
this is contrary to our everyday experience, as it was shown above, since
it is mother who is most often identified with such loving care.

The consequences of conceptualization of God as father may be
seen also in moral teaching of the Church concerning procreation, since
"called to give life, spouses share in the creative power and fatherhood
of God" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2367). In other words, an
act of procreation is enacting the Aristotelian role of God the Father as
life-giver. It also explains why the Catholic doctrine opposes *in
vitro* fertilization, since IVF separates the spousal union and act of
procreation itself, locating fatherhood of God outside marriage.

The problems with some aspects of the conceptualization of God
as Father presented above make us consider seriously the novel
conceptualizations of God proposed for example by the feminist
theology. If we put aside the radical trends of the feminist theology and
concentrate on these feminist theologians who wish to enrich and
complete traditional conceptualizations of God and not to remove them
altogether, we find some interesting proposals that may expand the way
we try to speak of God. A classic example of a comprehensive approach
to the problem of the conceptualization of God as father is a thorough
and classic study by Sister Elizabeth Johnson in which she presents
several alternative conceptualizations of God, among them God as
Mother[17].

Some might argue that such conceptualizations cannot be
accepted in the Christian discourse because they are not related in any
way to the Bible of the Christian tradition, but this is not true. The
feminist theologians remark that in several places in the Bible God is

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[16] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 239.
[17] Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist
Theological Discourse*, (New York: The Crossroad, 2002).

conceptualized in female terms as mother.[18] What is more, even the Hebrew language itself connects femininity and loving care since "the word for woman's womb and the word for 'compassion' are cognates, and are both related to the verb 'to show mercy' and to the adjective 'merciful'."[19] The most distinct and prominent conceptualization of God (Christ) as mother in the New Testament is Matthew 23: 37: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing." That this conceptualization was vivid and deployed in the Christian discourse and iconography is attested by a mosaic at Dominus Flevit Church on the Mount of Olives presenting a hen with the aureola around its head, symbolizing Christ. God as mother metaphor may be also found in writings of Christian theologians and mystics. Anselm of Canterbury addresses his prayers to Jesus-as-Mother[20] and Julian of Norwich calls Jesus 'our true Mother' and stresses in God the 'motherhood of love, a mother's love which never leaves us'".[21] Also the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, allows for that metaphor, when it reads: "God's parental tenderness can also be expressed by the image of motherhood, which emphasizes God's immanence, the intimacy between Creator and creature" (239).

Fatherhood of God involves also God's being omniscient and omnipotent, which directs us to the classic theological problem of evil in the world. In other words the conceptualization of God as father immediately forces us to construct some form of theodicy since we have to reconcile God's omnipotence as father with God's love. The problem of theodicy has got two aspects: philosophical and pastoral and it seems that some believers are not so much interested in philosophical, rational and objective solutions to the problem (such as Leibniz's idea of the best

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[18] Although God is never referred to as mother in biblical texts, yet given the fact that in Jewish culture fathers were not interested in taking care of babies (Rops 1965: 122), some biblical passages may be interpreted as stressing motherhood rather than fatherhood of God. Cf. "It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms" (Hos 11: 3); "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!" (Is 49: 15); "But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me" (Ps 131: 2).

[19] Johnson, *She Who Is*, p. 101.

[20] Elizabeth Spearing, "Introduction," *Revelations of Divine Love* (London: Penguin, 1998), p. xxiii.

[21] Edmund Colledge and James Walsh, *Julian of Norwich. Showings*, (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1978), pp. 296, 297.

of possible worlds), expecting rather a perspective that will help them to accept subjectively evil and suffering they may experience in their lives. In that case they might be interested more in such conceptualizations of God that stress more God's love than God's omnipotence, which is better connoted in the God-as-mother metaphor. That is why a Jewish feminist theologian Melissa Raphael in her study *The Female Face of God in Auschwitz* takes up an inconceivable challenge: to "explain" the horror of Auschwitz in terms of theology and theodicy conceptualizing God not as an omnipotent father but as loving mother.[22]

Conceptualizations of God as mother proposed by the feminist theology may be also useful pastorally and kerygmatically. Let us compare the three following statements, both describing Christ's death on the cross as giving birth to the Church.

> The Church is born primarily of Christ's total self-giving (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 766).[23]

> From the Heart of the crucified Christ the new humanity is born, redeemed from sin[24].

> As a mother travails to bring forth her children, so Christ travails on the cross to give spiritual birth to those who would be called by his name.[25]

The first two statements are purely metaphorical as the act of giving birth is separated from human experience that associates giving birth with women. The third statement is a comparison that appeals more strongly to our experience since Christ is compared to a mother and it is mother that gives life to her children through the pains of labour. This stronger appeal makes the last statement more convincing and transparent.

Another conceptualization of God that might sometimes correspond better with the mentality of modern people, especially in the

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[22] Melissa Raphael, *The Female Face of God in Auschwitz: A Jewish Feminist Theology of the Holocaust*, (London: Routledge, 2003).

[23] Cf. also: "As Eve was formed from the sleeping Adam's side, so the Church was born from the pierced heart of Christ hanging dead on the cross" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 766).

[24] John Paul II, *His Heart Is the Heart of the Church*, The Holy Father's Message for the Centenary of the Consecration of the Human Race to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, June 11, 1999, "*L'Osservatore Romano,*" June 23, 1999, p. 2; http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?id=1117.

[25] Grace Jantzen, *Julian of Norwich* (London: SPCK, 1987), p. 117.

Western culture stresses God's friendship with humanity in general and with people as individuals. God as friend metaphor appears in the Bible (Matt 11: 19; John 15: 14–15; 1 Cor 3: 9) and in classical theology (Thomas Aquinas *Summa Contra Gentiles*, IV, 21-22), but it has not gained greater popularity and has not become part of mainstream Christian discourse. In the twentieth century it was rediscovered by the feminist theology.[26]

While traditional metaphor of God as father underlines God's authority, God as a friend metaphor stresses human maturity and independence and minimizes or even downplays human dependence on God. Human moral behaviour is no longer identified with blind obedience to the norms but rests on our judgment and responsibility for our deeds. The vision of morality based on this metaphor is not understood in terms of moral accounting (see below), which may be attractive to morally mature people, yet at the same time makes it difficult to justify the traditional vision of eschatology, with God's judgment of an individual as its key element. As a feminist theologian put it, "God has our attention and devotion by the lure of his goodness rather than by the command of his sovereignty."[27] Another property of this metaphor is also its usefulness as the basis of theodicy. God is a friend metaphor, unlike God is father metaphor and similar to God is mother metaphor, does not presuppose God's omnipotence and does not make God responsible for suffering, thus acquitting God of the charges of cruelty toward the creation. Conversely, it allows for the conceptualization of God not as an Aristotelian impassive being but as somebody who suffers with people. The possibility of God's suffering is widely discussed in the theology of today[28] and the most radical version of this possibility is Whitehead's definition of God as "the great companion – the fellow sufferer who understands."[29]

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[26] For a more detailed discussion of this metaphor, see: Sally McFague, *Metaphorical Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), pp. 177–193; Johnson, *She Who Is*, pp. 217–218.

[27] Ruth Page, "Human Liberation and Divine Transcendence," *Theology*. No. 85 (1982), p. 189.

[28] Jean-Pierre Batut, "Does the Father Suffer?" *Communio*. No. 30 (2003), pp. 386–405.

[29] Alfred N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1978), p. 351.

OLD AND NEW CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF THE GOD–WORLD RELATION

Alfred North Whitehead's famous statement turns our attention to another challenge the Church is facing: how to convey the message of Christianity so that it won't collide with the worldview shaped by the natural sciences shared by the overwhelming majority of contemporary Western believers and seekers. Whitehead's seminal study *Science and the Modern World*, published in 1925 was one of the those works that set up a new paradigm of relations between the sciences and religion, marked earlier by the conflict between both, due to works by Draper and White. Nevertheless, the problem we still experience is how to reconcile the conceptualizations of the world taken from the Bible and constantly present in the teaching of the Church and its liturgy with the concepts and ideas of modern cosmology, physics and neurobiology or evolutionism. Actually we are not experiencing one problem but a plethora of problems. Let us name just a few of them: the pre-Copernican model of the world with the vertical orientation of the mutual location of the earth and the heaven as the basis of conceptualizations present in the Church liturgy and theological statements, including the most recent dogmas[30]; a disjunction between the conceptualization of the "history of salvation" with its distinct starting point i.e. the creation of Adam and Eve, including the Fall seen as the specific and concrete event that took place in the past and the infinitely much longer temporal and evolutional perspective confirmed by modern science; a disjunction between concepts used in traditional moral theology (understanding of sin, temptations, volitional acts etc.) and the findings of modern psychology and neurobiology. Of course all these disjunctions are not new; still none of them has been resolved satisfactorily so far. The truth is that both believers and seekers are experiencing constantly an irritating epistemological schizophrenia participating in the Church liturgy or learning the Christian truths because the conceptualizations that underlie the Church teaching reflect a pre-scientific vision of the world. Although the truths or insights that constitute that teaching are not necessarily false, their linguistic (i.e. conceptual form) makes them either incomprehensible or irreconcilable with the scientific worldview.

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[30] Cf. the anaphora of the Roman canon in the Roman Missal: "We entreat you, almighty God, that by the hands of your holy Angel this offering may be borne to your altar in heaven" quoted in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1383; or the dogma of the Assumption of Mary "taken up body and soul to the glory of heaven" (*Munificentissimus Deus*, 40).

Let us take for example the Ptolemaic model of the universe that underlies practically all conceptualizations of Christianity from its beginnings to 1950, when Pope Pius XII proclaimed the dogma of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary.[31] This vision of the world stressing the transcendence of God with reference to created reality resulted among other things in the deism of the Enlightenment and a total separation of God and the creation. Today, in the light of what cosmology tells us about the universe, it seems more sensible kerygmatically and pastorally to turn to those conceptualizations in the Christian tradition that stress God's immanence, since this perspective corresponds better with the modern sciences. Therefore the Church should employ more often St. Paul's words addressed to Greeks in Athens: "[God]" is not far from any one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being'"(Acts 17: 27–28) since such a conceptualization of relation between God and humanity appeals much better to a modern Western mind.[32] What is more, this conceptualization goes back to the very beginning of Christianity and retrieving it today we are simply following Christ's advice on *nova et vetera* in the treasure of Christian legacy.

NEW CONCEPTUALIZATIONS FOR THE "HISTORY OF SALVATION" THAT STARTS WITH THE BIG BANG

Unfortunately, not all traditional and theologically crucial conceptualizations of the Christian faith may be reframed by turning to the scriptures or mystical writings and one of them is the traditional vision of "history of salvation" spanned between the Fall and Parousia with Christ's death and Resurrection as its central point. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* interprets the beginning of the history of

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[31] Two classic works on relations between the Ptolemaic vision of the world and Christian theology, see: N.M. Wildiers, *The Theologian and his Universe: Theology and Cosmology from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Seabury Press 1982); A. Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (John Hopkins University Press 1968).

[32] God's immanence is very often stressed in the writings of the Christian mystics. "I saw that for us he is everything that is good and comforting and helping. He is our clothing, wrapping and enveloping us for love, embracing us and guiding us in all things, hanging about us in tender love, so that he can never leave us" Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love (Short Text and Long text)*, transl. E. Spearing (Penguin 1999), p. 7. "You intend to leave the chapel, but you shall not get away from Me, for I am everywhere" – says Jesus to sister Faustina Kowalska (*Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska. Divine Mercy in My Soul*, 429 (Stockbridge, MA: Marian Press, 2005), p. 130. Cf. also of course Ps 139 with a similar depiction of God's immanence.

salvation in the following way: "The account of the fall in Genesis 3 uses figurative language, but affirms a primeval event, a deed that took place at the beginning of the history of man" adding that "revelation gives us the certainty of faith that the whole of human history is marked by the original fault freely committed by our first parents."[33] Although this interpretation solves the problem of literal reading of the Bible some fundamentalist Christian denominations still grapple with, it is not easy to build it into a model of the history of the world that is not thousands, but billions years old and starts not. Why for example did God create dinosaurs and hundreds of other forms of life that were extinct millions years before humans appeared? These two perspectives: the biblical one and the scientific one, clash dramatically at Mount Carmel where, according to the Bible, Elijah defeated prophets of Baal (Kings 18: 20–40). However Wadi el-Mughara caves on the western slopes of the Mount Carmel range are also the site of the well documented evolution of human species representing at least 500,000 years of human history.[34] Those who visit Mount Carmel for biblical reasons are confronted with the artifacts of human history and evolution and cannot avoid this epistemological disjunction of two incompatible perspectives. The attempt to go beyond that schizophrenia taken by Teilhard de Chardin who wished to reconcile the both perspectives through new conceptualizations of Christ derived from the Bible (Christ-Logos as the Omega Point) was rejected by the Magisterium and the problem is still not solved. Maybe the Catholic theology should reconsider again Duns Scotus' idea that the Incarnation was not a "plan B" introduced by God when humans committed the original sin, but Christ's coming to the world was intended by God from the very beginning. Scotus' perspective seems to be a theological framework easier to harmonize with the findings of modern cosmology and biology. Adopting Scotus' proposal would also help the Church to abandon satisfaction theory of atonement developed by Anselm of Canterbury derived from the biblical idea of Christ as the Paschal Lamb who dies for the sins of the world placating the angry God the Father. This shift would correspond in turn with the new metaphors for God presented above.

Conceptualizations of Morality and Moral Theology

As far as the vision of Christian morality is concerned, Jesus in his ministry and teaching, especially in the Sermon on the Mount, rejects the idea of morality seen as moral accounting based on balancing the

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[33] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 390.

[34] See more: http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1393

account of merits and debts[35] and with it the conviction that it is possible to "buy" salvation. Yet it seems that quite often the basis of everyday morality for a lot of Catholics is the idea of salvation understood as "meritocracy."[36] We can observe therefore a discrepancy between the novelty of Gospel concerning morality and pre-Christian vision of morality as a form of accounting still present in popular piety and preaching. It is advisable to stress even more in Church preaching this novelty of Gospel, yet at the same time, the Catholic Church should be aware of the danger of "cheap grace" that Bonhoeffer was warning against, that is visible too often in many Protestant denominations. Another serious challenge in the sphere of morality or more specifically moral theology, comes from the findings of psychology and cognitive sciences. What we learn from these disciplines on the functioning human brain necessitates reconceptualizing the way in which the Catholic moral theology presents such concepts as "free will," "conscience" or "sin" in order not to lose their Christian contents and at the same time to make them comprehensible for a modern mind and compatible with the findings of neurosciences.[37] It is too early to propose well formed conceptualizations of these notions yet it is obvious that they must take into account neurobiology and neurophysiology of the human brain.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this very brief text was to present a specific problem concerning the language of the Church rather than to offer some ready-made solutions. However, when it comes to solutions, one might argue that the Church, introducing new conceptualizations sketched above or similar to them, risks distortion or losing its identity. This is not true. The Christian message has been reconceptualized and presented in Church teaching and preaching in new forms since its beginning. Needless to say that the dogmas regarded today as the core of the Christian doctrine were formulated as late as in the fourth century, being the result of the fusion of the philosophical ideas of the Greeks and the

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[35] More on cognitive linguistics' approach to the Sermon on the Mount see: E. Sweetser, *An Eye for an Eye versus Turning the Other Cheek: Moral Accounting in the Gospel of Matthew*, http://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/Sweetser_Eye.pdf

[36] This meritocratic understanding of salvation is visible even in the *Diary* of St Maria Faustina Kowalska, where Jesus says to her: "remember that the days of your exile will pass quickly, and with them the possibility of earning merit for heaven" (1489). Cf. also *Diary* 28, 93, 576, 904.

[37] See more in: Patricia S. Churchland, *Braintrust: What Neuroscience Tells Us about Morality* (Princeton University Press, 2011), pp. 191-200.

Bible. In the next centuries a lot of various new ideas and concepts were developed in Catholicism, sometimes loosely connected with the Bible, yet corresponding with devotional needs of many believers. Some of these died out in time. Thomism that was the philosophical basis of Catholicism until the half of the twentieth century was not known until the thirteenth century. Also some aspects of social and political reality taken for granted by the Biblical authors, such as slavery or class divisions were rejected in time by the Church.

The sweeping changes concerning our knowledge of the physical and social worlds and our existence we are witnessing today demand presenting the Christian message by means of conceptualizations that reflect this new awareness of both believers and seekers. Such a step may help to eliminate the disjunction between the conceptualizations of the Christian truths recorded in the Bible and the worldview predominant in the Western culture today. There is of course always the risk that taking over some concepts or notions from "the world" the Church will not be able to "(re)-christanize" them entirely.[38] Yet it seems that Catholicism managed to remain a living faith through so many centuries precisely because it did not reject the possibility of new conceptualizations of its truths and used very often "new wineskins" for its wine. It needs "new wineskins" also today in order not to become a religious sect with petrified concepts and ideas.

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[38] Tracey Rowland in her study of Benedict XVI's theology argues that: "the question which John Paul II faced and Benedict XVI now faces is whether to pursue a strategy of trying to reclaim the language which has been plundered, despoiled, and mutated, or to find other language with which to address the world," adding that "John Paul II's strategy of philological taxidermy is problematic in that some words and concepts obstinately retain their liberal meaning in a culture so deeply imbued with liberal principles. Ratzinger, however, seems to be more sensitive to the difficulty of trying to transpose concepts from hostile traditions." Tracey Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith. The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 153.

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CHAPTER V

PROBLEM OF AUTHORITY OF
THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN POLAND

PRZEMYSŁAW STRZYŻYŃSKI

INTRODUCTION

The present study is an attempt to explore the type and quality of the authority enjoyed by the Catholic Church in the Polish society over the past two decades (1994-2014), and to indicate possible measures of reinforcing that authority.

In the discussion below, the concept of authority is understood as "social recognition, prestige of individuals, groups and social institutions based on values cherished in a given society; also individuals and institutions enjoying general recognition"[1]. In order to achieve the authority status, a person (a group of people, an institution) should have competencies in a particular area, be trustworthy and live (act) in accordance with their declared views (rules). A religious authority, as Jaspers claims[2], should also possess a range of other qualities including the will to overcome the world; communicate the experience of the foundations of humanity; educate about the human vocation; give the experience of inner transformation and be a guide post. Each of the qualities listed above involves dialogue based on respect for the autonomy of a person. In other words, authority cannot be imposed.

The problem of whether and how the Church is an authority in Poland will be investigated primarily on the basis of a review of statistical studies and observations made by other authors, and less prominently on the basis of our own insights and input contributed by members of the Church. The analysis will focus on general statistical data, ethos and types of religiousness embraced by the Poles, the image of the Church in the society, typical features of the religious message conveyed by the Church and, last but not least, the formation of seminarians. It is in these areas, I believe, that the type and power of the

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[1] Encyklopedia PWN. Accesssed September 30, 2013. http://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/haslo/3872622/autorytet.html, 30.09.2013.

[2] Karl Jaspers,. *Autorytety. Sokrates, Budda, Konfucjusz, Jezus*, trans. P. Bentkowski, R. Flaszak, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo KR, 2000), pp. 157-165.

Church's authority are revealed – or it is these areas that determine the type and power of that authority. Conclusions drawn on the basis of the study and proposed corrective measures will, in turn, involve a certain idealization. The main idea behind the generalization and isolation of the characteristics of the Church is to assess its authority and formulate ways to improve it. Any generalizations are, therefore, intentional in that they serve the purpose of the text. It is not the aim of the study to offer an exclusively critical view of the Church. Nevertheless, it is imperative to focus on those aspects which, in my view, require improvement so that it is possible to propose actions enhancing the quality of the Church's service. Polish parishes are mostly managed by diocesan priests who, for the most part, make up the Polish Episcopate. This is why the analyses below concentrate on diocesan priests and the parish ministry.

THE CONDITION OF THE CHURCH IN POLAND

General Statistical Data on Religious Denominations and Participation in Sunday Mass

The current Polish population is estimated at 38.5 million. Recent years have seen a negative rate of natural increase[3]. In general terms, the percentage of the adult population who identify themselves as Catholic has consistently exceeded 90% for many years[4]. Fewer sources give a smaller figure, e.g. *European Value Survey* from 2008 specifies that 83.5% of the Polish population are Catholics[5]. Studies conducted by the Institute of Statistics of the Catholic Church (ISKK SAC), indicate a fall in the number of *dominicantes* and *comunicantes*. Assuming that the obligation to participate in Sunday mass was binding upon 82% of the congregation, analyses performed for all Polish dioceses yielded the following results. In 2008, the mean percentage of *dominicantes* in Poland was 40.4% (in 2007 – 44.2%), and *comunicantes* – 15.3% (in 2007 – 17.6%)[6]. Some accounts based on these statistics conclude that

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[3] Statistical Bulletin of the Central Statistical Office of Poland, 8/2013, Accessed September 30, 2013. http://www.stat.gov.pl/gus.

[4] Elżbieta Filrit, "Postawy społeczeństwa polskiego wobec parafii rzymskokatolickiej na przełomie wieków." *Socjologia Religii*. No. 1 (Poznań: Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2003), p. 172.

[5] Mariański, "Religijność i moralność w różnych kontekstach społeczno-kulturowych." *Socjologia Religii*. Vol. 8 (Poznań: Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza 2009), p. 169.

[6] Witold Zdaniewicz SAC and Lucjan Adamczuk. 2000. Accessed September 20, 2013. http://www.iskk.ecclesia.org.pl/praktyki-niedzielne.htm.

the number of practising Catholics is dropping. However, ISKK analyses spanning many years give rise to the following picture. In the 1980s, the mean percentage of *dominicantes* was 51.56%, and *comunicantes* – 9.42%. In the 1990s, the figures were 46.41% and 14.06%, respectively. In the period 2000-2008, the percentage of believers attending church service was 45.46%, and the percentage of believers taking communion was 16.72%[7]. Compared to the 1980s, the period 2000-2008 saw a major drop in church attendance, but an increase in the number of *comunicantes*. A comparison of the 1990s and the years 2000-2008 reveals similar percentages of *dominicantes* and *comunicantes*. The decline in mass attendance can be attributed, among other factors, to the fact that the 1990s saw a considerable number of congregation members drop out of the Church. The group of drop-outs comprised mainly those whose motivation to attend church service in the preceding decade was primarily political and social rather than strictly religious. During the time of the People's Republic of Poland (1945-1989) churches were centres of secular opposition against the political regime. Other factors underlying the decline in the number of *dominicantes* may be transformations of the Polish ethos discussed below.

Account of the Polish Ethos

An account of contemporary ethos of the Polish population would not be complete without addressing a number of crucial concepts including secularization, individualism, relativism, shift in the sphere of the *sacrum*, privatization (deprivatization) of religion, etc.[8] Since the concepts are sufficiently well-known, they will be referenced without a detailed description.

Piwowarski describes the contemporary condition of the Polish ethos as follows: "[…] a weakening or decline of previously existing ties, and a crisis of traditional values. Cultural transformations occur against the background of economic transitions which, to some groups of the Polish society, entail a sense of hopelessness, lack of prospects, and ongoing decline of the status of institutions and authorities"[9]. The tendency is visible in surveys focusing on the investigation of moral

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[7] *Ibid.*

[8] See Wojciech Świątkiewicz, "Rodzina wobec Kościoła. Refleksje Socjologiczne wokół Kulturowych Wzorców Konfesyjnej Religijności." *Socjologia Religii*. Vol. 5 (Poznań: Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2007), p. 139.

[9] Władysław Piwowarski, rev. "Wobec relatywizmu moralnego w społeczeństwie polskim.," *Życie katolickie*. No. 9, 1990 p. 86.

attitudes. Although surveys evaluating loyalty to principles, which were carried out in 2005-2009, produced divergent results, it can be argued that only a minority of Poles subscribe to a permanent moral order. Approximately one third of respondents accept moral absolutism[10]. In practice, however, the rising number of divorces is testimony to moral relativism. There is also considerable social acceptance in the sphere of sexuality. A total of 47.1% of respondents were in favour of contraception. Premarital sex was considered acceptable by 40.8% of the respondent population, and divorces – by 22.9%. The proportions of respondents expressing full tolerance of cohabitation and sex without limitations were 32% and 17.7%, respectively. A total ban on abortion is supported by 12%. Interestingly, only 5.1% of respondents believe that marital infidelity is not a matter of concern[11]. Admittedly, there is a correlation between the level of acceptance for cohabitation and weak religiousness, however Poles tend to be more tolerant in terms of sexuality than Czechs, Hungarians and Slovaks, which implies that that some Catholics (which form a smaller community in the Czech Republic) do not accept some of the tenets of their own religion[12]. Remaining in this context, it needs to be stressed that studies conducted in 2009 showed 54.2% of respondents to have no objections about the moral principles ingrained in the Catholic faith, and less than 10% reject Catholic morality altogether. A further 36.5% of members of the study group approach Catholic moral tenets selectively. It is also to be noted that non-religious people – and some of the believers – seek foundations of their morality beyond religion[13] (Mariański 2009, 170).

On the other hand, the observed relativism and selectivity can be confronted with the belief held by 75.8% of respondents claiming that civil marriage is not a sufficient prerequisite for starting a family because matrimony sanctioned by the Church is the only valid form of marriage[14]. It is not only relativism that appears to have its counterpoint in the ethos of a contemporary Pole. The quality of individualism also comes up against boundaries. Adolescents studied in 2006 indicated the following determinants of their social affiliation: family 96.5%, friends

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[10] Mariański, "Religijność i moralność w różnych kontekstach społeczno-kulturowych," pp. 168-169.

[11] Świątkiewicz, "Rodzina wobec Kościoła. Refleksje socjologiczne wokół kulturowych wzorców konfesyjnej religijności," p. 145.

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 134, 143.

[13] Mariański, "Religijność i moralność w różnych kontekstach społeczno-kulturowych," p. 170.

[14] Świątkiewicz, "Rodzina wobec Kościoła. Refleksje socjologiczne wokół kulturowych wzorców konfesyjnej religijności," p. 144.

and acquaintances 94%, and the Polish nation 94%.[15] What these data show is that family, friends and nation occupy an important place in the lives of Poles.

Another major factor related to the Polish ethos is the problem of its continuity and transmission. It might seem that the process of migration from the countryside to urban areas, combined with the fast pace of life, interferes with the process of ethos transmission, compromising its continuity. However, sociologists claim that in the aspect of religiousness the transmission does occur[16]. For example, 67% of parents from the Silesia province stated they attached a very high priority to the religious upbringing of their children; to a further 30% this was important but not a priority[17]. It is usually recognized that the transmission of religious values and truths fosters the transmission of ethos in a given society. However, as Mariański observes, religiousness and morality do not have uniform correlations in the Polish society: in some studies they are independent (morality without religion), while other reports indicate a positive or negative correlation (religiousness does not determine morality)[18]. It should also be noted that the relationship between religion and everyday morality is not definitely positive: such offences as theft, corruption, vandalism, alcohol abuse and alcoholism, abortion or drug use suggest a weakness of Polish Catholicism[19]. The tendency to disobey the rules of the Church concerning premarital sex leads to similar conclusions[20]. The ethos of Polish Catholics thus seems hardly consistent.

Axiological confusion stems not only from cultural trends but also from the collapse of authorities in Poland[21]. During the first two decades

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[15] *Ibid.*, p. 145.

[16] Libiszowska-Żółtowska, "Typy religijności w społeczeństwie polskim w początkach XXI w. – trwałość i zmiana." *Socjologia Religii*. Vol. 2 (Poznań: Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2004), p. 90.

[17] Świątkiewicz, "Rodzina wobec Kościoła. Refleksje socjologiczne wokół kulturowych wzorców konfesyjnej religijności," p. 148.

[18] Mariański, "Religijność i moralność w różnych kontekstach społeczno-kulturowych," p. 166.

[19] Stella Grotowska, "Identyfikacja z parafią w czasach globalizacji." *Socjologia Religii*. Vol. 1. (Poznań: Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2003), p. 303.

[20] Libiszowska-Żółtowska, "Sekularyzacja – wróg czy sprzymierzeniec Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce." *Socjologia Religii*. Vol. 4 (Poznań: Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2006), p. 278.

[21] Andrzej Górny, "Kościół w opinii młodzieży w przededniu wejścia Polski do Unii Europejskiej." *Socjologia Religii*. Vol. 2 (Poznań: Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2004), p. 236.

after the downfall of the communist system the Polish society went through a period marked by the decline of authorities. The surveillance of opposition activists and church hierarchy by the communist regime's security forces, which was revealed at the time, compounded by political clashes between former oppositionists and financial scandals, undermined confidence in elites and moral authorities. The Church was not spared in the process.

Similar to Western Europe, Poland is also confronted with a moral crisis affecting the family. The underlying causes of the crisis include long work hours and their negative impact on relations between parents and children. Another distinct feature is the lack of shared social ethos. What is more, the transmission of ethos can be further weakened by another important factor. Young people are increasingly reluctant to get married (according to 2002 data, ca. 30% of men and 24% of women in Poland choose not to enter into matrimony). Furthermore, one fifth of all families are single-parent families. A total of 1.5 million children are raised by single parents[22]. The transmission of ethos through the process of upbringing thus becomes even more disturbed.

In this context, the role of the Church as an authority not only preaching religious truths but also teaching ethos, which is key to the functioning of the society, appears even more essential. Despite the collapse of some of the authorities, however, the Church has retained a considerable degree of social trust in Poland, as I will demonstrate below. Consequently, the Church has some potential that can be tapped to reinforce its authority. Some studies in fact reveal that young people have expectations for priests to exercise the role of authorities.

Type of Religiousness among Poles

The religiousness of the Polish population is fundamentally of the folk type, revolving around ritualized and collective forms of religious practice[23]. The folk character of religiousness was commented on as early as before World War II. Among other authors, Jacek Woroniecki described Polish religiousness as folk-rooted, traditional and sentimental. It did not refer to God's wisdom and judgement, but rather to his will. This attitude gave rise to religiousness which was not focused on the domain of the sacred but, instead, on experiences and emotions associated with religious practices. They were superimposed with a powerful sense of unity existing in the community. In this way,

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[22] Świątkiewicz, "Rodzina wobec Kościoła. Refleksje socjologiczne wokół kulturowych wzorców konfesyjnej religijności," pp. 132-135.

[23] Grotowska, "Identyfikacja z parafią w czasach globalizacji," p. 303.

however, people became detached from the *sacrum* as they sought a collective "I" rather the person of God[24]. The religiousness of Poles also tends to be seen as an automatic perpetuation of a family tradition, devoid of any deeper reflection. Approximately 80% of Poles establish their world view in the family environment and uphold it later in life. As the primary motive, however, they seem to view it as a cultural obligation, an element of family ties or a formal and ceremonial style of life[25].

The religiousness of Poles is linked to patriotism[26]. This is evident both in social and religious dimensions (imaginaries), and in the teachings of the hierarchical Church. The bond between religion and patriotism has been especially pronounced since the 19th century[27]. Processes of individualization and privatization of religion, however, pose a challenge to the fusion of religiousness with patriotism. This is because the latter can be understood as a blurring of individuality in the human mass which does not embrace reflection and differentiation of attitudes.

In some accounts, religious behaviours of Poles are seen as an outcome of social conformity rather than identification with the Catholic doctrine[28]. This non-reflective identification is additionally reinforced by the homogeneity of religion in Poland. As there are no other religions strongly represented in the Polish population, there are no situations calling for self-exploration and evaluation of attitudes and beliefs. To ensure successful functioning in a homogeneous society, it is "enough to have an everyday knowledge referring to typical situations [...]"[29]. This may be the mechanism behind the observed limited interiorization of Catholicism and its meagre intellectual background[30].

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[24] Anna Mikołejko, "Nowe formy obecności sacrum w polskim doświadczeniu religijnym." *Socjologia Religii*, vol. 2., ed. Józef Baniak (Poznań: Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza 2004), p. 277.

[25] Libiszowska-Żółtowska, "Typy religijności w społeczeństwie polskim w początkach XXI w. – trwałości i zmiana," pp. 86-92.

[26] Jerzy Szymołon, "Kulturowe uwarunkowania religijności." In *Socjologia Religii*. Vol. 2 (Poznań: Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2004), p. 265.

[27] José Casanova, *Religie publiczne w nowoczesnym świecie*, trans. T. Kunz, (Kraków: Nomos 2005), pp. 159-161.

[28] Górny, "Kościół w opinii młodzieży w przededniu wejścia Polski do Unii Europejskiej," p. 236.

[29] Grotowska, "Identyfikacja z parafią w czasach globalizacji," p. 306.

[30] Świątkiewicz, "Rodzina wobec Kościoła. Refleksje socjologiczne wokół kulturowych wzorców konfesyjnej religijności," p. 139.

There seems to be good evidence for the fact that Polish Catholics do not have sufficient knowledge of their own religion, as many of them fall victim to the so-called unconscious heresy. For example, research shows that some Catholics in fact do not believe in the Resurrection of Jesus[31]. It must also be noted that affiliation with religious groups correlates with a greater consistency of beliefs[32].

The sentimentalism addressed above, as well as excessive asceticism, angelism and inadequate theological knowledge, unfortunately provide fertile ground for religious crises. Their emergence is also linked to problems with social and family communication, a partial breakdown of the authority of the Church and a lessening of emphasis on the transmission of religious, social and moral values[33].

Another emerging phenomenon is the departure of believers from the folk church (*Volkskirche*) for the church of choice[34]. Individualism in approaching one's religion may potentially result not only in apostasy or atheism but also, perhaps even more commonly, in taking up responsibility for oneself and embarking on the search for a suitable form of religiousness[35]. Individuals following this path do not necessarily need to be motivated by permissivism. They may also seek to deepen their religiousness and identify appropriate forms of building a relationship with God or the sacred. Polish individualism, however, also has its specific qualities. Studies reported by Szymołon show that the Polish society contains elements of both individualism and collectivism. Collectivism is manifested in the family and social spheres, and individualism – in strong self-reliance[36]. Studies by Jarosz, which can be correlated with the above investigations, reveal an association between

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[31] *Ibid.* p. 138.

[32] Mariański, "Emigracja młodzieży z Kościoła?" In *Socjologia Religii*. Vol. 3 (Poznań: Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2005), pp. 177-178.

[33] Zdzisław Stepulak, "Kryzysy religijne w dobie współczesnej – analiza psychologiczno-pastoralna." *Socjologia Religii*, Vol. 2 (Poznań: Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2004), p. 303.

[34] Andrzej Potocki, "Dlaczego młodzież boi się Kościoła?" *Socjologia Religii*. Vol. 3 (Poznań: Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2005), p. 203.

[35] Zygmunt Bauman,. *Dwa szkice o moralności ponowoczesnej* (Warszawa: Instytut Kultury,1994), pp. 83-84.

[36] Zbigniew Zaleski and Harry C. Triandis, "Indywidualizm-kolektywizm Polaków. Porównania międzykulturowe." *Wykłady z psychologii w KUL*. Vol. 5 (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1991), pp. 127-144.

these qualities and the relation to God. Excessive collectivism entails an apersonal relationship with God. Individualism, on the other hand, leads to rebellious attitudes towards God and selectivity in accepting religious dogmas[37]. Growing individualism and selectivity, a decline in religious practice and an absence of transmission of religious traditions are also addressed by Potocki[38]. In this context, it is quite disconcerting to note that individualism does not spawn the development of the specific form of personal ministry which is spiritual guidance. On the one hand, as Rev. Kozacki demonstrates, the number of people coming to the sacrament of penance is declining. On the other, however, the gradual disappearance of the practice of spiritual guidance also has its roots in the inadequacy of the priest formation[39]. The form and quality of priest preparation for religious service may be regarded by some worshippers – or seekers – as insufficient.

In Mariański's view, the language of the Church, its symbols and influence "appeal to the morality of only some of the believers." As a rule, young people are not interested in dogmatic aspects. They are more keen on learning about connections between faith and life. To this problem, however, young people receive no answers. The Church thus faces a weakening of its religious capital among the younger population[40]. Świątkiewicz comments on the situation in the same vein, stating that "religious ethics is losing its unificatory role. People do not know precisely what is morally allowed and what is not"[41]. Shortcomings can also be noticed in teaching to forgive, to make sacrifices or to create a community[42].

Surveys show Polish young people (aged 18-29 years) to be the most religious group compared to their peers from other European countries (with the young Irish close behind)[43]. Investigations spanning the period 1996-2003 demonstrate that secondary school students have a stable attitude towards religion. In 1996, 80% declared themselves as deeply religious or religious. In 2003, the figure was 78%. Religiousness is more commonly declared by girls than boys, and by inhabitants of rural areas than cities. The percentage of church attendance fell from

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[37] Szymołon, "Kulturowe uwarunkowania religijności," p. 262.

[38] Potocki, "Dlaczego młodzież boi się Kościoła?," pp. 183-186.

[39] Paweł Kozacki, OP, "Jutro nie nadejdzie Koniec. Diagnoza Współczesności." W drodze, April 2013, pp. 75, 86.

[40] Mariański, "Emigracja młodzieży z Kościoła?," pp. 179-180.

[41] Świątkiewicz, "Rodzina wobec Kościoła. Refleksje socjologiczne wokół kulturowych wzorców konfesyjnej religijności," p. 147.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 144.

[43] Mariański, "Emigracja młodzieży z Kościoła?," pp. 170-171.

62% in 1996 to 48% in 2003. In general terms, however, earlier forecasts about the widespread abandonment of faith and religious practices, have failed to materialize[44]. It is not inconceivable, though, that the trend is yet to surface. In the group of students investigated by Górny the *sacrum* was regarded as important, though the respondents did notice a retreat of the *sacrum* from the public space into the private zone. They believe that the sacred sphere and religion are subject to relativization. The Church, however, tends to be viewed in a negative light, as an institution rather than community. It does not satisfy the need to be in touch with transcendence and to experience the sacred. Although the students studies recognize the role of the Church in socialization and in the creation of foundations for social order, they do not identify the Church with the realm of the *sacrum*[45].

In the light of the observations presented above, it seems that the Church should pay greater attention to young people, and adjust not only forms of communication but also its general mentality to that specific group of believers. The young population will become even more individualistic and autonomous, and will be liable to reject any attempts at the imposition of sets of values, truths or ways of life. This is why the Church ought to adapt to that mentality, but without negating moral requirements.

Nonetheless, the authority of the Church should not be based solely on moral authority stemming from faithfulness to its own principles. The Church should aim to increase the understanding of religion among Catholics through improving the level of religious communication and education, and thus boost confidence in the Church as an entity preaching a clear and justified message. The need to justify religious faith is particularly urgent, considering the fact that the religiousness of the young generation will not be as strongly supported by the transmission of family traditions. What is more, individualism and responsibility for one's own choices which is so keenly emphasized in today's culture will encourage the balancing of arguments in favour of different world outlooks.

Authority cannot be constructed exclusively on the foundation of references to the martyrological history of the Polish nation and the myth of the Catholic Pole. The authority of the Church would increase if the new form of communication with believers (more natural, less inflated and less imbued with ecclesiastical phraseology) also included a

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[44] *Ibid.* 171-173.

[45] Andrzej Górny, "<<Odczarowany>> świat? Sacrum we współczesnej rzeczywistości w opinii młodzieży." *Socjologia Religii*. Vol. 4 (Poznań: Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2006), p. 215.

new vision of patriotism. It should fulfil the need of collectivism but, at the same time, convey the feeling of individual freedom and responsibility. The new vision of patriotism would have to be clearly differentiated from the old concept in several crucial aspects such as greater openness to acknowledging also the less glorious deeds of past generations, and ability to process these events with a view to promoting the present and future common good.

Image of the Church among Poles

An important element in the diagnosis of the authority of the Church in Poland is the perception of the Church by the society. Mariański argues that the Polish Church hierarchy exhibits a tendency towards greater openness and integration of the parish ministry. There is also a trend for replacing vertical relations with more horizontal structures[46]. At the same time, however, some of the younger generation think that the Church generates fear. It is perceived as an outdated institution tarnished by moral scandals. The fear is not about religion as such, or the Church as a community, but rather about members of institutions of the hierarchical Church[47]. There is also anxiety related to the imposition of belief without respecting other viewpoints, and concern about the Church as a sect curbing the freedom of spiritual explorations. The Church is seen by the younger generation as a threat to their moral autonomy. Interestingly, God is perceived as more understanding than the Church. On the other hand, non-acceptance of Catholic teachings on sexuality and premarital sex arouses fear caused by the Church's call to strive for goodness even in the face of hardship, which is communicated among others through the principle claiming that humans become better through sacrifice and love[48]. In this context, as Zięba[49] points out, the Church is perceived as a structure causing distress.

The image of the Church is also tainted by sex scandals involving priests which undermine the credibility of doctrines preached by the clergy. Likewise, the authority of the Church is diminished by cases of paedophilia which receive no response from church hierarchy. A parallel

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[46] Janusz Mariański, "Parafia szansą przemian polskiego katolicyzmu." *Socjologia Religii*. Vol. 1 (Poznań: Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2003), p. 199.

[47] Potocki, "Dlaczego młodzież boi się Kościoła?," p. 183-186.

[48] *Ibid.*, pp. 190-194.

[49] Maciej Zięba, *Unanimitas. Dominikańskie Przykazanie* (Poznań: W drodze, 2003), p. 69.

phenomenon is the social expectation of infallibility and moral exemplariness of Catholic priests[50]. Polish Catholic congregations have a tendency to mythicize the figure of priest. The authority of priests and church hierarchy is also called into question in the light of problems with financial transparency in parishes and in the Church as a whole, excessive pursuit of material gains and ostentatious wealth of members of the clergy, as well as tax and customs allowances available to the Church[51]. According to another surveyed group the Church excessively engages in politics, has already forfeited a part of its authority, and should adopt more liberal views on euthanasia, abortion and homosexuality[52]. Naturally, some of the opinions fail to take into account the fact that the Church is dogmatically unable to change its teachings on such topics as abortion or euthanasia. There is also a dominant view that the Church has a major impact on the situation in Poland. Such opinions are, to a certain extent, generated by the Church itself, since the engagement of the Church in politics is supported principally by the Catholic radio station Radio Maryja[53].

At the same time, claims emerge that the Church should stay out of politics and instead put its efforts into social aid and welfare, try to remedy social pathologies (alcohol and drug abuse), focus on matters of faith, morality, social responsibility and family life, become involved in the upbringing of children and adolescents, and in crime prevention[54]. Interestingly enough, however, the Polish society is not sufficiently aware of numerous successful charitable initiatives undertaken by the Catholic Church, including social welfare centres or diocesan branches of Caritas, e.g. an institution of the Polish Bishops' Conference allocated over 130 million PLN for charity in 2012, RC 2012.

The way the Church is perceived is also shaped by the state and private media. Some of surveyed subjects report that the Church is represented in the media as "an authoritarian, highly institutionalized entity guided by norms rather than values. The image of the Church is that of an institution depriving people of their freedom and ability to act independently"[55]. In studies conducted in 1994, 64% of participants

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[50] Potocki, "Dlaczego młodzież boi się Kościoła?," p. 195.

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 196.

[52] Górny, "Kościół w opinii młodzieży w przededniu wejścia Polski do Unii Europejskiej," p. 254.

[53] Libiszowska-Żółtowska,, "Sekularyzacja – wróg czy sprzymierzeniec Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce," p. 277.

[54] Górny, "Kościół w opinii młodzieży w przededniu wejścia Polski do Unii Europejskiej," pp. 246, 254.

[55] Potocki, "Dlaczego młodzież boi się Kościoła?," p. 199.

admitted that they personally respected priests. However, when requested to specify whether priests enjoyed social respect, 48% said that they did and 41% that they did not. A survey of opinions about the Church expressed in conversations with members of the family, friends and acquaintances revealed 19% of positive, 24% of neutral and 39% of critical comments[56]. The Church and priests are largely perceived in an unfavourable light, at least in the media and by the general public. The Polish Episcopate is, as yet, unable to change that negative image.

Also, the Church is sometimes accused of being too conservative and too reluctant to embrace change. It is said to have a rigid hierarchical structure that leaves no room for secular interference. Objections are raised that the liturgy is too long and sermons are boring. The defining feature of the Church is sadness, seen for example in church music. Representatives of the Church are said to dwell too much on human faults, while priests fail to show any understanding towards problems shared with them by penitents[57].

Mariański claims that "the most critical attitudes toward priests are found among people with high education, private entrepreneurs, managers, representatives of white-collar professions, individuals with an interest in politics and supporting the left side of the political spectrum"[58].

It also needs to be realized that the Church in Poland is currently regarded as any other institution and has now been displaced from its former privileged status[59]. This is why claims to holding an institutional or moral authority just because of being a priest may turn out to be ineffective or bordering on the ridiculous. Reinforcing the authority calls for certain prerequisites: financial transparency, keeping the vow of poverty, sufficient response to sex scandals among priests as well as a reasonable media policy and a shift of focus from human faults to God's love.

The future authority of the Church depends on the perception of the Church by contemporary young people. In the studied group of students (mainly consisting of women, individuals from cities, with educated family background) 66.7% never turn to priests for advice on how to handle life's challenges. Some of them believe the strategy would be useless because of priests' incompetence. 19% of subjects talk to their priests, though contacts are rare; in 9.5% of cases contacts are

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[56] Mariański, "Parafia szansą przemian polskiego katolicyzmu," p. 185.

[57] Potocki, "Dlaczego młodzież boi się Kościoła?," p. 188.

[58] Mariański, "Parafia szansą przemian polskiego katolicyzmu.," p. 184.

[59] Górny, "Kościół w opinii młodzieży w przededniu wejścia Polski do Unii Europejskiej," p. 238.

frequent; and in 4.8% contacts are frequent but limited to religious matters[60]. Nevertheless, a half of surveyed students admitted having contacts with priests, either in their own or another parish, and receiving advice that was meaningful for their lives. 48% of respondents stated that the parish had a favourable effect on their religious attitude and their approach to faith. 28.57% recognized the influence of the parish on the development of attitudes towards other people. The effect of the Church on building one's own identity and life goals, however, was rarely noted. This observation points to the negligible influence of parishes on the non-religious sphere. In fact, 21.43% of respondents reported they never noticed any influence, either on the religious or non-religious domain of life[61].

Another investigated aspect was the degree of awareness about the help and support provided by priests in their parishes: 47.6% of the surveyed students declared they had no knowledge of that aspect; 25% said the support was provided but only sporadically; 10.7% excluded the possibility altogether[62]. The survey thus demonstrates that the lack of contact with the parish results in the lack of knowledge about its activities. Without being aware of the Church's positive initiatives, it is difficult to put trust in the Church and consider it an authority. On the other hand, the underlying cause of having no contact with the parish is the fact that neither the parish nor the priests fulfil expectations vested in them by young people.

The majority of surveyed students said they would turn to their priests for help in religious and moral matters. A much smaller proportion, however, would ask for help with their day-to-day problems. The tendency is related to the perception of priests as incompetent[63]. It must be noted, though, that the surveyed subjects viewed priests as potential authorities. Maintaining that status, however, would require a more personal (as opposed to formal) contact with priests. Meanwhile, the students said, the reverse was true: 76.2% stated their relations with the clergy were mainly formal in nature.

What is more, the parish as such is seen as a place without meaningful social relationships. Asked to list obstacles hindering the

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[60] Ewa Wysocka, "Parafia w percepcji i doświadczeniach młodzieży studenckiej. Postrzegane funkcje w życiu codziennym i w kreowaniu tożsamości religijnej." In *Socjologia Religii*, vol. 1., ed. Józef Baniak (Poznań: Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2003), pp. 112-113.

[61] *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 125.

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 114.

[63] *Ibid.*

formation of such relationships, 53.57% of the surveyed indicated the sense of anonymity, and 21.43% stated that the parishes were too large. Such opinions, Wysocka argues, corroborate the thesis that parishes fail to integrate the community and only have a limited influence on the daily life of parishioners[64]. Only 14.3% of the students said they had a feeling of support from their parish in their day-to-day life. In contrast, 63% stated they had no such support[65]. Summing up the results of her study, Wysocka concludes that a total of 81.4% of the surveyed subjects do not consider their parish as a venue with any significant socialization role[66].

As Wysocka[67] claims: "young people see their parish as an area of potentially meaningful contacts – also in terms of socialization – and close, direct and emotionally enriching relations, viewed not only as a service but also as a way of creating identity." It appears, however, that priests in their work focus primary attention on the fulfilment of their obligations towards the Church as an institution. This approach is not conducive to the development of less formal relations – or transforming the Church into a community of believers.

Against this background, the role of lay and clerical teachers of religious education is evaluated much more favourably. Surveys conducted among adolescents and parents notice positive features of teachers of religion at Polish schools and, for the most part, trust them[68]. This finding may be associated with that fact that there is greater chance of building non-institutional relations based on personal authority with them. Teachers of religious education spend more time with young people, which is why they are able to be more involved in answering questions relating to religion and life in general. It should also be noted that favourable opinions among adolescents translate into favourable opinions among adults.

It may be that building personal moral authority is easier than creating institutional authority. As Mariański highlights: it is symptomatic that persons representing specific church institutions are more likely to be favourably evaluated [by respondents] than the

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[64] *Ibid.*, pp. 124-125.

[65] *Ibid.*, pp. 125-126.

[66] *Ibid.*, p. 127.

[67] *Ibid.*, p. 118.

[68] Mirosław Gogolik, "Język świadectwa wiary w katechezie." Grzegorz Cyran and Elżbieta Skorupska-Raczyńska (eds.) *Język doświadczenia religijnego.* Vol. 4 (Szczecin: Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, 2012), pp. 84-89.

institutions themselves (the pope is viewed more favourably than the Vatican, the primate and bishops – than the episcopate)"[69].

A vital element in the life of the Polish Church is the parish. The parochial organization of the Church in Poland has a centuries-long tradition. The network of parishes encompasses the whole Polish territory. Practically every Catholic belongs to a parish. The parish is also an institution which is capable of forming a community of believers. It is also the most important social institution from the viewpoint of setting up the authority of the Church because parishes are places where the fundamental message of faith is conveyed and sacraments are celebrated. The parish may also be a centre in which community groups emerge.

In 1998, 85% of Poles declared that they had a connection with their parish[70]. Based on studies covering the period from 1991 to 1998, Filrit[71] found that the vast majority of Poles self-identified with their parish. However, there was an increase in the percentage of young people (aged 18-29 years) who felt no such self-identification: from 14% in 1991 to 23% in 1998. The change may be a consequence of Poland's political, economic and social transformations – but also of the return to religious education to schools, which loosened the ties between children and adolescents and their parishes. Traditionally, the extent of identification with the parish is greater in rural areas: 66.3%. In towns and cities the figure is 27% lower. It should also be noted that the percentage is inversely proportional to the level of education[72].

Mariański's research conducted in 1998 among the general Catholic population in Poland shows that 57.8% of respondents had great confidence, and 18.6% – moderate confidence, in the rector of their parish. Low confidence was declared by 7.9% and no confidence – by 6.1%. A total of 7.3% had no opinion on the matter (with 2.2% of non-responders)[73].

In 1997-1998, an opinion survey was carried out among Catholic priests, with 5.6% of respondents declaring that they were trusted more than in the previous political regime, and 28.4% noting that the degree of confidence placed in them had decreased. 57.6% stated there had been no change in confidence. Others had no opinion on the topic. The drop in confidence was mentioned more frequently by younger priests and

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[69] Mariański, "Parafia szansą przemian polskiego katolicyzmu," p. 186.

[70] Grotowska, "Identyfikacja z parafią w czasach globalizacji," p. 303.

[71] Filrit, "Postawy społeczeństwa polskiego wobec parafii rzymskokatolickiej na przełomie wieków," p. 180.

[72] *Ibid.*, pp. 170-171, 180.

[73] Mariański, "Parafia szansą przemian polskiego katolicyzmu," p. 186.

priests working in city parishes[74]. One of the key differences between parishes located in rural and urban areas is the fact that the latter are usually more populous, less socialized (and thus less heavily impacted by the public opinion) and have a greater percentage of members with higher education. These elements are not so much implicated in the development of critical attitudes towards priests as in the rates of participation of the laity in the life of the parish.

The image of the Church in Poland which is held by its bishops can be partially reconstructed on the basis of remarks communicated during the *ad limina* visit in 2005. The bishops noticed, among other factors, that a vast majority of Catholics rejected the teaching of the Church on marriage and family, that members of the laity were passive, while at the same time attempts were made by priests to "take control" of all matters related to the parish, and that the unity of the Church was jeopardized by some of the mass-media and movements"[75]. These observations are, to a major degree, consistent with the data quoted above.

The building of the Church's authority is also crucially dependent on the image of the Church created by the Church itself, which is related to the Church's self-awareness. There is a multitude of terms used to describe that self-awareness (and the image of the Church), however the predominant term seems to be the opposition: open/closed Church. The latter, it appears, is wary of everything non-Catholic and non-Polish, which stems from a vision of the world in which the Church is surrounded by deadly enemies. It attracts people who are liable to have fundamentalist and non-reflective visions about their own faith. This type of Church would be considered repulsive, at least by a certain category of people. As Kominek notes, the transition from the Church perceiving itself as a victim of conspiracies and surrounded by alleged enemies to the open Church, which was postulated by the Second Vatican Council, is still only declarative in Poland, and exists solely on the level of liturgy and ritual. The situation is much less positive at the level of mentality, religious freedom, ecumenism or perception of the essence of the Church[76].

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[74] *Ibid.*, p. 187.

[75] Libiszowska-Żółtowska, "Sekularyzacja – wróg czy sprzymierzeniec Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce," p. 281.

[76] Andrzej Kominek, "Od i do świata. Językowe sposoby autoidentyfikacji w dyskursie publicznym Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce." Mikołajczak, Stanisław and Węcławski, Tomasz, Rev. (eds.), *Język Religijny Dawniej i Dziś*. Vol. 2 (Poznań: Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne, 2005), p. 166-167.

The situation is compounded by the fact that, as Mariański and other scholars observe, the Polish Church is dominated by an authoritarian and prescriptive approach. This attitude became consolidated during the communist regime of the People's Republic of Poland in response to the political circumstances faced by the Church. At that time, the Church was visibly clergy-dominated, with a clear deficit in roles assigned to the laity. Lay members were predominantly an object of paternalistic attitudes oriented towards the supply of needs; there was also a discernible distinction between the groups of laity and priests[77]. Communication was largely one-sided, marked by authoritativeness and the conveyance of orders. In this style of ministry, the faithful were thought of as children who must be helped and taken care of. All the characteristics of the Church described above are still discernible today, though admittedly to a lesser extent. Any authority adopting this attitude towards people runs the risk that some children will be submissively obedient, while others will rebel. Neither of the roles, however, is capable of achieving adulthood and creating a basis for a dialogue of equal partners who share a common goal of religious maturity on the level of the individual and the collective. Considering the fact that contemporary times are dominated by individualism and the pursuit of self-fulfilment, the Church should propose such a form of ministry in which all the people, believers and non-believers alike, are treated as adults. On that basis, through the autonomy of choice and individual approach, the Church should seek to establish a community, and strive towards both human and religious maturity. This goal, however, cannot be achieved without overcoming stereotypes in the perception of the laity and the clergy. Similarly, Mariański notes, there has been a change in how priests see their duty: from supervision to persuasion, from plain control to support and motivation, from normativeness to service, and from management and administration to companionship, acquisition and offering[78].

Characteristics of the Religious Message

A key element of building the authority of priests and bishops is the quality of the religious message, both in terms of form and content. In this context, the religious message should be interpreted as an umbrella term encompassing, above all, sermons and homilies, letters and communications issued by the Polish Episcopate, as well as religious education.

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[77] Mariański, "Parafia szansą przemian polskiego katolicyzmu," p. 187.
[78] *Ibid.*, p. 188.

In its 2003-2004 report, the Polish Language Council operating at the Presidium of the Polish Academy of Sciences, stated that the pastoral letters issued by the Episcopate were, in general, correctly phrased but contained a lot of rather non-functional linguistic means, an excessive proportion of foreign words and complicated syntactic structures, and a limited range of religious vocabulary. On account of these shortcomings the letters and messages can be communicatively incompetent[79].

What is more, the Episcopate's communications fail to adequately represent theological themes, with the exception of Virgin Mary. The main topics are social and political issues, with a clear underrepresentation of moral problems[80]. Skowronek[81] writes that only one letter issued in the period 1945-2005 discusses a document of the Second Vatican Council, whereas some of the decisions adopted during the last Council are not addressed at all, or only briefly. The reception of the Council's teachings is incomplete and sometimes delayed. On the other hand, there are ample references to the Apostolic Letters, the Gospel and the Pope's teachings[82].

Religious communication is characterized by a clear tendency to sacralize the nation and create the myth of the Catholic Pole. The past of the Polish nation is glorified, while the present is viewed in a negative light[83], which is yet another example illustrating the trend to simplify and mythologize reality.

According to Skowronek[84], messages conveyed by the Episcopate have an authoritarian slant in that the authors lay claim to the exclusive right to voice their opinions and the exclusive prerogative to choose the topic of communication; letters are regarded as writings that must be "accompanied by a detailed strategy describing how the recipient should approach the text."

I believe that a fundamental problem affecting both episcopal communication and sermons is the lack of feedback. There is no inclination to listen to the lay members of the Church, and there are no established mechanisms to determine how they evaluate the form and

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[79] Leszek Szewczyk, "Zaprosić retorykę na ambonę. Znaczenie retoryki dla współczesnego kaznodziejstwa. Dariusz Krok and Sławomir Pawiński (eds.), *Język Przekazu Religijnego* (Opole: Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2006), pp. 117-118.

[80] Katarzyna Skowronek, *Między sacrum a profanum. Studium językoznawcze listów pasterskich Konferencji Episkopatu Polski (1945-2005)* (Kraków: Lexis, 2006), p. 318.

[81] *Ibid.*, pp. 316-317.

[82] *Ibid.*, pp. 264, 316-317.

[83] *Ibid.*, p. 315.

[84] *Ibid.*, p. 319.

content of messages they receive from the Church, whether they have any problems and, if so, of what nature. Consequently, it must be recognized that the clergy have the monopoly not only with respect to selecting the topics of their communication but also assessing its quality (form and content).

Skowronek[85] points out that although bishops make attempts to abandon the authoritarian paradigm, there are instances in which the attitude is brought back into focus, manifested as preoccupation with releasing orders, asymmetry of communication and distance persisting in spite of attempts to reduce it.

The religious message communicated by the Polish Church exposes its general trait: lack of definite knowledge of what measures are required to achieve the desired effect. For example, priests know that sermons for children should be different from sermons delivered before a congregation of adults. Nonetheless, it is not uncommon that a children's sermon only begins in a form suited to children, while the overall content is exactly the same as in sermons prepared for adult recipients[86].

Sermons usually deal with generalities, and their authors fail to commit themselves to theological specifics. For a major part, they use simple conceptual templates (scholarly=conceited; simple=humble; money=greed; material poverty=piety) constructed by uncritically fitting reality into a series of binary oppositions. Furthermore, preachers tend to repeat what has already been mentioned in a reading from the Gospels. Often, they effectively discourage people from participation in Sunday mass by admonishing for non-attendance that part of the congregation which, in fact, does attend. Another common practice is cheap moralizing, i.e. passing negative moral and religious judgements on people's actions without delving deeper into the core of the problem and without any attempt to understand why a given situation has occurred. As for theological of biblical topics, it is rare for preachers to expand his listeners' knowledge of exegesis – or their understanding of dogmas. What emerges, in effect, is what Rev. Węcławski has observed, i.e. a situation where priests talk about secondary issues[87].

Another quality lacking in priests is a rudimentary knowledge of human psychology. Priests cannot be required to be therapists, however,

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[85] *Ibid.*, pp. 308-310, 319-320.

[86] Jadwiga Lizak, "Język kazań dla dzieci," Stanisław Mikołajczak and Tomasz Węcławski, Rev. (eds.), *Język Religijny Dawniej i Dziś*. Vol. 2. (Poznań: Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne, 2005), pp. 157-158.

[87] Skowronek, *Między sacrum a profanum. Studium językoznawcze listów pasterskich Konferencji Episkopatu Polski (1945-2005)*, p. 322.

they should not be negatively disposed towards psychology as such, and should be able to identify situations in which psychological help could prove beneficial.

Problems with the religious message are already noticed in the alumni. Attention has been drawn to deficiencies in the linguistic and cultural competence of seminarians, leading not only to errors of style and grammar, but also to their inability to comprehend theological terms and phrase them correctly in a language that would be easily understood by non-professionals[88]. Educational shortcomings often arise during secondary school. Theological seminaries may only attempt to reduce gaps in learning. However, they should also take into account the intellectual development of seminarians as a precondition for their spiritual development. Unfortunately, intellectual development is usually approached solely in terms of the acquisition of knowledge rather than the ability to think. One consequence of such intellectual passivity is perpetuation of established patterns of thinking, and thus stereotyping of religious imaginary and departure from the very essence of religion.

As mentioned above, teachers of religious education usually enjoy the trust of children, adolescents and adults. Despite that, however, they encounter a range of difficulties in their work. One potential problem, created by the hierarchical Church, concerns the selection of textbooks for religious education. There are dioceses in which there is one mandatory textbook, often published by the respective diocese, that must be used[89]. However, there is no formal system of communicating with teachers of religious education that would allow them to provide feedback on the quality of textbooks. The current model is based on orders, with the Church hierarchy deciding on what textbook should be used in a particular diocese. Different textbooks, it must be noted, do not diverge in terms of dogmatic truths but only in forms of communication and suggested teaching methods. It is, assumed, however, that an archbishop or a diocesan chancery official is better qualified than teachers and students to select a textbook. Consequently, there is a risk that the intended message will never reach the recipient.

Another obstacle relates to the organization of the religious message. The introduction of religious education in schools may lead to a weakening of ties between the students and the parish. If parishes are

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[88] Renata Przybylska and Wiesław Przyczyna, "O języku kleryków," Stanisław Mikołajczak and Tomasz Węcławski, Rev. (eds.), *Język Religijny Dawniej i Dziś* 2. (Poznań: Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne, 2005), pp. 70-81.

[89] Janusz Poniewierski, "Wolność dla katechetów," Religia Deon.pl. Accessed September 15, 2013, at http://www.deon.pl/religia/kosciol-i-swiat/komentarze/art,791,wolnosc-dla-katechetow.html.

to function as communities of people, children and adolescents should have more frequent contacts with them, rather than limit them to Sunday mass attendance. On the other hand, it seems justified to assume that religious classes at school are attended by more children and adolescents than would be the case if religious education was provided by parishes. The introduction of religious education in schools thus results in a potentially more widespread promotion of Christianity. The fact of teaching religion as a part of the general education curriculum also has other consequences that must be considered. Firstly, since the grade in religion is placed on the school certificate, attending classes is mandatory. It is usually very easy to gain a top grade in religious education, which helps improve the grade average. Secondly, since religion is taught at schools and grades are placed on school certificates, a belief arises that religion (typically equated with Catholicism) is something institutionalized. These elements may restrict the autonomy of religious class attendance. Some students may feel forced to attend despite not being inclined to do so. As a result, a potentially intriguing and voluntary meeting with a fellow believer turns into an undesirable interaction with a teacher of yet another school subject.

One of the most important characteristics of religious communication, including religious education at school and university levels, is the lack of focus on arguments in support of the truth of the Bible, dogmas, and the existence of God. Contemporary people (despite, or perhaps due to, the crisis affecting the notions of truth) seeking authenticity and individualism as they progress from folk religion towards a religion of choice, need justification as an absolute prerequisite. Without any attempts at justification, without critical rationality, the Church will be viewed as yet another sect, or a group of people deeply convinced about the truth of something that is not liable to justification. In this sense, the Catholic Church would not be essentially different, for example, from the Church of Scientology.

Formation of Seminarians

A vital element in the process of building the authority of the Church is the formation of seminarians. Studies among seminarians have been conducted by Przybylska who found that theological seminaries operate on the assumptions that students training for priesthood do not have doubts, questions or problems related to faith and morality. Consequently, seminarians are expected to attend lectures in theology and other subjects, take notes, memorize knowledge and recall it during examinations. The information thus learned is quickly forgotten for the teaching process has no place for discussion and reflection. In this respect, theological seminaries resemble mediocre vocational schools

rather than respectable institutions of learning. This seems to conform to the general trend of the Polish Church which values obedience over intellectual curiosity. Studying does not seem to be treated seriously enough[90].

In Okońska's studies seminarians stated, for example, that the examinations were so easy to pass that it was demoralizing; that it was possible to graduate without acquiring solid theological knowledge. Relations with clerical teachers were characterized by distance and apprehension but, on the other hand, they were better equipped to understand the specific nature of priesthood and the reality of the seminary. Lay teachers were generally more knowledgeable, more inclined to form interpersonal bonds and better at showing the reality of the world but, on the other hand, lacked good understanding of the priestly profession and the life of a seminarian. The author thus proposes a thesis that clerical and lay lecturers fulfil mutually complementary functions at theological seminaries and departments of theology. Meanwhile, in the thirty seminaries under investigation 84% of lecturers were clergy, 10% – lay women and 6% – men. Lay teaching staff consists mainly of teachers of foreign languages, phonetics and physical education, less frequently – psychology, philosophy and pedagogy, and least commonly – theology. This situation results, among other factors, from the lack of trust between the clergy and the laity. A considerable proportion of the clergy believe that "the Church is just us," and many lay members have not yet embraced the view that "the Church is also us"[91]. There is a popular view held in the community of scientists connected with theological colleges and universities that the Church is wary of lay theology teachers because they are more independently-minded and, it is believed, prone to instil liberal ideas and cloud the message of faith. The most glaring example of this attitude is the idea formulated by one member of the Vatican's hierarchy to restrict the access of the laity to theological studies; a full university course in theology would only be accessible to the clergy.

Priests are preferred as lecturers and educators at theological seminaries also for other reasons. For example, it can be argued that members of the clergy, who know the reality of clerical life first-hand, are better qualified to prepare students for priestly life and pastoral duties.

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[90] Przybylska and Przyczyna, "O języku kleryków," pp. 74-75.

[91] Elżbieta Okońska, "Obszary napięć w dialogu w formacji seminaryjnej a rozwój moralny kleryków," *Socjologia Religii*. Vol. 6 (Poznań: Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2008), pp. 303-305.

Interestingly, Okońska has observed widespread anti-intellectual attitudes among seminarians, who tended to think that whereas they dealt with matters of the spirit, lay teachers were concerned primarily with the intellect. Other insights include the dominance of education oriented on religious activity and didactic gaps in Church-run educational establishments[92]. Another point to consider in this context is that clerical academic staff are often recruited not from actual scientists but from people who pursue a different professional career path. This conclusion is clear if one analyzes the research output of these staff members[93]. The status quo may be a consequence of the staff policy followed by the Polish Church. Undertaking doctoral studies is conditional on the arbitrary decision of Church leaders and superiors at theological seminaries, not on individual academic abilities and aspirations of priests. It is common practice to delegate priests who are not interested in further education to enrol in a doctoral programme, or request doctoral candidates to pursue a degree in a subject that does not correspond to their interests and skills.

Surveys completed by seminarians contain complaints that instead of dialogue with their superiors, they find themselves in "master and servant" relationships. Seminarians are expected to follow directions, often at the expense of time allocated for studies. It is not uncommon for teachers to establish an unquestioned power relationship rather than building a foundation for dialogue. How can seminarians be taught the basis for dialogue, the ability to listen, understand and convince, if their institutionalized authorities do not possess these qualities? Another reason for complaints concerns expulsion of alumni from the seminary without any explanation[94]. Based on my own conversations with seminarians I conclude that not only are there no objective criteria for the assessment of seminary students (evaluation is often based on a purely subjective and arbitrary feeling of the rector), but there is also no communication of specific reasons for expulsion from the seminary. There are grounds to assume that some seminaries are dominated by an authoritarian rather than dialogical atmosphere. In Okońska's study seminarians also highlight that their contacts with lay teachers rely on dialogue, relation-building, and meetings. In contrast, seminary moderators tend not to engage in meetings and discussion. Instead, they

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[92] Elżbieta Okońska, "Osoby świeckie w przestrzeni akademickiego dialogu w seminarium duchowym – szansa czy zagrożenie?," *Socjologia Religii.* Vol. 4. (Poznań: Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2006), pp. 306-308.

[93] *Ibid.*, p. 303.

[94] *Ibid.*, pp. 328-329.

concentrate on giving instructions, avoiding confrontation of views, and imposing subordination. As can be expected, such practices are sanctioned by fear of expulsion or suspension of holy orders. In this light, a seminarian's statement that asking superiors for something is risky because it may do more harm than good must be viewed as symptomatic. It appears than individual seminarians are treated as objects rather than subjects of the formation[95]. Such instrumental treatment is also manifested in overprotective attitudes shown by superiors.

The Polish seminarian formation refers to two main documents: *Pastores dabo vobis* and *Rules for the Priestly Formation in Poland* (KEP1). The documents rightly suggest that the progression toward priesthood should involve stages of human formation and Christian formation, culminating in the priestly formation. As part of the scheme of moderating the human formation, one Polish seminary introduced a system of psychological testing, with seminarians undergoing evaluation in their first and sixth year of study (before taking holy orders). Unfortunately, the results were not in line with expectations. The alumni failed to undergo any significant personal development throughout their seminary formation[96]. A question thus arises as to whether the educational curriculum in theological seminaries is just a catalogue of wishful thinking and ineffective methods.

Opinions of congregations gathered by the author in numerous conversations suggest that seminarians, but also priests (especially diocesan priests), share a specific mentality characterized by sentimental spirituality; replication of existing patterns of priestly behaviours – assuming a specific tone of voice, repeating the same anecdotes and examples over and over again for many years; gaps in intellectual culture and anti-intellectual attitude – perception of the world in binary categories ("black and white"), hasty generalizations, "inclined plane" error; conviction that knowing what the desired situation is can be equated with knowing how to change the existing state of affairs.

One of the key elements shaping the lifestyle and development of seminarians is the curriculum of their studies and organization of life in seminaries. The daily schedule, already overloaded, also features extra activities such as household tasks, meetings with moderators or official

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[95] Okońska, "Obszary napięć w dialogu w formacji seminaryjnej a rozwój moralny kleryków," pp. 323-332.

[96] Grzegorz Wejman, Rev.. "Formacja kleryków po włączeniu seminariów duchownych w struktury uniwersyteckie na przykładzie metropolii szczecińsko-kamieńskiej," Jan Walkusz (ed.), *Kościół w Polsce. Dzieje i Kultura.* Vol. 11 (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 2012), p. 158.

guests, etc.[97]. Seminarians tend to be tired because of their overfilled curriculum. Time allocated for own study is after lunch, which is not particularly conducive to intellectual work, while evenings are dedicated to prayer. Also, seminarians have every right to socialize (socialization is also a community-building activity). All things considered, there remains very little time for individual reflection, studying and intellectual development. A picture thus emerges that Polish seminars operate exclusively on the basis of traditional models – without taking into account the contemporary reality and without professional psychological knowledge of young people's personality development and their particular needs. The author of the present study is under no illusion that good intentions displayed by seminary's moderators are sufficient for the process of formation of future priests. Educators lack knowledge and experience, and hence rely on models of educational practices which they themselves have acquired and which are not favourably viewed by seminarians, as shown above.

The philosophy underlying seminary education also has an impact on the formation of seminarians. The core of the philosophy is the following condition: "If you fulfil the expectations of your superiors, you will become a priest." A major problem faced by theological seminaries (probably not only in Poland) is the fact that the expectations are either unclear or not defined at all. Sometimes they are replaced with a set of regulations which, however, impose an order on the life of the community instead of explaining criteria which must be met to be admitted to holy orders. Consequently, students do not know what circumstances could result in their removal from the seminary. Unclear rules always trigger a feeling of insecurity – or even apprehension – and might encourage priests-to-be to project a false image of themselves in contacts with their superiors. The above assertion may be considered unjust by those moderators and seminarians who have successfully worked out a set of criteria (to the extent this is possible) and hence created a different atmosphere in their institutions. I apologize for the oversimplification, however the picture which I have outlined above

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[97] Conversations with seminarians show that lectures are usually scheduled from 8.00 am until 1.30 pm (or 2.00 pm); afterwards, there is some time allocated for cleaning and recreational activities (until 3.00 or 3.30 pm), followed by own study (until ca. 6.00 pm), and then joint prayers, exhortations, church service, etc. Evenings (between 7.30 and 9.00 pm) are devoted to study or rest. The evening prayer starts at 9.00 pm and finishes at ca. 9.30 pm, when night quiet time begins. All lights must be out at 10.30 pm. The next day begins with a wake-up call at 6.00 am and prayer starting at 6.30 am (during which seminarians are encouraged to engage in contemplative prayer).

does represent a portion of the current reality, and perpetuation of the *status quo* must be recognized as harmful.

Another important element impinging on the formation of seminarians is their young age and models derived from their families. A dominant trend in seminaries is the admission of adolescents directly after secondary school graduation, i.e. at 19 years old. Consequently, the institution is faced with the task of educating people who are both socially and psychologically immature. Seminary students starting their education are, in effect, unable to take full responsibility for themselves because they are smoothly transferred from one control system (parents) to another (seminary). Furthermore, they tend to use emotional intelligence more than conceptual intelligence.

In view of the fact that there has been an increase in the number of single-parent and dysfunctional families in Poland, seminaries increasingly admit students coming from such family backgrounds. This situation, however, sets off other problems in the area of education. If one adds to this the fact that moderators lack psychological knowledge and it is not customary to organize outside psychological assistance, it may turn out that seminaries not only fail to solve existing life problems of young men (which the seminars typically restrict to the domain of sexuality) but often confront them with new issues. New problems may arise out of attempts to adjust to the expectations of moderators by putting on a mask without resolving personality issues and doubts in faith.

I believe that the problems in the formation of seminarians have one common source: fear. Fear of the intellect – because intellect may challenge the truths of faith and lead to doubt. Fear of the laity – because it may pose a risk to the Church's unity. Fear of women – because they make men prone to the sin of impurity, and may discourage them from becoming priests. Due to the latter fear seminarians often succumb to the public pressure and reduce their contacts with women to an absolute minimum. They do this out of concern that they might become victims of slander, which entails disciplinary sanctions, expulsion included. Consequently, it is not an exaggeration to say, with a slight overgeneralization, that Polish theological seminaries mould their young students to become afraid of thinking, uncomfortable about sexuality and preoccupied with the opinions of others – instead of shaping them as loving, responsible and mature individuals.

If I am right in my diagnosis of the underlying fear, future priests may not possess personal characteristics predisposing them to become moral authorities. Those individuals who are afraid to think and distrustful of lay people are incapable of building honest and genuine relationships with others. They will have a tendency to seek refuge behind the façade of institutional authority. However, as mentioned

above, this type of authority is not valued very highly in times dominated by a culture of individualism which requires justification of beliefs and responsibility. The basis for authority building is sincerity and openness to others.

Diagnosis of the Type and Quality of Authority of the Catholic Church in Poland

Figures listed in the first section of this study indicate that the Church is regarded as an authority in Poland – admittedly less so than in the previous political regime, but still noticeably. The authority is more personal than institutional, though. Widespread individualism and criticism levelled at all systems and institutions, however, may result in a further decline of the authority of the Church.

The authority of individual priests, in turn, does not arise principally from their competence or merits. It is a consequence of the recognition of the social role of priests as authority figures regardless of the circumstances. The authority thus comes with the social role rather than specific moral qualifications – it is associated with the position of priest as such, not with the personality and actions of any particular priest. Authority based on social roles is passed on to the following generations in the process of upbringing. However, as I have shown above, transmission of the ethos – and hence the authority – is now in jeopardy.

What is more, since the society is becoming more and more educated, priests will find it more challenging to establish themselves as figures of authority if they demonstrate anti-intellectual views and gaps in theological knowledge. Taking into account the picture of the contemporary priest outlined above, it is not surprising that young people separate from their parish precisely due to their disappointment over contacts with members of the clergy who fail do not possess features that are expected today of good educators or tutors.

Priests have a lower chance of establishing themselves as moral authorities not only because they are not competent enough or fail to comply with the rules of Christian life, but also because, as surveys show, formal (institutional) contacts prevail over personal (community-oriented) relations in their parishes.

However, the most important aspect which reveals itself, among other circumstances, in the communication of Church leaders and priests with followers is authoritativeness. It is no wonder, then, that the Church is viewed as an authoritative institution. I believe that this quality may seriously endanger the process of authority building among individual priests and the Church as an institution. To illustrate this statement more thoroughly, I will analyze the survey data given above and their

interpretations through the prism of one of the theories of interpersonal relationships and communication. My theory of choice is *Transactional Analysis* (TA)[98] formulated by Eric Berne and recognized as a legitimate psychological framework. Due to lack of space, the theory and its tenets can only be presented sketchily. Berne distinguishes three main ego-states which are routinely used by people for the perception of themselves and others, and for communication. The states are: Parent (Controlling – CP and Nurturing – NP), Child (Compliant – CC, Rebellious – RC or Natural – NC) and Adult (A), forming what is referred to as the PAC model. Manifestations of these states determine the types and quality of our relationships with other people. In Berne's typology, each of the ego-states has its own specific behaviours, favourite expressions and dominant feelings. The Controlling Parent is mainly preoccupied with setting rules, defining boundaries for what is and what is not acceptable. The Controlling Parent does not justify the requirements. This state becomes manifest, for example, in the voice of conscience. The Nurturing Parent concentrates primarily on support, and wants to take care of someone. The main focus is on the minimization of threats. The Natural Child is characterized by joy, inquisitiveness and spontaneity. It is not ruled by standards of how to behave, or by fear of threats. In contrast, the Rebellious Child is capable of challenging standards and exposing oneself to danger. The Rebellious Child is able to act defiantly to protect its autonomy.

However, in the extreme of the Rebellious Child rebels too often, transcends the frames of reality and becomes self-destructive. What is more, it fails to achieve autonomy in this way because, paradoxically, the Rebellious Child is still entangled in a relationship with the Controlling Parent – one that is the opposite of compliance. The Compliant Child accepts orders and prohibitions set by the Parent, and accepts care. Excessive submissiveness, however, results in a loss of autonomy over decision-making and authenticity of being. The Adult ego-state is ruled by reality. It analyzes the surroundings and takes decisions and is ruled neither primarily by emotions (as the Child is) nor by prescriptions and safety (as the Parent). Given appropriate investment, both the Parent and the Child function harmoniously. A situation of balance between the states, with no over- or under investment, is referred to as autonomy. This is a state in which,

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[98] Eric Berne, *Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy* (New York: Grove Press Inc, 1961); *Games People Play. The Psychology of Human Relationships* (Random House, New York, 1964); polish edition: Eric Berne, *W co grają ludzie? Psychologia stosunków międzyludzkich*, trans. P. Izdebski (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1987).

respecting the framework of reality and other people's needs, we are able to assume proper attitudes and take suitable actions. Also, we are able to enter into genuine intimate relationships with others. There is no tendency to engage in so-called ulterior transactions or destructive games. In other words, the state of balance is characterized by an appropriate proportion between the Parent, Child and Adult. In general terms, in the TA framework successful communication and interpersonal relationships are determined by the mutual provision of positive reinforcement.

Nonetheless, it frequently happens that a clear exchange is substituted by ulterior transactions or destructive games. Ulterior transactions are those where the explicit conversation occurs, for example, between two Adults, however there is parallel extraverbal communication from a different ego-state, for example the Rebellious Child. The situation leads to misunderstandings, conflicts or breakdowns in communication. Destructive games include, for example, the game of "If It Weren't For You" which was described by Berne. In Berne's example, a woman complained about her husband who, she claimed, restricted her social activities, which resulted in her staying home most of the time. In reality, however, the woman herself made every effort to be restricted. For example, she turned down all proposals or measures that would enlarge the scope of her activities. In this way, she satisfied her need for security, for the outside world appeared to her to be full of threats[99].

I want to state very clearly that the mental mechanisms addressed here, as well as their results, are not necessarily conscious and intentional. Consequently, people cannot really be blamed for them. Another point is that the discussion below, just like the entire study, represents a certain idealization – a generalized construct that has been isolated from reality in order to demonstrate more clearly the qualities that characterize the authority of the Church in Poland. In the section below, I will use acronyms for Berne's ego-states (CP, NP, RC, etc.).

It is worthwhile to apply TA for the analysis of Church authority in Poland as the survey data presented above when analyzed with TA concepts can provide insights into the types of relationships existing in the Church. In this way, it is possible to analyze such aspects as authoritativeness in religious communication, ministry oriented towards the supply of needs (nurture), education of seminarians in apprehension of the opinion of others (respect for the public opinion), instillation of the belief that seminarians must be role models for the congregation

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[99] Berne, *Games People Play. The Psychology of Human Relationships* [Polish edition, pp 45-47].

when they become priests, specific elevated manner of speaking employed by priests in sermons, exclusive right to initiate communication and define its content. All these factors, in my opinion, suggest that priests excessively assume the roles of CP and NP in communication with their congregations and with the outside world.

In addition, religious communication is excessively normative, without adequate attention given to God's beauty and goodness. In this way, religiousness and piety is centred around sin and guilt instead of God and love. The communication lacks references to NC and A in order to fascinate others with God. Instead, religious messages are conveyed mainly by the CP, generating feelings of guilt in the audience and making them focus on sinfulness and the downfall of humankind, which results in sadness and joyless faith.

Anti-intellectualism, lack of justification in the communication of faith and theological studies, and absence of grassroots communication (feedback) can similarly be interpreted in the categories of overblown CP and NP roles. It is typical for the parent to decide authoritatively what is truth and what is not. The Parent only listens to the Child when the latter reports needs (e.g. confession, sacraments) – but not when the Child asks questions or expresses opinions. Furthermore, the Parent makes every effort to prevent the Child from going astray. Overinvested CP and NP discourage independent thinking and justification of what is right and what is wrong. Naturally, this is not intended to say that the Church should not teach the right and wrong. The argument here is that the Church needs to provide adequate arguments and treat believers as adults rather than children, i.e. give them the emotional freedom of choice.

In my view, the above analysis exposes the authoritative nature of communication and relationships existing in the Polish Church, mainly in the excess (overinvestment) of the CP and NP states and disregard for the opinions and concerns of believers.

According to the tenets of Transactional Analysis, overdeveloped CP and NP should give rise to overinvested RC or CC states. People respond to priests' excessive CP and NP ego-states in specific ways, e.g. by developing reluctance to participate in the life of the parish and becoming passive. What is more, Christianity is not regarded as something that one is allowed to challenge. It is viewed as a given – as something that is effectively dead, creating no space for thoughts or feelings other than those given by the Church.

The sense of guilt, focus on sin, joylessness and absence of autonomy are all attributes associated with the way the world is experienced by the overinvested CC whose natural curiosity, joy and energy (characteristic for the NC) have been stifled. Some members of the Church congregation stop short of entering the RC state because of

their fear of the CP and their need of protection granted by the NP. Others, however, stand up against such treatment.

Rebellion and compliance are evident in the fact that only a proportion of people place their confidence in the Church, recognize the Church as an institution of authority and believe in dogmas of faith. The situation can be compared to a family in which the parents are overprotective or/and too normative. Some children brought up in such a family relent (CC), while others rebel (RC). Similarly, some people act like CC and others like RC in response to overblown NP and CP roles assumed by priests.

Let me at this point return to the concept of game mentioned above and, more specifically, to "If It Weren't For You," which is one of the games with a destructive impact on human relationships. It seems that some of the priests and believers within the Polish Church are engaged in that game. For example, some worshippers think that if it were not for boring and silly sermons, they would certainly attend mass. Some claim that if it were not for scandals in the Church, they would be exemplary believers. To compound the picture, some priests believe that if it were not for the passivity of their congregation, it would be possible to accomplish so much more in the Church. Such games arise from the fact that some churchgoers need overinvested CP and NP, and are happy to accept the roles being played by priests. Furthermore, some priests feel the urge to play that role to fulfil their own desires and life scenarios. What is lost in the process is authentic, sincere and autonomous, i.e. mature, approach to religion. It is thus evident that relations rooted in the Parents-Children opposition should be replaced by mutual interactions between Adults. Personal development towards autonomy should be duly recognized as a prerequisite for Christian maturity. If members of the congregation are to be treated as Adults, priests must move away from using persuasion and manipulation, and instead assume a matter-of-fact approach to communication. In this way, they leave enough space for freedom of choice and responsibility.

Reactions of both believers and non-believers also confirm the authoritativeness of the way interpersonal relations and communication are built in the Polish Church.

How is that related to the authority of the Church in Poland?

According to TA, human mental mechanisms operate in such a way that overinvested CP and NP ego-states start to verge on authoritativeness. What emerges is a situation where authority does not arise from voluntary acceptance of someone's arguments but rather from force (e.g. concern about the loss of salvation, sense of guilt, fear of the evil world and the opinions of others) which forces people into submission. People who value authenticity, responsibility and co-participation, however, are not likely to ever accept authoritative

attitudes as an attractive option. The opposite scenario is more plausible – hence authoritativeness is a threat to authority.

Based on the observations given above it can be said that TA is a useful instrument for exposing mechanisms implicated in the defective communication occurring between priests and lay people, and between the Church and non-believers. The main defect of the communication is that it establishes a CP-NP-Child relationship instead of an Adult-Adult interaction. It might be argued that Christianity itself suggests that people ought to be like children in their relations with God (e.g. Mt 18, 1-6). What is meant, however, is that people should adopt child-like spontaneity, joy and curiosity, not become excessively rebellious or, on the other end of the spectrum, excessively compliant. In brief, what is meant is the properly invested Natural Child. For religiousness to be authentic and autonomous, it should be built on the Adult and Natural Child, with elements of CP and NP. Meanwhile, the religious message and religious mentality in Poland focus predominantly on orders and prohibitions, sins, guilt, moralizing and anti-intellectualism. As a consequence, some people stand up against the Church, while others become compliant (in the extreme variant worshippers elevate the Church and priests to a semi-god status, endowing them with infallibility in every sphere and unchallengeable divinity, as is the case with "Radio Maryja" radio station). Perhaps such defective communication is underpinned by people's games. Lay people need overinvested CP and NP roles to feel secure or to be able to rebel. Priests need the CC to assume the role of the NP and realize their life scenario, or the RC – to take on the role of the CP.

The interpretation of data reported in cited surveys in the framework of Transactional Analysis is thus useful in that it cogently shows the dominance of the Controlling Parent and Nurturing Parent in attitudes adopted by priests towards their parishioners. The tendency may result in the relegation of believers to the role of the Child and, consequently, deprive of the mental capacity to assume responsibility for their religiousness. As a result, similar to disobedient children, believers might need guidance as to what they should want, think and feel, and how they should act. Such children find it very hard to evolve into the role of the autonomous Adult.

The importance of accounts of interpersonal communication and relationships is further emphasized by the fact that the TA concept of ego-states and relations is not only consistent with daily observations but also has empirical validation in the work of therapists. To paint a fuller picture of the problem of Church authority in Poland, it is worthwhile to briefly compare it with Western European Churches. Although generalized, insights gained in this way are likely to provide a set of salient factors.

Casanova argues that the Polish Church managed to preserve loyalty to the nation and folk because during the Partitions of Poland it identified itself neither with the capitalists nor the throne, both of which were in foreign hands at the time[100]. By contrast, the institutional Church in the West defended the crown and the status of privileged social groups, which is why it forfeited its authority in a considerable section of the society that acquired a major influence in public life in the 20th century in the wake of democratization movements. These processes are responsible for the wave of antagonistic attitudes towards the Church which has been sweeping through culture in recent times.

The web of social interrelations is further complicated by cultural transformations in the domain of the humanities and theology. The West has gone through serious modernist and postmodernist crises, and the conflict between creationism and evolutionism, not to mention the effects of neopositivism. Due to historical considerations, the Partitions of Poland and then the era of Soviet dominance, these factors have not influenced the Polish culture to nearly the same extent, and have not changed the attitude of the Polish population towards the Church and religion in general. As Staniszkis claims[101], the Polish culture never really underwent modernist transformations. It was not until the last two decades that modernist and postmodernist ideas have gone beyond the realm of scientists and intellectuals, and worked their way into broadly understood culture. Poland is not, as yet, faced with a situation in which the majority of the society regard religions as false stories made up by people to engage other people. What is more, since the Polish Church has unquestionable merits due to its fight with the former political regime, it is actually viewed as an institution of authority. In the West, the Catholic community faces the task of establishing (or rebuilding) such authority. The Western European culture appears to be dominated by atheism or, in a less extreme variant, by agnosticism. As a result, if the Western Church is to succeed in positioning itself as an authority, it must first justify that what it preaches is true. To sum up, what the Church in the West has already lost, the Polish Church still retains. Suggestions provided below thus seek to outline what needs to be done to preserve and reinforce existing authority.

Naturally, the status of the Church in a given culture or country has an impact on the life of people, priests included. It seems that, on the one hand, Polish priests may suffer from a crisis of vocation due to media criticism which occasionally targets not only the Church as an

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[100] Casanova, *Religie publiczne w nowoczesnym świecie*, pp. 159-194.
[101] Jadwiga Staniszkis, *O władzy i bezsilności*, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2006).

institution but also individual priests. Confronted with demoralizing factors in culture, and moral pluralism (or even relativism) which is popular in the media, members of the clergy are likely to ask themselves the question of the purpose of their pastoral duty in such dramatically changed social circumstances. The situation may be further exacerbated by ordinary human crises related to the lack of understanding in others – or to one's own moral disorganization. Western European priests may be faced with other challenges. In addition to problems affecting their Polish counterparts, they must also address the fact that they function in a considerably secularized society dominated by non-believers and those who do not do practise religion. Contrary to Poland, churches do not attract crowds of believers. As a result, priests working west of the Elbe may not only find themselves wondering about the sense of their service in the defined form but even feel no need to perform priestly duties considering the paltry number of churchgoers. Polish priests, though criticized, rarely encounter indifference. A more typical attitude is that of respect. As a result, they are more likely to feel needed by people, which makes it possible not only to fulfil social roles appropriately but to remain in them at times of crisis.

PROPOSED CHANGES

General Postulates

If corrective actions are to be permanent systemic changes rather than short-term patches, it is vital to realize that the Church in Poland operates within specific mental frameworks or imaginaries. These comprise, above all, a generalized reluctance about changes in the life of the Church; an attitude of responding to changes on an *ad-hoc* basic (continuous innovations without consequences) and following the rule of "this is the way things have always been" (nostalgic scenarios)[102].

In order to break that pattern, as Okońska proposes, the Episcopate needs a pastoral vision, a new impulse in the ministry and a new formation of priests[103].

Authoritative treatment of believers (or potential believers) fails to conform to the expectations of at least a portion of the society that wants information, involvement in decision-making and co-

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[102] Mariański, "Parafia szansą przemian polskiego katolicyzmu," pp. 204-205.

[103] Okońska, "Osoby świeckie w przestrzeni akademickiego dialogu w seminarium duchowym – szansa czy zagrożenie?," p. 298.

responsibility[104]. These qualities support the formation of an individual, i.e. a person who is responsible for themselves, and autonomous. If the Church embraces them, it will not only open the door for the group of rebels but will also help those excessively submissive to mature into adulthood. As Mariański claims, authoritarian rule or management contributes to the emergence of tensions between the official Church and the community of worshippers, and between the hierarchy and the rest of the clergy[105]. If priests want to have a part in building the authority of the Church, they should give up the authoritative style of communication, and stop perceiving their role in authoritative terms.

Mariański even discerns a historical and sociological necessity to abandon the pattern built on the "impact of the subject (hierarchical Church) on the object (church member)," i.e. replace the current authoritative and directive approach with an integrative and motivational style. He furthermore argues for the emergence of an active offensive ministry, oriented primarily on social communication and seeking new ways of exerting influence – especially in those realms where the Church has traditionally been absent. It is a daunting task to forge ties and build a community if the Church is rules exclusively through circulars, regulations or instructions. There is an urgent need to abandon "monopolistic explanations and authoritative interpretations for an atmosphere of invitation, argumentation and persuasion." Factors determining the success of the Church as a community include openness, readiness to engage in mutual learning, and bidirectional communication[106]. Ensuring these factors will bring a change in opinion among those who accuse the Church of attempting to intervene in people's intimate lives, not having enough respect, stifling independent thinking or showing authoritative attitudes. In the previous political regime, the Church used to be a sanctuary of freedom. Today, the Church also has a chance of being a safe haven harbouring inner freedom, individualism and evolution to maturity – without losing its own set of beliefs and assertively defined morality. In contemporary times it is not possible to be regarded as an authority by leaving no freedom of choice and squashing individualism. Individualism in this context should not be interpreted as egocentrism but rather as autonomy which allows people to open themselves unrestrainedly to other members of their community. By individualism I understand an authentic, voluntary (free from any pressures), sincere and rational pursuit of full religious faith and life in a community.

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[104] Mariański, "Parafia szansą przemian polskiego katolicyzmu," p. 191.
[105] *Ibid.*
[106] *Ibid.*, pp. 190-191, 195-205.

Particular Postulates

Change of the role of parishes. Some of the opinions expressed about the role of parishes suggest that the philosophy underlying the functioning of parishes require modification. For example, Wysocka indicates that territorial parishes offering mainly folk religiousness may not be capable of fulfilling the task of communicating the message of faith and boosting the authority of the Church. This points to the need to reorganize parishes into more specialized and categorical units. New parishes should attract members not on the basis of territorial affiliation but because of the sense of community and type of ministry they offer. A facilitating factor for the establishment of such parishes would be communities. They would relieve the feeling of anonymity and strangeness which is a problem especially in large city parishes. In this way, parishes would not only convey the faith and authority of the Church, but will also embrace the process of internalization of values, religious behaviours and attitudes. As Wysocka aptly notes, the contemporary Church must compete for customers on the worldview market. Well functioning parishes would certainly be helpful in that competitive process[107].

Peperkamp holds a similar view on the role of small communities. She claims that the parish should be a part of people's daily life rather than a venue visited only on special occasions. If this happens, there is a chance of building a community of people who not only pray together and progress spiritually, but also solve their life problems[108]. A good solution facilitating people's integration is the formation of small task-oriented groups that would aim to resolve specific problems faced by the parish and its members. This would promote the sense of solidarity and community. The positive role of such groups was already appreciated by Tocqueville[109].

The reference to Tocqueville is not incidental, since other measures considered necessary to ameliorate the situation include democratization of parish administration and the introduction of

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[107] Wysocka, "Parafia w recepcji i doświadczeniach młodzieży studenckiej. Postrzegane funkcje w życiu codziennym i w kreowaniu tożsamości religijnej," pp. 102-105.

[108] Esther Peperkamp, "<<Mój Kościół>>. Oazy w Kościele lokalnym," *Socjologia Religii*. Vol. 1 (Poznań: Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2003), p. 159.

[109] Roger Scruton,. *Zachód i cała reszta*, trans. T. Bieroń, (Poznań: Zysk i S-ka, 2003), p. 52.

mechanisms ensuring financial transparency of parishes[110]. Polish bishops and some of the priests and lay people draw attention to the limited involvement of the laity in processes of making decisions about the life of parishes (including financial policy). In this light, it is not entirely clear why some laity are unwilling to become engaged in the life of the parish and decision processes. Perhaps the reluctance stems from the fact that some worshippers have assumed the role of the Child who takes up no responsibility but expects to have its needs met by priests.

The establishment of small communities and democratization of parish life would contribute to the emergence of the parish as a community of communities, and generate the feeling of solidarity with other members and involvement in parish activities. This, in turn, would increase potential religious and socializing influence of the parish on the congregation, and consequently reinforce both the personal authority of the priest and the institutional authority of the Church. Surveys demonstrate unequivocally that persons who participate in the life of their parish have a greater identification with Christ as a model of a perfect human being, a stronger normative commitment to faith and a more all-embracing acceptance of truths of faith[111].

In the process of building such parishes the clergy and the laity alike will need not only good will but also knowledge of the mechanisms governing the operation of groups, a view shared by Szymołon[112]. My postulate is that seminarians and priests should be taught how to foster the feeling of community, what roles are typically assumed by people in groups and how opinion-forming mechanisms operate, etc.

To ensure an efficient formation of the community of communities, existing territorial parishes should, preferably, be reduced in size (some parishes today have up to 12,000 members). An alternative solution would be the introduction of non-territorial personal parishes which might operate using the infrastructure of a nearby parish, if need be.

To finish this line of discussion, I want to emphasize that the philosophy underlying the operation of parishes should be consistent with the mentality of contemporary people who seek autonomy, responsibility and co-participation. Lay people would then be partners

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[110] Mariański, "Parafia szansą przemian polskiego katolicyzmu," pp. 189-190.

[111] Jerzy Szymołon, "Stosunek do sacrum a postawa wobec parafii," *Socjologia Religii*. Vol. 1 (Poznań: Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2003), p. 214.

[112] *Ibid.*, p. 212.

responsible for the ministry[113], and would cease to be treated like children. It can also be surmised that the parish as a community of daily life would also fulfil the needs of adolescent students who, as surveys show, often sever their ties with parishes and often leave the Church altogether.

Improvement of the quality of religious communication. Communication, especially when focused on conveying truths of faith and morality, represents (together with the testimony of life) a pillar for building authority. Errors of style, metaphor-laden rhetoric or loss of the thread of thought may not be the gravest errors of communication taking place between bishops, priests, worshippers and the outside world, however an improvement of this aspect could contribute to a restoration of confidence for the Church, thus facilitating serious treatment of priests. Perhaps the curriculum in theological seminaries should concentrate less on Greek or Latin courses, and place more emphasis on teaching seminarians how to engage in accurate and successful communication.

Another issue that cannot be ignored is the urgent need to improve the content of sermons and religious education at schools. This goal, however, cannot be accomplished without in-depth theological studies. If seminarians are to understand theology better, and be able to communicate it to others, seminaries need to be reformed to allow their students appropriate time for studying, reflection and discussion. The process must be complemented by hiring specialists as lecturers. Based on opinions expressed by seminarians in surveys, it is clear that the "pass" threshold in examinations should be raised, and the approach to students should be modified. Students should not be treated as an object of educational efforts. Instead, they should be engaged in a process of education that welcomes debate and responsibility for own development. To improve the level of intellectual culture, it is also necessary to raise the age threshold and level of education required of seminary applicants.

Considering the fact that the intended recipients of the religious message need some justification for the truths of faith, it seems reasonable to introduce (or bring back) a modern version of apologetics that would attempt to justify the existence of God and his qualities. Similar courses in fundamental and dogmatic theology should be conducted with a view to supporting the truths of faith. It is also important to take note of the interesting proposal formulated by Berger to preserve "epistemological modesty" in religious communication. As the author claims, there is no inner contradiction between being a

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[113] Mariański, "Parafia szansą przemian polskiego katolicyzmu," p. 195.

believer and saying: "I am not 100% sure about what I believe in"[114].
The ability to admit doubt is certain to be appreciated more – and lead to
more trust – than obstinate sticking to views which are considered
consistent with the teachings of the Church.

The quality of religious communication depends to a large extent
on the amount of time which can be allocated by priests for preparing
the message they intend to convey. However, where priests are
responsible for teaching religious classes, celebrating mass, conducting
religious service and running parish groups, the amount of time
remaining for theological study and spiritual growth is quite meagre. A
solution to the problem may lie in a more extensive allocation of
auxiliary tasks to lay members of the Church. They could teach religious
education, preach sermons at church services, lead non-sacramental
church services, etc. Paradoxically, however, this is the ground where
two reluctant attitudes converge: the unwillingness of some priests to
admit lay people to such tasks, and the disinclination of some lay
believers to assist in various parish functions.

An equally significant factor, though admittedly difficult to
pinpoint and explore, is the specific philosophy of religious
communication practised by diocesan priests. The core of the problem is
that the *sacrum* is conceived in opposition to the *profanum*, rather than
as a complementary idea, or that the *sacrum* must be something
miraculous, i.e. necessarily non-natural. Also, there is a pervading naive
belief that the transmission of faith consists in an invitation to share the
emotions and feelings which are experienced by those preaching the
word. As a result, priests have a tendency for unnatural voice
modulation or excessive use of pompous phrases. Also, they focus on
the emotional dimension rather than on the content of communication.

Another proposed solution is a change in the manner of
communication suggested by Transactional Analysis. The objective here
is to motivate priests and lay members of the Church to assume
responsibility for themselves, learn to recognize games and get to know
ways to avoid them. If priests acquired proper skills of communicating
with their parishioners, so that the latter could become autonomous
individuals and fully-fledged Christians, they would gain an
unquestionable status of authority: one that is not built on power,
institutions or a claim to infallibility, but instead founded on confidence
that the priest effectively stimulates personal and religious growth. A
presentation of the rules mentioned above, however, goes beyond the
scope of the present article. They can be found in publications cited
above.

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[114] Mariański, "Emigracja młodzieży z Kościoła?," p. 180.

Changes in the formation of seminarians. The authority of the Church as a foundation for trust and acceptance of the essential truths of Christian faith depends to a considerable extent on the formation and education of seminarians. Based on the account given above, a number of improvements can be suggested for these two aspects. Firstly, the Church should ensure an appropriate quality of the teaching staff. Seminarians and students at theology departments should not be taught by amateurs with academic titles earned "by chance" but by true professionals. Implementing this solution will require the Church to allocate greater funds for hiring lay teachers. This, in turn, calls for a common financial policy, encompassing the entire Church, overseen by the Episcopate.

The curriculum prepared for seminarians should include justification for faith in God and truth of the Gospels. In the same vein, seminaries should address and discuss apologetic problems but, above all, recognize that the Church today is dominated by fear of critical thinking. A reasonable way to tame that fear is to accept that doubts in faith are a normal part of Christian life rather than a manifestation of sin and evil. Since "God has never been seen," arguments must be found to reinforce faith in God's revelation. In my view, critical thinking, and reflection in general, are the central problems in the formation and education of seminarians. The main focus should be on the seminarians' own attitude to faith which may become more dynamic thanks to reflectiveness. The dominant social image of priests also needs to be reversed. The current perception is that priests are anti-intellectual, not sufficiently professional, potentially trustworthy, and generally nice people. This is, at least, the opinion held in circles that are friendly towards the Church. Those with a more hostile attitude hold a much more negative view. Enhancing confidence for rationality and pursuing it will definitely increase respect for the Church and its ordained ministry. Contemporary times highlight the importance of responsibility for moral and religious choices. In order to be responsible, however, various options must be reviewed. Consequently, demands are growing for the justification of faith. Priests who do not comprehend this trend frustrate the efforts made by Christian truth-seekers or discourage them.

Changes in the study curriculum and recruitment of teaching staff from true professionals (including an increase in the number of secular teachers) must be accompanied by a transformation of approach to the way that Polish seminaries are operated. They often fail in the task of moulding mature personalities, and of providing an adequate amount of time for study and reflection. On the other hand, they expect an extensive participation in religious rituals. Aside from taking away the freedom of choice, theological seminaries do not approach their students

as evolving subjects but rather as children who must be presented with ready-made solutions and supervised, so that they would not get hurt. In this way, instead of fostering responsibility for themselves and evolving into adulthood, seminaries hibernate personality issues and religious problems of their students under the cover of overloaded curriculum and emotional experiences. Seminarians are taught excessive concern about other people's opinions. They are instilled with a fear of women and fear of thinking. What ought to be done in this respect is an appointment of a group of professionals comprising priests, psychologists and seminarians who would be tasked with developing an efficient framework for the operation of seminaries, so that students have time both for study and for voluntary prayer (above the required minimum). It is also necessary to define qualities (behaviours) which must be met prior to taking holy orders. Such requirements must be clearly communicated to seminarians who must then consent to the proposed system of formation and education. The process of formation taking place in theological seminaries should not only offer future priests a chance to develop desired qualities and minimize unwanted traits, but also ensure proper assessment of the extent to which the alumni fulfil the required development standards.

A separate problem concerns a top-down dictation of *ratio studiorum* by Vatican dicasteries. Consequently, seminarians are still taught Latin, Greek and Hebrew, i.e. subjects which are as fascinating as they are useless, not to mention that they bring no tangible educational effects, yet take up a lot of valuable time. It is possible to familiarize students with the culture of the Antiquity, at least on a rudimentary level, without teaching them Latin and Greek. The ability to read and understand Latin liturgical texts, on the other hand, can be acquired by taking a monthly course. Another important aspect of reforming the education and formation of seminarians would be a greater flexibility of requirements set by the Vatican.

Equally important, I think, would be to introduce the practice of gathering information from seminarians, i.e. bring in feedback-based communication. If seminarians are to evolve into adulthood, and treat their parishioners in the same way, they must be allowed to express their views and granted the right to be heard. With no feedback-based communication, moderators may be unaware of the real problems faced by their students. The situation keeps up the fiction (or the lie) that everything is fine, in order to satisfy two needs: the need of the Church to have a steady rise in the number of priests, and the need of seminarians to be ordained.

The fundamental change which I am proposing, however, is introducing a minimum age limit for admission to the seminary. As said above, guiding young people – who have only just passed from one

system of control into another – into maturity and adulthood is a very challenging process. A good solution would be to admit older students, for example after completing their third year of study or after turning 23 years old, into seminaries. In this way, the alumni would be more mature at the very outset of the process of formation. The measure would also raise the level of intellectual maturity of the alumni. At presents, seminaries admit all applicants who have passed their secondary school graduation exams and have a recommendation from the rector of their parish.

Since secondary school graduation is no longer considered a proof of having acquired a sufficient knowledge and an ability to think independently, it should be mandatory for future priests to embark on another course of study prior to their seminary admission. In this way, they could enhance their intellectual growth and improve their future authority status by eliminating allegations of anti-intellectualism. Naturally, the above proposal does not mean that the door to priesthood should be closed to those less able – or even to those who exhibit substantial cognitive deficits. They might be accepted (with the minimum age limit of 23 years) for example for a trial period, and offered an individualized curriculum matched to their cognitive ability and with necessary professional help.

Improvement of the image of the Church. Although, as outlined above, the overall image of the Church in Poland is positive, there are areas with clear room for improvement. Remedying certain aspects might prove effective in rebuilding or boosting the authority of the Church. A key role in this domain would be fulfilled by a professional press office responsible not only for drafting the Episcopate's communications and letters but also creating the media image of the Church. In the context of the critical media climate surrounding the Church, which can be witnessed today, it is advisable not only to communicate properly but also to ensure that the society develops more positive associations with Catholicism. Staff working in the office for communication with the society at large would need to possess certain attributes encompassing, besides faith and religious knowledge, the ability to use language suitable for the contemporary audience including, for example, skilful use of a sense of humour. This would help eliminate the traditional perception of the Catholic Church as pervaded by sadness, accusing voice and stilted style of communication. Needless to say, the press office should employ competent professionals, not necessarily selected from among the clergy. This naturally would require an allocation of necessary financial resources.

Another image-enhancing factor is undoubtedly financial transparency not only in individual parishes but in the Church at large.

In this way, the Church will avoid recurrent allegations regarding excessive preoccupation with material needs or the accumulation of riches. Believers, in turn, will be able to learn how their donations and charitable contributions are administered. The Polish Episcopate is now working towards a framework for ensuring transparency of the Church's financial operations.

It is also necessary to adopt and consistently follow a procedure for responding to allegations voiced by the media or law enforcement agencies concerning sexual or financial scandals involving priests. One can only hope that the recent decisions taken by the Episcopate in this respect, and an official instruction for handling such incidents, will change the current practice of silence and the strategy of "sweeping scandals under the carpet"[115].

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It must be clearly stated that the proposed changes outlined above will not substitute for the religiousness and deep faith which are expected of priests. Priestly authority comes primarily from compliance with God's will and their testimony of life. Nonetheless, it is difficult to pinpoint any concrete changes that might be useful in this area. Calling for conversion, unless targeted at oneself, seems more like a voice of one calling in the wilderness. Hence I am of the view that truisms such as "to be an authority and bring people to God, one must be a true believer" are effectively pointless. On the other hand, deep religiousness and faith are not equivalent to knowledge and the ability to solve specific problems.

Throughout the study, I have invoked the works of many authors who have identified similar problems and suggested solutions similar to mine. Their insights give support to my observations that draw mainly on previously formulated opinions, some of which are addressed in greater detail in referenced studies.

I also believe is that the proposed changes may reinforce one another. For example, improved quality of education will push up the quality of religious communication. As a consequence, sentimental religiousness will have a counterproposal in the form of reflection. This, in turn, will contribute to the process of interiorization and

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[115] Konferencja Episkopatu Polski, [Polish Episcopal Conference]. 2013. "Komunikat z 363 zebrania plenarnego Konferencji Episkopatu Polski." AccesssedDecember7,2013.
http://episkopat.pl/dokumenty/komunikaty_zp_kep/5381.1

intellectualization of religious faith, making the choice of religion less conformist and more responsible and individual.

I hope that critical comments directed at the Church will not be interpreted as an accusation, an attack or as a measure aimed at generating feelings of guilt. It is not my intention to level accusations or apportion blame to anyone. The present study is an attempt at addressing the problem of authority of the Church in Poland. I have approached the problem on the basis of research data, within the confines adopted for the article. Definitely, however, the subject deserves a broader and more in-depth analysis.

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Chapter VI

CONTEMPORARY MORAL ISSUES IN THE LIGHT OF GOSPEL TEACHING

TADEUSZ BUKSIŃSKI

BACKGROUND

The disjunction between the morality of the world (applied to daily living, followed in contemporary times) and morality of a religious (especially Catholic) provenance is clear and apparent. Moreover, it is by no means a new development. Quite the opposite, it should be recognized as a standard over the course of human history. In the age of globalization, however, it has become particularly prominent. One of the unique qualities of contemporary times is the fact that secular morality claims superiority over religious morality and demands that the latter acknowledges it as its own. The requirements of secular morality are variable and culturally conditioned. In the age of globalization they are identified with practices prevailing among wealthy and educated groups in Western European societies. Secular morality is promoted by the media, and by both political and cultural élites of both the left and right, that are usually agnostically or atheistically inclined, and critical of various church organizations.

Worshippers and clergy have also developed a multitude of views and a variety of positions under the influence of consolidated pressure from secular institutions and organizations, and in response to the observed decline of institutional religion in Western Europe. Among Christian churches, the main dividing line runs between traditionalists and reformers. Members of the former group are in favour of traditional church morality. Reformers, on the other hand, argue that it should be abandoned – either in whole or in part – and religious morality should be enriched with fundamental norms and values of secular morality which prevail in the Western societies today. In some of the Protestant churches the process of adjustment to the tenets of secular morality is, in fact, already quite advanced. The Catholic Church, however, takes the most conservative stance on that issue among all Christian churches. If other religions were to be incorporated into the discussion, a more conservative approach would be found in Islam and some of the factions of Judaism.

Reformers evoke theories of the sign of the times (*signum temporis*) and challenges of the time to claim that the moral doctrine of

the Church needs revision. They point out that God is at work not only within organized churches but also – or perhaps first and foremost – outside them. This is precisely why the spread of certain moral views, behaviours and practices should be acknowledged as a sign of moral development – or moral progress. Changes in morality is a natural process that must be allowed to take its course. Those who ignore it – or choose to fight it – become detached from reality. Their positions and views cease to have any weight and impact on social reality. They are seen as in error and obsolete, and sometimes written off as plain reactionary. Proponents of reforms argue that throughout its history the Church has repeatedly revised its moral doctrine in response to social transformations and new human experience. Examples include the practice of charging interest on loans, slavery, religious freedom, separation of the church and the state, capital punishment, use of torture or conscientious objection[1].

Conservatives, on the other hand, believe that the fundamental moral values and standards are universal, constant and unalterable. These core values have been bestowed on humanity in the form of the Golden Rule (or ethic of reciprocity), The Decalogue of Moses, and lessons in love and forgiveness given by Jesus in the Gospels. Conservatives make references to the tradition of the Church, arguing that the position of the Church on fundamental moral issues has, in fact, remained unchanged. At the same time, they accept the view that norms must be precisely adjusted to various social and cultural context, and must be applied judiciously. The principles of reasonable application of norms and values in personal and social life have been embedded in the theory of prudence (*phronesis*). Conservatives highlight the fact that signs of the time do not exist merely as facts. Instead, they occur in this function as interpreted phenomena or processes. The same facts may lead to widely different interpretations[2].

Disputes on morality take place on a multitude of plains and with regard to a plethora of issues. Recent decades have seen particularly intense debates on the following problems: (a) divorce, (b) extramarital and premarital sex, (c) homosexuality and homosexual marriage, (d)

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[1] L Boeve, *God Interrupts History: Theology in a Time of Upheaval*, (New York: Continuum, 2007); J.T. Noonan Jr, *A Church That Can and Cannot Change: The Development of Catholic Moral Teaching* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005).

[2] B. Hoose (ed), *Moral Theology for the Twenty–First Century* (New York: T&T Clark, 2008); T.A. Salzman and M.G. Lawler, *The Sexual Person: Towards a Renewed Catholic Anthropology* (Washington: Georgetown University, 2008).

paedophilia,(e) zoophilia, (f) status of women in and outside the Church (g) abortion, (h) euthanasia, (i) *in vitro* fertilisation. Some of the most hotly debated issues are matters of sex and sexuality, and the quality of life. They concern the personal and interpersonal lives of both believers and non-believers. They are, however, either already regulated by law or are the object of initiatives taken by various social groups demanding their legal regulation. The main concepts that lie at the bottom of the debate include moral relativism (embraced by those striving for changes) and moral absolutism (embraced by their opponents). We live our lives today in a culture dominated by the pursuit of pleasure and sex, or – using trendy contemporary terminology – in "bare life" societies. What used to belong to the private realm now demands public and political acknowledgement, and new more liberal legal and moral regulations. The tendency towards gradual politicization and regulation of all spheres of life is clearly one of the defining features of modernity. It is a process of gaining public rights whereby individuals are becoming increasingly subordinated to political power. Through politics and liberal statutory law, all that was once deemed immoral or extra-moral, now requires moral legitimization.

Interestingly, less controversy is now associated with such thorny (and once hotly debated) issues as exploitation, injustice, poverty and penury, enslavement, social and economic inequality. This does not mean that they have been successfully resolved in the world. Simply, they have ceased to be a topic of discussion for social and political élites, and the media. They have been recognized as insurmountable or extremely difficult to resolve – or they have lost their old significance in western countries. Appeals voiced by different churches urging wealthy states to tackle these problems have not, as yet, met with any significant response.

It is interesting to note that participants in debates on moral topics rarely make references to the Gospels or the New Testament. Some consider moral teachings contained in these sources as historically and culturally conditioned and hence inapplicable to current times. Others fail to find in these biblical materials any explicit guidelines for the resolution of problems arising from contemporary interpersonal relations and the specific moral consciousness. The present study seeks to fill a certain gap existing in literature and review moral controversies currently existing in the Western world in the light of teachings and practices described in the four Gospels which are accepted as canonical by Christian churches. After all, the New Testament and the four Gospels in particular are – and must be – the very foundation of life choices and opinions for all Christians. The Gospels rarely provide outright answers to questions that trouble people today. Still, they are recognized as the cornerstone of faith and standards to be followed in

life. This is precisely why they need new interpretations and reinterpretations so that new generations of Christians are able to rise to the challenges of their time. It often happens, though, that Gospel interpretations established in previous times are presented as valid and binding – or even absolute – in later periods. This is especially true for interpretations made by church institutions. Inevitably it leads to tensions and problems between the requirements of contemporary times and old interpretations of truths of faith and religious norms. New situations call for new interpretations of basic sources of faith in the light of current requirements and circumstances. The need for new interpretations, however, should not be construed as the need to adjust the truths of faith to modern requirements, common practices and codes of behaviour.

In order to explore contemporary problems and controversies from the perspective of the Gospels, an appropriate methodology must be adopted. Some statements and occurrences described in the Gospels in fact refer to issues that are also relevant today, and are often addressed by contemporary societies. The present study will attempt to establish whether norms, values and solutions proposed in the Gospels are of a universal nature and can thus be directly applied to our times and followed as guide posts. A more methodologically intricate problem concerns matters on which the Gospels are silent or fail to give clear unambiguous guidance. What should contemporary followers of Jesus do about them? The path to follow is to derive logical conclusions on the basis of available premises, taking into account the cultural and historical context of actions and statements. Probabilistic, reductive or analogous reasoning must be applied in the process. An important methodological aspect that must be incorporated is the principle of interpretation of signs of innovation (or even the degree of normative revolutionary potential) found in statements and actions, and transposition of the innovation of normative and axiological content determined for one area to similar areas or to more general matters encompassing currently explored issues or problems[3].

PROBLEM OF DIVORCE AND SEX

The views given by Jesus on divorce and sexual relationships with divorced individuals are relatively clear and unambiguous. Jesus sees divorce as acceptable only in the case of adultery – or promiscuity

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[3] Compare T. Buksiński, *Zasady i metody interpretacji tekstów źródłowych*,[Principles and Methods of Interpretaion of Texts] (Warszawa-Poznań: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1991).

(*porneia*) of the spouse. The term *porneia*, however, is quite equivocal. Its connotations are, to a certain extent, culturally motivated. It is sound to assume that it encompasses "conjugal infidelity" as one of its meaning components. It is also likely to include various deviations. What other behaviours of sexual or non-sexual nature are involved can only be surmised – perhaps alcohol abuse, indecent exposure, idleness combined with profligacy, spousal mistreatment. A person who behaves promiscuously objectifies themselves and shows no serious concern for their spouse. The person fails to fulfil the goals and duties associated with matrimony, and prevents their partner from doing so. Consequently, the spouses cease to act as persons. Jesus adds that if a husband divorces his wife (or a wife divorces her husband) for reasons other than adultery (marital unfaithfulness), the person breaking the marital union is morally and religiously responsible for any sins committed by the divorced spouse – such as sex with other partners[4].

From one perspective, Jesus viewed marriage in transcendental categories: as a relationship that is made by God. Biological distinctions between men and women are a manifestation of metaphysical differences, and entail the moral duty to respect them. From another perspective, however, matrimony was seen in specifically understood terms of possession. They are not ordinary ownership relations but rather the right of mutual and exclusive disposition of the "sphere of love." The two parties to marriage vow or pledge that they will have a mutual and exclusive right to all aspects of their love relationship (sex included) until the death of the husband or the wife, with the stipulation that mutual freedom is maintained. The exclusivity clause refers to the ban on extramarital sexual relations. In this sense, marriage is a union of a conditional nature since failure by one of the spouses to comply with the exclusivity condition relieves the other party of the duty of compliance, and constitutes a justified reason for divorce. The party who first broke the exclusivity clause or committed other acts of sexual transgression is responsible for the disintegration of marriage. The standards of marital life preached by Jesus were considered novel and strict in his day. Jesus' disciples even regarded them as impossible to follow, concluding that it was better not to marry at all[5]. Divorce and conjugal infidelity (especially committed by men) were commonplace in that period. Under the Mosaic law, divorces were allowed.

Marriage in the Gospels has a distinct metaphysical, social and religious status, and is presented in opposition to the unmarried state. Jesus, however, never said unequivocally how marriage is concluded.

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[4] Mt 5,31, 19,3-19,6; Mk 10,2.
[5] Mt 19,6-19,10.

Formally, Jews took their vows in front of a rabbi. Knowing that Jesus was negatively inclined towards forms and formalizations, one cannot exclude the presumption that he would also accept marriages concluded between two people in an extra-religious manner (i.e. without the involvement of priest), for example by taking a mutual vow or an oath showing their commitment to enter into a permanent and lasting union based on principles of mutuality and exclusivity of sexual relations.

Divorce is related to the problem of validity of marriage. There are, as expected, certain obvious preconditions required for entering into marriage such as: being an adult person of sound mind, responsible for one's actions, having a reproductive capacity. If the preconditions are not fulfilled, the marriage is invalid. This is a reason justifying termination of marriage for unintentional reasons, i.e. causes independent of the intentional actions of the spouse. The subject is also explicitly discussed in the Gospels, when Jesus describes three types of eunuchs who are either unfit for matrimony or do not want to marry. Jesus identified three possible reasons for not entering into marriage: (a) congenital impotence (eunuchs who were born that way), (b) castrated men (eunuchs who are made eunuchs by men), (c) voluntary celibates (eunuchs who voluntarily abstain from sex as they strive for spiritual excellence and want to live their life fully for the Kingdom of God)[6].

The problem of sexual relations between unmarried people of different sex is more complex. Jesus never addressed the issue outright. However, based on some of Jesus' sayings it can be assumed enthymematically that unmarried sex was not held as a great moral sin. Indeed, Jesus openly condemned extramarital sex of married women (gunaicha) and married men (antropos). He had them in mind when he declared that whoever even who looks at a married woman (gunaicha) lustfully, has already committed adultery with her in his heart[7]. Neither unmarried young women (parthenia, chorasion), nor unmarried young men (nearos, neanischos) were mentioned in the context of sexual misdemeanours and adultery. After all, they did not belong to anyone in the sense of sexual exclusivity – nor did they vow to maintain such exclusivity. Evidence for the validity of this interpretation can be found in Jesus' attitude towards prostitutes. Moses' order was to stone them to death. Jesus not only tolerated prostitutes, but never condemned or punished them. He even allowed them to wash his feet and anoint his body with oil[8]. It must be noted, though, that Jesus also encouraged

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[6] Mt 19,12.
[7] Mt 5,25.
[8] Jn 8,3-8,11; Lk 7, 36-7,48.

prostitutes to give up their profession and turn over a new leaf in their lives.

The sphere of sexual activity also encompasses homosexual relationships. Male and female homosexuality are topics widely publicized by the media and activist groups today. More and more countries recognize that same-sex marriages should have the same legal status as heterosexual marriages. In ancient Israel, however, homosexual relations were punishable by death. Jesus never directly confronted the topic of homosexuality, however it can be surmised with a good amount of confidence that he took a negative view of homosexual behaviours and regarded them as a serious violation of God's fundamental moral norms. The claim can be made on the basis of Jesus' statements on the nature of relations existing between men and women. Jesus provides them with a metaphysical dimension. They exist so that man might continue the act of creation. A man (antropos) and a woman (gunaicha) come together and unite into one flesh. This is what they were created for. Consequently, there can be no acceptance for similar relationships occurring between partners of the same sex.

Advocates of the equality of heterosexual and homosexual relationships argue that both types of relations are built on love. Some people are born with a preference for partners of the same sex. By loving each other, they do not hurt themselves or anyone else. Both the society and the Church should sanction homosexual relations as legally equal to heterosexual relationships[9]. Referring to the Gospels, the thesis can be refuted with two arguments. Firstly, male/female relations are based on a set of transcendental norms and values. Importantly, Jesus did not say that God created a man and a woman. What he stressed was that "from the beginning, God made them male and female" (chtisas ap arches arsen chai thelu epoiesen autous)[10]. Therefore, the distinction between male and female is the fundamental principle of the world. The division into two sexes in humans is just a particular manifestation of the fundamental opposition between male and female elements, a primal duality found in forces of nature and cosmos. Therefore, recognizing homosexuality as a standard in human relations would not only undermine the moral order but also interfere with the underlying

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[9] K. Slany, B. Kowalska, M. Smietana, *Homoseksualizm. Perspektywa interdyscyplinarna* [Homosexuality. Interdisciplinary Perspective] (Kraków: Nomos, 2005).

[10] Mt 19,4; Por. K. Wojtyla, *Mężczyzną i niewiastą stworzył ich. Odkupienie ciała a sakramentalność małżeństwa* [Man and Woman was Created. Redemption of Body and the Sacrament of Marriage] (Lublin: RW KUL, 2008).

metaphysical order. It would be replaced by an empirical order constructed by people and based on blind desires. Only animals follow their desires blindly. Secondly, the love claimed by advocates of "legitimization" of homosexuality is rather a biologically motivated sexual urge. Sexual desire is not, in itself, something valuable. It only acquires value when it is directed towards the rational good, guided and controlled by reason and will. This is a point that all the ethicists since ancient times seem to agree upon.

In the context of male and female relationships Jesus never said anything about love but rather about the union of flesh and the metaphysical validation of the division of the sexes in the world. Love is not considered a defining feature of marriage. According to Gospels love may take a variety of forms: (1) interpersonal love – understood as a type of spiritual friendship between equal individuals who are committed to doing moral good; they retain their subjectivity and individuality; (2) caritas (agape) – based on compassion, charity, helping the poor, the suffering and the oppressed; (3) altruistic love – manifested as love for the enemy, forgiveness of faults and abandonment of revenge (4) love to God – expressed as strict compliance with God's instructions in daily life. Love is thus a specific type of a spiritual bond between members of a society, a selfless cooperation between different persons – including the husband and the wife. The Gospels do not address *eros* and its role in people's lives directly. There are, however, mentions of the union of bodies (flesh) which exists between spouses in marriage. *Eros* (bodily union) is thus understood – in the normative sense – as a component of spiritual unity, or a metaphysical bond between individuals of different sex who choose to live their life together.

The perception of homosexuality as a moral evil does not entail the condemnation of people with such inclinations. The only sanction applicable to homosexuals is that they are not given the right to marry. Jesus reserves marital status for relationships between men and women only.

In the light of the discussion presented above, it is evident that all other types of sexual relations (zoophilia, paedophilia) are also unequivocally condemned.

The Gospels discuss the topic of children quite extensively. Jesus spoke very harshly about those who hurt or harm children. He said they were doomed to eternal damnation and would be better off if they hanged a millstone about their neck and drowned[11]. Children, Jesus taught, are inherently good from birth, not evil.

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[11] Lk 18,5-18,7, 18,16.

In this context, a question arises as to whether the negative moral evaluation of homosexual relationships and paedophilia translates into the negation of people engaging in such reprehensible practices. The problem is far from unequivocal. The judgement depends on the type of relationships and the type of persons who engage in them. This is particularly well visible in the parables. In the first Parable of the Sower Jesus described the circumstances underlying people's moral beliefs and actions. They include social influences, background, upbringing and features of character. As a result, actions taken by different people – though seemingly similar – require separate moral evaluation. Consequently, various individuals may be judged differently in spite of the fact that they act ostensibly in the same way[12]. Also, aside from moral evaluation they are also assessed with other criteria: religious, personal, social, etc. The problem can be examined in more philosophical terms too. Ever since the times of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas philosophers have assumed that every person is a subject and an agent performing acts that are free and subject to moral qualification. The person has two basic aspects: the aspect of conscious performance of an act (actus humanus) and the aspect of substance of the person (assumed for every act). The person realizes themselves in acts due to external (intentional) transcendence towards things or people – and internal transcendence through the constitution and manifestation of their freedom, agency, reason, dynamism and consciousness. Firstly, in transcendence processes the person as an entity is neither questioned nor changed. Secondly, the person performing an act realizes two types of values: personal (freedom, self-determination, agency, self-ownership) and moral (reference of actions to moral norms and values). Moreover, every person performing acts is subject to somatic (corporeal) and mental factors over which the person has no full control and which enter into the sphere of the person's acts[13]. In this framework, moral evaluations of acts and acting persons do not need to lead to assessments in personal and existential categories. It is possible to give a negative moral assessment of reprehensibly behaving people without undermining their personal status which is a positive personal (though extra-moral) value – or their ontic subjectivity which is also axiological in nature.

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[12] Mt 13,3-13,23.;T.Buksinski, *Etyka ewangeliczna*[Ethics of Gospels], Poznan 2012, WNIFUAM

[13] K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*,[Person and Deed and other Antropological Studies], (Lublin: RW KUL, 2000), pp. 97, 161, 305, and others.

PROBLEM OF THE SEXES

The status of women, as described in the Gospels, deserves a separate review, since Jesus' position on the matter should have a decisive effect on the position taken on the matter by today's Church. Christian churches have always struggled with addressing the problem of the status of women. This is evident already in the Epistles of Paul, a former Pharisee, who relied heavily on the Old Testament. From one side he forbids women to hold speeches and be active during religious gatherings and calls for women to be obedient to their husbands[14]. Frome other side he writes that man and woman have the same status, because all people are equal in Jesus Christ[15] and he praises women working as deaconesses, chiefs of the Christian believers and even apostles[16]. Women were holding in the first century posts similar to men: deaconesses, prophets, preachers and priests. In the second century the process of institutionalization of Church and forming the official religious doctrine took place. During this period women were deprived of holding positions in the Church hierarchy. They kept their functions (as priests and bishops) only in Gnostic Christian communities[17]. From this time on the one hand, the institutionalized Church appreciated the faith shown by women in the face of hardship: a number of women were martyred for their faith in early Christian times and were then canonized. Also, the Church appreciated the knowledge and wisdom of women. Some of them were proclaimed as Doctors of the Church (e.g. St. Thérèse of Lisieux). Others gained an important status in the Church as visionaries, prophets or individuals inspired by God (St. Thérèse, Mother Teresa of Calcutta). Women's religious orders have existed alongside male orders from the very beginning. On the other hand, however, women are banned from holding high positions in the Church. They are not allowed to be ordained as priests and serve in other functions in the Church hierarchy. In the domain of social life, the Catholic Church until recently relegated women to roles within the family and household (providing for the needs children and husband, running the home). Both ancient and modern societies have traditionally perceived such roles as secondary, less prominent than public and political functions, or roles in the sphere of culture and entertainment, or the world of business. Top roles and important occupations used to be reserved for men. The tendency was usually attributed to Church

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[14] St. Paul, I. *Kor* 14.34*s*.
[15] St Paul, *Gal* 3.28.
[16] St Paul, *Rom* 16.1, 16.2, 16.7.
[17] E. Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels,* Philadelphia 1979, ch. III.

tradition. Claims were made that there were no women among Jesus' disciples and that no women were priests in early Christian communities. Not so long ago, it was also argued that women were unable to hold important managerial positions because they lacked appropriate traits of character. They were thought to be too emotional and to address problematic issues too personally rather than impartially and universally.

However, it is worthwhile to explore the actual position Jesus took on women. Contrary to commonly held beliefs, women did play a major role in Jesus' public life and teaching. Women were always present among the followers of Jesus and travelled with him. While it is true that Jesus selected twelve men as his closest disciples, one must not forget he lived in a patriarchal and theocratic society in which women had no public or religious roles. Formal appointment of women as religious apostles would have represented an outright violation of formally sanctioned religious and social standards, which would have been an immediate cause of conflict. Consequently, Jesus would have been banned from entering synagogues which, at the time, were the main venues of his preaching. In the times of Jesus, women were not allowed to stay in the main hall of the synagogue. They could only be present in balconies and in vestibules, and had to use their own entrances. Jesus, however, placed women on a par with men. There is a paradigmatic situation in which Jesus commended Mary for sitting down and listening to his teaching, and reprimanded her sister Martha for concentrating on preparing and serving food for the group of guests. Many women enjoyed a similar status to the Apostles since they accompanied Jesus on a regular basis. These were: Mary Magdalene, Mary, her sister Martha, Mary of Clopas, Salome, Joanna[18]. A group of female disciples was present at the crucifixion of Jesus, while the Apostles ran away in fear. Also, all the gospels say that women were the first to discover the Resurrection of Jesus. Addressing a Samaritan women at Jacob's well, Jesus confessed to being the Messiah. Importantly, that was the only time he voluntarily and directly announced this to anyone during his life[19]. Jesus also took a number of actions that broke the taboo of the day. Even the Apostles regarded some of Jesus' actions as extraordinary: "And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman"[20]. Jesus also praised poor and honest widows, contrasting them with wealthy yet greedy men[21]. He condemned the Pharisees for taking

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[18] Compare Jn 11,5-11,32, Lk 10,38-10,42.
[19] Jn 4,5-4,26.
[20] Jn 4,27.
[21] Lk 21,3-21,4.

advantage of poor widows[22]. While discussing their plight, he drew attention to the underlying structural social injustice: women were treated unfairly and could do nothing to improve their position. This type of society was inherently unjust. The poor and the suffering should be given assistance, however that was not a holistic solution to the problem. The situation called for the provision of social conditions allowing everyone to live on a decent level so that they would not be forced to beg others for help. What is more, the Gospels do not contain any explicit arguments why women should not enjoy equivalent status and hold similar positions to men in the community of believers (and hence in the contemporary Church). Men and women have the same metaphysical standing in Jesus' teachings, representing the opposite yet equal elements of creation. There are no factors justifying social discrimination of women, or claiming that they are the inferior sex. The social roles of men and women, and their typical tasks, were determined solely by existing social conventions.

Jesus' statements and actions corroborate the thesis that he embraced the idea of equality of men and women both in social (public), private and religious spheres. He did not manifest his views openly as he did not want to stir up another conflict with the Synagogue: the priests ruled the Jewish nation within the Roman empire.

The differences between men and women are typically associated with the corporeal (somatic), mental and spiritual domains. Central somatic differences are given as natural and, to a certain extent, also mental. The latter are invoked by proponents of the ethics of care (claimed to be characteristic for women) in opposition to intellectual ethics (distinct for men). The differences, however, neither entail not substantiate claims about the dominance or superiority of any of the sexes. Bodies are given to people, but people also reflect upon their bodies, shape them, cover, heal and decide on how they use them in accordance with their intentions and existing social norms. Not only bodies are changed and shaped. The same also applies to the senses, psyche, reason and characters. These are determined on an individual basis by every human being. Their development by criteria of sex is partially related to inherent divergences between the sexes and partially underlain by conventional and cultural factors. Differences connected with biological and mental constitution cause various perceptions of social roles (mother, father). They may not, however, lead to the discrimination of some of the roles, nor determine access to public positions. Both men and women are created to exist with a body and a soul. There is no evidence to demonstrate that any of the sexes is more

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[22] Lk 11,37, Lk 20,47.

closely bound to the body or to the soul. All people are endowed with reason which is the same for both sexes. Every reasonable human being is a person and must therefore be treated on the same level as others in terms of values.

DEFENCE OF LIFE

The issues of abortion and euthanasia warrant a separate discussion. Both topics receive a lot of media coverage and are an object of heated debate in medical and legal circles. The Gospels contain no direct references to either of them. However, the position of Jesus on the two issues can be inferred from his general outlook on life. Jesus repeatedly stressed the overriding principle stating "Do not kill (me foneuses)[23]. "Fonos" is not an unequivocal term; it may mean "murder" or "manslaughter." The difference in meaning is quite significant. If the interpretation of "do not murder" is adopted, the rule takes its focus on the fact that one must not kill oneself or other innocent people without a reason, or kill people out of revenge, malice, for immoral causes, etc. The interpretation, however, allows killing another person in self-defence or during a defensive war. If "me foneuses" were to be construed as meaning "do not kill" rather than "do not murder," it would, it seems, also exclude killing out of self-defence or during defensive wars. Under this interpretation, there are no circumstances justifying the intentional and conscious killing of other human beings. On the other hand, sacrificing one's own life to defend the lives of other people or for "God's higher goals" is acceptable.

Regardless of which of the interpretations is adopted, the basic sense of the ban is quite explicit: do not deprive innocent people of their lives. Human life is an unconditional value.

With respect to abortion, the ban on killing needs to be explored more closely. Abortion may be deemed acceptable or unacceptable depending on the definition of a human being and on the establishment whether an embryo/foetus satisfies the defining criteria of a human being, and if so, at which moment during pregnancy this happens. If the defining features of a human being are assumed to exist from the moment of fertilization, the resulting living organism requires protection and defence from that very moment, like any other human being. Decisions on this matter are conditional on the one hand on one's religious and philosophical views on the "essence" of the human being and – on the other hand – on empirical findings on the constitution and development of the human foetus made by specialists. It is in this

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[23] Mk 10,19.

context that some mention the "interest" of the foetus: already in the embryonic period there are observable defensive responses to danger.

A separate area of consideration concerns ethical problems that emerge when the mother's life is endangered because of her pregnancy. Such situations give rise to the dilemma about saving the life of one person at the expense of another human being. In fact, this seems to be the only circumstance justifying the abortion of a foetus that is acknowledged as a human being. In cases like this, the final decision should rest with the mother. She has the right to make decisions about her life and, if she so wishes, sacrifice her existence for the life of her child. No other person, however, should be allowed to take the decision for her. Until the time of birth, the mother is the carer of her unborn child whose fate ultimately depends on her (her body, health, well-being, actions and decisions).

"Me foneuses" also forms a normative foundation for the answer to the question on the moral acceptability of euthanasia. Innocent people may not be killed regardless of the fact who and what they are: incurably ill, retarded, mentally ill or in pain. No one has the right to dispose of other people's lives. Life is a value in itself. Exceptions to the rule include challenging situations such as those mentioned above. If my life is in danger – and so is the life of another person – I may be forced to make a choice between saving my life or someone else's. Confronted with such a dilemma, some choose to save their lives, while others decide to save the life of another person. Both choices are acceptable within the narrow understanding of the "me feneuses" principle – as "do not murder." If the broader interpretation is adopted, one must never value one's own life over the lives of others, regardless of the type of danger.

The above considerations may, by analogy, be applied to *in vitro* fertilization. Philosophers or theologians are not competent to decide *a priori* and unconditionally on the admissibility or inadmissibility of such practices. They may only attempt to formulate admissibility criteria. In general terms, such practices are admissible on the condition that they do not involve violation of moral principles governing the handling of human embryos or fertilized cells causing them to become damaged or weakened and, consequently, leading to deformities and disabilities of people (e.g. increased susceptibility to diseases). Whether these conditions are satisfied or not, however, can only be established by medical specialists analysing each case on an individual basis[24].

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[24] Compare A. Karnein, *A Theory of Unborn Life. From Abortion to Genetic Manipulation*, Oxford 2012, Oxford UP; J. Mumford, *Ethics at the Beginning of Life*, (Oxford UP, 2013).

People should defend their lives using all means available – but not at the expense of the lives of other people. As already mentioned, no one has the power to decide on other people's lives. By the same token, people should not allow others to take away their lives. Faced with danger, one should run away, defend oneself, and try to ease the situation, use all means available to save themselves. Jesus told his followers that people confronted with the choice between their own death and that of others should choose to die themselves rather than deprive anyone of their life[25]. It can thus be concluded that Jesus interpreted the idea of "me foneuses" broadly, in the sense of "do not kill" – at least obligatory for Him and his followers.

Another forbidden act mentioned in the Gospels is suicide. The act of intentionally causing one's own death is a violation of human dignity. Sacrificing one's life for high goals, by contrast, is allowed. High goals include, for example, defending other people's lives, morally commendable behaviour, safeguarding one's religious and moral identity. Every person is composed of a body (soma) and a soul (psyche), and spirit (pneuma), the latter being superior to the former. Consequently, there are times when it is appropriate – or even necessary – to sacrifice bodily life for spiritual things. The realization of fundamental virtues, values and moral norms determining every person as a spiritual being is a greater good than physical life itself[26].

PROBLEM OF ETHICAL RELATIVISM

The explorations above have focused on specific ethical problems that are intensely debated today, and on the positions on these issues that, in the light of the Gospels, are probable and likely to be acceptable to Christians. The discussion below concentrates on a more general topic of relativity of ethical norms and values. The claim of relativity of norms and values forms an assumption for the criticism of traditional positions embraced by the Catholic Church on issues of morality. Relativism has become the dominant view in contemporary ethics. Attention is frequently drawn to the fact that norms and values tend to change over time and space, and are often determined by individual interests, cultures, political views and other factors. Failure to take these aspects into account gives rise to ethical absolutism. Absolutism, however, is irreconcilable with fundamental principles of freedom and equality. As a rule, a single, particular point of view is absolutized, opening the door to the discrimination of others. Absolutism – relativists argue – is always

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[25] Mk 8,35-8,38.
[26] Jn 10,15 and others.

biased and one-sided, or even arbitrary. It prioritizes some at the expense of others.

The account below is an attempt at demonstrating that the Gospels represent absolutism of meta-ethical formal and meta-ethical regulative types. Contrary to widespread claims, however, the Gospels contain no substantive (normative) absolutism at the objective and intersubjective level. Jesus accepted and valued multiple ethical and moral approaches used by different entities in divergent circumstances.

The essence of formal ethical absolutism is continuous and consistent compliance with a certain principle, norm, law, opinion or value of a moral nature (or carrying moral consequences). The goal is that at the level of applied morality, i.e. moral rules followed in daily life, people should judge others according to the same principles which they apply to themselves, and vice *versa* – they should evaluate themselves based on the same rules they set for everyone else. The content of the principles (norms, assessments, criteria, values) is not comprehensively specified. The requirement of consistency or practical non-divergence eliminates the privileged position of the person who performs assessments or passes normative acts. No people are above the standards they apply to others. As Jesus said: "[...] for in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you"[27]. He used the same criterion when he criticized those who saw the speck of sawdust in another person's eye and paid no attention to the plank in their own eye[28], and those who pleaded with their creditors for mercy but were later unmerciful towards their own debtors[29].

At this point, doubts may arise as to whether the application of the criterion cannot be taken to justify immoral views and actions, such as persecution of those who think differently. It is easy to imagine individuals who persecute others for their religious views (or racial reasons) and, at the same time, accept that they may be persecuted themselves – for the same reasons – if the tables turn and one day they come under their rule. Firstly, it seems that persecutors are usually deeply convinced about their own moral superiority and supreme power (authority) over those they oppress. Rarely do they realize that one day they may find themselves in the power of the persecuted. Secondly, the principle of consistency is applied in practice to a narrower or wider circle of people. The scope of application of the principle is evidence for the moral status of individuals. The wider, and more ideologically and

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[27] Mt 7,2.
[28] Mt 7,3-7,4.
[29] Mt 18,23-18,35.

socially varied the scope of people covered by the principle, the more rational and moral are the people applying the principle. The criterion of consistency, or practical non-divergence, imposes the requirement to treat all people as equal. Compliance with the requirement is a sign of good sense and rationality of all individuals who are subject to moral assessment. People realize this to a greater or lesser degree. Inconsistent application of ethical principles (regardless of their particular content), or their application in a small group of people, is a manifestation of low moral consciousness. If this happens, some individuals receive unjustifiably privileged treatment (e.g. those who bestow privileges and their inner circle, relatives), while others are discriminated against (e.g. those outside their ethnic group). In practice, no one is able to treat everyone equally and apply exactly the same principle (for example help according to people's needs) because of limited possibilities in this regard. This is why an additional criterion must be used in actions to allow for existing possibilities. Thirdly, the principle of consistency is not the sole criterion for the assessment of morality of opinions and behaviours. Consistency in the application of principles is the minimum condition required for being moral. It is an obligatory, though not sufficient, formal condition.

Another universal meta-principle of a regulative and evaluative nature which can be found in the ethical framework of the Gospels is the principle of circumstances. In situations requiring moral assessment of actions the principle imposes the prerequisite to take into account, at the meta-level, the circumstances in which the actions are taken. At the level of subjective beliefs (of the first degree) and actions, the principle states that an individual must conform to a set of norms and values that (a) he is aware of, (b) he is truly and honestly convinced that they are valid and appropriate, (c) he should follow in particular objective and subjective circumstances.

What is meant here is familiarity with moral norms and values that can be acquired by various means: through upbringing, socialization, teaching, influence by others, own reflections etc. On the other hand, the focus is on the internal conviction about the validity of norms and values, and their acceptance. Human beings are familiar with various types of norms and values. It hence becomes problematic to decide which of them should be accepted and based on what criteria. All the factors which are involved in the acquisition of ethical knowledge also have an impact on the acceptance of a particular set of ethical norms and values. Some of them prove to be more powerful than others and people embrace them, adopting certain norms and values as their guiding posts. It should be borne in mind that intellectual acceptance often does not go hand in hand with the incorporation of accepted standards in real life. Implementation of norms and standards depends to a major degree

on subjective factors including one's will, character, drives and desires, habits, inclinations, social standing, life circumstances.

In the area of moral evaluations, the Gospels place emphasis on the obligatory (normative) ethical awareness of agents, i.e. the consciousness that some entities (individuals and groups) should possess and implement in practice because of objective factors (possibilities, life circumstances, social standing) and subjective aspects (knowledge, spiritual qualities, capabilities) which are characteristic(valid) for them. Such obligatory awareness is mandatory, while all entities are expected to act in accordance with it and because of it. It should also serve as a benchmark for people's moral evaluation.

According to Jesus' teachings, some entities should be expected to represent higher and more sophisticated moral qualities than others. Also, some entities should be expected to have a higher morality than they actually acknowledge or integrate into their actions. Any moral evaluations of their beliefs and actions should be performed against the moral framework which is deemed appropriate (suitable) for them. Such obligatory ethics is assigned to people on the basis of several criteria: general level of knowledge and intelligence; possibility of exploring various ethical perspectives; life experience, cultural background, upbringing and tradition. Obligatory morality can be construed as an "adjustment" of actual morality; it represents a benchmark and model to follow. Because different people and communities live in different social and cultural settings – and have diverse habits, mentalities, capabilities, experiences and potential for comprehension – they develop different moralities (moral awareness and conduct). The discussion, however, is not limited to factual statements concerning the underlying circumstances. The Gospels view such circumstances in normative and axiological dimensions as either constraints (obstacles) or opportunities (promotions) for the legitimacy and validity of specific moral norms and values. In this way, they acquire a normative/axiological dimension.

This interpretation of substantive morality is suggested by a number of Jesus' statements: "But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked"[30]. He disapproved and condemned the Pharisees and teachers of the law for the fact that they had warped the teaching of Moses by using legal loopholes and formalizing them. That was not the sole reason for his disapproval, though. He also reprimanded them for failure to accept his teaching, as he assumed they were capable of embracing his philosophy

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[30] Lk 12,48.

on intellectual, cultural and religious planes. The Pharisees knew what Jesus preached, and were unable to undermine his postulates with rational arguments. Nevertheless, they rejected them because they were afraid of losing their privileges, prestigious positions and high social status[31]. As for his disciples, Jesus expected them to adhere to his message of love and justice. Otherwise, he said, they would be like the Pharisees who would never get to the kingdom of heaven[32]. He had no such expectations of the simple folk. Considering the moral level of average people they could only be expected to follow the norms and values taught by the Pharisees. Compliance was the essence of their morality. Simple people had very restricted moral awareness because of their living circumstances, traditions, and influences of the environment[33].

There are a number of parables illustrating the role of objective factors, i.e. circumstances existing independently of entities, in the process of shaping people's ethical awareness[34]. The same idea is expressed in Jesus' guidance not to throw pearls to swine, as they will not appreciate them anyway[35]. Swine are subject to swine morality, and should be evaluated on the basis of it. They are unable to overcome the boundaries that are imposed on their consciousness.

Natural circumstances and constraints (both subjective and objective) are originally given by God. After that, they become dependent on people and on their ability to use gifts bestowed by God: on their will, activities undertaken within the scope of their freedom and the capacity to act. The idea is illustrated in the parable of the talents[36]. People are obliged to act morally within the constraints of their ethical consciousness, aptitudes and gifts.

FINAL REMARKS

In the light of the theory of circumstances discussed above, the ethical framework entrenched in the Gospels emerges as universal at the formal level and at the substantive meta-level. It regulates the applicability of specific moral norms and values with the criterion of the level of actual and obligatory ethical consciousness. At the same time, however, it is not universal in the sense of applying to all the people in

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[31] Mt 23,25- 23,36.
[32] Mt 5, 20.
[33] Mt 23,3.
[34] Mt 13,3-13,9.
[35] Mt 7,6.
[36] Lk 19,11-19,27.

equal measure. Instead, it is built on the assumption that individuals and social groups have dissimilar levels and types of ethical (obligatory and actual) consciousness, which means they are subject to different sets of norms and values. Individuals with a higher level of ethical consciousness are expected to follow more rigorous principles.

The teaching of Jesus is a normative foundation for the beliefs and conduct of Christians. Christians may not change Jesus' instructions or consider them inapplicable – unless they recognize the texts conveying Jesus' teachings as unreliable. However they can – and even should – regularly revisit Jesus' message, reexperience it, reinterpret it anew, and apply it to their lives, especially in the context of new challenges and the emergence of new material, spiritual and social circumstances of life and mutual coexistence. They must not adapt to the requirements of their time at the expense of evangelical norms and values. Their obligatory ethical consciousness is at a more refined level than that of other people. Therefore, they should use it in order to address the challenges of changing times. Consequently, "promiscuity" (*porneia*) presented above as a permissible reason for divorce may be variously interpreted by Christians, and differently applied across the times and cultures, however it may not be substituted with any other causes such as financial position, boredom in marriage, falling in love with someone else, etc. Such practices are unacceptable – just like homosexual marriages which contradict the essence of marriage (as a union between a man and a woman) expressed in the Gospels.

One could argue that Jesus' teaching was heavily culturally conditioned and hence may not be regarded as universally valid. After all, it is possible to imagine societies without marriages (as in some primitive tribes), communities with short-term marriages (as proposed by Plato; attempts to implement the idea were made in some communist states) or polygamous marriages (as in some Islamic countries). Such societies are, naturally, possible, but they are not Christian. Jesus did not address them directly. He referred to the religious and moral traditions that originated in the times of Moses, and presented his proposed norms and values of individual and collective life in opposition to Mosaic ideas. If the societies do not recognize, or stop recognizing, the norms and values taught by Jesus (love, justice, mercy, peace, marriage) as binding, they are not – or cease to be – Christian. This does not entail that they should be condemned outright. As mentioned in the discussion above, the moral evaluation of their actions must be relativized to their obligatory ethical consciousness which is determined by a variety of circumstances.

A claim is often made that the teaching of the Church is too obsolete or too strict, or that it fails to adapt to the challenges of modern times. In view of the current tendency for people to drift away from the

Church, there is a risk that the Church might end up with having no worshippers to speak to. Another negative factor is the demoralization within the Church. Such remarks are in place, since social impact is an important practical problem. The Church should find a new language and new methods of influence in order to attract followers. Jesus set an example for doing precisely that. The number of followers, however, does not have any bearing on the validity of religious and moral norms and values. The quality and morale of the clergy are similarly insignificant for the relevance of moral norms. Throughout human history, there have been many periods of demoralization of the clergy (e.g. in the 15th century) as lifestyle adjustments were made to the dominant forms of secular life. Such periods in the history of the Church have resulted in new churches and sects being formed, and in internal struggles within the Church. On the other hand, they have become seeds of reform.

The essence of reforms within the Church is not to accept standards of life that contradict the rules set out in the Gospels – nor to adjust to lifestyles prevailing in any particular age and acknowledge dominant practices as adherent to the doctrine just because they are widespread or popular within societies. The core of reforms is to use Jesus teachings as a basis for developing practical regulations concerning new forms of life and new problems, and presenting general evangelical norms and values from a new perspective. Material, social and spirituals conditions within human societies are constantly evolving. New problems and challenges arise. They require an analysis in the light of fundamental principles of Gospel teaching. Answers will not always be easy to find, for many issues that are very significant in modern life are not directly discussed in the Gospels. In cases like this one must draw on the spirit of the Gospels, which means that positions taken on such contentious issues might differ considerably. Within the scope of matters on which teaching is straightforward, however, there are no reasons to undermine them.

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THEOLOGY OF THE BODY AND THE TECHNICIZATION OF HUMAN CORPOREALITY

DARIUSZ DOBRZANSKI

BACKGROUND

In 1972, Jerzy Turowicz wrote: "If the Church is not predominantly a hierarchical structure but a community of people redeemed by the blood of Christ (and, as is known, not only Christians *but all people* were redeemed by Christ's blood), and if the task of the Church is to transform the entire humanity into a community based on fraternity, friendship and love, this means that the Church should not be looked upon as a besieged fortress holding off the attack of outside forces storming its walls. The Church must stop attaching primary importance to the defence of its interests conditioned by the historical past – because the only genuine interest of the Church is to be present everywhere as evangelical leaven, as a ferment transforming the shape of the world from within through persistent work"[1]. I treat Turowicz's words as my own declaration: this is exactly how I perceive the missionary activity of the Catholic Church in the contemporary "disenchanted" world.

The teaching of the Catholic Church evaluating the achievements of contemporary life sciences (medicine) and people's attitude to matters of the body (e.g. sexuality) introduces precisely the same "ferment" as that mentioned by Turowicz. The Church asks politically incorrect questions which typically present believers with the duty to take up difficult responsibilities and self-restrictions concerning their own bodies. At a first glance, asking uncomfortable questions may be viewed as an attempt to undermine someone's authority. Moral teachings of the Catholic Church may also give rise to additional suspicions: relating to resentment, jealousy or incompetence. After all, it can always be said that theology is "past its prime." I do not subscribe to this view. Critical opinions about some of the attempts to solve the perennial problems of humanity brought about by the "technicization of human corporeality,"

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[1] Jerzy Turowicz, „Kościół nie jest łodzią podwodną," *Tygodnik Powszechny*. No. 39, 1972, p. 5.

seeking to "improve God's work," are voiced not only by people of the Church. The issue is also addressed by philosophers who could not be further from embracing the Catholic creed. There is nothing exceptional or suspicious about political incorrectness. In fact, political incorrectness has always been an inherent element of European culture. Freedom of criticism and freedom to protect taboos form the rock that underlies Europe.

I shall begin my essay by presenting three examples illustrating advances in medicine which I am interpreting as manifestations of the process that I refer to as "technicization of human body." I shall then embark on reconstructing the section of history of philosophy which addresses problems of the body, and outline the scope and content of the Catholic theology of the body. From there, I shall proceed to presenting the outlook of the Catholic Church on the effects generated by organ transplantation and techniques of extracorporeal reproduction. To conclude, in the spirit of the tenet stating that "there is no salvation without the Church," I shall consider the reasons why homosexuals are absent from the community of the Catholic Church in Poland.

REALM OF MEDICINE

Example One: Transplantation

The medical term "transplantation" comes from the Latin word *transplantare* which means "to uproot" or "to displace." In medical terms, transplantation refers very broadly to the moving of cells, tissues and organs. The branch of science dealing with transplants is called transplantology, a section of clinical medicine. Cells or organs can be transplanted from one part of the body to another within the same individual (autotransplantation) – the donor and the recipient is then the very same person. Transplantation can also involve two individuals, whereby the donor and the recipient are two different persons. Also, transplantation is possible between individuals of two different species, e.g. from animals (donors) to humans (recipients). This type is referred to as xenotransplantation. Transplantations can be performed *ex morto*, i.e. from a dead individual to a living one, or *ex vivo*, i.e. between two living individuals[2].

Contemporary medicine in developed countries has now embarked on the path of progressive development of the use of human corpses. Practically the entire human body can be utilized for medical purposes. The French biologist Jean Bernard has put forward the

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[2] Maria Nowacka, *Etyka a transplantacje* (Warszawa 2003), p. 9.

following classification of components and products of the human body which can be used for transplants: a. the entire body (in drug testing); b. whole organs, including limb transplants; c. blood; d. eyes; e. elements of the procreation process: sperm and ova; f. human tissue cells and their derivatives; g. components naturally removed from the human body: urine, hair, nails[3].

Example Two: Reproduction

As the philosopher of medicine Kurt Bayertz highlights[4], knowledge about human reproduction is as old as human history. For example, a description of "surrogate motherhood" can be traced back to the Bible[5]. The knowledge of reproduction has always been characterized by two major aspects: the one against reproduction and the one pro-birth (or, more specifically, *pro-life* and *pro-choice*). Having said this, as Bayertz writes, medicine has only recently developed techniques allowing the determination of certain features of a future child (eye colour, gender, etc.). Technological interventions of science in human reproduction are, therefore, accompanied by procedures preventing unexpected or unwanted cases – "negative eugenics" and, on the other hand, the as yet potential capacity to create specific required qualities, known as "positive eugenics."

Born in 1978, Louise Brown, is the first child in the history of humanity conceived outside her mother's womb. In technical terms, one could say that Louise is a product of a sophisticated technology called *in vitro fertilization*. There is no doubt that this effective scientific procedure was a medical breakthrough – not only in terms of technology itself, but also certain "symbolic" qualities. After all, laboratory lights mercilessly exposed one of nature's most guarded secrets: human conception.

What we call "the technology of human reproduction" (incorporating, for example, in vitro fertilization) is an application of the (previously theoretical) scientific knowledge about hormones regulating women's menstrual cycles; physiological mechanisms of fertilization; different phases of embryonic development; reproduction of animals, etc. As with every kind of knowledge, it is a knowledge that not only makes it possible to explore the laws of nature, but also provides a tool to control them.

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[3] *Ibid.*, p. 17.
[4] Kurt Bayertz, *GenEthics, Technological Intervention in Human Reproduction as a Philosophical Problem,* (Cambridge, 1994).
[5] Bible, Book of Genesis, 30: 1-6; 16: 1-4.

Example Three: Homosexuality

A letter written by Łukasz to Father M., a well-known priest: "God Bless You. I am sorry that I can't reveal my name to you. After reading this e-mail, you will understand why. I am gay – this is the reason. Behind that simple sentence, there's a great personal tragedy. I am 35 years old. I have a wife and a child. When I was younger, I approached a confessor with my problem and he gave me the following advice: 'Do not tell that to anyone. Find a girlfriend – pick one that you like, at least a little bit, and marry her. And then try to get on with your marriage – no matter the cost'. This is what I did. When I got married, I thought that my true sexual orientation would be suppressed. I hoped it would stop haunting me. This is not the case, though."[6]

PROBLEM OF THE BODY IN THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY AND CHRISTIAN RELIGION

The fragment of reality described above represents an area of our everyday life in which, whether we want it or not, we are faced with very real choices that impinge upon the religious and spiritual dimensions of our existence. As a Catholic hoping for salvation, am I allowed to unreservedly use the achievements of modern medical sciences and, for example, give away a kidney or accept a kidney from another person? Is a Catholic family afflicted with infertility acting in compliance with the tradition and teaching of the Church if they use surrogate motherhood and "buy" a baby from a surrogate? Is it right for that family to opt for IVF, a procedure that is recognized as risky and controversial in the Catholic ethical tradition? And, last but not least, can a Catholic homosexual who does not want to give up the gift of giving love to another person, hope for salvation? I shall attempt to find answers to these thorny issues in official documents of the Catholic Church and in reflections contributed by Catholic philosophers and theologians.

Addressing the issue of status of the human body, it must be noted that the European history of Christian philosophy and religion comprises three main systems of reflection upon the human body – or theologies of the body. The first of them has its origins in Plato's philosophical system. The human body, in Plato's view, only occasionally participates (Metaxis) in the reality of ideas. It is involved neither in rational thinking nor in the process of rational creation of humanity in humans.

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[6] Cezary Gawryś, "Tato! Jestem homoseksualistą," *Więź.* No. 10 (588), 2007, p. 37.

To Plato, "man is the soul which utilizes the body." According to Plato, one of the means to cope with the corporeal ballast is asceticism, i.e. life characterized by rejection of excessive indulgence in pleasures of the flesh. Plato's views on the body are expounded in his dialogues *Phaedo*, *Crito* or *Book VII* of the *Republic*. The second approach is rooted in the tenets of Aristotelian philosophy. Aristotle saw the soul as the form of a living thing. Each thing, in Aristotle's philosophical system, consists of passive matter and active form which makes it what it is. Knowledge, in the strict sense, should deal with the formal aspect. Only then does it acquire a general dimension. Matter and form constitute a whole. Living things have their own principle of motion which also represents their principle of development.

The third approach is the mechanistic tradition followed, among others, by Descartes. Descartes perceived an individual as something different than a living being. It represented a mechanistic whole composed of separate elements, so-called *res extensa* ("extended thing" or "extended substance") and *res cogitans* ("thinking thing" or "thinking substance"). The element combining the two components, Descartes claimed, resided in the pineal gland. The nature of the body, *res extensa*, in the Cartesian paradigm, reflects the nature of the mechanism whose parts are connected by means of functional relationships. The human body performs a number of processes (e.g. physiological) which, in order to function properly, do not require any reference to the soul. In such cases, the body operates reactively. As Pierre Hadot points out, Descartes believed that the only sufficiently lucid and distinctive ideas making it possible to describe material (corporeal) objects were based on the categories of motion, number/quantity and shape. Rules governing these categories are founded on geometry and mechanics. The entire knowledge of the human body must be consistent with these rules[7].

To wind up the discussion, it seems worthwhile to emphasize (for the idea is not obvious to all historians of philosophy) that, as Hadot asserts, the Cartesian framework can be accommodated within the mechanistic image of the world previously found in the Christian idea of God the Creator, who occupies a position that is radically external to the works of his creation. What is more, the biblical formula stating that "He arranged all things with measure, number, and weight," Hadot claims, served as a guidance to many philosophers, such as Descartes, Bacon or Pascal, telling them how to embark on the study of nature in order to be in compliance with their religion's rules at the same time [8].

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[7] Pierre Hadot, *The Veil of Isis* (Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 126.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 130.

Religions discuss the body not only in theological but also cultural categories. As a rule, answers to questions about the body are given with the aid of concepts including the soul, creation, matter, God (or gods), death, good and evil, salvation, etc. The body also performs an important symbolic function in religions[9]. Concepts of the body embraced by Christianity took shape under the influence of two traditions: the Bible and Greek philosophy. With respect to the former, the Old Testament imbues the body with diverse meanings. The body denotes the biological structure of a human being but also, for example, relations based on blood. In this context, the human body, though created by God, is limited in its cognitive resources: "God sees more than man for His eyes are not of the body." The duality in viewing the body (it comes from God and, at the same time, is mortal) is reflected in the Septuagint and in the New Testament with the use of two different terms: *sarx* – denoting the body in its material dimension (flesh), and *soma* – signifying matter bound with the soul (form). In the New Testament *soma* acquires a new dimension, becoming a part of the body of Jesus Christ. By being born into a human being, the Son of God confirmed the dignity of the body: "*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us*"[10]. Through salvation, the body also became a temple of the Holy Spirit[11].

Reflection on the body features prominently in the theology professed by St. Paul who views the body both in a positive and negative light. On the one hand, as hinted above, the body is the holy abode of God's Sprit. Being a part of Christ's body, it will one day rise from the dead. On the other hand, everything that is connected to the body is synonymous to the domain of the human and, as such, is sinful – as opposed to the sphere of the supernatural. Paul writes that he who serves God cannot put confidence in the flesh[12]. All things bodily are subject to the bondage of sin. In that spirit, let me now proceed to a brief discussion of the history of the Catholic theology of the body.

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[9] "Ciało," Tadeusz Gadacz, Bogusław Milerski (eds.), *Religia. Encyklopedia.* Vol. 2. (Warszawa 2001).

[10] "Gospel of John" (1,14), *Pismo święte. Starego i Nowego Testamentu* (Warszawa-Poznań 2000).

[11] "First Epistle to the Corinthians" (3.17); "Second Epistle to the Corinthians" (6.16), *Pismo święte. Starego i Nowego Testamentu* (Warszawa-Poznań 2000).

[12] "Epistle of Paul to the Philippians" (3.3), *Pismo święte. Starego i Nowego Testamentu* (Warszawa-Poznań 2000).

Theology of the Body and Organ Transplantation[13]

All cultures treat the dead body with respect and dignity to the deceased person. It seems, however, that Christianity attaches a particular importance to the human corpse and the way it is approached because of the Christian dogma of resurrection. One of the unquestionable successes of the Second Vatican Council was the joint adoption of a criterion for the assessment of practices or projects concerning the domain of human bodiliness. The main adopted criterion was the dignity of the human being. A full exposition of the issue is included in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. Inalienable dignity, according to the Constitution, represents an intrinsic quality of human beings. It is an essential component of the existential structure of all people, allowing every human being to be treated as an end, not as a means. The criterion is applied to the evaluation of transplantation practices.

In general terms, the Catholic Church accepts organ transplants – with the exception of human cloning. In his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, John Paul II makes a distinction between the "culture of death" and "culture of life." The former allows such practices as abortion or euthanasia. The latter is built upon the concept of gift which encompasses such commendable gestures of sharing as, for example, the donation of organs to save life. The Pope refers to such gifts as acts of selfless "everyday heroism" building up an authentic culture of life. Body organ donation is a testimony of faith and a practical manifestation of Gospel teaching. In the address delivered one year after the publication of *Evangelium Vitae* the Pope expressed his full approval of transplantation therapy, arguing that donating organs represents the fundamental vocation of human beings to love and communion: "love, communion, solidarity and absolute respect for the dignity of the human person constitute the only legitimate context of organ transplantation." At the same time, however, the Pope criticizes and rejects all forms of transplantation which involve sale, exchange or derivation of benefits. Since the human body is always personal, it must never be treated as an object. Advances in medicine, the Pope highlights, offer many people an opportunity to "project beyond death their vocation to love" which is analogous to Christ's Paschal Mystery in that "in dying, death is

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[13] The definition of theology of the body is derived from: John S. Grabowsky, "Theology of Body," *New Catholic Encyclopedia Supplement. Jubilee Volume: The Wojtyla Years* (Detroit 2001), pp. 96-99.

somehow overcome and life restored"[14]. The Pope concludes by emphasizing the element of solidarity incorporated in the gift. The donor and the recipient involved in transplantation therapy create a new unique bond which is particularly significant in societies dominated by utilitarian values.

Recognizing transplants as voluntary and unselfish acts, the Church outright rejects human cloning projects. While human cloning is still something in the realm of science fiction rather than science fact, scientists are able to perform the cloning of embryonic cells, which makes it possible for women to become pregnant and give birth to a child without the involvement of a sexual partner. Let me recapitulate that one of the standards determining the dignity of a human being is the sanctity of life and the natural character of its perpetuation in marriage. From this perspective, cloning is a technique which violates two fundamental aspects of human sexuality: *procreation* and *unification*. *Donum Vitae*, the instruction on Respect for Human Life in Its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation*, issued in 1987, disapproves of cloning both as a result of research and as a technical proposal. The Instruction sets out that: "Attempts or hypotheses for obtaining a human being without any connection with sexuality through "twin fission," cloning or parthenogenesis are to be considered contrary to the moral law, since they are in opposition to the dignity both of human procreation and of the conjugal union." *Donum Vitae* clearly specifies two general criteria for moral judgement which are formulated by the Church with respect to techniques of artificial human procreation. These are: a/ the life of the human being called into existence and b/ the special nature of the transmission of human life in marriage. From this viewpoint, cloning is a practice disintegrating the family. This is especially true when a child is an offspring of just one parent, for example in situations involving the so-called homosexual cloning. As Eskridge and Stein point out, it is easy to imagine a situation in which a female or male homosexual (or bisexual) or a transgender individual can become a parent of a clone containing his or her genetic material. What is more, with the refinement of a technology allowing the transfer of genetic material into an egg cell and the creation of a zygote one should expect a gene combination technology so that it would be possible to combine the genetic material of two persons of the same gender and

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[14] John Paul II, "*Podarować cząstkę siebie." Fragmenty przemówienia do uczestników Kongresu transplantologicznego* (Vatican, 20 June 1991)," *W drodze*. No. 1 (281), 1997.

insert it into the zygote"[15]. Homosexual cloning, but also the concept of families of choice and the problem of child adoption by same-sex couples, are some of the most controversial and divisive issues of today. The main objections are raised over the identity of the child. It is claimed that a child born in a relationship not representing a "natural" family set-up is deprived of a crucial element of identity, i.e. family background. In conventional family units, children have access to the spiritual and material inheritance left to them by their predecessors. By contrast, children born by artificial insemination develop and are raised in the first line of "transmission." In an extreme scenario, cloning as a means of procreation could take away marital ties or male/female relationships from human reproduction.

Human Sexuality in the Light of Theology of the Body

In his *Humanae Vitae* encyclical (1968), Pope Paul VI makes repeated references to *Gaudium et Spes* which synthetically defines the position of the Catholic Church on human sexuality. The Pope recapitulates that marital love is not accidental – it was established by God. The wife and the husband, by committing to each other through matrimony, create a community, thus connecting with their Maker. Marriage is, after all, a sacrament. Secondly, the love between spouses is a process aimed at achieving true unselfish friendship. The husband and wife are expected to share their life together. Thirdly, matrimony is based on love that is loyal and exclusive, and is supposed to last until the end of life. Loyalty constitutes an essential element of marriage. Fourthly, a marital unit must be based on procreation. It should not be limited to the community of spouses but rather seek to generate and nurture offspring.

The encyclical discusses sexual activity as a practice that must be focused on its inherent goal which is the transmission of life. Every sexual act must retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life. Naturally, not every sexual intercourse leads to the conception of a child. This, however, does not mean that sexual activity ceases to be legitimate when it is infertile. Quite the opposite, it performs an important function of strengthening the union existing between spouses. *Unity* and *parenthood* represent the two pillars on which the Church's teaching on marital sex rests.

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[15] William N. Eskridge, Jr., Edward Stein, "*Klony homoseksualistów,*" Martha C. Nussbaum, Cass R. Sunstein (eds.), *Czy powstanie klon człowieka. Fakty i fantazje* (Warszawa 2000).

Paul VI also discusses two inadmissible birth control methods: abortion and sterilization. Furthermore, spouses should not employ the strategy of "lesser moral evil," i.e. use immoral means to achieve moral ends. The consequences of birth control can be dire especially among young people because using contraceptive methods may jeopardize the faithfulness of marriage. Paul VI views contraception through the perspective of biopolitics, claiming that all those who advocate fertility control at the same time encourage interference in the privacy of individuals, politicians and authorities. Therefore, the problem of birth control cannot be left to people's arbitrary decisions. Instead, it should be recognized that there are certain limits that must not be crossed. The limits arise out of reverence due to the human being. The Church is the guardian and interpreter of such truths rather than their originator.

There are many other documents addressing human sexuality, e.g. *Persona Humana*, i.e. declaration on certain questions concerning sexual ethics (1975)[16]. To conclude this part of my reflections, I wish to invoke one of the sections of *Gaudium et Spes* which is instrumental for a discussion of the topic of homosexuality in the teaching of the Catholic Church. The Declaration states that "when there is question of harmonizing conjugal love with the responsible transmission of life, the moral aspects of any procedure does not depend solely on sincere intentions or on an evaluation of motives, but must be determined by objective standards. These, based on the nature of human persons and their acts, preserve the full sense of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love." Interpretations of the Declaration usually highlight that the above words sum up the entire teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the legitimacy of sexual activity and the main criterion of its moral value; the dignity of the sexual act is secured when the legitimacy is maintained[17].

Religious Salvation of Homosexuals

Taking up the difficult and delicate issue of the status of homosexuals in the Catholic Church, it seems apt to return to *Persona Humana* (*Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics*). In the second section, the Declaration addresses the topic of the contemporary decline in morality and values. It criticizes proposals put forward by the gay community who demand their sexual orientation be recognized. The authors of the Declaration argue that science draws an

[16] A document published in 1975 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

[17] *Gaudium et Spes*, 49-50-51.

erroneous distinction between homosexuals whose tendency stems from a variety of life circumstances and those whose inclinations appear to be "an innate instinct." The Church does not embrace such a distinction. On the other hand, the Church advises that homosexuals should be treated: "with understanding and sustained in the hope of overcoming their personal difficulties and their inability to fit into society." Secondly, when assessing the morality of homosexuals, prudence is advised. In Church practice, however, "no pastoral method can be employed which would give moral justification to these acts" because according to the objective moral order homosexual relationships "lack an essential and indispensable finality." In the Holy Scriptures, homosexuality is presented as a grave depravation or even as a consequence of rejecting God[18].

To wind up this line of argument, let me quote an extensive passage from the Catechism of the Catholic Church which sums up the view of the Church on the homosexual orientation: "Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained. Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity tradition has always declared that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered." They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved. The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial. They must be accepted with *respect, compassion, and sensitivity*. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfill God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition. Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at

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[18] The most commonly quoted Bible passages referring directly to homosexuality include: Old Testament, Book of Genesis, 19-1-29; New Testament: First Epistle to the Corinthians, 6: 9-11, where Paul states that: "neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men will not inherit the kingdom of God"; First Epistle to Timothy, 1:8, 11, where homosexuality is addressed along with other grave offences including patricide and matricide as contradicting the teaching of the Church; Epistle to the Romans, 1: 26.

times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection"[19]. The Catechism thus makes a distinction between the inclination, the person and the homosexual act itself. The latter deserves a negative moral evaluation and outright rejection.

If one were to collect the main arguments levelled against the acceptance of homosexual practices by the Church (i.e. giving homosexuals equal access to the sacraments), they would be as follows. Firstly, the acceptance of homosexual practices would challenge the centuries-long tradition of the Church's interpretation of homosexuality which is rooted in the truth of the Revelation. Secondly, the recognition of homosexuality by the Church would undermine the status of heterosexuality. Thirdly, it would be a threat to the traditional family model. Fourthly, it would necessitate a change in the moral qualification of homosexual acts. Importantly, the Church highlights that it has no fear of the dominance of the homosexual culture because it has always been (and will be) a culture of a minority population. It is furthermore added that the exclusion of the homosexual community from the Church is not, strictly speaking, an exclusion but rather a manifestation of compliance with the biblical moral and social order.

Is Homosexuality a Personality Disorder?

In order to compile a holistic picture of homosexuality, it is necessary to consider arguments offered by science: biology, sociology of psychology. For reasons of space, it is not possible to present a comprehensive outline of the biological concept constructed on the basis of genetic arguments which, many scholars believe, resolves the dispute between the "deterministic" and "situational" views on the sources of homosexuality. The resolution of the dispute is important not only from the viewpoint of sexual morality or theological message – but also from the perspective of people who, as the Church claims, are "affected" by homosexuality. If it were recognized that people's sexual orientation (sexual inclinations) is predetermined by biology or genetics, it is hardly justified to make them culpable for their choices or persuade them to undertake therapy[20].

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[19] Katechizm Kościoła Katolickiego (Warszawa –Poznań: Pallottinum, 1994), p. 532.

[20] An interesting introduction to the problem is offered by Chandler Burr ("Homosexuality and Biology," *The Atlantic*. Mar. 1993) and Janet E. Halley ("Sexual Orientation and the Politics of Biology: A Critique of the Argument

At this point, I shall only give an account put forward by psychiatry. Modern psychiatry, or at least the trend in psychiatry which draws on the studies conducted by Robert L. Spitzer, one of the most influential psychiatrists of the 20th century, is dominated by the tenet that homosexuality is an innate, irreversible and normal variant of human sexuality. This position is upheld by a range of official bodies including the American Psychiatric Association (APA). In 1973, APA's Board of Directors decided to remove homosexuality from the third edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual Disorders*. Some professional psychotherapists, notably in Catholic circles, believe that the decision was influenced by political pressures exerted by the politically active gay community in the United States rather than on the basis of credible empirical data. This is why the Catholic Medical Association, and a number of other institutions of Catholic orientation, do not consider homosexuality to be an inborn trait. In fact, advocates of this view believe that homosexuality is an acquired condition and it is possible to protect oneself from it. For reasons of accuracy, however, it needs to be noted that Robert Spitzer, who is considered an authority on the topic, himself changed his views on the "treatment" of homosexuality throughout his career. Following his 2001 paper *Can Some Gay Men and Lesbians Change Their Sexual Orientation?,* Spitzer gained fame as the advocate of reparative therapy that sought to change people's sexual orientation to heterosexual. Spitzer claimed that the therapy was successful in those homosexuals who were strongly motivated to change. He placed homosexuality on a par with alcohol abuse and depression, and promoted conversion therapy for over a decade, sparking a lot of controversy and criticism. In 2012, confronted with a body of empirical findings, Spitzer announced that he largely agreed with his critics, and admitted that reparative therapy did not guarantee a successful change of sexual orientation. He also highlighted that it could, in fact, lead to serious personality disorders in treated "patients." Spitzer's retraction of his earlier claims again created a shockwave not only in the gay community, to which Spitzer offered an official apology, but in the society at large, stirring up a debate about the civil rights of gay citizens of the USA and leading to renewed discussions about same-sex marriages and the right of homosexuals to serve in the US army[21].

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from Immutability," *Stanford Law Review. V*ol. 46. No. 3, 1994). For an appealing account of historical transformations of Christian attitudes towards homosexuality see John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (University of Chicago Press, 2009).

[21] Robert L. Spitzer, "Can Some Gay Men and Lesbian Change Their Sexual Orientation? 200 Participants Reporting a Change from Homosexual to

Hard Love[22]

The third aspect of the problem of homosexuality in Catholicism draws on the views promoted by Stephen Macedo, a conservative philosopher and ethicist known and published in Poland. Macedo is an author of an interesting article addressing the topic of gay discrimination in the secular public sphere – including the ban on same-sex marriages and exclusion of gay men and lesbians from service and work in the US military. Macedo explores the origins of the reluctance found among many conservative thinkers who are critical about discussions on the status of homosexuals in the public sphere[23].

Macedo draws attention to the fact that in debates on homosexuality conservative thinkers tend to fall prey to the error of equating homosexual behaviours with the rightly criticized phenomenon of promiscuity. Macedo does not agree with such arguments put forward by conservative circles. On the other hand, he shares the opinions of conservatives calling for the protection of public morality. He stresses that conservatives are right in condemning promiscuity and highlighting risks involved in behaviours promoting sexual freedom, such as teenage pregnancy. Negative consequences of the sexual revolution of the 1960s in Europe and the US have shown clearly that the lack of inhibitions and "free love" ultimately lead to loneliness, unwanted children and dysfunctional families. The Church warns against such phenomena, pointing out that by undermining the family they shake the foundations of the social fabric. The cardinal error of conservative thinkers, Macedo asserts, is the fact that they extrapolate these fears on people of homosexual orientation, and apply the same arguments to them. Such argumentation, however, is not only irrational, but also unfair. Castigating all homosexuals on the basis of isolated instances of promiscuity is no different from condemning all the people on account of the fact that some people are rapists[24].

As Cezary Gawryś, a Catholic philosopher and therapist, notes, accusations of promiscuity, ideologization of the problem of sexual orientation, as well as the Church's proposals that homosexuals should

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Heterosexual Orientation," Archives of Sexual Behavior. Vol. 32. No. 5, October 2003; Benedict Carey, Psychiatry Giant Sorry for Backing Gay "Cure," *New York Times*, May 19, 2012 Saturday.

[22] The title is a reference to Jacek Sobolewski's article: "Wyzywająca miłość. Teolog o homoseksualizmie," *Więź*. No. 10 (588) 2007, pp.69-81.

[23] Stephen Macedo, "Homosexuality and the Conservative Mind," *The George Law Journal*. No. 261, 1995-1996, pp.261-300.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 267.

undergo therapy or live in celibacy, fail to correspond to reality – and hurt people. In his publications, arising from a strong background of empirical psychological studies conducted for many years, Gawryś remains decidedly sceptical about reparative therapies which are claimed to be able to change people's sexual orientation. Therefore, it is necessary to create such conditions in the Catholic Church that would be conducive to the establishment and activity of ministry centres for homosexual Catholics. These could function in a similar way to ministries dedicated to non-sacramental marriages. If one assumes that homosexuality is not a free choice, people cannot be expected to act heroically, Gawryś argues[25]. The Catechism of the Catholic Church quoted above only addresses homosexual people, without mentioning the issue of change of sexual orientation. In other words, by discussing "deep-seated homosexual tendencies," the Catechism implies their permanent character. Naturally, possible options for gay people include chastity or celibacy – but is sexual orientation in Christianity a value in itself, a factor determining salvation? After all, Christians will ultimately be judged on the acts of love (or their absence). In his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, John Paul II does not banish from the Church women who have committed the sin of abortion, addressing them with the words: "Do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope. Try rather to understand what happened and face it honestly. If you have not already done so, give yourselves over with humility and trust to repentance. The Father of mercies is ready to give you his forgiveness and his peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation." Is it too bold to hope that one day a similar statement will be directed at homosexual Catholics?

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[25] Cezary Gawryś, "Męska rozmowa. Chrześcijanie wobec homoseksualizmu," *Znak* 2013.

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CHAPTER VIII

"EXCARNATION": A REBUTTAL

ŁUKASZ TISCHNER

Research on sensuality in culture and, from a narrower perspective, in religion, has enjoyed a great deal of popularity of late. This is related to a noticable turn in the humanities, manifesting itself in an interest in the body and its various forms of expression. I am no authority on issues of sensuality, but I believe a rather naive question is worth asking: Why ought we to concern ourselves with sensuality as such? Such a straightforward approach scarcely befits a specialist; I, on the other hand, just might get away with it. My curiosity brought me to the history of ideas, where I tried to justify my intuition that the way the senses are represented in the literature of various epochs allows us to trace the transformations in man's self-awareness over the course of time. Self-awareness also encompasses the sphere of the religious experience, and this is central to the present article.

The following paper will make ample use of the work of Charles Taylor, whose monumental work *A Secular Age*, supplemented by an essay in his most recent book, *Dilemmas and Connections*, describes the transformations of European culture over the past five hundred years with impressive breadth. His analyses are invaluable to me in that they focus on man conceived integrally, as an individual functioning in the spheres of politics, economics, science, art, and religion. By the same token, he does not apprehend the sphere of religion as peripheral, but as fundamental, for to his mind it reveals the most profound truth about the human condition.[1]

I shall begin with the conclusion, so as to mark out where my thesis is heading from the outset. What is this enigmatic "excarnation"? The term appears in several places in *A Secular Age* to signify tendencies in European culture that smother, marginalize, or even repress the impulses of the body and the passions. Its etymology leads us toward the religious sphere, given that Taylor uses the word as an antonym for "incarnation," with reference to the Christian concept of the Incarnation. The Canadian philosopher describes "excarnation" as: "the steady disembodying of spiritual life, so that it is less carried in deeply

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[1] The present sketch expands on some observations I made in a review of *A Secular Age* (cf: "Zaufać Desdemonie," Ł. Tischner, *Miłosz w krainie odczarowanej* (Gdańsk 2011).

meaningful bodily forms, and lies more 'in the head'."[2] He also adds that this process is increasingly evident in Christianity, a fact which deeply unsettles him, because: "Christianity, as the faith of the Incarnate God, is denying something essential to itself as long as it remains wedded to forms which excarnate."[3] But excarnation is a phenomenon which goes beyond the sphere of religion and leaves its mark in all spheres of human activity. Moreover, it is an ailment that touches everyone – whether they be religious or atheists.

THE GENEALOGY OF "EXCARNATION"

What are the roots of "excarnation"? They are very diverse. Taylor goes back far, drawing upon the "Axial Revolution," i.e. the transformations that occurred simultaneously in various spheres of civilization with the appearance of Buddha, Confucius, Socrates, and the prophets of the Bible. According to Taylor, this essentially involves introducing a new notion of "transcendence" as a spiritual and good manner of being, and consequently: "a shift from a mode of religious life which involved 'feeding the gods', where the understanding of human good was that of prospering or flourishing (…); and where the 'gods' or spirits were not necessarily unambiguously on the side of human good; to a mode in which (a) there is notion of a higher, more complete human good, a notion of complete virtue, or even of a salvation beyond human flourishing (Buddha), while at the same time (b) the higher powers according to this view are unambiguously on the side of human good. What may survive is a notion of Satan or Mara, spirits which are not ambivalent, but rather totally against human good."[4]

Why does Taylor take us so far back to describe a process that definitively took root in European culture in the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries? It is because he perceived an undismissable tendency toward Reform (with a capital letter) in the history of humanity, and not only in the history of European culture, expressed in the fact that post-Axial religious communities imposing ever-higher moral standards, toppling existing structures with different understandings of holiness and good living. A new identity grows on the ruins of the previous social and cosmic structure, marked by an

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[2] Ch. Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 771.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Charles Taylor, "What Was the Axial Revolution?," *Dilemmas and Connections* (Cambridge Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 368.

uprootedness, a displacement from the natural network of tribal/ritual community relationships. This homelessness, of sorts, is a mainstay of individualism and universalizing ethics. According to Taylor, the changes that occurred in the wake of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation had their antecedents in the messages of the Axial Revolutions.

To better grasp the essence of the transformations brought about by "excarnation," we ought to clarify a few of Taylor's concepts. To begin with, he introduces a distinction between the "porous self" and the "buffered self." The "porous self" was, in fact, man at least five hundred years ago, living in an "enchanted" world, who did not distinguish between the workings of human and non-human powers, and felt a sympathetic bond with Universe. Mysterious ideas and even spirits were able to trickle through to him; he used amulets, and believed unconditionally in the curing properties of relics. The modern man, in turn, is a "buffered self," entirely dependent on the power of his own mind to establish the significance of things that he encounters. He cuts himself off from what lies beyond his ken – from the world of nature, and from other people. The "buffered self" is invulnerable and suffers no anxiety toward the outside world. He does, however, have his issues (a sense of the absurd, a substantially shrunken ideal of fulfillment in life etc.).

The transition from the "porous self" to the "buffered self" occurred for many reasons. Generally we might say that it was abetted by the tipping of the "post-Axial" scales toward Reform, which accompanied "disenchantment" in European culture; Weber called this "the elimination of magic as a means to salvation."[5] Taylor calls attention to the primordial religious impulse that spurred us toward disenchantment. The struggle against magic, against the Pagan gods, and against the "irrationality" of the carnival and tribal rituals went hand-in-hand with the development of modern science. "Irrationality" was also perceived in the social order, which, in medieval times, permitted a complementarity of vocations and a multi-speed system of striving toward God (medieval peasants neighbored Benedictine monasteries).

The transformations that followed the Reformation and the holy wars in Europe bore fruit in the creation of absolutist states (based on trust in the human ability to create order – to introduce disciplines that tame the passions), but also in the spread of Neo-Stoicism, which soon evolved toward Deism. These tendencies, which, from the standpoint of

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[5] M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons, with a foreword by R.H. Tawney (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, [1930] 1958), p. 11.

the twentieth century, are associated with "secularization," were actually Christian in origin. Religious wars compromised the naive faith in Providence and revealed the tribalism in nominally Christian faith. The Cartesian ethos of self-control and critique of the passions was to stop the onrush of violence and hatred toward "strangers," neighbours. The advancement of Deism, in turn, which restricted the place and role of transcendence, was tied to disenchantment with the Christian concept of God as an active subject in history (again, the lesson of the holy wars). The influence of Deism brought about four basic transformations that led to "excarnation." Firstly, the conviction spread that we were indebted to God only for the attainment of our own good. Secondly, faith in mercy began to lose significance, as good could be attained through the power of our reason and self-discipline. Thirdly, if God's intentions for man encompassed only goodness, which could be recognized in the intentions of human nature (natural religion), then all sense of mystery vanishes. Fourthly, and lastly, a faith that God wishes to transform human beings (*theiosis*) is marginalized. From this standpoint religion becomes identified with morality, while a Deistic God remains the Creator and a great benefactor, but his care and providence over the world are now strictly general. Over time, personal existence begins to blur around the edges. By the same token, personal ties with God and the significance of piety and worship are weakened.

Taylor also notes that science gained remarkable prestige in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with its ability to locate the universal laws that rule the cosmos. Alongside its development a certain "ethics of belief" (later elaborated by William Clifford) grew in significance, with its imperative to stifle or altogether suspend one's own emotions in verifying stated hypotheses. The "disengaged subject," depending strictly upon the power of reason and contemptuous of the body's impulses, becomes a privileged cognitive center.

The somewhat chaotically summarized changes I have mentioned led, of course, to the creation of a branch of atheism which Taylor calls "exclusive humanism" (which does not acknowledge the "transcendent" aims of human development). This ought not, however, to obscure the fact that these transformations left their mark on modern Christianity well into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. I will now cite a longer fragment, which indicates the consequences of the transformations that took place in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries:

"So we gravitate towards two possible positions; one tells us that we have to factor out our embodied feeling, our 'gut reactions' in determining what is right, even set aside our desires and emotions. This move finds a paradigm statement in the work of Kant. Or else, we turn against the excessive claims of reason, and base morality on emotions, as we find with Hume. But just for that reason we undercut the aura of

the higher that usually surrounds these feelings, giving them purely naturalistic explanation. Embodied feeling is no longer a medium in which we relate to what we recognize as rightly bearing an aura of the higher; either we do recognize something like this, and we see reason as our unique access to it; or we tend to reject this kind of higher altogether, reducing it through naturalistic explanation.

This is the move I want to call 'excarnation'."[6]

The Rehabilitation of the Body

Naturally, "excarnation" had, and continues to have, its fiery opponents, both religious and non-religious. This resistance has taken various forms. Taylor recalls, for example, the Romantic revolt, including the Schillerian theory of art, which privileged the incarnated emotion in the aesthetic experience as the thing which still has the power to open us to something higher, to a sense of fulfillment. The Romantics opposed the separation of reason from the sway of desires, and, more generally speaking, of man from nature. Their rebellion was aimed at the "buffered self." The experience of beauty, whose "disinterestedness" staunched the onrush of instrumental reason, was privileged – it was sensual, yet transcended toward something more elevated. Epiphanic poetry, whose patron in the English-language tradition became William Wordsworth, resurrected a lost unity of spirituality and the experiences of the body, lust, and the desire for transcendence. A similar sensibility is found in Adam Mickiewicz's masterful *Crimean Sonnets*.

An important movement that restored the Pagan trust in the body, while compromising the claims of instrumental reason, was the work of Nietzsche and the neo-Nietzschean thinkers. These tendencies come together to create a movement Taylor calls "immanent counter-Enlightenment," which rehabilitates the marginalized experiences of violence, madness, and death, and restores proper depth to the image of man. The neo-Nietzschean movement, which remains the most important exponent of this dark vision of the world, accuses the Enlightenment, and, more broadly speaking, "exclusive humanism," of a blindness toward the reservoirs of power slumbering in man. From the point of view of Taylor's argument, the paradigmatic figure for this tendency is Georges Bataille, who elevates physicality and its aspect of pain and agony, revealing the possible numinousness of the experience of violence. To his way of thinking transgressive experiences of pain, cruelty, orgiastic eroticism lead to a loss of animal intimacy. The desired intimacy brings a liberation from the instrumental order of things in

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[6] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 288.

which man has caged himself, enclosing himself in the realm of the sacred. The sacred is, however, "pre-Axial," as it situates itself beyond good and evil. It is linked to a sense of special unity and ecstasy, to the recognition of something higher, though this is merely a subjective experience, not a potential personal relationship with a loving deity.

Taylor appreciates the partial justice of the Nietzschean and neo-Nietzschean rebellions against excarnation tendencies, but does not consent to replace Jesus with Dionysus. He opposes the dismissal of the *theosis* perspective, and does not accept numinous violence as a bridge to a sense of fulfillment. He places his hopes for "incarnation" elsewhere.

One path to counteracting "excarnation" is opened by the above-mentioned experience of beauty. A second one, more important to his argument, is the Christian experience of the bond of *agape*. Taylor appears to suggest that both roads can be complementary, as in the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, to whom he devotes large portions of his chapter on conversions. Here we ought to note that the kinship between epiphany and *agape* is strongly present in the poetry of Czesław Miłosz, in which beauty and agape are additionally bound to eros – but I will return to this observation. The bond of *agape* is, of course, self-contained and fundamental. I shall try to explain why Taylor sees it as exceptional, and why it stands in opposition to the mechanisms of excarnation.

Agape *and the Intestines*

Explaining the notion of *agape*, Taylor evokes concepts he shares with Ivan Illich, found in *The Rivers North of the Future: The Testament of Ivan Illich*. The most crucial part is the original commentary on the parable of the Good Samaritan. Illich does not read it in the spirit of the modern universalist moral consciousness (as most of us surely do), by which we bring prevailing moral codes to the context of the wounded Jew and the Samaritan, collapsing the boundaries between "us" and "them." Illich shows that *agape* is not an abstract and perfect moral code which it behooves us to follow. Taylor reconstructs his views as follows:

> He [Samaritan] feels called to respond, however, not by some principle of "ought," but by this wounded person himself. And in so responding, he frees himself from the bounds of the "we." He also acts outside of the carefully constructed sense of the sacred, of the demons of darkness, and various modes of prophylaxis against them which have been erected in "our" culture, society, religion (often evident in views of the outsider as "unclean"). (…) It

creates a new kind of fittingness, belonging together, between Samaritan and wounded Jew. They are fitted together in a disymmetric proportionality (…) which comes from God, which is that of agape, and which became possible because God became flesh. The enfleshment of God extends outward, through such new links as the Samaritan makes with the Jew, into a network, which we call the Church. But this is a network, not a categorical grouping; that is, it is a skein of relations which link particular, unique, enfleshed people to each other, rather than a grouping of people together on the grounds of their sharing some important property (as in modern nations, we are all Canadians, Americans, French people; or universally, we are all rights-bearers, etc.). It resembles earlier kin networks in this regard. (…) But it is unlike tribal kinship groups in that it is not confined to the established "we," that it creates links across boundaries, on the basis of a mutual fittingness which is not based on kinship but on the kind of love which God has for us, which we call agape.[7]

According to Illich, who apparently meets with Taylor's approval, the development of the Christian Churches gradually led to the "corruption of Christianity." Modern civilization, meanwhile, has brought us to the outer limits of the tendencies that bore this corruption:

in response to the failure and inadequacy of a motivation grounded in a sense of mutual belonging, it erects a system. This incorporates (a) a code or set of rules, (b) a set of disciplines which make us internalize these rules, and (c) a system of rationally constructed organizations (private and public bureaucracies, universities, schools) to make sure that we carry out what the rules demand. All these become second nature to us, including the decentering from our lived experience which we have to carry through in order to become disciplined, rational, disengaged subjects. From within this perspective, the standard account of the Good Samaritan story appears just obvious: it is a stage on the road to a universal morality of rules.[8]

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[7] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 738-789.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 742.

Taylor does not go so far as the iconoclastic Illich in his critique of modern civilization, but he does indicate the mutilation of the modern man and the provisional and ambiguous aspect of all moral codes, be they the most perfect (he calls a blind faith in the unconditional goodness of a code the "fetishism of norms and rules" and "nomolatry"). He sees salvation in incarnation, which restores integrity to man, joining the impulses of the body and the longing for transcendence, to slowly regain the lost thread that joins erotic desires with the love of God, saturates rituals of sanctity with sensual joy, and liberates man from his solipsistic prison.

Turning to the Bible, Taylor shows that the thread of *agape* is born in the intestines. He explains that the Greek *splangnizesthai*, which the New Testament uses as a verb to describe empathy, pertains to a response of the intestines. Christ uses this word in the parable of the Samaritan: "And when he saw him, he had compassion *on him*" (Luke, 10:33), and in the lesson of the Prodigal Son: "But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him" (Luke, 15:20). The same term is used to describe Jesus's response when He saw the widow mourning the loss of her son (Luke, 7:14), and when he began to act, seeing Mary (identified with Mary Magdalene in the Catholic tradition) mourning Lazarus (John, 11:33-34).

Taylor sees the remedy for modern ailments in "incarnation." In light of his remarks on *agape*, we might suppose that this signifies not only the rehabilitation of the body, but the rediscovery of how "life in our natural surroundings, as well as bodily feeling, bodily action, and bodily expression, can be channels of contact with fullness."[9]

Miłosz on the Trail of Agape

To conclude, I would like to mention a poem by Miłosz, titled "A Skull," which might serve to illustrate Taylor's intuition. It is not by chance that I have chosen Miłosz, who once said: "I was not a spiritual man but flesh-enraptured"[10] (Czesław Miłosz, *Father Ch., Many Years Later*), as all of his poetry is, in fact, an attack on excarnation and a great cry for incarnation. This is how we might read his poetic notion of apocatastasis, a yearning for the epiphany, which accompanies the mighty sensual desires, the critique of the *Land of Ulro*, the struggle with the "generality" that devours the "particular," his interest in haiku

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[9] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 766.
[10] Czesław Miłosz, *New and Collected Poems 1931-2001*, trans. (mainly) by the author and Robert Hass, (New York: Ecco, 2003), p. 437.

poetry etc. But this is an oceanic subject, which still awaits its Magellan, or rather the crew of his ship, because, as we know, he perished before his journey's end. I will permit myself only to mark out the course.

"A Skull" comes from the volume entitled *Chronicles* (1987), and is a free *ekphrasis* of a picture by Georges de la Tour, depicting Mary Magdalen. The painter rendered a few such canvases. All signs seem to show that Miłosz had in mind a picture from the museum in Los Angeles, *Magdalen with the Smoking Flame*, and not the very similar, and better known portrait from the Louvre, titled *The Penitent Magdalen*. Both depict a woman in semi-darkness holding a skull, before whom smokes a candle, or rather, an oil lamp. In the Los Angeles picture the wick is short – it is smoking and about to snuff. We might add that in *Chronicles*, immediately preceding "A Skull," we have another poem about the mysterious figure from the Gospels: "Mary Magdalen and I." It is also an ekphrasis, though a deceptive one, as it refers not to a real, but to an imagined painting. As in "A Skull," "Mary Magdalen and I" highlights the moment of transition – this is a state of *metanoia* after being liberated from the seven evil spirits. The imagined painter renders a portrait of Mary Magdalen in a state of suspension: "Forever between / The element of flesh and the element / Of hope, she stays still."[11]

But let us return to "A Skull," for this poem encourages us to ponder incarnation, eros, *agape* and the possibility of divinization.

> A Skull
> Before Mary Magdalen, albescent in the dusk,
> A skull. The candle flickers. Which of her lovers
> Is this dried-up bone, she does not try to guess.
> She remains like that, for an age or two
> In meditation, while sand in the hourglass
> Has fallen asleep – because once she saw,
> And felt on her shoulder the touch of His hand,
> Then, at daybreak, when she exclaimed: "Rabboni!"
> I gather dreams of the skull for I am it,
> Impetuous, enamored, suffering in the gardens
> Under a dark window, uncertain whether it's mine
> And for no one else, the secret of her pleasure.
> Raptures, solemn oaths. She does not quite remember.
> And only that moment persists, unrevoked,
> When she was almost on the other side. (*Berkeley, 1985*[12])

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[11] *Ibid*., p. 456.
[12] *Ibid*., p. 457.

Despite its concision, this poem is not easy to interpret. Its lyrical subject is the skull which Mary Magdalen holds in her hands. This is one of her old lovers, whom the beautiful woman no longer recalls. The skull, the hourglass, and the dying candle, or oil lamp, introduce the motif of the passing of time. Its counterpoint is, however, the hope of salvation, of carrying on ("sand in the hourglass/Has fallen asleep"), and more precisely, a recollection of a scene from the Gospel according to Saint John, when the resurrected Christ appears to Mary Magdalen and speaks the mysterious words translated as "touch me not" (*Noli me tangere*; John, 20:17).

Two perspectives appear in the poem: that of the aforementioned lover and of Mary Magdalen, though her point of view is mediated through the relationship to the "dried-up bone," i.e., the omniscient lyrical subject. His omniscience is, of course, limited – it is the experience of the potential divinization, at whose threshold Mary Magdalen comes to a halt. Significantly, both perspectives are related – they feed on the sensually concrete, or perhaps even "a gut feeling." "Dreams of the skull" feed on the erotic impulses whose recollection elicit a shudder: "Under a dark window, uncertain whether it's mine / And for no one else, the secret of her pleasure," and the longing of Mary Magdalen for the memory of the dawn when "once she saw, / And felt on her shoulder the touch of His hand." Miłosz alludes to Faust's curse – *Verweile doch! du bist so schön!* – when he compares erotic love and *agape*: "And only that moment persists, unrevoked." I believe it is not inappropriate to use the term *agape* in this context, as the emotion felt by Mary Magdalen has much in common with what Taylor wrote about the thread that binds the Samaritan with the wounded Jew.

The subtle and paradoxical nature of this poem is in the fact that, despite the initial supposition that erotic desire unequivocally contrasts with the feeling of the "unrevoked moment" (the basic opposition between life and death in "A Skull" leads us on this path), both experiences are shown as utterly corporeal, and it is the body that opens us to the "other element" – Hope. There is no cheap psychology here, no personification of the relationship between Mary Magdalen and Jesus, but we are left with the impression that only someone like Mary Magdalen – "flesh-enraptured," yet later freed from the seven evil spirits – could feel the touch of Jesus unto the intestines, submit to the bonds of *agape*. At the same time, however, the promise of life is tied to the prospect of divinization, which means restraining from the yearning to touch.

My sketch contains few conclusions, but I hope I have managed to indirectly respond to why sensuality in culture and religion are worth examining. Why is this? For one thing, in order to understand the mutilation of the contemporary man and the "corruption of Christianity."

Armed with this knowledge, we will be better prepared to create a network based on *agape* – the Church.

Chapter IX

PROBLEM OF ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

WŁODZIMIERZ WILOWSKI

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

Debates on the condition of the Catholic Church in contemporary times frequently show that its current situation is quite dramatic. The Church has failed to maintain its relevance and its culturally creative role in the Western world. It has, to a major extent, succumbed to global civilization and its influences. Progressive marginalization of the Church is an effect of a number of factors, of which the most important are globalization processes bringing about the laicization and secularization of societies and nations. Consequently, the authority of the Church has been eroded, and its educational and moral roles in the Western world have been undermined. As a result, the number of practising Catholics in Europe and in America has been dropping dramatically in recent years. Unfortunately, the bleak *status quo* is not only an effect of the encroachment of the world on the Church. The diagnosis of the present condition of the Church must also take into account the fact that some of the representatives of the Church hierarchy have embraced an intentionally modernist viewpoint. The aspects of the world that the Church used to oppose have now partially infiltrated into the body of the Church.

At this point, however, a distinction must be made between the media image of the Church and the actual experience. If the media image of the Church is analyzed, one must not forget problems relating to the ownership structure of global media, and their liberal and leftist provenance. On the other hand, the actual image of the Church is shaped by a multiple social factors and social reception of dilemmas and scandals exposed within the Church. Without a doubt, scandalous revelations have adversely affected the authority of the institution. The problem, however, runs deeper. The root cause is that contemporary times seem to have rejected the authority of God. The observation was already made by Pope Pius XI in his encyclical *Ingravescentibus Malis*,

a fragment of which is quoted in the footnote[1]. The encyclical, announced on 29 September 1937, describes how the Church is under a constant threat of new ideologies which are continuously morphing and evolving, however their implications remain the same. Although 76 years have passed since the publication of the encyclical, the problems faced by the Church and the society have not changed much. The sense of Christian duty has become weakened. The faith has declined, and the religious foundations of human societies have been seriously shaken. Consequently, one must realize that discussions devoted to the condition of the Church in this day and age, and the capacity of the Church to enter into an effective dialogue with the contemporary world, may either stem from the deep concern about the Church or be a part of the ongoing fight with the Catholic Church undertaken to eliminate it from the contemporary world. With regard to the latter, one must consider two major forces – external and internal – impacting the Church. Naturally, at this point the question arises as to why the contemporary world is in a constant struggle with the Church. This may be a consequence of the message spread by the Church – the presence of the old evangelical

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[1] "But also in our day, dangers no less grave than in the past beset civil and religious society. In fact, because the supreme and eternal authority of God, which commands and forbids, is despised and completely repudiated by men, the result is that the consciousness of Christian duty is weakened, and that faith becomes tepid in souls or entirely lost, and his afterward affects and ruins the very basis of human society. Thus on the one hand are seen citizens intent on an atrocious struggle among themselves because some are provided with abundant riches and others must gain bread for themselves and their dear ones by the sweat of their brows. Indeed, as we all know, in some regions the evil had reached such a pitch that it seeks to destroy all private right of property, so that everything might be shared in common. On the other hand, there are not lacking men who declare that they honor and exalt, above all, the power of the State. They say they must use every means to assure civil order and enforce authority, and pretend that only thus are they able totally to repulse the execrable theories of the Communists. However, they despise the light of evangelic wisdom and endeavor to revive the errors of the pagans and their way of life. To this is added the clever and lamentable sect of those who, denying and hating God, declare themselves the enemies of the Eternal, and who insinuate themselves everywhere. They discredit and uproot all religious belief from souls. Finally, they trample on every human and Divine right. And while they cast scorn on the hope of heavenly reward, they incite men to seek, even by illicit means, false earthly happiness, and therefore drive them with brazen temerity to the dissolution of the social order, causing disorder, cruel rebellions and even the conflagration of civil war." A complete text is available, for example, at: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_29091937_ingravescentibus-malis_en.html.

testimony in today's world. It finds its expression in love which is rooted in the Truth[2]. This is the central reason why the world is afraid of the Catholic Church. Revealing the truth about the world, and speaking of the need to apply reason, it poses an obvious and immediate threat.

However, let us first discuss the possibilities that are opening up before the Catholic Church in debates on its contemporary condition.

CHURCH AND RELIGIONS VS. CONTEMPORARY WORLD

The observations made below pertain to the Catholic Church and its emerging idea of ecumenical dialogue with non-Christian religions. The explorations, however, form a part of a broader debate concerning relations and tensions existing between religions and the contemporary world.

Every religion in modern times is confronted, to a greater or lesser extent, with the problem of internal transformations which have their source in pressures arising from the development of civilization. Buddhism anticipated the situation very early on. At its very outset, it created prophetic visions of its own downfall. Some of the groups of topics explored below in relation to the problem of the Church (religions) versus the contemporary world are intrinsically associated with elements of the Church's dogmatics.

It is no accident that the foundations of the Western civilization and culture are believed to be comprised not only of the Hellenistic thought and the Roman law, but also the Christian thought. However, claims that the Church must enter into an effective dialogue with the world and that such dialogue is of crucial importance for the Western world may also have new justifications. The following aspects can be brought up in this context: 1. The Western world needs the Catholic Church, but not in the form that it presents today. The Church is in urgent need of reform of its structure and "views," so that it can successfully "serve" the world of civilization. The Church must catch up with the development of the civilization, and contribute to effecting a change in people's way of thinking and consciousness – to overcome attitudes based on the selfish good of the individual. 2. The Catholic Church is the last element (or one of the last elements) hampering globalization processes in the Western world. Interestingly, regardless of which of the approaches is used, it yields the same solutions. The way of adjusting the Church to the circumstances of the contemporary world is

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[2] See also *Caritas in Veritate* of 29 June 2009 at: www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben_xvi_e nc_20090629_caritas_in_veritate.

developed, *inter alia*, on the basis of discussions devoted to spirituality in general, with a focus on the alleged deterioration of spirituality in the Church, obsolete model of the Church authorities, issues concerning decency or sexual morality and gender, and the alleged condemnation of non-religious and atheist morality by the Church. The list of topics given above is not exhaustive. In a sense, debates on such topics prepare the ground for changes that are to occur within the Church. In connection with these problems, during the debate held in Vienna, Tadeusz Buksiński pointed out three options including: adjustment of the Church to new requirements; withdrawal and condemnation of changes; and internal and integral transformation without adaptation to the world[3]. The first two paths must be recognized as ineffective. In addition, they might lead to an open split in the Church. The only option left is thus the third solution which started to be implemented by Pope Benedict XVI.

The reasoning of some of the experts in religious studies who investigate the situation of the Church in the context of the contemporary world is based on the assumed supremacy of history – and the claim that religions along with their dogmatic systems must be accommodated to history. The best example here is Hinduism, a religion that evolved from its roots in Vedism via Brahmanism to its classical form, soaking up a number of ideas and views from various traditions, also from the Western thought, Christianity and Islam (Neo-Hindu movements in their different varieties). Reflections of this kind frequently give the example of Christianity which drew on the Greek thought and assimilated some aspects of it to be better adjusted to the developing civilization. One might wonder, then, whether similar efforts would also be reasonable today. Perhaps the Catholic Church might benefit from the incorporation of other spiritual practices? The answer to the question depends on the understanding of the idea of dialogue and the concept of ecumenism which preceded it. With regard to dialogue, a distinction between cultural (civilizational) and religious dialogue must be made. A question arises whether the idea of ecumenical dialogue is able to extend beyond the boundaries of Christian religions, forming a part of the Church's response to the pressures created by the contemporary world? The above proposal relates to the religious level rather than the general cultural or civilizational spheres.

Seeking an answer to the question, it seems apt to delve into the history of religions. Various religions have gone through schisms, splits, heresies, adaptation attempts etc. What this shows is that "adjustment"

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[3] See also materials from the meeting in Vienna: Disjunctions Areas of Concerns, Tadeusz Buksiński: *Ethical and Moral Praxis v/s Natural Law Morality*, p. 33.

to current needs may also result in a decline or weakening of a religion. For example, in China, the obligatory celibacy of Buddhist monks was abolished at some point. Contrary to predictions, however, the measure did not cause an increase in the number of candidates for monks' orders. By the same token, Protestant "progressive" modifications of the Christian dogmatic system failed to boost the number of believers. The essence of the process of transformation of religions seems to lie deeper. It is, indeed, conditioned on culture and civilization, but at the level of problems it provokes in people and changes in the domains of thinking, consciousness, emotions and hopes. The consciousness is constantly growing, while the sphere of emotions seems to require the realization of the same needs. Also, whatever the exact interpretation of humans, they must be recognized as spiritual beings and contemporary people seem to require from the religion still a tangible sense of transcendence (experience of the sphere of the sacred) expressed in a new way.

CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Although the Bible does not contain an explicit and detailed account of the Church, it uses a number of images of the Church such as calling it the Bride of Christ[4], the body of Christ[5], God's people[6], God's temple[7] or God's household[8]. These, however, also include images that seem to anticipate the disjunction between the Church and the contemporary world, as well as the internal disjunction affecting the Church. St. Paul addresses bishops designated by the Holy Spirit to serve the Church, warning them that savage wolves would enter between them after his departure. Also, people would arise between them that would preach distorted truths to lure people away[9]. Other parts of the Bible also contain mentions of the full number of the Gentiles entering the Church[10]. Also, an admonition is given that members of the Church should not offend against others[11]. There are also other statements on the Church found in the New Testament. The most important of them is that Christ is the head of the Church, and the Church is subordinate to

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[4] See Eph. 5,25; Apoc. 21,2; 22,17.
[5] See Rom. 12,4-5; 1 Cor. 12, 12-27; Eph. 1,22-23.
[6] E.g. Rom. 9,25.
[7] E.g. 1 Cor. 3,16.
[8] E.g. Eph. 2,19-22.
[9] See Acts 20,28; 20,29-30.
[10] See Rom. 11,25.
[11] See 1 Cor. 10,32.

Christ[12]. Peace can only be achieved through the blood which Christ shed on the cross[13], while God's wisdom is manifested through the Church[14]. God established a hierarchy in the Church, including apostles, prophets, teachers and those endowed with a variety of gifts[15]. Finally, the Church is presented as the pillar and foundation of the truth[16], pursuing a mission of the mediator and admonisher[17].

In the context of hypotheses concerning the decline of the Catholic Church due to its alienation from the modern world, it also seems fitting to consider the Gospel statement on the foundation and perpetuity of the Church enduring in spite of constant attacks:

> And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build
> my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it
> (Matt. 16, 18).

The Scriptures address not only the problem of the Church's constant clash with its contemporary world but also the message and mission of the Church. Faced with the dramatic situation of the Church, in his interview given during the flight from Rome to Lisbon on 11 May 2010, Pope Benedict XVI remarked that the Church had to adopt an attitude based on repentance and purification, and return to the three fundamental theological virtues: faith, hope and charity[18].

ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

There is a belief that documents prepared during the Second Vatican Council have brought all Christians the gift of *new spirit* that may eventually encompass all the people. The gift may be ascribed to inspiration derived from several salient documents. These include Declaration on Religious Freedom (*Dignitatis Humanae* of 7 December 1965); Declaration on the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra Aetate* of 28 October 1965); Decree on Ecumenism

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[12] See Eph. 5,23.
[13] See Col. 1,20.
[14] See Eph. 3,10.
[15] See 1 Cor. 12,28.
[16] See 1 Tim. 3,15.
[17] See Matt. 18,17.
[18] Quotedafter:http://www.google.pl/search?q=wywiad+Benedykta+XVI+1 1+maja+2010&hl=pl&gbv=2&oq=wywiad+Benedykta+XVI+11+maja+2010& gs_

(*Unitatis Redintegratio* of 21 November 1964) and Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church (*Ad Gentes Divinitus* of 7 December 1965). Without a doubt, they contain no deviations, and they meticulously explore new issues while maintaining congruity with long-established frameworks[19]. If, however, instead of looking at the whole certain issues are selectively considered, the concept of *ecumenical spirit of the Church* may be differently construed and used in the media. For example, *Dignitatis Humanae* and *Nostra Aetate* draw attention to the postulate of freedom in human societies with reference to humanistic spiritual ideals, to the idea of free worship of a religion within a society. The acknowledgement that a person has a right to religious freedom is complemented by the belief that all the people are obliged to seek the truth, especially in matters related to God and His Church. This message leaves intact the traditional Catholic teaching with regard to true religion and the only Church of Christ[20]. However, if the message is used in a selective manner, without quoting appropriate contexts, a simplified understanding of the spirit of the Second Vatican Council can be derived and applied as an element of searching, in religious dialogue, also universal messages that are common to all the religions, without identifying concrete examples of differences between them[21]. A selective analysis of texts gives an effect of popular understanding of ideas contained in them, such as equation of the role of the Catholic Church with other churches and religious traditions[22]. A centrepiece of the discussion is the Decree on Ecumenism. The document emphasizes the evangelical message of the unity of the Church. The source and centre of that unity is Christ[23]. Unity is also a gift of the Holy Spirit. The Decree asserts that various religious communities, though believed to be deficient in certain aspects, are not deprived of the meaning and importance of the mystery of salvation. The ecumenical movement is an activity that seeks to achieve the unity of all Christians. Renewal of the unity is the responsibility of the entire Church[24].

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[19] See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, declaration *Dominus Iesus*.

[20] See *Dignitatis Humanae*.

[21] Compare discussions held during the Kyoto Symposium in 1985. See Muramoto S., "Tradition and Modernity in Interreligious Dialogue," *Zen Buddhism Today.* No. 4 (1986), pp. 15-32.

[22] See the complete text of *Nostra Aetate*.

[23] See *Unitatis redintegratio*, Chapter 1 Catholic Principles on Ecumenism. See also Eph. 4,4-5; Gal. 3,27-28; John 17,20-21.

[24] See *Unitatis Redintegratio*, Chapter 1, sections 3 and 4; Chapter 2, section 5.

However, attention should be paid to section nine which highlights the need to become familiar with the spirit of "separated brethren" through a study undertaken in the spirit of truth and good will. Catholics must gain a better understanding of the doctrine and history, spiritual and liturgical life, religious psychology and culture of their brethren and their own. Importantly, each side of the meeting would be recognized as occupying an equal status. Such dialogue has the capacity of revealing the actual condition of the Catholic Church, achieving a broader knowledge of the views held by "separated brethren" and expounding our own faith to them. From what has been stated above, however, one problem emerges. A discussion on theological matters with Buddhists or Taoists is bound to be at best limited. Similarly, acknowledgement of equality would be problematic in the light of the Church's message. Also, the view that an understanding of the outlook of others makes it possible to describe and explain one's own faith better brings to mind missionary strategies rather than dialogue rooted in the idea of ecumenism. This is one of the main objections raised against this form of dialogue at the Kyoto Symposium in 1985. The concept of ecumenism thus becomes key to understanding the importance of dialogue. Contrary to what might be expected, it also covers the relations between the Church and non-Christian religions.

The need to enter into dialogue – or assume an attitude of dialogue – which is currently faced by the Church (idea of Church of dialogue) is an effect of the concept of ecumenism which has permeated the Catholic Church. The trend first emerged at the beginning of the Second Vatican Council and was then seized upon and disseminated by the media. Naturally, the ideas of ecumenism and Church of dialogue not only became flagships of the Second Vatican Council but also marked the beginning of a "new face" of the Church. The Greek word oikoumene corresponding to the concept of ecumenism can be found in the Greek version of the New Testament; it was also used by Homer. In the latter case, it designated the world the Greeks lived in – the Hellenic Greek world. The word appears 15 times in the New Testament, referring mostly to "inhabited earth" or "habitable world." Based on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews (Heb. 1,6), one might infer that the concept denotes a sphere of God's actions in incarnation: *(And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says: "Let all God's angels worship him.")*.

As the time went by, new interpretations of the word "ecumenism" emerged, referring to what is commonly valued in the Church. Consequently, the term started to be used to denote the idea of unity of the Church – though not in the context of the Roman Catholic Church but rather Protestant Churches. This was precipitated by two organizations: the World Council of Churches which was founded in

1948 and the International Missionary Council which was established in 1921. The two institutions raise the need to promote the unity of Christians and the complementary need to engage in constant missionary effort.

The Second Vatican Council embraced the meanings but at the same time, due to selective analysis of documents by the media, it found itself defenceless in the face of activation of common meanings of the words "dialogue" and "ecumenism," and expansion of their sense into new domains. In their everyday interpretations the words extended beyond their one-time definitions together with the concept of *ecumenical spirit*. They began to be applied not only to Christians, but to all people. They highlighted the attitude marked by good will and caring about all human beings – including non-Christians. The situation had important implications. Dialogue became perceived as an appropriate means of mutual understanding between different people. More significantly, though, ecumenical dialogue undermined the idea of the Church as the one and only path leading to salvation.

Accordingly, a number of fundamental principles and planes of dialogue were defined. These were meant to be used as practical guidelines. The problem cannot be discussed in any greater detail here due to constraints of space, however it is worthwhile to note that the idea of dialogue gradually went beyond Christian religions towards non-Christian faiths, and became one of the centrepieces of relations between the Church and the contemporary world. One of the analyses of foundations underlying the idea of dialogue in the Church[25] draws attention to a set of basic rules that must be adhered to if dialogue is to be successful. For example, each of the partners must: 1. believe that the other is speaking in good faith; 2. have a clear understanding of his own faith; 3. strive for a clear understanding of the faith of the other; 4. accept responsibility in humility and penitence for what his group has done, or is doing, to foster and perpetuate division; 5. forthrightly face the issues which cause separation as well as those which create unity; 6. recognize that all that can be done with the dialogue is to offer it up to God. What is interesting, however, is that the rules of dialogue sooner or later open up aspects and meanings which may not be an object of compromise since that would contradict the fundamental message of religions or Churches. The problem is addressed below. Regarding rule 1, Christian Churches accept the idea of common surrender to the One who said: "I am the way and the truth and the life." (John 14,6). Neither

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[25] See Robert McAfee Brown, *The Ecumenical Revolution. An Interpretation of The Catholic-Protestant Dialogue. Based on the William Belden Noble Lectures for 1964-1965*, New York 1969, p. 77.

Buddhism nor Taoism professes any similar ideas. As for rule 3, gaining a full insight into the faith of another person is impossible without practice; this holds especially for non-Christians. Rule 4 assumes the need of inner transformation, etc. Rules 6 carries the risk that instead of strengthening faith dialogue may become a basis for take-over or adaptation, potentially leading to religious syncretism.

At this point, it seems justified to look at some proposed levels of interreligious dialogue, as enumerated by Hans Waldenfels, SJ[26]. Interestingly enough, after discussions held at the Kyoto Symposium Waldenfels replaced the word "dialogue" with "encounter." Is it because he saw the word "dialogue" as too imprecise and too ambiguous?

The four platforms of encounter between different subjects are: 1. the social-political; 2. intellectual-scholarly; 3. philosophical-theological and 4. ascetic-spiritual. Waldenfels sees the first level of encounter as an impulse for representatives of different religions to act in the spirit of the postulate proposed in *Nostra Aetate* 1: "to foster unity and charity among individuals, and even among nations." Leaving aside aspects related to inspiring changes in people's consciousness and drawing public attention, the actual contribution of religion to the goal of peace and justice is quite small. Calls for peace, useful as they may be, do not necessarily lead to building a straight road to peace. In addition, there must be a religious justification of such actions, taking into account the problem of accurate understanding of crucial concepts as peace, justice, freedom, origins of the world and human nature – and different factors underpinning them in different religions. As for point 2, it can be argued that an appropriate understanding of another person on the basis of history, sociology and psychology without a normative reference is impossible. The latter, it must be noted, often leads to contradiction and opposition. Normative references must not be disregarded at this level of dialogue, however one must also realize that their comparison brings little benefit without a more comprehensive look at the problem of "the beginning," i.e. the broadly understood concept of reality adopted in different religions. Mutual understanding is a challenge if it is supposed to arise on a foundation made of mutually contradicting hypotheses of reality in the transcendent dimension.

With regard to level 3, Waldenfels argues that an encounter at this plane is difficult, as there is no strict distinction between philosophical and theological aspects. The problem seems to apply not only to Buddhism but also Taoism which was classified as a religion in Nostra

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[26] See Henri de Lubac, *Aspects du Bouddhisme*, Paris 1951 [Polish translation: *Aspekty buddyzmu*, Cracow 1995]; Hans Waldenfels (SJ), *Buddyzm a Chrześcijaństwo*, pp. 16-19.

Aetate. However, a clear-cut division between philosophy and theology is, in many religions, unfeasible. This, in turn, obscures the platform of understanding, and complicates potential encounter. Theology comprises a range of branches and fields that make references to God, which does not have any particular relevance for Buddhists (as opposed to Christians). As for the final level of encounter distinguished by Waldenfels ("ascetic-spiritual"), if Buddhism is analyzed along this line, it must be viewed as a spiritual path leading to liberation. It needs to be noted that the word "spiritual" used in this context carries a clear Western and Christian connotation. A more appropriate designation would be "inner." Christians tend to become interested in Buddhist practices mainly because of meditation yielding very personal experience of insight, and the fact that some Buddhist masters acknowledge that Christianity has also had prominent teachers of the Buddhist path to enlightenment (e.g. Meister Eckhart). But the Western approach to spirituality, which relies on the element of human beings that survives death and lives on is absent from the Buddhist system. It would be more accurate to speak of the "inner path." The main issue here concerns the understanding of crucial concepts and notions including the concept of the human being and the ultimate nature of reality. Seeking analogies – and platforms of mutual understanding, encounter or dialogue – solely on the basis of apparently convergent descriptions of intersubjective experiences is not sufficient. Rash conclusions drawn on their basis lead to superficial religious syncretism. As a consequence, no side is able to convince the other side at this level. The crucial level is that of the religious interpretation of the encounter rather than the analogy of experiences.

TRADITION VS. MODERNISM – INSIGHTS INTO THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN CHRISTIAN AND NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS GAINED AT THE KYOTO SYMPOSIUM

The idea of the Church entering into dialogue with the world – non-Christian faiths included – has been universally embraced. However, experience derived from the meetings held between representatives of the Church and members of non-Christian religions point to a number of interesting issues. In addition to the possibility of understanding others emerging out of dialogue, another trend has surfaced, namely, a search for common foundations underpinning all religions – or platforms of understanding. In a sense, these explorations correspond to requirements posed by modern times to all religions. Consequently, attempts were undertaken to identify a religious formula that would not only rise up to the challenges of modern times but also somehow integrate contradictions appearing whenever dialogue

conducted at the religious level reveals the need to confront philosophical/theological and dogmatic elements. In relation to a practical attempt at religious dialogue, the Kyoto Symposium brought up three major problems. The discussion below focuses on these problems from the perspective of views proposed by Nishimura[27], Kobayashi[28], Basu[29] and Shōji Muramoto[30].

The first is related to the meaning of spiritual experience for the contemporary world the second draws attention to the need to strive for religious syntheses and to identify universal supra-religious elements that might potentially unite all religions. The focus is on experiencing the divine, the sacred, the absolute. It is recognized that a particularly meaningful aspect of religions today is tangible individual experience which – arguably – validates the message professed by all (or some) religions. The final conclusion, in the context of accommodating modernity and tradition, concerns searching for religion that might be scientifically justified.

Common Element of Dialogue. Modernity and the Crisis of Religious Values

Although the leading theme of the fourth symposium which was held in Kyoto in 1985 was *Zen in the Contemporary World*, the meeting also addressed an important issue of relations existing between non-Christian religions and Christianity. Participants of the meeting repeatedly made references to the problem of religious dialogue, its different levels and forms.

It is worthwhile investing some time to recapitulate the results of debates on the first two issues brought up in Kyoto, especially that in a sense they correspond to conclusions gathered during 20 years of dialogue between Christianity and non-Christian faiths that was sparked by the Second Vatican Council.

One of the shared conclusions is that modernity imposes on religious traditions is the process of constant self-definition. This is also

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[27] Based on Symposium reports. Refer to Nishimura E., "Idealism, 'Existentialism, and Zen Buddhism'," *Zen Buddhism Today.* No. 3 (1985), pp. 125-130.

[28] See Kobayashi E., "On the Significance of the Samadhi In Contemporary Society," *Zen Buddhism Today,* No. 3 (1985), pp. 131-140.

[29] See Basu A., "Samadhi In Hindu Spiritual Thought," *Zen Buddhism Today*. No. 3 (1985), pp. 15-34.

[30] See Muramoto S., "Tradition and Modernity in Interreligious Dialogue," *Zen Buddhism Today.* No. 4 (1986), pp. 15-32.

true for the Catholic Church. The Kyoto debates seem to be dominated by the idea that religions should define themselves in contemporary times, i.e. in a world which on the one hand accepts a plurality of views and on the other hand witnesses a remarkable development of science and technology. These considerations have a major impact on the situation of Christian churches – but also, for example, on the status of Zen Buddhism in Japan. They are not the sole factors, though, for it is believed[31] that an equally important role is played by historical interconnections between different religions, which have had mutual impact on one another throughout the entire human history. At Kyoto, attention was paid to the new "spirit" of the Church encapsulated in the expression "spirit of Vatican II." The "spirit" seemed to unveil a new face of the Church – striving to achieve dialogue with other religions.

The debates held at the symposium highlighted that through mutual interactions religions demonstrate their own truth about the world but, on the other hand, that they come into unavoidable conflicts with one another. These are not the only implications of mutual interactions existing between different religions. Though perhaps the point was not accented strongly enough at the Kyoto sessions, it appears that interreligious relations are a result of external influences, i.e. impact exerted by modernity or civilizations on religions. Analyzing the crisis of religions in the contemporary world, Muramoto mentioned the development of science and technology which, he claims, are an expression of modernity. On the other hand, however, he argued that Zen Buddhism can be recognized as a leading power in dialogue involving all faiths: Christianity, Hinduism and other Eastern religions. The insights into dialogue that were made at Kyoto take into account the dynamic expansion of Eastern religions, Zen Buddhism in particular, in Western Europe and the United States.

Another point which merits attention, is the constant element present in all discussions on the topic, namely, the friction between religions and contemporary science and technology. The progress of civilization is thought to entail a decline of traditional values taught by religions. The conclusion is an effect of observations of social and political life, however it is also embedded in (or justified by) Buddha's prophetic visions which also arise from the cyclical nature of history, religions and the world in general. Consequently, it is argued that dialogue between Christianity and non-Christian religions should incorporate the identification of a universal religion (which rises above all divisions) and understanding its new meaning also in relation to the world.

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[31] See Muramoto S., *Tradition and Modernity in Interreligious Dialogue*.

There is yet another conclusion arising from claims about the universality of Zen Buddhism. As Muramoto asserts[32], Zen – as opposed to Christianity, Hinduism and other religions – makes it possible to attain and maintain a state of mystical union, and then return to daily life and society *with a refreshed and free mind*. A compelling aspect of this viewpoint is the combination of the goal defined by religion with its individual and social utility. Naturally, this should not be taken to mean that the combination is impossible. This way of thinking is meant to substantiate the claim that Zen is universal – as opposed to Christianity and Hinduism – and satisfies the needs generated by modernity, both on the individual and social levels. Is this view not perfectly aligned with the requirements which civilization presents to religions? Regardless of how this manner of presenting Zen is evaluated, Zen must enter into interreligious dialogue and pass the test of philosophical scrutiny. Was such dialogue precipitated by the spirit of Vatican II and its documents? And if so, to what extent?

Some Conclusions on the Dialogue between Zen Buddhism (Non-Christian Religions) and Christianity

The round of symposiums held at the Kyoto University addressed a broad range of problems within the general topic of the influence of modernity on religions and religious dialogue. A special focus, however, was given to relations existing between Zen Buddhism and Christianity. On the foundation of topics such as *Zen and philosophy* or *Zen and mysticism* claims were made that a number of detailed issues had to be incorporated into interreligious dialogue. The basis consisted of ideas and inspirations arising originally in the works of the Second Vatican Council and in the opening of the Church towards other faiths and towards the world.

Understanding in dialogue was sought, among other means, by indicating the possibility of combining the experience encountered through Zen practice with the mysticism of Meister Eckhart. The search for religious universalism and the selection of Zen could be partially justified by reference to the *spirit of Vatican II*. The Second Vatican Council indicated a possibility of a broad interpretation of the idea of ecumenism, underpinned by the need of interreligious dialogue. Seen in this manner, ecumenism might – in some interpretations – go beyond the boundaries of Christian denominations and become a way of ecumenical dialogue with non-Christian religions. Considering all that has been

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[32] See *Ibid.*, Muramoto S., *Tradition and Modernity in Interreligious Dialogue*.

stated above, could dialogue be acknowledged as a panacea to the thorny issues of the status of the Church in the contemporary world and the conflict between modernity and tradition? The spirit of Vatican II has been repeatedly used, for example in explorations into the universalism of Zen and in the interpretations of Zen that differentiate between Buddhist Zen and the spirit of Zen (Zen-Geist). During the Kyoto Symposia, the point was raised by Ueda Shizuteru, who represented the outlook of the majority of Kyoto thinkers including Nishida, Suzuki or Nishitani. They note that the universality of Zen stems from the method which it employs and which can be "safely" used by all religions.

The dialogue took place before the Kyoto sessions and has continued ever since. One of its effects is delving into Zen to identify methods that, some claim, might enrich Christianity and other faiths. Both representatives of Christianity (Hans Waldenfels and Walter Strolz) and representatives of Zen were convinced of versatility of their viewpoint with regard to the universality of their respective religions. Despite the will to understand each other more thoroughly, both sides attempted the method of own interpretation of the beliefs held by the other side, revealing a research dilemma involving interpretation based on theory, without a glimpse into practice. It is, perhaps, the desire to overcome the dilemma that motivated Hugo Makibi Enomiya-Lassalle to make an attempt at embracing both Roman Catholic Christianity and Zen Buddhism.

Whether that approach was an attempt at demonstrating that a contact between religion and requirements created by modern reality was possible is hard to resolve at this point. Perhaps one of the motivations was to use the favourable climate created by the Second Vatican Council and what the Japanese termed the *spirit of Vatican II*. Initially, this interpretation of Zen obviously received criticism from the Christian community which saw the proposal as a straightforward reflection of the Buddhist outlook that disregards the Christian context. What is more, it ignores the fact that reality is replete with contradictions, and omits a number of crucial differences which arise not only from a comparison of, for example, the ethics of Zen with the Christian ethical system. Also, even though the *Spirit of Zen* is presented as a complement or a common basis for many (or all) religions, it is at the same time used as an instrument for criticizing elements of other religions, Christianity included. Leaving aside the possibility of returning to normal individual and social life after the attainment of enlightenment in Zen (presented as allegedly dissimilar from Christianity), the main criticism in dialogue is directed at the concepts of Christian God. The approach to God in Buddhism and Christianity reveals an array of fundamental differences. Some of them are discussed in greater detail below. Seeking the essence of the Christian faith,

representatives of Japanese Zen, e.g. Nishitani, often focus their attention on the biblical God. They assert that the Bible contains no obligation or no agreement for *the analysis of God*. It is not easy to grasp Nishitani's idea when he speaks of the analysis of God. Does he refer to the Hinduistic path of reaching the Absolute through positive or negative actions? Or perhaps the intersubjective experience of insight into the ultimate essence of reality? Nishitani, speaking from the perspective of the Spirit of Zen, states that the Christian God can be described as an example of a *selfish being* that takes total control of human life.

The statement is an excellent illustration of problems faced by interreligious dialogue. Interpretational problems and diverse understandings of concepts are evident. The situation is especially difficult when aspects related to God or the interpretation of the concept of the person are analyzed.

The symposia also addressed the problem of linguistic differences which pose a major barrier to effective understanding between the East and West. The gap is mainly semantic in nature, and involves diversity of interpretation of concepts. Suzuki highlighted the problem by discussing Zen in the West and adapting Western concepts to Eastern ideas. The problem of diverse interpretations is best illustrated with the concepts of "philosophy"[33] or "experience." The process of construction

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[33] Because of frequently encountered stereotypes based on false claims about the alleged non-existence of Eastern philosophies, at least two issues merit special attention. These concern philosophy in the semantic framework – seen as a term or a notion – and in the substantive perspective. As for the former, there appear to be no differences in opinion. Oriental languages indeed have no notion of the "philosopher." On the other hand, however, they contain a number of related concepts such as *tarka* (thinking reasoning, study); *tarkaśastra* (science of reasoning); *vadavidya* (art of discussion); *nyaya* (rule, guideline, method – especially in the context of thinking, inference and deduction); *anviksikividya* (insightful, verificatory or investigative knowledge); *mata* (denoting a thought or what has has been thought, a term indicating theories); *atmavidya* (identified with knowledge of the soul or the highest spirit); *tattvavidyaśastra* (a term that can be interpreted as the science of knowledge or knowledge of truth); *darśana* (a term commonly denoting a thought or philosophical system). In the Chinese tradition, there are concepts of *zhéxué (cze-hüe)* – a philosophy-related notion denoting the exploration of the Way (*dàoxué* – study of the Way); *géwù zhìzhī* (study of things and expansion of knowledge). There is also the notion of *shèngxué*, the investigator of wisdom. The similarity between the investigator of wisdom and the lover of wisdom is quite thought-provoking. Also, one must not forget about the Japanese concept of *tetsugaku*, the Korean *cheol hak*, the Arabic-Persian *falsafa* and others which refer to philosophical thought. For a broader discussion on the topic refer to: Włodzimierz Wilowski, *Utracona mądrość. Umiłowanie*

of meanings should involve the cultural context to avoid misunderstandings. At this point Ueda Shizuteru[34], the Japanese philosopher, underscored the autonomy and common nature of philosophical thinking. At the same time, he seemed to hold that philosophical thinking is beyond the backdrop of religion.

Selected Elements Necessary for Dialogue between Christian and Buddhist Religions

In the process of identification of prerequisites for dialogue, participants of the Kyoto meetings listed a set of specific and recognized elements that are essential within a given tradition. Naturally, they are inherently intertwined with obstacles that hamper or even preclude the *understanding* of culturally conditioned religious distinctiveness. Let us omit the question of disputability of some of the views voiced during the Kyoto meetings and instead progress to addressing selected proposals regarding elements that are key to successful dialogue. These assume[35], as claimed by a number of representatives of Japanese Zen, that the Buddhist framework extends beyond the Christian context. Importantly, despite earlier examples showing the critical attitude of the *Spirit of Zen* towards elements of other religions, it is asserted that Buddhism encounters lesser difficulties in understanding other religions – the reason being that, historically speaking, the religion has not attached major importance to missionary endeavours. What is more, it is also held that Christian missionary activity often takes the form of self-centred propaganda that lacks proper respect for other cultural and spiritual traditions. In this way – Zen followers argue – the missionary nature of Christianity endangers the identity of religious traditions and jeopardizes interreligious dialogue.

To achieve missionary success, it is necessary to explore the culture and socioeconomic structure of the group in which one's religious truth is to be spread. Another prerequisite is adaptation to the lifestyle of the target group which, it must be remembered, is often completely different from the background of the missionaries. This is how Buddhists and Zen followers frequently perceive the Christian

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mądrości a mądrość. Studium z filozofii porównawczej. Od greckich siedmiu mędrców, poprzez Bhartrhariego, Zhuangzi i Salomona, do Schopenhauera (Poznań 2012), pp. 17-22.

[34] The discussion presented here is based on Muramoto S., *Tradition and Modernity in Interreligious Dialogue*.

[35] *Ibid*.

missionary effort which finds its fullest expression in St. Mark's words[36].

However, the critical overview of the Christian missionary form and methods by Zen followers as part of their dialogue endeavour is also complemented by a focus on those elements of the Christian thought that may be viewed as commonly attractive from the social angle, and suprareligious. Accordingly, Zen highlights the necessity of analyzing one's own sensitivity to needs resulting from problems faced by the world. At the same time, this aspect is viewed as a significant lack in the Christian tradition[37].

So, even though the conclusions reached during the symposia demonstrate the need to continue teaching individual religions worldwide, misunderstandings stand in the way. Could one assume that the Christian biblical God is a selfish being that ruthlessly forces his way upon Buddhists and representatives of other religions? This Buddhist vision of Christian God in the spirit of Zen is complemented by the concept of reality associated with modernity. In a quite similar way, modernity gives rise to a cultural change leading to narcissism. In turn, one's own projection of narcissism is manifested as intolerance to the narcissism of others. Seen from this perspective, it is no wonder that to some Zen followers modernity gives Christian God a set of narcissistic traits. It is, therefore, human narcissism that is frustrating. It must be said that such a critical concept of Christian God is not common. An additional concept of Christian God is also present. It is reminiscent of the thought of many contemporary people who, after many unpleasant experiences, have partially given up their narcissistic needs. This vision, however, reveals the lack of differentiation between the image of God in the Old and New Testament. The dialogue between Zen and Christianity showed that Zen did not grasp the main ideas underlying the Christian faith. The Buddhist vision of the Christian God precludes any possibility of understanding and continued dialogue on a religious plane.

Christian God may be radically different from the God figure invented by many contemporary people and by Zen. However, why is it that Christian God is not as frequently experienced by people as the Bible reveals? Why cannot Christians experience divine reality in their individual experience of insight? Does the previous observation entail

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[36] See also Mark 16,15.

[37] Muramoto argues that Buddhism must be more skillful in its use of the method called *upaja* which points to the activity of the absolute in the phenomenal world manifesting itself as compassion (*karuna*). However, from the viewpoint of pure consciousness of enlightenment bodhisattvas perceive no suffering individuals, as there is nothing beyond dharmakāya, the absolute.

that the experience of God in Christianity is so rare because the Christian religion has failed to work out sufficiently good methods allowing that type of experience? Can Zen, whose teachings comprise the spirit of all religions, be deemed helpful in this respect? Was that way of thinking shared by Lassalle who was a pioneer of Zen for Christians?

Muramoto w Kyoto suggests that Christianity might benefit from the resolution of these confrontations. There are, admittedly, other problems such as the Western separation of three main pillars of philosophy and religion: the world (nature), man and God. In the East, these categories are tightly interconnected. It is a Buddhist truth expressed in Western philosophical categories. It asserts that Zen plays a decisive role in the process of sharing this truth with the West and with Christianity. To what extent Christianity is able to embrace this truth without experiencing the problem of partial loss of identity remains an open – and strongly debatable – issue. A recurrent question, however, is whether Vatican II and its spirit set the stage for these speculations which were perhaps impossible before the Council took place? Or, alternatively, were they a consequence of cultural transformation and the general decline of the authority of religion?

Elements of Religious Experience in the Contemporary World

The round of symposia that were held in Kyoto show that dialogue is tied not only to a dilemma between modernity and tradition. The third symposium in Kyoto was devoted to the topic of *Samadhi[38] and meditation in the contemporary world* focusing not only on religious dialogue but also on the special meaning held by different paths of spiritual development. Interesting interpretations of these topics were proposed by Arabinda Basu[38].

They include the observation that contemporary persons do not want to disclose what they really believe. Modernity, Basu argues, is distinctive for its lack of interest and involvement in traditional value systems. One may get the impression that the tendency is, in fact, one of the main prerequisites of modernity. Until recently, religious systems were a prominent element of traditional culturally based values.

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[38] Japanese *zanmai*, i.e. focus of the mind on a single object by tranquilizing mental activity. It is a non-dualistic state of consciousness, and a prerequisite for meditation (dhyana). Samadhi is interpreted differently in Buddhist and Hindu schools.

[38] Based on Basu A., *Samadhi In Hindu Spiritual Thought*, in: *Zen Buddhism Today*.

Modernity viewed in this way, Basu claims, maintains that it is tolerant of various belief systems, however in actual fact it uses the veil of tolerance to shroud the fact that it rejects them all. Consequently, contemporary people are bound to lose their sense of identity.

Is the situation reversible? Basu offers no straightforward answer. He draws attention to the general conflict between modernity and religions. Furthermore, Basu neither assures that the modern approach can be overcome, nor reflects on whether religious transformations can potentially occur as its consequence. He seems to delve deeper into the issue, suggesting that an encounter with other traditions is also crucial to one's own formation. Similar to other scholars before him Basu also addresses dialogue, though at the level of analysis of suitability of various spiritual paths offered by religions. Whether one's own tradition and identity can be found in this way, however, remains an open question. In his view, the meeting does not need to lead to the commitment to another tradition. Encounters with other traditions, Basu asserts, are an absolute prerequisite for stimulating the existential orientation initially found in one's own religious tradition. Analyzing Zen, Hinduism and other religions, Basu is quite aware of the fact that Buddhism assumes a superior attitude to the latter[39].

However, what is particularly important about Basu's reflections is his distinct perception of Hinduism in the context of religious dialogue and modernity. In a sense, he adapts tradition to modernity, indicating – perhaps subconsciously – a pluralism which leads to relativism.

In the Hinduistic spiritual thought, one of the answers to the question "where does it lead" is that Hinduistic spirituality triggers a transformation from mental to supermental awareness, from normal empirical personality to genuinely spiritual nature, from our earthly world to paradise. Similar to other followers of Zen, Basu strives for a method that would be free from dogmatic presuppositions that are not accommodated within today's concept and the requirements of modernity. Basu thus notes that it is necessary to find a new yoga. In doing so, he follows the same path as Zen, proclaiming his universality and supra-religiousness. Yoga is presented chiefly as a method which allows going beyond confrontations at the level of purely religious dialogue.

Modernity seeks novelty. Since yoga has no disregard for life, it tries to reach the realm of the divine and the absolute, i.e. a domain that is shared by all religions. Consequently, Basu highlights the importance of samadhi as a state that is able and bound to lead an individual to

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[39] During the 3rd symposium, misunderstandings arising from the Buddhist version of Hinduism were explored by Eshin Nishimura.

knowledge and previously unexperienced joy. Also, as far as interreligious dialogue is concerned, both Hinduism and Zen are seriously concerned about challenges thrown up by the contemporary age. The dilemma between modernity and tradition is stressed. The proposals which they offer seem to suggest that they are bent on finding one universal religion with the help of methods which have been used in the Eastern tradition for ages. The methods which fit well with modern requirements need, in their view, to take into account the possibility of synthesis of the great religions of the world. Among Kyoto's scholars, the possibility of synthesis is also suggested by Ensho Kobayashi[40].

Kobayashi is convinced not only that the possibility exists but also that it is justified by the features of modern times. Unlike Nishimura, Kobayashi admits the possibility of synthesis of religions, though he only mentions Buddhism and Hinduism. Could the framework be expanded to cover all religions? In this line of thinking, it is suggested that an analysis of concepts is required – primarily with regard to those concepts that are a basis underlying diverse religious systems. Accordingly, Kobayashi embarks on a search for analogies. He mentions, for example, the notion of *samadhi* which in Mahayana Buddhism is usually thought to precede *prajna*. Kobayashi's suggestion ultimately shows that the former has come to be identified with *prajna*[41] in Zen. Kobayashi's suggestion of equivalence between *samadhi* and *prajna*, however, enforces the need of effecting a change in the meaning of both terms. To what extent is that possible? Kobayashi fails to give a precise answer, shifting his attention to the individual and social dimension of deliberations concerning interreligious dialogue.

The starting point for Kobayashi's considerations is the question whether contemporary times need the focus of the mind and tranquilization of mental activity. To recapitulate, the two ensure a non-dualistic state of consciousness and the possibility of entering into meditation *(dhyana)* to achieve *samadhi*. This outlook seems quite attractive for the Western world especially in view of the current tension between technology and the person – and today's attitude to methods employed by the Church.

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[40] See Kobayashi E., *On the Significance of the Samadhi In Contemporary Society*.

[41] Pali: *pańńa*, Japanese: *hannya,* wisdom that is not conveyed conceptually but rather experienced directly, and intuitive, in which the decisive element is insight into emptiness/voidness *(sunyata)*. It represents one of *paramitas* (a notion that can be rendered as perfection or culmination of values). It is preceded by *dhjana* – meditation. The ability to attain *samadhi* is a precondition for meditation.

The conclusion of what has been stated above, however, may be quite different than expected. An unsatisfactory answer given by tradition to requirements posed by modernity may be resolved. In what way?

This is possible if the question is transformed into a traditional and contemporary *koan*[42]. The inevitable tension between tradition and modernity can be overcome, Kobayashi claims, only by referring to *solutions* found in Zen where the focus is on the new activation of tradition – in line with the needs of modern times – pointing out possibilities given by koan in Zen and possibly also in all other religions. In addition, attention is also drawn to possibilities offered by the Eastern concept of the human being in terms of addressing problems associated with the tradition vs. modernity debate. Is it completely free of dogmas which allegedly restrain it in the Western world?

It is hard to reject the statement that the majority of contemporary researchers analyzing interreligious dialogue concentrate on the relations and the significance of diverse religious practices, confronting them with the technologically sophisticated civilization, and pointing to their mutual opposition. This viewpoint, however, must be overcome. Although it is recognized that interreligious dialogue carries a considerable potential, the main benchmark of a true contemporary religion is openness. This, however, is accompanied by an effort to establish the common foundations of all religions – or a platform of understanding that lies beyond the sphere of confrontation-inducing dogmatics. In non-Christian religions, on the other hand, the supra-religious spirit of Zen or yoga are invoked in the search for elements that might make up one future religion to be embraced by the whole world. But dialogue also exposes considerable differences existing between religions. As a result, two opposing positions can be distinguished: searching for a religious universalism that might be capable of rising up to the expectations created by modernity, and defenders of traditional religions who believe that scientific and technological discoveries have nothing to do with the essence of religion. The latter view does not rule out interactions between tradition and modernity. For the purpose of the present discussion it is crucial to determine the necessity of dialogue and openness of religion in the contemporary age. Openness, in a sense, reveals not only the need of adaptation but also the absence of self-sufficiency in the fulfilment of the goal outlined and served by each religion, regardless of other views indicating the strength of religion. Whether one accepts that Christianity may be complemented by elements of other religions or rejects this view, depends – in a certain

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[42] In Zen the word refers to the ultimate truth.

sense – upon insights achieved from a range of problems such as the influence of modernity on tradition, the purpose and potential gains of dialogue, and the main message behind non-Christian religions and the Church.

SOME FINAL REMARKS

The ecumenical movement arose in Protestantism in the early 20th century with a view to achieving unity of various Protestant churches. In the course of time, the idea infiltrated the Catholic Church under the banner of uniting all Christians. Consequently, a prominent place among documents of the Second Vatican Council was given to *Unitatis Redintegratio*, or the Decree on Ecumenism. The contents of the Decree were interpreted as a sign of the inner transformation of the Church in the spirit of ecumenical cooperation and new dialogue. In a certain sense, the idea also effected interreligious dialogue, becoming its unilateral tool in many endeavours including the search for similarities and dialogue platforms instead of dissimilarities and divergences between Christianity and non-religious religions, or the Catholic Church and other Christian denominations.

It is hard to determine why Vatican II devoted little attention to earlier documents discussing the problem of relations between Christianity and non-Christian religions, and the effects of modernity on religions and the Church[43]. The Church implemented an almost unimaginable internal reform to come up to the expectations of the world, non-Christian religions included. Did that have an effect on strengthening the position and status of the Church? It is easily noticeable that documents of the Second Vatican Council contain no reference to the instruction announced by the Holy Office on 20 December 1949 during the pontificate of Pope Pius XII: *De Montione Eecumenica*[44] and *Mortalium Animos* authored by Pius XI[45] and

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[43] See selected documents of the Church, e.g. Decree for the Jacobites of 4 February 1441 (Council of Florence); epistle by Pope Innocent III, *Eius Exemplo*; encyclical *Mirari Vos* by Pope Gregory XVI; encyclical *Quanto conficiamur moerore* by Pope Pius IX; epistle by Pope Leo XIII *Testem Benevoleniae*, or epistle authored by Pope Pius X, *Notre Charge Apostolique*. They raise the problem of the Church's mission in the work of Salvation, and the error of indifferentism with regard to Salvation – erroneous reasoning that the Church should follow modern times, changing and adapting some of its truths or passing over some problems in silence, reducing the Church's Magisterium or allowing tolerance of erroneous views.

[44] Based on the article authored by Heyne J. in *The Reign of Mary*, Spring 2013. See http://www.ultramontes.pl/heyne_ruch_ekumeniczny.htm.

announced on 6 January 1928. The former document notes that even though the Church does not participate in congresses and meetings officially termed as ecumenical, it had never wavered, and would never waver, in its resolve to attain unity[46]. The document also admitted that attempts to unite Christian non-Catholics with the Catholic Church were often well-meaning but also carried risks. Hence a number of suggestions were proposed, such as to devote more time to contentious issues rather than on points of agreement. This approach protects against the danger of indifferentism. Putting aside differences – and arguing for the need to create a common platform where all religions could meet – points to the distinction between more and less urgent problems. If the Church has not resolved differences through theological opinions, it may not accept views indicating similarities, without taking into account dogmatic attitudes. If the focus is solely on similarities, the discussion heads in the direction of accepting that all denominations and religions are a manifestation of one and the same faith. This approach, however, leads to indifferentism. Still, this way of thinking is common despite the warnings given by Pius XI and XII to the contemporary world[47] and the dialogue between Christian and non-Christian religions. Pius voiced a similar opinion on the interreligious encounter between Catholics and non-Catholics. They are preconditioned not only on the possession of specific knowledge but also specific spiritual formation in order to avoid conversion. Dialogue should not lead only to conversion. Similarly, the recognition that all religions are to a greater or lesser extent good and commendable, and manifest (on an equal footing though in different forms) our innate sense attracting us to God and acknowledging his rule[48] is erroneous. Proponents of the search for common religious ideas deviate from true faith, perverting its meaning and falling prey to naturalism and atheism.

The Catholic Church headed by the successor of St. Peter has always been international in scope: this is the message found in the Gospels. This is why the Greek notion of *oikoumene* in the New Testament has been invoked above. Other religious communities initially had no such aspirations. The word oikoumene reappeared in 1937 during the Oxford Conference as a competition to the Catholic Church, bringing the suggestion that there are coexisting equal Christian churches that should strive for unity (ecumenical community). As a

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[45] See also the Encyclical of Pope Pius XI *Mortalium animos* of 6 January 1928.

[46] See 1 Cor. 1,13.

[47] See Heyne J., in: *The Reign of Mary*, op. cit.

[48] See *Mortalium animos,* p. 6.

result, there are considerable differences in the perception of unity that is attempted within Christian churches, and unity between Christianity and non-Christian religions. The Holy See has never been a member of the World Council of Churches, the main inter-church organization including most mainstream Christian churches. The Catholic Church – with Peter's succession as the head, hierarchical structure and sacraments – does not see itself as one of many communities within Christ's Church that all enjoy an equal status. This stems from the justification and mission of the Catholic Church rooted in the New Testament.

The issue of the Catholic Church joining the ecumenical movement is regulated by the Decree on Ecumenism. The document does not abandon the principles of Catholic ecclesiology, however it formulates them in such a way as to enable participation. The world wanted the Church to conduct dialogue with Christian and non-Christian religions, and with itself. Accordingly, the new spirit of the Church was highlighted. In the eyes of the media, the dialogue-oriented Catholic Church had become one of many Christian Churches. In fact, in the eyes of the world it had become one of many religions, even though Ratzinger was intent on rejecting the thought in his *Dominus Iesus*, in 2000. This led to the activation of inner interpretations infusing the Church with elements that contradicted its message. Examples abound, ranging from architecture, symbols and signs adopted from other traditions to the recognition that the Eucharist and Zen are one[49]. Another example relates to joint meditations for Buddhist and Christian monks, or the idea of Zen for Christians. There are also common prayers and paraliturgical or liturgical worship that offend against liturgical rules, revealing signs of public sin. All these activities create the impression of equality of all denominations. This, in practical terms, negates the sole truth of the Church as the road to salvation which, however, should not be mistaken for and replaced by the idea of liberation.

The decisive moment in ecumenical initiatives and in interreligious dialogue is the ultimate question about theological justification and its compliance with the message conveyed by the Gospels. Considering all that has been said above, it is hard to agree with some proponents of ecumenism and religious dialogue[50] that they are important precisely because why we do not know what will come out of them. Some have faith that the Holy Spirit will use it to achieve a renewal of the Church. Nevertheless, there are no guarantees that the

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[49] See Messerer J., OFM in Hugo Makibi Enomiya-Lassalle, *Medytacja zen dla chrześcijan*, Kraków 2008, p. 9.

[50] See McAfee Brown, *The Ecumenical Revolution*, p. 96.

adversary of the Holy Spirit has no opposing intentions which he has just started putting into practice.

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THE COUNCIL FOR RESEARCH
IN VALUES AND PHILOSOPHY

PURPOSE

Today there is urgent need to attend to the nature and dignity of the person, to the quality of human life, to the purpose and goal of the physical transformation of our environment, and to the relation of all this to the development of social and political life. This, in turn, requires philosophic clarification of the base upon which freedom is exercised, that is, of the values which provide stability and guidance to one's decisions.

Such studies must be able to reach deeply into one's culture and that of other parts of the world as mutually reinforcing and enriching in order to uncover the roots of the dignity of persons and of their societies. They must be able to identify the conceptual forms in terms of which modern industrial and technological developments are structured and how these impact upon human self-understanding. Above all, they must be able to bring these elements together in the creative understanding essential for setting our goals and determining our modes of interaction. In the present complex global circumstances this is a condition for growing together with trust and justice, honest dedication and mutual concern.

The Council for Studies in Values and Philosophy (RVP) unites scholars who share these concerns and are interested in the application thereto of existing capabilities in the field of philosophy and other disciplines. Its work is to identify areas in which study is needed, the intellectual resources which can be brought to bear thereupon, and the means for publication and interchange of the work from the various regions of the world. In bringing these together its goal is scientific discovery and publication which contributes to the present promotion of humankind.

In sum, our times present both the need and the opportunity for deeper and ever more progressive understanding of the person and of the foundations of social life. The development of such understanding is the goal of the RVP.

PROJECTS

A set of related research efforts is currently in process:

1. *Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change: Philosophical Foundations for Social Life.* Focused, mutually coordinated research teams in university centers prepare volumes as part of an integrated philosophic search for self-understanding differentiated by culture and civilization. These evolve more adequate understandings of the person in society and look to the cultural heritage of each for the resources to respond to the challenges of its own specific contemporary transformation.

2. *Seminars on Culture and Contemporary Issues*. This series of 10 week crosscultural and interdisciplinary seminars is coordinated by the RVP in Washington.

3. *Joint-Colloquia* with Institutes of Philosophy of the National Academies of Science, university philosophy departments, and societies. Underway since 1976 in Eastern Europe and, since 1987, in China, these concern the person in contemporary society.

4. *Foundations of Moral Education and Character Development.* A study in values and education which unites philosophers, psychologists, social scientists and scholars in education in the elaboration of ways of enriching the moral content of education and character development. This work has been underway since 1980.

The personnel for these projects consists of established scholars willing to contribute their time and research as part of their professional commitment to life in contemporary society. For resources to implement this work the Council, as 501 C3 a non-profit organization incorporated in the District of Colombia, looks to various private foundations, public programs and enterprises.

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