



Gusztáv Kovács
Mátyás Szalay

EUROPE: Spiritual Resources for the Future

THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE OF PÉCS

Gusztáv Kovács/Mátyás Szalay
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Theological College of Pécs

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FOR CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

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LIST OF PRESIDENTS OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIETY FOR CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

- 1989–1995 Peter Hünermann Tübingen, Germany, Honorary President
- 1995–1998 Hans Van Der Ven, Nijmegen, Netherlands
- 1998–2001 Gerhard Larcher, Graz, Austria
- 2001–2004 Leo Karrer, Fribourg, Switzerland
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- 2009–2011 Eamonn Conway, Limerick, Ireland
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- 2019–2021 Milos Lichner Bratislava, Slovakia
- 2021–2023 Margit Eckholt Osnabrück, Germany
- 2023–2025 Gusztáv Kovács, Pécs, Hungary
- 2023–2025 (Vice President) Fáinche Ryan, Dublin, Ireland

ESCT CONGRESSES

- 1992 Stuttgart
- 1995 Freising
- 1998 Nijmegen
- 2001 Graz and Maribor
- 2004 Fribourg and Geneva
- 2007 Leuven (Religion and the European Project)
- 2009 Limerick, Ireland (Eager Longing of Creation)
- 2011 Vienna, Austria (Grenzen der Leiblichkeit)
- 2013 Brixen, South Tyrol (Gott in Frage)
- 2015 Leuven, Belgium (The Soul of Theology)
- 2017 Strasbourg, France (Philadelphia: The Challenge of Fraternity)
- 2019 Bratislava, Slovakia (Hope. Where does our Hope lie?)
- 2021 Osnabrück, Germany (Creation – Transformation – Theology)
- 2023 Pécs, Hungary (EUROPE: Spiritual Resources for the Future)

IMPORTANT GUESTS WHO HONOURED THE CONGRESS IN PÉCS WITH THEIR PRESENCE

- László Felföldi, Bishop of Pécs
- Andrej Saje, President of the Episcopal Conference of Slovenia
- Levente Balázs Martos, Auxiliary Bishop of Esztergom-Budapest
- György Hölvényi, Member of the European Parliament
- László Hegyi, Chief Advisor of the Ministry of Culture and Innovation
- Margit Eckholt, President of the European Society for Catholic Theology
- Attila Miseta, Rector of the University of Pécs
- Tamás Fedeles, Vice-rector of the University of Pécs
- Izunna Okonkwo, CEO of St. Charles Boromeo Hospital in Onitsha, Nigeria
- Marie Jo Thiel, Former president of ESCT, Member of the Pontifical Academy for Life
- Sigrid Müller, Former president of ESCT, former Dean of the Catholic Theological Faculty of the University of Vienna
- Stefan Attard, Dean of the Catholic Theological Faculty of the University of Malta
- Susan Abraham, President of the journal Concilium, Dean of Faculty at Pacific School of Religion
- Milos Lichner, Former president of ESCT, Rector of the University of Trnava
- Jean Ehret, Founding director of the Luxembourg School of Religion & Society

EDITOR'S PREFACE

EUROPEAN THEOLOGY AT THE CROSSROADS OF LOCALITY, HISTORY AND FUTURE

Gusztáv Kovács – Mátyás Szalay

Between August 30 and September 2, 2023, Hungary hosted the biennial congress of the European Society for Catholic Theology (ESCT) for the first time. The location was Pécs, a historic town and diocese in the southwestern part of the country.

The venue for the opening session was carefully selected: the so-called Granary, a newly renovated building owned by the Diocese of Pécs. This venue is deeply connected, both historically and symbolically, to the conference's theme—namely, the question of Europe and its spiritual resources for the future.

The Granary was historically a place for storing grain, cereal, and wine. In the 18th century, farm wagons laden with grain sacks and barrels regularly approached the granary from all corners of the diocese. It was once a magnetic place, eagerly awaiting the arrival of goods to be stored. This historical background of the venue was symbolic for the congress, as participants gathered in the Granary from all over Europe and beyond to collect thoughts and ideas about Europe and the spiritual resources that might serve the continent's future.

Another important message conveyed by the Granary was its location at a significant crossroads of European history. It was built on a ground where a 1st-century Celtic tribe may have set its campfire in the then swampy area, or where a 2nd-century Roman builder might have brought Christianity and Christian imagery to the region, constructing one of the five churches that gave the city its name, *Quinque Ecclesiae* (the City of the Five Churches). Later, barbarian families who have inhabited the tombs of the ancient Christian cemetery of *Sopianae* might have dwelt, and Bonipert, the first bishop of Pécs (appointed in 1009), may have spent his first night at his new post here too. William of Koppenbach, chancellor of Hungary's first university, founded in 1367, might have dreamt of his cherished plans at this

very place. Janus Pannonius, Hungary's first lyric poet, humanist, and bishop of Pécs, may have written one of his poems here as well. Later, a Protestant pastor, caring for Catholics left without priests during the Ottoman occupation, may have prepared his sermons where the Granary now stands. Although we do not have historical evidence, these could be realistic events that might have occurred at the location where the Granary now stands.¹ But from the communist era, we know for certain that Bishop Cserháti guided trusted friends into a secret tunnel beneath the Granary to avoid surveillance by the communist secret police.²

This diversity of historical figures and events was reflected in the participants of the congress, who came with varied ideas – not only about spirituality and spiritual resources but also about what Europe is. The idea of Europe is shaped by the histories of its different countries, by languages, and by our personal biographies. Just as the various layers of history form a solid foundation for the Granary, the diversity of the participants provided a firm basis for enriching discussions about Europe and its spiritual resources.

The event itself, the 14th ESCT Congress, also carried an important message for the participants. All the previous congresses have been milestones in the common life of theologians in Europe. Since the founding of the society in 1989, ESCT has witnessed the fall of the Iron Curtain, the expansion of NATO and the European Union, Brexit, the wars in former Yugoslavia, and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. It has also seen the reign of three popes, each with their own continuities and idiosyncrasies. In these changing circumstances, the society has always managed to find its unique role within Europe's academic and religious spheres, standing up for values such as academic freedom, synodality, and fostering connections among theologians from different countries. Through its efforts, ESCT has also helped nurture the development of new generations of theologians. All thirteen previous congresses, from Stuttgart to Osnabrück, have addressed contemporary challenges such as religious language, fraternity, hope, and the ecological crisis.

¹ Cf. FONT, *Pécs története II. A püspökség alapításától a török hódításig*; VISY, *Pécs története I. Az őskortól a püspökség megalapításáig*.

² Cf. PÉCSI EGYHÁZMEGYE, *Ezer év öröksége újul meg*.

The congress in Pécs aimed to explore a similarly pressing issue: participants sought to discover the spiritual resources for Europe and join in a quest for future-oriented moments within the Judeo-Christian tradition. While acknowledging the decline of traditional religiosity, they also recognized a growing thirst for spirituality. The congress challenged participants to rediscover and reshape the vision of Christianity. The opportunity was seen not only as a challenge but also as a chance to rediscover the Judeo-Christian tradition for Europe. The rich heritage of ESCT and the diversity of its members were viewed as valuable assets for breaking free from narrow understandings of religion and spirituality, helping to better understand how theological traditions can illuminate “the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties” (GS 1) of our contemporaries.

In his letter for the 40th anniversary of COMECE, Pope Francis called on Christians “to serve as leaven in reviving Europe’s conscience and help generate processes capable of awakening new energies in society”.³ In a similar spirit, this collection of papers presented at the congress aims to remind Europe of its roots and heritage, offering inspiration and fostering a sense of unity rather than resentment.

The theme of the congress is closely linked to the identity of the ESCT: it is a continuous question of how, as a European association, ESCT can serve our continent. This raised key questions: Do theology, religion, and spirituality still have something to offer Europe? Do theologians possess resources that are essential for the future of our continent? Can members of the society collectively ask: what can we do to make Europe a liveable place – humane, just, and worthy of living?

We hope that this volume offers at least partial answers to these questions. The nearly forty papers published here represent the efforts of theologians to contribute to Europe’s future with the resources at their disposal. The diversity of topics, approaches, and perspectives highlights this collective endeavour to find a path toward future-oriented theology, one that offers hope to our continent by drawing on its roots. This pluralism and search for truth were key considerations in the editing of this volume, as its editors sought to present contemporary theology in all

³ Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis on Europe*.

its diversity – both its values and challenges – while providing theologians from diverse backgrounds the opportunity to express their perspectives on the topic.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to everyone who have worked on the production of this volume, especially to the authors who prepared their papers in a dedicated spirit, and to the Theological College of Pécs for the support in the publication of this volume. We are grateful for the sponsors of the Congress: the Diocese of Pécs, Renovabis, Porticus, and the Peter Hünemann Stiftung for making the participation of many from Central Europe and the Global South possible.

We hope that this volume will be followed by many others, continuing the tradition of ESCT congresses for future generations!

The Editors

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I.
CRISIS AND KAIROS

GREETING

Margit Eckholt

Osnabrück University, Institute of Catholic Theology

President of ESCT (8/2021-8/2023)

Dear participants in the
Congress of the European Society of Catholic Theology in Pécs!

Europe is "exhausted", according to cultural-philosophical studies in Europe, but above all philosophical and theological perspectives from the countries of the South. This view of Europe from the "South" is both captivating and sobering, written by thinkers who, as young theologians from African, Asian or Latin American countries, received part of their theological training at various European theological and philosophical faculties in the 1960s and 1970s. Is Europe exhausted because the intellectual and spiritual sources are drying up and no impulses are reaching out? Exhausted in the face of a new war in Europe, in Ukraine, and a confrontation between East and West? Exhausted in the face of the limits set by climate change and the borders that Europe marks to the South? Exhausted in the face of the difficult confrontation with our own history of conquest, exclusion, racism and misanthropy and the associated enquiries into our humanist and Enlightenment heritage?

The reform impulses of the Second Vatican Council and the new confrontation with the sources of European thought, the biblical texts, the patristic traditions of the East and West, the scholastic and mystical theologies, the new theological and philosophical approaches in the 20th century – existential philosophy, phenomenology, hermeneutics and critical philosophy – were the starting point for the emergence of new historically and anthropologically focused theological approaches in the West and the diverse contextual theologies in the countries of the South. In the future, thinking can only take place in diverse intercultural dynamics.

Pope Francis and the new Prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, Mons. Victor Manuel Fernández, stand in this tradition, at the same time they stand for the fact that the weights in the Church have shifted and Europe is becoming one of the many "peripheries" of the one world and has become aware of its own "contextuality". Yes, the view of these many "contexts" and their own histories, often marked by violence, war and border crossings, confessional and religious conflicts, is exhausted as the dark sides of European humanism and the Enlightenment increasingly come to light, the grimaces of the conquests and colonialism, of exclusion, discrimination, anti-Semitism and racism.

Thus the question of spiritual resources for the future in Europe, the leitmotif of the Congress of the European Society for Catholic Theology, is in need: Maxim Kantor, Russian painter, writer and art historian with German citizenship, who designed the chapel of the Luxembourg School of Religion and Society and presented it to the Curatorium of ESCT at its meeting in February 2022, has depicted the women at the tomb and placed in a land of ruins: The wind blows from paradise, on the hand of the boy sits a colourful bird, ready for flight – in the midst of the ruins, resurrection grows, a symbol for the Congress of ESCT: Europe is "post-Christian", in very few regions a majority still belongs to one of the Christian denominations, in Germany the affiliation to Christianity has dropped to only about 48 % within a few years. But the Christian history of Europe cannot be denied, and so the question arises: How can that which belongs to the "source" of European history be "reactivated" in such a way that it becomes a „resource“ and strength for the future in new times of a globalised world shaken by crises? And can this heritage perhaps also be reactivated in such a way that the sources are opened up in a new, non-exclusive breadth – in dialogue with the different cultures and religious traditions in East and West, North and South, in dialogue with Judaism and Islam, and in recognition of the pluralisation of the European tradition?

Modernity and Western self-referential thinking have too often forgotten this. The Oriental churches emerged with the first ecumenical councils in the 5th century, and Christianity was already present on the African and Asian continents at that time; scholastic theology draws not only from Aristotelian thought but also from the spirit

of the Muslim medreses. We can only do theology in Europe today if we take a new look at our own history and open it up in a new plurality, in recognition of our own guilt, but also in discovering resources that have not yet been exhausted.

So I wish for a good cooperation, thinking and discussion at the congress, in order to continue to shape the "laboratory" of theology in Europe in the service of the future of the whole creation, in the service of peace and justice. I wish good luck and thank the Vice-President of our Society, Prof. Dr Gusztáv Kovács, and his team for hosting and organizing this conference. God's blessing and Pax et Bonum!

GRUßWORT

Margit Eckholt

Osnabrück University, Institute of Catholic Theology

President of ESCT (8/2021-8/2023)

Liebe Teilnehmerinnen und Teilnehmer am Kongress der Europäischen Gesellschaft für katholische Theologie in Pécs!

Europa ist „erschöpft“, so zeigen es kulturphilosophische Studien in Europa, vor allem aber auch philosophische und theologische Perspektiven aus den Ländern des Südens auf. Gerade dieser Blick aus dem Süden auf Europa ist bestechend und ernüchternd zugleich, oft geschrieben von Denkern, die wie viele junge Theologen aus afrikanischen, asiatischen oder lateinamerikanischen Ländern in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren einen Teil ihrer theologischen Ausbildung an europäischen theologischen und philosophischen Fakultäten durchlaufen haben. Ist Europa erschöpft, weil die intellektuellen und geistlichen Quellen versiegen und keine Impulse mehr nach außen wirken? Erschöpft, angesichts von Krieg und Gewalt in Europa, angesichts des Kriegs in der Ukraine und einer neuen Konfrontation von Ost und West? Erschöpft, angesichts der Grenzen, die der Klimawandel setzt und der Grenzen, die Europa zum Süden hin markiert? Erschöpft angesichts der schwierigen Auseinandersetzung mit der eigenen Geschichte von Eroberung, Ausgrenzung, Rassismus und Menschenfeindlichkeit und der damit verbundenen Anfragen an das humanistische und aufklärerische Erbe Europas?

Die Reformimpulse des 2. Vatikanischen Konzils und die neue Auseinandersetzung mit den Quellen europäischen Denkens, den biblischen Texten, den patristischen Traditionen des Ostens und Westens, den scholastischen und mystischen Theologien, den neuen theologischen und philosophischen Ansätzen im 20. Jahrhundert – Existenzialphilosophie, Phänomenologie, Hermeneutik und kritische Philosophie – waren der Ausgangspunkt für die Entfaltung neuer geschichtlich und anthropologisch fokussierter theologischer Ansätze im Westen und der vielfältigen kontextuellen Theologien in den Ländern des Südens. Philosophisches und

theologisches Denken wird sich der eigenen Verortung bewusst, Denken kann sich auf Zukunft nur in vielfältigen interkulturellen Dynamiken vollziehen.

Papst Franziskus und der neue Präfekt des Dikasteriums für die Glaubenslehre, Mons. Victor Manuel Fernández, stehen in dieser Tradition, gleichzeitig stehen sie dafür, dass sich die Gewichte in der Kirche verschoben haben und Europa zu einer der vielen „Peripherien“ der einen Welt wird und sich seiner eigenen „Kontextualität“ bewusst geworden ist. Ja, der Blick auf diese vielen „Kontexte“ und ihre je eigenen Geschichten, oft von Gewalt, Krieg und Grenzüberschreitungen, konfessionellen und religiösen Konflikten geprägt, erschöpft, wenn immer mehr die dunklen Seiten des europäischen Humanismus und der Aufklärung aufgehen, die Fratzen der Conquistas und des Kolonialismus, von Ausgrenzung, Diskriminierung, Antisemitismus und Rassismus.

So tut die Frage nach den spirituellen Ressourcen für die Zukunft in Europa, das Leitmotiv des Kongresses der Europäischen Gesellschaft für katholische Theologie in Pécs, Not: Maxim Kantor, russischer Maler, Schriftsteller und Kunsthistoriker mit deutscher Staatsbürgerschaft, der die Kapelle der Luxembourg School of Religion and Society gestaltet und dem Kuratorium der ESCT im Februar 2022 vorgestellt hat, hat die Frauen am Grab dargestellt und in eine Trümmerlandschaft hineingestellt: Der Wind bläst vom Paradies her, auf der Hand des Jungen sitzt ein bunter Vogel, bereit zum Flug – mitten in den Trümmern wächst Auferstehung, ein Symbol für den Kongress der ESCT: Europa ist „postchristlich“, in den wenigsten Regionen gehört noch eine Mehrheit einer der christlichen Konfessionen an, in Deutschland ist die Zugehörigkeit zum Christentum innerhalb weniger Jahre auf nur ca. 48 % gesunken. Aber nicht zu leugnen ist die christliche Geschichte Europas, und so stellt sich die Frage: Wie kann das, was zum Quellgrund („source“) der europäischen Geschichte gehört, wieder so „reaktiviert“ werden, dass es in neuen Zeiten einer globalisierten und von Krisen geschüttelten Welt zu einer „Ressource“ und Kraft für die Zukunft wird? Und kann dieses Erbe vielleicht auch so reaktiviert werden, dass die Quellen in einer neuen, nicht ausschließenden Weite erschlossen werden – im Dialog mit den unterschiedlichen Kulturen und religiösen Traditionen in Ost und West, Nord und Süd, im Dialog mit Judentum und Islam und in Anerkennung der Pluralisierung seiner Ausdrucksformen im Lauf der Geschichte?

Die Moderne und ein westliches selbstbezügliches Denken haben dies zu oft vergessen. Die orientalischen Kirchen sind mit den ersten ökumenischen Konzilien im 5. Jahrhundert entstanden, und bereits in dieser Zeit war das Christentum auf dem afrikanischen und asiatischen Kontinent präsent; die scholastische Theologie schöpft nicht nur aus aristotelischem Denken, sondern auch aus dem Geist der muslimischen Medresen. Theologie können wir heute in Europa nur treiben, wenn wir einen neuen Blick auf die eigene Geschichte gewinnen und diese in einer neuen Pluralität erschließen, in Anerkennung der eigenen Schuld, aber auch im Entdecken von noch nicht erschöpften Ressourcen.

So wünsche ich ein gutes Miteinander, Mitdenken und Mitdiskutieren auf dem Kongress, um gemeinsam mit dem Blick auf die spirituellen Ressourcen das „Laboratorium“ der Theologie in Europa im Dienst der Zukunft der ganzen Schöpfung, im Dienst von Frieden und Gerechtigkeit weiter zu gestalten. Ich wünsche gutes Gelingen und danke dem Vize-Präsidenten unserer Gesellschaft, Prof. Dr. Gusztáv Kovács, und seinem Team für die Ausrichtung dieser Tagung. Gottes Segen und Pax et Bonum!



*Maxim Kantor, Chapel of the Luxembourg School of Religion
Foto: Margit Eckholt*

ERINNERN – ÜBERSETZEN – VERZEIHEN. EUROPA NEU DENKEN VON DER “ANDEREN SEITE” DER GESCHICHTE

Margit Eckholt

Osnabrück University, Institute of Catholic Theology

Keywords: Europe, memory, translation, forgiveness, peace

1. DER STURM VOM PARADIES – EIN BILD VON MAXIM KANTOR

Ich möchte an das in meinen einführenden Worten eingespielte Bild von Maxim Kantor erinnern, dem russischen Maler, Schriftsteller und Kunsthistoriker mit deutscher Staatsbürgerschaft, der die Kapelle der Luxembourg School of Religion and Society gestaltet hat. Hinter dem Altar hängt ein Bild, in dem Maxim Kantor die Szene aus dem Markusevangelium (Mk 16) darstellt: Drei Frauen (Maria, die Mutter Jesu, Maria von Magdala und Salome) eilen zum Grab. Eine ist noch auf dem Weg, fast stolpernd mit wehenden Haaren und aufgerissenem Mund, wahrscheinlich erschöpft vom schnellen Lauf; eine ist am Sarg angekommen, eine Hand tastend nach dem Rand des leeren Sargs, die andere ans Herz gedrückt, der Blick noch eher skeptisch; die dritte hat den Sarg umschlungen, sie hat wohl bereits in den Sarg geschaut, schaut in die Ferne, aus dem Bild heraus, zur Betrachterin. Es ist ein offener, klarer Blick – der, den sie gesucht hat, Jesus von Nazareth, ist nicht im Grab, aber sie ist nicht verzweifelt, nicht suchend, sie hat vielleicht ihn, den Christus, gefunden – und schaut hinaus aus dem Bild, in das Leben.

Maxim Kantor hat die Szene der Frauen am Grab in eine Ruinenlandschaft hineingesetzt, wie wir sie von Besuchen im römischen Forum oder an anderen Orten der europäischen Kulturlandschaften kennen. Relikte des griechischen und römischen Erbes liegen verstreut am Boden, Reste von Säulen, von Statuen, so eine Sandale mit einem vom Bein abgeschnittenen Fuß und der Kopf eines behelmten

Soldaten; Teile einer Tempelanlage stehen noch, der Seitenrand des Sarges trägt wahrscheinlich Motive aus dem altägyptischen Raum. Weit hinten am linken Bildrand sind drei Kreuze zu sehen, Golgota, das Geschehen der Gewalt in der Ferne, und am rechten oberen Bildrand ragen moderne Hochhäuser in den Himmel. Aber keine Spuren aus der mittelalterlichen oder frühmodernen Zeit, keine Reste von Kathedralen oder Klöstern, von Schlössern oder Museen und anderen Kunstwerken der Moderne.

Das Bild ist von einer großen Dynamik geprägt: Aus dem Osten bläst ein starker Wind, es stürmt, der Baum im rechten Teil des Gartens neigt sich stark nach links, der rennenden Frau bläst dieser Wind ins Gesicht, ihre Haare sind verweht. Als Jesus starb riss der Vorhang im Tempel entzwei, die Erde bebte, die Felsen spalteten sich und die Gräber öffneten sich (Mt 27,51). Ein starker Wind bläst vom Paradies her, in ihn hat der Maler Paul Klee den „Engel der Geschichte“ hineingestellt, und der französische Philosoph Paul Ricoeur greift auf dieses Bild, unter Bezug auf Walter Benjamin, in seinem Jahrhundertwerk über „La Mémoire, l’Histoire, l’Oubli“¹ zurück. Auch in den Trümmer- und Ruinenlandschaften des 20. Jahrhunderts kann Leben wachsen. Auf der ausgestreckten Hand des Jungen, der vor dem Baum steht, sitzt ein bunter Vogel, bereit zum Flug.

Das Bild ist für mich ein Symbol für die Frage des Kongresses der ESCT nach den „spirituellen Ressourcen Europas“. Maxim Kantor hat die eschatologische Friedensvision, die Judentum, Christentum und Islam miteinander verbindet, in Szene gesetzt: Der Schöpfungsgarten des Buches Genesis (Gen 1-2) ist der Paradiesgarten, die Vision eines guten und erfüllten Lebens in der Zukunft Gottes. In christlicher Perspektive sind beide über den Auferstehungsgarten (Joh 20,11-18) miteinander verbunden, wie es das Buch der Offenbarung des Johannes vor Augen führt (Offb 22). Das Motiv des Gartens und der Stadt verbinden sich bei Johannes und bei Kantor, und vor dem Jungen entdecken wir wie in der Offenbarung des Johannes das Lamm: die große Vision des eschatologischen Friedens. Die Dynamik des Sturms und die Ruhe, die von der Dreiergruppe von Kind, Vogel und Lamm

¹ Cf. RICOEUR, *La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli*.

ausgeht, gehören zueinander. Das ist „aktive Gewaltlosigkeit“, von der Papst Franziskus in seiner Ansprache zum Weltfriedenstag am 1. Januar 2017 gesprochen hat und mit der bestimmt wird, was Frieden ist – eine Vision, die der Papst auch in der Enzyklika „Fratelli tutti“ über Geschwisterlichkeit und soziale Freundschaft aufgreift.²

2. EUROPA NEU ERZÄHLEN

Die Frau schaut aus dem Bild zur Betrachterin mit einem klaren, offenen Blick und lädt uns ein, aus biblischer und christlicher Perspektive Europa – mit Ricoeur gesprochen – zu „imaginieren“. Dabei sind diese spirituellen Ressourcen auf dem Bild von Maxim Kantor auf das Wesentliche reduziert, es ist ein Rückschritt in den „radikalen“ Ursprung, die Erneuerung der Schöpfungszusage des Anfangs, die aus der Verheißung der Zukunft die Friedensvision von Anfang und Ende in der Gegenwart konkret werden lassen kann. Auf dem Bild sind keine Reste von Kathedralen, Klöstern oder Bibliotheken zu finden, nichts deutet auf das Buch und die Schrift, die spirituellen Ressourcen sind auf das Minimalistische reduziert. Alles was „Macht“ bedeutet, ist entmachtet. Der Kopf eines Soldaten, vom Rumpf abgetrennt, liegt auf der linken Seite des Bildes; er scheint die Augen geöffnet zu haben – ist es ein Hinweis des Malers, dass es eine Kraft des Bösen geben kann, die Macht und Gewalt wieder entfachen können und den Frieden zunichtemachen?

Der behelmte Kopf des Soldaten – Symbol des Konquistadors aller Zeiten – führt zur Frage, wie wir heute von Europa sprechen können, in globalen Zeiten, in denen die Wunden von Conquista und Kolonialismus offen gelegt werden und diese Geschichten von Gewalt und Macht, die von Europa ausgegangen sind, mit den vielen Migranten und Migrantinnen, die nach Europa kommen, auf eine neue Weise offengelegt werden. Post- und dekoloniale Studien weisen auf die „andere“ Seite der Moderne hin, so wie bereits der Gründungsvater der Befreiungstheologie, Gustavo Gutiérrez, von der „Rückseite der Geschichte“ gesprochen hat.³ In die

² FRANZISKUS, *Botschaft zur Feier des Weltfriedenstages*, Nr. 3; Cf. FRANZISKUS, Enzyklika „Fratelli tutti“

³ Cf. GUTIÉRREZ, *Teología desde el reverso de la historia*.

Geschichte Europas sind Gewalt und Zerstörung eingeschrieben: Die Hochzeit der Kathedralen war auch die der Ghettos der jüdischen Bevölkerung, der Kreuzzüge und der Gewalt der Reconquista, der kriegerischen Auseinandersetzung mit dem Islam und der Zurückweisung der arabischen Kultur. Die Frühe Moderne, die Zeit von Renaissance, Reformation, der Entdeckung des Buchdrucks und der Übersetzungen der Bibel in die Nationalsprachen, war auch die Zeit der Conquistas, der Zerstörung indigener Kulturen und der Versklavung so vieler Bewohner Schwarzafrikas, und Mission und Kolonialismus gingen auch noch im 19. Jahrhundert Hand in Hand. Das Projekt der Missionierung war verbunden mit dem Transfer europäischer Bildung; einheimische Sprachen Feuerlands und Patagoniens – um nur ein Beispiel zu nennen – sind noch in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts zurückgedrängt und ausgelöscht worden. Die „Erfindung Amerikas“, so der argentinische Literaturwissenschaftler Walter Mignolo (geb. 1941), neben Aníbal Quijano und Enrique Dussel einer der bedeutenden lateinamerikanischen Theoretiker der Dekolonialität, war „der erste Schritt zur Erfindung nicht-europäischer Traditionen, und die Moderne war dafür verantwortlich, diese Traditionen durch Konvertierung, Zivilisierung und später durch Entwicklung zu verdrängen“⁴. Moderne und Kolonialität sind „zwei Seiten derselben Medaille“⁵. Heute von „Europa“ zu sprechen, bedeutet, auch die Gewalt und Zerstörung, die mit den verschiedenen kolonialen Projekten der europäischen Nationen verknüpft waren, zu vergegenwärtigen und damit die Millionen von Menschen, die auf den Sklavenschiffen, durch Zwangsarbeit in Plantagen und im Bergbau, beim Bau von Straßen, Kanälen, Städten, beim Versuch der Einrichtung der sogenannten „Zivilisation“ in den eroberten und kolonialisierten Ländern ums Leben gekommen sind.

Gerade darum ist die Friedensvision, die Maxim Kantor vor Augen führt, von Bedeutung: Es geht um den Rückschritt in den Ursprung, in die Tiefendimension der spirituellen Ressourcen Europas: Es geht um den Neubeginn, der für die drei Frauen am leeren Grab möglich wird, um die Erfahrung der mit der Auferstehung Jesu

⁴ MIGNOLO, *Kolonialität: Die dunkle Seite der Moderne*, 367-386, 374. – Die Verfasserin hat diesen Blick auf Europa entfaltet in: ECKHOLT, *Der „Welt“ verpflichtet*, 73-96.

⁵ MIGNOLO, *Kolonialität*, 375.

Christi bekräftigten radikalen Auslösung von Schuld, die ein Vergeben und ein Miteinander ermöglichen und mit dem der Friedensgedanke der jüdischen und christlichen Traditionen in der Weltgesellschaft fruchtbar werden kann. In diesem Sinn kann von Europa und seinen spirituellen Ressourcen heute nur im Zusammenhang der Weltgesellschaft gesprochen werden, und der Angelpunkt dieser Ressourcen, wie er auf dem Bild von Maxim Kantor in aller Minimalistik vorgestellt ist, ist die Friedensvision von Schöpfung und Neuschöpfung.

3. FRIEDEN DENKEN

Der französische Philosoph Paul Ricœur (1913-2005) hat in seinem 1991 in Hannover gehaltenen und 1992 publizierten Vortrag zu einem „neuen Ethos für Europa“⁶ einen faszinierenden und weit über den damaligen Moment kurz nach dem Fall der Mauer und der sozialistischen Ordnung Osteuropas und der daraus folgenden Erweiterung der Europäischen Union hinausführenden Beitrag zu einem Neu-Denken Europas im Dienst des Friedens vorgelegt. In der Dichte und Präzision der Gedankenführung ist dieser Aufsatz einer der zentralen philosophischen Texte des 20. Jahrhunderts, ein Beitrag zu einem Denken dieses von zwei grausamen Kriegen, von mörderischen Ideologien und einem an dem jüdischen Volk in Europa in einer unüberbietbaren Grausamkeit verübten Genozid geprägten Jahrhunderts. In gewisser Weise stellt dieser Aufsatz die Quintessenz des Ricœurschen Denkens dar, eines von der „Last der Hoffnung“ geprägten Denkens, das auf dem Hintergrund der Gewalt- und Kriegserfahrungen des 20. Jahrhunderts und des abgrundtiefen Bösen, in dem der Mensch sich selbst um seine Würde gebracht hat, indem er diese anderen abgesprochen hat, doch den „fähigen Menschen“ postuliert und dazu Denken in den Dienst der Mit-Menschlichkeit und des Friedens stellt.⁷

In den Lagern von Auschwitz und Buchenwald, auf den Schlachtfeldern und in den Trümmern der Städte, die der Krieg hinterlassen hat, ist der europäisches Denken auszeichnende Humanismus mit Füßen getreten worden ist. Darum geht Ricœur zurück in die Quellen dieses Denkens: das biblische Erbe, die philosophischen

⁶ RICOEUR, *Welches neue Ethos für Europa?* 108-120.

⁷ *Die Überlegungen zu Paul Ricoeur sind weiter entfaltet in: ECKHOLT, Frieden denken.*

Traditionen Athens und des aufklärerischen Denkens, um über diese Ursprungsgründe zu einem Neu-Denken in Europa in der Tradition diskursiven, rationalen und freiheitlichen Denkens zu finden. Dieses Neu-Denken ereignet sich aus dem Rückschritt in die in der Tiefe der Existenz liegende Mit-Menschlichkeit. Gerade weil die Würde des Menschen, weil Menschlichkeit vernichtet worden ist, setzt Ricœur genau hier an. Grund des Denkens ist die Frage nach dem Menschen, die nur beantwortet werden kann, wenn die grundlegende Bezogenheit des Menschen auf den anderen/die andere in den Blick genommen wird. Denken bewegt sich im „Zwischen“ der unauflöselichen Aufeinanderbezogenheit auf die anderen, der Verwicklung in die Geschichten der vielen, und genau dieses „Zwischen“ zu stärken, bedarf der Sympathie, des Respekt und der Anerkennung, ebenso wie der Auseinandersetzung mit der „Fehlbarkeit“ des Menschen, der Einsicht in das, was ich dem anderen schulde und schuldig bleibe – das sind Gedanken, die Ricœur von Beginn seines Denkens formuliert hat und die in den großen Werken zur narrativen Identität, zum „Selbst als Anderen“ und zur Erinnerung und Anerkennung Gestalt annehmen.⁸ In seinem Beitrag zu einem „neuen Ethos für Europa“ verdichtet er die Frage nach dem, was es heißt, im 20. Jahrhundert überhaupt denken zu können oder vielleicht besser: weiter zu denken angesichts des Bruchs, den die Gewalterfahrungen bedeuten. Denken steht im Dienst des „fähigen Menschen“, im Dienst dessen, was es heißt, miteinander unterwegs zu sein, mit anderen Mensch zu sein und in „gerechten Institutionen“ zu leben. In diesem Sinn bedeutet „Denken“, den Frieden zu denken – in dem hier zugrundeliegenden Aufsatz ist dies bezogen auf Europa, auch wenn die Denkbewegung Ricoeurs sicher weiterführt. Er „kontextualisiert“ in all´ seiner Bescheidenheit auf beeindruckende Weise sein Denken, um gerade darin die universale Kraft zu wahren, die in den spirituellen Ressourcen Europas – dazu gehören auch die genannten vielfältigen Denktraditionen – liegt.

Auch nach über 30 Jahren haben diese Überlegungen Ricoeurs zu einem „neuen Ethos für Europa“ nicht an Bedeutung verloren. Der Krieg auf dem Balkan in den 1990er Jahren, die Tausenden von Toten, die Gräueltaten in Srebrenica, die

⁸ Zu einer theologischen Annäherung an das Denken Paul Ricoeurs Cf. ECKHOLT, *Hermeneutik und Theologie bei Paul Ricoeur*; Cf. ECKHOLT, *Dogmatik interkulturell*.

Anschläge auf Synagogen und ausländische, vor allem muslimische Bürger und Bürgerinnen, die Zunahme des Antisemitismus, die Entstehung neuer Nationalismen, populistischer Parteien und die Gefährdung demokratischer Entwicklungen, nicht nur in Osteuropa, legen die auch heute wieder wachsende Spannung offen zwischen einer universalistisch ausgerichteten Begründung der Menschenrechte und des Rechtsstaates auf der einen Seite und von Positionen auf der anderen Seite, die von „unüberwindlichen Unterschieden“ ausgehen, die „kollektive Identitäten“ trennen.⁹ Die von Ricœur aufgezeigte Perspektive ist darum bemüht, jeglichen Ethnozentrismus sowie nationalistische und aggressive identitäre Bewegungen und damit verbundene ausländerfeindliche Kräfte zu überwinden, und gleichzeitig Universalität und Partikularität in je neuen Dynamiken miteinander zu vermitteln. Hans Joas hat in seiner 2020 erschienen Studie „Friedensprojekt Europa?“ daran angeknüpft; er mahnt, dass das Reden über Europa „nicht in die Strukturen des Redens über den Nationalstaat in der Zeit seiner Herausbildung zurückfallen“¹⁰ darf, er warnt vor einer „Selbtsakralisierung Europas“¹¹ und zieht in diesem Sinn Denklinien Ricœurs weiter, wenn er schreibt: „Der normative Bezugspunkt muss aber für moralische Universalisten, ob für Aufklärer oder Christen oder andere, selbstverständlich jenseits des Nationalstaats, aber eben auch jenseits einer spezifischen Föderation von Staaten liegen. Er muss die ganze Menschheit sein, die heutige Menschheit, aber auch die künftigen, noch gar nicht geborenen Generationen.“¹²

Paul Ricœur legt in seinem Aufsatz die Pisten aus für ein neues Ethos in Europa. Es sind Pisten, Frieden zu denken – auch wenn er diesen Begriff selbst nicht verwendet. Er bereitet aber den Weg, Frieden, der in der Tradition politischer Philosophie im Sinne der Maxime „si vis pacem para bellum“ immer nur als „Abwesenheit von

⁹ RICOEUR, *Welches Ethos für Europa*, 119; Cf. DELGADO / LUTZ-BACHMANN, *Vorwort*, 7-8: „So fordern in nicht wenigen Ländern Europas rechte Parteien und nationalistische Bewegungen eine Rückkehr zu Prinzipien des Nationalstaats alter Prägung. Sie werden unterstützt von ausländerfeindlichen Kräften, die zwar für einen weltweiten ‘Ethno-Pluralismus’ plädieren, doch sich zugleich mit allen Mitteln gegen eine ethnisch-kulturelle Vielfalt im Inneren der Gesellschaften wenden...“ (p.7)

¹⁰ JOAS, *Friedensprojekt Europa?*, 92.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

Krieg¹³ bezeichnet worden ist und der als „Utopie“ und „Vision“ Bestandteil der symbolischen und poetischen Ausdrucksformen der religiösen Traditionen Europas ist, ins Denken zu holen.¹⁴ Frieden zu denken ist ein demütiges Denken, im Angesicht der möglichen Abgründe, der Fragilität und Vulnerabilität allen Miteinanders, aber es ist darin doch von Hoffnung geprägt, die aus den Ressourcen der Geschichte und ihren nicht in die Zukunft gesandten „Pfeilen“¹⁵ erwächst. Das ist ein Denken, das in der Tradition Kants dem „Imaginieren“ von Neuem Raum lässt.

Ricœur verwendet den Begriff des Friedens nicht, denn er weiß, dass er sich hier als Philosoph auf einer Grenze bewegt und die Theologie die religiösen Quellen des Alten und Neuen Testaments und der weiteren religiösen Traditionen als Erbe Europas erschließt. In diesen Traditionen ist das, was Frieden ist, in symbolischen und poetischen Ausdrucksformen „imaginiert“ worden, vor allem in den Schöpfungstexten der hebräischen Bibel bzw. des Alten Testaments, die eine Friedensvision zeichnen, deren Höhepunkt der Sabbat ist (Gen 1,1-2,3) und an die die christliche Friedensvision des Auferstehungsgartens (Joh 20,1-18) anknüpft, als Neuschöpfung und Bekräftigung des Schöpfungsfriedens, der allein Gabe des Leben schaffenden und lebendigen Gottes ist. Genau dies ist im Bild von Maxim Kantor in Szene gesetzt.

Im Christusereignis verdichten sich die Heilsvisionen der Propheten, Gottes Reich bricht an, in der Auferstehung Jesu Christi wird der Schöpfungsfrieden erneuert und durch alle Gewalt hindurch, für die die Passion Jesu Christi steht, eine Hoffnung auf Leben bekräftigt, die nicht nur Utopie ist, sondern konkret werden kann in der gelebten Feindesliebe (Mt 5,44), in der Compassion, in der Versöhnung und Vergebung (z.B. Mt 18,1-35). Die biblische Friedensvision bedeutet Erkenntnis der Geschwisterlichkeit aller Menschen, und genau dies erschließt Ricœur als Philosoph, indem er philosophisches Denken in den Dienst der Erkenntnis der Mit-

¹³ Eugen Biser hält in seinem Beitrag für das Historische Wörterbuch der Philosophie fest, dass Frieden in „seiner philosophischen Bedeutung erst seit kurzem, in seinem Rang als Prinzip des Denkens und Handelns noch kaum wahrgenommen“ ist: BISER, Art. Friede, 1114. Zu neuen Zugängen Vgl. SEDMAK (ed.), Frieden. Vom Wert der Koexistenz.

¹⁴ Vgl. aus philosophischer Perspektive den Beitrag von: NEGELE, Friede – ein Sprachproblem?, 174-192; aus theologischer Perspektive: ECKHOLT, Friedens-Räume. 17-41.

¹⁵ RICOEUR, Welches Ethos für Europa, 115.

Menschlichkeit und Geschwisterlichkeit stellt. Dabei öffnet er aber auch den Theologien neue Perspektiven, in einer globalisierten und gebrochenen Welt die Ressourcen der biblischen Texte und der spirituellen Traditionen neu zu erschließen. Insofern weist Ricœur in seinem Aufsatz zum „neuen Ethos für Europa“ den christlichen Theologien in Europa einen zentralen Stellenwert auf der Ebene des Denkens dieses neuen Ethos zu. Wenn wir nicht mehr verstehen, die religiösen Ressourcen in die öffentlichen Diskurse einzuspeisen und über die Erschließung der Quellen des jüdischen und christlichen Erbes zu erläutern, was Zentrum der Heilsvisionen der biblischen Texte ist, was Vergebung ist und wie Vergebung „gehen“ kann, dann steht auch das philosophische Denken der Anerkennung auf dem Spiel. Am Ende seines Aufsatzes zum „Ethos in Europa“ stellt er dazu nur kurze Bemerkungen an, Hinweise in Form von zwei Mahnungen im Blick auf den Beitrag der christlichen Konfessionen bei der Suche nach einem neuen Ethos für Europa: Es geht darum, zu einem „Modell der Brüderlichkeit“ zu werden und die Vergebung zunächst im interkonfessionellen Miteinander zu praktizieren. Die Glaubwürdigkeit der Kirchen wird sich in Zukunft an diesem gemeinsamen Weg der christlichen Konfessionen entscheiden, und ohne diese Glaubwürdigkeit wird es den Theologien nicht gelingen, die Friedensvisionen der religiösen Traditionen Europas auf rationale Weise zu erschließen und in den interdisziplinären – dekolonialen – Diskurs der Weltgesellschaft und das Gespräch der vielen Religionen einzuspeisen: dass Frieden gedacht und dass Frieden praktiziert werden kann.

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I. LA CRISE ACTUELLE

L'affirmation qui dit, que la période que nous traversons aujourd'hui est une période de crise suscite peu d'objections. Il suffit de mentionner la polarisation des sociétés, la pandémie de COVID-19, les questions anthropologiques, écologiques et politiques, notamment la crise de la démocratie, les conflits et les guerres, la crise migratoire, les crises économiques et financières, les inégalités sociales croissantes et la pauvreté. Nous pourrions continuer en mentionnant la crise de la vérité marquée par la désinformation et la crise d'identité qui est aussi une crise du sujet ; sans oublier les défis posés par l'intelligence artificielle, le monde virtuel et la surcharge d'informations parmi lesquelles distinguer le vrai du faux demeure parfois impossible. Certains soutiennent que derrière ces crises se cache une autre, plus profonde et invisible : la crise de la pensée².

Bien trop fréquemment, la situation actuelle favorise l'émergence d'une rationalité purement fonctionnaliste, calculatrice et technocratique. Cette logique tend à reléguer au second plan, parfois en négligeant complètement l'engagement

¹ *This publication was funded by the project "Trinitarian Ontologies: A New Philosophical Investigation into Trinitarian Relationality" (JG_2024_002) implemented within the Palacký University Young Researcher Grant.*

² *Cf. MORIN, La Méthode. Éthique et aussi Leçons d'un siècle de vie.*

personnel de la conscience humaine et à la mettre entre parenthèses, voire à oublier³.

Il semble que la pensée contemporaine met en avant une logique binaire, ce que nous pouvons constater dans beaucoup de débats privés ou politiques. Cela se manifeste entre autres dans la difficulté à concilier efficacement l'unité et la diversité. D'un côté, il y a une tendance à uniformiser les diversités, tandis que de l'autre, on exalte la diversité sans parvenir à l'unité, ce qui conduit à la polarisation et à l'opposition.

Dans nombreuses de nos sociétés, le grand défi social réside dans la recherche d'une place et la manière d'évoluer au sein d'une société pluraliste et démocratique. Cette difficulté se traduit par des tendances au repli sur ses positions et ses idées, à percevoir ce qui est différent comme une menace, et donc à renforcer ses propres positions, notamment par les rencontres interpersonnelles, les lectures et la réception d'informations qui nous ne permettent pas de franchir les mêmes idées. Cela est un terreau favorable pour le virus de la désinformation, qui se propage en mélangeant les faits réels avec des faits déformés.

Par conséquent, tout est perçu de manière simplifiée dans une relation d'opposition (ce qui caractérise une logique binaire), sans possibilité de conciliation. Pour donner des exemples: est-ouest, idéal-concret, théorie-pratique, matériel-spirituel, croyant-athée, humain-spirituel, naturel-surnaturel, tout-partie, moi-autre, etc.

2. REPENSER LA PENSÉE

Avec une grande lucidité, le Pape François a décrit la période actuelle comme une période de changement d'époque. Il la voit comme une crise « dans laquelle nous rencontrons chaque jour davantage “des symptômes d'un point de rupture à cause de la rapidité des changements et de la dégradation qui se manifestent tant dans les catastrophes naturelles régionales que dans les crises sociales ou même financières” »⁴. Dans le préambule de *Veritatis gaudium*, il ajoute – et j'aimerais

³ Cf. CODA, *Ontologie trinitaire*, 141-142.

⁴ FRANÇOIS, *Laudato si' (LS)*, n. 61, reprise dans *Veritatis gaudium (VG)*, n. 3.

attirer l'attention là-dessus– que « “le problème est que nous n'avons pas encore la culture nécessaire pour faire face à cette crise”. (...) Cette tâche considérable et qui ne peut pas être reportée demande (...) l'engagement généreux et convergent vers un changement radical de paradigme, et même (...) vers une “révolution culturelle courageuse” »⁵.

Pour prolonger l'idée du pape François, je dirais que ce changement radical du paradigme et cette révolution culturelle nécessitent des idées, une pensée nouvelle qui ne doit pas se contenter de répéter les réponses du passé et qui ne doit pas se détacher des problèmes et des questions des individus et des sociétés. Ce qui signifie, qu'elle ne doit pas être une pensée abstraite.

Face aux défis d'aujourd'hui, et dans le contexte de changement d'époque, il est donc urgent de « repenser la pensée », comme le disent certains⁶.

En effet, la crise n'est pas seulement un moment difficile qui au meilleur des cas passera et ramènera tout à la normale. Toutefois, la crise est une période propice pour la diagnostique de l'état des choses et pour l'émergence de quelque chose de nouveau, qui pourrait inverser le cours des événements. Pour ces raisons, les défis auxquels la pensée contemporaine est confrontée et qu'elle doit affronter constituent un moment opportun – le *kairos* – pour une pensée nouvelle⁷.

3. LA RÉPONSE DU CHRISTIANISME

Or, se pose les questions suivantes: quel point de départ choisir? Où puiser les éléments pour le renouvellement de la pensée? L'aspect majeur réside dans la capacité du christianisme à relever ce défi en prenant pour référence la Trinité. Pourquoi cela?

Premièrement parce que le christianisme a toujours apporté une contribution majeure à la société en temps de besoin, façonnant ainsi les cultures et la civilisation

⁵ VG, 3, en reprenant LS, 53 et 114.

⁶ Notamment Edgar Morin et Piero Coda.

⁷ Cf. CODA, *Ontologie trinitaire*.

occidentale. Il est porteur d'une force transformatrice qui ne concerne pas seulement les individus mais aussi les cultures et la pensée⁸. Cela se produit lorsqu'il sort de soi, comme le dit le Pape François : « La théologie et la culture d'inspiration chrétienne ont été à la hauteur de leur mission quand elles ont su vivre de façon risquée et fidèle aux frontières »⁹. Le processus synodal actuel est une grande opportunité non seulement pour la mission de l'Église mais aussi pour la société, dans le changement d'époque que nous vivons.

Deuxièmement parce que le christianisme n'a pas encore tout donné. Le message dont il est porteur n'est pas uniforme parce que « le christianisme n'a pas un modèle culturel unique »¹⁰. Dans les premiers siècles, le christianisme a assumé plusieurs principes de la pensée grecque. Mais comme le surligne philosophe et théologien allemande Klaus Hemmerle, en se référant à la question ontologique, que j'aimerais développer par la suite, « le fond spécifique chrétien n'a définitivement renouvelé ni la précompréhension du sens de l'être, ni la position de l'ontologie dans son ensemble »¹¹ parce que le cadre que le christianisme a adopté est trop étroit pour lui. A ce propos, Jean-Yves Lacoste résume cette idée de Hemmerle en disant : « Il demeure pourtant (et ceci aussi importe grandement) que le "rapport d'échange" entre ontologie (laïque, ou pré-chrétienne, ou autre) et christianisme n'a jamais instauré d'ontologie qui soit véritablement ontologie, discours (savoir) sur l'être de l'étant, et totalement chrétienne. Il y a déficit dans les relations du christianisme et de la pensée occidentale »¹². S'il y a donc déficit à ce niveau, les conséquences sont considérables. Ainsi, selon Hemmerle : « l'exigence d'une "nouvelle ontologie", d'une "ontologie trinitaire" »¹³.

⁸ Cf. FRANÇOIS, *Evangelii gaudium (EG)*, n. 116-117.

⁹ VG, 5.

¹⁰ EG, 116.

¹¹ HEMMERLE, *Thèses*, 41.

¹² LACOSTE, *Ontologie et mystère chrétien*, 709.

¹³ Klaus Hemmerle en 1976, dans un livre écrit pour le 70ème anniversaire de Hans Urs von Balthasar affirme : *Si Dieu est Trine et si, en tant qu'il est Trine, il a son histoire dans notre histoire, c'est notre situation fondamentale d'êtres humains, notre pensée et notre être, et même l'être tout*

Dans la même direction, Piero Coda, qui reprend et développe l'idée de Klaus Hemmerle, affirme que

« le concept de Trinité n'a pas entièrement réussi à générer ce lieu d'expérience et d'exercice relationnel et communautaire de la pensée (à commencer par la relation entre le masculin et le féminin), qui correspond à la Réalité accueillie et conçue en son sein et qui, en tant que tel, permet d'expérimenter au fil de l'existence et de sonder par l'intelligence ses fondements ultimes et ses implications pratiques, au-delà des apports bénéfiques de la matrice de la métaphysique grecque, bien que celle-ci ait été remodelée par sa rencontre avec l'intelligence de la révélation. (...) Ainsi est apparue progressivement, à l'époque moderne, une dialectique tourmentée et, en définitive, insoluble, où le chemin de la philosophie (raison) et celui de la théologie (foi) se sont séparés jusqu'à s'opposer sur un plan abstrait »¹⁴.

Ainsi, pour revenir à notre propos, il y a déficit dans la relation entre le christianisme et la pensée occidentale et de ce fait, le christianisme est capable de relever le défi de la crise de la pensée et de repenser la pensée. Aujourd'hui, peut-être qu'une des tentatives les plus avancées de repenser la pensée, s'articule autour de l'ontologie trinitaire¹⁵.

entier, qui font l'épreuve d'un retournement. Ce retournement dépasse la mesure de toute pensée "transmise" de l'homme sur Dieu, sur lui-même, sur le monde, sur l'être. La relecture pure et simple de la précompréhension ontologique, transmise dans la foi, n'arrive pas à cueillir ce qui se révèle et ce qui se communique à l'être et à l'intellect humains. L'exigence d'une "nouvelle ontologie", d'une "ontologie trinitaire", est la conséquence de cette foi elle-même. HEMMERLE, Thèses, 54.

¹⁴ CODA, *Ontologie trinitaire*, 154.

¹⁵ Tout particulièrement autour du projet de Dictionnaire dynamique d'ontologie trinitaire en Italie.

4. L'ONTOLOGIE TRINITAIRE

La particularité de l'ontologie trinitaire réside dans sa position à se situer à la frontière, avant tout de la théologie et de la philosophie, mais aussi avec d'autres domaines de savoir. Par-là, elle « peut constituer l'horizon interprétatif de référence, libre et pluriel, de toute interprétation particulière de la réalité mise en œuvre par les divers savoirs. Et ce, sans empiéter en rien sur leur autonomie, leur méthodologie et leur intentionnalité, mais plutôt en interagissant positivement avec eux »¹. Il s'agit donc de « mettre la pensée à la mesure du modèle trinitaire »².

En effet, comme le précise Piero Coda, « une ontologie trinitaire n'est pas seulement affaire de la foi : c'est une perspective de valeur universelle, parce qu'elle interprète de manière profonde la vocation de l'homme ainsi que la nature et dynamique de la réalité. Certes, l'adjectif qui la qualifie – trinitaire – est chrétien et exprime tout son sens dans la lumière de la foi : mais la dynamique trinitaire est la dynamique gratuite, réciproque et ouverte de l'amour qui est en soi l'affaire de tous »³.

L'ontologie trinitaire est donc le lieu commun, avant tout de la théologie et de la philosophie, qui ne sont pas séparées mais restent bien distinguées. En effet, la philosophie reste philosophie et la théologie reste théologie. Ce qui fait que l'ontologie trinitaire n'est ni théologie ni philosophie; elle est à la fois les deux dans

¹ CODA, *Ontologie trinitaire*, 46-47.

² « Mettre la pensée à la mesure du modèle trinitaire, prendre aux sérieux cette analogie de la pensée et de l'être, communiquée au créé par le don de soi du mystère trinitaire originnaire : voilà qui éclaire autrement les problèmes philosophiques difficile à résoudre pour une ontologie déductive ou constructive, ou bien même pour une ontologie purement inductive ou descriptive. Cette thèse pourrait se vérifier si nous réfléchissons un peu à l'inclusion réciproque de l'analyse et de la synthèse, de ce qui est et de ce qui se produit, de la permanence et de l'événement, de la liberté et de la nécessité ». HEMMERLE, *Thèses*, 81. Justement, en partant de la Trinité, cette ontologie articule unité et multiplicité, identité et altérité, tout ce qui semble antinomique parce qu'elle est le lieu relationnel et dialogique.

³ CODA, *Ontologie trinitaire*, 19-20. « La Trinité n'est pas une abstraction logique produite par la mise en évidence d'affirmations particulières de l'Écriture ; ce n'est pas une spéculation qui extrapole de modestes points de départ et les manipule dans une rationalité dominant tout. Elle est l'expression de l'expérience fondamentale de la manière toute nouvelle dont Dieu est offert à l'homme et dont l'homme est nouvellement offert à soi-même, s'il croit en Jésus-Christ ». HEMMERLE, *Thèses*, 53-54.

leur distinction et réciprocité, où les deux s'éclairent mutuellement⁴. C'est pourquoi il ne faut pas penser l'ontologie trinitaire comme une théologie trinitaire ni comme simplement une philosophie chrétienne ou encore une ontothéologie. Ce ne serait que des réductions. En effet, si l'ontologie trinitaire est une véritable ontologie, elle peut être valable pour les deux disciplines parce que la théologie, comme la philosophie, peuvent décrire la même réalité avec la particularité qui leur est propre. La même réalité peut en effet se présenter avec de multiples facettes.

La clé de lecture de l'être et de la réalité vient sans doute de la théologie, mais cela ne conditionne pas et n'empêche pas le questionnement et l'argumentation rationnelle. Cela peut donc bien se faire par la philosophie avec la méthode qui lui est propre. Toutefois, la philosophie peut intégrer dans son questionnement des données qui lui sont extérieures, puis les élaborer avec ses propres outils et éteindre l'approfondissement spéculatif. Dans ce cas, la philosophie reste elle-même, elle n'a pas le rôle de la théologie et ne présuppose pas la foi.

Les données de la foi peuvent être prises comme objet d'étude philosophique et non comme autorité; ce qui permet à ceux qui n'adhèrent pas à la foi d'ouvrir de nouvelles possibilités de recherche, lesquelles pourraient dévoiler quelques aspects de la réalité. D'ailleurs, les données de la réflexion ne sont pas que théoriques ou originellement philosophiques, mais très souvent elles viennent aussi de l'expérience, de la vie ou d'autres domaines du savoir.

5. LE CHEMIN DE LA PENSÉE NOUVELLE

L'ontologie trinitaire est donc un « effort de penser à neuf et à fond »⁵. Elle ne se limite pas à penser la Trinité comme son objet. En effet, elle demande que la pensée et la vie se laissent imprégner d'elle et adoptent sa dynamique, afin que nous arrivions à « changer le regard, c'est-à-dire à voir, interpréter et comprendre la

⁴ Cette ontologie (...) questionne aussi en direction de cette lumière dans laquelle se produisent chacune de nos visions et chacun de nos dire. L'ontologie qu'il nous faut aujourd'hui, c'est une ontologie radicale et fondamentale ». *Ibid.*, 31.

⁵ LACOSTE, *Ontologie et mystère chrétien*, 708.

réalité d'une façon pleinement libre, dans la gratuité et la fraternité »⁶. Il est important de prendre conscience que notre manière actuelle d'expérimenter la pensée est souvent caractérisée par un individualisme parfois excessif. Ceci résulte de l'héritage de la modernité, où la dignité et la liberté du « je » ont émergé. Or, ce « je » est également un « tu » pour un autre « je » et existe en relation avec le « nous ». Ainsi, il est important d'apprendre à exercer le « moi » en relation avec le « tu » et le « nous ». Cela représente non seulement un véritable exercice de vie, mais aussi de pensée »⁷.

Ce renouvellement de la pensée est donc et avant tout un chemin (*methodos*), qui possède plusieurs caractéristiques.

Le chemin à entreprendre trouve son point de départ dans la « matrice vivante de la Révélation transmise par la tradition de la pensée illustrée par la foi »⁸, et « elle reconnaît et s'engage à exprimer trinitairement le sens trinitaire de l'être »⁹.

Cette méthode de pensée se nourrit et s'éprouve dans la communion et dans le dialogue, dans le rythme trinitaire. Ce n'est rien de nouveau dans l'histoire de la pensée, mais possiblement oublié. Prenons simplement exemple de la *Lettre VII* de Platon, où le grand philosophe décrit une orientation de la recherche qui naît et

⁶ CODA, *Ontologie trinitaire*, 20.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 164. « Comme le dit le pape François dans *Laudato si'*, il est nécessaire de vivre une conversion de la pensée, à niveau personnel et social, qui ait sa source et son inspiration dans une vision trinitaire de la création : "Tout est lié, et cela nous invite à mûrir une spiritualité de la solidarité globale qui jaillit du mystère de la Trinité" LS, 238-240 ». *Ibid.*, 24-25. *L'ontologie trinitaire*, loin d'être une spéculation abstraite sur être, cherche à accueillir (dans son double sens) et à mettre en évidence ce qui est présent dans la réalité et dans l'expérience anthropologique. C'est ce qui justifie le recours au paradigme trinitaire d'autant qu'il ne s'applique pas uniquement à Dieu, mais il peut aussi, en même temps, mettre en lumière l'expérience de la foi vécue et accueillie à la lumière de la révélation. Alors, faut-il être croyant pour pouvoir faire cette opération, la vivre et l'expérimenter ? Il faut répondre de manière négative car, autrement, cette ontologie ne serait qu'une proposition sans pertinence, une ontologie parmi d'autres. Une telle expérience anthropologique peut être vécue et pensée par tous car elle est profondément humaine et non réservée qu'aux croyants. Certes, la foi peut éclairer, nous en rendre conscients et nous aider à l'exprimer. Cependant, elle peut être aussi exprimée par les paroles et façons différentes qui toutefois saisissent sa dynamique interne, étant donné que, pour le christianisme, chaque personne peut participer de manière mystérieuse et différente à l'événement trinitaire, comme le souligne Gaudium et Spes (n. 22).

s'enrichit dans le dialogue à partir de l'expérience partagée, où la vérité émerge comme une flamme au milieu de ceux qui la cherchent en dialogue. Avec le processus synodal, nous pourrions dire, qu'il s'agit du discernement communautaire. Pensons également aux dialogues d'Augustin après sa conversion. En fait, il s'agit de mettre en pratique l'exercice de la pensée qui se nourrit et vit la dynamique de l'agapè, transformant ainsi la dynamique *rationnelle* en une dynamique *relationnelle*, où penser avec l'autre tend à devenir penser dans l'autre¹⁰.

Puis, une autre caractéristique : le dialogue entre les sciences, les cultures et les différentes formes de sagesse qui n'exclut et n'élimine pas les méthodes et les recherches spécifiques et particulières, mais qui les « les ré-oriente, au-delà de leurs résultats respectifs, dans l'horizon original et vaste (...) de la rencontre, qui dépasse les méthodologies individuelles et leur simple somme »¹¹. Il s'agit donc d'un aspect inter et transdisciplinaire.

6. CONCLUSION

L'ontologie trinitaire est donc une invitation à vivre et à penser différemment. Pour cette raison elle peut entrouvrir des chemins qui nous amènent à modeler une pensée capable de relever les défis actuels afin que nous retrouvions l'harmonie entre les personnes, les peuples et avec la nature.

La foi en la Trinité et la vie qui en découle empêchent le christianisme de se replier sur lui-même, de se contenter d'assumer les positions défensives, de perdre tout intérêt pour le dialogue avec la société ou de créer des relations conflictuelles avec elle. Pourtant, il est souvent constaté que la foi est davantage associée à des lois et des commandements (à la morale) plutôt qu'à la liberté, et la réalité même de la vie trinitaire, à laquelle nous sommes appelés à participer, est souvent reléguée à une simple valeur optionnelle qui ne joue aucun rôle central.

Cette participation est aussi une affaire de pensée. Le fait de négliger l'unité dans la pensée, ce que saint Paul appelle « la pensée du Christ » (1 Corinthiens 2,16), ne nous

¹⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, 22-24.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 168.

conduit-il à être en proie à une polarisation qui nous enferme sur nous-mêmes, rendant le dialogue impossible, voire dans ceux qui pensent différemment des ennemis et nous pousse à tout voir et à tout façonner selon une vision uniforme de la réalité ? Nous l'avons constaté pendant la pandémie du coronavirus, et nous le faisons encore dans la guerre au-delà de nos frontières et dans presque tous les débats politiques ou médiatiques. Cette polarisation s'étend même à la communauté chrétienne elle-même. Elle est alimentée par une logique binaire ou une mentalité qui divise, qui oppose, fragmente et simplifie. Alors, où pouvons-nous trouver une voie pour dépasser ces oppositions et divisions, sinon dans la Trinité elle-même ?

Ainsi nous sommes invitées à vivre et exercer la *relationnalité* – qui est le lieu trinitaire – aussi au niveau de la pensée et déclencher une « révolution culturelle »¹². Le christianisme ne pourra relever le défi de la pensée, qu'en partant de la Trinité.

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¹² Cf. VG, 3-5.

TRANSFORMER LE *CHRONOS* DE LA CRISE EN *KAIROS* POUR CONSTRUIRE L'AVENIR

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*Mots clés: Crise de l'Église, événement de parole,
Église évangélique, kairos, peuple de baptisés*

L'Église catholique a connu bien des crises au cours de son histoire. Et la sécularisation des sociétés occidentales l'interroge en profondeur depuis le milieu du 20^e siècle. Mais la « nouveauté » et la profondeur de l'ébranlement actuel tiennent (surtout) au fait que ses causes ne viennent pas d'éléments hostiles extérieurs à l'institution, mais d'abord et avant tout à la structure ecclésiale elle-même. Deux séismes particulièrement caustiques – la pandémie Covid-19 et le scandale des abus sexuels¹ – ont atteint l'Église² en son cœur et ont conduit en réaction à une libération vigoureuse de la parole des laïcs, de plus en plus émancipés des tutelles du pouvoir autoritaire et du patriarcalisme. Ils ont suscité un événement au sens fort de ce qui fait irruption et marque de façon irréversible: un événement de parole et d'affranchissement au nom à la fois de l'Évangile et de la fraternité en Christ supposant l'égalité baptismale homme-femme, laïcs-prêtres. Cet événement peut aussi être interprété comme celui d'un accès à l'autonomie relationnelle des baptisés, hommes et femmes, favorisée par leur formation théologique et exprimée à travers le processus synodal. Envisagé ainsi, il suscite beaucoup d'espérance chez bien des fidèles, laïcs et prêtres, quand bien même il semble aussi insécuriser certains évêques dès lors qu'ils se livrent à un exercice autoritaire et solitaire du pouvoir.

¹ Voir mes publications récentes sur le sujet en bibliographie.

² Le mot *Église* renverra en général dans ce texte à *Église catholique*.

Je pose l'hypothèse que cet événement actuellement vécu par l'Église en Europe pourrait devenir réalité événementielle pour toute l'Église car cette prise de conscience des baptisés quant à leur dignité christique et à leur rôle de « prêtres, prophètes et rois », pourrait être une immense opportunité pour l'Église autant qu'une bénédiction, du moins dans la mesure où l'élite épiscopale sait la reconnaître comme une « parole de bien/une bénédiction » nourrie de la Parole de Dieu et s'y appuyer pour dégager l'institution de la gangue cléricale, monarchique et patriarcale, et renaître de l'Esprit (Jn 3). Évoquer la crise actuelle que traverse le peuple de Dieu en termes d'événement de parole oblige à regarder en face le surgissement inattendu de cette nouveauté du dire à haute voix et de l'adresse relationnelle dans une histoire où seuls les clercs avaient le privilège de la parole. Parler d'événement, c'est acter un tournant irréversible, désormais à accueillir comme un appel attendant une réponse. L'*instrumentum laboris* du synode sur la synodalité, en reprenant à son compte nombre des questions parfois audacieuses formulées par les consultations synodales, répond à l'événement de parole, quand bien même il y a des résistances que le document reconnaît et quelques manques non anodins. L'enjeu est immense et ne pas répondre à ce défi, serait laisser imploser l'Église.

Cette contribution voudrait le montrer en suivant trois étapes: la crise actuelle comme trouée ouvrant sur un événement de parole ; puis la libération de la parole des baptisés laïcs au nom de l'Évangile, et enfin l'opportunité, si cette aspiration est reconnue – et le chemin synodal y engage – de co-construire une Église plus évangélique.

I. LA CRISE COMME TROUÉE OUVRANT SUR UN ÉVÉNEMENT DE PAROLE

Aux premiers siècles de notre ère et jusqu'au 14^e siècle, le terme *crisis* n'avait qu'un sens médical : il désignait l'acmé d'une pathologie, c'est-à-dire un moment bien particulier : à la fois le pire de la maladie dans sa gravité et le meilleur en raison de la présence de tous les symptômes permettant donc de poser un diagnostic et de décider, c'est-à-dire d'opérer les choix nécessaires.

Toute crise sérieuse, a fortiori celle multiforme qui aujourd'hui traverse l'Église et la société, bouleverse. Dans l'institution ecclésiale où le cataclysme actuel est provoqué avant tout par des facteurs internes à son fonctionnement, elle pourrait être un moment décisif où le diagnostic des dysfonctionnements se donne à voir dans son ampleur systémique afin d'être appréhendée et traitée avec les remèdes appropriés.

L'adjectif systémique signifie qu'il ne s'agit pas simplement de l'un ou l'autre problème ponctuel, mais, à l'instar d'une maladie systémique, d'une affection touchant nombre d'organes et se répercutant dans tout le corps institutionnel. L'Église a, durant son histoire, tenté de réagir à maintes contestations et obstacles, et elle a apposé en réaction des solutions diverses adaptées à un temps donné, conformes à l'anthropologie, à la théologie, à l'ecclésiologie, etc., de cette époque. Mais l'accumulation et la superposition de ces réponses a fini par engendrer des effets délétères, à emprisonner le message évangélique, à mettre en place un cléricalisme porté par le verrou pouvoir-sexualité-genre³.

Or cela restait en grande partie invisible jusqu'à ces dernières décennies où un événement de parole des baptisés a fait irruption dans l'Église.

La notion d'événement

Ce qui caractérise un événement, écrit Marguerite Léna, c'est « un avènement de nouveauté, imprévisible au point de laisser les témoins eux-mêmes dans la stupéfaction, irréversible au point de bouleverser définitivement le rapport à la vie et à la mort, c'est-à-dire l'infrastructure même de notre temporalité⁴ ». L'*événement*, *e-venit*, est ce qui vient d'ailleurs et se caractérise par trois facettes : 1. il est ce à quoi on ne s'attendait pas, 2. il est à penser dans l'horizon de l'appel, et enfin, 3. il s'inscrit dans une dimension irréversible de l'histoire qui sollicite le récit.

En christianisme, l'événement clé est, bien sûr, Jésus-Christ, un événement imprévisible et irréversible qui fait désormais partie du récit de vie de l'Église et des chrétiens que nous sommes. L'événement met à l'épreuve et devient le lieu d'un

³ Cf. THIEL, *Plus forts, car vulnérables!*, 58 sq.

⁴ LÉNA. Les références de pages sont absentes car l'article a été consulté sur internet.

consentement nouveau auquel personne ne peut se soustraire au sens où l'on ne peut plus faire, agir, vivre, comme si l'événement n'avait pas eu lieu (et cela, que l'on soit d'accord ou non).

Or le scandale des agressions sexuelles commises et couvertes au sein de l'Église, a ouvert les vannes du dire et de la parole : d'abord quelques cris d'indignation se mêlant aux cris des victimes qui peu à peu se constituent en association (cf. « La parole libérée ») et prennent confiance pour dire les faits et dénoncer les violences dont elles ont été et sont encore victimes. Ensuite se sont ajoutées des protestations des baptisés adressées à la hiérarchie : elles manifestent leur refus de certaines normes de l'éthique sexuelle et familiale, et expriment leur décalage par rapport à une certaine anthropologie de l'Église devenue inaudible... Bon nombre de croyants prenant conscience de l'éloignement de l'Évangile, quittent l'Église sans pour autant renier leur foi. D'autres poursuivent envers et contre tout, comme brûlés de l'intérieur par l'urgence évangélique : « Malheur à moi si je n'annonce pas l'Évangile » (1 Co 9,16).

Quand se déclenche la pandémie Covid 19 et que beaucoup de pays sont confinés (mars 2019), c'est une Église de clercs célébrant la messe qui apparaît sur les écrans d'ordinateurs⁵; le travail de l'ombre des laïcs, parfois accompagnés de quelques prêtres, s'occupant des plus déshérités, n'est guère visible. L'image interroge : La foi chrétienne se résume-t-elle à l'assistance à la messe dominicale? Qu'est-ce que l'Église? Où est-elle? Que signifie suivre le Christ? Médias, réseaux sociaux, colloques... se font l'écho de deux visions théologiques, ecclésiologiques, politiques... L'événement de parole bouillonne.

Ainsi l'impensable advient: des laïcs très silencieux pendant des siècles, sous la houlette du triple pouvoir (législatif, juridique et exécutif) des clercs et des évêques, des femmes réduites à des positions figées de soumission, prennent la parole, avec audace et liberté. Ils sont confortés dans leur élan par la société démocratique, les mouvements *MeToo*, les lois sur la parité, les évolutions législatives..., et confortés dans leur savoir par les formations en théologie, en sciences religieuses et humaines

⁵ THIEL, « Le visage de l'Église de France sous le projecteur de la Covid-19 ».

qui ouvrent leur conscience et les invitent à revisiter les Écritures, l'histoire de l'Église, la théologie pastorale, ministérielle, sacramentaire... Ils prennent finalement conscience, de mieux en mieux, des dysfonctionnements systémiques et revendiquent des changements urgents en lien avec l'Évangile du Christ. Ils lisent et discutent de textes de l'Écriture, partagent leurs lectures « savantes », ils prennent ainsi des initiatives, éparses et minuscules, mais qui disent l'événement de parole en marche.

II. LIBÉRATION DE LA PAROLE DES BAPTISÉS AU NOM DE L'ÉVANGILE

L'événement de la parole des baptisés est une épreuve pour l'Église et pour son unité. La libération de la parole des baptisés – des laïcs, mais aussi des prêtres, en particulier ceux qui se revendiquent du Concile Vatican II – fait progressivement voler en éclats le système clérical avec ses secrets, son « entre soi », ses silences, et braque les projecteurs sur les logiques de gouvernance et de pouvoir, le patriarcalisme et le hiérarcalisme monarchique, la centralisation forte et non transparente, les dissymétries à l'intérieur du peuple de Dieu, des dysfonctionnements non seulement cléricaux mais aussi ecclésiaux⁶, des actions de retardement bureaucratiques pavloviennes pour éviter le passage à l'action.

En même temps, cette libération de la parole cabre une autre frange de l'Église qui refuse tout changement et se cramponne à une certaine idée de ce qu'elle dénomme le « christianisme de toujours » tant l'événement de parole est porteur d'une nouveauté ressentie comme déstabilisante pour elle, y compris pour certains évêques et cardinaux qui ne veulent pas « compromettre » le système qui garantit leur pouvoir...

Or cette nouveauté à la fois libérante et dérangeante n'est-elle pas d'abord celle de l'Évangile et plus largement de l'Écriture qui, comme le soulignait Grégoire le

⁶ Cf. FLEMING / KEENAN / ZOLLNER (ed.) *Doing Theology*, et en particulier les contributions de Faggioli, Lennan.

Grand⁷, « grandit avec celui qui la lit » et donc l'interprète à l'aune des cultures modernes qui en élargissent le sens et la portée. Le pape théologien poursuit : « les révélations divines croissent avec celui qui les lit » et ainsi éprouvent et vérifient le discipulat et du croyant et de l'institution qui se comprennent eux-mêmes différemment en fonction des cultures et des moments de l'histoire. Dès lors, l'événement de la parole (petit « p ») n'est-il pas à lire d'abord et avant tout comme une déclinaison de l'événement de Parole (avec une majuscule), du *Logos* qui a planté sa tente parmi nous, en nous, et qui interpelle? « Le Vent souffle où il veut » (Jn 3,8), il fait irruption selon des modalités où on ne l'attendait pas ou plus, au cœur de la crise.

Il en résulte au moins deux conséquences :

- La première convoque à prendre au sérieux les cultures contemporaines imprégnées de sciences et de technologies dans lesquelles est immergé et issu l'irréversible événement de Parole motivant – au double sens de légitimer et mettre en mouvement – les baptisés frères et sœurs. Ce n'est pas simple car ces cultures ont elles-mêmes connu un changement de paradigme bouleversant profondément les sociétés actuelles. Elles ont déplacé très fortement la compréhension de l'être humain, de la nature, de la famille, de la sexualité, de la politique, etc. Et elles sont devenues le terrain façonnant la recevabilité ou, à l'inverse, l'irrecevabilité de l'enseignement de l'Église parce que les catégories cognitives ont radicalement changé. L'heure n'est pas simplement à des changements dans le monde mais à un changement de monde.
- La deuxième conséquence convoque à prendre au sérieux la théologie dans ses différentes disciplines (l'exégèse, l'histoire de l'Église, l'ecclésiologie, etc.) et à l'engager dans des recherches susceptibles de répondre au défi de cette double nouveauté : celle des cultures contemporaines dans laquelle prend chair la nouveauté de l'Écriture et celle de l'Événement Jésus-Christ. Comme tout événement, celui de la parole s'inscrit dans une dimension irréversible de

⁷ SAINT GRÉGOIRE LE GRAND, 245-247. Voir également à ce sujet Pier Cesare Bori. Henri de Lubac disait que cette intuition était « l'un des fondements de l'exégèse chrétienne » (*L'Écriture dans la Tradition*, 284).

l'histoire et doit être pensé dans l'horizon de l'appel qui sollicite un récit recevable et porté par le peuple de Dieu dans son entièreté.

Assurément, l'événement de parole en lien avec Celui du *Logos* inouï (au sens étymologique de non encore entendu) peut transformer le *chronos* de la crise en *kairos* pour construire l'avenir en consentant à co-construire une Église plus évangélique osant relire sa riche Tradition à l'aune des nombreuses recherches actuelles en théologie, exégèse, histoire, sciences humaines... Mais cela implique des conversions et des changements structurels radicaux, des évolutions décidées et assumées et non pas arrachées par la pression des médias et des baptisés mobilisés, parce que jusqu'ici, très souvent, ce qui n'est pas public est quasi habituellement considéré comme inexistant et reste sans effet ; parce que jusqu'ici le légalisme moral et le double langage⁸ restent d'actualité, que toute une frange du haut clergé est tentée par la restauration⁹ plutôt que la mise en œuvre du Concile Vatican II, freinant des quatre fers les ouvertures aux laïcs et aux femmes, vidant de sa substance « l'autonomie des réalités terrestres » puisque le magistère continue de vouloir normer le comportement humain sur toutes les questions de vie et de mort pour lesquelles il s'affirme « expert en humanité »¹⁰.

III. CO-CONSTRUIRE UNE ÉGLISE PLUS ÉVANGÉLIQUE

Toute crise comporte deux risques : la minimalisation (« ce n'est rien, les crises ont toujours existé) et l'excès de rationalisation (« il suffit de »). Sa gestion doit éviter l'une et l'autre et suivre le précepte qui consiste à prendre acte de l'ébranlement et de le transformer en opportunité: d'abord en prenant au sérieux ou en favorisant encore l'expression de l'événement de parole, et ensuite en mettant au travail

⁸ Ce fut le cas de la réunion du 13 juin, où après une dénégation sur les votes négatifs lors de l'Assemblée plénière à Lourdes fin mars 2023, le Conseil permanent de la Conférence des évêques de France finit par reconnaître d'abord « un » vote négatif, puis toute une « série » sans dire combien au juste... Une palinodie exemplaire d'une « religion du secret », d'une confusion persistante entre autorité et pouvoir, d'une incapacité à sortir de la centralisation excessive... Un exemple parmi d'autres.

⁹ Jean-Louis Schlegel rappelle l'entreprise de déconstruction à cet égard de Jean Paul II et Benoît XVI in HERVIEU-LÉGER / SCHLEGEL, *Vers l'implosion?*, 200-201.

¹⁰ L'Église conteste aux sociétés démocratiques le droit de s'arroger ces questions sur la fin de vie, l'IVG, l'assistance à la procréation...

l'ensemble des acteurs concernés, dans leurs différences et leur unité en Christ, y compris les victimes directes et indirectes. L'expérience montre que ceux qui ont souffert de la crise ont acquis une compréhension de la structure ou de l'institution, un savoir essentiel qu'il s'agit de prendre en compte sous peine de reproduire les mêmes dysfonctionnements.

Et cela est encore plus vrai en Église en raison de la fraternité baptismale et de la commune dignité de tous les enfants de Dieu. La remise officielle du rapport de la CIASE¹¹ en France a ainsi été l'occasion de rappeler une méthode : celle des « victimes d'abord » car elles ont un sixième sens sur ce qui peut, doit se faire. Aucune attitude préventive, aucune réforme sérieuse n'est possible sans l'écoute première des blessés de la crise. Lors de la remise du rapport cela a non seulement été dit, mais expérimenté car le « livre » remis à chacun des participants n'était pas le rapport lui-même comme on aurait pu s'y attendre, mais le recueil de témoignages *De victimes à témoins*. Un titre expliqué par Jean-Marc Sauvé : « ces personnes étaient victimes : elles sont devenues témoins, et acteurs de la vérité ». Toutes les recommandations sont conséquemment formulées en lien avec le témoignage des victimes. Une méthode utilisée aussi par le pape François en février 2019 quand il a demandé aux évêques d'écouter les victimes avant de venir à Rome pour le sommet *ad hoc*. Et il l'a rappelé à maintes reprises depuis.

Or, certains évêques actuels n'ont jamais encore écouté de victimes d'agressions sexuelles. Si le Conseil Permanent de la Conférence des évêques de France l'a ouvertement reconnu¹² pour notre pays, il n'en va pas différemment ailleurs. Le pape lui-même en a une conscience aiguë ! La première étape qu'il a posée pour le processus synodal en cours est précisément l'écoute. Et *l'instrumentum laboris* y insiste fortement : l'écoute de l'expérience et des souffrances¹³ des hommes et des femmes de ce temps, l'écoute des victimes d'agressions sexuelles mais aussi d'abus de pouvoir, de conscience, d'abus spirituels et autres ; l'écoute, enfin, des victimes

¹¹ Commission indépendante sur les abus sexuels dans l'Église.

¹² Lors de la réunion du 13 juin 2023 déjà mentionnée, réunissant le Conseil permanent de la Conférence des évêques de France et les membres des différents groupes de travail mis en place par ce Conseil au lendemain du rapport de la CIASE en novembre 2021.

¹³ Pape François, « Homélie lors de la messe d'ouverture du chemin synodal » (10 octobre 2021).

secondaires : les croyants scandalisés et déstabilisés par la crise ; car sans cette intégration de l'ensemble du peuple de Dieu, toute réforme est vouée à l'échec et l'Église à l'implosion. Or beaucoup, sinon la plupart, des évêques ne sont pas prêts à travailler avec des laïcs. Collaborer n'est pas juste intégrer quelques non-clercs à un conseil épiscopal ou mettre en place des groupes de travail mixtes comme on l'a fait en France après le rapport de la CIASE. « On ne peut [...] laisser les évêques seuls, écrit Mgr Pascal Wintzer¹⁴, ni dans les procédures, ni dans les actes, ni dans les réformes ». Le seul discours ne suffit pas. « L'opinion publique dans l'Église [...] précise encore l'archevêque de Poitiers, est honorable. Il est heureux qu'elle se fasse entendre. Cependant il revient aux personnes qui détiennent une autorité de ne pas désertier le rôle qu'elles ont accepté. Une autorité qui n'agit pas devient complice, même si cette complicité n'est pas répréhensible devant la loi. C'est par la parole et par des actes que l'on décide de mettre fin à cette complicité »¹⁵. De fait, la crise actuelle pourrait revêtir une dimension prophétique si elle confrontait l'Église à la cohérence de ses actes et de ses paroles, sans se dérober et sans recourir à l'argument d'autorité.

Pour le pape François, le processus synodal en cours devrait contribuer à la transformation de l'événement de parole en co-construction d'une Église plus évangélique avec tous les acteurs, y compris les évêques. En s'adressant à l'Assemblée plénière de la conférence des évêques catholiques des États-Unis (15 juin 2023), le nonce apostolique, Mgr Christophe Pierre¹⁶, le souligne : « En tant qu'Église, nous connaissons la direction que nous prenons : Jésus-Christ et son Royaume sont le "vrai Nord". Mais pour trouver le bon chemin, nous devons nous immerger dans la réalité de notre peuple et écouter attentivement les questions et les préoccupations de son cœur. C'est le chemin synodal, c'est le chemin d'incarnation de Jésus. »

¹⁴ WINTZER, *Abus sexuels dans l'Église catholique*, 20.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 20-21.

¹⁶ *Address of H.E. Archbishop Christophe Pierre, to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Plenary Assembly.*

Le synode n'est cependant pas seulement une question de chemin. Le théologien Yves-Marie Blanchard¹⁷ rappelle que l'étymologie du mot *synodos* n'est pas *syn-odia* – *sun* (ensemble) et *hodos* (avec esprit rude, d'où la consonne initiale « h » en alphabet latin) – même si cela peut revêtir une pertinence pour les communautés chrétiennes, mais *syn-oudos/odos*, avec un esprit doux, sans « h » initial, « signifiant le seuil d'une maison, autrement dit le sas à franchir pour se trouver à l'intérieur de la demeure, le temps de s'asseoir pour 'être ensemble', réfléchir, discuter, débattre et décider. L'accent est mis sur la convivialité plutôt que l'activité, privilégiant le temps et l'espace de la concertation-délibération. »¹⁸ Il s'agit donc d'un style de relation entre les personnes et les groupes dans leur autonomie, capable de mettre en récit l'événement de parole issu de la crise actuelle de l'Église : se mettre ensemble à l'écoute de l'Évangile, non dans un entre-soi cléricale, mais *en Christo*, c'est-à-dire en ce « lieu » qu'est le Christ en sa personne, comme Fils du Père dans l'Esprit.

La formule de Paul en Ga 3,26-28 qui définit le baptême et sa signification filiale, est fracassante. J'en retiens la traduction de Blanchard au plus près de l'original grec : « Tous, vous êtes fils de Dieu à cause de la foi en Christ Jésus. Car vous tous qui avez été baptisés en Christ, vous avez revêtu le Christ. Il n'y a ni Juif ni Grec ; il n'y a ni esclave, ni [personne] libre ; il n'y a pas masculin et féminin. Car tous, vous êtes UN *en Christ* Jésus. »¹⁹ En somme, non pas d'abord le Christ comme « objet de la foi », mais comme « 'lieu' au sein duquel [...] peut s'exercer une foi consistant justement à accueillir le don de la filiation, accordée par le Père. »²⁰ Une unité en Christ qui n'efface pas la pluralité constitutive des croyants ni la diversité des rôles. Les différences entre Juifs et Grecs ; esclaves, étrangers et citoyens libres ; entre hommes et femmes ; demeurent mais EN Christ, elles se « trouvent dénuées de toute pertinence tant théorique que pratique. »²¹

¹⁷ BLANCHARD, *Contre le cléricisme*, 115 sq. Tout le dernier chapitre 7 est consacré à la synodalité.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 115-116.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 58.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 58.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 60.

Les incertitudes de traduction ne sont pas anecdotiques, elles attestent du déni toujours prégnant dans les Églises, de certaines questions comme celle des femmes. Ainsi dans Ga 3,26-28, « Paul n’emploie pas les mots ‘homme’ (*aner*) et ‘femme’ (*gunè*) mais ‘mâle’ (*arsèn*) et ‘femelle’ (*thèlu*) » ni ne recourt à la construction grammaticale « ni...ni »; il se contente de dire : « il n’y pas masculin et féminin »: « La négation ne porte donc pas sur l’existence des individus, hommes ou femmes, mais sur la confrontation, voire le rapport de concurrence et rivalité »²² entre les deux. Bien d’autres mentions pauliniennes, dont celles touchant au diaconat, aux responsabilités liturgiques et communautaires... devraient éclairer sous un jour nouveau la question des ministères. Et l’on pourrait multiplier les exemples tant l’accès à l’Écriture et à des outils scientifiques par des chercheurs de toutes disciplines ouvrent des pistes susceptibles de renouveler et d’élargir le sens et la portée du Donné Révélé (cf. Grégoire le Grand). Mais l’expérience aussi déplace ce que Paul Ricoeur appelait « l’expliquer et le comprendre », pour éclairer la formulation des données de la foi, à partir de l’aiguillon des vulnérabilités comme principe épistémologique.

Finalement, en considérant la crise actuelle non seulement comme une réalité mais comme un symptôme, la théologie doit tenir toute sa place. Portée non seulement par des clercs mais par une grande part de laïcs, hommes et femmes, elle prend un relief inédit et une portée radicalement nouvelle. Elle pourrait d’une part stimuler davantage encore l’andragogie afin de transmettre le goût de la Bonne Nouvelle au plus grand nombre, et d’autre part convoquer une recherche interdisciplinaire sur les sources de la foi chrétienne permettant aux croyants de s’en saisir et de contribuer à leur manière à l’événement de parole/Parole et à l’interprétation réciproque entre donné de la foi et expériences culturelles contemporaines. Elle pourrait s’appuyer sur l’ampleur énorme et inédite de la consultation du peuple de Dieu lors de la première phase synodale pour articuler *top-down* et *bottom-up*, en prenant au sérieux les trois mots-clés de l’instrument de travail du synode – communion, mission, participation – de façon à être moteur de renouvellement du fonctionnement et de la gouvernance ecclésiale. À condition cependant de ne pas oublier que la théologie elle-même est fragile, qu’aucune théologie n’épuise le

²² *Ibid.* 61.

mystère de Dieu, que nous sommes tous des éduquants et qu'il s'agit toujours de prendre en compte la vulnérabilité des personnes comme des institutions²³. L'on est fort parce que conscient de sa vulnérabilité et du fait que le Christ compte sur chacun. Jésus appelle des disciples loin d'être parfaits ou efficaces, Judas le trahira, mais il prend le risque car la mission doit reposer sur l'ensemble du peuple de Dieu dans sa pluralité, ses forces et ses faiblesses. Les semences de la Parole christique ont porté des fruits. À présent la moisson est abondante. Et il faut se concentrer sur elle (cf. Mt 9,35-38).

EN CONCLUSION

Le processus synodal n'en est qu'à son début. Mais déjà sa première étape, malgré la diversité des réponses concrètes, a commencé à résonner avec l'événement de parole/Parole. À moins que l'événement de parole n'ait déjà poussé le pape François à modifier les règles du synode et à inclure des laïcs, y compris des femmes, avec droit de vote. C'est la synergie qui est efficace et performative.

Le processus synodal ne doit pas être une chose de plus « à faire ». Il doit nourrir l'action et être un principe de transformation où l'on apprend en faisant (*learning by doing*), y compris pour les évêques dans leur apprentissage plus humble de la relation avec les laïcs, y compris sur des sujets²⁴ tels celui de l'éthique sexuelle et familiale ou la pleine intégration des femmes pour toutes les missions et tous les ministères dans l'Église. Mais cela suppose que l'on quitte l'Église patriarcale et monarchique pour un peuple de Dieu en permanente co-construction au contact des cultures et de la fréquentation du Logos. « On ne met pas du vin nouveau dans de vieilles outres » (Mt 9,17). Or le travail théologique, l'écoute mutuelle (synodale), la prise au sérieux de l'événement de parole/Parole sont des moteurs de transformation de l'Église, des médiations formant le peuple de Dieu en vue de l'exercice de ses responsabilités, l'aidant à découvrir qu'on peut évoquer librement les questions qu'habituellement on n'ose pas poser et que cela permet de mieux

²³ Sur ce sujet, je renvoie à THIEL, *Plus forts, car vulnérables!* Tout l'ouvrage porte sur cette thématique.

²⁴ *L'instrumentum laboris n'évoque pas l'éthique sexuelle et familiale et très peu les femmes, du moins dans des perspectives égalitaires.*

appréhender ce que nous avons à vivre. Plus encore, ces médiations donnent aussi une vraie liberté de croire. Elles esquissent des chemins nouveaux dans un univers encombré de préceptes, de règlements et d'habitudes, et les mettent à disposition du discernement de l'ensemble des baptisés. Dans le sermon sur la montagne, Jésus était lui-même en butte au légalisme de la loi qui assujettit, aux fausses images de Dieu qui aliènent, etc. Avec une grande audace, il formule des antithèses qui déconstruisent et vont à l'essentiel. Écho au prophète Michée: « Ce que le Seigneur réclame de toi ? Rien d'autre que pratiquer la justice, aimer avec tendresse et marcher humblement avec ton Dieu. » (Mi 6,8).

L'événement actuel de parole/Parole dans l'Église comme dans la société est en marche, quoi qu'on en dise. Il transforme les esprits et les cœurs plus profondément qu'une révolution qui n'atteindrait que des enluminures extérieures. Il in-forme au sens le plus fort en donnant forme dès aujourd'hui aux personnes comme aux institutions. L'Église pourrait compter sur la créativité de tous les baptisés, à condition de reconnaître non seulement théoriquement mais aussi pratiquement leur égale dignité, et de consentir à ce que la pierre de touche pour évaluer tout agir dans sa conformité à l'Évangile soit la figure du petit et des souffrants, des pauvres et des humbles de cœur.

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THE IRONY OF CHRISTIAN HOPE: TAKING A LEAP BEYOND DESPAIR

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Keywords: Irony, dialectics, Kierkegaard, hope, eschatology

INTRODUCTION

Before turning our attention to theological matters, it is key to recognize and acknowledge the world and environment we live in. In this world, it is apparent that the current state of things is far from a ‘normal situation;’ the current state of things puts our human contingency and inability to save ourselves full on display. Most striking, we can see this unsound deviation from a ‘normal setting’ in the acceleration of the climate crisis and its subsequent catastrophic race towards the tipping points which entail an unthinkable change of our world. In addition to the climate crisis, encompassing calamities take place, as in the extinction of wildlife, poisoning of soil, and zoonosis. In general, it is fair to state that our environmental situation seems bleak, and it is very easy for anybody to become a cynic and fall into despair.

However, in contrast to this situation we are embedded in, we find a profound discrepancy between Christianity as a *religion of hope* and the likely catastrophic outcome of the environmental dynamics. In this constellation, the rift between our anticipation of eschatological and the inability to save ourselves is undeniable. Especially as faithful Christians, we cannot bypass our very own contingency: Christ’s death, as the darkest depiction of God’s own abandonment from the source of life and love,¹ paints a dark picture about God’s involvement in humanity’s fate

¹ See BALTHASAR, *Theodramatik* 3, 297.

And yet, through Christ's resurrection, Christianity is not a tragic religion.² Through Christ's example of overcoming death from within, Christianity gains a perspective of hope that humanity is not doomed to extinction and oblivion. In deep contrast, this perspective of Christian hope is at odds with the current situation of natural environment. Hence, this discrepancy does not lead to a stance of optimism. Instead, the perspective of Christianity stems from hope that goes beyond the likeliness of imagination. And yet, Christianity is not a religion of escapism, as Christ's body after the resurrection shows in a profound way: His body still bears the marks of violence and bodily fragility. Christ's resurrection opened Christianity to the perspective that death has no final say about life as such.

In the following, I want to investigate how this discrepancy does not make Christianity a religion of escapism. Instead, in its hope, Christianity holds a spiritual resource that allows to accept the world and its state as it is; nevertheless, Christianity is not locked within a perspective of despair or cynicism. Elaborating on this stance this stance of hope, I will illustrate this Christian stance as a religious variation of philosophical irony.

1. DESPAIR AND FAITH

Sören Kierkegaard, both a philosopher and theologian, is convinced that a direct relation to somebody else's faith is not accessible; thereby, it is impossible by both edifying and theoretical writings to convince this person to become a Christian. For that very reason, Kierkegaard takes a detour and tries to 'trick' a person into faith.³ Instead of examining the benefits of faith, Kierkegaard chooses the opposite path to illustrating the understanding of Christian faith in a benevolent perspective. In a fundamental analysis of human life, he illustrates that despair and anxiety (as an expression of original sin) are the common conditions of humanity;⁴ even if a person

² See POUND, *Theology, Comedy, Politics*, 58-65.

³ See LIESSMANN, *Kierkegaard zur Einführung*, 32.

⁴ For the elaboration on despair as common in humanity, see KIERKEGAARD, *Sickness Unto Death*, 22. For the elaboration on anxiety, see KIERKEGAARD, *Concept of Anxiety*, 42-44.

is unaware of his or her despair or anxiety, both matters still shape their human condition and determine their relation to themselves and the world.

In his analysis of forms of despair, one specific form of despair stands out that connects Kierkegaard's philosophy and our current state of things: This form of despair is caused by the lack of possibility because, for this person, necessity is the architectural framework of the world which nobody can escape.⁵ Nothing seems to have room for spontaneous development, change, or alteration; necessity rules everything and determines the outcome of history's course. From this perspective, it is impossible to look beyond the obvious since there is no point in having imagination. Trying to imagine a different outcome of history would just increase suffering about the given situation. For a person suffering from this form of despair, necessity is more than just a principle. Kierkegaard points out that, for this person, necessity became all-encompassing in its reach. There is no counterforce to the rule of necessity. In the end, necessity consumes everything, as Kierkegaard puts it bluntly: "But the fatalist has no God, or, what amounts to the same thing, his God is necessity."⁶

In this analysis, it is not Kierkegaard's aim to frame being desperate as an accusation. Instead, despair is a universal feature in humanity and entails a general perspective on how to perceive reality.⁷ For him, it is a descriptive analysis of the given state of humanity; as an ethical matter, he accuses solely himself for having

⁵ See KIERKEGAARD, *Sickness Unto Death*, 35-40; see *ibid.*, 40: "To lack possibility means either that everything has become necessary for a person or that everything has become trivial. The determinist, the fatalist, is in despair and as one in despair has lost his self, because for him everything has become necessity. He is like that king who starved to death because all his food was changed to gold. Personhood is a synthesis of possibility and necessity. Its continued existence is like breathing (respiration), which is an inhaling and exhaling. The self of the determinist cannot breathe, for it is impossible to breathe necessity exclusively, because that would utterly suffocate a person's self. The fatalist is in despair, has lost God and thus his self, for he who does not have a God does not have a self, either."

⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁷ See *ibid.*, 22-23. See also *ibid.*, 23: "That one is in despair is not a rarity; no, it is rare, very rare, that one is in truth not in despair."

despair.⁸ The same descriptive analysis is true for us since the situation of the world is bleak and deeply demanding. Therefore, despair should not count as an easy choice or be morally charged. Rather, despair can become a realist perspective if we take the scientific evaluation of the upcoming climate catastrophe seriously,⁹ as we can see in the movements (e.g., fridays for future or extinction rebellion) to raise awareness for the climate crisis and the vanishing window to change even the tiniest bit for the better.

Hence, we can detect a parallel between our given environmental situation and Kierkegaard's conceptual foundation: Despair is not an exceptional condition. Rather, despair seems to be the general condition in humanity because it is the subsequent result of fully accepting its contingency and lack of sovereignty.

However, for Kierkegaard, despair is not the final condition in humanity; as a Christian philosopher, Kierkegaard sees a dialectical relation between despair, on the hand, and the cure of despair by having faith, on the other hand. Only through the experience of despair, genuine faith is possible. In other words, Kierkegaard regards despair as a necessary step in the process of having faith. To look beyond the obvious and inevitable, a person firstly needs to acknowledge the given in all its graveness and severity; even if it entails to embrace one's existential lack of power and absolute contingency.¹⁰

2. CONTINGENCY AND HOPE

The acknowledgement of contingency is key for Christian faith since its faith does not provide a loophole to a different reality that is totally unhinged from the given world. Instead of pointing to a realm of mere spirituality and rejection of the creational sphere, the incarnation of the logos (see John 1:1-14) highlights that God

⁸ See *ibid.*, 158: “indeed, I do all I can to make myself the one who is incriminated, as if I were the only one. [...] Really and truly, I judge no one. Even if I myself am striving after perfection—for it would indeed be blasphemous to praise the ideal and not strive after it oneself—I nevertheless judge no one; and even if I may have a psychologist's eye—I nevertheless see people in such universality that I truly can be said to see no one—yet I judge no one.”

⁹ For example, see PIERREHUBERT, *There is no Plan B*, 215-221.

¹⁰ See KIERKEGAARD, *Sickness Unto Death*, 26.

acknowledges and ennobles creation as such. Especially, Christ's embrace of the flesh (see John 1:14) is an act of unrestricted solidarity with creation. In his incarnation, Christ's relation to creation becomes indivisible, as Catherine Keller points out in reference to St. Athanasius of Alexandria.¹¹

Moreover, this solidarity of God with creation becomes even more apparent in Christ's death on the cross and subsequent resurrection. In Christ's salvific works, there is no salvation *from* the world; instead, God shows in His suffering and redemptive transformation of His bruised human body that He is engaged in salvation *of* the world. In this divine action, He lets no separation or distance between Him and creation take place.¹² Christ's body after the resurrection still bears the marks of the previous torment. In the encounter between the resurrected Christ and Thomas in his doubts (see John 20:24-29), Thomas can approve of Christ's identity before and after the resurrection in his confession of faith.¹³ This very passage paints a narrative picture that the resurrection does not let all marks of suffering vanish into thin air; fragility and contingency are still part of Christ's form (*Gestalt*) in its transformative glory (*Herrlichkeit*).¹⁴

Further, Christ's transformation is not limited to His very person. As Paul illustrates in his theology, Christ's death and resurrection unlock a new perspective that looks beyond the obvious and the given state of things (see 1 Cor. 15:35-58), insofar as Christ's resurrection started a redemptive sequence that involves all creation (see Rom. 8:18-30). Paul goes into more detail about the relation of humanity, especially the faithful, to Jesus Christ: Redemption and salvation for humanity go beyond a mere intellectual matter and relate to them in more than an issue of passive involvement. In baptism, the faithful participate in Christ's redemptive works; the Christian baptism is more than a *symbolic* involvement in Christ's fate. In their baptism, the faithful share Christ's death and already anticipate proleptically His glorious overcoming of death (see Rom. 6:1-11). Therein, they experience a foretaste

¹¹ See KELLER, *Face of the Deep*, 62-64.

¹² See *ibid.*, 50-51.

¹³ See SCHNACKENBURG, *Johannesevangelium*, 395-397.

¹⁴ See BALTHASAR, *Herrlichkeit 1*, 423-429.

of the eschatological fulfillment and have an existential relation to Jesus Christ, as the bringer and source of salvation (see Gal. 2:19-20).

This transgression of death's captivity also means a transgression beyond the *rule of necessity*: Death is no longer the absolute ending of a person's life. Christ's death and resurrection is, on the one side, incomprehensible for humanity, and, on the other side, the transgression of death's absoluteness enables humanity to have an unseen perspective about God and His involvement in creation.

Within a reasoning of probability and likelihood, the overcoming of death does not make sense at all. For this reason, Christianity does not have a perspective of *optimism* that reckons within a scheme of a favorable and likely outcome. Instead, Paul points out that, through Christ's salvific works, the faithful experience a perspective of *hope* that exceeds the given state of things: While optimism stays within a framework of likelihood and opts for a favorable outcome, hope is not bound to the conception of necessity as such (see Rom. 8:18-30). Instead, hope transgresses necessity as such. Stepping into the realm of the unseen, the eschatological hope of Christianity holds an *imaginative capacity* that looks beyond possibility, probability, and necessity. Terry Eagleton captures the core notion of Christian hope as follows:

“A robust hope, however, does not simply gaze at some future contentment over the abyss of the actual, which is usually the way with desire, but has a foretaste of its fulfillment, mixing a certain euphoria with its sense of incompleteness by discerning signs and pledges of the future within the present. Indeed, Christianity associates the condition with joyful anticipation.”¹⁵

Through hope, a profound change of perspective can take place in how to perceive the world. Instead of clinging to possibility, probability, and necessity as the only ways of perception and understanding, hope lets look beyond the *actual* state of things! Hope looks even beyond a hidden *potential* of things that might be still untapped and lies in wait. In its Christian fashion, hope does not entail a path of possibility that is open for us to take, insofar as hope would grant a form of agency

¹⁵ EAGLETON, *Hope Without Optimism*, 53.

or even sovereignty that takes place within the realm of the ordinary. Thus, Christian hope, stemming from Christ's death and resurrection, lets us acknowledge the world in its bleak state. And, at the same time, the faithful do not buy into the absoluteness or finality of this given state of contingency, fragility, and the current catastrophes!

3. OVERCOMING THE CONTRADICTION

Due to this two-sidedness of hope, we need to investigate our form of thought (*Denkform*) to cope with its simultaneity and process nature. On the one side, the Christian perspective does not deny the reality of the current catastrophes and sees a severe responsibility to care for creation since we are creatures ourselves and have the vocation to be "protectors of God's handiwork."¹⁶ On the other side, Christ surpassed humanity's contingency in its powerlessness to open a new form of life (*Lebensform*). For this new form of life, we need to investigate and develop a new form of thought that can incorporate this dialectical two-sidedness.

Developing a form of thought that is capable to handle oppositions and apparent contradictions, this endeavor is not an easy task. In the history of philosophy, we can trace a continuous thread that runs from Platon to Immanuel Kant in regard to the evaluation of contradiction: For Plato and especially Aristotle,¹⁷ the law of noncontradiction is an axiomatic foundation of their reasoning and essential for their form of thought.¹⁸ Yet, Kant elaborates on the law of noncontradiction that it is only valid in its strict form in an analytical reasoning.¹⁹ Hence, the law of noncontradiction does not rule reality per se.

¹⁶ POPE FRANCIS, *Laudato Si'*. *On Care for Our Common Home*, 217.

¹⁷ See PLATO, *rep.*, 435a7-437a2; ARISTOTLE, *metaph.*, III/1005b 11-34.b

¹⁸ See STEKELER-WEITHOFER, *Satz vom (ausgeschlossenen) Widerspruch*, 1202-1205. See also BRANDT, *Philosophie*, 27-50.

¹⁹ See HÖFFE, *Aristoteles*, 87. See also KANT, *KrV*, B 189-193 A151-154.

Instead of adhering strictly to notion of noncontradiction, the concept of *dialectics* is a viable approach to seemingly unfitting simultaneities.²⁰ Within a dialectical understanding of process, it is possible to adhere to the validity of opposing phenomena and seemingly conflicting statements, insofar as the current catastrophes are embedded within the greater perspective of eschatological hope. Within this framework of dialectics, the given state of facticity counts as real and an alarming statement about it is true. And yet, the factual given is not everything and, thereby, is open to a further investigation and a perspective that fathoms the sense of reality as such.

In this form of thought (*Denkform*) of acknowledging the given without stating it as absolute, it is possible to see the Christian stance as a *Socratic enterprise*: By questioning the given for greater meaning and place it within an encompassing horizon, we adopt Socrates' stance of seeking truth, without neither the assumption of intellectual sovereignty nor expecting a final answer before the eschatological consummation. In other words, Christians engage in irony, as both *theory* and *praxis*.

This Socratic mode of irony exceeds being a rhetorical means that relies on oppositions and contradictions to initiate an intellectual process of reconsideration and rethinking. Instead of the occasional quality of a rhetorical means, irony, regarding its Socratic origin, is an existential stance of living and a form of thought. In its deliberation of and tarrying with the given for further insight, irony releases a person from enclosed conceptions and enables to take a stance of questioning without the urge to embrace partial answers.²¹ In this way, irony emancipates a person from the overwhelming narrowness of the situation in its hopeless appearance. Vladimir Jankélévitch illustrates the emancipating quality of irony as follows:

²⁰ Aristotle points out that someone who engages in dialectics needs to have moral quality and adhere only to true statements. Because sophists showed that in their rhetorical skills, they make truth suffer by confusing true and false. See ARISTOTLE, *top.*, 1/1 100b; 8/14 153b. See also HÖFFE, *Aristoteles*, 59.

²¹ See KIERKEGAARD, *Works of Love*, 469-470.

“In reality, irony is a false falsehood, a lie that destroys itself (as a lie) when used. It re-guides the lost ones; it is the disentanglement of the entangled ones; or rather more, it provides the instruments for this disentanglement [...]. Irony does not want to be believed in – it wants to be comprehended. In other words, ‘interpreted’. Irony makes us not believe in its words, but in its meaning.”²²

In adopting this stance of irony in the current time, we can acknowledge the ongoing catastrophe in the world; and yet, we do not fall prey to despair due to the seemingly inevitable tragedy of life and perdition. This stance of living and the new perspective are open for us through Christ’s death and resurrection. Instead of the inevitable absoluteness of death and demise, the Christian faithful have a new perspective on reality that goes beyond the realm of the obvious.

4. IRONY, HOPE, AND *GELASSENHEIT*

In his narration of the apostles’ way to Emmaus (see Luke 24:13-24), Luke depicts the apostles’ grievous perspective clinging to necessity and absoluteness of death. Before their faithful experience of Christ’s resurrection, grief and despair shaped their worldview thus profoundly so that any other outcome of the crucifixion than the failure of Jesus’ mission seemed impossible to them. Therein, the dialectics of the resurrection neither nullify nor cancel death regarding human contingency. However, the resurrection provides an untapped vision of hope for them that crosses the absoluteness of death as such. In Christ’s resurrection, the faithful gain a glimpse of insight into God’s salvific will for creation. Christ conquers death and offers a perspective that not only provides intellectual access but also a proleptical participation in God’s eschatological works, as Paul illustrates in his theology of baptism (Rom. 5-6).

In similarity to the apostles’ experience of Christ’s resurrection in Emmaus, the faithful to this day struggle to find adequate words to analyze the content and meaning of Christ’s resurrection and cope with the ongoing embeddedness in

²² JANKÉLÉVITCH, *L’ironie*, 60 (my translation).

creational contingency, accompanied by all sorts of catastrophes and misfortunes.²³ Yet, similar to the apostles' experience, the subsequent generations of faithful do not fall prey to despair. By participating in Christ's resurrection and proleptically sharing His overcoming of death, the faithful can relativize the obvious and ask for greater meaning of life. In other words, the faithful take a stance of hope wherein they ask, strive, and reach beyond the realm of the given and the level of the obvious.

In contrast to Kierkegaard's depiction of Socratic irony that rests on nothing and lacks any stable foundation, the faithful hold in Christ's resurrection an axiomatic grounding which they believe in. Kierkegaard illustrates such a form of irony, stemming from an axiomatic grounding, as 'controlled irony' that can cope with the fragility and contingency of life, without collapsing into (metaphysical) despair.²⁴ By aligning Socratic irony with the faithful's belief in Christ's resurrection, they engage in the Socratic enterprise of questioning the obvious for greater meaning, without canceling the reality of the given and falling into (metaphysical) despair. This form of *controlled irony* may appear as a spiritual resource as it does not collapse into neither despair nor cynicism, facing the bleak situation of today's world. Instead, this form of irony is an existential expression of an attitude of hope: Christian irony acknowledges the ongoing catastrophes; and yet, it is somewhat content with the lack of sovereignty.²⁵ In its embrace of the lack of control, the stance of Christian faith stays away from despair and cynicism that are deeply related to the conscious discomfort about powerlessness to change the situation on individual terms. Thus, Christian faith does not come as an attitude of escapism that looks for a loophole to

²³ See KLUG, *Fragility of Language*, 53-60.

²⁴ Kierkegaard sees this lack of axiomatic grounding as the major shortcoming of Socratic irony. When reading Kierkegaard's thoughts on irony in light of later works on despair and anxiety, it seems highly conclusive to regard Christian faith as one cure to settle irony's missing foundation in its Socratic design. See KIERKEGAARD, *Concept of Irony*, 220-224. 263-266. 326.

²⁵ Hence, Christian irony does not overcompensate the lack of sovereignty by overdemanding responsibility to save the world on their own. This overburdening responsibility will never meet the necessary demands that could save the world. It would be a noble but illusionary act of self-sacrifice that mistakes the faithful's role with God's.

a different reality; instead, in its combination of faith, hope, and irony, Christian faith shows *Gelassenheit* (composure, calmness, and inactivity) in its attitude.

Byung-Chul Han advises to engage in *Gelassenheit* to stay away from the compulsion to act and the illusion to save oneself, as an act of overcompensation. In the stance of *Gelassenheit*, a person's perspective opens to an experience of the so far unseen and unknown:²⁶ This is especially important for the faithful because, through contemplation, it is possible to experience God's ongoing works in the world – as they appear in the form of subterranean rifts that are already in motion and yet to be seen. Likewise, Martin Heidegger advocates *Besinnung* (reflexion and reconsideration) in his late works: He sees *Besinnung* as a contemporary form of the βίος θεωρητικός; in the stance of *Besinnung*, humanity holds the capacity to experience the presence of gods or God within the realm of humanity.²⁷ Driven by the compulsion to control, measure, and rectify the world scientifically, humanity becomes blind to the wonders. Instead, through the stance of *Besinnung*, humanity regains its perspective openness to truth, meaning, and purpose.²⁸ Relating these thoughts on contemplation to the previous analysis of despair, the blindness for the wonders of the world can easily lead into a perspective of misery because the unseen works of God cannot appear within the horizon of probability and likelihood.

In sum, we can illustrate the perspective of Christian faith facing the current catastrophes as follows: In the faithful stance of Christianity, the faithful perspective is already embedded in the foreshadowing and anticipation of the ongoing eschatological completion: Through His resurrection, Jesus Christ has transformed death from the inside so that human contingency and fragility do not have the final say about humanity's fate. This transformation lets the faithful have a transgressing perspective of hope and an ironical attitude of *Gelassenheit*. The current catastrophes of the world do not vanish; and yet, they are dialectically transgressed by the eschatological unfolding of God's works. Thereby, the faithful can pursue a life that is already enmeshed into eschatology. In this stance of hope, the faithful

²⁶ See HAN, *Vita Contemplativa*, 26-28. 48-50.

²⁷ See HEIDEGGER, *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 46-47 (*Wissenschaft und Besinnung*).

²⁸ See *ibid.*, 47. 63-65.

can look beyond the demanding phenomena of the ongoing catastrophes. And further, they can live and act as if God already completed the salvation of the world.

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DAS EVANGELIUM ALS QUELLE UND INSPIRATION ZUR STÄRKUNG DER GEISTLICHEN GRUNDLAGEN EUROPAS²⁹

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Stichworte: Europäische Union, Erneuerung der Kirche, Evangelium, Kirchenreform, Synode über die Synodalität der Kirche, Glaube und Hoffnung

I. EINLEITUNG

Das Projekt Europa als Gemeinschaft der Nationen, wie es von seinen Gründervätern Adenauer, De Gasperi und Schuman konzipiert wurde, beruhte auf der gemeinsamen Verpflichtung, die Konflikte und nationalen Interessen der einzelnen Länder zu überwinden und das Gemeinwohl dieses Kontinents zu anzustreben. Ihr Ziel war es, dauerhaften Frieden und Versöhnung zwischen den Völkern zu gewährleisten und gemeinsam die Welt der Zukunft zu gestalten. Das Projekt eines geeinten Europas beruhte nicht nur auf dem humanitären Grundsatz, allen Menschen Gutes zu tun, sondern war auch in christlichen Werten verwurzelt, die ihm ein starkes geistiges Fundament verliehen.³⁰

Der christliche Universalismus als theologisches Fundament der Vision einer geeinten Menschheit, die sichtbare Einheit der Kirche und die Zugehörigkeit zu ein und derselben christlichen Gemeinschaft, sind Elemente, die den europäischen Einigungsprozess der Nachkriegszeit kennzeichnen. Ihre Vision der modernen

²⁹ Dieser Artikel wurde im Rahmen des Forschungsprogramms P6-0262 („Werte in jüdisch-christlichen Quellen und Traditionen und die Möglichkeiten des Dialogs“) und des Forschungsprojekts J6-50212 („Die Macht der Emotionen und der Status weiblicher Charaktere in verschiedenen literarischen Genres des Alten Testaments“) verfasst, die von der slowenischen Forschungs- und Innovationsagentur (ARIS) kofinanziert werden.

³⁰ Cf. *Vom Krieg zum Frieden*.

Gesellschaft wurde von zwei wichtigen päpstlichen Dokumenten zu sozialen Fragen beeinflusst, nämlich von der Enzyklika *Rerum Novarum* (1891) von Papst Leo XIII. und der Enzyklika *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) von Papst Pius XI.

Die Globalisierung hat zu einer Öffnung der nationalen Grenzen und damit zu einer Massenmigration geführt, so dass sich Europa mit neuen kulturellen und religiösen Fragen konfrontiert sieht, wie der Konfrontation mit dem Islam und der Frage nach dem Verhältnis zwischen Politik und Religion. Europa ist heute so nicht nur ein geografischer Begriff, sondern mehr noch eine geistige und soziale Realität.³¹

Die Öffnung der Grenzen, nicht zuletzt aufgrund der Notwendigkeit, die Politik des Wirtschaftswachstums der am stärksten industrialisierten Länder zu unterstützen, hat zu neuen Formen der Verwundbarkeit und des kulturellen Umbruchs geführt. Die europäischen Bürger sind Zeugen einer radikalen Veränderung der anthropologischen Struktur des Zusammenlebens. Gesellschaftliche Veränderungen werden oft als Angriff auf unsere kulturellen und religiösen Wurzeln empfunden. Religion ist auch ein politisches Thema geworden.

2. REALE SITUATION IN DER KIRCHE UND IN DER GESELLSCHAFT

Wir haben heute den Eindruck eines Orientierungsmangels. Europa verliert sein christliches Gedächtnis und versucht, das Erbe der griechisch-römischen und jüdischen Kultur, aus der es hervorgegangen ist, zu verleugnen. Praktischer Agnostizismus und religiöse Gleichgültigkeit sind die Folge. Die Menschen in Europa geben eine Impression, ohne einen spirituellen Hintergrund zu leben. Die Politik schließt immer mehr das religiöse Erbe aus. Im Vertragsentwurf über eine Verfassung für Europa wurde in der Präambel ausdrücklich auf das christliche Erbe Europas verwiesen, aber die Politik des Mainstreams führte später dazu, dass in der endgültigen Fassung des Vertrags die Bedeutung religiöser Traditionen nur vage

³¹ OPYD, *Der Dialog zwischen Glaube und Kultur*, 54.

erwähnt wurde. Es scheint, als wolle Europa mit der christlichen Tradition brechen.³²

Der Verlust der Erinnerung und die Verleugnung der christlichen Wurzeln werden von einer Angst vor der Zukunft begleitet. Diese Tatsache spiegelt sich in der inneren Leere des Menschen und dem Verlust des Lebenssinns wider. Dies zeigen die Daten über den Geburtenrückgang, die Zahl der Selbstmorde oder die aggressiven Versuche, Euthanasie und Sterbehilfe einzuführen. Anzeichen existenzieller Ängste zeigen sich auch in der Unfähigkeit, sich für die Ehe oder für eine geistliche Berufung zu entscheiden.

Auf dem europäischen Kontinent gibt es zwar noch lebendige Kirchengemeinden, sie sind aber zunehmend und immer mehr eine Minderheit. Es mangelt nicht an wichtigen Symbolen für die Präsenz des Christentums. Man denke nur an die vielen Kirchen, Klöster und andere religiöse Zeichen. Doch mit dem langsamen Voranschreiten des Säkularismus besteht die Gefahr, dass diese religiösen Zeichen bald der Vergangenheit angehören werden.³³

Viele Christen bringen ihr Leben nicht mehr mit dem Evangelium in Verbindung. Der gelegentliche Besuch von Kirchen an großen Feiertagen ist oft nur religiöse Tradition ohne geistigen Inhalt. Im sozialen und kulturellen Umfeld stößt die christliche Lebensweise zunehmend auf Widerstand. Der Glaube an Jesus Christus wird für engagierte Christen immer schwieriger. Es ist leichter, Gott in der Öffentlichkeit zu negieren. Angesichts des heutigen kulturellen Umfelds hat man das Gefühl, dass der Unglaube immer mehr zur Normalität wird.

Neben anderen Symptomen dieser Situation befindet sich das heutige Europa in einer schweren Krise der Familie. Auch der Begriff der Familie verschwindet Schritt für Schritt. Er wird mit verschiedenen Formen des menschlichen Zusammenlebens gleichgesetzt. Wir erleben ethnische Konflikte und Kriege. Die Fakten zeigen, dass die Digitalisierung der Welt und ihre Globalisierung nicht zu einer größeren Einheit der Menschheit führt, sondern zu steigender Einsamkeit und Ausgrenzung der

³² Cf. *Der Vertrag über eine Verfassung für Europa 2004, Präambel.*

³³ Cf. *KASPER, Crisi e futuro della Chiesa.*

Schwächsten. In Verbindung mit der Ausbreitung des Individualismus schwindet die zwischenmenschliche Solidarität. Viele Menschen fühlen sich zunehmend isoliert und sich selbst überlassen, ohne emotionale und andere Unterstützung durch ihre Mitmenschen und die Gesellschaft.

Der Verlust der Hoffnung, so Papst Johannes Paul II., ist das Ergebnis des Versuchs, eine Anthropologie ohne Gott und ohne Christus zu fördern. Diese Denkweise hat dazu geführt, den Menschen als absoluten Mittelpunkt der Existenz zu betrachten und ihn fälschlicherweise an die Stelle Gottes treten zu lassen.³⁴ Die Vergessenheit Gottes hat zum Untergang des Menschen geführt. In diesem Zusammenhang wurde Raum für die Entwicklung des Nihilismus im philosophischen Bereich, des Relativismus auf ethischer Ebene und des Pragmatismus im Alltagsleben geschaffen. Die europäische Kultur vermittelt den Eindruck, als ob es keinen Gott gebe.³⁵

Es entsteht eine neue Form der Kultur, die auf dem momentanen Wohlbefinden des Menschen beruht und weitgehend von den Medien beeinflusst wird. Sie steht oft im Widerspruch zum Evangelium und zur Würde der menschlichen Person. Zu dieser Kultur gehört auch ein religiöser Agnostizismus, der mit einem ethischen und rechtlichen Relativismus verwoben ist. Letzterer wurzelt im Verlust der Wahrheit über die menschliche Person als Grundlage der unveräußerlichen Rechte eines jeden Menschen. Die Anzeichen einer neuen Form der Existenz manifestieren sich darin, was man als Kultur des Todes bezeichnen kann.³⁶

3. KRISE ALS CHANCE FÜR WACHSTUM

In Europa, wie auch anderswo in der entwickelten Welt, leben wir in einer Zeit des schnellen Wandels. Wir erleben verschiedene Krisen auf gesellschaftlicher und persönlicher Ebene. Das Leben in den christlichen Gemeinschaften und die täglichen Ereignisse einer sich ständig verändernden Zeit deuten auch auf eine

³⁴ Cf. JOHANNES PAUL II., *Nachsynodales Apostolisches schreiben Ecclesia in Europa*.

³⁵ *Zweite Versammlung der Synode der Bischöfe für Europa, Relatio ante disceptationem, L'Osservatore Romano*, 3. Oktober 1999, 6.

³⁶ FRANZISKUS, *Generalaudienz*, 9. 2. 2022.

deutliche Glaubenskrisen hin. Sie ist gekennzeichnet von religiöser Gleichgültigkeit und Loslösung von der institutionellen Kirche.³⁷

Wir sind Zeugen eines raschen Rückgangs der religiösen Praxis. Der Glaube wird nicht mehr wie früher selbstverständlich zwischen den Generationen weitergegeben. Dies hat zu einem drastischen Rückgang der geistlichen Berufungen geführt. Aus verschiedenen Gründen hat die Kirche als Institution allmählich an Prestige und Kraft verloren. Dies zwingt sie dazu, sich zu überdenken und zu erneuern, zu ihren Wurzeln auf der Grundlage des Evangeliums zurückzukehren. Doch zunächst müssen wir uns fragen, auf welche Wurzeln wir zurückgreifen und wie wir die christlichen Wurzeln überhaupt verstehen.

Als das Projekt eines vereinten Europas konzipiert wurde, war klar, dass Europa überwiegend christlich sein würde, doch heute sprechen die Fakten dagegen. Europa kann natürlich aus verschiedenen Blickwinkeln betrachtet werden.

Christliche Themen finden wir noch immer in der Kunst, in der Architektur, in der Musik und in der Literatur, sowie in der allgemeinen sozialen Kultur. Andererseits ist die kritische Masse der Menschen, die die Kirche besuchen und aktiv an der christlichen Gemeinschaft teilnehmen, sehr gering.

In diesem Zusammenhang stellt sich auch die wichtige Frage, wie viele Menschen noch erkennen, dass Jesus Christus wahrer Gott und wahrer Mensch ist, und wie viele akzeptieren, dass das Evangelium einen wichtigen Platz in ihrem Leben einnimmt. Das Christentum lässt sich nicht auf eine äußere Institution oder ethische Grundsätze reduzieren. Es ist nicht nur ein Zusammenschluss von Gleichgesinnten, sondern eine Begegnung mit der Person Jesu Christi, die das Leben der Menschen verwandelt. Dieser Ausgangspunkt zwingt uns dazu, eine neue Identität für den europäischen Kontinent zu finden, eine Identität, die die Vielfalt umfasst und die Besonderheiten des Einzelnen respektiert.³⁸

³⁷ Tomáš HALÍK, *Der Nachmittag des Christentums*, 11.

³⁸ THEOBALD, *Christ und Kirche sein in Europa heute*, 24-25.

4. DIE AUSÜBUNG DER RELIGION IST EIN GRUNDLEGENDES MENSCHENRECHT

Zusätzlich zu diesem Thema beunruhigt uns die Tatsache, dass neben dem Rückgang des Christentums und dem Rückgang der religiösen Praxis auch der Ausschluss der Religion aus dem öffentlichen Leben zunimmt. Während die moderne Demokratie die Religionsfreiheit als ein grundlegendes Menschenrecht anerkennt, wird die Religion in der Praxis oft als Teil der Privatsphäre des Einzelnen und nicht als Teil des öffentlichen Bereichs betrachtet. Dies ergibt sich aus der einfachen Tatsache, dass in den meisten Fällen religiöse Symbole auf öffentlichen Plätzen oder in staatlichen Gebäuden nicht zulässig sind. Nach Ansicht der Politiker verstoßen diese Symbole gegen den so genannten Grundsatz des Säkularismus und der Neutralität des Staates. Der Säkularismus ist aber nicht neutral, betont Papst Franziskus, „es ist eine Lebensauffassung, die uns völlig von unserer Bindung an den Schöpfer trennt, so dass Gott überflüssig und zu einem Störfaktor wird und neue Formen des Atheismus entstehen“.³⁹

Lassen Sie uns von der Analyse der hinter uns liegenden Zeit in die Zukunft blicken. Es ist klar, dass Europa keine gemeinsame kulturelle Identität hat. Es ist geprägt von der Vielfalt der historischen Hintergründe seiner Völker und Kulturen. Der Islam ist zunehmend präsent, während das Christentum im Schwinden begriffen ist.⁴⁰

Während Professor Josef Weiler im Prozess Lautsi gegen Italien⁴¹ den Wert der Toleranz und die Toleranz gegenüber Andersdenkenden und anderen Religionen als Lösung für das Problem der Präsenz des Kreuzes in öffentlichen Schulen verteidigt, spricht Papst Franziskus von Brüderlichkeit (*Fratelli tutti*, 2020). Die Sorge um unsere Mitmenschen muss eine Priorität für die Welt von morgen sein. Für unsere Zukunft ist es wichtig, dass wir den anderen wie einen Bruder oder eine Schwester aufnehmen, das heißt, dass wir ihn oder sie in unser Haus und in unsere Herzen aufnehmen.

³⁹ FRANZISKUS, *Cattedrale di Notre Dame a Québec*.

⁴⁰ Cf. ZÖHRER, *Europa im Denken von Joseph Ratzinger/Papst Benedikt XVI.*

⁴¹ Cf. EGMR, *Lautsi et autres c. Italie, Rechtsprechung*.

5. BLICK IN DIE ZUKUNFT

Das Zusammenleben der verschiedenen Kulturen und Religionen im Europa der Zukunft wird nur möglich sein, wenn die Vielfalt geachtet wird und alle kleineren und größeren Akteure der Gesellschaft zu einem Ganzen zusammengeführt werden, in dem jeder seinen Platz hat. Die Mehrheit hat die Pflicht, die Minderheit zu respektieren und zu akzeptieren, so wie die Minderheit die Pflicht hat, die Mehrheit zu akzeptieren und zu respektieren. Der Frieden wird dort besser gesichert, wo die Würde jedes Menschen geachtet wird und wo der Staat den menschlichen Fortschritt ermöglicht.

Wenn wir über die Vision des zukünftigen Europas und seine geistigen Lebensquellen nachdenken, können wir nicht jeder für sich selbst denken. Der Weg nach vorne liegt in unserer Verbundenheit mit anderen Nationen. Er hängt auch von dem Beitrag der katholischen Kirche und anderer christlicher Kirchen und anderer Religionen ab. Im synodalen Prozess über die Kirche, der nach der Entscheidung von Papst Franziskus stattfindet, reflektieren wir über den bisherigen geistlichen Weg. In diesem Zusammenhang fragen wir uns: Ist die Erneuerung der Kirche noch zeitgemäß? Warum sind die aktuellen Methoden der Evangelisierung heute so erfolglos? Ist das Christentum nicht schon zu sehr im Niedergang begriffen?

Das jahrhundertelange Modell der Weitergabe des Glaubens, das unser persönliches und kollektives Bewusstsein geprägt und unser gesellschaftliches Leben beeinflusst hat, trägt nicht die erwarteten Früchte. Papst Franziskus ermutigt und lädt uns in seiner Enzyklika *Evangelii gaudium* ein, das Paradigma zu wechseln, das heißt, sich nicht länger gegen die notwendigen Veränderungen zu sträuben und das Risiko einzugehen, uns für die Neuheit des Evangeliums zu öffnen, die unsere Zeit braucht.⁴²

Die Rebellen gegen den Wandel in der Kirche glauben, dass die Kirche und ihre Pastoral nur ein paar formale Anpassungen brauchen, ohne die Strukturen und Formen des kirchlichen Glaubens in Frage zu stellen. Papst Franziskus hat eine

⁴² Papst Franziskus betont: »Es entstehen fortwährend neue Kulturen in diesen riesigen menschlichen Geographien, wo der Christ gewöhnlich nicht mehr derjenige ist, der Sinn fördert oder stiftet, sondern derjenige, der von diesen Kulturen andere Sprachgebräuche, Symbole, Botschaften und Paradigmen empfängt, die neue Lebensorientierungen bieten, welche häufig im Gegensatz zum Evangelium Jesu stehen« (*Evangelii gaudium*, Nr. 73).

andere Vision. Er ermutigt uns durch die Synode zur Synodalität, die im Laufe ist, uns zu bemühen, mehr und mehr Volk Gottes zu sein (LG 6) und betont die Bedeutung von Gemeinschaft, Partizipation und Mission.⁴³

Jeder Getaufte ist ein Subjekt der Evangelisierung. Er ist nicht nur ihr Empfänger, sondern auch ihr Akteur. Er fordert die Beteiligung und Mitwirkung aller, auch derer, die am Rande stehen, und betont die Bedeutung des Reichtums und der Vielfalt der Gaben und Charismen, die der Geist uns zum Nutzen aller schenkt. Wir lernen voneinander auf dem synodalen Weg, auf dem wir gemeinsam gehen und unsere Bande des Glaubens und der Freundschaft stärken.

Die Kirche braucht eine pastorale Umkehr. Der Papst betont, dass es sich dabei nicht nur um eine persönliche Umkehr des Einzelnen handelt, sondern auch um ein Überdenken all unserer Strukturen. Letztere müssen an die Bedürfnisse der Evangelisierung und der Pastoral in konkreten Situationen angepasst werden. Der gegenwärtige synodale Weg ist eine Fortsetzung der Prozesse des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils. Er ist ein dauerhafter Weg und eine Lebensform für die Kirche. Es reicht nicht aus, die Normen zu ändern, sondern es ist notwendig, den institutionellen Rahmen der Kirche so anzupassen, dass er evangelischer wird und den Geist Christi im Dienst an unseren Brüdern und Schwestern besser widerspiegelt.

6. SÄKULARISIERTE WELT ALS HERAUSFORDERUNG

In unserer säkularisierten Welt ist die Frage nach Gott die größte Herausforderung. Wer ist Gott als Schöpfer für uns? Es ist nicht nur eine Frage der ausdrücklichen Leugnung Gottes, sondern der Gleichgültigkeit ihm gegenüber, des Vergessens und der Unwissenheit. In der modernen Welt leben viele so, als gäbe es Gott nicht. Sie glauben, dass sie so besser leben können. Sie sind überzeugt, dass Gott und ihr Glaube an ihn sie einschränken würde. Darüber hinaus gibt es viele Menschen, die sich als Nicht-Gläubige betrachten, obwohl sie auf einer spirituellen Suche sind. Sie

⁴³ Seit 2021 befasst sich die katholische Kirche eingehend mit der Frage, welche Formen der Mitbestimmung es geben soll. Unter dem offiziellen Titel „Die synodale Kirche: Gemeinschaft, Partizipation, Mission“ finden mehrstufige Konsultationen auf der Ebene von Ortskirchen, Kontinenten und der Weltkirche statt.

interessieren sich nicht für die internen Strukturfragen der Kirche, wie Zölibat, Frauenordination, gleichgeschlechtliche Ehe usw., die oft in der Öffentlichkeit präsent sind. Sie fragen sich, was die Kirche zu den grundlegenden Fragen der menschlichen Existenz zu sagen hat.⁴⁴

Die Antwort auf diese Herausforderungen wird für die Kirche der Zukunft entscheidend sein, meint Kardinal Walter Kasper.⁴⁵ Es wird ein authentisches Zeugnis sein, das auf der Einfachheit des Evangeliums und der Echtheit des Geistes beruht, das zu den Suchenden sprechen wird. Die Erneuerung der Kirche und ihre pastorale Umkehr ist kein soziologisches, sondern ein theologisches Konzept. Es geht um Fragen nach Gott und nach der Beziehung zwischen Mensch und Gott. Die Erneuerung der Kirche muss daher ein geistliches Fundament haben.

Sie muss durch die Theologie untermauert werden, d.h. durch die Ankündigung der Ankunft des Reiches Gottes und die Hoffnung. Die Hoffnung ist ein heute wenig geschätztes Gut. Jesus selbst hat nicht ausdrücklich von der Kirche gesprochen, sondern vom Reich Gottes, das bereits unter uns ist (Lk 17,21). Wir leben es bereits. Das ist unsere Freude, aber sie ist noch nicht vollständig verwirklicht. Das Konzil lehrt uns, dass die Kirche ein Sakrament des Heils ist, d.h. ein konkretes Zeichen, das bereits als Werkzeug des entstehenden Reiches Gottes, eines Reiches der Wahrheit, der Gerechtigkeit und der Heiligkeit, in die Praxis umgesetzt wird.

Lassen Sie uns über die Rolle des Christentums und der Religion in der Zukunft Europas nachdenken, indem wir die Zeichen der Gegenwart wahrnehmen. Obwohl das Christentum stark im Niedergang begriffen zu sein scheint, trägt es die große Macht Gottes in sich.

7. DIE ROLLE DER THEOLOGIE

Die Theologie ermutigt uns, unseren Glauben nicht nur zu erforschen, sondern unbedingt zu vertiefen. Dazu ermutigen uns die Beispiele verschiedener Heiliger. Es

⁴⁴ Für ein besseres Verständnis dieser von der Synode über die Synodalität der Kirche, insbesondere der Kirche in Europa, behandelten Themen, siehe: ECKHOLT (ed.), *Synodality in Europe*.

⁴⁵ Cf. KASPER, *Crisi e futuro della Chiesa a 50 anni dal Concilio*.

liegt an uns, auf Gottes Hilfe zu vertrauen und zu tun, was wir können. Wir leben in einer Welt, die nicht mehr mit Gott rechnet.

Wir spüren, wie hilflos der Mensch den grassierenden Konflikten unserer Zeit, dem Krieg, der Migration und den Umweltkatastrophen ausgeliefert ist. Nach Rawls sollten in einer liberalen Demokratie die öffentliche Debatte und der politische Konsens auf einer rationalen Debatte beruhen. Das Christentum hingegen passt nicht in eine solche rationale Debatte, da es seine eigene, aus der Offenbarung abgeleitete unbestreitbare Wahrheit voraussetzt. Infolgedessen lebt das Christentum in dieser Welt in einer Spannung zwischen einem bereits gelebten und einem noch nicht voll ausgelebten Leben.

Das Evangelium ermutigt uns, uns ständig zu bemühen, das Paradox des Glaubens zu leben, d. h. mit dem Apostel Paulus "*gegen die Hoffnung zu hoffen*" (2 Kor 12,10) und den Worten Jesu zu vertrauen: "*Was bei den Menschen unmöglich ist, das ist bei Gott möglich*" (Mt 19,26). Wir sind verantwortlich für die Welt, in der wir leben und die wir den künftigen Generationen hinterlassen werden. Die Regeln und Gesetze in der Gesellschaft und in der Kirche sind ziemlich klar, aber das Leben ist kompliziert. Es ist nicht möglich, Antworten auf alle drängenden Fragen zu geben. Deshalb ist die richtige Antwort für die Zukunft Mut, Geduld und das Vertrauen, dass der Herr uns bei unseren Bemühungen seinen Heiligen Geist schenken wird. Und hier kommt der Theologie eine wichtige Rolle zu.

8. DAS EVANGELIUM ALS HOFFNUNGSTRÄGER UND ALS MAßSTAB FÜR DIE UMKEHR

Kirche zu sein bedeutet, Gottes Volk zu sein, nach Gottes Plan. Es bedeutet, Gottes Heil in dieser Welt zu verkünden und es einer oft verlorenen Welt zu bringen. Die Menschen von heute brauchen Antworten, die sie ermutigen und ihnen Hoffnung für den weiteren Weg geben. Die Kirche muss immer mehr zu einem Ort der Barmherzigkeit Gottes werden, an dem sich jeder angenommen und geliebt fühlen

kann. In ihr sollen alle Menschen Vergebung und Annahme finden. Möge er sich ermutigt fühlen, das Evangelium zu leben.⁴⁶

Papst Benedikt XV. betont, dass die Sehnsucht nach Gott und die Suche nach dem Transzendenten tief in das menschliche Herz eingeschrieben ist. Diese Sehnsucht kann nicht verschwinden. Der Mensch kann Gott in den Hintergrund drängen oder ihm widerstehen, aber die Wahrheit als solche verschwindet nicht. Der heilige Augustinus drückte dies unter anderem mit den Worten aus: „Unruhig ist unser Herz, bis es in dir ruht, mein Gott. Diese Unruhe bleibt auch heute bestehen und ermutigt uns, Gott zu suchen.“⁴⁷

Der Grund, warum die Hoffnung gestärkt wird, liegt auch darin, dass das Evangelium von Jesus Christus für alle Zeiten wahr ist. Die Wahrheit wird nicht alt und verblasst nicht. Sie mag übersehen oder vergessen werden, aber sie bleibt bestehen. Ideologien mögen mächtig erscheinen, aber sie haben ihre Zeit. Die Wahrheit ist ewig. Und das Evangelium ist die Wahrheit des Herrn und des Menschen, den Gott liebt und dem er barmherzig ist. Weil das Evangelium Wahrheit in Großbuchstaben ist, erschöpft es sich nicht. Die Worte des Evangeliums sind in jedem geschichtlichen Augenblick relevant und sind wie ein Wegweiser für den Menschen in einem bestimmten geschichtlichen Augenblick.

Die neue Apostolische Konstitution *Praedicate Evangelium* vom 5. Juni 2022, die die Römische Kurie reformiert, ist ein konkreter Versuch der Kirche, einen vom Evangelium inspirierten Wandel herbeizuführen. Dieser Wandel kann durch die persönliche Umkehr des Einzelnen und die Umkehr der kirchlichen Strukturen herbeigeführt werden, die im Dienst der Kirche und ihres Volkes stehen müssen. Die Kirche und ihre Gemeinschaften stehen im Dienst der Evangelisierung und haben einen missionarischen Charakter.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ FRANZISKUS, *Evangelii gaudium*, Nr. 114.

⁴⁷ Cf. BENEDIKT XVI. in einem Interview 2012 mit dem Titel „Campane d'Europa“.

⁴⁸ Für ein tieferes Verständnis dieses Dokuments, siehe: GIAMMARESI, *La costituzione apostolica Praedicate Evangelium*.

Mit diesem Dokument weist Papst Franziskus auf die grundlegende Ausrichtung der Weltkirche für die Zukunft hin. Er erinnert an ihren Ursprung und ihr Ziel. Der Herr Jesus hat den Jüngern die Verkündigung des Evangeliums als ihre grundlegende Mission anvertraut. Diese Sendung stellt den Dienst dar, den die Kirche jedem Menschen anbietet, auch in der heutigen Welt und unter veränderten gesellschaftlichen Bedingungen. Das Wort Gottes hat eine Kraft, die wir nicht voraussehen können. Das Evangelium spricht von einem Samenkorn, das, wenn es gesät ist, von selbst aufgeht (vgl. Mk 4,26-29). Die Kirche nimmt diese Logik des Wortes an, das auf seine eigene Weise und in sehr unterschiedlichen Formen wirkt. Es wirkt meist jenseits unserer Annahmen.

Jeder Christ ist durch die Taufe ein Missionar. Er ist und muss am Leben der Kirche teilnehmen. Er kann Führungsaufgaben in der römischen Kurie und in der Ortskirche übernehmen. Die Kurie ist auch ein Instrument im Dienst des Bischofs von Rom zum Wohl der Gesamtkirche und der Ortskirchen.

Die Reform der römischen Kurie ist ein Wachstumsprozess und ein Aufruf zur Umkehr im weiteren Sinne des Wortes. Im engeren Sinne zielt sie auf die Umgestaltung der Römischen Kurie ab; im weiteren Sinne ist sie ein Wachstumsmodell für die gesamte Kirche. Es ist ein Modell des Dienstes, das der Papst als Oberhaupt der Kirche an die Diözesen, Pfarreien und Ordensgemeinschaften weitergeben möchte.⁴⁹

Im Mittelpunkt der Reform stehen die Bekehrung und die gemeinsame Verantwortung aller für Wachstum und Fortschritt sowie für die Verkündigung des Evangeliums. Jede Reform beinhaltet eine Bekehrung, so wie jede Bekehrung eine Veränderung der Person und der Menschen erfordert. Wandlung ist das Wesen der Kirche.⁵⁰ Doch damit der Wandel wirklich wirksam wird, muss es sowohl eine individuelle als auch eine strukturelle Umkehr geben. Die kirchlichen Strukturen und Dienste müssen in Zukunft angepasst werden, damit sie der Kirche und ihrem

⁴⁹ „Es stehen sich zwei Kirchenmodelle gegenüber: das im römisch-katholischen Autoritarismus verankerte, hierarchisch-zentralistisch-uniforme Kirchenverständnis einerseits, und das im postmodernen, zeitgenössisch-ökumenischen Paradigma wurzelnde kollegiale Kirchenkonzept andererseits,“ in: ZÜND, *Zur Reform der Römischen Kurie*.

⁵⁰ HILLEBRAND / QUISINSKY, *Kirche und Welt–neu entgrenzt*, 23.

Auftrag wirksam dienen können. Zur Umkehr gehört es, schädliche Logiken zu überwinden, die Wachstum und Fortschritt behindern, wie z. B. die Überzeugung, dass „es schon immer so war und wir nichts ändern werden“.

Theologische Fakultäten und andere akademische und pastorale Einrichtungen der Kirche haben die Aufgabe, Laienmitarbeiter aus- und fortzubilden. Darüber hinaus ist es wichtig, dass die Mitarbeiter aktiv in die Gemeinschaft der Kirche eingebunden sind und die Möglichkeit haben, geistlich zu wachsen und begleitet zu werden.

9. SCHLUSSWORT

Europa ist angesichts seiner kulturellen, historischen, religiösen und intellektuellen Vielfalt ein schwer zu definierender Begriff. Tatsache ist, dass sein heutiges Bild untrennbar mit der Geschichte des Christentums und der griechisch-römischen und jüdischen Vorgeschichte verbunden ist. Diese Kulturen sind in gewissem Sinne integraler Bestandteil der europäischen Identität. Europa zeichnet sich durch gemeinsame Werte und eine gemeinsame Geschichte aus. Der europäische Kontinent ist mit Migrationsströmen, wirtschaftlichen und geistigen Krisen konfrontiert. Die Bedrohung durch Kriege wächst. Die Integration ausländischer Bevölkerungsgruppen, die das Gesicht Europas verändert, ist nur auf der Grundlage der Achtung der eigenen Identität und der damit verbundenen verbindlichen Werte möglich. Die Anerkennung und Achtung der geistigen Grundlagen Europas ist eine Voraussetzung dafür, dass die Menschen in Europa auch in Zukunft in Frieden und Brüderlichkeit leben können und nicht dem Profitstreben zum Opfer fallen.

Der europäische Kontinent befindet sich in einer tiefgreifenden Krise. Sie ist auf sozialer und persönlicher Ebene sichtbar. Während der technologische Fortschritt und die Globalisierung große Fortschritte in der Gesellschaft gebracht haben, erleben viele Menschen auf persönlicher Ebene Leere und Verzweiflung. Die Krise rührt von der Forderung des Menschen nach Wahrheit und Achtung seiner Würde her, Werte, die nicht ausreichend geachtet werden. Indem die Wahrheit über den Menschen und den Sinn seiner Existenz geleugnet wird, wird auch die Vorstellung von Gott in Frage gestellt.

Das Evangelium bringt die gute Nachricht von der Erlösung der Welt und des Menschen. Es vertreibt und klärt die Zweifel. Es ist das lebendige und wirksame Wort Gottes (Hebr 4,12), es ist eine Quelle der Inspiration für jeden Suchenden. Der religiöse Zweifel ist wie ein Gegenwind, dem sich jeder Reisende im Glauben stellen muss. Der Zweifel, der die Suche nach Wahrheit anregt, ist eine Gelegenheit, im Glauben zu wachsen. Der Glaube bringt die Hoffnung hervor und stärkt sie. Mit dem Glauben als Fundament der Existenz ist es möglich, aus der Gewissheit der Hoffnung zu leben. Sowohl der Glaube als auch die Hoffnung geben die Gewissheit, dass man in einem bestimmten Moment der Geschichte nicht zusammenbricht, dass man im Guten verharret und den richtigen Weg weitergeht.⁵¹

Das Zukunftsbild Europas ist bedingt durch das Bewusstsein der Verantwortung des Menschen vor Gott und durch die Anerkennung der unantastbaren Würde des Menschen. Dabei haben das Evangelium und seine Botschaft von der Liebe Gottes einen wichtigen und unersetzlichen Platz. Jesus versichert uns, dass er „der Weg, die Wahrheit und das Leben“ ist (Joh 14,6).

⁵¹ *QUISINSKY, Wechselseitige Ent-Grenzung, 231.*

LITERATURVERZEICHNIS

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II.
EUROPE'S PROBLEMATIC TRADITIONS
AND CONFLICTING
ANTHROPOLOGICAL VISIONS

CHRISTLICHE SOZIALETHIK: AUS TRADITION OFFEN FÜR JEDLICHE BEGABUNGEN, ERFAHRUNGEN UND KOMPETENZEN

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EINLEITUNG

Wie steht es um die katholische Theologie in Europa angesichts vielfältiger Krisen in Gesellschaft und Kirche? Auf welche spirituellen Ressourcen kann sie zurückgreifen, um sich zu erneuern und auch in Zukunft für Kirche und Gesellschaft relevant zu bleiben? Gibt es eine spezifisch „europäische“ Theologie und inwiefern hat diese etwas mit einer angenommenen „Identität“ Europas zu tun? In welchem Verhältnis stehen die Kernelemente europäischer Kultur zum Christentum und universalistischen Moralvorstellungen wie beispielsweise den Menschenrechten? Mit diesen sehr wichtigen und aktuellen Fragen befasste sich der Kongress der Europäischen Gesellschaft für Katholische Theologie (ET) in Pécs/Ungarn (deutsch: Fünfkirchen). Bei einer solchen Besinnung auf die spirituellen Wurzeln Europas, muss man sich vorab die folgenden Einsichten vor Augen führen, damit die Berufung auf so etwas wie die „europäischen Wurzeln“ nicht neokoloniale Züge annimmt und möglichst auch nicht im globalen Süden so wahrgenommen wird.¹

¹ Gerade aus „postkolonialer Sicht“ gibt es teilweise heftige Kritik am „westlichen Denken“. Cf. SILBER, *Postkoloniale Theologien.*; KRUIJ, *Entkolonialisierung des Christentums und der Vernunft?*

DIE VIELFALT EUROPAS

Es ist eindeutig klar, dass das, was Europa heute ausmacht, Ergebnis sehr unterschiedlicher Einflüsse ist.² Häufig und recht plakativ werden dabei Jerusalem, Athen und Rom zusammen mit den Stichworten Judentum/Christentum, Philosophie und Recht genannt. Ich nenne in unsystematischer Folge ein paar weitere Indikatoren, um eine noch größere Vielfalt anschaulich zu machen. Nehmen wir die Out-of-Africa-Hypothese ernst, stammen die Europäer/innen ursprünglich alle aus Afrika, hatten bis mindestens in die Jungsteinzeit hinein dunkle Hautfarbe und sind die Donau entlang nach Mittel- und Westeuropa eingewandert. Der Balkan war immer schon eine Zone dichter Migrationsbewegungen und ist es auch noch heute. Die für die Kulturen Europas so wichtige Schrift wurde von den Phöniziern erfunden, die ungefähr in der Region des heutigen Libanon lebten. Wenn wir vom „Alphabet“ sprechen, beziehen wir uns auf die beiden ersten Buchstaben Alef und Bet des altsemitischen Alphabets, die Ochse und Haus bedeuten und beides auch graphisch darstellen. Die römische Kultur ist nicht ohne die griechische, letztere aber auch nicht ohne weiter östliche Einflüsse zu verstehen. Der Ackerbau und die ersten größeren Siedlungen wurden in Mesopotamien und in Ägypten entwickelt, zusammen mit den ersten hierarchisch strukturierten Gesellschaften und den sie legitimierenden Religionen, deren Spuren sich auch im Alten Testament finden. Wichtige Elemente griechischer Kultur sind im frühen Persien entstanden auf einem Gebiet, das heute zur Türkei gehört. „Paradies“ ist ursprünglich das altpersische Wort für Garten. Wenn wir rechnen, verwenden wir arabische Ziffern, die aus Indien stammen und über die Araber zu uns gekommen sind. Das im Zusammenhang künstlicher Intelligenz so häufig gebrauchte Wort „Algorithmus“ geht auf den Namen des frühmittelalterlichen Mathematikers al-Chwarizmi aus Zentralasien zurück. Nach dem Zusammenbruch des weströmischen Reiches war neben dem weit im Osten liegenden Byzanz der Islam der wichtigste Kulturträger, der das Erbe der Antike an Europa weitergab, insbesondere auch über die iberische Halbinsel bis zur Reconquista, die im gleichen Jahr abgeschlossen war, in dem auch der später „Amerika“ genannte Kontinent „entdeckt“ wurde, nämlich 1492. Islamische Gelehrte hatten auch einen großen Anteil an der Wiederentdeckung aristotelischer

² Zu den folgenden Details vgl. v. a. die hervorragenden historischen Analysen von BRAUN, *Die Herkunft Europas, passim*.

Schriften im Mittelalter, ohne die beispielsweise die Theologie des Thomas von Aquin nicht möglich gewesen wäre. Schon allein deshalb ist klar, dass der Islam zu Europa gehört. Gleichzeitig ist der gegenwärtige Islam nicht zu verstehen, ohne die massiven Einflüsse, die der europäische Kolonialismus auf ihn ausgeübt hat. „Wer sich heute über den Splitter einer angeblichen Invasion der islamischen Kultur nach Europa erregt, dem dürfte der dicke Balken entgangen sein, dass im 19. Jahrhundert ein massiver und nachhaltiger Schub westlicher Ideen und Lebensentwürfe in die vielfältige islamische Welt brandete.“³

Das Schießpulver und das Porzellan wurden in China erfunden. Wie viele andere europäische Adelige mit großer China-Begeisterung ließ auch der österreichische Kaiser Franz Joseph I. sein Schönbrunner Schloss mit mehreren chinesischen Salons ausstatten. Dass der in Europa so beliebte Kaffee aus Äthiopien und die Kartoffeln und Tomaten aus Amerika kommen, ist vielen Menschen nicht bewusst. Ohne den Handel über große Distanzen hinweg, ohne intensiven interkulturellen Austausch, ohne zahlreiche Migrationsbewegungen, ohne die Neugier auf das Fremde ist Europa also gar nicht zu denken, genauso wenig wie das aus dem Orient stammende Christentum und seine erfolgreiche Ausbreitung nach Westen. Bernhard Braun kommt in seinem lesenswerten Buch „Die Herkunft Europas“ zu der treffenden Formulierung, Europa sei ein Kontinent mit Migrationshintergrund.⁴

Sprachen, Religionen und Kulturen sind niemals Container mit wohl definierten Inhalten und klaren Grenzen, sondern historisch gewordene Amalgamierungen höchst heterogener Strömungen. Besonders einflussreich für eine Vorstellung von Kulturen als Inseln oder in sich geschlossenen Kugeln war der Kulturbegriff Johann Gottfried Herders. Für ihn waren die einzelnen Kulturen Hervorbringungen von „Völkern“, die in sich relativ homogen und von den Kulturen anderer Völker relativ klar abgrenzbar waren. Wolfgang Welsch gehört zu denjenigen, die seit vielen Jahren diesen Kulturbegriff mit Recht kritisieren. Die spätmodernen Gesellschaften in Europa sind bereits in sich nicht mehr homogen, sondern sowohl vertikal (nach sozialen Schichten) wie horizontal (z. B. nach Geschlechtern oder unterschiedlichen

³ BRAUN, *Die Herkunft Europas*, 512.

⁴ So BRAUN, *Die Herkunft Europas*, 9.

Erlebnismilieus) hochgradig differenziert. Die ethnische Fundierung des Herderschen Kulturbegriffs erweist sich sogar im historischen Rückblick als fiktiv, weil es die angenommene Einheit der Völker und die klare Beziehung eines Volkes zu seiner Kultur nie gegeben hat. Damit verschwindet dann aber auch die Behauptung, es gäbe zwischen den Kulturen klare Grenzen. Schließlich legt der Herdersche Kulturbegriff Abgrenzungen, Verstehensschwierigkeiten und Probleme des Zusammenlebens nahe, deren Attribuierung an unterschiedliche Einzelkulturen selbst konstruiert und zudem wegen seiner Missbrauchsgefahr moralisch hochproblematisch ist. „Das klassische Kulturmodell ist nicht nur deskriptiv falsch, sondern auch normativ gefährlich und unhaltbar. Der Abschied von diesem Konzept ist in jeder Hinsicht angezeigt. Heute gilt es, die Kulturen jenseits des Gegensatzes von Eigenkultur und Fremdkultur zu denken [...]“⁵

Es muss hier jedoch noch auf eine noch schmerzlichere Vielfalt in einer anderen Dimension hingewiesen werden: Europa ist nicht allein ein Kontinent technischer, wissenschaftlicher und wirtschaftlicher Fortschritte, ein Kontinent einer Entwicklung hin zu Demokratie, Rechtsstaatlichkeit, sozialer Gerechtigkeit und religiöser Freiheit, ein Kontinent beeindruckender kultureller Entwicklungen in Literatur, Kunst und Musik. Zur europäischen Geschichte gehören spätestens seit Karl dem Großen auch Zwangsbekehrungen, religiöse Intoleranz, Kreuzzüge, Religions- und andere Kriege, Feudalismus und Absolutismus, Kolonialismus und Imperialismus, Antisemitismus, Nationalsozialismus und kommunistische Diktaturen – wobei diese Aneinanderreihung auf keinen Fall bedeutet, dass dies alles auf die gleiche Stufe zu stellen wäre. Aber bis heute erweist sich die Geschichte Europas eben auch als eine Last, die „aufzuarbeiten“ noch lange nicht abgeschlossen sein wird.

IDENTITÄRE STRATEGIEN

Wer also meint, Geschichte allgemein oder auch die eigenen Wurzeln in einer Weise denken zu können, dass sich *daraus* eindeutige Weltansichten, klare Werte und bestimmte religiöse Identitäten ableiten ließen, der kennt die Geschichte nicht. Das

⁵ Siehe hierzu WELSCH, *Transkulturalität*, 48.

gilt für jede Art von identitären Strategien, seien es nationalistische, kulturalistische oder religiöse Fundamentalismen. Traditionalismus hat nichts mit Traditionen zu tun, sondern besteht im Grunde aus „fake-news“ über die Geschichte, die auf diese unverantwortliche Weise grotesk verengt wird. Leider erleben wir heute, dass große Teile der Bevölkerung durch die Beschleunigungen und wachsenden Heterogenitäten, wie sie die späte Moderne hervorbringt, verunsichert werden und dadurch nach willkürlichen und oft ziemlich irrationalen neuen Sicherheiten suchen. Ulrich Beck hat dies in seiner Theorie reflexiver Modernisierung als zunehmende Fraglichkeit der Moderne bezeichnet, die durch eine Gegenmoderne als künstlich „hergestellte Fraglosigkeit“ entsorgt werde. Dabei ist diese Gegenmoderne ein durch und durch modernes Phänomen: „Es handelt sich – entgegen dem Gehalt gegenmoderner Schlüsselbegriffe: Nation, Volk, Natur, Frau, Mann – gerade *nicht* um etwas Altes, Überzeitliches, Anthropologisches, Transzendentes (oder wie immer diese Statuswörter des Unerbittlichen heißen mögen).“⁶

In vielen europäischen Ländern, auch in Deutschland, wird diese Dynamik zunehmend von rechtspopulistischen oder gar rechtsradikalen Bewegungen und Parteien ausgenutzt. Die vollkommen irrationale Debatte um eine vermeintliche Gender-Ideologie⁷ ist ein Beispiel dafür, das leider auch in der katholischen Kirche immer wieder Platz greift. Es ist jedoch kaum zu glauben, dass alle, die solchen Unsinn verbreiten und damit um Zustimmung buhlen, auch selbst davon überzeugt sind. Themen wie die zunehmende Migration, der leider oft in Zweifel gezogene Klimawandel oder eben auch liberalere Formen des Zusammenlebens und der Sexualität werden von bestimmten Kräften ganz gezielt eingesetzt, was jedoch nur funktionieren kann, weil es in wachsenden Teilen der Bevölkerung dafür offenbar einen Resonanzboden gibt. Wo entsprechende politische Akteure schon an die Macht gekommen sind, dienen diese Themen ihnen zur Machterhaltung und oft genug auch zur persönlichen Bereicherung. In den letzten Jahren ist leider die beunruhigende Tendenz zu beobachten, dass die Brandmauer zwischen demokratisch-konservativen und rechtsextremen, teilweise faschistischen Parteien

⁶ BECK, *Die Erfindung des Politischen*, 101.

⁷ Cf. ADAMIAK, *Die soziale, politische und religiöse Auseinandersetzung*.

durchlöchert wird und Konservative zunehmend bereit sind, mit Rechtsextremen zusammenzuarbeiten. Das ist gefährlich. Hitler ist nur deshalb 1933 an die Macht gekommen, weil Konservative ihm zur Macht verholpen haben. Unsere Demokratien sind auch heute wieder in Gefahr!⁸

NOTWENDIGE KRITERIEN IN DER BERUFUNG AUF TRADITIONEN UND IDENTITÄTEN

Wenn also klar geworden ist, dass Europa Ergebnis sehr heterogener Einflüsse ist, dann kommt man *zweitens* nicht darum herum einzusehen, dass man Kriterien braucht, um zu entscheiden, in welchen historischen Phänomenen man so etwas wie spirituelle Wurzeln oder wertvolle Potenziale auch für heute sehen könnte. Geschichte lässt sich nicht wertfrei für die Gegenwart fruchtbar machen. Um einen Zirkelschluss zu vermeiden, dürfen diese Kriterien nicht wiederum auf historische Wurzeln zurückgeführt werden. Ein einfaches „Zurück zu den Wurzeln“ ist keine Lösung. Auch Papst Franziskus verlangt, „das bequeme pastorale Kriterium des ‚Es wurde immer so gemacht‘ aufzugeben.“ (Evangelii gaudium 33). Er spricht sich also gegen plumpe Traditionsargumente aus. Traditionsargumente sind generell schwache Argumente.

Die Kriterien dafür, was als empirisch wahr und was als moralisch richtig anzusehen ist, müssen in der Gegenwart entwickelt werden. Das geht sicherlich selbst wieder nur in einem vielfältigen und möglicherweise konfliktiven Prozess. Dabei ist natürlich klar, dass gegenwärtig lebende Menschen auch heute von bestimmten Kontexten geprägt sind, so dass künftige Generationen durchaus zu anderen Ergebnissen kommen können. Unfehlbarkeitsansprüche verbieten sich also. Aber ebenso verbietet sich ein genereller Relativismus, der den Anspruch, erhobene Geltungsansprüche argumentativ einlösen zu können, von vornherein aufgibt.

⁸ In Deutschland wird die Partei „Alternative für Deutschland“ (AFD) vom Verfassungsschutz in Sachsen-Anhalt, Sachsen und Thüringen als „erwiesen rechtsextrem“ eingestuft. Zur Analyse der AFD aus christlich-sozialethischer Perspektive siehe HEIMBACH-STEINS, Grundpositionen der Partei „Alternative für Deutschland“. Die Positionen der AFD haben sich seit 2017 durchaus noch weiter radikalisiert. Dass die römisch-katholische Kirche auch in ihren eigenen Reihen Probleme mit Rechtspopulismus hat, betont u. a. LOB-HÜDEPOHL, Kirche gegen Rechtspopulismus.

Welcher Art diese Kriterien sind, kann hier nicht entfaltet werden. Zu denken ist an das Kriterium der intersubjektiven Nachvollziehbarkeit in einer modernen Wissenschaftskultur und an die zumindest vorläufige Universalisierbarkeitsprüfung für moralische Normen, wie sie in vielen heutigen Ethiktheorien in der Tradition Kants vorgenommen wird. Letzteres dürfte zu so etwas wie den allgemeinen Menschenrechten führen und in der Anwendung auf gegenwärtige Herausforderungen zu den ebenfalls von den Vereinten Nationen beschlossenen Zielen für Nachhaltige Entwicklung. All diese normativen Orientierungen tragen zweifelsohne einen Zeitstempel mit sich und werden möglicherweise in Zukunft noch überboten. Man sollte aber trotzdem nicht zu einem epistemologischen Pessimismus neigen. Dass die Erde keine Scheibe ist und man Kinder nicht sexuell missbrauchen darf, kann und sollte man durchaus für objektive Einsichten halten.

EIN EXEMPLARISCHER LERNPROZESS AUS DER GESCHICHTE CHRISTLICHER SOZIALETHIK

Wenn ich im Folgenden trotzdem auf die Geschichte Bezug nehme, tue ich das in der Absicht, dort Lernprozesse aufzuzeigen, also Prozesse, in denen genau das versucht wurde, nämlich nicht einfach eine Tradition fortzusetzen, sondern sie zu überprüfen und weiterzuentwickeln, teilweise auch, sie zu überwinden. Dafür gibt es in der Geschichte des Christentums viele Beispiele. Man könnte es paradox formulieren: Indem man aufzeigt, wie kreativ in der Geschichte der Kirche mit Traditionen umgegangen wurde, kann man eine Tradition des kritischen Umgangs mit Traditionen, eine Tradition des nicht-traditionellen Fortschritts rekonstruieren, die zumindest eines leistet: gegenwärtig verwendete und häufig missbrauchte Traditionsargumente zu desavouieren.

Das Beispiel, das hier verwendet werden soll, ist die Entstehung katholischer Soziallehre im 19. Jahrhundert, illustriert anhand eines Lernprozesses, den Bischof Ketteler durchlaufen hat.⁹ Es ist ein Beispiel aus Deutschland und hat deshalb nur

⁹ Im Folgenden verwende ich Teile aus KRUIP, *Sozialkatholizismus*. Dort auch weitere Nachweise.

begrenzte Kraft. Aber auch in anderen Ländern Europas dürften ähnliche Lernprozesse stattgefunden haben.

Wilhelm Emmanuel Freiherr von Ketteler war ab 1850 Bischof von Mainz. Sein Lernprozess von einer sozialromantischen und integralistischen Sicht hin zu realistischen und pragmatischen Vorschlägen für strukturelle Veränderungen hatte entscheidenden Einfluss auf den Sozialkatholizismus und die kirchliche Soziallehre. In seinen Adventspredigten im Mainzer Dom im Revolutionsjahr 1848 identifizierte Ketteler als zentrale Ursache der Sozialen Frage noch einen Abfall vom Christentum. Wären die Menschen wirklich Christen, so dachte er, würden sie den Armen das Nötigste zum Leben abgeben und es gäbe keine Armut mehr. Folglich war es für ihn nur die katholische Kirche, die die notwendigen Mittel zur Lösung sozialer Probleme anzubieten hatte. Entsprechend unterstützte er auch die Gründung kirchlicher Vereine, die meist von Adligen oder dem Bürgertum geleitet wurden und den Arbeitern und armen Bauern helfen wollten. Auch regte er die Gründung vieler neuer caritativer Orden an, in denen übrigens Frauen eine besondere Möglichkeit zu eigenständiger beruflicher Tätigkeit fanden.

Etwa 20 Jahre nach den Adventspredigten hatte sich Kettelers oben beschriebene Ursachenanalyse verändert. In einer Rede vor 10.000 Arbeitern auf der Liebfrauenheide bei Offenbach im Jahr 1869 betonte er, dass die Ursachen der sozialen Frage nicht allein oder in erster Linie in der Erosion christlichen Glaubens lägen, sondern in der Entwicklung hin zu einem kapitalistischen System. Die Arbeit werde nur als Ware betrachtet und deshalb der Arbeiter nach dem „ehernen Lohngesetz“ nur so entlohnt, dass er gerade das Nötigste zum Überleben habe. Da die Möglichkeit eines völligen Systemwechsels für Ketteler nicht vorstellbar war – weder rückwärts zu einer mittelalterlichen Gesellschaft der Stände, noch in Richtung einer kommunistischen Gesellschaft – war die einzige Lösung die Organisation der Arbeiterinnen und Arbeiter zur Verteidigung ihrer Rechte und Interessen, zur Durchsetzung höherer Löhne, besserer Ausbildung, regelmäßiger Ruhepausen, des Verbots von Kinderarbeit und – damaligen Rollenvorstellungen entsprechend – des Verbots der Arbeit verheirateter Frauen – alles dies mit Hilfe des Eingreifens des Staates. Ketteler kam zu einer Kenntnis, die bis heute das Profil christlicher Sozialethik prägt: Es geht nicht nur um die Veränderung ethischer Orientierungen für individuelles Handeln, es braucht auch strukturelle und

institutionelle Reformen, in der Sprache der Enzyklika *Quadragesimo anno* (QA 77): Es braucht sowohl „Sittenbesserung“ als auch „Zuständereform“.

Kettelers Predigt auf der Liebfrauenheide, oft als "Magna Carta" der christlichen Arbeiterbewegung bezeichnet, war ein entscheidender Impuls für die Gründung katholischer Arbeitervereinigungen, die bereit waren, die Interessen und Rechte der Arbeiterinnen und Arbeiter zu verteidigen und daher auch offen waren für die Zusammenarbeit mit der Sozialdemokratie und Gewerkschaften und später für christliche Gewerkschaften evangelischer und katholischer Arbeitender – was dann ja den Gewerkschaftsstreit auslöste, weil einige Bischöfe die Arbeiter stärker kontrollieren wollten, die ihnen zu selbständig geworden waren.¹⁰

Ketteler kam zu diesen Erkenntnissen durch sein Verantwortungsbewusstsein für die Entwicklung der Gesellschaft über den Tellerrand kirchlicher pastoraler Arbeit hinaus und durch seine Offenheit zur Rezeption neuester sozial- und wirtschaftswissenschaftlicher Forschungen seiner Zeit. Er ließ sich empirische Studien zur Situation in England schicken, das in der Industrialisierung schon weiter vorangeschritten war. Mit dem Sozialisten Ferdinand Lassalle, dem Präsidenten des 1863 gegründeten Allgemeinen Deutschen Arbeitervereins, führte er eine interessante Korrespondenz und übernahm dabei zentrale Einsichten der marxistischen Kapitalismuskritik. Er versuchte intensiv, die Zeichen seiner Zeit zu verstehen und im Lichte des Evangeliums zu deuten, wenn man hierfür die Worte von *Gaudium et spes* verwenden darf. Seine Haltung war geprägt von der Bereitschaft, Neues in Angriff zu nehmen, ohne Vorbehalte auch mit Menschen ganz anderer Herkunft und Weltanschauungen zusammenzuarbeiten und gewonnene Einsichten mit tatkräftigem Pragmatismus umzusetzen. Man könnte hier, wenn die Zeit dazu wäre, viele Parallelen zur Befreiungstheologie herausarbeiten, wie sie in Lateinamerika als Umsetzung des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils Ende der 1960er Jahre entstanden ist, aber leider weder von Johannes Paul II. noch von Benedikt XVI. wirklich verstanden worden ist.¹¹

¹⁰ Cf. BRACK, *Deutscher Episkopat*.

¹¹ Cf. KRUIP, *Der polnische Papst*.

Auch in anderer Hinsicht war Ketteler seiner Zeit voraus. So trat er beispielsweise, anders noch als die damaligen Päpste, für Religionsfreiheit ein, selbstverständlich nicht nur für die Freiheit der katholischen Kirche, sondern auch der anderen Konfessionen und Religionen. Er befürwortete Meinungs- und Pressefreiheit, auch weil der Sozialkatholizismus in der Pressefreiheit große Chancen für die eigene Bewusstseinsbildungsarbeit erkannte. Und es überrascht nicht, dass er ein Gegner des päpstlichen Unfehlbarkeitsdogmas war, wie es auf dem Ersten Vatikanischen Konzil 1870 in äußerst fragwürdiger Weise auch gegen große bischöfliche Widerstände von Papst Pius IX: durchgesetzt wurde, einem Papst übrigens, dessen Hybris durch seinen berühmten, an Ludwig XIV. angelehnten Ausspruch „Die Kirche, das bin ich“ zum Ausdruck kam.¹²

Erstaunlicherweise war es Kardinal Joseph Ratzinger, der 1986 als Präfekt der Glaubenskongregation einen Begriff von kirchlicher Soziallehre entfaltete, der diesem Ketteler'schen Lernprozess entsprach. In dem Dokument „*Libertatis conscientia*“, der zweiten, vergleichsweise wohlwollenden Erklärung der Glaubenskongregation zur Theologie der Befreiung heißt es in Nr. 72: „Die soziale Unterweisung der Kirche ist entstanden aus der Begegnung der Botschaft des Evangeliums und ihrer Forderungen, wie sie im Hauptgebot der Gottes- und Nächstenliebe und der Gerechtigkeit zusammengefaßt sind, mit den Problemen, die sich aus dem Leben der Gesellschaft ergeben. Indem man sich der Schätze der Weisheit und der Humanwissenschaften bediente, bildete sich so etwas wie eine Lehre, [...]. Da diese Unterweisung wesentlich auf das Handeln ausgerichtet ist, entwickelt sie sich entsprechend den wechselnden Umständen der Geschichte. Darum enthält sie neben fortwährend geltenden Prinzipien auch veränderliche Beurteilungen. Sie bildet kein geschlossenes System, sondern bleibt stets offen für neue Fragen, die sich ständig stellen; sie erfordert den Beitrag jeglicher Begabungen, Erfahrungen und Kompetenzen.“

An dieser Textstelle sind mehrere Aspekte bemerkenswert: Es gibt hier offensichtlich seitens der Glaubenskongregation ein Bewusstsein dafür, dass eine kirchliche Lehre, die übrigens nach dem Verständnis der letzten Päpste nicht an der Peripherie

¹² Cf. WOLF, *Der Unfehlbare*.

kirchlicher Lehren anzusiedeln ist, sondern durchaus zum Zentrum des Evangelisierungsauftrags der Kirche (siehe *Sollicitudo rei socialis* 41 und *Centesimus annus* 54) gehört, zu einer bestimmten Zeit in einem bestimmten Kontext „entstanden“ ist, also nicht schon immer da war, weshalb sie auch nicht einfach als Fortschreibung einer bestimmten Tradition verstanden werden kann. Sie ist entstanden auf Grund der Begegnung mit bestimmten Problemen, die zu lösen waren. Sie brauchte dabei nicht nur das kirchliche Amt und die kirchliche Tradition, sondern war angewiesen auf den interdisziplinären Dialog mit einschlägigen Wissenschaften. Sie kam dabei zu Ergebnissen, die kein geschlossenes System bilden, sondern entwicklungs offen und veränderlich sind. Schließlich muss sie auch für die Zukunft offen bleiben, sich immer wieder neuen Fragen stellen und sich dabei in einen Dialog begeben mit „jegliche[n] Begabungen, Erfahrungen und Kompetenzen“.

Daraus ergibt sich logisch, dass diese kirchliche Lehre auch weiterhin kontextbezogen sein, also Vielfalt in der Lehre möglich sein muss. Das betonte übrigens auch schon Paul VI. in seinem Schreiben *Ocotogesima adveniens* von 1971. In Nr. 4 heißt es, und auch das ist ein sehr bemerkenswertes Zitat:

„Wenn nun die so verschiedenen Verhältnisse erwogen werden, erscheint es Uns in der Tat sehr schwer, mit der Darlegung eines einzigen Gedankens eine überall passende Lösung zu bieten. Indes verfolgen Wir gar nicht ein solches Ziel, dies gehört auch nicht zu Unserem Aufgabenbereich. Denn die christlichen Gemeinschaften selbst müssen darauf hinwirken, die Lage des eigenen Landes nach dem wahren Sachverhalt zu erforschen und im Lichte der unveränderlichen Worte des Evangeliums zu erhellen, um Grundsätze, Beurteilungsnormen, Richtlinien für das Handeln aus der Soziallehre der Kirche zu gewinnen, [...]. Aufgabe solcher christlichen Gemeinschaften ist es also, unter dem Beistand des Heiligen Geistes – in Gemeinschaft mit den zuständigen Bischöfen, im Gespräch mit den anderen christlichen Brüdern und mit allen Menschen guten Willens – ausfindig zu machen, welche Wege beschritten und welche Leistungen erbracht werden müssen, um die notwendig erscheinenden und oft unaufschiebbaren Veränderungen auf sozialem, politischem und wirtschaftlichem Gebiet herbeizuführen.“

ZUR NOTWENDIGEN UND LEGITIMEN OFFENHEIT KATHOLISCHER LEHRE

Gerade in den letzten Jahren angesichts des offensichtlichen Reformbedarfs in der katholischen Kirche, haben sich viele Gläubige gefragt, ob das, was hier Papst Paul VI. zur Rolle der Ortskirchen gesagt hat und die Art, wie Kardinal Ratzinger die Soziallehre der Kirche beschrieb, nicht auch für andere Felder kirchlicher Lehre gilt oder gelten sollte. Ist es nicht auch in anderen Bereichen so, dass die Rolle der Ortskirchen gestärkt werden muss, damit ein wirklich inkulturiertes kirchliches Leben vor Ort möglich wird? Und gilt das nicht auch in gewissem Maße für andere Felder kirchlicher Lehre, nehmen wir als Beispiel so ein hochdogmatisches Feld wie die Trinitätslehre. Ist es nicht auch hier so, dass diese Lehre nicht immer schon da war, sondern irgendwann, nämlich vor allem im vierten und fünften Jahrhundert entstanden ist, als Reaktion auf bestimmte Probleme, die zu lösen waren, und dass so ein dogmatischer Fortschritt ermöglicht wurde, der damit aber nicht zu einem Ende gekommen sein muss, weil diese Lehre neben fortwährend geltenden Prinzipien auch veränderliche Beurteilungen enthalten dürfte? Ist es nicht auch hier so, dass sie nicht wirklich ein geschlossenes System bildet, sondern zu jeder Zeit neu entfaltet und verstanden werden muss, wofür der Austausch mit ganz unterschiedlichen Perspektiven sinnvoll und notwendig ist? Ist es nicht auch im Feld der Sexualmoral so, dass neue humanwissenschaftliche Erkenntnisse im Konkreten neue moralische Einsichten erzwingen, um dem Grundanliegen jeder Moral, dem Schutz menschlicher Würde, die allen Menschen zukommen muss, gerecht zu werden?¹³ Zwingen nicht die unglaublich vielen Fälle sexuellen Missbrauchs durch Priester und Bischöfe, die nicht als Einzelfälle abgetan werden können, sondern systemische Ursachen haben, dazu, diese Ursachen genauer zu erforschen und zu überwinden?¹⁴ Damit würde ja ganz gewiss nicht der Kern christlicher Botschaft verraten, sondern dadurch würde es überhaupt erst wieder möglich, ihn sichtbar zu machen und kirchliche Strukturen und Institutionen wieder nach ihm auszurichten.

¹³ Vgl. hierzu das sehr bemerkenswerte Buch von LINTNER, *Christliche Beziehungsethik*.

¹⁴ Das beste Buch zu dieser Thematik ist THIEL, *L'Église catholique face aux abus sexuels sur mineurs*. In: KRUIP, *Les abus sexuels, habe ich versucht, die systemischen Ursachen für den sexuellen Missbrauch herauszuarbeiten*.

SCHLUSS

Zurück zur Sozialethik: Niemand kann leugnen, dass die Kirche auch eine menschliche Organisation ist, weshalb sie die von ihr so erfolgreich entwickelte Soziallehre auch auf sich selbst anwenden sollte.¹⁵

Das betrifft dann Fragen der Beteiligung, der Subsidiarität, der Machtkontrolle und Gewaltenteilung, der unteilbaren Menschenrechte, der Gleichheit der Geschlechter und nicht zuletzt des Rechts auf sexuelle Selbstbestimmung. Daraus ergibt sich zwangsläufig eine Kritik der Sakralisierung des Amtes, des absolutistischen päpstlichen Jurisdiktionsprimats, des Zölibats und der Reservierung der Weihe nur für Männer. Das alles sind eben nicht nur dogmatische Fragen, sondern auch sozialetische – und der Widerspruch zwischen dem, was man nach außen verkündet, nach innen aber nicht meint einhalten zu müssen, untergräbt massiv die Glaubwürdigkeit einer jeden Institution, die um die Moralität der Menschen besorgt ist.

Für die bislang offizielle Lehre in all diesen Fragen gibt es letztlich nur Traditions- und Autoritätsargumente, die an Plausibilität immer mehr verlieren. Deshalb braucht es synodale Prozesse auf allen Ebenen mit größtmöglicher Offenheit, von denen ich hoffe, dass auch Papst Franziskus sie weiterhin will, einer Offenheit „für den Beitrag jeglicher Begabungen, Erfahrungen und Kompetenzen“.

Ich vertrete die These, dass weniger einzelne materiale Lehrinhalte oder gar bestimmte äußere Merkmale einer traditionellen religiösen Identität als vielmehr diese grundsätzliche Offenheit für Neues im Sinne einer größeren Menschlichkeit den normativen Kern unserer sozialetischen, ja sogar generell theologischen Tradition ausmacht, ganz getreu nach dem Motto des Apostels Paulus: „Prüft alles und behaltet das Gute.“ (1 Thess 5,24)

¹⁵ Cf. BOGNER, *Kirche*, 2022.

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THE VISION OF THE EUROPEAN CHURCH AFTER A DISAPPOINTMENT

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I. THE BLEAK STATE OF EUROPEAN CHRISTIANITY

On the day after the funeral of Pope Benedict XVI, the professor of history and the founder of the Community of Sant'Egidio, Andrea Riccardi published an opinion editorial in *Corriere della sera*. The title of the article was *La fine di un mondo e la ricerca (difficile) di nuovi equilibri* [*The end of a world and the (difficult) search for new equilibria*], and the paper was about the end of a European papacy and about the European Catholicism in crisis. He put it this way:

“The end of a man’s life and the end of a world. Wojtyla was the first non-Italian pope since 1553. It seemed like a leap. But with Ratzinger, it became clear that a European pope, whether a Polish from Habsburg Krakow, or from Bavaria, was not far from an Italian one (Montini of Brescia or Pope John of Bergamo). The Italian-European papacy had hitherto been considered suitable to lead the universal Church. After Wojtyla’s charismatic power (which – Cardinal Martini already said – covered up some of the problems), Ratzinger’s papacy showed rather the fragility of the Church and the immobility of the Vatican machine. Both Ratzinger and Wojtyla believed in Europe’s central role in the Catholic world. Europe was the origin of the Polish Pope’s global ambition, and he dramatically said: ‘If Europe is lost, Catholicism is lost’. Yesterday’s funeral marked the end of the European papacy, which was already evident in the election of Francis, who came ‘almost from the end of the world’. Catholicism is sick with the crisis in Europe, and is perhaps itself part of that crisis. The low number of people practising their faith

*and the scarcity of vocations (on a continent that used to send missionaries everywhere) show this*¹⁶.

Whether the European papacy will end, I do not know. That will be decided at the next conclaves. But we can perhaps say – in Riccardi’s words – that the Church has become sick in Europe, and Europe itself has become sick. In the meantime, of course, we must also bear in mind that, however much the number of Christians in the southern hemisphere increases, we cannot ignore the Christian communities in Europe and in the West. We must also find answers in the context of Paris, Munich, Cologne or Brussels, even if Christianity there has often shrunk to a fraction of society as a whole and is often forced to live in the trappings of the past. Not to mention the fact that this Christianity in minority is not infrequently very self-conscious and creative, and that the places of theological education of high quality are still mostly to be found here.

*“The atmosphere at the funeral of Benedict XVI was sad. And it was not just the sadness of the funeral. The fog, rare in Rome, only heightened the feeling. Ratzinger was a great personality: both as an intellectual and as Pope. Dead, whose days, as the Bible would say, were fulfilled. Yet there was a sense of an end hanging over the liturgy. Francis, in the red liturgical vestments of papal mourning, performed the service with a serious look on his face, and after the farewell he did not hide his tears...”*¹⁷

These lines of Riccardi foreshadow a bleak future for the Roman Pontiff in Europe and for the Church of Rome in general. They suggest that an age is coming in which – whoever the Pope may be and wherever he may come from – the Church of Rome will find no greater rest than in the period of increasing uncertainty under these three Popes. And if the fate of the Church of Rome is gloomy, the whole universal Church will suffer from the same uncertainty. Referring to the line taken by Popes Benedict and Francis, Riccardi concluded his article:

¹⁶ Cf. RICCARDI, *La fine di un mondo e la ricerca (difficile) di nuovi equilibri*.

¹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

“But in the Church there are not two currents (the Benedict and Francis line – LG), but rather a phenomenon of fragmentation and little common vision, as in European society. The same ecclesial leadership, no longer centred on a European cluster, has not found a new equilibrium. Change is taking place, as Montini taught, with a renewed ruling class.

At yesterday’s funeral, exhaustion was present, as it was throughout Europe... Francis did not speak about history or about the future, and confined himself to suggestive words full of faith. The seriousness of this funeral lay more in the words than in the ceremony. Perhaps the Pope did so in the knowledge that the ancient Roman Church was undergoing a transition towards a future that was still somewhat foggy”¹⁸.

As Catholics, when we fear for Europe, we often defend the culture, the environment in which we grew up, to which our Christianity is linked, and which was such an unparalleled unity of faith and society. Seeing its decline, we rightly feel fear and anxiety. The age is fragmented, uncertain and unpredictable in its morals and values. Even if we can renounce the fear of culture and the organic unity of faith and civilisation once experienced in Europe – a unity that is unlikely to be reconstructed in the form we have known it – we cannot renounce European Catholicism. We have to find ways to rebuild this once so strong Christian community and this will not be easy, and may not even be fruitful in the life of our generation. Looking at the “Catholic geography” of Europe, we are rather confronted with historical relics. Secularisation is often on an incredible scale in some European countries. In many places, Catholic centres have become tourist attractions, and the small and fragile communities have to continue their own history in these settings, draps and costumes. This, of course, often embarrasses them, while public opinion and the press are mercilessly mocking the plight of European Christians.

The European Church has experienced a great disappointment. Pope John Paul II believed in the Reuniting of Europe on a Christian basis around 1990, but by the end of his papacy he saw the failure of this vision. Benedict XVI was no longer looking for

¹⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

the Christian foundations of Europe, but for the moral foundations of the continent. Francis, on the other hand, recognised and appreciated the diversity of the region, the multipolar nature of the continent. Today, however, his confidence in European pluralism seems to have been shaken. The European Church is at a loss a little bit and has no one to turn to. We must surely see that it is not the African priests who will save Europe (just as the demographic catastrophe cannot be avoided by simply accepting immigrants). The Church is not like an unevenly filled pot whose contents just need to be shaken to sort it out. This cannot be done with the universal Church.

The vocation and the role of the laity must be deepened, but not only in the context of the priest shortage, but primarily for the sake of understanding the lay vocation itself, because it is not important only because of the priest shortage. The laity is not so, that if there is no priest, then they will be good. For the European Church, replacing priests with lay people as a solution to a need is not enough.

In the meantime, it must be clearly taken into account that the catacomb is a possible alternative for European Christianity – even if it is not the most likely scenario. Local Churches may of course disappear. History warns us of this, for example, when we think of the great ancient Churches of North Africa, which had a huge influence on the theology and Church life of the first centuries, which no longer exist. Both a reconstructible Christian Europe and the disappearance of Christianity on the continent could be realistic scenarios, but the reality will certainly unfold between these two possibilities. In October 2022, Cardinal Mario Grech, Secretary General of the Synod, in the Archabbey of Pannonhalma (Hungary), reflecting on the nature of synodality and its importance, made the following observations on the situation of the Church:

“Since the first centuries, Christian preaching has been interwoven with Western culture, and in this context it has reached the whole world through missionary activity. The search for a Christianity that is not ‘imported’ but in harmony with the culture in which the Church lives is one of the aspects that define the Church’s reality today. At the same time, we must also take account of the fact that Western culture has changed profoundly and often distances itself from the anthropological visions and ethical models that were part of Western thought as a result of the Christian heritage. In contrast to these ‘liberal’ driftings of the West,

*the churches of the Global South hold the letter of biblical teaching as normative and strongly affirm that it cannot be deviated from if the heritage of faith in the Lord is to be fully preserved*¹⁹.

Echoing the words of Cardinal Grech, we must say that there is therefore a normative minimum in the Church's doctrine of faith and morals to which we must adhere, based on Scripture and the tradition of the Church. It is a fundamental problem today, especially in Western societies, that many ecclesial communities, and sometimes even Catholics, are giving in to the spirit of the times and the pressures of mainstream society, and are even giving in to these demands. I am thinking here in particular of disagreements on the indissolubility of marriage, same-sex marriage, contraception or the nature of the priesthood and the possibility of women priests. It does so only in order to 'keep up' with the times, so to speak, or to gain or retain potential members in its long-standing historical community. But this is not the way forward. Jesus himself asks the question: „When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” If we give up the essence, the doctrine, the Church as an institution will remain, but who needs an empty, divided community. These solutions can only bring short-term, but short-lived success. And a faithful community of Jesus, even a handful, is worth more than an unfaithful and comfortable crowd.

2. THE GENERATION OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL AND THE RECEPTION OF THE COUNCIL

Ralph Martin's book *The Catholic Church at the End of an Age* has already pointed out that the reception of Vatican II was not smooth and did not bring the expected renewal in all areas. „The new paths”, he wrote in 1994, „on which Vatican II launched the Catholic Church have proved more difficult to follow than had been thought, and the destination set out at that time may be reached more slowly than expected. If we look at the statistics, it is in some ways easier to see the old system dying than the new one being born”²⁰. A great era seems to be coming to an end.

¹⁹ GRECH, *A szinódus: a közösség és a testvériség útja*, 584.

²⁰ MARTIN, *The Catholic Church at the End of an Age*, 15.

That something is coming to an end is certain. But what comes next is almost entirely uncertain. We are living in an open moment of history, a transitional period, the outcome of which will, in the lifetime of my generation, at best, only just unfold. The closure of an era – often mentioned by John Lukacs in relation to the current state of Western culture – is being felt in the Church in theological and pastoral point of view. On the death of Benedict XVI, Christopher Ruddy writes in *Commonweal Magazine*:

*“Now the last surviving major participant at Vatican II is gone. An ecclesial era has ended. The man who grew up under Nazism, who resisted Marxism and theological liberalism, has passed. There are new movements in the world and in the Church, new signs of the times, for good and for ill. Still, I am convinced that the stature of this ‘mustard seed’ theologian and hierarch will grow over the coming decades and bear much fruit.”*²¹.

This is true. Pope Francis talks about, that an ecumenical council taking a hundred years to bear its present fruit, and in the meantime, in the middle of this process, the Church, theology, pastoral ministry and mission have reached the stage where the great council generation has passed away.

*“Historians say that it takes 100 years for a Council to be fully implemented, so it is only half way through. Many things have changed in the Church, many things for the better... There are two interesting signs: the initial imprudent enthusiasm of the Council has already disappeared, I am thinking of the liturgical effervescence, which is almost non-existent. And anti-conciliar resistance is emerging that had never been seen before, something that is typical of any process of maturation. But so much has changed...”*²²

The first reception of the council has taken place, and perhaps the time for post-conciliar excesses is over. But we sense that the focus of theological and pastoral issues has shifted in the last 15-20 years. The enthusiasm and the willingness to act of the post-conciliar church of the post-conciliar years has been replaced by a community of people whose influential groups now often question the nature and

²¹ Cf. RUDDY, *Benedict’s Theological Legacy*.

²² Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *Africa ‘a continent to be valued not plundered’*.

impact of the council. Perhaps the most controversy has centred on liturgical reform and its implementation, but many have also recalled the systematic nature of the 'old' theology. Alongside the narrative method of the conciliar theologian generation, there is a growing demand for tighter systems. At the same time, however, systematic theology and dogmatics have been relegated to the background in relation to contextual theologies, while theological analysis of ethics, culture, history or society is nowadays given greater emphasis. We can therefore say that we have reached the end of the conciliar generation, while the reception of the council is still in full swing.

The reception of Vatican II began with sincere and often biased enthusiasm. Heribert Mühlen, in a 1978 book, even compared the decades after the Council to the time of the *Acts of the Apostles*. He also spoke of a „new age” in which the Church was being renewed and people were finally taking note of social problems. The experience of faith in this period becomes a communal one, as witnessed by the movements, groups and prayer communities that were formed during and in the wake of the Council. This enthusiastic joy has determined the attitudes of many, and the sense of a new frontier has encouraged a desire to break with the old theology and, in general, with the established Christian culture of behaviour in the name of something new. And this process has often led to excesses, while the enthusiasm for the Council has nowadays faded or become a disappointment, and the need to reconstruct the old forms has been intensified. This reactionary need is partly due to nostalgia, but partly to a desire for real life and renewal. Erik Varden, bishop-prelate of the Catholic Territorial Prelature of Trondheim in Norway and former Trappist abbot of Leicestershire, writes in his analysis of the post-Council public mood, that

“the Second Vatican Council’s legacy is complex, conditioned, sometimes eclipsed, by that of the secular culture revolution which, just as the council was drawing to a close, engulfed the West. In assessing this legacy, too, metanoia is called for. We routinely confront, in the Church, not so much a clash of convictions as a clash of sensibilities. The elderly accuse the young of being retrograde. The young accuse the

*old of clinging to aggiornamento premised on a giorno on which the sun has long since set. This state of affairs is really rather comical, when you stop and think*²³.

It will be the task of a generation to carry on in a rational and balanced way the implementation of the teaching of the Council, which is today under a great deal of tension. The Council's teaching is clear, serene and powerful even after sixty years. The way of the future Church can only be the way of the Council.

3. THE AGE OF THE PROPHETS DURING THE STORMS OF HISTORY

Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, President of the Pontifical Academy for Life, who has accompanied the Community of Sant'Egidio since its birth, publishes a yearly book of reflections to help in daily prayer (*La parola di Dio ogni giorno*). In this volume, he offers meditations for each day of the year, based on the scriptural passages of the daily Mass, especially for the members of the community. In 23 December 2022, he formulated the following reflection:

"Israel's prophets lived in a complex time when Israel's faith was under attack in a world changing rapidly and in unexpected directions. What can a small nation, deprived of its independence and autonomy, do in the face of expanding, oppressive, large nations? This is the question of the faithful, a question that is always revisited in times of change. And so it is with us, in this age that Pope Francis radically calls a change of era. What should we do? This is indeed an important question. Should believers allow themselves to adapt, to assimilate into the dominant culture?"

Israel's faith was small and its commitment to God was fragile. It lived among great peoples and leading cultures such as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and Rome, peoples who left their mark on history and even dictated the course of history. A small nation, which could be swept away by the great at any moment, nevertheless came to believe that its God was a living God, and that this God would bring salvation to all peoples. The

²³ Cf. VARDEN, *Monastic Wisdom – A Return to the Centre*.

motto of the 52nd International Eucharistic Congress in Budapest, “All my fountains flow from you”, is the last verse of Psalm 87, the Psalm that says that all peoples will come to Zion to be saved. “Among my worshippers I will mention Egypt and Babylon, Philistia, Tyre and Ethiopia, for they were all born here,” the Psalmist says. The nations are saved in Zion and Israel is the bearer of the salvation of the nations. Where does the strength of this conviction come from? Where is the certainty, when in the age of the prophets, the small people who carry the promise are facing actual destruction? And if we draw a parallel now? Can the Church be so fragile? Israel was not only small, but also sinful and fallen. Can the Church be like that? In the storm of history, amidst great ideals defined by materialism, scepticism, scientific and technological self-confidence? In a time that proclaims a post-human age, and that lives its daily life in the sure knowledge of the unstoppable advance of secularisation? In an age when Christians are being read the errors and sins of 2000 years? Is it possible for a tiny people – the Christian community – to endure and carry the promise? We get the example in Jeremiah’s prophecy that after the prophet pronounces judgment on the people of Israel, he also pronounces judgment on the nations and then prophesies salvation to the chosen people. In that order. In other words, the smallest nation, the unfaithful Israel, is placed at the centre of history as the bearer of the proclaimed salvation. The fate of the nations is made sense of in the context of the fate of Israel. Israel is the bearer of salvation for them too. Indeed, the history of the nations will be understood in the context of Israel’s history. The destiny of a peripheral people dictates the dynamics of history and not those of the great nations. This interpretation of history is the reading of salvation history in human history. The history of Israel in the Old Testament provides the interpretive key to a true understanding of the history of the great nations of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and Rome. The periphery – Israel, politically and culturally insignificant, even sometimes unfaithful to God – is brought to the centre. The Church of the New Testament – a community on the periphery of Galilee, a people little known in the Greco-Latin world, coming from a cultural context of no interest whatsoever – sets out to go as far as Rome, according to the narrative of Luke the Evangelist, and change the world. The Church today, especially in the West, is steadily losing its majority position and its cultural and political influence, and in countries where Christianity is young, it has never been in the majority, but has remained in the minority, on the periphery. The fate of this marginal community

parallels the fate of peripheral Israel and the fate of the Master, the marginal Jew²⁴. The historic mission of the Church must be seen in the scale of Jeremiah's great vision for Israel. The destiny and history of the Church offer a solution to the great question of the destiny of peoples. The story of this sinful, fallible people carries the salvation of the nations, despite all their sins and failures. It is the Church which, in spite of its own weakness and marginality, is the centre of history because of God's action. Pope John XXIII, on the opening day of the Second Vatican Council, 11 October 1962, spoke of the prophets of doom (*profeti di sventura*), a phrase used by Benedict XVI (in his address to the seminarians on 8 February 2013) and Pope Francis (*Evangeliu gaudium* 84). Pope John put it this way at the time:

“Sometimes, sadly, we have to hear to the voices of people who are fired with zeal but lack a sense of discretion and moderation. In this modern age they see nothing but destruction... We feel that we do not agree with the prophets of doom, who always predict disaster, as if the end of the world were come”²⁵.

To accept the certainty carried by a small and fragile people requires a prophetic spirit from us, the Christian community of the third millennium. There will always be prophets of despair and doom, alarmists who warn of the disappearance of the Church and the loss of the truth. Moreover, there is always a piece of the prophet of doom and doomsayers within us, in our own souls. This is often why hope fails among us, why we lose our serenity and optimism, and why we lose our vision of the future. Salvation will unfold in history, this is the action of Jesus. And it is precisely now, when the Church is becoming poorer, more and more distant from worldly influence, less and less influential on morality and culture, now that it is itself experiencing simplicity in the insignificance of marginality, that the purity and power of the gospel can be shown, perhaps more than in the years of strength and confidence. Churchill is reputed to have once said, „Never waste a crisis!“ A time of crisis is the perfect time to be prophets of hope. It would be a mistake to miss this opportunity.

²⁴ Cf. with the title of John Meier's the six-volume book series, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*.

²⁵ POPE JOHN XXIII, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesiae*, 789.

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LA NATION EST-ELLE VRAIMENT LA VALEUR SPIRITUELLE DE L'AVENIR?

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INTRODUCTION

«Actuellement, le problème des nationalités se situe dans une perspective mondiale nouvelle, caractérisée par une forte "mobilité" qui rend les frontières ethniques et culturelles des différents peuples toujours moins nettement tracées, sous l'influence de nombreux facteurs comme les migrations, les moyens de communication sociale et la mondialisation de l'économie». Ces mots ont été prononcés par un grand pape du 20ème siècle, saint Jean-Paul II, dans son discours aux Nations Unies à l'occasion du 50ème anniversaire de l'Organisation au Palais des Nations à New York le 5 octobre 1995.¹ Cet événement s'est déroulé au milieu des années 1990, à une époque d'élargissement majeur de l'Union européenne (avec, par exemple, l'adhésion de l'Autriche), alors que beaucoup parlaient de la redondance des nations et des États-nations, comme si les nations n'étaient qu'un vestige du passé.

Ces dernières années, de nombreux intellectuels européens se sont interrogés sur l'avenir commun de l'Europe et de l'Union européenne, et peu de voix se sont élevées pour la défendre.² Nous avons également assisté au retour du nationalisme pendant la pandémie de COVID-19. Au cours de cette période, 35 ans après la chute

¹ JEAN PAUL II, *Discours*, Art. 7.

² BUTTIGLIONE, *L'Europa è finita?*

du communisme et 20 ans après l'élargissement de l'Union européenne (important pour de nombreux États d'Europe occidentale), nous avons connu une période de prospérité et de coopération pour l'ensemble de l'Europe et un monde globalisé, caractérisé par la réémergence d'idées nationales, nationalistes ou même populistes. Cependant, une partie importante du spectre indique l'insolubilité de la nation, même lorsque le rêve de l'État européen s'est réalisé. À ce deuxième courant appartiennent un diplômé de notre université pontificale Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, l'*Angelicum*, saint Jean-Paul II et Józef Tischner, un philosophe très proche de lui.³

LE RÔLE DE LA NATION SELON JEAN-PAUL II

Néanmoins, examinons d'abord les ressources qui nous ont permis d'arriver à l'événement de Jean-Paul II, qui a inspiré Tischner. Le discours de Jean-Paul II aux Nations Unies à l'occasion du 50e anniversaire de cette organisation a été mentionné par une autre personnalité, l'universitaire autrichien Friedrich Romig, qui, lors de la campagne pour l'adhésion de l'Autriche à l'Union européenne en 1992-1994, était le représentant du diocèse de St-Pölten et membre de la Commission européenne de la Conférence épiscopale autrichienne.⁴

Romig commence son livre par l'idée que la Déclaration générale des droits de l'homme parle de droits personnels, mais qu'il n'existe pas d'accord similaire sur les "droits des nations".⁵ C'est sur ce fondement anthropologique que reposent également les "droits des nations", qui ne sont rien d'autre que des "droits de l'homme" saisis à ce niveau spécifique de la vie communautaire.⁶

Romig poursuit en disant que l'idée de Jean-Paul II est que *chaque peuple veut devenir une nation*.⁷ Selon lui, l'idée de nation a un caractère supra-individuel et intemporel, réunissant l'individu et la communauté, le passé et l'avenir, le temps et l'éternité, les générations passées, présentes et futures dans leur travail sur le

³ TISCHNER, *Die Nation und ihre Rechte*, 122-145.

⁴ Cf. ROMIG, *Die Rechte der Nation*.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶ JEAN-PAUL II, *ibid.* art. 8.

⁷ ROMIG, *ibid.*, 8, cf. JEAN-PAUL II, *Laborem exercens*, art. 10.

patrimoine culturel que la nation "incarne".⁸ Romig cite Tischner qui affirme avec force que l'on ne peut participer au patrimoine historique et culturel qu'à travers la *communauté humaine* et la *nation*. L'héritage de l'homme façonne, influence et coordonne son destin. C'est pourquoi, l'appartenance à la nation, à laquelle l'homme doit la reconnaissance de son identité culturelle, est *l'un des droits fondamentaux de l'homme*.⁹

Notre saint diplômé de l'Angelicum, Jean Paul II, est conscient du danger de renforcer l'idée de nation dans le nationalisme, qui ne donne pas aux autres nations le droit à la vie, ou même supprime ce droit par violence. Pour lui, le concept de nation a un caractère "relationnel". Il ne peut être compris que par ce qui distingue sa nation des autres nations, mais aussi par ce qui les *associe*.¹⁰ Après Romig, Tischner et Jean-Paul II voient dans chaque nation une "personnalité" qui se distingue par son caractère unique et qui, de ce fait, se situe à la frontière de toutes les autres nations. Ce n'est que parce que les peuples se lient et se différencient qu'ils peuvent s'associer et respecter l'autonomie de chacun.¹¹

Les nations n'ont donc pas seulement des droits mais aussi des devoirs: "le plus important d'entre eux est l'obligation de vivre avec les autres peuples dans un esprit de paix, de respect et de solidarité". La nation qui aspire à priver une autre nation de sa liberté *n'est pas libre*. Les nations s'unissent dans la reconnaissance mutuelle du droit à la liberté et au développement culturel.¹²

Toujours dans cette considération, nous lisons que le premier droit de la nation est *le droit à l'existence*. Ce droit comprend également le droit à sa propre langue et à sa propre culture, par lesquelles les gens s'expriment et soutiennent ce que Jean-Paul II a appelé la *souveraineté mentale* de chaque nation. Chaque nation a le droit de vivre selon ses propres coutumes, de construire son avenir et d'éduquer ses jeunes générations. C'est précisément par la reconnaissance des droits de la nation que

⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁰ JEAN-PAUL II, *ibid.* art. 11.

¹¹ ROMIG, *ibid.*, 9.

¹² JEAN-PAUL II, *ibid.* art. 8.

l'on tient compte d'un "désir explosif d'identification et de survie" et d'une "sorte de contreponds à la tendance à l'unification".¹³

LA PATRIE - UN GRAND OBJECTIF COLLECTIF DE LA LIBERTÉ DU PEUPLE

Dans son commentaire sur le discours de Jean-Paul II, Tischner distingue les groupes différents suivants:¹⁴

39. la *communauté des peuples* (le *peuple* est particulier, lié à un lieu et à un temps, fermé sur lui-même – rejetant tout "étrange"; mais aussi le lieu où l'universalité s'est manifestée pour la première fois d'une manière émotionnelle à travers laquelle nous découvrons la vérité de la vie, qui, sous l'influence du rationalisme, est tombée dans l'oubli, conduisant à la renaissance du romantisme),¹⁵
40. la *nation* (elle appartient à la sphère de la culture consciente et réceptive),
41. la *patrie* (la patrie-mère).

Cependant, Tischner note que tout ce que l'on dit de la "nation" confirme qu'elle appartient à la sphère de la culture et non de la "nature". Personne ne "naît" Polonais, Allemand ou Français. L'homme "devient" polonais, allemand ou français lorsqu'il entre dans la "réalité historique" de sa "nation".¹⁶

Au-dessus de la signification ethno-culturelle de la nation se trouve enfin la *patrie*, qui doit être comprise non pas comme un ensemble d'obligations mais plutôt comme un ensemble de droits à sa protection et à sa défense, même au prix de la propriété et de la vie elle-même.¹⁷ Tischner ajoute que *la patrie est une grande obligation collective*. La communion pour remplir les obligations collectives doit

¹³ *Ibid.* art. 8.

¹⁴ ROMIG, *ibid.*, 8, cf. TISCHNER, *ibid.*, 126.

¹⁵ TISCHNER, *ibid.*, 130.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 125, cf. RENAN, *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation ?*, 17.

venir de l'intérieur, du cœur où se fonde le sentiment de patrie. La patrie est la destinée de l'État. Jean-Paul II sait que l'Église, qui n'est plus enracinée dans les peuples, se dessèche et perd sa capacité à façonner la vie. Aujourd'hui, l'Église n'est plus ni "âme", ni "principe vivant", ni même le "cœur" de la culture nationale. Mais lorsqu'elle cesse d'être un cœur, la nation se dissout avec l'Église dans la "société mondiale".¹⁸

Pour Tischner, l'espoir national commence avec le "peuple". *Mais le "peuple" n'est pas la "nation"*.¹⁹ La pensée déterminée par l'espérance découvre le "peuple" comme la "substance" de la nation. Elle ne décrit pas "le peuple en tant que peuple", mais décrit le "peuple" à travers ce qu'il peut devenir. Le "peuple" doit être "ressenti" par la "nation". Cette approche n'est toutefois pas universelle. Certaines idéologies préfèrent que le "peuple" reste toujours le "peuple".²⁰

Le "peuple" est quelque chose qui est "dépassé", auquel on peut et doit cependant toujours se rattacher. La nature du "peuple" est déterminée par la tension qui l'imprègne. Le "peuple" est "particulier", lié au lieu et au temps, fermé sur lui-même et sur des "étrangers" repoussants, mais il est en même temps le lieu où l'universel s'exprime pour la première fois. Cependant, dans l'expérience transcendantale du "peuple responsable", le premier n'est pas le "je", mais le "nous". L'un a rompu la coutume, abandonné la coutume "sacrée", oublié ses "racines" et, ce faisant, a placé son "moi" égoïste au-dessus des autres. L'autre a "accepté" le "peuple" et a élevé sa culture au rang de "culture nationale". Le "peuple responsable" se révèle comme ce qui est constamment dépassé, mais qui est toujours présent dans cet acte de dépassement.²¹

Les "gens" vivent dans leur "monde". Le monde des "gens" est le "monde de la vie". La clé du "monde de la vie" est l'*expérience de la "vie"*. La "vie" n'est pas un terme, mais la plénitude de l'immédiat: le froid et la chaleur, la fatigue et la fraîcheur, le

¹⁸ ROMIG, *ibid.*, 11.

¹⁹ TISCHNER, *ibid.*, 128.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 127.

²¹ TISCHNER, *ibid.*, 128.

sommeil et la vigilance, la jeunesse et la vieillesse, la cohésion avec les membres de la famille, la nostalgie, la tristesse, l'attente, la naissance et la mort.²²

Tischner dit que pour Trentowski, le "peuple" est avant tout celui qui ne connaît pas l'expérience de la liberté. Le "peuple" est "à la merci de la nécessité". Son asservissement consiste surtout en un *asservissement aux forces de la nature*. Il ne connaît pas non plus la souffrance qu'apporte la conscience de la liberté. *Mais lorsque le "peuple" prend conscience de sa liberté, il devient partie intégrante de la "nation"*.²³

Cependant, pour Trentowski, le "peuple" est la "cellule reine" de la nation. La "nation" se rend à la "cellule reine". La porte d'entrée est l'expérience de la liberté. Grâce à la liberté, le "peuple" s'est "fondu" derrière cette cellule. Mais ce n'est pas cette "liberté" qui se réfugie dans l'individualisme, mais celle qui découvre un type supérieur de communauté: *la communauté nationale*. Deux expériences sont cruciales: *devenir propriétaire* et *être prêt à sacrifier sa vie pour les autres*. Il faut "augmenter considérablement le nombre de propriétaires dans le pays" pour que les nouveaux propriétaires puissent employer leur vie dans la lutte pour la liberté. Car seul le "propriétaire" peut devenir un "citoyen" libre, seul le "citoyen" peut dépasser le "peuple" et mourir volontairement "pour la Pologne" en tant que membre de la "nation".²⁴

L'IDÉE COMMUNISTE SELON LAQUELLE LE PEUPLE SE PLACE AU-DESSUS DE LA NATION

Tischner ne serait pas un philosophe et un intellectuel polonais s'il n'avait pas souligné l'environnement destructeur du communisme basé sur le marxisme-léninisme. Il ajoute que Jean-Paul II connaît aussi une autre tradition de pensée sur le "peuple", issue de la Révolution française, qui a façonné la réalité de la "Pologne populaire" à travers le marxisme et l'idéologie communiste. Dans quel sens la

²² *Ibid.*, 129.

²³ *Ibid.*, 131, cf. TRENTOWSKI, *Czy można uczyć się filozofii narodowej*, 22-32.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 132, cf. LIBELT, *Samowładztwo rozumu*, 15.

"Pologne populaire" était-elle réellement "populaire" (ou "peuple responsable")? Dans le langage de l'idéologie communiste, le "peuple" n'était pas et ne pouvait pas être la "cellule reine" de la nation. Il doit au contraire rester le "peuple". L'idée de base était que la "nation" devait être "dépassée" par le "peuple" et se fondre dans sa "matière première".²⁵

Tischner poursuit en affirmant que le malheur du "peuple", comme l'écrivait le jeune Marx, est fondé sur l'aliénation de la "nature de l'homme". Les préoccupations principales du "peuple" sont la satisfaction des besoins communs aux hommes et aux animaux: satisfaire la faim et la soif, se protéger du froid et de la chaleur, se loger. La souffrance du "peuple" a fourni la légitimation de base du "pouvoir révolutionnaire". La "Pologne populaire" existait dans le sens de "peuple responsable" lorsqu'elle cultivait la "souffrance du peuple" avec une sensibilité particulière. Les "malheureux" étaient sa *raison d'être*. Dans la phase initiale du communisme, l'idée du "peuple responsable" pouvait naturellement jouer un rôle positif dans l'élaboration de la politique sociale de l'État mais elle a rapidement conduit à la formation d'un cercle vicieux: au lieu de lutter contre la misère, le gouvernement communiste avait besoin de la misère pour que les "misérables" et les "malheureux" justifient leur maintien. Cette relation ambivalente avec la misère est devenue évidente en temps de crise. Dès que le régime communiste se trouve en situation de crise, il recourt au "sédiment social" pour rechercher la "misère" et s'y maintenir.²⁶

Cependant, ajoute Tischner, le "peuple" ne peut pas se contenter d'être le "peuple". Cela ne leur permet pas de se sentir responsables. On ne peut pas être heureux et malheureux à la fois. Le "je" fuit la "responsabilité du peuple à notre égard", mais dans quelle direction? Dans un "internationalisme" pur ou dans la direction d'un nouveau "nous" – un "nous" national?

La question clé pour Tischner, qui découle des expériences précédentes avec le "peuple" et la "nation", semble être la suivante: la "nation" peut-elle être contournée dans la transition du "je" au "nous" – du particulier à l'universel?

²⁵ TISCHNER, *ibid.*, 132.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 133.

Théoriquement, cela semble possible. Si la nation est une œuvre de culture et non de nature, alors une transition simple et profonde du "peuple accroché" à "l'homme en général" est concevable. Un tel saut a été proposé par le "communisme populaire". Son idéal était la "fraternité des peuples", et non des nations.²⁷

UN PEUPLE COMME CHOIX D'UNE CULTURE DE VALEURS ÉTHIQUES QUI PEUT DEVENIR UNE NATION

L'effet d'un tel comportement nécessite d'en connaître les conséquences. Pour répondre à cette question, il est nécessaire de clarifier ce qu'est la "nation". En effet, l'expérience de la "nation" reste étroitement liée à l'expérience de l'identité humaine. Tischner pose la question suivante: comment une personne qui n'a pas trouvé son identité au niveau du "peuple" peut-elle la trouver au niveau de la "nation"? Quelles expériences, quelles impressions sont décisives à cet égard? Sa réponse est que la "nation" représente avant tout la décision d'une culture.

Mais quelles sont les conditions de possibilité d'une "nation"? Commençons par quelques explications terminologiques. Qui dit "naród" (la nation) pense moins aux liens du sang qu'aux liens culturels dont le cœur est l'héritage éthique – les "bonnes manières" au sens le plus profond du terme. L'un des liens les plus importants qui constituent la "nation" est la *langue*. Mais il ne s'agit pas tant de mots ayant la même sonorité que du contenu que les membres d'une nation se communiquent sans utiliser de mots. Il existe un lien étroit entre le mot "naród" et le mot "patrie". Être dans la "patrie" signifie être *chez soi*. Mais cela n'est pas possible sans *un choix*. On a une "patrie" (terre des pères, terre d'accueil), on peut obtenir une "patrie", mais on peut aussi *choisir* une "patrie". Au moment du choix, la "nation" et la "patrie" deviennent des *valeurs éthiques*. En tant que telles, elles construisent un "devoir éthique". Norwid a défini la "nation" en ces termes : "(...) la patrie est *un grand devoir collectif*".²⁸

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 134.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 134, cf. NORWID, *Memorial o młodej emigracji*, 656.

En effet, avec l'aide de Norwid, Tischner tente de combiner l'idée émergente de la nation comme devoir collectif avec celle de l'idéologie communiste qui a longtemps constitué l'arrière-plan de la pensée papale sur la nation. Sans tenir compte de cet arrière-plan, nous ne pourrions pas comprendre pleinement la pensée de Jean-Paul II.²⁹ Pour lui, dans la tradition telle qu'elle s'est développée pendant la partition de la Pologne, la "nation" n'est pas une simple "superstructure" de conditions socio-économiques, comme l'ont toujours dit les communistes, mais le résultat de certains *actes électoraux*, imprégnés de certaines expériences du passé et d'espoirs pour l'avenir. La "nation" choisit quelque chose qui, en un sens, est déjà, mais *sans ce choix*, elle resterait morte et inefficace. Tout d'abord, il est important de choisir. Les circonstances de ces élections sont parfois très dramatiques. Quel camp choisir? Le choix est celui du passé, mais il est fait en vue de l'avenir. Sans doute, comme le dit Heidegger, s'agit-il d'une "répétition". La répétition du passé a une signification essentielle pour l'avenir.³⁰

Enfin, une fois l'élection terminée, le "je" entre en relation avec le "nous". Tischner pose alors la question suivante: quelle est cette relation? Il ne s'agit pas seulement de la relation "moi à côté des autres" ou "moi avec les autres". Le "nous" est une relation de *responsabilité mutuelle*. Norwid a également écrit: "Pour la patrie – les compatriotes –, c'est *une union morale sans laquelle il n'y a même pas de partis*, sans laquelle les partis sont comparables à des bandes ou à des camps polémiques, dont le feu est la discorde et la réalité la fumée des mots."³¹

L'"union morale" est une association fondée sur la relation "les un pour les autres", "les autres pour l'un" (Levinas). Une relation aussi intense contient une intention héroïque, elle signifie la volonté de sacrifier sa vie pour les autres, mais aussi la volonté de tuer les autres – les ennemis de la nation – "pour votre et notre liberté". L'éthique nationale contient une ambiguïté qui, sur la base de cette seule éthique, ne peut apparemment pas être exclue.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 135.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 136, cf. HEIDEGGER, *Sein und Zeit*, 385.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 136, cf. NORWID, *Głos*, 333.

La cristallisation de la nation dans son éthique conduit à la "participation" à l'idéal. La logique du drame est convaincante. La nation devient de plus en plus l'incarnation de l'"idéal national" et nous pouvons l'observer une fois de plus dans l'exemple de la relation avec la loi écrite. Les relations entre l'*ethos national* ("la coutume") et le droit écrit dans un pays qui n'a pas d'État sont plus compliquées. Le droit applicable est d'emblée qualifié d'"étranger" et d'"hostile". Son caractère contraignant est d'emblée marqué d'un point d'interrogation. Il s'oppose à l'éthique nationale idéalisée ou au droit applicable antérieur. L'éthique nationale idéalisée a également joué un rôle important. Le droit reposait sur le principe que tout le mal provenait de l'esclavage, car l'esclavage signifiait avant tout l'esclavage à la "bonne volonté" de la Pologne.³²

D'autre part, il est dans la "nature" de la conscience nationale de définir une relation positive avec les "autres". Norwid a écrit à juste titre: "(...) les nations européennes doivent posséder leur propre personnalité complète dans une plus large mesure que d'autres personnalités complètes, parce que la personnalité bannie de la solitude n'est pas encore complète et que ce n'est qu'au contact des autres que son essence mûrit. Cela est si vrai que ceux qui diraient que la nation est composée non seulement de ce qui la distingue des autres, mais aussi de ce qui l'unit aux autres, diraient en même temps que la force de cette solidarité n'est pas du tout une concession et ne brise pas la nation, mais plutôt un attribut de la perfection du caractère et une qualité positive."³³

Nous rencontrons ici un moment important dans l'idée de "nation": dans le concept même de "nation", dans son "essence", il y a une référence *aux autres*; le concept de "nation" a un caractère *relationnel* – il ne rejette pas les autres, mais ce n'est qu'avec les autres qu'il acquiert sa pleine signification. Böckenförde cite un exemple de la Pologne d'avant les divisions: lorsqu'on demandait à quelqu'un qui il était, on pouvait obtenir la réponse suivante: *Canonicus cracoviensis, natione Polonus, gente Ruthenus, original Judaeus*.³⁴

³² *Ibid.*, 138.

³³ *Ibid.*, 139, cf. NORWID, *Znicestwienie narodu*, 668.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 139, cf. BÖCKENFÖRDE, *Die Nation*, 159.

La "force unificatrice" contenue dans le concept de "nation" a été exprimée de différentes manières. À l'époque des soulèvements nationaux polonais, elle s'exprimait dans le slogan "pour votre et notre liberté". Les rebelles ne se battaient pas contre une autre nation, mais contre la tyrannie, qui opprimait les autres autant que sa propre patrie. La conviction générale était qu'une nation qui cherchait à priver une autre nation de sa liberté *n'était pas libre*. L'idée de liberté et de souveraineté nationale a pris une signification universelle. Elle a marqué le concept d'État-nation. Cet État, s'il devait être l'expression de l'éthique nationale, ne pouvait pas être dirigé contre les "autres".³⁵

Le partage de l'idéal éthique, la participation, conduit à la découverte de sa propre identité. Jean-Paul II en parle clairement: "C'est (...) un besoin impérieux d'identité et de survie, une sorte de contrepoids aux tendances à l'homologation".³⁶ É. Tischner note que Charles Taylor souligne, dans ses précieuses études sur l'"identité européenne", que le concept de "soi", c'est-à-dire l'identité personnelle, est étroitement lié au *concept (d'expérience) de "bien"*. Nous ne sommes pas en mesure de clarifier les expériences de notre identité "tant que nous ne comprenons pas mieux comment notre image du bien a évolué". La pensée de Taylor est une excellente illustration du développement de la conscience nationale : du "je" au "nous" par le choix de la responsabilité dans l'héritage du passé, inspiré par un certain espoir. Cette évolution est parfois appelée "*libération*". La "libération" de la conscience nationale signifie que "quelque chose" ne surgit pas de "rien", mais "surgit" des profondeurs de l'inconscient. La nation "en soi" devient la "nation pour soi".³⁷

Mais en même temps, les dangers de ce processus sont devenus évidents: l'idéalisation de sa propre nation, la tentation de se venger des injustices subies ou supposées, la légitimation de l'effusion de sang étranger comme étant le sien, la séparation de la dimension "unificatrice" de l'idée nationale, tout cela crée les

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 140.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 140, cf. JEAN-PAUL II, *Discours*, art. 7.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 141, cf. TAYLOR, *Quellen des Selbst*, 15.

dangers d'un "nationalisme" inséparable de la volonté de puissance.³⁸ Comment éviter ces dangers?³⁹

LA NATION COMME EFFORT SPIRITUEL DE CULTURE CONTRE LE NATIONALISME ET LE TOTALITARISME

Tischner soutient que si la "nation" est un produit et une continuation *d'une culture*, alors l'effort sur la culture et sa condition est en même temps un travail sur l'"ethos national". La situation actuelle (quelques années seulement après la chute du mur de Berlin) semble très préoccupante. Le discours de Jean-Paul II contient des remarques critiques sur l'état de la culture moderne. Il mentionne l'utilitarisme, le relativisme et le scepticisme, mais l'objet particulier de sa critique est le *nationalisme*, qui est une justification idéologique de la violence qu'une nation fait subir à une autre. Le nationalisme nie aux autres tous les droits.⁴⁰ Un nationalisme extrême peut conduire au totalitarisme. Parfois, le nationalisme tente de s'appuyer sur la religion, "car, dit le pape, dans certains phénomènes, on assiste malheureusement à ce qu'on appelle le fondamentalisme". À l'instar d'Orwell, Jean-Paul II souligne également que le patriotisme diffère du nationalisme en ce qu'il consiste en un "juste amour de la patrie".⁴¹ Le nationalisme et les autres déviations de l'idéologie ne peuvent être surmontés que par un *retour aux fondements de la culture*, en particulier à l'idée bien comprise de *liberté et de vérité*.⁴²

La critique de l'utilitarisme, du relativisme et du scepticisme est "pragmatique". Au lieu de mettre à jour les contradictions internes des théories, elle s'interroge sur les conséquences des attitudes. Bien qu'aucune des théories mentionnées n'approuve les idéologies totalitaires, elles sont incapables, en tant qu'attitudes sociales, de prévenir le totalitarisme. Là où la violence commence à dominer la vie sociale, la résistance à la violence naît d'attitudes fondées sur "la liberté et la vérité".

³⁸ ORWELL, *Notes of Nationalism*, 9.

³⁹ TISCHNER, *ibid.*, 141.

⁴⁰ JEAN PAUL II, *ibid.*, art. 9.

⁴¹ ORWELL, *ibid.* p. 9.

⁴² JEAN-PAUL II, *ibid.*, art. 11.

C'est la leçon que nous pouvons tirer de l'expérience historique. Jean-Paul II affirme que la liberté est "la mesure de la dignité et de la grandeur humaines" et "un grand défi pour la croissance spirituelle de l'homme". Nous devons en faire un usage responsable. La liberté, dit-on, "est ordonnée à la vérité et se réalise dans la recherche et l'accomplissement de la vérité". "Détachée de la vérité de la personne humaine, elle se transforme, dans la vie individuelle, en licence et, dans la vie politique, en arbitraire du plus fort et en arrogance du pouvoir."⁴³

Pour Tischner, une question se pose à ce stade: les idéologies totalitaires n'ont-elles pas proclamé quelque chose de similaire? N'ont-elles pas d'abord prétendu détenir la vérité pour ensuite recourir à des mesures coercitives afin d'obliger les gens à "vivre selon la vérité"? Que signifie le mot "vérité" dans le discours de Jean-Paul II?⁴⁴ Celui-ci déclare: "C'est pourquoi, loin d'être une limitation ou une menace pour la liberté, la référence à la vérité sur l'homme – vérité universellement connaissable grâce à la loi morale inscrite dans le cœur de chaque personne – est, en réalité, la garantie de l'avenir de la liberté".⁴⁵ Ces mots font référence aux paroles de saint Paul (Rom 2, 15), qui parlent de la loi "inscrite dans le cœur de l'homme". Jean-Paul II interprète cette loi comme la "loi naturelle".

CONCLUSION

Le "droit naturel" est le fondement des "droits de l'homme". Tischner comme Romig sont d'accord et on pourrait conclure la réflexion en disant: les droits de la nation ne sont "rien d'autre que les 'droits de l'homme' cultivés à ce niveau particulier de la vie communautaire". Jean-Paul II ajoute: "Une réflexion sur ces droits n'est certes pas aisée, étant donné la difficulté de définir le concept même de "nation", qui n'est pas a priori et nécessairement identifié à l'Etat. Il s'agit cependant d'une réflexion qui ne peut être différée si nous voulons éviter les erreurs du passé et assurer un

⁴³ JEAN-PAUL II, *ibid.*, art. 12.

⁴⁴ TISCHNER, *ibid.*, 142.

⁴⁵ JEAN-PAUL II, *ibid.*, art. 12.

ordre mondial juste".⁴⁶ Même près de 30 ans après leur annonce, ces idées n'ont rien perdu de leur pertinence aujourd'hui.

Dans cet article, nous avons essayé de montrer l'importance de l'approche éthique et spirituelle à la nation pour la formation de bonnes relations dans la communauté des nations. Nous nous sommes inspirés de l'importante contribution du pape Jean-Paul II en 1995 et de plusieurs autres personnalités. Nous avons souligné les possibilités de construire une communauté nationale, mais aussi les dangers du nationalisme en tant que position extrême. Nous avons essayé de clarifier des concepts tels que les droits des nations, les libertés et les cultures d'une nation afin d'établir des relations éthiques entre les nations.

Bien sûr, le discours de Saint Jean Paul II n'a pas résolu tous les problèmes liés au traitement des nations et à leurs droits. Néanmoins, il a abordé des questions tellement fondamentales qu'il est devenu un puissant stimulant pour continuer à travailler sur ce problème afin de donner à la coopération européenne un avenir propre (et spirituel) et un meilleur fonctionnement de l'Union européenne sans régime hybride.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ JEAN-PAUL II, *ibid.*, art. 8.

⁴⁷ HVIŽĎALA, *Hybridní režimy*.

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EDITH STEIN (1891-1942), A SPIRITUAL RESOURCE FOR EUROPE

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Keywords: Community, Dialogue, Freedom, Judaism, Translation

INTRODUCTION

In a speech delivered in February 1992, Jacques Delors, former President of the European Commission, said: “If in ten years we have not succeeded in giving Europe a soul, a spirituality, we will have lost the game”.¹ Thirty years later, we still hope that it is not too late. The majority of the citizens of the Member States are attached to the fundamental values defended by the European Union: human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law. But how could be rekindled the conviction that a *community* is necessary to protect and strengthen these values?

The shock of the invasion of Ukraine on the 24th of February 2022 may, paradoxically, have been salutary: at a time when the Union is facing scepticism from its citizens, war on the European continent could have revived the dream of peace and unity of Europe's founders. But the hoped-for revival did not happen.

The founders of Europe undoubtedly aspired to a “Europe of the spirit”.² If Europe is to become a place of hope again, we need to return to its *spiritual sources*, to revisit its foundations. The term “spiritual” can, at first, be simply and banally distinguished from the term “material”. The hope of Robert Schuman and Konrad Adenauer was that sharing material resources, initially coal and steel, would make possible a *spiritual* community. Schuman described the inspiration of the fathers of Europe in these terms: “By a paradox that would surprise us if we were not Christians, perhaps unconsciously Christians, we are extending the hand of

¹ As quoted in DALOZ, *L'Europe peut-elle se faire sans dimension spirituelle?*, 215. English translations are our own.

² Cardinal C.M. Martini gave pride of place to this expression in *Je rêve d'une Europe de l'esprit*.

friendship to our enemies of yesterday to build together the Europe of tomorrow”.³ Schuman, who was a deeply religious man, was referring here to the Christian faith, but the non-believer Jean Monnet was just as convinced by this approach. It is a *spiritual* approach, which does not necessarily have a *religious* meaning, but which refers to the *spirit* in which we want to live with our neighbours.⁴

The figure of Edith Stein, Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, can help us to discover this spirit again. Born into a Prussian Jewish family in Breslau (now Wrocław, Poland) in 1891, she had a deeply moving experience during the First World War. When the war broke out, she interrupted her doctoral work in philosophy to spend four months as a nurse in a military hospital in Austria. She discovered there the diversity of the peoples of Europe, united under the banner of the same suffering, as she described it many years later:

*“By far my favourite thing was the contact with the patients, even though it presented some difficulties. All the nations of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy were represented in our hospital: Germans, Czechs, Slovaks, Slovenes, Poles, Ruthenians, Hungarians, Romanians, Italians. Gypsies were not uncommon either. Sometimes there was also a Russian or a Turk. To help the doctor communicate with the sick, there was a booklet containing the most necessary daily questions and answers in nine languages. I also familiarised myself with it.”*⁵

Stein, who was not yet a Christian, discovered there something of the spiritual reality of Europe. This fundamental experience may explain why, although she was deeply attached to Germany (though without being nationalistic), she had a ‘European conscience’. In 1917, she wrote to her friend, the Polish philosopher Roman Ingarden: “There are really only two things that keep me motivated: the eagerness to see what will become of Europe, and the hope of making a contribution to philosophy.”⁶ She became a citizen of Europe through her travels in the 1920s:

³ SCHUMAN, *Pour l'Europe*, 27.

⁴ *The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000) recognised in this sense the Union's “spiritual and moral heritage”.*

⁵ STEIN, ESGA 1, 274. Cf. LAVIGNE, *Edith Stein als Phänomenologin und Christin*, 208-209.

⁶ *Letter to Roman Ingarden*, 6.7.1917, Stein, ESGA 4, 62.

her lectures took her to several European capitals (Vienna, Prague and Paris). She entered the Cologne Carmelite convent in October 1933. At the end of 1938 she had to flee Germany and joined the Echt Carmelite convent in the Netherlands, where she was arrested by the Gestapo on the 2nd of August 1942. She died at Auschwitz on the 9th of August.

Through her life and thought, Edith Stein is a spiritual resource for Europe. The adjective ‘spiritual’ here does not only refer to Christian spirituality, as one would expect from a woman who became a Carmelite, but also to the life of the mind, to Stein's lifelong philosophical quest for truth. We will focus on three fundamental aspects that make her a source of the ‘European spirit’: her life of openness to others and dialogue; the way she understood the Christian spiritual life as inseparable from ethical and political commitment; and her original philosophical reflection on freedom, seeking to demonstrate the compatibility between the aspiration to individual autonomy and life in a community.

A LIFE OF OPENNESS TO OTHERS AND DIALOGUE

When John Paul II declared Edith Stein a co-patron of Europe in 1999, he explained that this meant “unfurling on the horizon of the old continent a banner of respect, tolerance and welcome”.⁷ Edith Stein's life, marked by openness to alterity, is a source of inspiration for building a “Europe of dialogue”.⁸

In her teens, Edith Stein distanced herself from the Jewish religion passed on by her mother. When she arrived in Göttingen in 1913 to study phenomenology with Edmund Husserl, she was, as she said later, full of “rationalist prejudices”⁹. But she embraced the phenomenological method, which requires to “look everything in the face, free of all prejudice, and to reject all ‘blinkers’”.¹⁰ This attitude made her receptive to the thought of the phenomenologist Max Scheler, who, at the time she

⁷ *Motu proprio proclaiming saint Bridget of Sweden, saint Catherine of Siena and saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross co-patronesses of Europe, 01.01.99, § 9.*

⁸ *Pope Francis, Speech to the Council of Europe, 25.11.2014.*

⁹ *STEIN, ESGA 1, 211.*

¹⁰ *Ibid., 211.*

met him, recognised himself in the Catholic faith: “That was my first contact with a world that was completely unknown to me until then. It did not yet lead me to faith. But it opened a field of ‘phenomena’ that I could no longer ignore.”¹¹

As she gradually made her way towards baptism, which she received on the 1st of January 1922, she demonstrated her capacity for dialogue by asking the bishop's permission to choose a Protestant godmother, the philosopher Hedwig Conrad-Martius, whom she had met in Göttingen and who had become a close friend. This original choice is a strong sign, that makes Stein a source of inspiration for the ecumenical movement.

Her capacity for dialogue was also evident at a philosophical level. Her openness to alterity was evident in the choice of the subject of her doctorate: *empathy*, a concept that she analysed in new ways. By devoting her first research project to the problem of knowing the other as an *alter ego*, she placed her entry into philosophy under the sign of thinking about alterity.

After having been trained in phenomenology, she decided after her baptism to immerse herself in the philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas. She always tried then to build bridges between modern philosophy and Christian metaphysics.

A lesser-known aspect of Stein's intellectual life confirms how inspiring she could be for the construction of a culture of dialogue: her activity as a translator. After translating *The Idea of University* from J.H. Newman, she devoted herself during several years to a translation of the *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* of Thomas Aquinas, which was published in 1931. Once she entered Carmel, she continued to translate, in particular Latin hymns, poems by Saint John of the Cross and numerous texts by Pseudo-Denys the Areopagite. She loved translating and experienced it as

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 211.

an encounter with an author, a spiritual contact with him, a way of “entering into empathy”.¹²

In 1991, the philosopher Paul Ricoeur argued that “translation is an appropriate model for the specific problem posed by the construction of Europe”.¹³ He saw at the heart of the act of translating “an ethic of linguistic hospitality”¹⁴, which he explained as follows: “It’s all about living in the other person’s home, in order to bring him or her into your own home as a guest.”¹⁵ This *ethos of translation* can be a spiritual resource for the peoples of Europe: learning a foreign language so as to be able to speak with others in their own language, learning to translate, are irreplaceable acts of welcoming others, in the awareness of what is close and what is different about them.

Finally, Stein’s capacity for dialogue is most clearly demonstrated in her relationship with Jewish tradition. Her baptism led her to rediscover her belonging to the Jewish people. She chose the 1st of January, the feast of the circumcision of Jesus, i.e. the entry of the child Jesus into the Jewish people, as the date of her entry into the Catholic Church.¹⁶ She became fully a “daughter of the Catholic Church”, but was convinced to remain, as she wrote it herself, a “daughter of the Jewish people”.¹⁷

Several of the spiritual meditations she wrote in Carmel reveal her link with Judaism and foreshadow the Second Vatican Council’s declaration *Nostra Aetate*. She was convinced that the Christian faith requires dialogue with Jewish tradition. In the

¹² RASTOIN, *Edith Stein traductrice*, 117. In a letter to Roman Ingarden (19.6.1924), Stein described her work translating Newman: “Translating gives me joy purely as such. And besides, it is very beautiful for me to come into such close contact with a spirit like Newman, as translating brings with it” (ESGA 4, 153).

¹³ RICOEUR, *Quel ethos nouveau pour l’Europe?*, 109.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁶ Similarly, the date of her confirmation, the 2nd of February 1922, corresponds to the celebration of the Presentation of Jesus in the temple, as a little Jewish child, by his parents, Mary and Joseph, pious Jews.

¹⁷ This is how she presented herself in the letter she sent to Pius XI in April 1933, asking the Church to break its silence in the face of Nazi ideology (Stein, ESGA 28, 393).

beautiful article entitled “The Prayer of the Church” (1936), she began by recalling that “Christ prayed as a believing Jew, faithful to the Law”.¹⁸ Recalling that Jesus was a Jew¹⁹ must have made a strong impression on the Christians who listened to her, in the violently anti-Semitic climate of the time.

The figure of Edith Stein draws our attention to Judaism as a fundamental element of European heritage. The theologian Johann Baptist Metz believes that this heritage resides in a “biblical knowledge that sees in alterity the mark of God”²⁰, a heritage that in his view “has been constantly repressed by both Christianity and the European spirit”.²¹

The *difference* between Judaism and Christianity has essentially been “a dispute” (*un différend* in French), “the Jewish-Christian dispute”, as the philosopher Jean Greisch calls it. He points out that “more than any other dispute, it has left its mark on European history, leaving deep, indelible traces. Some of these traces are among the most terrible and painful of our past”.²² This difference is an essential aspect of the European spirit, because it “can be neither erased nor abolished in a reconciling synthesis”, but it leads us to “recognise an irreducible alterity”.²³ This difference reminds Christians that they need somebody who is irreducibly other in order to understand themselves²⁴. This welcome for otherness, if it is real, can inspire Europeans, even independently of any commitment to Judaism or Christianity, to foster “a solid culture of welcome”.²⁵ A culture of this kind requires us to ask the

¹⁸ Stein, *Das Gebet der Kirche*, 45.

¹⁹ As she also did in the last course she taught in 1932-1933 in Münster, *Der Aufbau der menschlichen Person*, 151.

²⁰ METZ, *Le christianisme et l'esprit européen*, 296.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 299.

²² GREISCH, *Repenser l'Europe*, 372-373.

²³ *Ibid.*, 373.

²⁴ In the *Ecumenical Charter signed in Strasbourg in April 2001 by the President of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences and the President of the Conference of European Churches*, it is emphasised: “There is an urgent need, in worship and catechesis, in the teaching and life of our Churches, to make clear the deep link between the Christian faith and Judaism and to support Jewish-Christian co-operation” (§ 10).

²⁵ JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Europa*, § 101. The same paragraph stresses that “it is the responsibility of the public authorities to exercise control over migratory flows in accordance with the requirements of the common good”.

question: how can we try to be united, despite being aware that we are – and will stay – radically different?

Openness is not only an attitude of mind for Stein. The life of the spirit – whether by this is meant the intellectual quest for truth, which animated her throughout her life as a philosopher, or the Christian spiritual life, which she discovered in the early 1920s – was inseparable for her from ethical and political commitment.

THE MEANING OF THE CHRISTIAN SPIRITUAL LIFE ACCORDING TO STEIN AND ITS INSEPARABLE LINK WITH ETHICAL AND POLITICAL COMMITMENT

From childhood, Edith Stein had an intense *spiritual* life, in the sense of an *inner* life, which consisted of assimilating and meditating what she experienced, often transforming it through her overflowing imagination.²⁶ This gave her a secret appearance. Her brothers and sisters called her “the book with the seven seals”. Was there anything *religious* about this spiritual life? When she recalled her teenage crisis and her stay of almost a year in the atheist home of her older sister Else, she wrote: “I have there consciously and of my own free will given up praying”.²⁷ The reference to ‘prayer’ suggests a spiritual life understood as a relationship with God. Does this refer only to the vocal prayers said in her family and in the synagogue, or to a more personal approach? She said no more.

Stein's natural openness to her inner world predisposed her to become a philosopher and to lead an intense intellectual life, which she later interpreted as a *spiritual* life. She wrote in a letter in 1938: “Who seeks the truth seeks God, whether he knows it clearly or not”.²⁸

²⁶ STEIN, ESGA 1, 47.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 109.

²⁸ Letter dated 23.3.38 to sister Adelgundis Jaegerschmid (STEIN, ESGA 3, 300). Her first biographer, her prioress at the Carmelite convent in Cologne, attributed to her these famous words: “The longing for the truth was my only prayer”. in: POSSELT, *Edith Stein*, 55.

Numerous testimonies indicate that after her baptism, her life of prayer, nourished by daily Mass, was intense, in the school of John of the Cross and Teresa of Jesus, who were already her spiritual masters, and who became it even more when she entered Carmel in 1933. Stein didn't reveal much about her prayer life, but a few clues indicate its fundamental structure: a life led by an Other, who is love. A passage from *Psychic Causality*, which was written before her baptism, gives a phenomenological description of what she calls "resting in God":

*"There is a state of resting in God, of complete relaxation of all activity of mind, in which one does not make any plans, does not make any resolutions and certainly does not act, but leaves everything in the future to the divine will, leaves oneself completely to 'fate'. I was granted this state after an experience that exceeded my strength completely consumed the vitality of my mind and robbed me of all activity. Resting in God is something completely new and unique compared to the failure of activity due to lack of vitality. The former was dead silence. In its place there is now a feeling of security, of being free from all care, responsibility and obligation to act. And by surrendering to this feeling, new life gradually begins to fill me and drive me – without any voluntary tension – to new activity. This invigorating influx appears as the outpouring of an activity and a force which are not mine and which, without making any demands on mine, are active in me."*²⁹

This description comes at a time when Stein is investigating the way in which a subject can regain his strength. He can find resources on his own, for example by eating or sleeping when he needs it. This passage describes a *spiritual* resource, which the subject does not give to himself, but *receives*. This is important to note. In the Europe of today, there is a strong thirst for 'spirituality', although the feeling of belonging to a religion is in free fall.³⁰ However, there is no clear vision of what

²⁹ STEIN, ESGA 6, 73.

³⁰ The latest European Values Study (EVS) survey of 2017-2018 shows that people declaring themselves to have "no religion" make up a considerable proportion of the European population and are in the majority in six countries: Estonia (79%), Czech Republic (74%), Netherlands (61%), Great Britain (59%), France (57%), Hungary (53%) (D'ARMENT, *Religion, frontières nationales et clivages culturels en Europe*, 41). There is nevertheless a growing practice of personal daily 'prayer', and a great attraction for new forms of "spirituality" (Cf. BRÉCHON / GONTHIER / ASTOR, *La France des valeurs. 40 ans d'évolution*).

spirituality means. For many people who claim to be on a *spiritual* quest, *spirituality* is not different from personal development, from the search for well-being. Dissatisfied with the consumption of material goods, the subject, the author of his or her quest, is aiming to *master* techniques of self-care, particularly bodily practices.³¹ Christian spirituality, as Stein described it, is about self-decentredness, loss of mastery, and dependence on an Other who is to be received, and whom no technique can conquer.

The depth of Edith Stein's spiritual life never cut her off from concrete realities. When she recalled her years as a student in Breslau and her passionate interest in history, she mentioned “an unusually strong sense of social responsibility”³². This awareness led her to numerous commitments, such as evening classes for employees and the ardent defence of women's right to vote. During the First World War, she interrupted her philosophical research to help in a military hospital, and devoted a year to teaching in her former school in Breslau, where many teachers had been mobilised.

Stein's political courage in the face of Nazi barbarism was also striking. The last lecture she gave in Münster in 1932-1933 was devoted to the human person. Her way to define human dignity was in itself an act of resistance. Several remarks reveal her opposition to the Third Reich. In April 1933, she wrote to Pius XI, asking him for the Church to break its silence in the face of Nazi ideology. Forbidden to teach, she began writing *Life in a Jewish Family*, in which she wanted to “simply describe” her experience as the daughter of a warm and loving Jewish family. She saw it as an act of resistance against a regime that disseminated an abominable image of the Jews.

For Stein, the interior life was not a retreat, but a renewal, with a view to reaching out to others. In Christian spirituality, as she understood and lived it, a ‘mystical’ resource, a resource drawn from the experience of God, is always at the same time an ethical and political resource.

³¹ Cf. BARBIER-BOUVET, *Les Nouveaux Aventuriers de la spiritualité*.

³² ESGA 1, 145.

AN ORIGINAL VISION OF FREEDOM, WHICH MAKES THE CONSTITUTION OF A COMMUNITY POSSIBLE

Europe's founders dreamed of a *community*, not only of an economic *union*³³. But the term *community* frightens individuals thirsting for *autonomy*, understood as independence. Rediscovering the sense of community presupposes a vision of freedom that is not reduced to autonomy. One of the main features of Stein's work is the development of such a conception of freedom, which can be summarised as follows.³⁴

In the first part of her work, which is strictly phenomenological and heavily influenced by the thought of Husserl, she placed great emphasis on subjective autonomy, conceived as the capacity for self-determination. However, she never absolutized it, and, through phenomenological descriptions of the life of the pure ego, she also identified the conditioning that limits autonomy. Even in her early works, she thus showed an ability to analyse the dependency that every free subject faces, thereby distinguishing herself before the time from Jean-Paul Sartre, for whom the freedom of the subject is an absolute. Under the influence of Max Scheler, Stein's thinking is immediately marked by an awareness of *values*, which the subject does not invent, but which are given to him, calling for his response.

After her baptism, without renouncing phenomenology or becoming a Thomist, she opted philosophically for a “new alliance between faith and reason”.³⁵ This “extended rationality” led her to develop an original “Christian philosophy”.³⁶ In *Freedom and grace*, a short essay in philosophy of religion she wrote in the months before her baptism, she emphasised for the first time that the subject's freedom is, as such, empty, exposed to anguish, if it is not guided by love. She wrote at the time that “self-giving (*Selbsthingabe*) is the freest act of freedom”.³⁷ From then on, until her last work, *The Science of the Cross*, she analysed freedom more and more as

³³ In *Pour l'Europe* Schuman laid great stress on the concept of community.

³⁴ Cf. BUR, *L'Expérience de la liberté selon Edith Stein*.

³⁵ LAVIGNE, *Edith Stein als Phänomenologin und Christin*, 206.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 206.

³⁷ STEIN, *ESGA* 9, 30.

abandonment, as consent. But she never denied the price of autonomy, and that is what makes her original. She resolutely insisted on the fact that only the subject who is capable of autonomy, capable of “taking himself in hand”, according to a metaphor she often repeated, can be in a position to give of himself. Acknowledging the greatness of subjective autonomy, without reducing freedom to that, enabled her to analyse the subject as capable of responding to the call of common values, and therefore of limiting his autonomy, by consenting to the good that community life represents.

Only openness to shared values can be a solid foundation for a community. This is true of the national community, but also of a community of several states. The formation of a community presupposes what Stein called a “cultural cosmos”³⁸, “a minimal cultural basis that ensures the cohesion of citizens”³⁹. For Stein, this cultural cosmos is made up of shared cultural works, created by human hands, but also of *values*, which are not created by human beings, but which they can recognise and commit themselves to. Consenting to these values does not diminish freedom, but makes it possible in a community driven by the search for the common good. But how can attention to values be awakened and how can such consent be obtained? We will suggest an answer to this question as a conclusion.

CONCLUSION

We must never forget that it was the Second World War that convinced of the need for a united Europe. It represented a peak in violence, but the entire history of the European continent has a “cursed side”, as Jean Greisch describes it: “We Europeans [...] do not have the right to forget how many times in Europe, but also in the name of Europe, or of certain of its ‘values’, the language of violence, oppression and hatred of others was spoken”.⁴⁰ This painful memory is in itself a resource: it can give the desire to strengthen the union.

³⁸ STEIN, *ESGA* 7, 20-21.

³⁹ AUCANTE, *Edith Stein, aux frontières de l'Europe*, 99.

⁴⁰ GREISCH, *Repenser l'Europe*, 374-375.

Edith Stein's life dives us into this memory. She was hit hard by the First World War, losing close friends. But above all, after fleeing her country at the end of 1938 and being declared stateless when Germany annexed the Netherlands, she was arrested by the Gestapo at the Carmelite convent in Echt. Her death in Auschwitz in August 1942 is the “testimony of an innocent victim and a loud protest against all violations of fundamental human rights”.⁴¹ This testimony reminds us of what hatred leads to and challenges us with this question, asked by Cardinal Ratzinger when he visited in France the German military cemetery of La Cambe (Calvados) in June 2004 : “And you, what are you doing for peace?”⁴²

⁴¹ JOHN PAUL II, *Motu proprio*, § 9.

⁴² RATZINGER, *L'Europe, ses fondements aujourd'hui et demain*, 141.

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DIE CHRISTLICHEN WURZELN EUROPAS IN DER SICHT VON JOHANNES PAUL II.

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Schlüsselworte: Europa, Christentum, Johannes Paul II., Werte, Einheit

I. EINLEITUNG

Während seines fast 27-jährigen Pontifikats war der Papst aus Polen, Johannes Paul II. (1920-2005) zutiefst europäisch. Dies zeigt sich unter anderem daran, dass er die umfangreichste päpstliche Lehre über den europäischen Kontinent hinterlassen hat. Während seines Pontifikats erlebte Europa viele historische Momente, vor allem die sogenannte „Friedliche Revolution“ im Herbst 1989 und den Sturz der Berliner Mauer. Maßgeblichen Einfluss hatte dabei – nach Ansicht vieler – auch der polnische Papst, der in seinen Ansprachen und Dokumenten immer wieder forderte, alle Spaltungen in Europa zu überwinden, damit dieser Kontinent mit seinen beiden Lungenflügeln (sowohl westlichen als auch östlichen) atmen könne¹.

Das Hauptziel dieses Textes besteht darin, an die Gedanken des polnischen Papstes zu Europa zu erinnern, die auch heute wichtig erscheinen. Natürlich ist es unmöglich, in diesem kurzen Aufsatz auf alle Aussagen Johannes Pauls II. über Europa Bezug zu nehmen. Deshalb werden hier insbesondere die Hauptideen des Papstes aus Polen, die mit den christlichen Werten in Europa verbunden sind, verwendet. Von besonderer Bedeutung ist dabei das vor 20 Jahren veröffentlichte Dokument *Ecclesia in Europa*. Dieses nachsynodale Apostolische Schreiben kann nämlich als eine Zusammenfassung der Überlegungen des polnischen Papstes zum jeweiligen Thema betrachtet werden.

¹ Vgl. RE, Jan Paweł II, 51; ŚWIST, Europa.

2. IN CHRISTUS BIS ZUR FÜLLE DER WAHRHEIT

Es besteht kein Zweifel, dass die Geschichte des europäischen Kontinents vom belebenden Einfluss des Evangeliums geprägt ist. Der christliche Glaube gehört – in der Sicht von Johannes Paul II. – tiefgreifend und maßgebend zu den Fundamenten der europäischen Kultur. Das Christentum hat in der Tat Europa dadurch Gestalt gegeben, dass es ihm einige grundlegende Werte einprägte. Diese Werte lassen sich unter anderem in der Bejahung der transzendenten Würde der menschlichen Person, der Vernunft, der Freiheit, der Demokratie, des Rechtsstaates wie auch der Unterscheidung zwischen Politik und Religion zusammenfassen. Die europäische Identität kann also ohne das Christentum nicht verstanden werden, weil genau dort die gemeinsamen Wurzeln Europas liegen. Leider scheint das heutige Europa unter einer tiefen Wertekrise zu leiden, wie es schon vor vielen Jahren der polnische Papst treffend bemerkte². Deshalb war der von ihm an die Vertreter verschiedener Behörden gerichtete und oft wiederholte Appel so wichtig: „Europa, kehre du selbst um! Sei du selbst! Entdecke wieder deine Ursprünge. Belebe deine Wurzeln!“³.

Nach Ansicht von Johannes Paul II. muss die spirituelle und moralische Dimension Europas bestätigt, weiterentwickelt und klug geschützt werden. Auf diese Weise wird die Vision der Einheit der europäischen Völker in der Transzendenz verankert durch die ausdrückliche Anerkennung der Rechte Gottes. Und dies ist die einzige wirklich unbestreitbare Garantie der Menschenwürde, der Freiheit der Völker, der sozialen Gerechtigkeit und internationalen Solidarität – betonte der Papst aus Polen⁴. Deshalb, „wenn Europa ein versöhntes Miteinander von Menschen und Völkern sein will, muss Christus diesen Kontinent beseelen. Der gemeinsame Weg in die Zukunft wird umso leichter gangbar sein, je mehr sich die Menschen in Europa auf ihre christlichen Wurzeln besinnen und aus diesen die Maßstäbe für ihr

² Vgl. JOHANNES PAUL II., *Ecclesia in Europa*, 108–109; NAGÓRNY, *Miejsce i rola wartości chrześcijańskich w europejskim systemie wartości*, 529–531.

³ JOHANNES PAUL II., *Europa-Feier in Santiago de Compostela*, 4; vgl. STĘPNIAK, *Integracja europejska*, 210; GRABOWSKI, *O jakiej Europie marzył Jan Paweł II.*

⁴ Vgl. JOHANNES PAUL II., *Messaggio all'Arcivescovo di Ravenna-Cervia*, 4; GUZ, *Chrześcijańska koncepcja Europy*, 99.

gesellschaftliches und politisches Handeln ableiten“⁵. Andernfalls droht Europa ein Prozess der systematischen Säkularisierung und der verschiedenen Konflikten.

Es besteht kein Zweifel, dass eben die Christen seit über 2000 Jahren das Leben und die reiche Kultur Europas geprägt haben. Nach Johannes Paul II. sollen sie sich „auch heute und in Zukunft der Mitgestaltung der Gesellschaft Europas zur Verfügung stellen. Die Kraft dazu empfangen sie aus der Botschaft des Evangeliums, das bleibend gültige Werte enthält und hervorbringt, denen für das persönliche ebenso wie für das soziale Leben eine tragende Bedeutung zukommt“⁶. Daher – wie der polnische Papst oft gelehrt hat – „muss im Mittelpunkt jeder rechten bürgerlichen Ordnung die Achtung vor dem Menschen, vor seiner Würde und vor seinen unveräußerlichen Rechten stehen. Zu Recht heißt es schon in einem alten Sprichwort: «Hominum causa omne ius constitutum est». In diesem Spruch ist die Überzeugung enthalten, dass es eine «Wahrheit über den Menschen» gibt, die über die Schranken der unterschiedlichen Sprachen und Kulturen hinausreicht“⁷. Und diese Wahrheit lässt sich am besten auf der Grundlage christlicher Werte konkretisieren. Auf diese Weise kann der Traum verwirklicht werden, den der Papst aus Polen im Herzen getragen hat, nämlich dass Europa „eine politische, ja mehr noch eine geistige Einheit ist, in der christliche Politiker aller Länder im Bewusstsein der menschlichen Reichtümer handeln, die der Glaube mit sich bringt. Es geht hier vor allem um engagierte Männer und Frauen, die solche [christliche] Werte fruchtbar werden lassen, indem sie sich in den Dienst aller stellen für ein Europa des Menschen, über dem das Angesicht Gottes leuchtet“⁸.

Aus diesem Grund sollte der alte Kontinent ein Ort der Versöhnung und des Zusammenlebens von Menschen und Nationen sein, die miteinander mit tiefem Respekt, aufrichtiger Freundlichkeit und Verantwortung umgehen. Und dies ist ein Merkmal der umfassend geprägten Menschen. In diesem Kontext bemerkte

⁵ JOHANNES PAUL II., *Mitteleuropäischer Katholikentag*, 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*; vgl. STĘPNIAK, *Integracja europejska*, 208–209.

⁷ JOHANNES PAUL II., *Ansprache beim Besuch der öffentlichen Sitzung im Italienischen Parlament*, 3; vgl. GUZ, *Chrześcijańska koncepcja Europy*, 101.

⁸ JOHANNES PAUL II., *Ansprache an die Mitglieder des Karlspreis-Direktoriums*, 5; vgl. GUZ, *Chrześcijańska koncepcja Europy*, 102.

Johannes Paul II. sehr treffend, dass nach dem Fall einer sichtbaren Mauer in Europa nun eine weitere unsichtbare Mauer enthüllt wurde. Es ist eine Mauer, die durch die Herzen der Menschen geht. Diese Mauer besteht oft aus Angst und Aggression, aus dem Unverständnis für Menschen unterschiedlicher Herkunft und Hautfarbe, aus den religiösen Überzeugungen, aus dem politischen und wirtschaftlichen Egoismus, wie auch aus der Schwächung der Sensibilität für den Wert des menschlichen Lebens und für die Würde jedes einzelnen Menschen⁹.

Dies wiederum führt dazu, dass heute in Europa die Ehen, Familien und Nationen häufig leiden. Deshalb muss die Kirche in Europa – wie der polnische Papst betonte – „auf allen Ebenen wieder die Wahrheit über die Ehe und die Familie zuverlässig herausstellen. [...] Nicht wenige kulturelle, soziale und politische Faktoren [...] gefährden in verschiedenem Ausmaß die Wahrheit und die Würde der menschlichen Person und stellen durch Verzerrung selbst die Idee der Familie in Frage. Der Wert der Unauflöslichkeit der Ehe wird immer weniger anerkannt; es wird die gesetzliche Anerkennung von Formen faktischen Zusammenlebens und deren Gleichstellung mit den rechtmäßig geschlossenen Ehen verlangt; es fehlt nicht an Versuchen, Modelle von Partnerschaften zu akzeptieren, in denen der Unterschied im Geschlecht nicht mehr wesentlich ist“¹⁰. In diesem Kontext – wie Johannes Paul II. wiederholte – „ist die Kirche gefordert, mit neuer Kraft zu verkünden, was das Evangelium über die Ehe und die Familie sagt, um deren Bedeutung und Wert im Heilsplan Gottes zu erfassen“¹¹.

Die Familie war schon immer ein verbindender Faktor und eine Kraftquelle für Mensch und Gesellschaft. Auch heute bleibt sie für viele ein Objekt der Bestrebungen, Wünsche, Pläne oder Sehnsüchte. Paradoxerweise fühlen sich die jungen Generationen „stark vom traditionellen Familienideal angezogen, aber scheinen beinahe unfähig zu sein, die damit zusammenhängende Verantwortung in angemessenem Umfang zu übernehmen“¹². Darum ist es so wichtig – nach Ansicht

⁹ Vgl. JOHANNES PAUL II., *Predigt bei der Messe zur Tausendjahrfeier des Martyriums des hl. Adalbert*, 4; STĘPNIAK, *Integracja europejska*, 209; GRABOWSKI, *O jakiej Europie marzył Jan Paweł II.*

¹⁰ JOHANNES PAUL II., *Ecclesia in Europa*, 90.

¹¹ *Ibid.*; vgl. STĘPNIAK, *Integracja europejska*, 212; GUZ, *Chrześcijańska koncepcja Europy*, 102.

¹² JOHANNES PAUL II., *Botschaft an die Teilnehmer des Europäischen Symposiums*, 2.

des Papstes aus Polen – dass in Europa „das «Salz» des christlichen Engagements nicht seinen «Geschmack» verliert, und das «Licht» der im Evangelium wurzelnden Ideale nicht durch Pragmatismus oder [...] Utilitarismus getrübt wird“¹³. Aus diesem Grund muss jeder Christ „seine Kenntnis der christlichen Soziallehre vertiefen, indem er danach strebt, ihre Prinzipien aufzunehmen und sie mit weiser Einsicht anzuwenden, wo immer es notwendig erscheint. Voraussetzung dafür ist eine durch das Gebet genährte ernsthafte geistliche Formung. [Denn] eine oberflächliche, spirituell laue oder gleichgültige Person oder ein übermäßig nach Erfolg und Anerkennung strebender Mensch wird nie in der Lage sein, seiner politischen Verantwortung in angemessener Form zu entsprechen“¹⁴.

Nur so kann Europa zu einer authentischen Gemeinschaft des Geistes – das heißt der Wahrheit, des Guten, der Schönheit, des Rechtes, der Gerechtigkeit und Solidarität – werden. Nach Johannes Paul II. sollte daher der alte Kontinent den Wegen großer Ideale und Prinzipien des Geistes folgen, die am besten auf der Grundlage des persönlichen Gottes verstanden werden. Denn „der Glaube an eine gemeinsame geistig-kulturelle Identität der europäischen Völker muss die Grundlage für ihr politisch-institutionelles Zusammenwachsen [...] bilden. Europa wäre schlichtweg nicht Europa ohne das reiche Patrimonium seiner Völker, welches, ähnlich den menschlichen Genen, das Persönlichkeitsbild dieses Kontinents geformt hat und weiterhin prägt. Dieses «Erbgut» zu vernachlässigen oder gar aufzugeben, hieße, die eigene [europäische] Identität aufs Spiel zu setzen und schließlich zu verlieren“¹⁵. Heute liegt also vor den Europäern – wie treffend der polnische Papst betonte – die große Herausforderung, „eine Kultur und eine Ethik der Einheit aufzubauen. Denn wenn diese fehlen, ist jede Politik der Einheit früher oder später zum Scheitern verurteilt“¹⁶.

¹³ JOHANNES PAUL II., *Ansprache an die Mitglieder der Robert-Schuman-Stiftung*, 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*; vgl. GUZ, *Chrześcijańska koncepcja Europy*, 103.

¹⁵ JOHANNES PAUL II., *Ansprache an den Botschafter der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 2; vgl. JOHANNES PAUL II., *Predigt bei der Messe zur Tausendjahrfeier des Martyriums des hl. Adalbert*, 4.

¹⁶ JOHANNES PAUL II., *Spes Aedificandi*, 10; vgl. STĘPNIAK, *Integracja europejska*, 211; GUZ, *Chrześcijańska koncepcja Europy*, 103.

Eine wesentliche Hilfe in diesem Prozess des Wachstums Europas als Gemeinschaft des Geistes ist die Universitätswissenschaft als Krone der geistigen Bildung, des Gedächtnisses und der Freiheit des Menschen sowie ganzer Nationen. Nach Ansicht des polnischen Papstes kann die „Universität durch die Schaffung von Möglichkeiten für die Entwicklung der Geisteswissenschaften zu einer solchen Reinigung des Gedächtnisses beitragen, die Unrecht und Fehler nicht verbirgt, sondern die Vergebung und Bitte um Vergebung ermöglicht und dann den Geist und das Herz für Wahrheit, Güte und Schönheit öffnet, die einen gemeinsamen Reichtum darstellen und gepflegt und entwickelt werden sollten“¹⁷. Dann wies Johannes Paul II. darauf hin, dass heute die „Kathedralen, Kunstwerke, Musik und Literatur zwar Zeichen der christlichen Wurzeln Europas seien, sie aber sozusagen im Stillen sprechen. Die Universitäten hingegen können laut über diese christlichen Wurzeln sprechen. Sie können eine moderne Sprache sprechen, die jeder verstehen kann. Diese Stimme wird möglicherweise nicht von denen akzeptiert, die von der säkularen Ideologie [des alten] Kontinents verblüfft sind. [Dies] aber entbindet die Wissenschaftler, die der historischen Wahrheit treu sind, nicht von der Aufgabe, das Zeugnis abzulegen, indem sie die Geheimnisse des Wissens und der Weisheit gründlich erforschen, die auf dem fruchtbaren Boden des Christentums gewachsen sind“¹⁸.

Zusammenfassend ist es daher notwendig, über die Rahmen rein technischer, administrativer, wirtschaftlicher und monetärer Regelungen hinauszugehen, um die authentische Identität und das Erbe dieser Zivilisation zu bewahren, deren grundlegender Bestandteil das Christentum ist. Gerade das Christentum bleibt nämlich die wichtige Inspirationsquelle für das über viele Generationen gepflegte Ideal des europäischen Universalismus – betonte der Papst aus Polen¹⁹.

¹⁷ JOHANNES PAUL II., *Ansprache an die Vertreter der Universität von Oppeln*.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*; vgl. GUZ, *Chrześcijańska koncepcja Europy*, 103–104.

¹⁹ Vgl. JOHANNES PAUL II., *Messaggio all’Arcivescovo di Ravenna-Cervia*, 4; NAGÓRNY, *Miejsce i rola wartości chrześcijańskich w europejskim systemie wartości*, 545–546.

3. IN CHRISTUS BIS ZUR FREIHEIT UND EINHEIT

Johannes Paul II. hat mehrmals während seines Pontifikats an die grundlegende Wahrheit über den Ursprung der menschlichen Freiheit im ewig freien und liebenden Gott erinnert. In diesem Zusammenhang wies der polnische Papst auch darauf hin, dass den Samen der Freiheit nach Europa der hl. Paulus gebracht hat, der über die Befreiung durch Christus oft predigte (vgl. Röm 8). Diese Freiheit, zu der Christus befreit, ist die Botschaft des Evangeliums, die seit über 2000 Jahren die Geschichte Europas prägt. Diese Freiheit wurde den Menschen gegeben und angeboten, damit sie sie praktizieren und anderen weitergeben können²⁰.

Es ist notwendig heute an diese Wahrheit in Europa zu erinnern. Vor allem wenn man bedenkt, dass insbesondere in der sogenannten Neuzeit Christus als Urheber des europäischen Geistes, als Urheber jener Freiheit, die in Ihm ihre heilbringende Wurzel hat, in Klammern gesetzt wurde. So begann sich eine andere europäische Mentalität zu bilden, die sich kurz in einem Satz ausdrücken lässt: „Denken wir so, leben wir so, als ob Gott nicht existiert“. Diese Aussage ist mittlerweile auch Teil des europäischen Geistes, Teil der europäischen modernen Tradition. In diesem Kontext – betonte der Papst aus Polen – muss man über die vielfältigen Bedeutungen der europäischen Identität nachdenken. Wenn wir also auf der Ebene des authentischen Humanismus stehen wollen, sollten wir uns daran erinnern, dass dieser Humanismus seine vollste Offenbarung in Christus hat. Deshalb besteht heute ein dringender Bedarf an einer Neuevangelisierung des alten Kontinents, der alten christlichen Gesellschaften in Europa – konkludiert Johannes Paul II²¹.

Und dies bleibt die gemeinsame Aufgabe der immer noch geteilten christlichen Kirchen. Auf dem Spiel steht also hier und jetzt – nach Ansicht des polnischen Papstes – die Förderung aller menschlichen und auch religiösen Werte in Europa, der Schutz der Heiligkeit des Lebens und die Bewahrung der Schöpfung. „Dabei beseelt uns die tiefe Überzeugung, dass der alte Kontinent den christlichen Reichtum seines geistigen Erbes nicht verlieren darf, dass er nichts von all dem

²⁰ Vgl. JOHANNES PAUL II., *Predigt zur Seligsprechung des Franziskanerpaters Rafael Chyliński*; STĘPNIAK, *Integracja europejska*, 211.

²¹ *Ibid.*; vgl. NAGÓRNY, *Miejsce i rola wartości chrześcijańskich w europejskim systemie wartości*, 536–538; GUZ, *Chrześcijańska koncepcja Europy*, 104–105.

verlieren darf, was ihn in der Vergangenheit hat groß werden lassen. Wir spüren das Bedürfnis, unserem Glaubenszeugnis ein neues, wirkungsvolleres Antlitz zu geben, damit die christlichen Wurzeln Europas mit neuem Lebenssaft genährt werden, nämlich dem eines einmütigeren gemeinsamen Zeugnisses. Diese Zusammenarbeit [...] könnte ein wirksames Mittel gegen den in Europa so weit verbreiteten ideologischen Relativismus sein, gegen einen ethischen Pluralismus, der die ewig währenden Werte vergisst, und gegen eine Form der Globalisierung, die für den Menschen unbefriedigend ist, weil sie die gerechtfertigten Unterschiede verwischt, die die Verbreitung so vieler Schätze im europäischen Osten und Westen ermöglicht haben“²².

Man darf also sagen, dass die Gemeinschaft und zugleich die Institution, die Europa am meisten gegeben hat – nicht nur im spirituellen, moralischen und religiösen, sondern auch im wissenschaftlichen, künstlerischen und wirtschaftlichen Sinne – das Christentum ist. Wie Johannes Paul II. mehrmals betonte, trotz der schmerzlichen Spaltung zwischen Orient und Okzident, hat sich das Christentum als die Religion der Europäer durchgesetzt. Auch heute, wo die religiöse Einheit sowohl infolge weiterer Spaltungen unter den Christen als auch wegen der Loslösungsprozesse der Kultur vom Horizont des Glaubens mehr und mehr zerbröckelte, kommt der Rolle des christlichen Glaubens auch weiterhin eine wichtige Bedeutung zu. „So sind die Christen aufgerufen, sich des Glaubens neu bewusst zu werden, um zu zeigen, was er an Möglichkeiten ständig in sich birgt. Sie haben die Pflicht, zum Aufbau Europas einen besonderen Beitrag zu leisten. Dieser wird umso wertvoller und wirksamer sein, je mehr es den Christen gelingt, sich selbst im Lichte des Evangeliums zu erneuern“²³ – konkludiert der Papst aus Polen.

²² JOHANNES PAUL II., *Botschaft an Seine Seligkeit Christodoulos*; vgl. STĘPNIAK, *Integracja europejska*, 209–210; NAGÓRNY, *Miejsce i rola wartości chrześcijańskich w europejskim systemie wartości*, 549–551.

²³ JOHANNES PAUL II., *Spes Aedificandi*, 1; vgl. GUZ, *Chrześcijańska koncepcja Europy*, 105–106; DALGIEWICZ, *Europa wstań*.

4. ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Zusammenfassend lässt sich festhalten, dass sich Europa als der alte Kontinent – in der Sicht von Johannes Paul II. – eindeutig auf Gott und den christlichen Glauben beziehen sollte. Es geht hier vor allem darum, die historische und kulturelle Realität anzuerkennen, die auch die Gegenwart prägt und die Quelle der Identität der Europäer ist. In Jesus Christus liegt die größte Hoffnung, wenn es um die Zukunft Europas geht, die leider heute durch verschiedene Ideologien behindert wird. Sie basieren vor allem auf der seltsamen Gott-Vergessenheit, der Vergessenheit der christlichen Wurzeln. Unterdessen ist hervorzuheben, dass die Rechte Gottes und des Menschen gemeinsam stehen oder fallen. Denn die Ablehnung Gottes und seiner Gebote führt immer wieder zur Tyrannei der Götzen, unter anderem der Rasse, der Klasse, des Staates, der Nation oder der Partei²⁴. Mögen die oben genannten und zurückgerufenen Gedanken des polnischen Papstes den Europäern helfen, diesen wertvollen, alten Kontinent vor solchen Gefahren im 21. Jahrhundert zu schützen

²⁴ Vgl. JOHANNES PAUL II., *Botschaft an Kardinal Antonio María Javierre Ortas*; vgl. PÉREZ LÓPEZ, *Znaczenie pontyfikatu Jana Pawła II dla Europy Zachodniej*, 42; GUZ, *Chrześcijańska koncepcja Europy*, 106.

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A SOTERIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF HOPE IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD FROM THE THOUGHT OF KAROL WOJTYŁA?

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INTRODUCTION

The first papal encyclical of St John Paul II famously begins: THE REDEEMER OF MAN, Jesus Christ, is the centre of the universe and of history. To him go my thoughts and my heart in this solemn moment of the world that the Church and the whole family of present-day humanity are now living.¹

If we understand the Redeemer of man to be the centre of the universe and history, then every aspect of human understanding and life will devolve from that. This includes the sense of self with its contingent behaviours, social enterprises and organisation.

In a time of turmoil and crises the question *Why be a human person and how?* rises up among people, - explicitly, or covertly, or perhaps simply as a loss of hope. Karol Wojtyła faced deeply into this question both as a philosopher, as a theologian, as a priest and pastor, and simply as a human person himself. His enquiry was impacted by his personal experiences living in a family, friendship group, university, society, country and continent overrun by war and different totalitarian ideologies. He concluded that some of the problems, tragedies and horrors which he and his contemporaries knew from within could be traced to erroneous ideas of what it means to be human and consequently the effect this had on often well-meaning but

¹ Cf. Pope JOHN PAUL II, *Encyclical Redemptor Hominis*.

disastrous attempts to address the serious problems of human life and society. If he was right, it follows that the ideas which he developed may help us now in our own existential situation.

The concept of *alienation* has been a topic of philosophical enquiry for centuries, famously, though certainly not uniquely by Karl Marx. It involves a separation in the human self as subject from an object which should belong to that subject. The association with labour practices, property ownership and the organising of civil and social life and so forth are extremely well known. Wojtyła thought it was precisely the inclusion of a false understanding of the human person in some of the analyses of alienation which contributed to subsequent tragedies and disaster. Perhaps a fresh look at alienation using a hermeneutic of soteriology might be helpful in proposing a kerygmatic, evangelical response to it. Perhaps there is something inherent to the human person – something *inalienable* – from which we *are* somehow alienated. Might it be that at the root of all alienation there is a fundamental disjunction within the individual person, prior to apparently ineluctable societal pressures: a hiatus within the human person with his or her life experience, with on the one hand their roots, their experience, their aims and drives, and on the other hand the telos for which the human person is created: their inherent aims and drives are now disorientated, dislocated. In the context of human society, civil, social, familial, ecclesial and private, this would be a powerful force on the many seas of chaos and an effective Christian soteriology could be at least proportionately influential in the world. I say ‘at least’ because in fact I think Christian revelation does not stop at that minimum.

This renewed approach to the inalienable and to alienation would concern not only or primarily the world of the mind. My own thinking occurs mostly in my home in a beautiful town by the sea. As I walk around, many people will stop and say hello to me and my dog. Often in the presence of the dog people open up in all sorts of ways, and I am extraordinarily privileged to witness a sort of existential procession through the world, akin to that presented in the pages of *Gaudium et Spes*, for example, and *Redemptor Hominis*. Returning home to read these texts I can experience them using a sort of VR headset constructed by the people whom I have met, the moments of empathy shared with them in Market Street or on the East Sands. I can pass through a portal into a place in which the actual, natural, physical

and spiritual world of lived experience bring flesh and blood to the world of words and concepts. Conversely, the words of the Apostolic Constitution feed my thinking and illuminate interpersonal encounters, and the people encountered in daily life.

Gaudium et Spes speaks of the human person as ‘split within’², ‘remain[ing] to themselves an unsolved puzzle’³ and it displays with an almost clinical efficiency something of the ‘depths of misery’ and ‘the monumental struggle against the power of darkness’ which are part and parcel of human experience. It also, and essentially, points to the fullness of understanding of human life:

Indeed, the Lord Jesus, when He prayed to the Father, "that all may be one. . . as we are one" (John 17:21-22) opened up vistas closed to human reason, for He implied a certain likeness between the union of the divine Persons, and the unity of God's sons in truth and charity. This likeness reveals that man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself.⁴

For Pope John Paul II ‘these words of the Pastoral Constitution of the Council can be said to sum up the whole of Christian anthropology’.⁵ They give ‘*an essential indication of what it means to be human*,’ which is not purely theoretical or abstract.⁶ Implied in this assertion is an infinitely profound understanding of our alienation, of the ‘split within’. The sacerdotal prayer of Christ quoted in *Gaudium et spes* (which itself is found with astonishing frequency throughout the work of John Paul), speaks precisely of vistas *closed to human reason*: surely within human experience it has to be a cause of alienation if the purpose for which I am created is hidden to my reason. The reception of the revelation of my own and my community’s likeness to the Trinity is received through faith: yet numerous individuals, even those who have already received the gift of faith, are clinging on to faith and hope by the skin of their

² *Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, § 13.*

³ *Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, § 21.*

⁴ *Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, § 24.*

⁵ *POPE JOHN PAUL II, "Dominum et vivificantem" § 59. Pascal Ide has done a minute study of the uses by John Paul II of Gaudium et Spes 24:3, cf. IDE, Une théologie du don, 129-163.*

⁶ *POPE JOHN PAUL II, Mulieris dignitatem, § 18.*

teeth, striving both to survive themselves and to help others; to find meaning and to explain it; to undergo and to overcome; to live their faith and to be supported by it. Faith needs to be nourished, nurtured, renewed in orientation to these revealed vistas unless it is to be lost in impotence and absurdity.

FAITH AND REDEMPTION

For Wojtyła at the heart of the renewal of faith is Redemption, with the Redeemer at the centre of history.⁷ While archbishop of Krakow he wrote:

Redemption is the work of Christ, the Son of God made man; it is the essence of the mission of the second Person of the Trinity whereby God entered visibly into human history and made it a history of salvation.⁸

As Pope John Paul frequently quoted St John:

"God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life".⁹

These words depict, he says, 'the very essence of Christian soteriology, that is, of the theology of salvation'.¹⁰ God loved ... God gave ..., whoever believes ... should not perish ... have eternal life". Man encounters the gratuity of love from the Divine Creator, and man, impotent before the roots of suffering and evil, needs to meet the God who is Redemption, whose work is Redemption, who gives the gift of eternal life.

In this finding of Christ and walking with Him, each person can find the answer to the question of '*Why be a human person and how?*' The Redeemer Christ illuminates 'the truth about man' and empowers him on the path of life towards man's goal and

⁷ Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Sources of renewal*.

⁸ John Paul II, *Sources of Renewal*., 66

⁹ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptor Hominis*.

¹⁰ JOHN PAUL II, *Salvifici Doloris*, §14.

end in the fullness of love and humanity. Thus the Son of God, who is the actor of Redemption, in redeeming restores to man God's original intention for him:

Through the Incarnation God gave human life the dimension that he intended man to have from his first beginning; he has granted that dimension definitively - in the way that is peculiar to him alone, in keeping with his eternal love and mercy, with the full freedom of God - and he has granted it also with the bounty that enables us, in considering the original sin and the whole history of the sins of humanity, and in considering the errors of the human intellect, will and heart, to repeat with amazement the words of the Sacred Liturgy: "O happy fault... which gained us so great a Redeemer!"¹¹

Pope John Paul poses theological questions from within contemporary narrative:

Could the mystery of Redemption be the response to that historical evil which, in different forms, continually recurs in human affairs? Is it also the response to the evil of our own days? ... concentration camps, of gas chambers, of police cruelty, of total war and of oppressive regimes... To those who are subjected to systematic evil, there remains only Christ and his Cross as a source of spiritual self-defence, as a promise of victory.¹²

If the mystery of Redemption is the response to historical evil, and if historical evil is to some extent fuelled by a false understanding of the human person, then a correct understanding of the human person can flow from the Redeemer. As God 'gives definitively' to human life its Divinely purposed intention a new stream of understanding, and therefore of life patterns, continues to flow from the side of Christ within the historic moment. One might say that the joyful cry made before heaven and earth in the Easter Proclamation is that of a hope already fulfilled:

O Felix Culpa! Happy Fault! O necessary sin of Adam that earns for us such a Redeemer, and so great a Redeemer!

¹¹ JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptor Hominis*, §1. *Exsultet at the Easter Vigil.* « O felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem! » O happy fault, which merited for us so great a Redeemer!

¹² JOHN PAUL II, *Memory and Identity*, 21.

The fault – the ‘happy fault’? - has occurred and does still occur; the Redeemer is still being ‘earned’ by the ‘happy fault’ and Easter Night does still ‘wed together things of earth and of heaven, the divine to the human’. Redemption is this gift of God for the life of the world, the new life of the world. At every single offering of the Mass during the Offertory the prayer is said: *By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ as he humbled himself to share in our humanity.* Our participation, through baptism and the Eucharist places us within this narrative of sin and Redemption: through this we respond, our drop of water in the wine of Christ, both to historical, present evil and to the consummation of the Redemption in which we share in the divinity of Christ.

Here can be found a soteriological anthropology which comprises the dialectic of human need and divine gratuity finding resolution and fulfilment in Redemption; it exists in the economy of the creative initiative of the gratuitous love of God. On the one hand Wojtyła, following *Gaudium et Spes* speaks of the slavery to sin, struggle and suffering, weakness and sin, life and death. Man is ‘divided within himself’, ‘degraded’, involved in a dramatic struggle between good and evil, and unable on his own to ‘overcome the assaults of evil’,¹³ living with a ‘congenital moral weakness which goes hand in hand with the fragility of [man’s] being, with his psycho-physical fragility.’¹⁴ It is beyond the control of man either to avoid or to rectify this situation of alienation. In his response John Paul says that by drawing near to Christ in an interiority in which he experiences both his ‘unrest, uncertainty, ... weakness and sin’ and also the redeeming love of Christ, man reaches a full understanding of himself. Christ, John Paul says, walks with ‘each person the path of life, with the power of the truth about man and the world that is contained in the mystery of the Incarnation.’ This is the condition in which we live and in which we participate in the Redemption, a new birth into an integrated life possessing power to transcend and to heal alienation.

¹³ *Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, § 13*

¹⁴ *John Paul II, Memory and Identity, 20.*

THE ECONOMY OF REDEMPTION

Through the Sacraments, and beginning with Baptism, ‘each Christian receives the saving power of the Redemption’¹⁵. We can speak of a kind of *existential conversation* of Redemption, in which there is an exchange of love and of need between God and humankind. Essential to Redemption is

*“the transformation of the entire cosmos through the heart of man, from within: “For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. . . and will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God.”(47) This transformation takes place in step with that love which Christ’s call infuses in the depth of the individual.”*¹⁶

The love which is in the heart of Christ the Redeemer is infused in the depth of the baptised for the transformation of the world through and by that same love. This is not merely the transformation of the private heart of the individual and it is not merely that when individuals live well and ethically their influence ripples out. The individual, each one who forms the Community of the Baptised, *participates in the economy of Redemption, in the Christ-activity* of de-alienating. Baptism is a consecration to the mission of the Redeemer. Beginning with the initiation of Baptism the *inalienability* of human life is restored, healed by the love of God in Christ.

The mother who anguishes as she admits the horrific bullying her young son is going through at school; the spouse of a person with Alzheimer’s who is utterly exhausted and herself dying of pain inside; the daughter watching her mother in the last days and weeks of a terrible and distressing death; the young mother of two small children who suddenly finds herself alone with them, depressed, without a job, with no money and a complete collapse of confidence; this is the ‘universe and the history’ at the centre of which is ‘the Redeemer of man, Jesus Christ’¹⁷, he who does what human agency alone cannot do. But it is an insult to the human person to speak of Redemption in this way if we offer only either attempts towards the

¹⁵ JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptor Hominis*, § 20

¹⁶ JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptionis Donum*, § 9

¹⁷ JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptor Hominis*, § 1

temporal and practical alleviation of suffering, or the promise of future well-being. As the dynamic of human existence ineluctably drives towards the fulfilment of its most intimate purpose and meaning the human subject experiences futility and absurdity as the inchoate and burgeoning human life is condemned to constant thwarting. The futile and the absurd, by definition, do not admit to reparation by logic or promise.

The active, effective gift of God given in Redemption is identified by Pope St John Paul II as the inalienable goodness, vocation and dignity intended for us in creation.

The Redeemer of the world! In him has been revealed in a new and more wonderful way the fundamental truth concerning creation to which the Book of Genesis gives witness when it repeats several times: "God saw that it was good"¹⁸ The good has its source in Wisdom and Love. In Jesus Christ the visible world which God created for man¹⁹ - the world that, when sin entered, "was subjected to futility"²⁰ - recovers again its original link with the divine source of Wisdom and Love. Indeed, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son".^{21 22}

For us in the contemporary world, living in 'widespread existential fragmentation',²³ this really is Good News.

¹⁸ Cf. *Gen. 1 passim.*)

¹⁹ Cf. *Gen. 1:26 - 30*

²⁰ *Rom . 8: 20; cf . 8:19 - 22; Vatican Council II: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes, 2, 13: AAS 58 (1966) 1026, 1034 - 1035*

²¹ *1Jn 3:16*

²² *JOHN PAUL II, Redemptoris Hominis, §8*

²³ *JOHN PAUL II, Ecclesia in Europa, §9*

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FOOLS POURING FORTH WORDS OF GOD A RE-READING OF THE FOOLISH GESTURE FROM THE PROPHETS TO THE POPE

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I. HOLY FOOLS DRAMATIZE THE MYSTERY IN THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM ORIENTED WORLD

In the light of Jesus' words "my Kingdom is not from here" (Joh 18:36), there has been a longstanding tradition of Christian men and women leaving the world, searching for His Kingdom.²⁴ They did not follow the problem solving logic of "how to improve the world," but instead, they walked a mystical path, facing the shortages of this world as masks of the divine mystery in a coming world. If you intend to improve the world, you will approach it as a set or series of problems. You will put each problem before you – the Greek *pro-blema* means an 'obstacle,' something thrown before –, analyze, discuss or explain it in order to solve it. The problem is approached as an object (the Latin *ob-jectum* is related to the Greek *pro-blema*). Jesus and His followers did not approach the world as a problem to be solved or an object to be studied, but as the mystery of Gods Kingdom to be received as a revelation.²⁵ In a mystery approach, the reality is not before you, but you are involved in it. It is not approached as an object, but as a voice or movement (from a person) that tells you something. You do not analyze and discuss it, but receive by listening and being moved. In the reception of the mystery there is indifference: you

²⁴ *The fuga saeculi was a technical expression for becoming a religious. See: Weltverachtung, Weltflucht, Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie, 521-527.*

²⁵ *The distinction of approaching a reality as a problem or a mystery is from Gabriel MARCEL. See his Being and Having, and The Mystery of Being.*

do not separate it from yourself, putting it before you, but you are moved by it and thus following the same movement, and ‘leaving the world’ is actually not different from a deep engagement with it, the shortages of the world are actually not different from the enjoyment of its abundance.

In his Sermon of the Mount Jesus says: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:3).²⁶ The economist Tomáš Sedláček reads the figure of ‘poor in spirit’ as those who do not make the difference between right and wrong, rich and poor, wise and foolish.²⁷ Jesus locates these differences in the will and the heart of the human being. The mystery of salvation is in the transcendence of these differences by the grace of God.²⁸ The ‘poor in spirit’ walk the path of the mystery with gestures that seem foolish because of this indifference. They are wrong and yet not wrong, poor and yet not poor, foolish and yet not foolish. And precisely because of their apparent indifference, they made a difference in their world, and – as we remember them – in our present world which is captured in its own problem solving strategies. An enlightening imagination of the mystery path is given by the fifth century philosopher, who identified himself with Dionysius Areopagite. Identifying with another is a foolish gesture in itself, but his *Mystical Theology* fools the intelligentsia sublimely. Dionysius develops a mystical approach to the Divine as a combination of descending and ascending, comparable with the angels on Jakob’s ladder (Gen 28:10-22). In a descending (*cataphatic*) movement, God is named with many names, and in an ascending (*apophatic*) movement every name is denied as inappropriate: God is good, but He is not good.²⁹ The messengers of the divine are sent into this world to return to God, for they are not from this world (cf. Joh 17:14-19). A modern form of this mystical approach is formulated by Michel de Certeau: “He or she is mystic who cannot stop walking and, with the certainty of what is lacking, knows of every place and object that it is *not that*; one cannot stay *there* nor be content with

²⁶ For the new Christian understanding of the world, as economic-political-cultural reality, and how it is approached in the light of the coming world, see GRELOT, *Monde*, 1627.

²⁷ SEDLÁČEK, *De economie van goed en kwaad*, 162-163. (English: *Economics of Good and Evil. The Quest for Economic Meaning from Gilgamesh to Wall Street*).

²⁸ SEDLÁČEK, *De economie van goed en kwaad*, 180-181.

²⁹ PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS, *The Complete Works*. The cataphatic approach is described in the book *Divine Names*, the apophatic approach in *Mystical Theology*.

that.” [Italics in original.]³⁰ Certeau’s mystic is also the figure of a fool.³¹ At second glance, he or she is not, but his or her gesture of walking around restlessly searching for meaning and direction makes him or her look like one. Because of the indeterminacy of the divine messenger as inside and outside the world, which again is a form of indifference, the holy fool makes a difference in the world. To highlight the religious fools, and how they make a difference in the problem oriented world, I will shortly describe five exemplary foolish characters of the Christian tradition: a prophet, an apostle, a nun, a saint, and a pope. And I will focus on their foolish gestures as actions that create moments in which the mystery may come forth. I will interpret the gesture as the type of action that makes a difference by creating a moment of indifference. This moment of indifference produces an empty space in the center of the worldly order, in which the sacred human reconnects the world to the bare life that she forgot. But first I will describe the frame in which I will interpret the role and function of the holy fools: the sacred human or the *homo sacer*.

2. HOLY FOOL AS A HOMO SACER

In his description of the state of exception in the Western biopolitical state, Giorgio Agamben discovers the motif of bare life, which is a translation of the Greek *zoe* in opposition to the political life as *bios*. Agamben describes how the establishment of the state begins by excluding bare life in order to transform it into a political life. By taking the right to end and forget this bare life – which is the life of nature, animals and plants – the city includes it by exclusion, as for example in a park or a garden.³² It is noted, that life in a garden is not the same thing as life in nature. And indeed, “bare life,” as Agamben describes it, is not preexistent life before it was recreated as an excluded inclusion, a state of exception in the empty spaces of the city.³³

The inclusion of bare life, *zoe*, in the political realm of *bios* is an approach as if it were a problem, e.g. the issue of climate change today where the destruction of bare life

³⁰ CERTEAU, *The Mystic Fable*, 299.

³¹ Martin Heidegger analyzes the word ‘Wahnsinn’ (madness) as going without or in a different direction. See. GALL, *Toward a Tragic Theology*, 20.

³² AGAMBEN, *Homo Sacer*, 9: “inclusion of bare life in the political realm”.

³³ AGAMBEN, *State of Exception*. (*The Omnibus Homo Sacer: Homo Sacer II: 1, 161-245*), 241.

endangers our *bios*. But life cannot be captured in such a way, for it is not an object; you cannot put it before you, for it is moving in you and you are moving in it. That may be the reason why *zoe* is excepted – taken apart – within a creature that bears and generates life, like the fig tree of Romulus on the *forum* of Rome.³⁴ Agamben sees the sacred human, *homo sacer*, as the originating figure of “bare life” or “bare life as such”.³⁵ *Homo sacer* embodies bare life ‘which is included in politics in the form of the exception, that is, as something that is included solely through an exclusion’.³⁶

a. The ‘ban’ of the *homo sacer*

First of all, we meet the *homo sacer* in the banned figure of the enemy of state, the bandit or wolf-man. This is the figure who may be killed without repercussion for the killer, but he may not be sacrificed.³⁷ As sacrifice means ‘to make sacred’ (*sacri facere*), the *homo sacer* is already consecrated in the divine realm. He or she has no clearly defined position, but remains ambiguous and indifferent. The *homo sacer* lives between the human and the divine, belonging to neither.

The figure is more complex than the bandit or enemy. The fool is also included in society by being excluded, as is the leper, who is ritually banned from the community. And as *sacer* is an ambiguous word, meaning sacred as well as excluded, we may also include the religious, who has voluntarily banned him- and herself from the world. Abandoning the world in a religious gesture of *Weltverlassenheit* and *fuga saeculi*, is not different from being abandoned by the world. When Jesus Christ meets the leper, the poor, the whore, and the tax collector, a *homo sacer* meets a *homo sacer*. Especially in these encounters, the state and the church are reminded of their beginning: bare life itself, that was denied.

³⁴ FRAZER, *De Gouden Tak.*, 153. Later Frazer describes how the so-called ‘primitive’ people personified the movements of life and death in birds, trees, and people.

³⁵ AGAMBEN, *Homo Sacer*, 6.

³⁶ AGAMBEN, *Homo Sacer*, 12.

³⁷ AGAMBEN, *Homo Sacer*, 10: Bare life is articulated by the law, as ‘the life of *homo sacer* (sacred man), who may be killed and yet not sacrificed ... an obscure figure of archaic Roman law’. In this “may be killed but not sacrificed,” the ban is related to the Hebrew *herem* and Latin *devotio*, which means ‘handed over to God’ as well as ‘to be utterly destroyed.’ As a banned person or people was already devoted to God, it could not be sacrificed.

b. The fool and the king

I referred to Jesus Christ, the King of the universe, as a *homo sacer*. Not only the bandit, the fool and the religious are *homines sacri*, but Agamben sees the position of the sovereign also as one. The “one who decides on the state of exception” (Carl Schmitt, quoted by Agamben) can only do so when he or she is outside and inside the order, that is, included in the political system by being excluded from it.³⁸ The King chooses the moment, *kairos*, in which the future order is opened. His followers will ask Him for a new law and order. As a *homo sacer*, however, who lives between the human and divine order, His response will be ambiguous: “Love one another as I have loved you,” (John 15:12) which, because of the boundless nature of love cannot be a law.³⁹ And yet, in its ambiguity, in the person of the Sovereign, the *homo sacer* is at the beginning of a new state.

c. Exception becoming an example

As the strangeness (“estrarity”) of the *homo sacer* is “more intimate and primary than the extraneousness of the foreigner,” we can understand how this figure may perform an exemplary role in the city or the church.⁴⁰ The exception may become an example, as is often the case when bandits, fools, religious or kings disturb the regular order of the state.⁴¹ People suspect they have a message of origin. In case of the holy fool, “a character with an exemplary devotion to (...) God” takes up the position and the role of stand-in, between the human and the divine.⁴² Just like the *homo sacer* reminds the state of its beginning, the holy fool reminds the church of her original calling.

d. Fool as vicarius Christi

Whether we consider Him as a fool or a sovereign, Jesus Christ deposited the earthly sovereign power and took up the position of the *homo sacer*. He carried bare life and

³⁸ AGAMBEN, *Homo Sacer*, 13.

³⁹ Paul RICOEUR calls this commandment an *appel* (appeal), in his *Amour et Justice*. Paris: Seuil, 2008, 22.

⁴⁰ AGAMBEN, *Homo Sacer*, 93.

⁴¹ AGAMBEN, *Homo Sacer*, 22: *The exception becomes an example, when the inclusive exclusion becomes an exclusive inclusion.*

⁴² GALL, *Toward a Tragic Theology*, 20.

thus the blame, the violence and the law, borne by the other excluded. Jesus acted in a time and a place where bare life had been transformed into the biopolitical order of the law. And when, after His death, resurrection and ascension, the church had been transforming His bare life into another biopolitical law, new *homines sacri* came to remind the church of this banned and excluded bare life. Thus, the fool for Christ presents Christ, the Sovereign confronting the sovereign – pope *and* emperor, both *vicarii Christi*⁴³ - with His bare life: “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (Joh 14:6) and “I am the door” (Joh 10:9): the door to the law of life. As we have seen, bare life is not equal to life itself as a preexistent phenomenon, but an empty space within the law, where the law with its differentiations – good/bad, wise/foolish, sacred/profane – is suspended. And yet, Paul – one of the ‘fools for Christ’ – did not give up the law (Rom 7:7 – “I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law”). One needs the law to make a difference within the law, one needs an order to break it and make the light come through. The fool, in order to function as such, presupposes a well-functioning church that has forgotten the life from which it originated. Indeed, bare life originates from the law, and the law originates from bare life.⁴⁴

3. EXAMPLES OF HOMINES SACRI AS ‘HOLY FOOLS’

The *homo sacer*, bearer of bare life within the world, can be recognized in the religious men and women in our tradition that have identified with or were identified as fools. Their deviant actions have created moments of indifference, or at least where the difference between good and bad, wise and idiot, holy and harlot is suspended. These moments will be described as motifs; both concepts are related to movement. It is the movement of their gestures that moves people to reflect on the reality they have created, and judge it in the light of the divine reality.

⁴³ AGAMBEN, *The Kingdom and the Glory*. (*The Omnibus Homo Sacer II:4*, 363-641), 495.

⁴⁴ Agamben makes the comparison with the *langue*, language as a system, and the *parole*, language as a process, claiming that the law (*langue*) must be valid independent from its application in real life (*parole*) (*Homo sacer*, 21). He seems in line with Louis Hjelmslev, who claims that a system (*langue*) can exist without a process (*parole*). HJELMSLEV, *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language*, 39-40. But I have strong doubts here, for a system exists within the process and the process functions within the system; the one consists of the relations that are contracted by the other. Only thus it can be explained that the law changes in dialogue with life. See SPEELMAN, *The Generation of Meaning*, 7.

a. A prophet

Jacob Kaplan describes the prophet (*nabi*) as “a pourer of words.”⁴⁵ The root *naba*, “to cause to bubble forth,” does not characterize the prophetic speech as a well-organized language, but as an abundant gushing forth of speech sounds by an inspired, mad, raging person in trance.⁴⁶ Not only the speech characterizes the prophet, but also his gestures seem to be the moves of a madman.⁴⁷ Isaiah walked naked and barefoot for about three years (Isa 20:2-3); the prophet Ezekiel ate bread baked on cow dung (Ez 4:9-15). I will focus on Hosea, who married an infidel woman (*Gomer*: “*I will go after my lovers*”) and called the children he had with her: *Jezreel* (“*God sows*”), *Lo-ruhamah* (“*not-loved*”), *Lo-ammi* (“*not my people*”). As a “pourer of words” the prophet claims to be speaking on behalf of God (Hos 1:2). The prophetic speech and gestures mirror the people’s infidelity to God, with the intention of a reconciliation (Hos 3). Acting in such a way, that they give a voice and a body to the message of God, the prophet presents the holy One in the midst of the people (cf. Hos 11:9). Whether this person is a fool or a prophet is to decide by the people who hear him or her. The one will understand his or her foolishness, the other will stumble over it (cf. Hos 14:9). The intention of the prophet may be clear, but his reception by the people is not. This ambiguity is the same as in the figure of the *homo sacer*, a person who can be excluded and sacred at the same time.

The *homo sacer* may shed some light on the prophetic behavior. Being inside and outside the world of the people, the sacred man presents the life (*zoe*) that the people have forgotten, and the voice that the logics of the people have lost.⁴⁸ In this light, it is perhaps more apt to say that the prophet gives voice and body to the word of God. But the ambiguity of the *homo sacer* also means that the prophet gives a voice and a body to the excluded people with whom he identifies in his foolish behavior. The prophet is neither God nor a fool or harlot: he is a human mediating

⁴⁵ *Nabi* is a loanword from older Semitic tongues. “Before time in Israel when a man went to inquire of God, thus he said: ‘Come, let us go to the Seer, for he that is now called a *nabi* was aforesime called a Seer’ (I Sam 9:9). See: KAPLAN, *Psychology of Prophecy*, 2-3.

⁴⁶ See examples of foolish gushing in Ps 59:8, Prov 15:2 and 28.

⁴⁷ Cf. BOSMAN, *De eeuwige nar: de toekomst van het religieus gemeenschapsleven*.

⁴⁸ “There is politics because man is the living being who, in language, separates and opposes himself to his own bare life and, at the same time, maintains himself in relation to that bare life in an inclusive exclusion.” AGAMBEN, *Homo Sacer*, 10.

between God and man, life and law, powerless and powerful. This in-between position is the gateway to the reconciliation of broken relationships.

b. An apostle

Especially in his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul identifies with the mad messenger: “We are fools for Christ’s sake, but you are wise in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are honourable, but we are despised” (1 Cor 4:10).⁴⁹ In a city where the Christian community tended to consider their spiritual identity in terms of wisdom, power, freedom, and knowledge, Paul preaches Jesus as a “a sign of contradiction” (Lk 2:34).⁵⁰ Jesus’ cross and resurrection are a “foolish” message to those who are perishing, but a divine power to those who are being saved (1 Cor 1:18). The foolish motif of indifference can be recognized: “neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female.” (Gal 3:23-29)⁵¹ or the “... as if not ...” (1 Cor 7:29-31).⁵²

Paul identified as a fool, but he was not and he did not feign to be one.⁵³ In fact, when Festus calls him a mad man, Paul replies that he speaks “words of truth and sound-

⁴⁹ Other places: “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (1 Cor 1:18); “For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.” (1 Cor 1:21); “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight. As it is written: ‘He catches the wise in their craftiness’.” (1 Cor 3:19).

⁵⁰ BARRAM, “Fools for the sake of Christ”, 195–207.

⁵¹ “Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

⁵² “What I mean, brothers and sisters, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they do not; those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.”

⁵³ GORSKI, *Godseekers*, 185: “... it must be clearly said at the outset that St Paul is not narrowly concerned with the ‘feigning’ of ‘madness’. The resonance of his words goes broader and deeper and establishes the relationship of the Christian to this world. The Christian is a witness to a wisdom that is not and cannot be recognized by the world, and so St Paul mounts a sustained refutation of the wisdom of men and of ‘the rulers of this age’.”

mindfulness” (Acts 26:24-26).⁵⁴ He follows the divine logos instead of the worldly logic. When he speaks at the Areopagus in Athens about the altar for the unknown god, he knows how to catch the attention of the philosophers and poets and face them with the foolishness of their wisdom and the wisdom in their foolish gestures (Act 17:22-29). Many of them did not look in the mirror that Paul held up to them. They shut him out, but some of them listened. Paraphrasing Hosea 14: some understood his foolish behavior, the others stumbled over it.

In the conduct of the apostle we may recognize the ambiguity of the *homo sacer*. By giving a voice to the divine logos which reveals, as in a mirror, the foolishness of human logical thinking, Paul creates a paradoxical space: there is foolishness in wise men, and wisdom in simple people, weakness in strong men, and strength in the weak humans. There is foolishness in all human beings, a *homo sacer* in all of us; that is a sign of our reconciliation.

c. A nun

Isidora of Tabenna (Egypt 4th C) lived as a nun in a monastery.⁵⁵ She did not speak, she worked in the kitchen washing the pots, was never seen eating or sitting at a

⁵⁴ “And while he was speaking these things in his defense, Festus says in a loud voice, “You are mad, Paul. Great learning is turning you to madness”. But Paul says, “I am not mad, most-excellent Festus, but I am declaring words of truth and of sound-mindedness.”

⁵⁵ Palladius: *The Lausiaca History*, Chapter XXXIV: “The nun who feigned madness.” He writes: “In this monastery there was another virgin who feigned madness and possession by a demon. And they detested her so much that they would not even eat with her, she preferring this. She would wander about in the kitchen and do every kind of menial work, and she was, as they say, “the monastery sponge,” fulfilling in fact the words of Scripture: “If any one seem to be wise among you in this world, let him become foolish that he may be wise.” She fastened some rags on her head----all the rest had the tonsure and wore cowls----and served in this guise. None of the 400 sisters ever saw her chewing during the years of her life. She never sat at table, nor partook of a piece of bread, but wiping up the crumbs from the tables and washing the kitchen pots she was content with what she got in this way. Never did she insult any one nor grumble nor talk either little or much, although she was cuffed and insulted and cursed and execrated. Now an angel appeared to the holy Piteroum, an anchorite of high reputation who dwelt in Porphyrites, and said to him: “Why are you proud of yourself for being religious and dwelling in a place like this? Do you want to see a woman who is more religious than you? Go to the monastery of the Tabennesiot women and there you will find a woman wearing a crown on her head. She is better than you. For though she spars with so great a crowd, she has never let her heart go away from God. But you sit here and wander in imagination through the different

table. Her sisters consider her as a fool, a “sale.” A topic of the fool is that the community has forgotten about him or her: “there is one lacking.” On the revelation of an angel, the hermit Piteroum went to search and ask for her and immediately recognized her grace. He told the sisters that not Isidora was the fool, but they. The sisters confessed before Piteroum their bad behavior towards her. Not before Isidora: it is not about reconciliation with her, but with the forgotten One she is presenting. This is another topic of the fool, that he or she avoid any attention towards his or her person, for they are a servant of the Lord. Isidora could not stand the attention about her person, and secretly left the monastery. How she lived and died after she left is unknown.

We recognize the motif of the mirror in the harsh judgement from Piteroum towards the sisters, who had considered Isidora a fool but were fools themselves. From Anthony the Great is the quote: “Here comes the time, when people will behave like madmen, and if they see anybody who does not behave like that, they will rebel against him and say: ‘You are mad’, — because he is not like them.”

Palladius calls her “the nun who feigned madness,” but Isidora did not feign anything. She identified with the *homo sacer*, the excluded human. And she took this position voluntarily in order to keep close to the Lord. She did so in silence, leaving no traces of her presence. And yet, her traceless path was followed in her story.

cities." And he who had never gone out went off to that monastery and besought the masters to let him go to the monastery of the women. They were emboldened to let him in, since he was famous and advanced in years. And having gone in he demanded to see them all. But she did not appear. At last he said to them: "Bring me all, for there is one lacking." They said to him: "We have one within in the kitchen, a sale." For thus they style the mentally afflicted. He said to them: "Bring her also to me. Let me see her." They went off to call her. She did not answer, perhaps perceiving what was the matter, or even having had a revelation. They drag her forcibly and say to her: "The holy Piteroum wants to see you"; for he was famous. When she came, he perceived the rag on her forehead and fell at her feet and said to her: "Bless me." She also fell at his feet in like manner, saying: "Do you bless me, Master." They were all amazed and said to him: "Father, do not let her insult you, she is sale." Said Piteroum to them all: "You are sale. For she is mother both of me and you"----for thus they call the spiritual women----"and I pray to be found worthy of her in the day of judgment." Having heard these words they fell at his feet, all confessing in different ways: one that she had poured the rinsings of the plate over her; another that she had beaten her with her fist; another that she had applied a mustard-plaster to her nose. And, in a word, all confessed outrages of one kind or another. So after praying for them he went away. And after a few days, unable to bear her glory and the honour bestowed by the sisters, and burdened by their apologies, she left the monastery. And where she went, or where she disappeared to, or how she died, no one knows."

Again, we need the order of the story, to see the empty space it is creating. The extremely humble position that Isidora held – clothing in rags, eating crumbs, working in the kitchen, cleaning pots, dedicated to God in constant prayer and self-renunciation, accepting insults in silence – can be recognized in later fools for Christ. Perhaps we should be careful of interpreting them as her followers, for it is conceivable that anyone radically following the Lord in His footsteps will naturally be ‘clothed’ with the same characteristics. There is a motif of recognition in the holy fool, for we are all not even that different from Isidora.

d. A saint⁵⁶

Francis of Assisi shows many aspects of the fool for Christ. Although he may never have heard about Isidora, he too has worked in the kitchen of a monastery, and left,⁵⁷ he was constantly praying,⁵⁸ he had the habit of acting foolish,⁵⁹ or of sneaking away when people might praise him,⁶⁰ he called himself dead for the order,⁶¹ and when his brotherhood planned to become a steadily organized order, he declared that God had sent him in humility and simplicity as “a new fool”.⁶²

⁵⁶ *The difference between saint, sanctus, and sacred, sacer, has been described by Émile BENVENISTE, Dictionary of Indo-European Concepts and Society, 462-463: “There is not only the difference between sacer as a natural state and sanctus as the result of some operation. One said: via sacra, mons sacer, dies sacra, but always murus sanctus, lex sancta. What is sanctus is the wall and not the domain enclosed by it, which is said to be sacer. What is sanctus is what is defended by certain sanctions. But the fact of making contact with the “sacred” does not bring about the state of being sanctus. There is no sanction for the man who by touching the sacer himself becomes sacer. He is banished from the community, but he is not punished any more than the man who kills him is. One might say of the sanctum that it is what is found on the periphery of the sacrum, what serves to isolate it from all contact.”*

⁵⁷ *The Life of Saint Francis by Thomas of Celano, 16 [Future reference: 1Cel 16], in: ARMSTRONG/WAYNE HELLMANN/SHORT (ed.), Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, vol. 1, The Saint, 195. [Future reference: FAED I].*

⁵⁸ 1 Cel 24, in FAED I, 203.

⁵⁹ *Assisi Compilation, 80 [Future reference: AC 80], in: ARMSTRONG/WAYNE HELLMANN/SHORT (ed.), Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, vol. 2, The Founder, 181-182. [Future reference: FAED II].*

⁶⁰ *Fioretti, 21 [Future reference: Fior 21], in Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, vol. 3, ARMSTRONG / WAYNE HELLMANN/SHORT (ed.), The Prophet, 601-604 [Future reference: FAED III].*

⁶¹ *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul by Thomas of Celano, 143 [Future reference: 2Cel 143], in FAED II, 340.*

⁶² *Francis calls himself unus novellus pazzus in mundo before his brothers, in AC 18.*

Francis had left the world and identified with people who were banned from the world:⁶³ the poor, who did not take part in the economy, the bandits, who could not have a social life, the lepers, who were expelled from the city. He had chosen to follow the Lord in His footsteps (1 Petrus 2:21),⁶⁴ and became a *homo sacer*, full of foolish gestures.

Francis went so far as to associate himself with animals. As they were God's creatures too, he called them his brothers and sisters. Although the association of the *homo sacer* with animals is not explicitly discussed by Agamben, he mentions this association several times.⁶⁵ An interesting example in this respect is the story of the wolf of Gubbio in *Fioretti* 21. This wolf did not only attack sheep, but also people, and the city of Gubbio lived in fear of this disordered creature. Francis went out of town to meet the wolf, "brother wolf," tamed him, brought him into the city and reconciled the people with the wolf. The story can be read as if it concerns a 'wolf-man' or *wargus*, a Germanic figure of the *homo sacer*. A sacred man associates with the *wargus* – *homo sacer* meets *homo sacer* – to establish a state of exception in which the law and order of the city can be revived. In the same way, Francis reconciled the other outcasts with the city and the church, not least Christ in his famous Christmas celebration above a manger in Greccio (1Cel 84-87).⁶⁶

In Francis of Assisi, we recognize the prophetic motif of reconciling the people, who have forgotten the life which bears and sustains their world, and God, who gave and gives that life. And here we may add a third reconciliation, namely that in calling them brothers and sisters, Francis reconciles the forgotten people and creatures with themselves: you are loved, you are good. In the case of the wolf and the people of Gubbio (and also his own brothers), he sometimes does so by confronting them with their bad behavior. This confrontational motif, the mirror, can be recognized in

⁶³ Testament, 1-3 [Future reference Test 1-3], in FAED I, 124.

⁶⁴ This is one of the motifs of the life of Francis. It can, for example, be found in his Earlier Rule (*Regula Non Bullata* I:1), in FAED I, 63-64.

⁶⁵ AGAMBEN, *Homo Sacer*, 89: "The life of the bandit, like that of the sacred man, is ... a threshold of indistinction and of passage between animal and man, physis and nomos, exclusion and inclusion."

⁶⁶ The story is about the revivification of the forgotten child of Bethlehem, "wakening Him from a deep sleep."

all the exemplary holy fools mentioned here. But, again, the intention of all confrontations is a reconciliation.

e. A pope

Pope Francis is certainly not a fool, but his gestures catch the eye, arouse surprise and, among some traditional Catholics, annoyance. Indeed, compared to the other popes, Francis' behavior is deviant. As a sovereign without violence – the Vatican State has no military power – pope Francis criticizes the powerful in the church and in the world. In his second encyclical *Laudato Si'* he writes: "What would induce anyone, at this stage, to hold on to power, only to be remembered for their inability to take action when it was urgent and necessary to do so?"⁶⁷ Meanwhile, Francis has surprisingly personal encounters with the homeless, poor, and also with the press.⁶⁸ He sees the sacred side of the poor, the fugitives, and the secluded people; calls them the treasure of the Church.⁶⁹

By taking intermediary positions in the world and in the church as inside & outside and in-between the powerful and the powerless, pope Francis acts like a foolish sovereign. He does not have the power, nor the strategy to solve the problems of the world and the church, but he calls a state of exception in which the world and the church can be revived. This call is a gesture, but not an ineffective one. Speaking and acting in the name of Christ, he takes up the position of the prophet. As a fool, a sovereign, a prophet, a *homo sacer* Francis presents the mystery of bare life in our world and in our church, and revives it from a deep sleep.

4. THE GESTURE AS A VICARIOUS ACT

Discussing the foolish conduct of a prophet, an apostle, a nun, a saint and a pope, we were confronted with the deviance of the prophetic act itself: he or she does not do something (*agere*) nor did he or she make something (*facere*), but he or she was

⁶⁷ *Laudato Si'*, 57. In his Apostolic Exhortation *Laudate Deum* 60, Francis quotes these words.

⁶⁸ Just as an example of the surprising gestures of Pope Francis: in November 2015 he received Marc, a homeless man, vendor of the 'homeless-newspaper' *Straatnieuws* (Streetnews) for an interview. Cf. NOS NIEUWS, *Straatnieuws spreekt paus: deze zomer was er dan die witte rook*.

⁶⁹ Cf. VATICAN NEWS, *Pope on World Day of Poor*.

as it were the carrier of an act not of his or her own (but for example carried out in the name of God). The Latin verb *gerere* – from which the English lent the words ‘gesture’ and ‘gestation’ – expresses this “third type of action,” which means to bear or to carry out.⁷⁰ Agamben interprets the gesture as “an activity or a potential that consists in deactivating human works and rendering them inoperative, and in this way, [opening] them to a new, possible use.”⁷¹ The focus of attention in a gesture is on the act itself, for it has a meaning that it will reveal itself: the gesture is a mystery driven type of action. Perhaps the ‘gestation’ of a mother bearing a child can help understand the mysterious nature of the gesture, for the activity of the mother is to create an environment where the unknown fruit can grow until it is born and reveals itself. Likewise, the prophetic gesture may be interpreted as an activity in which the word of God, carried out by the prophet who gives it a human voice and a human body, is born into the world to “achieve the purpose for which God sent it” (Isa 55:11).

On the conceptual plan, the gesture is a carrying out of a word from the Sovereign, so that for example Jesus does what was prophesied by Zechariah. Intellectuals will discuss the deviant behavior of the holy fool, and explain its message as if it were a problem to be solved. But the true meaning of a gesture is not discussed and explained, for it reveals itself. The foolish gesture is not defined by the human logic, but it is a voice and a movement which communicates “from body to body and from culture to culture”.⁷² Children may understand it, whereas the intelligentsia will be puzzled (Mt 11:25 - “you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children”).

⁷⁰ “... Varro, taking up the Aristotelian distinction between *poiesis* and *praxis*, doing and acting, introduces among them a third type of action (*tertium genus agendi*), which he expresses by means of the verb *gerere*.” And quoting Varro: “... the imperator (...), in respect to whom one uses the expression *res gerere*, in this neither makes nor acts but *gerit*, that is, assumes and supports [*sustinet*], a meaning transferred from those who hold office [or, according to some manuscripts, ‘bear a weight’], because they assume and support it.” AGAMBEN, Karman, 83. I discussed the gestures of Francis of Assisi and Pope Francis in SPEELMAN, Pope Francis and Francis of Assisi, 275-288.

⁷¹ AGAMBEN, Karman, 84.

⁷² STERN, *Ghosting*, 185-215.

The little children, the ‘poor in spirit,’ do not stumble over foolish gestures because they do not differentiate them in either foolish or normal: they just follow them. It is not the analyzing and logical mind, but the flexible body and sensitive ear which follow the prophet’s moves. Perhaps the children do not understand the gestures, not in an intellectual way, but they get it, for it gets to them.⁷³ Gestures communicate from body to body. Suppose you would meet Isidora in her silence. How would your body react? A natural reaction, as of a little child, would be that you imitate her silence. The communication from body to body is first of all an imitation, in this case following the silence of the other. This silence, generated by your imitating body, is in immediate message to yourself: you feel your own silence. This is not understanding in an intellectual way, but it *is* an understanding, a direct message moving your flesh. The way a *homo sacer* communicates is not by talking about the reality, but by sharing the pure being of that reality.⁷⁴

The communication of the gesture, then, is like a mirror: it is a reflection of an activity on the body itself performing that activity. The prophetic gesture of the fool shows the people what they are doing without knowing it, or what they know without acting accordingly. The performance of that gesture reconciles the people’s reality with reality itself. It will not improve the world, but bring the people back to the real world, and to the world of which God saw that it was good. The people see and hear a fool, foul, homeless, unpredictable, humble, breaking the rules and talking in riddles. But some also recognize their own situation and their own self in these foolish gestures.

Ultimately, the state – city and church – will put the *homo sacer* in a state of exception: either as a king, a saint, a bandit or a fool. The one in a palace, the second in a cloister, the third in prison and the fourth in an asylum.⁷⁵ In this way, the problematic is separated from the regular and put ‘forward’ in an enclosed space:

⁷³ In the words of Charles Taylor, *their selves are not buffered yet, so that the world can get to them.* TAYLOR, *A Secular Age*, 38.

⁷⁴ AGAMBEN, *Homo Sacer*, 149: “For bare life is certainly as indeterminate and impenetrable as haplos Being, and one could say that reason cannot think bare life except as it thinks pure Being, in stupor and in astonishment.”

⁷⁵ Svetlana Koblets writes: “In the eighteenth century there appeared the first lunatic asylums where holy fools could be detained along with conventional madmen.” Quoted in GORSKI, *Godseekers*, 193.

excluded by inclusion. But even then, taken apart, the sacred human will function as a spiritual resource for the state by creating moments in which the mystery may come forth.

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LA SPIRITUALITÉ DU COUPLE ÉLECTIF, UNE RESSOURCE D'AVENIR POUR L'EUROPE DU XXI^E SIÈCLE

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Keywords: conjugal spirituality, marriage, couple life, postmodernity

INTRODUCTION

La famille aurait-elle vécu son âge d'or, défait par l'individualisme ? Le pape François reste prudent, tant le rigorisme anhistorique perd de vue la « Joie de l'amour », même fragilisée.

Amoris laetitia (AL) salue l'œuvre de l'Esprit dans les créatures avançant *hic et nunc*, en vertu de la promesse universelle du salut et de la fidélité du Dieu de l'Alliance... et cela, sous le prisme d'une justice céleste⁷⁶ qui, dans les temps « avant-derniers »⁷⁷, appelle à l'espérance⁷⁸.

De fait, « en théologie, la foi sans l'espérance n'est rien, car, dans le malheur, c'est l'espérance qui supporte et persévère, et qui remporte la victoire »⁷⁹. En outre, l'œuvre du Dieu trine dépasse l'entendement, l'Esprit défendant, relevant et équipant dans l'adversité.

L'Évangile empêche de voir une personne peinant dans une histoire singulière, en des temps et lieu particuliers, comme un être privé d'inspiration. Le regard de Jésus sur deux femmes, adultère ou moult fois remariée, le confirme.

⁷⁶ CHALAMET, *Une voie infiniment supérieure*, 136.

⁷⁷ Cf. GARRIGUES, « L'inachèvement du salut, composante essentielle du temps de l'Eglise ».

⁷⁸ Pape FRANÇOIS, *Fratelli Tutti* (FT), 196.

⁷⁹ CHALAMET, *Une voie*, 24-25.

Dénoncer la « crise » familiale sans recul revient à oublier d'y lire un Signe des temps, non sans occulter bien des usages délétères du passé. Accompagner tout un chacun, c'est ainsi se faire « présence d'Esprit »⁸⁰ colorée de confiance, accueillant la vie telle un cadeau divin. C'est déborder d'*agapè* pour d'autres, voulant leur bien gratuitement⁸¹, tout en les aidant en conscience.

Ceci conduit à s'intéresser, successivement : à la spiritualité du couple dit « électif » comme promesse ; à ses enjeux, mesurés avec le pape François ; aux modalités d'une pastorale familiale ancrée dans le présent et porteuse d'avenir.

1. LA SPIRITUALITÉ DU COUPLE ÉLECTIF COMME PROMESSE

Un couple âgé tendre et complice est touchant. Tous, jeunes inclus, rêvent de cela, même en doutant d'y arriver : trace d'un vrai accord sur la vie affective adulte. Or, un nouveau style de couple investit désormais la vie à deux et en famille de façon constamment amoureuse. Disruptif dans ses vues et pratiques, il suscite une vraie bascule dans l'histoire humaine.

De fait, mariés et chrétiens ou non, nombre de nos contemporains voient le couple comme un lieu où vivre des attentes si fortes qu'ils sont prêts à tout perdre pour elles... C'est le cœur battant de ma recherche.

1.1 Définir le paradigme du couple électif

J'ai dégagé en 2017 le paradigme du « couple électif » (du latin *eligere*, choisir). Émergé en Occident, ce schéma se propage. À l'âge de fonder une famille, il naît de *l'élection amoureuse de deux personnes, très souvent un homme et une femme*⁸², *voulant vivre à deux, avec un projet d'enfant le moment venu*⁸³.

⁸⁰ BARTH, *Le développement durable du couple*.

⁸¹ MANGENOT, *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, 613-614.

⁸² C'est parfois un couple homosexuel : cf. « le mariage pour tous » en France.

⁸³ En Europe les couples sans projet d'enfant étaient moins de 3 % en 2014 ; cela croît avec la crise climatique.

7 traits s’y associent, auxquels les couples peuvent intégrer ou non des normes religieuses :

1. « Le couple électif » se choisit librement par amour et pour l’amour mutuel.
2. Il engage à son rythme une communauté de toit, de table et de lit⁸⁴.
3. Il décide ou non une officialisation civile, sinon chrétienne.
4. Il mène son projet d’enfant en coopération libre (moment, nombre) sans confier la charge éducative à un seul conjoint.
5. Il revalide son choix ; il faut s’y impliquer pour durer.
6. Il admet de stopper si l’un se dédit, ou les deux.
7. S’il se sépare, il peut se recomposer ou non, avec ou sans enfant(s).

En Occident, cultures, sociétés et Église l’élaborent, sans toujours s’en aviser, *intra et extra matrimonium*, guidées notamment par l’Amour courtois issu d’une veine mystique orientale chrétienne reprise en islam⁸⁵.

On s’y lance, mais s’y perpétue aussi, sur la base d’une alliance intime et d’une promesse de bonheur vraiment partagé. S’y tissent désir amoureux (*eros*), relation partenariale bienveillante (*philia*) acceptation bilatérale à mettre le projet de couple, sinon le bien du conjoint, en priorité (*agapè*) quand cela s’impose, mais sans altération des intégrités ni dissymétrie persistante. L’éducation est non-violente.

En somme, au gré de valeurs choisies hors cadre patriarcal, un tel modèle mobilise des sujets en vis-à-vis, alors même que les société et Église contrôlent moins la vie privée.

Miser sur la relation ajustée et la gestion commune d’un projet co-élaboré révèle en creux les dérives de systèmes sociaux fondés sur la soumission. Niant la souffrance des dominés, femmes et enfants d’abord, ils les font taire : en famille, en société, voire en Église.

⁸⁴ *Peu de liaisons en résidence séparée incluent un projet d’enfant commun.*

⁸⁵ BROGNIET « L’influence des poètes arabes préislamiques sur la naissance de l’amour courtois chez les troubadours de langue d’oc », 2011, site www.arlfb.be. Pour les références appuyant la partie I de l’article, voir S. BARTH, « La voie de l’amour électif », in *Mariage, familles & Spirituality; La voie de l’amour électif : Une interpellation spirituelle; Le développement durable du couple*, op. cit.

Au vrai, on détecte aussi des problèmes qu'on ne saurait pourtant imputer qu'aux conjoint(e)s : j'y reviendrai.

Quoique, donc, cette innovation balbutie encore, *la voie de l'amour électif*⁸⁶ est un *synodos*, en écho, prometteur en soi, aux enjeux ecclésiaux et mondiaux actuels.

1.2 Concevoir la spiritualité « coélective »

À quel titre parler d'une *spiritualité* du **couple électif**, ou « spiritualité **coélective** »⁸⁷, comme ressource d'avenir ?

Il se trouve que les attentes nommées « spirituelles » par les experts en Europe se projettent dans le couple : à savoir la cohérence du faire, du sentir et du penser (« orthopraxie, orthopathie, orthodoxie »). On espère y devenir pleinement soi-même, vivre une vérité de soi et de l'autre, atteindre un équilibre de vie non productiviste en une intimité joyeuse. On doit s'y dépasser et décentrer pour le bien des deux conjoints, et des enfants, en mode de co-conception et copilotage.

On exerce l'art de s'aimer et construire pas à pas son couple, corps, âme et esprit mêlés, en vivant un amour mature inscrit dans la durée, rejoignant le « sentiment volontaire » évoqué dans *Gaudium et Spes*, explicité en 2005 dans le *Lexique du vocabulaire ambigu et controversé sur la famille, la vie et les questions éthiques*, comme je le montre ailleurs⁸⁸.

Théologienne mariée, accompagnant des couples, j'en suis témoin : de l'élection mutuelle aux étapes majeures et temps d'ajustements, les processus liés à la voie élective sont constamment instituants, et réclament l'engagement.

Si se marier, y compris religieusement, fait sens, cela ne fait pas « tout », sauf à nier la densité d'une relation et d'un projet de couple de qualité qui mette en route, requière le meilleur de soi, non sans s'affronter aux limites humaines. Le couple

⁸⁶ C'est le titre de ma thèse publiée, cf. note 85.

⁸⁷ La spiritualité « conjugale » est proprement celle du mariage. Ce terme renvoie aussi à l'idée de collaboration.

⁸⁸ S. BARTH, *Le développement durable du couple*, 107-109.

durable fait tomber les illusions au moment où il fait grandir. La spiritualité coélective y est quête concrète de sens et de souffle, une inspiration après l'autre.

Ressaisir en chrétien ce qui sort des cadres reçus importe. Mon livre récent y œuvre... Taxer le neuf de ridicule, nocif ou « évident » nie en tout cas son potentiel novateur. D'ailleurs, Vatican II tient que l'Esprit œuvre en toute personne « de bonne volonté ». Théologie de la grâce et pneumatologie allant de pair, AL ose dire de conjoints aimants, même « limités »⁸⁹ ou hors-cadre, que la grâce agit aussi en eux⁹⁰.

1.3 Systématiser le concept de « spiritualité coélective »

J'ai trouvé un appui précieux dans la pensée de J-C Sagne, psychosociologue reconnu, et dominicain. Pour lui, l'élan d'alliance faisant croître un petit d'homme naît d'un don et lien nourriciers⁹¹. Sécurisé par des mots et des gestes pour patienter entre les tétés, le bébé s'inscrit dans des interactions repérables, le rendant capable un jour d'un donner-recevoir adulte.

De fait, la voie coélective intègre l'altérité comme un cadeau, tel que le veut l'Esprit-Saint⁹². Sortir de soi (l'ek-stase), saisir le *kairos* de l'échange empreint de désir, mener le combat contre les tics, peurs, fausses croyances, en somme, lâcher la lutte pour le pouvoir, transforme jour après jour.

Loin du « tout à l'égo », si donateur, donataire et mouvement de don sont actifs de conserve (d'ailleurs identifiables de façon trinitaire !), la quête coélective sollicite les vertus cardinales. À certaines conditions, elle devient théologale, assume la dynamique sacramentelle et approfondit la pensée du mariage.

C'est qu'humainement, la *promesse de bonheur partagé*, l'*alliance privilégiée* à horizon humain culminent dans l'*intimité féconde* entre des adultes qui édifient en altérité une *communauté sociale amoureuse* de sujets solides et vulnérables,

⁸⁹ Voir AL, 301.

⁹⁰ AL, 291.

⁹¹ Cf. SAGNE, *La loi du don*, partie 1.

⁹² THÉOBALD, « L'Esprit Mystagogue », 85-98.

œuvrant ensemble à des communs solidaires. Quatre éléments de systématisation bien liés !

En vision chrétienne, la lumière des Promesse et Alliance d'Amour bibliques éclairent ce projet incarné, au gré des desseins divins de salut et d'accomplissement. Placée dans la perspective de la suite du Christ, la *communio personarum* catholique cimente, elle, une petite "*communauté de disciples et d'apôtres égaux et partenaires placés sous l'impulsion ... de l'Esprit*"⁹³. Dotée de charismes singuliers, la communauté conjugale « sacramentelle » et la communauté familiale vivent la finitude comme un appel à la conversion.

Ici, les couples dits « réguliers » n'ont plus de monopole !⁹⁴ Selon la parabole des vigneronniers appelés à la vigne⁹⁵, un « non » finalement suivi d'engagement sauve. Ceci posé, à quels enjeux se confronte la spiritualité coélective comme ressource d'avenir ?

2. LA SPIRITUALITÉ COÉLECTIVE ET SES ENJEUX AU REGARD DE LA PENSÉE DU PAPE FRANÇOIS

Je suivrai ici la méthode du Pape François : mesurer une situation, poser les questions *ad hoc*, les éclairer des Écritures pour agir.

2.1 Mesurer la situation

La crise conjugale actuelle appelle à aiguïser notre regard. L'instabilité familiale a des causes multiples !

Y conduisent déjà les maux globaux nommés dans *Fratelli Tutti (FT)* ... Soit la délinquance structurée, via le crime organisé et/ou le terrorisme (y compris étatique) : traite humaine, esclavage, trafic d'organes, tissus, stupéfiants, et règlements de compte. La famille en est détruite. Mais celle plus larvée des

⁹³ BORDEYNE, *Éthique du mariage*, 128.

⁹⁴ C'est l'objet du chapitre 8 d'AL.

⁹⁵ Mt 21, 28-32.

« quartiers - ghettos » voire des milieux aisés, mêlant addictions, deal et violence sexuelle, est délétère aussi.

D'autres facteurs agissent, anciens comme actuels. Les illusions de la romance, déifiant l'amour-fusion, amollissent. Pour l'idéalisme catholique, la foi, voire la pitié, font tout : haro sur les faibles⁹⁶. La pornographie, elle, scénarise des performances sexistes, aux dépens de personnes fragiles. La stratégie de vente, aguicheuse, capte le flux cérébral quand a pression pour produire éreinte. Comment se « retrouver », discerner des choix, les concrétiser et les affiner, aborder un conflit si l'on est harassé, harcelé et privé de formation, concertation, vision, et sans objectifs à réévaluer, même si l'on a des valeurs ?

D'autant que le couple s'épuise à fournir le matin des apprenants et des actifs en bonne santé, propres sur eux, bien nourris et reposés, aux lieux d'enseignement et de travail qui souvent les mettent à mal. L'individualisme a bon dos, quand le système exploite la famille !

Et puis la « modernité liquide » et la loi du marché sévissent, comme le montre Eva Illouz⁹⁷. Aux yeux des hommes menant carrière – encore fertiles à 70 ans – toutes les femmes sont convoitables. Pour elles, instruites et compétentes, avoir au moins un enfant avant 40 ans puis l'élever, est prenant (c'est pire en « solo »). Elles restent cibles de violences et d'iniquités au foyer, en société, en Église, face à l'accès aux biens essentiels, au « coût » de la vie familiale et aux décisions les concernant. Fonder un foyer est donc plus difficile pour elles.

Mais les hommes vivent mal les séparations subies. C'est que la vie change⁹⁸, que la dynamique coélective éprouve⁹⁹, quand les heurts réactivent des défenses

⁹⁶ DUMAS, *Il était une fois*, 412-430.

⁹⁷ Cf. ILLOUZ, *Pourquoi l'amour fait mal*.

⁹⁸ *Les contraintes économiques et la pression sociale étaient dissuasives pour les femmes*.

⁹⁹ Cf. GOTTMAN, *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail*.

archaïques¹⁰⁰. Si la violence menace, il faut y mettre fin¹⁰¹, non sans risque¹⁰². Or, si un duo ne peut « rester coûte que coûte », un « solo malgré lui » doit-il « s'isoler à vie », avec ou sans enfant(s) ?

Au vrai, la crise ordinaire met en danger quand on la nie, la reporte sur l'autre, fuit ou se raidit, mais elle fait mûrir si on la traite. Le défi, c'est de s'assouplir sans juste se soumettre ; alors la vie peut rejaillir. Un couple assaini peut relever ses membres une vie durant¹⁰³.

Au fond, ce qui étonne, telle la « petite fille espérance »¹⁰⁴, est le succès du paradigme coélectif, comme « art vivant » de la relation en contexte complexe.

2.2 Poser des questions

Quelque chose choque, toutefois. Pourquoi le potentiel de changement du couple électif passe-t-il autant inaperçu... alors que viser, sans juste « se caser », une relation adulte, unifiée, où chacun(e) ait place et dignité égales – intégrant les différences¹⁰⁵, articulant les besoins personnels et collectifs, ménageant l'interface entre intime et social – est aussi porteur ?

Depuis la Covid, de fait, les échelons familial et socio-politique sont mieux reliés. On voit que l'amour vrai aide à endurer le manque, l'inconnu, il ouvre au don, dynamique que le pouvoir, le sexe et l'argent idolâtrés ruinent. Des choix vertueux démultipliés créent des tendances globales, c'est la « vocation sociale de l'amour »¹⁰⁶. Des foyers « écoresponsables » changent ainsi de vie, des ménages généreux hébergent, soutiennent, se mobilisent, s'allient pour agir.

¹⁰⁰ HAHUSSEAU, *Petit guide de l'amour heureux*, 68-70, 132-143; MILJOKOVITCH, *Les fondations du lien amoureux*, 211.; CYRULNIK, *Parler d'amour au bord du gouffre*, 141-150.

¹⁰¹ *L'Église, qui l'admet comme tel, n'accorde de nullité que si l'on prouve des obstacles clairs au début. Mais un appariement impossible ne se voit pas toujours d'emblée.*

¹⁰² *On s'expose à la solitude, au désespoir voire à la mort (suicide ; féminicide).*

¹⁰³ *On peut parler là de résilience (ANAUT, *Le concept de résilience*, 4-11.). Des couples trouvent comme « bien aller » durablement (voir les études de psychologie positive d'Y. DALLAIRE). NB :*

¹⁰⁴ Cf. PÉGUY, *Le Porche du mystère*.

¹⁰⁵ *Si l'un « n'est » jamais l'autre, ne serait-ce qu'en comparant don de sperme et GPA, on ne peut pas non plus occulter la réalité de couples homosexuels pérennes.*

¹⁰⁶ BORDEYNE, *Éthique du mariage*, 128.

Précisément, le pape François désire que chacun/(e) concoure au bien commun¹⁰⁷. Cela repose pour part sur des couples « adultes » ayant le sens « de la solidarité et de la fraternité »¹⁰⁸. Mais c'est aussi collectif : « *l'amour fait de petits gestes d'attention mutuelle est aussi civil et politique, et il se manifeste dans toutes les actions qui essaient de construire un monde meilleur* »¹⁰⁹, aussi vrai que « *la stature spirituelle est définie par l'amour qui nous amène à chercher le meilleur pour la vie de l'autre* ». Quel éclairage offre alors la Parole de Dieu sur la correspondance entre relation de couple, dessein créateur et salut du monde ?

2.3 Apprécier la spiritualité coélective au regard des Écritures et de la Tradition Une intuition biblique retient l'attention.

La métaphore du jeune époux, épris mais respectant l'épouse « séduite au désert », croise deux utopies : une alliance d'amour avec Dieu et un mariage humain, tous deux « amoureusement réciproques ». La teneur du *Cantique des Cantiques* y renvoie, en écho à la une mystique orientale qui donnera le *Fin'amor*.

Pour autant, presque tous les couples bibliques s'égarer. Mais Dieu les appelle sans se lasser ! Et la thématique amoureuse inspire, en filigrane. Augustin, dans son *De bono conjugali*, évoquant la mère de son fils mort jeune, n'ose-t-il pas nommer « mariage » une union de fait électivement fidèle¹¹⁰ ? Il y a peu, GS associe, dans une veine patristique, la vision d'un Dieu Trine bénissant la création et les créatures, et une vue personnaliste du mariage.

On l'admet davantage depuis peu : les couples, y compris les plus « saints », restent « imparfaits ». Des époux, on le sait, perdent la foi ; des *lapsi*, réintégrés avec discernement, reviennent aux sacrements avec joie¹¹¹ ; d'autres désertent le culte, qui s'aiment et croient¹¹².

¹⁰⁷ FT, 162.

¹⁰⁸ Comme le résume le service du Vatican synthétisant Fratelli Tutti.

¹⁰⁹ FT, 181.

¹¹⁰ AUGUSTIN, *De Bono Conjugali*, chapitre V, 401, voir *Le développement durable du couple*, 59.

¹¹¹ En France sont organisés des parcours *Amoris laetitia*, voir le site [www. http://sedirelyon.fr](http://sedirelyon.fr).

¹¹² AL, 304. Le pape renvoie au vécu, et non à l'abstrait.

AL tient que l'Esprit œuvre au cœur des limitations publiques et privée. Quel Bon Pasteur, à ce compte, jugerait, sans état d'âme, des liens de couple soignant des gens meurtris, dès lors le Bon Samaritain symbolise l'amour divin, que Yahvé épargne David, et Jésus, la Samaritaine ?

Et comment procède le Semeur divin ? La Bible le rappelle : la pluie du Ciel ne touche pas le sol sans effet. Ce champ du couple plein de ronces et de pierres, ou aride, on peut, misant sur des forces cachées aux superbes, le fertiliser, le mettre en « permaculture », pourquoi pas. Si, héritier du personnalisme conciliaire, Wojtyła a réhabilité le corps¹¹³, ne faudrait-il pas voir la fragilité du « cœur humain » comme un don plutôt qu'une menace ? Pousser à une ascèse janséniste frise le pélagianisme, sinon la gnose.

Il n'y a d'amour électif que perfectible, tant se chérir en couple toute une vie et faire famille dans l'*agapè* est fou ! D'autant que prioriser les normes, selon une pensée faussée de la grâce¹¹⁴, c'est biffer la limite, enclure l'inspiration, sinon ruiner le plan divin du salut. Le lien coélectif assumé du mieux « possible » tend ainsi à sanctifier *parce qu'il les humanise* ceux qui, sans vocation au célibat pour Dieu, osent l'intime altérité. Une exégèse attentive montre que le projet créateur inclut le vis-à-vis amoureux.¹¹⁵ On saisit mieux que violenter ou asservir est nocif, désirer une femme ou un homme avec respect, non. Ceci dit, il faut ajuster les rapports entre les sexes – et ce n'est pas acquis¹¹⁶, la réalité des abus le prouve.

3. PASTORALE FAMILIALE D'AVENIR ET DÉVELOPPEMENT DURABLE DU COUPLE

La pastorale ne peut plus ignorer la réalité coélective : il lui faut éclairer et soutenir les processus instituants, donner accès et goût à des outils inspirés et efficaces, et annoncer la Bonne Nouvelle du salut dès que c'est possible.

¹¹³ Une lecture anhistorique de la théologie du corps ferait du « cœur » un objet substitutif de soupçon.

¹¹⁴ Exhortation apostolique *Gaudete et exsultate*, n° 50.

¹¹⁵ Entre autres, MARCHADOUR, *Genèse, 13-33* ; AUBERT, *L'Exil féminin, 102-123*.

¹¹⁶ Cf. DERMIENCE, *La question féminine et l'Eglise catholique*.

Une pastorale qui fait fond sur la miséricorde divine, avec l'appel au dépassement, à l'audace du pas possible *hic et nunc*, contemple au final le Christ « qui vient à nous », faisant refluer ici-bas la promesse du salut.

3.1 Initier des processus

La sagesse du pape François sera précieuse, ici. « Il y a une grande noblesse dans le fait d'être capable d'initier des processus dont les fruits seront recueillis par d'autres, en mettant son espérance dans les forces secrètes du bien qui est semé »¹¹⁷. Une pastorale ouverte à un large public de couples en « formation continue » (en sus de la préparation au mariage) incitera tous les couples à relire les premiers « moments » de leur vie à deux : le processus de fondation - élection, mythe amoureux, premiers dialogues.

Comment se dessine l'*intra* et l'*extra* du couple (ex. qui est le « ministre des affaires extérieures » ?), ses relations aux proches et leur regard sur lui. Quelles sont les seuils et freins pour mettre en route et en œuvre un projet commun, un style de vie autour de valeurs-phares ; de quelle façon on a choisi, on investit et entretient le « nid » conjugal. La vie coélective a ses scansion, dans le long terme ; il est utile de donner des aperçus sur les phases et étapes de la vie du couple, et de l'existence tout court.

Ménager la création d'espaces pour communiquer est aussi capital : il est si tentant d'éluder l'échange en profondeur. Laisser entrevoir la beauté et le précieux d'une aventure inconfortable par nature compte, enfin. Tant de doutes incongrus naissent de fausses croyances : les tensions sont normales et salubres !

Il faut changer de culture face au couple et à la famille : en prendre soin comme d'un jardin, y voir une réalité vivante ; se faire aider, anticiper, et lire les « crises » comme une chance de croissance... Autant de bons réflexes face à la peur du conflit, dont seule la gestion en *casus belli* détruit¹¹⁸.

¹¹⁷ FT, 196.

¹¹⁸ FT, 244.

L'issue en est capitale, car le couple électif réussi réduit les carences affectives poussant à la rivalité mimétique, donc à l'agressivité et à la prédation censément compensatrice.

3.2 Croiser les inspirations

J'ai exposé (cf note 10) des ressources utiles, nées en Église et dans la société civile.

L'une d'elle, le conseil conjugal, s'enracine dans les traditions catholique et protestante..En catholicisme, des anthropologies moins pessimistes (salésienne, jésuite, franciscaine) ont permis, en théorie puis en pratique, de soutenir des couples en attente de sens et de souffle.

Mais des courants psychologiques américains, notamment rogériens, centrés sur la croissance des personnes l'ont aussi soutenu. Dans la société civile, en 1990, des praticiens européens se mettent à corrélérer capacité de résilience conjugale et valeurs spirituelles. C'est décisif notamment dans les épreuves graves. L'INTAMS confronte des pratiques civiles et ecclésiales pour le suivi des couples, et met en valeur leur enrichissement respectif, sans confondre les épistémologies¹¹⁹.

Il s'agit là de penser l'articulation entre l'inspiration à l'œuvre dans le monde, et dans l'Église, postulant qu'il s'agit du fruit du même Esprit¹²⁰. La mutation « interdisciplinaire » de l'Institut pontifical Jean-Paul II pour les Sciences du Mariage et de la Famille, conviant les Sciences Humaines et Sociales, marque ici une étape.

3.3 Servir l'espérance

Nos contemporains n'ont attendu personne pour faire du neuf. Ni dominer, ni manipuler : le credo coélectif rappelle comme tel la relation offerte par Dieu à ses créatures. Il est un peu court de s'en gausser, au motif de ses difficultés. Violenter et contrôler, n'est-ce pas, n'honore pas l'amour vrai.

¹¹⁹ *L'International Academy of Marital Spirituality a édité un précieux Companion to marital spirituality en 2008.*

¹²⁰ *Sur l'instrumentalisation abusive de l'Esprit au sein de l'institution ecclésiale, voir KASPER / SAUTER, Kirche-Ort des Geistes, 7-55.*

Le tissage nouveau de l'*eros*, de la *philia* et de l'*agapè*, quand on prend les moyens d'inscrire le projet dans la durée, avec une sécurité suffisante des échanges (même vifs), épure la relation adulte, les enfants en étant les premiers bénéficiaires. Pour autant, quid du juste accueil de la vie, face aux paradoxes du désir et du « projet d'enfant »¹²¹, aux manipulations du vivant, aux blessures dues aux aléas amoureux ?

La voie coélective se situe en somme dans une perspective qui invite à *l'espérance sans complaisance*. J. Ratzinger soulignait déjà la cohérence du projet divin d'Alliance, où Création, Révélation et Rédemption¹²² sont des « relations » initiées par Dieu. Inscrites dans le cadre trinitaire où s'enracine la notion théologique de *personne* sur laquelle repose l'analogie entre Dieu et l'homme, adressées à une créature libre, elles attendent un retour spontané sans l'imposer de force.

Dieu, ici, veut se fier aux créatures humaines frappées d'une limite ontologique¹²³. L'État, lui, par respect de la vie privée, se borne à préserver les liens filiaux, et à compenser le coût des ruptures. Proposer le conseil conjugal, initier les jeunes à la dynamique relationnelle en parlant du « développement durable du couple », et de ses bienfaits : prévenir plutôt que guérir, n'est pas son choix. Encourager au contraire la variété des propositions dans des modalités variées relèverait du service public, dans ces temps d'effondrement du lien¹²⁴.

Croiser les inspirations, valoriser des pratiques efficaces et les promouvoir, dans la conscience du « possible », se révèle ainsi porteur. Il s'agit de viser un couple « suffisamment bon » pour faire grandir sans altérer les intégrités, mais assumant de ne pas effacer le manque, d'inciter à l'ajustement, quitte à égratigner l'égo. Favoriser des pédagogies conjuguant humour, apports, créativité partagée, échanges de paroles non descendantes, ouverture au spirituel sans prosélytisme,

¹²¹ *On s'en garde quitte à avorter - l'écologie y questionnant aussi l'usage de la chimie et du latex, polluant - mais on souffre s'il échoue quand on le souhaite. L'éco-anxiété actuelle en dissuade.*

¹²² *La métaphore sotériologique du rachat en côtoie d'autres dans la Bible, ce qui élargit le regard, voir LOSSKY, A l'image et à la ressemblance de Dieu, 95-108. ; BORDEYNE, Éthique du mariage, 128.*

¹²³ « Dieu voit la réalité ambivalente qui caractérise tout être humain... Il les porte tous dans son amour et tous, dans le secret, lui rendent hommage. Car tous en fin de compte sont par lui identifiés à son Fils Bien-aimé », in FINO, « Un déplacement du regard, 79-80.

¹²⁴ *Un plaidoyer est mené en ce sens par les maisons Familya en France.*

art et instants festifs dans le respect de chacun, là où il en est, porte de bons fruits, comme je le constate¹²⁵.

Au fond, ce dont ont besoin les couples d'aujourd'hui n'est pas qu'on leur vende un vécu aisé : ils n'y croiraient pas. Il sera plus efficient de leur montrer l'innovation coélective comme une opportunité rare, un levier magnifique de maturation personnelle et collectif pour le bien de tous comme de la terre. Et les initier à ce qui est aidant. S'ouvrir à son potentiel exige là d'accueillir le manque avec paix, en renonçant au confort et à l'image idéale de soi autant qu'à l'obsession toute-puissante de la performance.

CONCLUSION

La voie de l'amour électif, dans son potentiel de résilience souvent méconnu, est une provocation à nouer des alliances plus constructives, saines, donc sanctifiantes... D'abord entre partenaires amoureux, puis entre parents et enfants, mais aussi entre acteurs de la réalité du couple et de la famille, dirigeants politiques / ecclésiastiques et citoyens / fidèles, entre confessions, entre religions, entre groupes sociaux et culturels, en vue du bien de tous. Ceci implique la prise en compte de la vulnérabilité, c'est-à-dire l'abandon d'un idéalisme excessif, puisque les personnes concernées ne sont pas toujours « en pleine possession de leurs moyens ». Elles ne sauraient être tenues au prodige, donc au silence et à la résignation quant à leur souffrance, pour ne pas déranger les ordres et/ou les théories établis. Cela suppose aussi de sortir d'un lâche fatalisme, faisant silence sur les divers moyens propres à permettre la maturation bienfaisante qu'autorise le modèle coélectif bien vécu. L'on peut véritablement parler ici de conversion, au sens sportif et spirituel du terme.

De fait, agir pour le « développement durable de l'amour » dans la diversité des familles d'aujourd'hui, n'est-ce pas une mission d'avenir qui prend particulièrement saveur d'Évangile pour l'Église du XXI^e millénaire ?

¹²⁵ Depuis près de 25 ans, le mouvement Fondacio propose des sessions de ce type à un public large de couples.

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III.
RENOVATION THROUGH
REINTERPRETATION

EUROPE: A CHRISTIAN AND PLURAL IDENTITY – KEYS FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH TO RESPOND TO TODAY'S REALITY AND TO OPEN UP FUTURE HORIZONS

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Keywords: Book of Ruth, Identity, Pluriculturalty, Secularisation, Inclusion,

The latest Eurobarometer surveys¹, carried out between January and February 2023, show that 72% of the Spanish population feels linked to Europe, a higher percentage than the 68% who answered the same in the European Union as a whole. Even so, it would be naive to identify this perception of union with a feeling of belonging capable of shaping one's own identity. If we look up the term in a dictionary, it will tell us that identity is “the set of traits of an individual or a group that characterises them in relation to others”. We might ask ourselves if being European is only about being born in a specific geographical area, or if we could speak about a deeper, shared identity.

These questions are not as simple as they might seem, and even less so in the current circumstances, which are improving the development of extremism of all kinds across the continent. This positioning tries to protect what they consider to be threatened and, at the same time, an inalienable European right. This is not the place for an exhaustive review of the critical situations we are experiencing in Europe, but we can safely say that we are being permanently challenged. The migration issue, cultural and religious plurality or the approach to sexual diversity are challenges that question, directly or indirectly, what Europeans mean to be.

¹ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *Opinión pública en la Unión Europea*.

We cannot deny Europe Christian roots, so returning to biblical traditions also means returning to the spiritual sources on which our identity is rooted. The Bible, which has helped to shape who we Europeans are, is also capable of offering us alternative models for, on the one hand, building a new identity that integrates some of today's challenges and, on the other hand, encouraging a spirituality capable of generating inclusive spaces for all. Specifically, on the next few pages I'm intending to show you some of the keys that the book of Ruth offers us as it is read from the perspective of the problems of its time.

THE CONTEXT OF THE BOOK OF RUTH

We are witnessing the revival of political and social positioning that seemed to have been banished from modern society. Behind these less moderate positions, which are determining both coexistence and the state decisions of the various national governments, it lies a question about the identity of Europe's inhabitants that is not always directly or clearly addressed. This situation is not very different from that in which the biblical book of Ruth arose. Although its beginning places it at the Judges' time (Ruth 1:1), there is some unanimity among scholars to consider that it was written during the complex process of the restoration of the Jewish community after its return to the land following the Babylonian exile².

When the Babylonian emperor Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Temple and the city of Jerusalem in 586 BC, he deported to Babylon those Jews who could lead a revolt against them. Only after almost fifty years did the edict of Cyrus (538 B.C.) permit the return from exile of those who wished to do so. The version of events always remains in the hands of those who have the power and the possibility to tell the story. This is also the case in the biblical tradition. Although the Bible does not give much evidence of this, the encounter between those who had remained in their own country and those returning from Babylon was problematic.

² *About the dating of this book, VILCHEZ LÍNDEZ, Rut y Ester, 35–37; NAVARRO PUERTO, Narraciones Bíblicas, 543–545.*

Those who suffered exile protected their Jewishness from an environment they considered as threatening for four decades. They did this by reinforcing the tie with their own group, as well as by emphasizing and enhancing any custom or religious practice that set them apart from the foreigners they lived with in Babylon. Those who had been forced to build an identity in contrast and opposition to those who were different, when returning to their own land found other Jews who did not have the same problems and identity concerns. Not only did this generate an inevitable conflict between the Jews who had remained in the country and those who had returned from exile, but the latter also took over the leadership and imposed it as the only valid way of understanding Jewish identity.

On the other hand, the book of Ruth is presented as a work of resistance that offers an alternative way to deal with the problems of that time. This biblical passage suggests the creation of a strong, not rigid, Jewish identity in a different manner from that intended by the official Judaism. Against the legal decisions that wanted to separate and protect Israel from foreign people and their influence, the story of Ruth raises the possibility that one's identity should not be reduced to racial belonging. Thus, identity is proposed as a relational issue that needs to build bridges to others rather than walls of separation. So as not to go into too much detail, I will focus on outlining how this biblical book addresses some of the challenges we also face today.

THE CHALLENGE OF MULTICULTURALISM

Following in the footsteps how the exiles had survived during their stay in Babylonia, in the time of the leaders Ezra and Nehemiah, in the mid-5th century BC, a rule was imposed with retroactive effect in order to prohibit intermarriage, annulling those that had already taken place³.

Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, “You have broken faith and married foreign women, and so increased the guilt of Israel. Now then make confession to

³ To explore this issue further, ALBERTZ, *Historia de La Religión de Israel*, 587–588; LIVERANI, *Más Allá de La Biblia*, 422–425.

YHWH, the God of your fathers and so his will. Separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the foreign wives” (Ezra 10:10-11).

This was intended to reinforce Jewish identity among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, ensuring that the Hebrew language and religious traditions were passed on to children through their mother, who could no longer be a foreigner. In this context the plot of the book of Ruth is deeply subversive, as it presents the paradigmatic King David as the descendants of an intermarriage:

The neighbor women joined the celebration: “A son has been born to Naomi!” They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David (Ruth 4:17).

The scandalous tone of the biblical passage is not limited to this fact, as there is also a certain hierarchy among the neighbouring villages of Israel. For biblical Israel, the Transjordanian regions of Moab and Ammon are the most despicable nations of all, to the extent that the Law forbids them to be part of God assembly:

No Ammonite or Moabite may ever come into the assembly of YHWH, nor may any of their descendants even to the tenth generation come into the assembly of YHWH (Dt 23:4)⁴.

Ruth is not only a stranger, but she also happens to be from Moab. Throughout the four chapters of the biblical book, she is called Moabite seven times (Ruth 1:4,22; 2:2,6,21; 4:5,10)⁵. This is a very striking insistence, intended by the author, which

⁴ *It is not aseptic that the book of Nehemiah recalls this same rule (Neh 13:1).*

⁵ *In fact, later Jewish tradition had to make real trade-offs in order to harmonise the positive assessment of Ruth with her Moabite origin. Thus, the Targum of Ruth states that the premature death of Naomi's children is due to her marriage with Moabites and explains Ruth's belonging to God's people by saying that the legislation of Deuteronomy affects only males and not females. “They transgressed against the decree of the Memra of the Lord and they took for themselves foreign wives from the daughters of Moab [...] And because they transgressed against the decree of the Memra of the Lord and intermarried with foreign peoples, their days were cut short” (TgRut 1,4a.5a). “She fell on her face and bowed to the ground and said to him, «Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should befriend me, when I am from a foreign people, from the daughters of Moab, and from a people who are not permitted to enter the congregation of the Lord?» Boaz replied and said to her, «It has surely been told to me about the word of the sages that, when the Lord made the decree about*

focuses attention on the fact that the protagonist does not belong by birth to the Jewish people.

The face of Europe has markedly and rapidly changed in recent decades. Caucasian features, once considered characteristic of the European population, have been mixed and intermingled with other features, tones and, above all, with different languages and customs. Cultural diversity and migratory movements place us at the crossroads of opting for defensive measures, as it was for Israel the ban on mixed marriages. Also the understanding of identity as not a fixed, stable and given element to be preserved, but a reality that is being constructed in interaction with the diverse, including those who, as “new Moabites”, we have been able to imagine as the most opposite to our European condition.

The insistence of the biblical book on calling Ruth *Moabite*, encourages us to build this new European identity without blurring the differences. It is a matter of refusing to allow other cultures to *integrate*, that is, to allow others to accommodate and assume our customs and habits as their own, to launch ourselves into the challenge of *including*, that is, welcoming diversity while respecting its autonomy⁶. This requires a major dialogue effort, listening and the joint construction, which we often do not find space for in our current social structure.

FRAGILITY AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ENCOUNTER

The driving force behind the plot of Ruth's story is precariousness. As it is often the case, this is the starting point for migratory movements, including those described in the biblical book. It was the famine that drove Naomi's family to leave their land and settle in Moab.

Once back in the time of the judges there was a famine in the land; so a man from Bethlehem of Judah left home with his wife and two sons to reside on the plateau

*you, he did not make it with reference to females, he made it only with reference to men»” (TgRut 2,10-11a). For a comprehensive study on the evolution of the character of Ruth, cf. BRADY, *The Proselyte and the Prophet*.*

⁶ *On the nuances of this differentiation in relation to synodality cf. MARTÍNEZ-GAYOL FERNÁNDEZ, *El principio "inclusión" en la sinodalidad*.*

of Moab. The man was named Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and his sons Mahlon and Chilion; they were Ephrathites from Bethlehem of Judah (Ruth 1:1-2a)

Similarly, the return to Bethlehem is driven by the fragility of widowhood (Ruth 1:5-7). The bonds between Naomi and Ruth, being both from two different nations and cultures, grow closer until they share a destiny based on the shared fragility of widowhood and an uncertain future they are forced to face.

The story of Ruth exemplifies how fragility connects us and common care can minimize differences and set up links. We tend to focus more on the needs that make people from other geographical latitudes arrive in Europe. Paying attention to our own precariousness would make it easier to place ourselves on an equal footing with those who come to us. This way, we would be able to recognise them as fellow travellers in need, even though it is different. We are not just referring to the essential vulnerability that all human beings share as human beings, but also to difficulties such as the ageing of the population, the depopulation of large areas, the lack of birth rates or the difficulties in attending to certain sectors of the labour market. Recognising that we are in need would make it easier to seek solutions together, as Ruth and Naomi did.

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY AND SECULARISATION

Even though the later Christian or rabbinical tradition tried to discover Ruth as a convert, the biblical text does not allow us such a consideration. The Moabite will not become an essential part of Israel because she has converted to the God in whom her mother-in-law believes. She will not be equal to the biblical matriarchs because of her faith (Ruth 4:11). What earns her the praise of the people of Bethlehem is her commitment to her mother-in-law:

Then the women said to Naomi: "Blessed be YHWH, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel. He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him" (Ruth 4:14-15).

Although the Hebrew word *hesed* is used only three times in the four chapters of the book, the whole story of Ruth is about it⁷. This word can be translated as mercy, kindness, love, affection, solidarity, loyalty, help or commitment. We could say that what brings together the different meanings of this word is how it emphasizes the loyalty and commitment of love towards the others. The *hesed*, as a divine attribute, is recognised as that which characterises Ruth's actions by both Naomi (Ruth 1:8) and Boaz (Ruth 3:10).

The Moabite's emphatic affirmation, "your God will be my God" (Ruth 1:16b), seems to respond more to a commitment to Naomi than to a true religious conversion, at least as we understand it. If Jewish and Christian tradition has regarded Ruth as a convert, it is not because she makes an explicit confession of faith. It is the *hesed* that opens her up and incorporates her into the community, covering her under divine protection, as expressed in Boaz's blessing:

YHWH repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by YHWH, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge (Ruth 2:12).

Religious plurality and the process of de-Christianisation is, for many, a threat to Europe's religious identity. On the other hand, the Judeo-Christian tradition expressed in the story of Ruth encourages us to find in the kindness and mutual commitment expressed by the term *hesed*. A meeting point not only between different religions, but also between those who do not define themselves as believers. The search for a shared identity in kindness and mutual care is at the heart of Europe's Christian roots.

Under the plurality of external expressions and the variety of beliefs and ideologies lies a common ground, that makes unity in diversity possible. Practice is showing us how initiatives that seek the common good and concrete commitment for each person can bring the different together. The biblical story of Ruth reminds us of the religious character of a behaviour that might be considered exclusively ethical. It is, in fact, a model for Matthew's parable, where the final evaluation of our existence

⁷ Cf. CABELL, *Naomi, Boaz and Ruth: Hesed and Change*; KUGLER / MAGORI, *Hesed in Ruth*

does not depend on the religion we profess, but on the extent to which we have cared for our least brothers and sisters (cf. Mt 25:31-46).

IN CONCLUSION

What we are unfamiliar with arouses distrust almost immediately. The most common and spontaneous reaction is to see it as a potential risk and to look for ways to protect ourselves. In addition to this tendency, we have to take into account the force of inertia and the difficulty of anything that implies a change in the way we live, relate to or perceive the reality around us. All this allows us to understand that, when we find ourselves surrounded by situations and people who are different from those we are used to, we tend to reject them and isolate ourselves in those who think and are like us. Experiencing diversity as a danger generates defence mechanisms and polarised positions that lead to concrete decisions, both politically and socially.

In a situation as plural and diverse as the one we have in Europe, one can try to build one's own identity by reinforcing what separates and distinguishes us from others. This is an option that, by playing on the fear of what is different, many political and social movements promote. It is the same as what happened among biblical Israel at the time when the book of Ruth was written. This story, on the other hand, shows the possibility of building a group identity by building bridges that unite rather than walls that separate. We can reinforce who we are by establishing links with those we consider to be outside our group. Similarly, European identity, so much in question today, can also be built by uniting rather than separating.

The biblical tradition, which is at the basis and cultural foundation of Europe, reminds us that there are alternative ways of perceiving what is different and that identity can be built in relation and not necessarily in opposition. The examples presented allow us to recognise how the book of Ruth makes diversity instead of a threat to Israel, an opportunity to build its identity. Thus, by framing the biblical texts in their historical and social context, we can also discover the points of convergence between our circumstances and those in which they were written. In this way we can continue to draw on them to provide valid answers to current problems.

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LIGHT IN THE REGION OF THE NATIONS – A REREADING ISAIAH 8:23C IN MATTHEW 4:12–17 AND *ADVERSUS MARCIONEM* IV.7,3B–4A

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Keywords: Intertextuality – Communication – Reception History – Biblical History

INTRODUCTION

Biblical texts have been read over and over again. Their rereading has shed new light onto new situations. In this way, biblical texts have always been “Spiritual Resources for the Future,” the title of our conference.

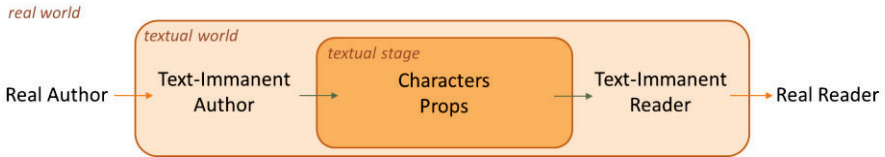
Biblical texts belong to the most read and reread texts of the Western world, shaping our cultural domain, our self-identification, and our artistic imagination as no other collection of sources ever have. Prophetic texts, being a specific kind of biblical text, have a special place both in the Bible and in our collective history: they criticise what is, and they direct us, readers, to what could and should be. If we, Catholic theologians, wish to reflect upon the “spiritual resources for the future,” it is fitting to ask the prophets of old for guidance and understanding.

Rereading texts implies intertextuality. Intertextual research studies relationships between texts.¹ Because texts are communication, these relationships, too, must contain communication.²

¹ KRISTEVA, *Desire in Language*. VAN WIERINGEN, *Methodological Developments in Biblical Exegesis*, 34–36.

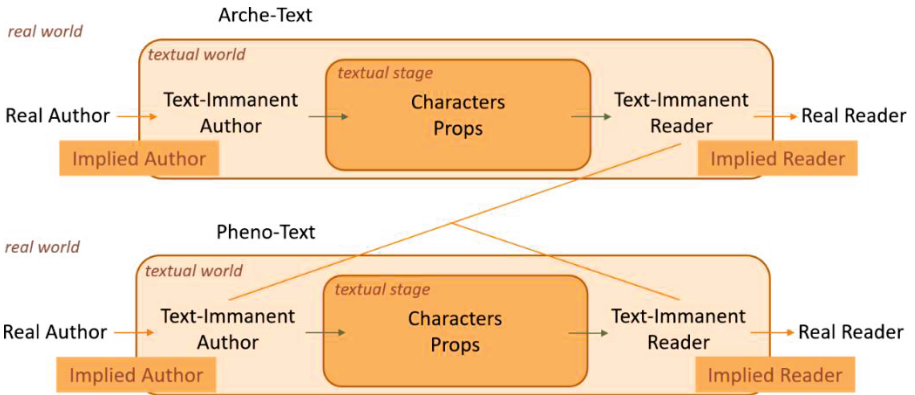
² For a detailed description of the communication-oriented analysis see BOSMAN / VAN WIERINGEN, *Video Games as Art*. For an example of communicative intertextuality see VAN WIERINGEN / BOSMAN, *Reading Melchizedek*.

It is now generally understood that a text is communication. A sender communicates with a receiver through the text. To be more precise: besides this level, there are two levels of communication *within* the text, as can be seen in the diagram below:



The first level concerns that of the characters, who appear on the textual stage. The second level concerns that of the text-immanent author, who acts as the director of the textual stage, and the text-immanent reader, the textual reading entity that optimally knows how to follow the textual signs of the text-immanent author.

In an intertextual relationship between two texts, in which the pheno-text rereads the arche-text, complex communicative connections arise, as shown in the diagram below:



The text-immanent author of the pheno-text relates to the text-immanent reader of the arche-text. It is the text-immanent reader of the pheno-text that perceives this relationship and is directed by it.

In this paper, I wish to examine Isaiah 8:23c–9:1 and its intertextual impact, first in Matthew 4:15–16 and then, briefly, in Tertulian's *Adversus Marcionem* iv.7,3b–4a.

Matthew 4:15–16 and *Adversus Marcionem* iv.7,3b–4a, namely, both quote Isaiah 8:23c–9:1. I will focus first on the position of the text-immanent reader in the Isaianic text. Then I will pay attention to how the text-immanent author of the Matthean text relates to the Isaianic text-immanent reader, in view of his own text-immanent reader. Finally, I will briefly discuss *Adversus Marcionem* iv.7,3b–4a in the same way.

THE TEXT-IMMANENT AUTHOR AND THE TEXT-IMMANENT READER IN ISAIAH 8:23C–9:1 AS SEEN FROM CHAPTERS 6–12

Verses 8:23c–9:1 read as follows:³

8:23c	As in the former time, he disdained the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,	כַּעַת הָרְאִישׁוֹן הַקַּל אֶרְצָה זְבֻלוֹן וְנַפְתָּלִי	8:23c
8:23d	so he honoured in the latter [time] the Way of the Sea, the opposite side of the Jordan, the region of the nations.	וְהִאֲחֲרֹן הַכְּבִיד דְּרֹךְ הַיָּם עָבַר הַיַּרְדֵּן גְּלִיל הַגּוֹיִם:	8:23d
9:1a	The people,	הָעָם	9:1a
9:1b	that was going in the dark,	הַהֹלְכִים בְּחָשֶׁךְ	9:1b
9:1c	has seen a great light;	רָאוּ אֹרֶךְ גָּדוֹל	9:1c
9:1d	they who were sitting in the land of the shadow of death,	יֹשְׁבֵי בְּאֶרֶץ צֶלְמָוֶת	9:1d
9:1e	a light has shined on them.	אֹרֶךְ נִגְהָ עָלֵיהֶם:	9:1e

These verses are part of the pericope 8:23c–9:6.⁴ This pericope, in its turn, is part of the so-called Immanu-El-prophecies in chapters 6–12 of the Book of Isaiah.

Making use of the communication-oriented analysis briefly explained above, I wish to answer the question as to what the position of the text-immanent reader is, and I

³ For the Hebrew texts, see *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. For the Greek translation of this Hebrew text see especially COLLINS, *Isaiah* 8:23–9:6.

⁴ Because verses 11–23b form one continuous direct speech, verse 23c must be the beginning of a new pericope; see VAN WIERINGEN, *The Implied Reader in Isaiah 6-12*, especially 128.

will do so in two rounds. First, I will look at the position of the text-immanent reader in the pericope of Isaiah 8:23c–9:6 as part of chapters 6–12, then as part of the entire Book of Isaiah.

Verses 8:23c–9:1 explicitly position the text-immanent reader with respect to ‘place’ and ‘time.’ As far as ‘place’ is concerned, different topographical names are used. The tribal areas of Zebulun and Naphtali are located in the northern part of the Northern Kingdom (the Kingdom of Israel). The *הַיָּם דְרָךְ הַיָּם* *Via Maris* also points in the direction of these tribal areas.⁵ The designation *גְּלִיל* *region* is used only six times in the Hebrew Bible. In Joshua 20:7; 21:32; 2 Kings 15:32 this designation is connected to the tribal name of Naphtali.

The focus on the north is not surprising, the north being from where the Assyrian threat is always looming (as in Isaiah 7:17 and, indirectly, in 10:28–34⁶). The Assyrian armies from Mesopotamia entered the biblical land from the north.

Two other elements in Isaiah 8:23c–9:6 also play a role in the text’s connection with the Assyrian threat:⁷

1. Two akkadisms are used: the Hebrew word *בֹּט* *boot* (verse 4) is derived from the Akkadian word *šēnum* and the Hebrew word *שָׂר* *ruler* (verse 6) from the Akkadian word *šarrum*.⁸
2. Moreover, the first throne-name of the new-born, *פְּלֵא יוֹעֵץ* *Deviser of wonderfulness* (verse 6), forms a word play with the name of the Assyrian King Tiglat-*פְּלֵא*-ser, the first to follow a policy of deporting populations.⁹

However, the text-immanent author does not position his text-immanent reader in the north. Because verse 6 explicitly states that the new-born is a Davidide, who sits

⁵ MESHTEL, *Was There a ‘Via Maris’?*.

⁶ VAN WIERINGEN, *The Implied Reader in Isaiah 6-12*, 205–206.

⁷ VAN WIERINGEN, *The Implied Reader in Isaiah 6-12*, 144–145.

⁸ VON SODEN, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*, respectively 1213–1214 and 1188–1190.

⁹ The Akkadian name of Tiglatpileser is *Tukultī-apil-Ešarra*, which means *my trust belongs to the son of Ešarra*.

on the throne of David and to whom David's kingdom belongs, the text-immanent reader views the locations from Jerusalem.

The positioning of the text-immanent reader in time is also important. Because the text-immanent author uses verbal forms in verses 8:23c–9:1 with a past perspective, the text-immanent reader, too, looks back in time at the event. Because of this positioning, the text-immanent reader is actually situated beyond the crisis of the Assyrian threat. However, the direct speech in 9:2–6, which also has a past perspective, concludes with a remark without a past perspective: קָנְאָתָּהּ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת תַּעֲשֶׂה-לָּהּ *the zeal of the Lord of hosts does this*. In this way the past is actualized, first of all for the one who speaks the direct speech, but indirectly for the text-immanent reader as well.¹⁰

It is true that the text-immanent reader is distanced from the event by both aspects of 'place' and 'time', but the communication at the level of the characters draws the text-immanent reader into the event. The minimal information provided by the text-immanent author is instrumental in this. This minimal information consists of the following two elements:

1. The character הָעָם *the people* in 9:1 remains anonymous. Who this character is, must therefore be constructed by the text-immanent reader.
2. The direct speech in 9:2–6 does not have a formula introducing the direct speech. The text-immanent reader, therefore, has to construct who is speaking to whom.

Because in verse 2, at the beginning of the direct speech, הַגֵּוִי לֹא *the non-nation* is mentioned,¹¹ an identification with the people that goes from dark to light is obvious. This implies that the character הָעָם *the people* cannot simply be seen as the speaker of the direct speech. Verses 9:5–6 of the direct speech are characterized by a first person plural. This means that the direct speech is spoken by a 'we'-group. Combined, these two elements imply that the 'we'-group speaks in the transition

¹⁰ VAN WIERINGEN, *The Implied Reader in Isaiah 6-12*, 144.

¹¹ For the interpretation of הַגֵּוִי לֹא see VAN WIERINGEN, *The Implied Reader in Isaiah 6-12*, 129–130.

from non-nation to nation,¹² with 9:2–4 directed to God who has made the former non-nation now stand as a ‘we’-group before God, and with 9:5–6 the ‘we’-group confirming to itself what God has done.

This also makes it possible to interpret the light. The light that dispels the dark turns out to be materialized in the new-born who acts as the ideal leader of the ‘we’-group.

THE TEXT-IMMANENT AUTHOR AND TEXT-IMMANENT READER IN ISAIAH 8:23C–9:6 AS SEEN FROM THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

However, when the pericope Isaiah 8:23c–9:6 is read in the context of the entirety of the Book of Isaiah, the position of the text-immanent reader shifts slightly. In this case, the threat has to be understood, not as the Assyrian threat, but rather as the Babylonian threat, with the Babylonian captivity as the result.

Three elements play a role here:

1. Due to the mentioning of David and his kingdom, the text-immanent reader is situated in Jerusalem. The fact that Jerusalem, capital of the Southern Kingdom (the Kingdom of Judah), can be labelled a *non-nation* points at this being during the Babylonian captivity, not at the time of the Assyrian threat.
2. The term **עַל** yoke in 9:4 is often used in reference to the Babylonian threat, especially in Jeremiah 26–29.¹³
3. Moreover, the terminology of **רֵאשִׁוֹן** *former* and **אַחֲרָיוֹן** *later* is characteristic for the second part of the Book of Isaiah, the chapters 40–66.¹⁴ Against

¹² Within the unit Isaiah 6–12, this pericope belongs to the triptych 7:1–17, 8:23b–9:6, and 10:28–11:16. In all these three text-passages, an ideal leader performs. This leader is announced in 7:14–15 using the name **אֱלֹהֵימָנוּ אֵל** *Immanu-El*, which means with us: God, born and given **לָנוּ** to us in 9:5, using the indications **יָלֵד** *Child* and **בֵּן** *Son*. Within the entire Book of Isaiah, these prophecies on the ideal leader are related to the prophecies of the ideal Servant of the Lord in chapters 40–66.

¹³ SCHMOLDT, **עַל**, 201.

¹⁴ Especially Isaiah 41:22; 42:9; 43:9, 18; 46:9; 48:3. See further in particular LEENE, *De vroegere en de nieuwe dingen*.

this background, the expression אור גוים *a light of the Goyim* (42:6; 49:6) could be seen as the counterpart of the expression גליל הגוים *the region of the Goyim* (8:23d).

The diachronic development of Isaiah 8:23b–9:6 is impossible to reconstruct,¹⁵ but we do see traces of an editing of the Book of Isaiah, creating a coherence for the entire book. The fact that the text-immanent reader shifts along in the development of the text towards the final version of the Book of Isaiah, in comparison to the text-immanent reader of a pericope, means that a rereading of the prophecy, with a view to the new future, already occurs in the Hebrew Bible itself. In other words, the Book of Isaiah itself already bears witness to the process of rereading – an activity that leads to a new positioning of the text-immanent reader.¹⁶ We will see now that this activity of rereading is also continued in New Testament texts.

THE TEXT-IMMANENT AUTHOR AND TEXT-IMMANENT READER IN MATTHEW 4:15–16 AS SEEN FROM ISAIAH

Matthew 4:12–16 forms the immediate context of a lengthy quotation from Isaiah:¹⁷

12a	Ἀκούσας δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς	When Jesus had heard	12a
12b	ὅτι Ἰωάννης παρεδόθη	that John had been put in prison,	12b
12c	ἀνεχώρησεν εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν	he withdrew to Galilee	12c
13a	καὶ καταλιπὼν τὴν Ναζαρέτ	Leaving Nazareth,	13a
13b	ἔλθων	going,	13b

¹⁵ For a diachronic reconstruction see especially BECKER, *Jesaja*, 123, 213–214.

¹⁶ A shift in the positioning of the text-immanent reader occurs in Psalm 120–124 in comparison to the individual psalms 120, 121, 122, 123, and 124; see VAN DE WIEL, *Psalmlezer in verandering*.

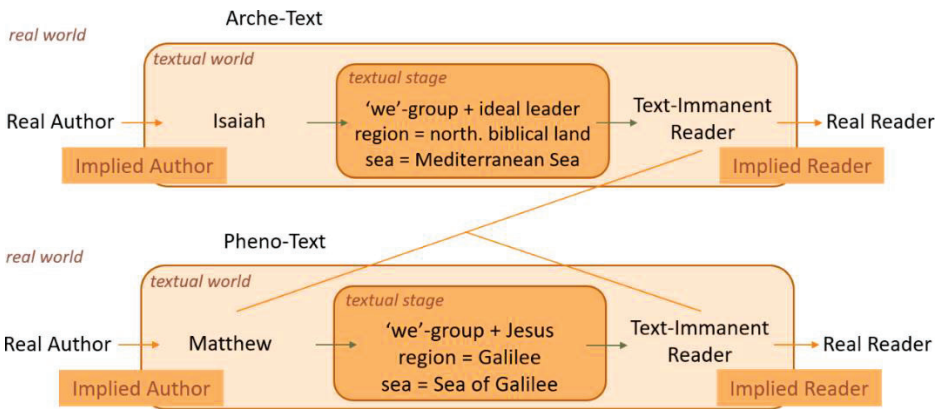
¹⁷ For the Greek text see Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece*.

13c	κατώκησεν εἰς Καπερναοῦμ	he dwelt in Capernaum,	13c
13d	τὴν παραθαλασσίαν	which is upon the seacoast	13d
13e	ἐν ὀρίοις Ζαβουλῶν καὶ Νεφθαλείμ	in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali,	13e
14a	ἵνα πληρωθῆ τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ Ἡσαίου τοῦ προφήτου	so that would be fulfilled what was said through the prophet Isaiah	14a
14b	λέγοντος	: ¹⁸	14b
15	Γῆ Ζαβουλῶν καὶ Γῆ Νεφθαλείμ, ὁδὸν θαλάσσης πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου Γαλιλαία τῶν ἐθνῶν	Land of Zebulun and Land of Naphtali, the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations —	15
16a	ὁ λαὸς	the people	16a
16b	ὁ καθηήμενος ἐν σκότει	sitting in darkness	16b
16c	εἶδε φῶς μέγα	have seen a great light,	16c
16d	καὶ τοῖς	on those	16d
16e	καθημένοις ἐν χώρᾳ καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου	sitting in the land of the shadow of death,	16e
16f	φῶς ἀνέτειλεν αὐτοῖς	a light has dawned on them.	16f

¹⁸ The Greek expression λέγοντος is to be considered as a Hebraism for לְאמֹר, which can be best translated with a colon. CONYBEARE / STOCK, *Grammar of Septuagint Greek*, 96–97; MEIER, *Speaking of Speaking*, 94–140.

The quotation is part of pericope 4:12–25, which narrates the beginning of Jesus’s ministry. This pericope in its turn is part of chapters 3–4, which narrate the events leading up to the Sermon on the Mount.

The Matthean text-immanent author reads the Isaianic text and thus enters into a relationship with the text-immanent reader of this text. Using the result of his reading activity, the text-immanent author creates his own text. This text contains its own text-immanent reader, which is directed by the result of the text-immanent author’s reading activity. Schematically, this can be rendered as follows:



The Matthean text-immanent author mainly reuses the aspect ‘place’ from his reading activity. However, also regarding the aspect ‘time,’ the text-immanent author reuses the temporal positioning of the Isaianic text-immanent reader. The text-immanent reader of the Isaianic text is situated in a position looking backwards. The same happens regarding the text-immanent reader of the Matthean text, which is of course also due to the transition of the Isaianic discursive world to the Matthean discursive world. The actualization of the aspect ‘place’ is the result of the fact that the text-immanent author not only uses the location of Galilee in chapter 4, but also at the end of his Gospel. I will come back to this later.

But there is more going on here. The Matthean text-immanent author narrates about Jesus with a reference to Isaiah. The quoted text of Isaiah, like the text of Isaiah itself, has a past perspective and is placed in a narrative with a past perspective. The text-immanent author explicitly introduces this reference, which affects the text-

immanent reader. On the one hand, the text-immanent author places his text-immanent reader in a past perspective that precedes his Gospel narrative; on the other hand, he transposes the past perspective that precedes his narrative, to the time of his own narrative, by interpreting his main character Jesus with it.

In addition to this complexity in ‘time,’ the explicit introduction to the quotation from Isaiah also brings about a meta-communication between the Matthean text-immanent author and his text-immanent reader.¹⁹ This meta-communication is about prophecy in the Scriptures. The Isaianic prophecy has been brought to completion in its relation to the Gospel’s main character, Jesus.

By omitting the aspects ‘earlier’ and ‘later’ in the quotation, there is a greater focus on the application of the aspect ‘time’ to the main character Jesus. However, the earlier-later scheme is still recognizable in the temporal transition that the text-immanent author narrates outside the quotation. Jesus’s ministry begins after John is imprisoned (verse 12). In verse 17 this new time is made explicit with the expression ἀπό τότε *from then on*.²⁰ Thus, for the Matthean text-immanent reader, the darkness is made concrete in John’s arrest, namely by the unmentioned kingdom of Herod, and the light in Jesus’s proclamation of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The text-immanent author of the Matthean text makes explicit use of the topographical indications that occur in his relationship with the text-immanent reader of the Isaianic text. The Hebrew word גליל *region* indeed sounds like the topographical proper name Γαλιλαία *Galilee*, and the Matthean text-immanent author uses the name Γαλιλαία. Already the Septuagint reads גליל *region* as Γαλιλαία

¹⁹ The quotation formulae as such have been studied for decades, see e.g., METZGER, *The Formulas Introducing Quotations*. Recently, communicative aspects have been included as well, see e.g., LUZ, *Intertexts in the Gospel*. For interpreting quotations as markers of intertext see PLETT, *Intertextualities*.

²⁰ The connection between this expression of time and the aspect of ‘time’ in the quotation from Isaiah has always been neglected; e.g., LUZ, *Matthäus*, 173.

Galilee.²¹ Due to this, the Isaianic sea, which is the Mediterranean Sea, shifts to the Sea of Galilee.²²

The explicit attention given to Galilee, mentioned no fewer than five times in the pericope 4:12–25 (including the quotation from Isaiah), remains present in the Gospel of Matthew. It is the place where the disciples see and meet Jesus as the Risen Lord after his resurrection (Matthew 28:7, 10, 16).²³ If someone wishes to accompany Jesus, like the first two couples in 4:18–22, they have to start in Galilee. While the Matthean text-immanent author has read the place Galilee only once in the Greek text of the quotation from Isaiah found in the Septuagint, he makes this location extremely important for his own text-immanent reader. With his emphasis on Galilee in 4:12–25, he prepares the text-immanent reader for the importance of Galilee in the concluding chapter of his Gospel. In this way, the aspects of ‘place’ and ‘time’ merge. Just as Jesus once continued John’s message about the Kingdom, so must the disciples now also do. It is through these disciples that the text-immanent reader is involved in this: he, too, will have to start again and again in Galilee in order to see and meet the risen Lord.

We have seen that, due to the limited information offered in the Isaianic text, there is a lot of reading-work to be done by the Isaianic text-immanent reader in order to determine the identity of the people, the one speaking the direct speech, the ‘we’-group, and the light. With regard to the light, the Matthean text-immanent author likewise offers limited information to his text-immanent reader.

²¹ *The Septuagint contains textual differences with the Masoretic text. E.g., Isaiah 9:2 LXX reads verbal forms in the second person plural, whereas 9:1 MT reads verbal forms third person plural. Due to this, 9:1 MT אָנְכֶם the people becomes the vocative 9:2 LXX ὁ λαὸς ὁ πορευόμενος ἐν σκότει. This implies that the position of the text-immanent reader in 9:2 LXX is different from 9:1 MT. Because Matthew 4:15–16 does not quote the Septuagint, I do not go into the details of these differences. Differently: MENKEN, *The Textual Form*.*

²² *Cf. the misunderstanding of this transition in LUZ, *Matthäus*, 169. In a couple of European languages, the Sea of Galilee is called the Lake of Galilee, e.g., *der See von Galiläa* in German and *het Meer van Galilea* in Dutch, due to which the relationship between the Isaiah-text and the Matthew-text has unfortunately become invisible.*

²³ *WEREN, *The Macrostructure*.*

The Matthean text-immanent author stops the quotation from Isaiah at the moment the direct speech in the Isaianic text begins. By doing so, he makes his text-immanent reader view the direct speech of Jesus that follows upon the quotation from Isaiah as the replacement of the direct speech in the Isaianic text. Both direct speeches explain the transition from dark to light. The Matthean text-immanent author thus highlights Jesus for his text-immanent reader.

A direct indication of who the light is, is not given by the Matthean text-immanent author. It is the text-immanent reader that has to link the light to the main character Jesus. Just as the new-born ideal leader is referred to as a Davidide in the Isaianic text, Jesus is also referred to as a Davidide in the Matthean text. This interpretation is prepared in the narrative about the origin of Jesus, especially in Matthew 1:20, where a quotation from Isaiah is also used.²⁴ The direct speech in the Isaianic text reveals the 'we'-group. Where is this 'we'-group present in the Matthean text? I believe this 'we'-group takes shape in the first two pairs of Jesus-followers in 4:18–22. By following Jesus, they become fishers of men. That means they can make the group of Jesus-followers grow. The position of Galilee at the end of the Gospel of Matthew also implies this men-fishing and thus also links the text-immanent reader to it.

THE TEXT-IMMANENT AUTHOR AND TEXT-IMMANENT READER IN *ADVERSUS MARCIONEM* IV.7,3B–4A AS SEEN FROM ISAIAH/MATTHEW

The intertextual rereading of texts as spiritual resources does not stop with the Bible. It is an ongoing process that underpins the whole of Catholic tradition. To conclude my paper, I would like to briefly give one example: Tertulian's *Adversus Marcionem* iv.7 quoting our Isaianic/Matthean text.²⁵ In presumably 202 CE, Tertulian (c. 160 – c. 230 CE) wrote his work *Adversus Marcionem*, *Against Marcion*. Marcion (c. 85 – c. 160 CE) argued that the God of the Old Testament could not be the Father of Jesus Christ. Marcion propagated a gospel that was therefore stripped of all references to the Old Testament. His Bible canon only consisted of a gospel

²⁴ See also VAN WIERINGEN, *The Immanu-El in Isaiah and Matthew*.

²⁵ HAMELL, *Tertullian*.

‘purified’ by him, together with ten letters from Paul (without the pastoral letters).²⁶ Tertullian rejects this view. He expresses this in *Adversus Marcionem* iv.7,3b–4a as follows:

<p>Quid autem illi cum Galilaea, si non erat creatoris, cui ista regio destinabatur ingressuro praedicationem?</p>	<p>Then, what had he to do with Galilee, if he did not belong to the Creator by whom that region was destined when about to enter on His ministry?</p>
<p>dicente Esaia, Hoc primum bibito, cito facito, regio Zabulon et terra Nephthalim, et ceteri qui maritimam et Iordanis, Galilaea nationum, populus qui sedetis in tenebris, videte lumen magnum: qui habitatis terram, sedentes in umbra mortis, lumen ortum est super vos.</p>	<p>“As Isaiah says: Drink in this first, and be prompt, O region of Zabulon and land of Nephthalim, and ye others who inhabit the sea-coast, and that of Jordan, Galilee of the nations, ye people who sit in darkness, behold a great light; upon you, who inhabit that land, sitting in the shadow of death, the light hath arisen.”</p>
<p>Bene autem quod et deus Marcionis illuminator vindicatur nationum, quo magis debuerit vel de caelo descendere, et, si utique, in Pontum potius descendere quam in Galilaeam.</p>	<p>It is, however, well that Marcion’s god does claim to be the enlightener of the nations, that so he might have the better reason for coming down from heaven; only, if it must needs be, he should rather have made Pontus his place of descent than Galilee.²⁷</p>

²⁶ MAY, *Marcion. From a Jewish perspective* see ENSLIN, *Bible*, 665. Unfortunately, modern forms of Marcionism can be found anywhere in theology; e.g., the pastoral theological vision of the rector of one of the Great Seminaries in the Netherlands: DE WIT, *Wat is pastorale theologie?*, 415: ‘...[het] is helder dat we geen PT moeten gaan zoeken in het Oude Testament, toen de Kerk nog niet gesticht was’ (‘...[it] is clear that we should not look for PT in the Old Testament, when the Church was not yet established’).

²⁷ HOLMES, *Tertullianus Against Marcion*, 216.

The text-immanent author of *Adversus Marcionem* only focuses on the topographical places he has read in the texts of Isaiah and Matthew. In doing so, he does not adopt the complete positions of the Isaianic and the Matthean text-immanent readers, but chooses his own rereading to direct his own text-immanent reader.

For his own text-immanent reader, the Tertullian text-immanent author wishes to place Galilee and Pontus in contrast to each other (Marcion's birthplace is Sinope in the Roman region of Pontus). The text-immanent author of *Adversus Marcionem* situates this contrast also in the meta-communication about prophecy, just as the Matthean text-immanent author creates this meta-communication for the Matthean text-immanent reader. Isaiah must therefore be explicitly indicated as the source of the quotation, although, given the context about Jesus, it is quoted via Matthew. In this way, the text-immanent author makes clear that, if this source were to disappear, Galilee as a location would become meaningless, and that, in that case, the region of Galilee could just as well have been replaced by the region of Pontus. This meta-communication makes clear to the text-immanent reader of *Adversus Marcionem* that the Isaianic prophecy is not abolished in Jesus Christ, but rather finds its fulfilment in him.

There is, however, a semantic shift. *Adversus Marcionem* contains the verb *descendere*, *to descend*. In Latin, this can be used to indicate a movement between two places when the final destination is lower than the point of departure; this also goes for Greek where, for example, the verb καταβαίνω means *to descend*. Matthew 4:12–25, however, lacks these kinds of verbs, however appropriate they would have been in the movement down towards the Sea of Galilee.²⁸ At most the verb ἀπέρχομαι in verse 24 can be understood in this way, but the Vulgate uses the verb *abire* there. Be that as it may, the text-immanent author of *Adversus Marcionem* reads the movement of Jesus as a descent to Galilee, namely from heaven, thus interpreting the Isaianic and Matthean texts as a testimony to the incarnation. This reinterpretation allows him to again emphasize the contrast between his view and that of his opponent Marcion.

²⁸ The verbs ἀναχωρέω (verse 12), καταλείπω (verse 13), ἔρχομαι (verse 13) ἐν περιπατέω (verse 18), and προβαίνω (verse 21).

The direct speech in Isaiah 8:23c–9:6 is not quoted in Matthew 4:12–25. This gives the Matthean text-immanent author the opportunity to build up the ‘we’-group from the followers of Jesus, and to connect his text-immanent reader indirectly with these Jesus-followers. This direct speech is not mentioned in *Adversus Marcionem* iv.7,3b–4a either. Therefore, the text-immanent author of *Adversus Marcionem* has the opportunity of not only building up the ‘we’-group from the followers of Jesus, but also of including it in the contrast he makes between Galilee and Pontus, in other words between the true Church, that is the group around the text-immanent author of *Adversus Marcionem*, to which he invites his text-immanent reader, and the group around Marcion.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In my paper, I have demonstrated that intertextuality, studied by using the communication-oriented analysis, reveals how new meanings are created for the new text-immanent reader due to the reading activity of the text-immanent author.

This is not just about semantics, but primarily concerns the communicative position of the text-immanent reader. Striking in the example I discuss in my paper, is how the communicative setting largely remains the same, even with the new semantics. The strength of the intertextual relationship is, therefore, primarily the communicative aspect.

This phenomenon of communicative intertextuality already occurs in the Bible itself. It is visible both in the editing process that the biblical books have themselves undergone, as well as in the references in biblical texts to other biblical texts. This phenomenon is continued in post-biblical texts. It is my conviction, that this is the characteristic *par excellence* of the Catholic tradition in its ongoing rereading of spiritual resources for the future.²⁹

²⁹ I am greatly indebted to Drs. Maurits J. Sinninghe Damsté STL (Breña Baja, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Spain) for his correction of the English of this article.

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GRÖßERE TIEFE, DIE IN GRÖßERE WEITE FÜHRT BIBLISCHE GRUNDLAGEN FÜR EINE CHRISTLICHE SAMENKORN-SPIRITUALITÄT

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*Keywords: Spirituality; seed spirituality; mystagogy; evangelization;
experience of grace*

Was für eine Spiritualität brauchen wir für das 21. Jahrhundert mit seinen gewaltigen Herausforderungen von Klima, Krieg und Krankheit, in denen wir mitten drin stecken? Dass es sich hier auch um eine Frage der Spiritualität handelt, ist säkularen Menschen oft stärker bewusst als verunsicherten Christen und skeptischen Theolog:innen. Aber *eine* Spiritualität wird es gewiss nicht sein; vielmehr braucht es *einigende* Spiritualitäten, die dialogfähig und voneinander lernfähig sind, auch über den christlichen oder explizit religiösen Bereich hinaus.

Zugleich sollten diese Spiritualitäten tief aus ihren eigenen Quellen schöpfen. Aber wie ist das möglich, ohne dass die größere Tiefe mit Enge, Intoleranz und Irrelevanz für Andersgläubige erkaufte wird? Es scheint ein Dilemma zwischen Identität und Relevanz zu geben, das zu Polarisierungen zwischen konservativen (primär quellenbezogenen) und liberalen Christen führt. So stellt sich die Frage nach einigenden Spiritualitäten für Christen nicht nur nach außen, sondern zugleich nach innen.

Die Quelle, aus der Christen schöpfen, ist personal und untrennbar mit Jesus Christus verbunden. Aber macht das entschiedene Bekenntnis zu ihm nicht eng und intolerant? „Es ist uns Menschen kein anderer Name unter dem Himmel gegeben,

durch den wir gerettet werden sollen“ (Apg 4,12)¹. Für evangelikale und charismatische Christen ist dieses urkirchliche Bekenntnis zentral. Es begründet ihr Vertrauen in Gottes Heilsmacht. Aber viele von ihnen können sich aufgrund dieses scheinbar exklusivistischen Bekenntnisses nur schwer vorstellen, dass Menschen, die sich nicht ausdrücklich zu Jesus Christus bekennen, für die Ewigkeit gerettet werden können. Das ist ihnen nicht gleichgültig. Es ist für sie ein starker Antrieb, sich in Mission und Evangelisation zu engagieren, um „Jesus zu den Menschen zu bringen“².

Sollen sie ihre evangelistische Leidenschaft bändigen, um die Menschen mit ihren konkreten Nöten und ihren vorhandenen Qualitäten besser wahrzunehmen, so dass sie offen für einen echten Dialog werden, zu dem auch Hören und Empfangen dazugehören? Von außerbiblischen Argumenten werden sie sich schwer dazu überzeugen lassen.³ Aber es ist das Evangelium selbst, das den Christusglauben in eine größere Tiefe führt und gerade so für eine größere Weite öffnet.⁴

1. DIE PROVOKATION DER WELTGERICHTSREDE (MT 25): IN DEN ENTSCHEIDENDEN MOMENTEN SIND WIR ALLE ANONYME CHRISTEN

Für eine solche vertiefende Weitung des Christusglaubens ist vor allem die letzte große Rede Jesu im Matthäusevangelium über das Weltgericht im Mt 25,31–46 hilfreich. Ihr zufolge entscheidet sich unser ewiges Heil an Begegnungen mit

¹ Wenn nicht anders angegeben, sind die Bibelstellen nach der Revidierten Einheitsübersetzung von 2016 zitiert.

² Cf. HARTL / WALLNER / MEUSER, *Mission Manifest*; dazu die Kritik in NOTHELLE-WILDFEUER / STRIET, *Einfach nur Jesus?*, v.a. 44–47, 94, 98, 126, sowie SANDLER, *Charismatisch, evangelikal und katholisch*, 226, 245f.

³ Starke Argumente liefert Karl Rahners *Theologoumenon vom anonymen Christen*; vgl. SCHWERTFEGGER, *Gnade und Welt. Dass Rahner dabei selber stark von Mt 25 inspiriert ist* (vgl. *ibid.* 39–42; 288 Anm. 139), wird nicht nur von evangelikalen Kritikern übersehen.

⁴ Dieser Grundannahme folgt meine biblisch-kairologisch ansetzende „*theologische Unterscheidung der Geister*“ in Bezug auf das „*Mission Manifest*“ und charismatisch-evangelikal-katholische Bewegungen: SANDLER, *Charismatisch, evangelikal und katholisch*.

notleidenden Menschen, in denen wir Christus selbst annehmen oder abweisen, ohne in ihnen Christus zu identifizieren.

Zwei Dinge schärft uns diese Gleichnisrede ein: Erstens entscheidet sich unser ewiges Leben in Ereignissen der Begegnung mit Christus, die jederzeit mitten in unserem gegenwärtigen Leben erfolgen können. Zweitens begegnen in diesen Ereignissen ausnahmslos alle Menschen – und damit auch die Christen – Christus, ohne ihn als Christus zu erkennen. In diesem Sinn sind wir in den heilsentscheidenden Momenten unseres Lebens *alle* anonyme Christen.⁵

Damit stellt die Weltgerichtsrede die verbreitete evangelikale Perspektive von Evangelisation auf den Kopf – und zwar nicht, um sie zu widerlegen, sondern um sie radikal zu vertiefen, indem sie Christen davor bewahrt, von Christus zu klein zu denken: Keiner von uns *hat* Christus, so dass wir ihn den Nichtchristen „bringen“ und so verhindern könnten, dass sie an ihm achtlos vorbeilaufen.⁶ Um eine solche Achtlosigkeit zu verhindern, genügt es nicht, seinen Namen zu kennen und zu bekennen. Insofern zielt die Warnung der Weltgerichtsrede in erster Linie auf die Christen. Sie warnt uns, dass wir selbst mit dem entschiedenen Vorsatz, Jesus zu dienen, an ihm vorbeilaufen können.⁷

Die Weltgerichtsrede verschärft Jesu kurz zuvor wiedergegebene Warnung, dass wir jederzeit wachsam sein müssen, weil der Herr wie der Dieb in der Nacht kommt (Mt 24,43). Nun macht Jesus klar, dass das hier gemeinte Kommen sich nicht erst auf die Wiederkunft Christi und sein Weltgericht am Jüngsten Tag bezieht. Denn wie Jesus verdeutlicht, wird sich dort offenbaren, dass alles längst entschieden ist: nämlich in Momenten seines Kommens – immer wieder mitten in unserem Leben und in Gestalten, die wir nicht kennen.

Von daher wird die Frage dringlich: Was sind das für Ereignisse, in denen Christus uns jederzeit begegnen kann? Die einfache Antwort, die die Weltgerichtsrede darauf

⁵ Cf. Anm. 3.

⁶ Vgl. SANDLER, *Charismatisch, evangelikal und katholisch*, 226, 245f.

⁷ Was zum Beispiel, wenn mir Jesus in einem bestimmten Menschen begegnen will, und ich für dessen eigentliche Bedürftigkeit taub bin, weil ich zu beschäftigt damit bin, ihm ‚meinen‘ Christus zu bringen?

gibt (die Hungernden, Kranken usw.) ist offensichtlich exemplarisch und in eine bildhafte Darstellung eingebunden.⁸ Entsprechend einem buchstäblichen Verständnis müsste ich nur jedem Hungernden zu essen geben, jede Fremde aufnehmen und jeden Kranken oder Inhaftierten besuchen, damit ich Jesus nicht verfehle. Aber wie ist das möglich, wo es so viele sind? Und selbst, wenn es mir mit äußerstem Einsatz gelänge, würde es nicht reichen. Denn es genügt nicht, wenn ich Menschen um Christi willen (als eines Anderen!) diene. Ich muss sie um ihrer selbst willen annehmen und mich ihnen aus Liebe zuwenden (vgl. 1 Kor 13,3). Eine solche *reine Gabe* und *reine Liebe* können wir nicht leisten, ohne sie von Gott als Gnade geschenkt zu bekommen.⁹ In der Metaphorik der Weltgerichtsrede: Wo immer uns Christus inkognito in der Gestalt eines Bedürftigen begegnet, müssen wir uns in die Motivation und in die Kraft zu unserem liebenden Dienst *von ihm* hineinführen lassen. Und da wir ja nicht wissen, wann und wo er uns begegnet, müssen wir möglichst überall und jederzeit bereit sein, uns auf jede:n und alles, was uns begegnet, in einer Haltung des Empfangens zu öffnen. Wir müssen lernen, „Gott in allen Dingen zu finden“, wo immer er uns begegnen will.

2. DAS ÜBERNATÜRLICHE MITLEID DES BARMHERZIGEN SAMARITERS: SCHLÜSSEL FÜR EINE NICHT-MORALISTISCHE DEUTUNG DER WELTGERICHTSREDE

Aber wie kann das allein von uns her Unmögliches – als Gnade – Ereignis werden, dass ich mich auf eine bedürftige Person so um ihrer selbst willen einlasse, dass ich in ihr (und nicht hinter ihr) Christus um seiner selbst willen bejahe? Die Evangelien

⁸ Das ist exegetischer Konsens, auch wenn die Bezeichnung der ganzen Weltgerichtsrede als Gleichnis umstritten ist. Vgl. LUZ, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*. 3. Teilband, 515–544, v.a. 517.

⁹ Dieses Unvermögen (im Sinne einer Nicht-Leistbarkeit und Unverfügbarkeit) einer reinen Liebe und Gabe entsteht also nicht erst – paradoxerweise – für Christen dadurch, dass sie wissen, dass ihnen Christus in den Bedürftigen begegnet, sodass sie „die Erzählung vom Weltgericht möglichst schleunigst wieder [...] vergessen [müssten], damit nur ja ihre lautere Motivation nicht korrumpiert werde, indem sich doch eine Hoffnung auf den hier verheißenen Lohn einschliche“ (HOFFMANN, *Skizzen zu einer Theologie der Gabe*, 158; exegetisch vgl. zum Unwissenheitsmotiv in der Weltgerichtsrede: LUZ, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*. 3. Teilband, 536f.). Nach Jacques Derrida ist eine „reine Gabe“, die frei von jedem ökonomischen Interesse ist, zwar nicht unmöglich, aber doch „das Unmögliche“, im Sinn eines von Menschen nicht leistbaren Vollzugs, der sich aber doch immer wieder ereignet (HOFFMANN. *ibid.* 77–91).

beantworten diese Frage mit drei großen Mitleid-Gleichnissen, von denen das Gleichnis vom barmherzigen Samariter den Beispielen der Weltgerichtsrede am nächsten kommt: Da liegt ein von Räubern Zusammengeschlagener halbtot im Straßengraben, und drei Menschen kommen vorbei und „sehen“ ihn. Zwei reagieren darauf so, dass sie „auf der entgegengesetzten Seite vorbeigehen“; nur einer verhält sich anders, indem er mit dem Verwundeten „Mitleid hat“ und zu ihm hingeht, um ihm gezielt und effektiv zu helfen. Mit diesen drei Reaktionsverben erschließt uns das Gleichnis, wie wir die Gnadenchance bzw. den *Kairos*¹⁰ der Begegnung mit einem Bedürftigen wahrnehmen oder auch verpassen können:

1. Jeder der drei Vorübergehenden *sieht* den unter die Räuber Gefallenen. „Sehen“ bedeutet hier mehr als ein bloß zufälliges Wahrnehmen. Vielmehr hat Gott jedem der drei – Priester, Levit und Samariter – die Augen für diesen Notleidenden geöffnet. Damit verbunden ist eine innere Bewegung der Empathie, die jeden der drei Personen zu diesem Verletzten hinzieht.
2. Wem das aufgrund unvereinbarer Interessen nicht recht ist, der bzw. die muss diese innere Bewegung durch eine gewaltsame Gegenbewegung unterdrücken. Genau dies tun der Priester und der Levit, wie es das bemerkenswert spezielle griechische Verb *anti-parérchomai* zum Ausdruck bringt: Sie „gehen auf der anderen Seite vorbei“ (Lk 10,31.32), damit sie nicht sehen, was sie nicht sehen wollen und auf diese Weise tiefer involviert werden.
3. Eben dieses Tiefer-Hineingezogenwerden widerfährt dem Samariter: „Er sah ihn und *hatte Mitleid*“ (Lk 10,33). Diese verbreitete Übersetzung ist allerdings viel zu harmlos für das, was hier ausgesagt wird: Das verwendete Verb „esplanchnísthe“ kommt von „splánchna“, was „Eingeweide“ bedeutet. Wörtlich wäre zu übersetzten: Der Samariter wurde *vereingeweidet* oder *in seinen Eingeweiden erschüttert*. Man könnte auch sagen: Der Anblick des Zusammengeschlagenen ging ihm durch und durch.

¹⁰ Cf. SANDLER, *Kairos und Parusie*.

Das Verb *splanchnízomai* gehört zu den erstaunlichsten in der ganzen griechischen Bibel. Nur zwölfmal kommt es vor, und zwar ausschließlich in den Evangelien. Achtmal beschreibt es ein inneres Ergriffenwerden Jesu, das jeweils einem besonderen Heilshandeln vorausgeht, einmal erbittet es ein zweifelnder Fürbitter von Jesus (Mk 9,21) und je einmal kommt es in den drei großen Mitleidsgleichnissen vom barmherzigen Samariter (Lk 10,33), dem barmherzigen Vater (Lk 15,20) und dem barmherzigen Gläubiger (Mt 18,27) vor. Das *In-den-Eingeweiden-ergriffen-Werden* intensiviert im Menschen drei Beziehungen zugleich, nämlich

1. mit bestimmten anderen Menschen in Not,
2. mit sich selber, und zwar auf eine ausgesprochenen körperliche Weise
3. und mit Gott, von dem diese Bewegung in der Weise einer aktuellen, situationsgebundenen Gnade ausgeht.

Die dritte Beziehung ist in den *splanchnizomai*-Texten nicht explizit, ergibt sich aber aus deren durchwegs auf Jesus Christus bezogener Verwendung, so dass diese Texte besonders gut veranschaulichen, wie Jesus sich vom Heiligen Geist leiten lässt und wie wir uns in seiner Nachfolge vom Heiligen Geist leiten lassen sollen und können. Auf Letzteres zielen ausdrücklich die drei *splanchnizomai*-Gleichnisse, die vorrangig christologisch zu deuten sind¹¹ und gerade so als Vorbild für die gelebte Frömmigkeit aller Menschen dienen.

Konkret am Gleichnis vom barmherzigen Samariter: Ungleich stärker wie schon zuvor das „*Sehen*“ des unter die Räuber Gefallenen gründet das „Zuinnerst-Bewegtwerden“ von ihm in einer übernatürlichen Gnadenwirkung, die wir dem Heiligen Geist zuschreiben können.¹² Die *splanchnizomai*-Texte verdeutlichen somit exemplarisch, wie sich Jesus in allem, was er tut, vom Heiligen Geist führen lässt.¹³

¹¹ Es ist in erster Linie Jesus, der wie der barmherzige Samariter (vgl. BOVON, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*. 2. Teilband, 82), der barmherzige Vater und der barmherzige Gläubiger handelt.

¹² Ein Berührtwerden von der Not in der Schöpfung als Frucht des Heiligen Geistes erschließt Paulus in Röm 8,18–27 mit einem dreifachen „Seufzen“ oder „Stöhnen“ (in den Versen 22, 23 und 26 jeweils mit der Wortwurzel *stenázein*). Dessen sozial-diakonisches Potenzial hat N.T. Wright im Zusammenhang mit der Corona-Pandemie überzeugend entfaltet: WRIGHT, *God and the pandemic*, 38–51.

¹³ Auch die drei Mitleidsgleichnisse lassen sich in erster Linie christologisch deuten. Cf. Anm. 11.

In seiner Nachfolge, erfüllt durch den von ihm ausgegossenen Heiligen Geist, können und sollen auch wir in ähnlicher Weise handeln.

Von einer solchen Auslegung des Gleichnisses vom barmherzigen Samariter her lässt sich die Weltgerichtsrede verstehen und für das konkrete Leben anwenden, ohne dass sie moralisierend überfordert. Weder um ein gewitztes Herausfiltern und Berücksichtigten einer begrenzten Zahl von Ereignissen, in denen allein uns Christus begegnet, noch um lückenlose moralische Leistungen gegenüber jedem Bedürftigen geht es,¹⁴ sondern darum, dass wir jederzeit¹⁵ bereit sind, der inneren Bewegung zu entsprechen, die Gott durch seinen Heiligen Geist in uns zwar *nicht immer*, aber doch *immer wieder* bewirkt, so wie es Jesus beispielgebend am barmherzigen Samariter aufzeigt. Und Jesus warnt uns davor, diese Gnadenbewegung zu underdrücken, indem wir – wie der Priester und der Levit im Gleichnis – „auf der anderen Seite vorbeigehen“. Deren Verhalten entspricht das Urteil des Menschensohns in der Weltgerichtsrede: „Ich war hungrig und ihr habt mir nichts zu essen gegeben ...“ (Mt 25,42–43).

3. OFFENBARUNG EINES GEWALTLOSEN UND DOCH HEILSMÄCHTIGEN HANDELNS GOTTES IM CHRISTUSEREIGNIS

Das Gleichnis vom barmherzigen Samariter (wie auch die anderen splanchnizomai-Texte) offenbart ein Handeln Gottes an den Menschen, das ihre Freiheit nicht überwältigt, sondern sie zu einem eigenständigen guten Handeln über sich hinausführt. Gott handelt durch eine Offenbarung seiner selbst in einer behutsamen Dosierung und Selbstzurücknahme – ersichtlich an der Unterscheidung zwischen niederschwelligem „Sehen“ und einem intensiven „Innerlich-ergriffen-Werden“ als Wirkungen dieses Handelns – so dass der Mensch im Angesicht Gottes dennoch die Möglichkeit behält, Gottes Heilsangebot und damit Gott selbst zurückzuweisen. Das

¹⁴ Um einen Mittelweg zwischen den Extremen einer ekklesiologisch limitierten und einer universalistisch überfordernden Deutung bemüht sich Luz in seiner Deutung der Weltgerichtsrede: Cf. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*. 3. Teilband, 542–544.

¹⁵ Vgl. dazu Jesu wiederholte Aufforderung zur Wachsamkeit im Umfeld der Weltgerichtsrede: Mt 24,32; 25,13.

von den Evangelien bezeugte Heilsdrama Jesu Christi führt uns zur Einsicht, dass Gottes Handeln grundsätzlich so verfasst ist.¹⁶

Jesus begann sein öffentliches Wirken in einer Zeit gesteigerter apokalyptischer Naherwartung, die sich aktuell in der Verkündigung von Johannes dem Täufer widerspiegelte. Dieser erwartete eine Durchsetzung von Gottes Herrschaft durch ein unmittelbar bevorstehendes richtendes göttliches Handeln, das nicht anders als gewalttätig vorstellbar war: „Schon ist die Axt an die Wurzel der Bäume gelegt ...“ (Mt 3,10). Diese Vorstellungen bezogen sich auch auf den Messias, den der Täufer ankündigte und als den er Jesus identifizierte.

Gemäß dem Matthäusevangelium griff Jesus zwar die Verkündigung des Johannes wörtlich auf: „Kehrt um, denn das Himmelreich ist nahe“ (Mt 4,17 = 3,2). Aber er gab dieser Botschaft eine neue Ausrichtung, indem er (anfänglich) auf Gerichtsworte verzichtete und seine Verkündigung mit anderen Handlungen als der Täufer verband: Jesus heilte und befreite viele Menschen (Mt 4,23f.) und beanspruchte, dass damit das sehnsüchtig erwartete Reich Gottes bereits angekommen ist (Mt 12,26 par Lk 11,20). So verwandelte Jesus die Drohbotschaft des Täufers in eine Frohbotschaft („Evangelium“: Mt 4,23).

Aber war das für die erwartete Königsherrschaft Gottes und für das eschatologische göttliche Handeln, das diese neue Weltordnung in Friede und Gerechtigkeit heraufbringen sollte, nicht zu wenig – und zu individualistisch? Kann denn das Gottesreich angekommen sein, solange noch gerechte Gottesdiener im Gefängnis und ungerechte Herrscher auf dem Thron sitzen? Johannes, der im Gefängnis war, während Herodes immer noch unangefochten herrschte, war sich in Bezug auf Jesus als Messias offenbar nicht mehr sicher. Er ließ ihn durch seine Jünger fragen: „Bist du der, der kommen soll, oder sollen wir auf einen anderen warten?“ (Mt 11,3). Jesu Antwort mit einem erneuten Verweis auf seine Heilungstätigkeit und Verkündigung dürfte Johannes kaum zufriedengestellt haben. Aber sie mündet in einen dunklen Schlusssatz: „Selig ist, wer an mir keinen Anstoß nimmt“ (Mt 11,6). Damit deutet Jesus an, dass das ganz und gar gewaltlose durch ihn vermittelte Handeln Gottes

¹⁶ Das ist ein zentrales Anliegen der Innsbrucker Dramatischen Theologie. Vgl. SANDLER, *Divine Action and Dramatic Christology*, mit einer Relektüre von SCHWAGER, *Jesu im Heilsdrama*.

eine Wirkung entfaltet, der sich kein Mensch entziehen kann. Das geschieht gerade dadurch, dass Gottes Gabe in sich ganz und gar gut ist – reine Liebe ohne Zwang und Gewalt – und als solches die tiefste menschliche Sehnsucht unfehlbar anspricht, aber ohne sie restlos zu überwältigen. Wer diese Gabe nicht annehmen will, ist frei sie abzuweisen, aber wie das „Auf-der-anderen-Seite-Vorbeigehen“ im Samariter-Gleichnis ist das nur möglich als ein zweiter Vollzug, der eine ursprüngliche Zustimmung zurücknimmt, aber nie ganz auslöschen kann.¹⁷ So entsteht im Falle einer Zurückweisung eines echten göttlichen Gnadenangebots ein Widerstreit im Menschen und in der Folge auch zwischen annehmenden und ablehnenden Menschen (vgl. Mt 10,34). Dieser Widerstreit wird von Jesus weiter angefacht, indem er die sich verhärtenden Menschen weder aggressiv bekämpft noch resignativ sich selber überlässt, sondern sie in kritischer Solidarität begleitet.¹⁸ Sein fortgesetztes Engagement kann Menschen zur Umkehr führen, aber auch in eine eskalierende Gewalttätigkeit treiben. Aber selbst durch die Tötung seiner Gesandten werden die Menschen Gott nicht los, sondern verstricken sich noch tiefer in ihn. Dies bestätigt sich durch die Auferstehung und von ihr her durch die Ausgießung des Heiligen Geistes, der die Menschen mit der verdrängten Wahrheit ihrer Geschichte konfrontiert und ihnen zugleich Christi Vergebung vermittelt und die Möglichkeit eines Neuanfangs eröffnet.¹⁹ Dies verdeutlicht paradigmatisch die Pfingstpredigt des Petrus mit Freimut (Apg 2,29), kritischer Solidarität,²⁰ erschütternder Wirkung (Apg 2,37) und Zusage eines Neubeginns in Umkehr, Taufe und erneuerter Heilsverheißung (Apg 2,38) für viele ehemals Verstockte.

¹⁷ Vgl. dazu die dramatische Auslegung von Lk 4,22a–c in SANDLER, *Kairos und Parusie*, 13–15.

¹⁸ Vgl. SANDLER, *Kreuz-Weg zwischen Aggression und Resignation*.

¹⁹ Vgl. SANDLER, *Die gesprengten Fesseln des Todes*, 111–113. Das Eröffnen einen neuen Anfangs kann als ein wesentliches Merkmal von Gottes „nicht invasiven“ Handeln erschlossen werden. Dazu lässt sich Hanna Arendts Existenzial der Natalität oder Gebürtlichkeit mit den Hauptmomenten von Vergebung und Zusage theologisch rezipieren. Cf. WENDEL, *Vergabung und Zusage*.

²⁰ Kritisch konfrontiert Petrus die jüdischen Verantwortlichen damit, dass sie den von Gott Gesandten dem Tod auslieferten; zugleich spricht er sie solidarisch als „Brüder“ an (Apg 2,29), was für sie so glaubwürdig ist, dass sie es in ihrer erschütterten Reaktion übernehmen: „Was sollen wir tun, Brüder?“ (Apg 2,37).

4. WIE GOTT ERLÖST UND ZUR VOLLENDUNG FÜHRT: DURCH „SAMENKÖRNER DES GOTTESREICHS“ UND ALS „LICHT DER WELT“

Diesem „minimal invasiven“, freisetzenden und zugleich heilsmächtigen Handeln Gott es durch Jesus Christus, das schuldverstrickten Menschen einen neuen Anfang eröffnet,²¹ entspricht Jesu Lehre über das kommende Gottesreich: Er erklärt seine hereinbrechende Gegenwart und seine noch ausstehende vollendete Ankunft vor allem mit Wachstumsgleichnissen.

Gemäß dem Gleichnis vom Senfkorn wird das Reich Gottes gegenwärtig grundgelegt in kleinen und kleinsten Ereignissen (des Wirkens Jesu)²², die aber ein unvorstellbares Wachstumspotenzial haben (Mt 13,31f par), mit einem Wachstum, das ganz in Gottes Macht gründet, „von selber“ (automaté: Mk 4,28) so dass der Bauer „nicht weiß, wie“ (Mk 4,27).

Das Gleichnis vom Sämann (Mt 13,3–9.18–23 par) gibt eine Ahnung von der überbordenden Fülle der Samenkörner – die für Ereignisse von Gottes lebendigem Wort stehen, das der himmlische Sämann an alle möglichen und unmöglichen Orte verstreut. Ihre Fruchtbarkeit hängt von der Beschaffenheit des Bodens ab, die auf unterschiedliche Dispositionen der Menschen verweist. Gemäß einer wörtlichen Übersetzung des Sämanngleichnisses sät der Sämann nicht nur *in* den Menschen, sondern *den* Mensch auf guten oder schlechten Grund (Mt 13,20.22.23 par). Das bringt die seinsverändernde Tiefenwirkung von Gottes Handeln zum Ausdruck.

Wie aber geht Gottes Heilsmacht mit den unterschiedlichen Dispositionen der Menschen und mit ihrer Freiheit und Verantwortung zusammen? Markus und Lukas verdeutlichen den von den Menschen zu verantwortenden Anteil mit einem Lichtgleichnis, das sie unmittelbar an das Gleichnis vom Sämann anschließen: „Zündet man etwa eine Leuchte an und stellt sie unter den Scheffel oder unter das

²¹ Vgl. Anm. 19.

²² Die Senfkörner beziehen sich auf einzelne Aktionen von Jesu Wirken (vgl. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*. 2. Teilband, 332). „Klein und Kleinst“ sind sie im Vergleich zum ausgewachsenen „Baum“ des Gottesreichs (Mt 13,32b), zu dem eine bei Jesus noch ausstehende vollständige Überwindung von politischen und kosmischen Mächten und Gewalten gehört. Vgl. oben, Kap. 3 zu den Zweifeln des Täufers an Jesus.

Bett? Stellt man sie nicht auf den Leuchter?“ (Mk 4,21) Dabei ist es letztlich Gottes Sache, ein Licht in uns zu entzünden und unsere Sache, es auf den Leuchter zu stellen, damit es sich entfalten kann. Dieser Zusammenhang wird bei Matthäus noch deutlicher:²³

„Ihr seid das Licht der Welt. Eine Stadt, die auf einem Berg liegt, kann nicht verborgen bleiben. Man zündet auch nicht eine Leuchte an und stellt sie unter den Scheffel, sondern auf den Leuchter; dann leuchtet sie allen im Haus.“ (Mt 5,14f.)

Wie kann Jesus, den Matthäus kurz zuvor selbst als Licht für das Volk vorstellte (Mt 4,16), den ersten Jüngern und den Volksmengen, die ihm auf den Berg gefolgt sind, zusprechen, dass sie *das* Licht der Welt sind? Jesus kann das in dem Sinn, dass er selbst als Licht auf sie ausstrahlt und sie sich als uneingeschränkt offen dafür erwiesen haben. Dieser Widerschein ist ihnen nicht nur äußerlich; sie *haben* das Licht Christi nicht nur, sondern *sind* es – in einer Resonanz, die aus dem innersten Grund ihres Seins kommt. Aber das ist noch keine nachhaltige Transformation. Das Licht würde verblassen, sobald sie Jesus aus den Augen verlieren. Damit das nicht geschieht, müssen sie *eigentätig* aus ihrem verdankten Lichtsein heraus ihm entsprechend wirken und auf diese Weise mit dem Wirken Gottes kooperieren. Und sie müssen gewohnte Verhaltensweisen und Reaktionen vermeiden, mit dem sie dieses Licht verlieren würden.

Dieses Tun und Lassen wird von der *Bergpredigt* in verschiedenen Dimensionen und Kontexten mit einer Reihe von Beispielen exemplarisch erschlossen. Die Bergpredigt darf deshalb nicht als allgemeine christliche Ethik verstanden werden. Als solche würde sie uns komplett überfordern. Vielmehr ist sie eine Mystagogie in Samenkorn-Erfahrungen des anbrechenden Gottesreichs mit großer ethischer Tragweite.²⁴ In der Bildsprache der Evangelien können wir das so ausdrücken: Mit der Bergpredigt lehrt uns Jesus, wie wir es konkret angehen müssen, dass wir unser Licht auf den Leuchter stellen (Mt 5,15), vollkommen wie der himmlische Vater sind (Mt 5,48), mit den Talenten, die er uns immer wieder gibt, wuchern (Mt 25,14–30)

²³ *Matthäus behandelt die beiden Gleichnisse ausführlich an verschiedenen Orten. Das Lichtgleichnis erhält bei ihm eine Schlüsselstellung im Anfangsteil der Bergpredigt. Vgl. DEINES, Die Gerechtigkeit der Tora, 221.*

²⁴ *Vgl. dazu SANDLER, Bergpredigt und Gnadenerfahrung.*

oder – in paulinischer Sprache – den jeweiligen Gnaden-Kairos auskaufen (Kol 4,5; Eph 5,16).²⁵

5. INKARNATION ALS DYNAMISCHER PROZESS UND „GOTT IN ALLEN DINGEN“

Wie können wir diese biblische Mystagogie für unser konkretes Leben im 21. Jahrhundert mitten in einer großteils säkularisierten Welt fruchtbar machen? Dazu müssen wir zunächst die Kluft überwinden zwischen den Israeliten des ersten Jahrhunderts, denen in der Begegnung mit dem vorösterlichen Jesus Gott und das Himmelreich aufgingen, und den späteren Menschen, die Ähnliches allenfalls in weit weniger greifbarer Gestalt erfuhren. Diese Kluft bestand bereits für die urkirchlichen Erst-Adressaten der Evangelien und wird durch verschiedene Zeugnisse und Lehren des Neuen Testaments überbrückt.²⁶ Die Apostelgeschichte erschließt das Wirken des Heiligen Geistes und zeigt, wie diese den Begegnungen der Jünger mit dem vorösterlichen Jesus in manchen Wirkungen überlegen ist.²⁷ Andererseits wirkt der Heilige Geist subtiler und kann leicht mit ‚unreinen‘ Bewegungen des menschlichen Geistes vermischt und verwechselt werden. Hier gibt das reine Wirken des Heiligen Geistes in den Taten Jesu, wie es die Evangelien bezeugen, einen Maßstab für eine Unterscheidung der Geister. Aber wo und wie ist können wir überhaupt in unserem Leben und in der Welt mit einem Wirken des Heiligen Geistes rechnen? Für eine Antwort müssen wir auf der Grundlage neutestamentlicher Zeugnisse die Ausgießung des Heiligen Geistes durch den Auferstandenen als eine Frucht und Wirkung des Lebens Jesu verstehen, der sich durch den Heiligen Geist in seinem öffentlichen Wirken von seiner Gottesreich-Verkündigung über kritisch-solidarische

²⁵ *Einer solchen kairologischen Deutung der Bergpredigt (vgl. SANDLER, Bergpredigt und Gnadenerfahrung) entspricht ihre Positionierung im Matthäusevangelium zwischen einer ausschließlich summarischen Darstellung von Jesu Heilungstätigkeit (Mt 4,23f) und einer Darstellung von zehn exemplarischen Wundern, verbunden mit unterschiedlichen Reaktionen der Zeug:innen (Mt 8–9). Durch Jesu Anweisungen zur richtigen Rezeption solcher Gnadenereignisse, die Matthäus zur Bergpredigt komponiert hat, werden die Hörer:innen und Leser:innen vorweg darauf sensibilisiert, wodurch die Wahrnehmung dieser Kairoi glückt oder scheitert.*

²⁶ Vgl. SANDLER, *Divine Action and Dramatic Christology*, 13–15.

²⁷ *Paradigmatisch geschah das in der freimütigen Pfingstpredigt des Petrus, durch die er die verantwortlichen Juden in den Spuren Jesu kritisch-solidarisch konfrontierte und ihnen so durch Gericht hindurch einen neuen Weg der Erlösung eröffnete. Siehe dazu oben, Kap. 3.*

Konfrontationen bis ans Kreuz und in die Abgründe des Todes und von daher in die Auferstehung führen ließ. Wir können dieses Geistwirken als Weg einer *dynamisch sich durchsetzenden Inkarnation* begreifen, die mit der Empfängnis und der Geburt Jesu keineswegs abgeschlossen war, sondern vielmehr ihren Anfang nahm und sich während seines Lebens in seinem zunehmenden Sicheinlassen auf die Abgründe der Welt und des Menschlichen vertiefte. Durch seinen gewaltsamen Tod und seinen „Abstieg in das Reich des Todes“ ging Jesus in dieser Welt buchstäblich „zu Grunde“ und dadurch erst vollendete sich seine Inkarnation.²⁸ Seine Position *im Wurzelgrund der Welt* ließ er durch seine Auferstehung und Himmelfahrt nicht hinter sich, so dass er „sitzend zur Rechten des Vaters“ zugleich seinen Ort „im Herzen der Welt“ einnimmt.²⁹ Was ich auf diese Weise metaphorisch ausmalte, haben verschiedene Quellen des Neuen Testaments intuitiv erfasst, wenn sie den Auferstandenen als „Erstgeborenen der Toten“ (Kol 1,18), solcherart als Ursprung der neuen Schöpfung,³⁰ wie auch als Mittler der ganzen Schöpfung (Hebr 1,2; Joh 1,2) bekennen und auf diese Weise ein neues Verständnis von Schöpfung im Licht der Auferstehung eröffnen.

Diese Bekenntnisse lassen sich theologisch mit der Überlegung ausfallen, dass der Glaube an die Auferstehung Jesu Christi, um konsistent zu sein, eine radikale Transformation unseres Verständnisses von Schöpfung voraussetzt:³¹ nämlich in der Weise, dass die eschatologisch erwartete neue Schöpfung als Vollendungsgestalt dieser dem Tod überantworteten Schöpfung (Röm 8,20) zu verstehen ist: und zwar so, dass diese Vollendungsgestalt nicht ausschließlich zukünftig und jenseitig zu denken ist, da sie vom Auferstandenen her auf vielerlei Weise bereits in diese Schöpfung hineinwirkt: zuerst in den Erscheinungen des Auferstandenen (als des „Erstgeborenen der neuen Schöpfung“), die die Auferstehungszeugen mit einer Zuversicht erfüllten, ohne die das die Weltgeschichte prägende Christentum nicht hätte entstehen können. Aber nicht nur das: Die neue Schöpfung wirkt auch in die alte als Grund einer Wandlung im menschlichen Sein, die Paulus mit den Worten beschreibt: „Wenn also

²⁸ Vgl. das soteriologische Prinzip, dass nicht erlöst ist, was nicht angenommen ist.

²⁹ Vgl. SANDLER, *Doch einen Leib hast du mir geschaffen*, 57f.

³⁰ So dass von daher die paulinischen Aussagen, dass wir in Christus eine neue Schöpfung sind (2 Kor 5,17; Gal 6,15), erst einen Sinn machen.

³¹ Vgl. SANDLER, *Divine Action and Dramatic Christology*, 10f.

jemand in Christus ist, dann ist er eine neue Schöpfung“ (2 Kor 5,17; vgl. Gal 6,15). Dies ist der Mensch gewiss nicht *immer* (z.B. seit der Taufe), wohl aber *immer wieder*, wie von einer dramatisch-theologischen Kairologie³² der Samenkorn-Ereignisse her zu präzisieren wäre.

Auf diese Weise kann christliche Theologie und Spiritualität universalistische Vorstellungen von „Gott in allen Dingen“ auf eine differenzierte Weise übernehmen und vertiefen, wobei sie sich an den Maßstäben einer eschatologisch und schöpfungstheologisch ausgefalteten dramatischen Christologie orientiert. Auf diesem Weg wird ein christlicher Universalismus gerade nicht durch eine Abkehr von der inkarnatorischen Christozentrik gewonnen, sondern durch ihre radikale Vertiefung. „Gott in allen Dingen“ wird so nicht zu einem göttlichen Prinzip oder einer göttlichen Energie oder Ressource, für die die verführerische Annahme naheliegt, man könne sie mit bestimmten Methoden verfügbar machen. Vielmehr wächst die Aufmerksamkeit für wesentlich personale Begegnungen mit dem „Gott *über* der Welt“, der sich uns als „Gott *in* der Welt“ greifbar macht: *möglicherweise* in jedem Stück Schöpfung (gleich ob Person, Ding oder Ereignis), *faktisch* aber nicht immer und überall, sondern wann, wo und wie Gott will – in großen, kleineren oder kleinsten Ereignissen.

6. DER EINIGENDE CHARAKTER DER SAMENKORN-SPIRITUALITÄT IN DER VIELFALT CHRISTLICHER SPIRITUALITÄTEN

Eine solche Samenkorn-Spiritualität kann die Stärken verschiedener christlicher Spiritualitäten verbinden und Übergänge zwischen ihnen ermöglichen:³³

³² Unter „dramatischer Kairologie“ verstehe ich eine theologische Analyse von Heilsereignissen, die ich hier als „Samenkornereignisse des anbrechenden Gottesreichs“ beschrieben habe, und zwar vor allem im Hinblick auf die dadurch freigesetzte und auch notwendige Entscheidung, den Kairos zu nutzen oder zu verfehlen, sowie die aus beidem entstehenden Konsequenzen. Aufgrund des begrenzten Umfangs dieses Aufsatzes konnte ich die damit verbundene Kairos-Theologie bzw. Kairologie nur andeutungsweise behandeln. Vergleiche dazu v.a SANDLER, *Kairos und Parusie*, sowie SANDLER, *Divine Action and Dramatic Christology*.

³³ Im Folgenden greife ich auf die Typologie von sechs christlichen Spiritualitäten in FOSTER, *Streams of the Living Water* zurück.

- Sie ist *kontemplativ* und übt sich in Achtsamkeit, um jederzeit und überall offen zu sein nicht nur für außerordentliche, sondern für kleine und kleinste Samenkorn-Ereignisse, die geistliche Kraft und Orientierung geben.
- Sie ist zugleich *charismatisch*, insofern sie die eigenen Kräfte vom erfahrenen Wirken des Heiligen Geistes her leiten lässt, um nicht nur gutgemeinte *Werke für Gott*, sondern mit ihm mitwirkend *Werke Gottes* zu vollbringen. Im Gebet lassen sich kontemplative mit charismatischem Anteilen verbinden, indem man aus einer achtsam-abwartenden Haltung des Nicht-Tuns in ein aktiv betendes oder Charismen ausübendes *Mit-Tun* übergeht, wenn Gottes Gnade entsprechend spürbar wird.
- Achtsamkeit und Kontemplation werden nicht um ihrer selbst willen praktiziert (mit der Gefahr einer „Wellness-Spiritualität“), sondern bereiten den Grund für eine jederzeitige Wachsamkeit, um jeden Kairos unverzüglich und entschieden zu nutzen. Wie am Beispiel des responsiv und fokussiert helfenden barmherzigen Samariters hat diese Spiritualität zugleich einen ausgeprägt *sozial-diakonischen* Charakter.³⁴ Dabei lässt sie sich dank ihrer kontemplativ-charismatischen Grundlage von Gottes Wirken leiten und kooperiert mit ihr. So ist sie vor Aktivismus, Burnout und einem Helfersyndrom³⁵ geschützt.
- Weiters kann die christliche Samenkorn-Spiritualität eine hohe Resilienz freisetzen. Dies hängt mit dem nüchternen Realismus eines eschatologischen Vorbehalts zusammen: Jesus hat nicht beansprucht, diese Welt in das Gottesreich mit umfassendem Frieden, Leidfreiheit und einer Überwindung der Mächte des Todes restlos zu verwandeln, sondern in ihr das Gottesreich exemplarisch und realsymbolisch (in der Weise einer „Realverheißung“) verwirklicht. Auf diese Weise hat er Menschen nicht nur gestärkt und motiviert, sondern ihnen eine seinsmäßige Grundlage dafür gegeben, die empfangene Vergegenwärtigung des Ewigen im Zeitlichen eigentätig fortzuführen, um so nicht diese Welt zum Himmel, wohl aber die Menschen, die Welt und sich selbst „himmelsfähig“ zu machen. Dies, aber auch nicht mehr, kann und soll von uns

³⁴ Siehe auch oben, Anm. 12.

³⁵ Vgl. den barmherzigen Samariter, der sich mühelos von der Person, der er so konzentriert geholfen hat, wieder lösen kann (vgl. Lk 10,35).

in der Nachfolge Christi versucht werden. Hier zeigt sich auch der *inkarnatorische und im weiten Sinn sakramentale* Charakter der christlichen Samenkorn-Spiritualität.

- *Evangelikale Spiritualität* ist auf das Wort Gottes in der Heiligen Schrift fokussiert, was ihr entschiedenes Vertrauen in Gottes Heilsmacht gibt.³⁶ Allerdings wird Jesu Transformation gewaltbesetzter apokalyptischer Vorstellungen von Gottes Handeln in ein gewaltloses, geduldiges und sich selbst riskierendes Handeln ganz aus Liebe mit einer daraus resultierenden universalen Heilsmacht von Evangelikalen meist nur eingeschränkt nachvollzogen. Demgemäß neigen viele von ihnen auch dazu, eine Heilmöglichkeit auf Christus Kennende und Bekennende zu beschränken. Der hier skizzierte systematisch-bibeltheologische Ansatz für eine christliche Samenkorn-Spiritualität teilt mit den Evangelikalen das Vertrauen auf Gottes Wort und Wirken und kann dazu beitragen, deren Christusbekenntnis in einer Weise zu vertiefen, dass diese größere Tiefe eine größere Weite freigibt.³⁷

7. AUSBLICK

Dieser Artikel entwickelte aus biblischer Christologie einen weiten Horizont für Samenkorn-Erfahrungen des offenen Himmels mitten in unserem Leben. Das verlangt nach einer Fortsetzung, die hier aus Platzgründen nicht geleistet werden kann. Zu entwickeln wäre eine Phänomenologie und Typologie von Samenkorn-Erfahrungen oder „Epiphanien“³⁸, die auch an kleinen und kleinsten Alltagserfahrungen („Mikro-Epiphanien“³⁹) unter anderem zu zeigen hätten, dass diese nicht nur als „gut“ in einem wohltuenden Sinn erfahren werden, sondern gerade in ihrer Gutheit auch als störend und verstörend wahrgenommen werden. Sie können auch Wert-Erfahrungen sein, die uns unter einen unbedingten Anspruch

³⁶ Für eine breitere Verankerung der evangelikalen Spiritualität, die die Momente der Entscheidung, sowie der gelebten Christusunachfolge in Heiligung und Mission betont, vgl. SANDLER, *Charismatisch, Evangelikal und Katholisch*, 43–100.

³⁷ Vgl. die Einleitung zu diesem Artikel.

³⁸ Vgl. CHAPPELL, *Epiphanies*.

³⁹ Vgl. *ibid.* 5, 14.

stellen und uns solcherart fordern und auch überfordern.⁴⁰ Zu klären wäre in diesem Zusammenhang, woran man solche Samenkorn-Erfahrungen erkennen und unterscheiden kann: vor allem an ihrer Absolutheit, die sich daran zeigt, dass jede komparative Bewertung „besser als“ spontan als verfehlt empfunden wird. Verbunden damit ist die Evidenz einer universal ausstrahlenden Inklusivität: „Ein Blatt ist gut. Alles gut“⁴¹. Weiters wäre ihr transformatives Potenzial zu entfalten, das ihnen Relevanz für die eingangs erwähnten großen Herausforderungen unserer Zeit gibt: etwa die Eigenart von Wert-Erfahrungen, die uns unerwartet in eine Bereitschaft oder ein Tun versetzt, so dass der schwer überwindbare Knowledge-Action-Gap im Ansatz bereits überwunden ist.⁴²

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⁴⁰ Vgl. RAHNER, *Erfahrung des Heiligen Geistes*.

⁴¹ Vgl. DOSTOJEWSKIJ, *Böse Geister*, 313.

⁴² Vgl. CHAPPELL, *Epiphanies*, 50–56.

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‘BUT THE WORD OF GOD IS NOT BOUND!’ (2TIMOTHY 2:9): POSITIVELY APPRAISING THE CANONS OF SCRIPTURE OF DIFFERENT FAITH COMMUNITIES

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exclusivist reading, religious identity*

INTRODUCTION

The canons of Scripture of different faith communities – Samaritans, Jews, Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants – are at times a point of contention. Since some communities have shorter canons, they might be considered by others as being disadvantaged in this regard. Conversely, communities that have longer canons could be regarded as having embraced non-inspired, hence, apocryphal texts. The formation of the canons of the various believing communities may have been the result of a concoction of political struggles, hierarchical tensions, spiritual convictions, and traditional legacies, yet these were the means by which their respective collections of what they each consider to be God’s Word were formed. Hence, it is imperative to assess the relevance of such canons in the light of each other and to adopt a healthy inclusive stance vis-à-vis the canons of other communities.

THE VARIETIES OF TRADITIONS

Though different believing communities settled for diverse canonical collections, it is also a fact that the various books found therein have numerous amounts of textual witnesses in the form of mss. The canonicity of books does not depend as such on their extant mss, though a numerous amount of witnesses of a book can be a sign of its

canonical significance.¹ Moreover, such mss are usually imbued with theologically-laden content which may be conducive to their canonical appreciation.

On the level of textual evidence

Any critical edition of the OT or the NT shows the numerous alternative readings that are found in a myriad of extant mss. The apparatus criticus indicates the most significant of these different readings as found in the relatively most reliable mss available to us, hence witnessing to the fact that there was not one single version of any book of what is now the Bible.² The very phenomenon of Kethiv – Qere in Masoretic mss shows that the Masoretes themselves allowed two traditions to stand alongside each other without eliminating any of them.³ Different Hebrew readings are also evident between major authoritative mss such the Leningrad Codex and the Aleppo Codex. In fact, James Barr suggests that, given the fact that there exist inconsistencies between Hebrew mss – even though they are often not significant ones – it is logical to question the notion of *the* Masoretic Text.⁴

The Samaritan Bible (Samaritan Pentateuch) only contains the first five books of the OT, namely the Torah. Though Samaritans and Jews shared the same Torah, after their definitive split which happened in the late 2nd cent. BCE, the texts of these five books took a somewhat different shape on the lexical and redactional levels.⁵ It was believed that the Samaritans made textual changes to better fit their non-Jewish religious milieu. One notable difference concerns the place where God was meant to be worshipped. There are 21 instances of variants in Deuteronomy where the place that God “will choose” is rendered as the place which he already “chose”, this being Mount Gerizim and not Jerusalem.⁶ However, it is now becoming clear that

¹ VANDERKAM, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bible*, 3 gives a list of different copies of biblical books found in Qumran, citing Gen, Exod, Lev, Deut, Isa, and Pss as the ones mostly represented.

² Cf. McDONALD, *Before There Was a Bible*, 128-29.

³ This argument has been made to critique the notion of an “Endtext,” that is a final form of the text, suggesting that, over the centuries, there was always a development in the way the Scriptures were presented. Cf. LOADER, *The Finality*, 743-52 where other such phenomena in the Jewish tradition are mentioned.

⁴ Cf. BARR, *The Variable Spellings*, 5-7.

⁵ Cf. SCHORCH, *The Samaritan Pentateuch*, 53-54; cf. WILLIAMS, *Textual Criticism*, 835-36.

⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, 836.

the Samaritans' version is at times more faithful to the original Hebrew text than the one we have generally considered more authoritative.

If we follow the Masoretic Text, the Book of Daniel has a number of texts that are missing, but one finds these in the Septuagint. At a *seminario biblico* held at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome in January 2023, Gianto stated that a Greek translation of Daniel already existed at the beginning of the 1st century BCE, but that other texts were added to it later – the prayer of Azariah and the hymn of praise of the three youths – and that, subsequently, a version of the story of Susanna, the story of Bel, and that of Daniel who kills the dragon were added to the Greek version. Hence, we witness a longer Greek text. On the other hand, the Greek version of Jeremiah is shorter than its Masoretic counterpart, LXX Jer being mostly representative of an older Hebrew version of the book.⁷ Moreover, Origen's Hexapla is evidence of the fact that there existed at least another three Greek versions of the OT, namely Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion (all 2nd cent. CE).

The Septuagint's importance as a text in its own right, and not merely a translation, has been steadily increasing. Ska claims that the Pentateuchal minuses and pluses in the Septuagint are not mere later changes made to the Hebrew *Vorlage*, but they reflect a more ancient *Vorlage* with respect to that of the present Masoretic Text. Hence, the Septuagint was being faithful to the Hebrew texts it translated, and was not shortening or amplifying these texts.⁸ Hence, Tov's wise claim: "An analysis solely of the central biblical text, the Masoretic Text (MT), does not suffice because MT provides only one part of the textual evidence."⁹

Apart from differences between texts of different languages, here we are concerned primarily with how diverse language communities or distinct religious groups adopted scriptures and adapted them, for whatever reason/s they did so. Tov continues:

"The reply to the core question: «Where is/are the text(s) of the Bible to be found?» is thus that all these texts together and each one separately reflect «the text of the

⁷ Cf. BACKHAUS and MEYER, *Il libro di Geremia, 686-89*; see also LAW, *When God Spoke Greek*, 20.

⁸ Cf. SKA, 'Questa o quella', *n.d.*

⁹ TOV, *The Praxis of Textual Criticism*, 21.

Bible». «*The text of the Bible*» is no more than an abstract entity since the biblical text is represented by all authoritative representatives of the Bible in Hebrew or translation.”¹⁰

In the light of the multiplicity of witnesses, one needs to affirm the concreteness of the many texts of the Bible, these being its pluriform representations. Tov’s claims can thus be taken as a warning to avoid an absolutist and exclusivist approach. It is for this reason that “many textual critics had given up on arriving at the original text of the biblical books and seek to find what the manuscripts reflect of the sociohistorical context in which they were found and how the language is used in the various manuscripts.”¹¹

On the level of canonical books

Both the Jewish and Christian worlds experienced a diversification in their respective creeds and consequently in their Scriptures. Moreover, for the former group, a major division which is still visible to this day is the distinction between the Samaritan canon and the Jewish one. Though the Samaritans have held onto only the first five books of the OT, Jews developed a much larger corpus of scriptures that added to its Torah both the Prophets and the Writings. In his exposition of Sundberg Jr.’s theory on the formation of the Greek Bible, Barton notes that the Jewish and Christian Scriptures (not including the NT) developed in parallel processes, one becoming the Hebrew Bible and the other becoming the Greek Bible.¹² Christians embraced all the books that are found in the so-called Palestinian canon, that is the Hebrew Bible, but also included others which the Jews eventually did not incorporate into their own canon. The process of formation of these canons was a long one, even because the very concept of canon was not as rigidly understood as it is today.¹³

The process of the canonisation of the NT itself took a number of centuries. When the author of the last book of the Bible states “For I testify to everyone who hears the

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 24-25. Cf. RICHELLE, *Critique Textuelle et ‘Forme Canonique’ du Texte*, 71 who speaks about two approaches, namely sticking to one form of the text or embracing a plurality of texts.

¹¹ McDONALD, *Before There Was a Bible*, 129.

¹² Cf. BARTON, *Canons of the Old Testament*, 207.

¹³ Cf. LIGHTSTONE, ‘*The Rabbis’ Bible*’, 176-77.

words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book” (Rev 22,18), the text refers specifically to the Book of Revelation. McDonald notes: “Presently, there is no clear evidence to substantiate the claim that Jesus had a fixed biblical canon, that is, a fixed collection of sacred scriptures that informed his teachings and beliefs.”¹⁴ Centuries later, as a reaction to the Reformation and its elimination of books not handed down in Hebrew (based on the *Hebraica veritas* principle), the Council of Trent listed the biblical books it held to be canonical, declaring anathema those who did not accept them all.¹⁵

The Church only mentions the books of the Bible that are inspired, not the mss. The NT does not pose problems since all Christian Churches have the same canon.¹⁶ The OT (or Hebrew scripture) canons, however, exhibit numerous differences (cf. Table 1).

Table 1: Current Canons of Scripture

Samaritan	Jewish	Protestant	Roman Catholic	Orthodox
Torah	Torah Nevi'im Ketuvim	Jewish Bible (in a different order)	Jewish Bible (in a different order)	Jewish Bible (in a different order even in relation to the Catholic one)
			7 Deuterocanonical books	7 Deuterocanonical books
				1 Esdras 3 Maccabees

¹⁴ McDonald, *Before There Was a Bible*, 71. For instance, in Mt 5,43 Jesus said: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy’,” but the second part of this supposedly fixed commandment is not found anywhere in the OT.

¹⁵ Cf. Council of Trent, Fourth Session.

¹⁶ For the NT books, see McDONALD, Appendix D, 591-97 who gives various NT canons showing which books were at times omitted.

In the Catholic and Orthodox versions, Daniel has some additions with respect to the Jewish and Protestant one. The Epistle of Jeremiah appears on its own in the Orthodox Bible, but forms part of Baruch in the Catholic tradition. The Orthodox Book of Psalms also contains Ps 151.¹⁷ Harrington notes the way the apocrypha have been handled in various Bibles (being either included in a section on their own, or being completely omitted), and proposes a historically sensitive way of approaching these texts since they point to the social context of Jesus and the early Christian movement.¹⁸

ASSESSING THE QUESTION OF INSPIRATION

Given the variations in the numerous mss and in linguistic versions belonging more generally to various religious communities (Masoretic, Samaritan, Essene, Christian, some of which can be further subdivided), pertinent questions need to be asked. Is it reasonable to hold that one community possesses more of God's Word in textual form than others? Can one hold that certain communities possess less of God's Word than others? Does God's communication with a community depend on how many mss/texts have been handed down to it? Does one version of Scripture exclude, by default, any other similar but non-identical version from fully representing God's message to a community? An ecumenical hermeneutic could lead us out of this impasse, one that allows us to truly value the Scriptures of each community. This is the inclusive approach that is being proposed here.

Noting that Judaism itself had various canons before the destruction of the Temple, and that large sections of the Church give value to the Septuagint, Richelle affirms: "it would be necessary to explain why the TM constitutes the only *telos* targeted by divine providence."¹⁹ Richelle's statement has to do with the textual validity of mss, but it bears directly upon the question of inspiration. One gets the impression that one cannot decide on which text is inspired merely by resorting to internal

¹⁷ Cf. McDONALD, *Appendix C*, 589-90.

¹⁸ Cf. HARRINGTON, *The Old Testament Apocrypha*, 196. *An interesting aspect is that, though not considered canonical by Jews, the Books of Maccabees are religiously important for Hanukkah.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 64 (*my translation*).

considerations, though the Lutheran approach has been to accept books depending on whether they announce Christ and prepare for the Gospel. Rather, one has to respect the oftentimes complex history of how faith communities made such choices, whilst admitting that we may never fully understand those processes. The scribal deviations from earlier texts, as well as translators' productions together with redactional additions of canonical literature (even whole books) can be valued as diverse ways in which God spoke to his peoples.²⁰

The huge number of mss that emerged in the last centuries made it impossible to uphold the notion of divine dictation as a means for the composition of the Scriptures. In fact, in speaking of the canon of Scripture, the Catholic Church only mentions the *books* of the Bible that are inspired and does not get entangled in the question of the inspiration of the various at times somewhat conflicting mss. Indeed, before the pluriformity of texts and the non-identical Scriptures held sacred by various believing communities, when hearing the rallying cry *sola scriptura*, one is justified in asking: *sed quam scriptura?* (But which Scripture?). Each community has its own reasoning behind the selection of certain books as normative and canonical, but most denominations would agree with the position of the First Vatican Council that “they have God for their author, and have been delivered as such to the Church herself.”²¹

Each of those mss was “sacred scripture” for the various communities that preserved them. It is necessary to see the Scriptures within the larger framework of the dialogue between God and his people/s. It would seem that the correct question to ask is not exactly whether a book is inspired or not, but to appreciate the triangular dynamic between God, the community, and the latter's canonical texts, which dynamic is one wherein a unique conversation is stimulated and cultivated.

In view of the above, is it not more reasonable to claim that God speaks to different communities in different ways and that the respective communities' reception of various groups of texts as canonical constitutes the personal and exclusive matrix of

²⁰ KRAFT, *The Codex and Canon Consciousness*, 233 suggests that things were still fluid up till the fourth century CE and that the idea of a canon became clearer with the emergence of the codices, this being a technological development.

²¹ VATICAN I, *Dei Filius*, par. 1787.

God's communication with each of them? Rather than trying to ascertain which Church possesses the fullest and most original versions of God's Word, what matters is understanding the personal dialogue of God with the respective communities which do not really need to have an identical canon. Such an approach demands a greater appreciation of the community's role of being a protagonist in this dialogue with the Lord. It also demands that categories such as deuterocanonical or apocryphal be dispensed with, as these reflect a strong bias in favour of one's own canon and a lack of openness to the belief that God has spoken to other communities in unique ways. Only within such a hermeneutic can we seriously affirm the words of Scripture that "God's Word is not chained" (2 Tim 2:9).

A HERMENEUTICAL READING OF DIFFERENT CANONS

At times, the evangelists give us the impression that Jesus made use of a number of textual traditions, possibly moving from one to the other without hitches. It is therefore difficult to know which textual traditions he was used. Evans claims: "Jesus was not wedded to a particular text, but appealed to words, phrases, and sometimes whole passages—whatever their textual origin—in an ad hoc, experiential fashion."²² A rigid, exclusivist outlook does not represent his logic.

The fact that Scriptures were composed in particular languages meant that those language groups were being addressed directly, but this is also true of texts that were translated and handed down in a specific language. This is somewhat implied by the title of a book on the Septuagint called *When God Spoke Greek*, which captures the notion that God's Word must not be limited to one language group or one canonical collection.²³

Due consideration must be given to the shape of canons as they now stand. What follows is not an in-depth analysis of the hermeneutical relevance of each canon,

²² EVANS, *The Scriptures of Jesus*, 195.

²³ Cf. LAW, *When God Spoke Greek*, 124 on Origen's favouring the acceptance of books that were not in the Hebrew Bible. He points out that a number of books hardly ever featured in the writings of early Christians either because they were not useful in the debates and polemics with Jews or else because they did not contribute to Christological exegesis and messianic discourse (cf. *ibid.*, 121-22).

but some basic notions of their meaning vis-à-vis other canons. In the Samaritan Pentateuch, the absence of all the books from Joshua onwards brings their canon to an abrupt end. The climax that is anticipated as early as in Genesis 15,7.16.18 is never reached. This makes of their Pentateuch a canon of the divine promise that did not need its fulfilment to be recorded. Thus, the Samaritan Pentateuch is very much like the original version of the Gospel of Mark wherein the resurrection accounts were missing.²⁴ Recording the resurrection was not deemed necessary probably because Jesus' assurance given about his resurrection sufficed and because the first Christians were experiencing his power anyway.

As for the Hebrew Bible, is there any value in the fact that it has hardly any reference to the afterlife, but that this is then treated more clearly in texts such as 2 Maccabees 7 and, naturally, the NT? The absence of an afterlife theology in the Hebrew Bible seems to have enriched the Jewish perspective of appreciating life on earth as it is (a *diesseits* perspective) and not simply in relation to what is yet to come (a *jenseits* perspective). In fact, a central concept in Judaism is that of *tikkun olam* ("repairing the world").²⁵ In like manner, Luther's non-acceptance of the Deuterocanonicals constituted the barring of those texts that happened to most explicitly refer to a resurrection and an afterlife. Hence, because Luther's Bible also contains the NT, the novelty of the resurrection and afterlife made possible by Jesus is more strongly pronounced as there are no clear antecedents in the OT.

Luther's decision to leave out the Deuterocanonicals was guided by his principle of accepting only "what promotes Christ" ("was treibt Christum"). It is paradoxical that, as far as the OT is concerned, his means of doing so was by adopting the Tanakh which, in the end, was the definitive and normative Jewish collection of Scripture. Conversely, those Churches which continued to adhere to Jewish scriptures which were broader than the Tanakh and included later writings were, in their own way, open to the full socio-religious and political milieu from which Jesus hailed. As Harrington has suggested, so-called apocryphal works such as Esther and

²⁴ Some of the most ancient textual witnesses arrive up to Mark 16:8, hence they draw to a close with the account of the fearful women disciples who said nothing about the report of the young man dressed in white concerning Jesus' resurrection: cf. NESTLE et al., *Greek-English New Testament*, 149.

²⁵ Cf. LIEBER, *The Essential Guide*, 210.

Maccabees might not be in line with Luther's canonical criterion of promoting Christ as such, but they contribute to helping us appreciate the Jewishness of Jesus.²⁶ Unlike the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church makes a distinction between the protocanonical writings and the deuterocanonical ones. It is strict concerning the canonicity of the former, but allows for flexibility with regards to the latter, which it refers to as *anaginōskomena*, that is "permitted to be read."²⁷

All Christians should believe that no canon poses a threat to any other, but that they can actually highlight particular aspects of God's relationship with their respective communities.²⁸ The real significance of a canon is the concreteness of the community's relationship with God witnessed in the formation of that canon as well as in its interpretation. In a book on the Dead Sea Scrolls, Ulrich states: "The process of the biblical books' composition and the scrolls' abundant pluriform evidence highlight the considerable role played by the community in forming and endorsing the tradition as Scripture..."²⁹

It is noteworthy that 4 Ezra, written around 100 CE, speaks of the Torah being rewritten by five men to whom it was dictated by an inspired Ezra, resulting in the writing of ninety-four books over a period of forty days:

So during the forty days, ninety-four books were written. ...the Most High spoke to me, saying, "Make public the twenty-four books that you wrote first, and let the worthy and the unworthy read them; but keep the seventy that were written last, in order to give them to the wise among your people. For in them is the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the river of knowledge." (4 Ezra 14,44-47)

²⁶ Cf. HARRINGTON, *The Old Testament Apocrypha*, 206.

²⁷ Cf. OIKONOMOS, *The Significance of the Deuterocanonical Writings*, 25. Among these is Ben Sirach which the Orthodox tradition considers to be a source of wisdom for young people.

²⁸ In the Book of Revelation, Christ addresses seven letters to seven churches. Each of these is addressed individually and by name, but they are also open to "whoever has ears" to listen to the Spirit's voice (Rev 2, 7. 11. 17, 29; 3, 6, 13, 22, 9).

²⁹ ULRICH, *Our Sharper Focus*, 24.

One gets the impression that the book is suggesting that we be open to other scriptures too, that is even beyond the ones of the Tanakh.³⁰ It is consoling to think that this may have been the view even in Judaism at such an early stage, as it represents a healthy approach to inspiration. Ossandón Widow expresses this succinctly in his analysis of the author of 4 Ezra:

*“He does not want to break with tradition. In this sense, it is possible to speak of inclusivism not only in relation to other literature of apocalyptic type... but also with respect to those who prefer to limit themselves to the traditional Scriptures. They are not asked to renounce their legacy; they are asked only to not reject those who claim to develop or expand the divine revelations of the Torah.”*³¹

Each faith community has the prerogative to recognise inspiration and to define canonicity as far as that community itself is concerned and must respect God’s liberty of possibly reaching out to other communities in a similar but not an identical way.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The formation of the different canons of the various believing communities mentioned above was a process that also contributed to solidifying their respective religious identities. However, it is not ideal to seek to ascertain which one of the canons is the entirely correct one, because the pinpointing of the “authentic” canon has an exclusivist nuance: if this is the right canon, the others either have superfluous additions or serious omissions.

“Many modern Christians are fixated with the search for an “original text,” but from the beginning it was not so. Early Christians were able to appreciate the diversity of divine communication, and even when some began to recognize the divergences between the Bible of the Jews and the Greek Christian Bible most welcomed the

³⁰ Cf. OSSANDÓN WIDOW, *The Origins of the Canon*, 186: “...it seems highly probable that 4 Ezra expresses a resistance to an attempt to limit revelation to a collection of twenty-four books, consisting of the traditional Scriptures of Israel.”

³¹ *Ibid.*, 186.

opportunity to learn more, showing no anxiety at the thought of not having the “original.” This is a distinctive modern theological anxiety.”³²

The hermeneutical approach proposed here is one that not only abates such an anxiety, but also increases the sense of appreciation at the way God communicates personally with the various believing communities. The question is not so much *which* books we each have, but rather *how* we read the books we have. We must marvel at God’s ability to speak to his many children in the ways he deems best. Respect for other canons can be bolstered by understanding their specific hermeneutical implications.

Christians that are capable of valuing God’s message as addressed to different faith communities in its pluriform expressions can more truly be said to believe that God’s Word is not chained, but reaches far and wide even beyond our tradition-imposed boundaries. Such an approach is conducive, not only to stronger ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue, but also to a greater appreciation of the different journeys of people seeking God in other spiritualities. It should prompt us to be more willing to acknowledge the seeds of the Logos sowed in people’s hearts, and also to try to be enriched by the various ways such people respond to that seed. This would make us credible witnesses to the truth that God reaches out to all and that his Word is not chained.

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³² LAW, *When God Spoke Greek*, 168.

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PROPHETS WRITE ON WALLS

AN INTERTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF DANIEL 5 AND PAUL SIMON'S 'THE SOUND OF SILENCE'

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Keywords: intertextuality, communication, apocalypse, critique of capitalism

In the 2010 biography of legendary American folk singer Paul Simon, biographer Marc Eliot describes one of Simon & Garfunkel's earliest and, even today, most popular songs, *The Sound of Silence*. Eliot's description is rather critical:

Finally, there was "The Sound of Silence." Overly vague, it was the type of gloom-and-doom song that would become Paul's special niche. With images that don't connect—what is the sound of silence?—he appears to be making some sort of "God is dead" statement. (...) Ultimately, its imagery is obscured by its vagueness, redeemed by the single line about the *handwriting on the subway walls and tenement halls* [italics, fgb], which is at once vivid, specific, and powerful.¹

The 'redeeming' phrase Eliot is referring to is found in the fifth and final stanza of *The Sound of Silence* (1964): 'The words of the prophets are written on the subway walls and tenement halls.' Paul Simon's words refer to a well-known expression in the English language: 'the writing on the wall', meaning that 'there are clear signs that something unpleasant or unwelcome is going to happen.'² The expression is historically connected to a biblical story found in Daniel 5.³ In Daniel 5, the prophet of the same name is able to read and interpret a divine sign: a hand writing the

¹ ELIOT, *Paul Simon*, 39.

² AYTO, *Oxford dictionary*, 391; cf. AMMER, *The American Heritage Dictionary*, 196; BLAKE, *English Vocabulary Today*, 142.

³ AYTO, *Oxford dictionary*, 196; cf. TWOMEY, *Handwriting on the Wall*.

cryptic words *mene, mene, tekel upharsin* on a palace wall, indicating the rapidly approaching destruction of the Babylonian Empire and its King Belshazzar. In other European languages a similar expression also exists, having the same biblical source: *dat is een teken aan de wand* (Dutch, literally ‘that is a sign on the wall’), *l’inscription sur le mur* (French, literally ‘the inscription on the wall’), and *das Menetekel* or *die Schrift an der Wand* (German, literally ‘the Menetekel’ or ‘the writing on the wall’).

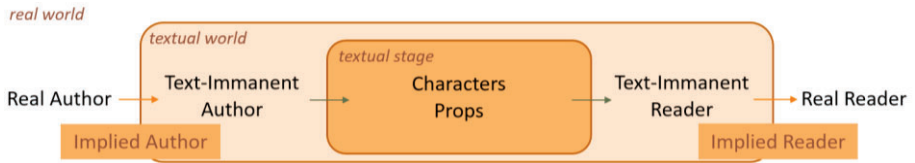
In this article, I wish to explore the intertextual relationship between Daniel 5 and the song ‘The Sound of Silence’, based primarily on the latter’s use of the phrase ‘the words of the prophets are written on the subway walls and tenement halls’ as a reference to Daniel 5, and secondarily based on supplemental references by the Simon & Garfunkel song to other biblical imagery, specifically mentions of visions and dreams, and of a human-made ‘neon god’ to which ‘people bowed and prayed’. This exercise is not a goal in its own right. As an anonymous critic has pointed out: ‘While we know that the prophet’s words are written somewhere where we can easily see and access, we don’t know what they say, we don’t know what they’re warning us of.’⁴ The real question I wish to answer is therefore: what is the exact meaning and content of the prophetic words sung about in ‘The Sound of Silence’?

As methodology, I will use the communication-oriented analysis of texts.⁵ This methodology differentiates between the text-external world of real author and real reader versus the text-internal world of text-immanent author and text-immanent reader (see Scheme #1). Real authors and real readers are people of flesh and blood living in a certain space at a certain time in history, while the immanent ones only ‘live’ *inside* the text itself. The implied author and the implied reader function together as paradigm builders, making the communication possible between the world inside the text and the world outside the text. This paradigm includes all possibility conditions for the communication, like knowledge of the necessary linguistics (e.g., Hebrew and Aramaic for Daniel, English for Simon’s song), historical, social, and cultural particularities.

⁴ ANONYMOUS, *The Sound of Silence*.

⁵ BOSMAN / VAN WIERINGEN, *Video Games as Art*.

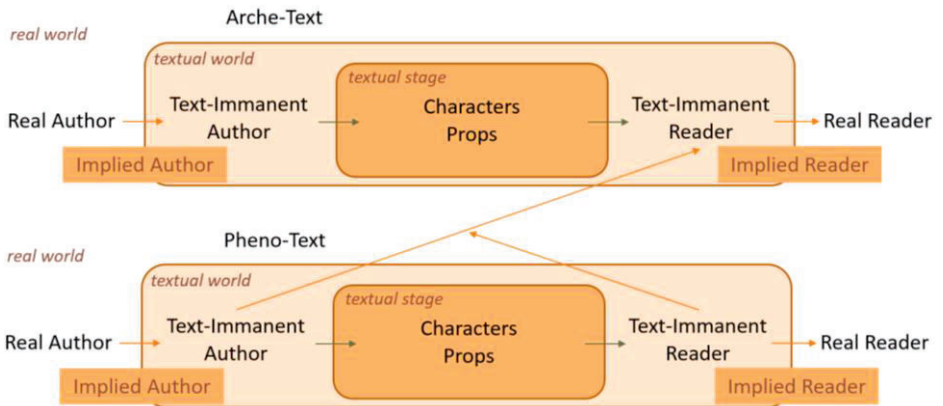
Scheme #1: Communication-Oriented Analysis



Caption: Scheme of the basics of the communication-oriented analysis of texts.

Because of the emphasis on the intertextuality between Daniel and ‘The Sound of Silence’, I will focus my attention in this article primarily, but not exclusively, on the text-internal communication between the text-immanent author and the text-immanent reader. Intertextuality occurs when one text quotes the second one (see Scheme #2). In the case of Daniel 5 and ‘The Sound of Silence’, the first one (called the ‘pheno-text’) is quoted by the second one (called the ‘arche-text’) in the phrase about the prophets writing on the subway walls and the tenement halls.

Scheme #2: Intertextuality



Caption: Scheme of intertextuality.

From a communication perspective, intertextuality constitutes an entanglement between the pheno-text’s immanent author (in our case ‘The Sound of Silence’) and the arche-text’s immanent reader (in our case Daniel 5); it is the pheno-text’s

immanent reader who has the task of interpreting this relationship between the two texts.

To answer the research question, I will take the following steps in this article. I will start with introducing both texts, beginning with ‘The Sound of Silence’ (section 1) and next Daniel 5 (section 2). Then, I will analyse the intertextual relationship between the two texts (section 3), concluding with the answer to my research question about the meaning and content of ‘the words of the prophets’ from the song (conclusion).

I. SIMON’S DARKNESS

‘The Sound of Silence’ was originally released in 1964 on Paul Simon and Ark Garfunkel’s commercially unsuccessful debut album *Wednesday Morning 3 A.M.* After the duo finally began to attract attention from radio stations and fans after two years, it was re-released on their second album, also called *Sound of Silence* in 1966. The cover of the initial album featured the duo on a Manhattan subway station as a nod to the phrase on the words of the prophets ‘written on the subway walls’.⁶ In recognition of its importance in music history, the Library of Congress in 2013 chose ‘The Sound of Silence’ for long-term preservation in its archives.⁷ The song has been included in the soundtrack of multiple films, like *The Graduate* (Mike Nichols, 1967), *Kingpin* (Peter and Bobby Farrelly, 1996), *Old School* (Todd Phillips, 2003), *Bobby* (Emilio Estevez, 2006), *Watchmen* (Zack Snyder, 2009), *Trolls* (Mike Mitchell, 2016), and *A Twelve Year Night* (Álvaro Brechner, 2018). It was recently covered by the heavy metal band Disturbed in 2015 (on the album *Immortalized*), to reasonable commercial success.

The song itself is comprised of five stanzas, without any refrain or bridge (see Table #1). The text-immanent author of the song communicates with the text-immanent reader (or listener) via the ‘I’-character, who relates his vision-cum-dreams (1c, 2a) to a character simply referred to as ‘darkness’, apparently an old acquaintance of

⁶ Himes, *The Sound of Silence*.

⁷ Mastropolo, *The Sound of Silence*.

the 'I'-character (1a). The content of the dreams is laid out in the stanzas 2-5: a kind of dystopian interpretation of modern-day society. In the 'neon light that split the night' (2ef), the 'I'-character sees 'ten thousand people, maybe more' (3ab), who are 'talking without speaking' (3c), 'hearing without listening' (3d), 'writing songs that voices never share' (3e), and eventually 'bow and pray to the neon god they made' (5ab).

Table #1: Sound of Silence

Stanza		Text	Rhyme
1	A	Hello darkness, my old friend	A
	B	I've come to talk with you again	...
	C	Because a vision softly creeping	B
	D	Left its seeds while I was sleeping	B
	E	And the vision that was planted in my brain	B
	F	Still remains	...
	G	Within the sound of silence	X
2	A	In restless dreams I walked alone	A
	B	Narrow streets of cobblestone	A
	C	'Neath the halo of a street lamp	B
	D	I turned my collar to the cold and damp	B
	E	When my eyes were stabbed by the flash of a neon light	C
	F	That split the night	C
	G	And touched the sound of silence	X
3	A	And in the naked light I saw	A
	B	Ten thousand people, maybe more	...
	C	People talking without speaking	B
	D	People hearing without listening	B
	E	People writing songs that voices never shared	C
	F	No one dared	C
	G	Disturb the sound of silence	X

4	A	“Fools,” said I, “you do not know	A
	B	Silence like a cancer grows	A
	C	Hear my words that I might teach you	B
	D	Take my arms that I might reach you”	B
	E	But my words like silent raindrops fell	C
	F	And echoed	...
	G	in the wells of silence	X
5	A	And the people bowed and prayed	A
	B	To the neon god they made	A
	C	And the sign flashed out its warning	B
	D	In the words that it was forming	B
		And the sign said	C
	E	“The words of the prophets are written on the subway walls	
	F	And tenement halls	C
G	And whispered in the sounds of silence”	X	

Caption: A schematic overview of the song ‘The Sound of Silence’, including rhyme scheme.⁸ The quotation marks are by the article’s author.

The ‘I’-character tries to warn these people by stressing that ‘silence like a cancer grows’ (4abcd). The ‘I’-character begs the ‘fools’ to hear him and thus his warnings. The ‘I’-character even stretches out his arms to them, but all attempts are in vain: his words fell ‘like silent raindrops’ (4e) and ‘echoed in the wells of silence’ (4fg), the same silence the ‘I’-character wants to break through.

In the fifth stanza, the apotheosis of the song, two things happen simultaneously. Firstly, the people who were criticized in the previous stanzas, are now bowing and praying to an idol of their own making (5ab). Secondly, a ‘sign’ appears, seemingly from nowhere (5c), flashing out its warning (5d). The warning (5efg) beams its message into the world of the song, saying that ‘the words of the prophets are

⁸ The rhyme scheme is based on: LUKAS, *The Sound of Silence*, 17-21.

written on the subway walls and [the] tenements halls and [are] whispered in the sound of silence’.

The interpretation of the song has been debated widely among fans and critics alike. We will turn our attention, initially, to the two artists themselves (the real authors of the song), starting with the text and music composer Paul Simon. In 1984, Simon looked back at the conception of their surprise hit in an interview with *Playboy*, providing a rather sobering interpretation of his own:

*“The Sound of Silence can be quite effective. It caught the mood of the time, alienation.’ (...) The main thing about playing the guitar, though, was that I was able to sit by myself and play and dream. And I was always happy doing that. I used to go off in the bathroom, because the bathroom had tiles, so it was a slight echo chamber. I’d turn on the faucet so that water would run – I like that sound, it’s very soothing to me – and I’d play. In the dark. “Hello darkness, my old friend / I’ve come to talk with you again”.*⁹

However, the prosaic bathroom scene is not the only thing Simon has to say about the song. In another biography – there are a lot of them actually! – Simon makes a reference to the French philosopher and 1957 Nobel Prize laureate Albert Camus (1913-1960).

*“It feels like there’s Camus in there. When I see the line about the cobblestone streets, I was probably thinking about Manhattan, the Village—not Kew Gardens Hills—just putting myself into that world of singers who were writing about the world around them. Then there’s the whole thing in the song about the people who weren’t paying attention. It was like I was thinking, ‘What’s wrong with them? Why can’t they hear?’”*¹⁰

Simon seems to refer to Camus’ ideas on silence. For Camus, as Robert Zaretsky has argued, silence is ‘also metaphysical and ethical’.¹¹ Silence belongs to ‘people’, to

⁹ SCHWARTZ, *Playboy Interview with Paul Simon*.

¹⁰ HILBURN, *Paul Simon*.

¹¹ ZARETSKY, *Albert Camus*, 14.

borrow Simon's language, who are indifferent to politics in general, while Camus insists that language, as the opposite of silence, is connected to the world of political struggle and societal engagement. According to this interpretation, the people of Simon's song have turned away from engaging in politics in favour of indulging themselves in a world of leisure and entertainment, symbolized both by the neon lights and the neon god.

Simon's artistic partner, Art Garfunkel, also expressed his own interpretation of their famous song. In an interview with *Forbes*, Garfunkel first presents a lyrical, almost mythical origin of 'The Sound of Silence', only to defuse it immediately:

"The words to me were very appealing, and it was one of those melodies Paul wrote that made you feel like 'we know this song. It's been under our noses all of our lives. Doesn't this already exist?' And so it is with really basic, wonderful stuff. 'It's always been around. Paul just uncovered what was, right?' No he didn't – he wrote it!"¹²

However, on another occasion, Garfunkel also provided a more content-focused interpretation. According to Simon's biographer Marc Eliot, he said that the song was about 'the inability of people to communicate with each other, not particularly internationally but especially emotionally, so what you see around you are people unable to love each other.'¹³ The silence that 'like a cancer grows' stands for, in this interpretation, the growing inability of people to really connect to one another. Again, the 'new', neon media are to blame – television, a sentiment native to the song's 1960's, but one that is also heard in our contemporary society associated with the rise of internet and social media.¹⁴

Other commentators continue along this interpretational path provided by Simon and Garfunkel: 'the Sound of Silence' is thought to be dealing with consumerism as a kind of new, secular religion. One anonymous critic writes that the poem can be seen as a

¹² CLASH, Art Garfunkel [accessed January 20, 2023].

¹³ Quoted in: ELIOT, Paul Simon, 40.

¹⁴ See for example: KLASS, *When Social Media*; Brandon, *Here's the Real Problem*; KALE, *Social Media*.

“...bitter satire towards materialistic tendency of people in the new world (...) [in which] the multinational companies and the capitalist have taken [over] the position of God [and] the neon signs or hoarding boards have taken the place of the Holy Scriptures. People listen to or see what these advertisements say and work accordingly.”¹⁵

The final stanza ‘contains a fierce attack against modern consumerism,’ another critic, Carlo Romeo, agrees. He continues:

“The people idolize the neon sign they themselves have created, worshiping it as a god; the author means to show how modern men have converted to a new religion, whose holy cows are money, appearances and shiny futility. Serving as prophet of the new god is obviously the advertising industry, which covers up with billboards every corner of the cities, while ads and commercials are whispered in the sound of silence and are the only audible noise, brainwashing people into buying things they do not really need.”¹⁶

Edoardo Crasta voices the same kind of sentiments in his analysis of ‘The Sound of Silence’, explicitly identifying the ‘neon lights’ with ‘television and screens in general, capable of shaping new thoughts in people.’¹⁷ The people, Crasta continues, have chosen to blindly obey ‘capitalism’, from which no salvation is possible ‘until they spiritually unite in a chain of solidarity and pity, as the dramatic historical period we are experiencing teaches us.’

However, among the many commentators of the song, also another theme can be distinguished: a criticism of the oppression of the poor in our modern society. According to Sandra Schmidt, the song:

“...criticizes silence that perpetuates oppression. Living amid familiar darkness, people struggle to hear others screaming for recognition. Social movements, some of which have used this song, have slowly changed the faces of oppression.”¹⁸

¹⁵ ANONYMOUS, *The Sound of Silence* by Paul Simon [accessed January 20, 2023].

¹⁶ ROMEO, *The Sound of Silence*.

¹⁷ CRASTA, *The Sound of Silence*.

¹⁸ SCHMIDT, *Within the Sound of Silence*, 121.

Reuben Tasker strengthened this interpretation with his argument that the tenement houses and subway tunnels are typically the places where the poor or homeless have to live.¹⁹ In an implicit reference to Daniel 5, he continues: ‘Instead of being written on a palace wall where the richest will see it, the only people who see the approaching doom are the poor.’ The only people who are not brainwashed by the consumerism of the ‘neon light god’ are, as Luisa Zambrotta suggests, found ‘maybe in the poorest environments, [because] they may be able to understand the revelation of the approaching doom.’²⁰

As a provisional conclusion, the song ‘The Sound of Silence’ appears to be a criticism of consumer society, whose constituents – the people – are brainwashed by capitalist corporations through the modern media, effectively blocking people’s ability to really connect with one another. What remains is the ominous and ever-growing sound of silence, which is only broken by the poor who live on the fringes of society and who are still susceptible to the prophets’ warnings.

2. DANIEL’S RIDDLE

Let us now turn our attention to Daniel 5, as it is evoked by ‘The Sound of Silence’ in the phrase ‘the words of the prophets are written on the subway walls and tenement halls’. The book of Daniel is found under the Writings in the Hebrew Bible, but is associated with the prophets in the Christian canon and tradition.²¹ Two long prayers in Daniel 3 and the stories of Susanna and of Bel and the Serpent are not included in the Hebrew Bible (nor in the Protestant Bible canon), but are considered canonical in the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions. Parts of the book, Daniel 2:4b-7 are written in Aramaic, while Daniel 1-2:4a and 8-12 have been handed down in Hebrew.²² The first six stories (Daniel 1-6) are told in the third person and relate the adventures of the Jew Daniel and his companions-cum-fellow-exiles at the court of the Babylonian king, while the other ones (Daniel 7-12) consist of four accounts,

¹⁹ TASKER, *Annotation to Verse 5*.

²⁰ ZAMBROTTA, *The Sound of Silence*; cf. CHRIS, *Simon & Garfunkel*.

²¹ COLLINS, *Daniel*, 1.

²² ALBERTZ, *The Social Setting*.

narrated in the first person, many of them being apocalyptic visions received by Daniel. The book relates stories taking place at the court of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the Babylonian Empire, after the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem in 587 BCE (synchronic); but modern exegetical scholarship suggests a much later date of origin, namely during the Maccabean Revolt against the Seleucid persecution of the Jews in the 2nd century BCE (diachronic).²³

Daniel 5, the chapter of interest in our inquiry, begins with the son of Nebuchadnezzar, King Belshazzar, throwing a gigantic party, attended by thousands of guests (5:1), including the King's nobles, wives, and concubines (5:3). They drink wine from the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple in Jerusalem (5:2). And while they drink, they praise their Babylonian gods, made of 'gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone' (5:4). But suddenly something happens:

“Suddenly the fingers of a human hand emerged and began writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace, and the king saw the back of the hand that did the writing.” (Daniel 5:5; New American Standard Bible translation, 2020)

The King becomes very anxious (5:6) and calls upon his 'sorcerers, the Chaldeans, and the diviners' to 'read this inscription and explain its interpretation' (5:7), but nobody could (5:8). Then, out of nowhere, the queen appears (5:10), advising Belshazzar to seek help from Daniel, whom Nebuchadnezzar had appointed 'chief of the soothsayer priests, sorcerers, Chaldeans, and diviners' (5:11). When Daniel is summoned, the King praises the prophet's expertise and explains the problem the court is facing (5:13-16). Daniel responds (5:17-23) by lecturing Nebuchadnezzar for being arrogant, and Belshazzar for drinking from the Jerusalem vessels and praising 'the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see, nor hear, nor understand.'

²³ GINSBERG, *Daniel. Book of.*

Finally, Daniel reads out what the hand actually wrote on the palace wall (5:24): *Mene, mene, tekel upharsin* (5:25). Next, he gives an interpretation of the three words (5:26-28):

MENĒ – God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it.

TEKĒL – You have been weighed on the scales and found deficient.

PERĒS – Your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

The King is very pleased with Daniel's reading and rewards him greatly (5:29), even though he does not seem to understand that Daniel has just proclaimed the quickly approaching ending of his reign: the same night Belshazzar is killed (5:3) and the Persian King Darius takes over the kingdom (5:31).

The story of Daniel has been discussed extensively in the exegetical literature.²⁴ It has been classified as a type of folk tale in which a king needs a special sage to solve his problem where all the other court advisors fail miserably.²⁵ Even more strongly, others have pointed out that the text of Daniel portrays its hero as a divinator, capable of interpreting the otherwise impenetrable oracles of God.²⁶ Writing, in the context of ancient Mesopotamia, is even thought to be a metaphor for the act of divination itself.²⁷ Control of (a unifying) language, and thus of the communication between people and between the divine and the mortal realms, was an important element of royal authority.²⁸ Daniel describes Nebuchadnezzar as being empowered by God to control 'all peoples, nations, and *languages* [italics fgb]' (Daniel 5:19; cf. Daniel 3:4), thus implicitly mocking Belshazzar for not having the power to interpret a few 'simple' words written on the wall of his palace.

²⁴ BOYARIN / ZEIDNER, *Mene, Mene*.

²⁵ NIDITCH / DORNA, *The Success Story of the Wise Courtier*; cf. AARNE / THOMPSON, *The types of folktale*.

²⁶ BROIDA, *Textualizing Divination*.

²⁷ WINITZER, *Writing and Mesopotamian Divination*.

²⁸ POLASKI, *Mene, mene*; Fewell, *Circle of Sovereignty*, 83-86.

The riddle is indeed at the heart of the chapter.²⁹ The text-immanent author of Daniel is clearly playing with monetary units to express God's appreciation of Belshazzar's kingship. As Danna Fewell summarizes:

*"If Nebuchadnezzar is a minah, Belshazzar is only a shekel (a ratio of 60 to 1) and while the Medes and Persians (half-minahs) may be less valuable than Nebuchadnezzar, they are a good deal better than Belshazzar."*³⁰

Translated into modern-day terms, these equal 'a half dollar, a penny, and two bits.'³¹

If we focus somewhat more on the communicational dynamic of the riddle and its solution, we find a substantial debate among exegetes about three questions.³² (1) Who can see the hand writing and/or the actual four words written on the wall? (2) Are the words easily legible, that is, written in Aramaic as the text of Daniel 5 suggests, or are the words encrypted in one way or another blocking the sages from reading it? (3) Who is able to understand the actual meaning of the words after Daniel explains them to Belshazzar?

There are actually three moments in the story of Daniel 5 in which the circumstances related to the reading and the interpretation of the riddle are changed: when the writing on the wall appears during Belshazzar's party (Daniel 5:5-9; phase I), when the King summons his sages to no avail (Daniel 5:24-25; phase II), and when Daniel comes onto the textual stage to interpret the riddle (Daniel 5:26-28; phase III). In every phase, the balance of seeing (the hand and the letters/words) and understanding/interpreting the message shifts (see Table #2).

²⁹ COLLINS, *Daniel*, 253.

³⁰ FEWELL, *Circle of Sovereignty*, 100; cf. Clermond-Gannaue, *Mene, Tekel*; PRINCE, *Mene Mene*; GANDZ, *Mene Mene*.

³¹ TOWNER, *Daniel*, 75.

³² HARTMAN / DI LELLA, *Daniel*, 188; COLLINS, *Daniel*, 248; SEGAL, *Dreams*, 60-61; ALT, *Zur Menetekel Inschrift*; POLASKI, *Mene, Mene*.

Table #2

	See: hand	See: letters	Understand: meaning
Phase I: Daniel 5:5-9			
King Belshazzar	Yes	yes	no
The court	yes/no	yes/no	no
The sages	No	yes/no	no
Daniel	-	-	-
Text-immanent reader	Yes	no	no
Phase II Daniel 5:24-25			
King Belshazzar	Yes	yes	no
The court	yes/no	yes/no	no
The sages	No	yes/no	no
Daniel	(yes)	yes	-
Text-immanent reader	Yes	yes	no
Phase III: Daniel 5:26-28			
King Belshazzar	Yes	yes	no
The court	yes/no	yes/no	no
The sages	No	yes/no	no
Daniel	(yes)	yes	yes
Text-immanent reader	Yes	yes	yes

Caption: The three phases of seeing and understanding in Daniel 5.

Phase 1. When the writing on the wall commences, it is not immediately clear who can see the hand writing and/or the actual letters and words appearing on the palace wall. The text of Daniel 5 allows for an interpretation suggesting that all attendees of the King's party (the royal court) are witnessing the hand writing, and seeing the words, but it is also possible to argue that the King is the only one seeing both. The summoned sages cannot see the hand writing, since they were not at the party in the first place, but it remains unclear if they cannot see the writing at all or whether they just cannot decipher the words/letters, due to the use of a foreign alphabet, the use of abbreviations, and/or the unconventional order in which they are displayed. In any case, neither the King nor the sages can interpret the message's true meaning. In this phase, neither can Daniel, because he has not been summoned yet. Interestingly enough, the text-immanent reader of Daniel 5 is also in the dark about the nature of the letters/words of the message (and thus its interpretation), although it has 'seen' the hand writing earlier. The *mene mene tekel upharsin* is only later revealed to the text-immanent reader.

Phase 2. When Daniel is summoned by Belshazzar at the advice of the queen, he – and maybe only he – is able to see the letters and the words on the wall, and to identify the 'owner' of the hand writing on the wall, Israel's God, even though he was not personally present at the King's feast. Because Daniel reads out the words on the wall – *mene, mene, tekel upharsin* – everyone present, including the King, (possibly) the sages, and also the text-immanent reader, now knows the words of the hand's written message. But still, nobody is capable of understanding its meaning; it remains to be seen whether Daniel himself is indeed able to do so.

Phase 3. When Daniel has interpreted the message, he proves he understands the message's true meaning. Daniel makes this meaning crystal clear to all attending the scene, including Belshazzar, (again possibly) his sages, and the text-immanent reader. Daniel and the text-immanent reader, however, remain the only two entities who truly understand what Daniel is telling them. This becomes even clearer when the King's only reaction to his foretold impending doom is to reward the prophet as he promised (5:29). The text-immanent reader hears nothing of fear for the near future, neither about any steps the King could take to prevent this impending doom. Two verses later, the King is dead (5:30) and his empire is taken over by its enemies (5:31).

The words *mene, mene, tekel upharsin* function on three interpretational levels at once, as Al Wolters has argued (see Table #3). They represent monetary units symbolizing standards of divine justice (level 1), the act of God evaluating Belshazzar’s kingdom (level 2), and the description of the results of God’s judgment (level 3). In summary, God has weighed the Babylonian Empire in general and King Belshazzar specifically, judging it to fail in all aspects, and therefore giving it over to its enemies, the Medes and the Persians.

Table #3

	Level 1: monetary	Level 2: evaluation	Level 3: judgement
Daniel 5:26	Mina	your kingdom is numbered	your kingdom [will be] put to and end
Daniel 5:27	Shekel	you have been weighed on the scales	you have been found deficient
Daniel 5:28	Half-Mina	your kingdom has been divided	your kingdom has been given to the Medes and the Persians

Caption: Multiple interpretational levels in Daniel 5:26-28.³³

As a provisional conclusion, in Daniel 5, the content and the interpretation of the divine riddle-cum-prophecy is communicated by the text-immanent author to the text-immanent reader via the character Daniel. Except for Daniel himself, this text-immanent reader appears to be the only one capable of understanding the true meaning of the writing on the wall.

3. PROPHETS’ WRITINGS

Next, we will turn our attention to the exploration of the intertextual relationship between Daniel 5 and ‘The Sound of Silence’. But before we focus on the primary point of intersection – *mene mene tekel upharsin* vis-à-vis ‘the words of the prophets

³³ Based on: WOLTERS, *The Riddle of the Scales*, 176; cf. Broida, *Textualizing Divination*.

are written on the subway walls and tenement halls' –, we will first make an inventory of the secondary supporting points of intertextuality.

Firstly, 'The Sound of Silence' speaks of a 'vision' that 'was planted' in the 'brain' of an 'I'-character (1e), and only some lines later speaks of 'restless dreams' that the 'I'-character finds himself in the midst of (2a). The content of the vision-cum-dreams is described in the rest of the song. Both the vision and the dreams also evoke the divinely induced dreams of the patriarch Joseph (in the book of Genesis) and Jesus' guardian of the same name (in Matthew).³⁴ The content of the dreams/song is therefore strengthened by a divine association: it is not something originating from the author's brain alone, but is – at least in part – from somewhere else, as Garfunkel claimed in his aforementioned interview with *Forbes*.

Secondly, the song speaks about 'the halo of a streetlamp' (2c) in 'narrow streets of cobblestone' (2b), where the author's 'eyes were stabbed by the flash of a neon light that split the night' (2ef), enabling him, 'in the naked light' (3a), to see the thousand people imprisoned by the silence (3b). The neon light and the streetlamp resemble the 'lampstand on the plaster of the king's palace' in the glow of which Belshazzar could clearly see the hand writing the words (Daniel 5:5). Some critics claim that this lampstand is one of the treasures taken by Nebuchadnezzar from the Temple in Jerusalem, ending up in Belshazzar's court (as suggested in Daniel 5:2-3).³⁵ It gives the vision-cum-dreams in 'The Sound of Silence' – again – an association with the divine realm.

Thirdly, the 'people who bowed and prayed to the neon god they made' (5ab) have several connotations to the discussion surrounding idol worship in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, especially the construction and adoration of the gold bullock, known as the 'Golden Calf', by the Israelites in the desert (Exodus 32:1-4). In Daniel, however, idol worship also plays a role. In Daniel 3, Nebuchadnezzar erects a giant statue of gold, ordering all his subordinates, 'peoples, nations, and populations of *all languages* [italics fgb]' (Daniel 3:4), to worship it on penalty of death. Again, the connection between language and royal power is made. Also, Belshazzar is

³⁴ HUSSER, *Dreams*, 106-115; BROWN, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 36-37.

³⁵ JORDAN, *Handwriting on the Wall*, 288-289; cf. COLLINS, *Daniel*, 246.

immediately linked to idol worship, in Daniel 5:4, when the King and his court drink wine and praise ‘the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone.’

Daniel rebukes Belshazzar explicitly for his defilement of the Jerusalem vessels *and* for his worship of ‘the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone.’ These idols are described in a familiar fashion: they ‘do not see, nor hear, nor understand’ (Daniel 5:23). This formula is reminiscent of Psalm 115, which speaks of idols of silver and gold, ‘the work of human hands’.³⁶

*Their idols are silver and gold,
The work of human hands.
They have mouths, but they cannot speak;
They have eyes, but they cannot see;
They have ears, but they cannot hear;
They have noses, but they cannot smell;
They have hands, but they cannot feel;
They have feet, but they cannot walk;
They cannot make a sound with their throat.
Those who make them will become like them,
Everyone who trusts in them.*

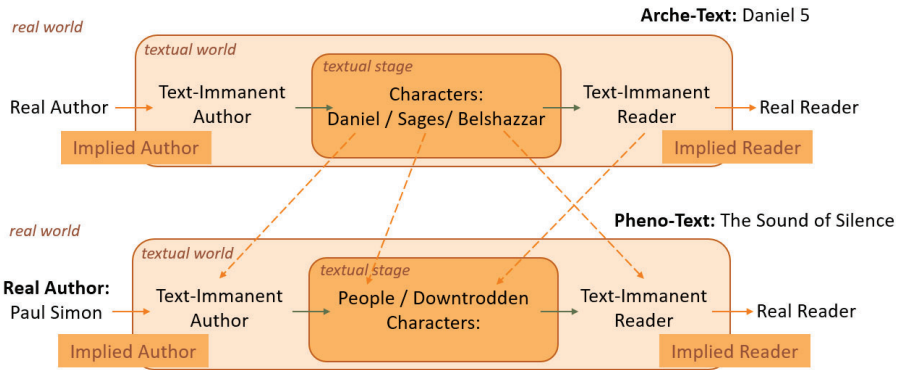
(Psalm 115:4-8)

The characteristics of the idols of Daniel 3 and 5, and of Psalm 115 are intriguingly close to those of the ‘people’ in ‘The Sound of Silence’, who are ‘talking without hearing’ and ‘hearing without listening’ (3cd).

The primary intertextuality between Daniel 5 and ‘The Sound of Silence’ is found in the phrase about the wall-writing prophets of Simon’s song. From a communicative perspective, this means that the text-immanent reader of ‘The Sound of Silence’ has to interpret the nature of the entanglement between the song’s text-immanent author and Daniel 5’s text-immanent reader.

³⁶ HOSSFELD / ZENGER, *Psalmen 101–150*, 283–285.

Scheme #3:



Caption: Scheme of the intertextual communication between Daniel 5 and ‘The Sound of Silence’.

In Daniel 5, the text-immanent reader is only privy to the wording of the writing on the wall when the character Daniel speaks the four words and relates their true meaning. Belshazzar does not understand, as we have established above. Whereas the prophet Daniel is a character in the arche-text as the one who knows about the true nature of the prophecy, this role shifts to the text-immanent author-cum-‘I’-character of ‘The Sound of Silence’ (see Scheme #3). The ‘I’-character sees the silence growing, consuming people without them knowing. He sees, and only he is capable of reading and interpreting the words that the prophets are writing on the subway walls and tenement halls.

On the other hand, the role of the character Belshazzar in Daniel 5 is shifted to the text-immanent reader of ‘The Sound of Silence’, since he is unable to read, let alone interpret what the content of the prophets’ writing is. The sign may communicate *that* the prophets write, but it fails to communicate *what* they write. In Daniel 5, the text-immanent reader is satisfied, the riddle is solved. In ‘The Sound of Silence’, the text-immanent reader is kept in the dark, and the riddle is not solved.

But let us revisit that provisional conclusion. Is it really true that the song’s text-immanent reader cannot know the content of the prophets’ warning? Initially not,

but if we take the song as a whole maybe he nevertheless can. If the riddle in Daniel 5 signifies the end of the Babylonian Empire – one of the greatest empires the world has ever known – the prophets' words in the song must have a similar meaning, signifying the end of today's empire. The vision, the dream and the prophets' words blur into one message: the end is nigh! The words of the prophets are, or even become the song itself.

Is there then nobody who can understand the prophecy on the walls? The song suggests that only those can understand whose native habitat is the subway station of the world's big cities, the homeless who are ignored by a world that is driven by egoism and capitalism and whose citizens are desensitized by the entertainment industry. These homeless are accompanied by those who have to spend their lives in the tenement halls, a *pars pro toto* for the massive, anonymous apartment buildings characteristic of the just off-centre slums, riddled with crime, filth, and social indifference. They understand what the neon sign is signifying in contrast to the blind and deaf elite masses – the struggling sages of Daniel 5, looking without seeing, hearing without listening – who still believe in the rat-race of the American Dream. The 'thousands' see in the neon lights a welcome distraction, an innocent spending of time, while the downtrodden see the neon lights for what they truly are, human-made idols to be worshipped in vain. This is the final shift between Daniel 5 and 'The Sound of Silence': the text-immanent reader of Daniel 5, who understands the riddle, shifts to the song's collective character of the downtrodden.

CONCLUSIONS

‘The Sound of Silence’ evokes Daniel 5 in the phrase ‘the words of the prophets’ primarily through the English colloquialism ‘the writing on the wall’. After careful examination of the two texts and their intertextual relationship, also other biblical references in the song can be explored, including references to the two Josephs’ divinely-inspired dreams (Genesis and Matthew), the lampstand of Jerusalem’s Temple (Exodus 25:31–39 and 37:17–24), and the worship of the Golden Calf (Exodus 32:1–4) and other idols (Daniel 3). This last theme has also been explored in more secular analyses of the song, where the topic of criticism of capitalism is discussed.

When both texts are related to one another in this fashion, some significant shifts can be pointed out in the communication patterns, especially in relation to the riddle (Daniel) and the prophets’ words (‘The Sound of Silence’). In the first text, only the character Daniel and the text-immanent reader are ultimately able to understand the full extent of the divine message on the palace wall, the impending destruction of the empire. All the other characters, including King Belshazzar himself, appear to remain oblivious to the message’s interpretation, even if it concerns them directly and severely. In the second text, the role of the character Daniel is transferred to the text-immanent author, the role of Belshazzar falls unto the song’s text-immanent reader, and the role of Daniel’s text-immanent reader to the character-collective of the homeless and downtrodden.

This means that the message of the prophets in the song can be understood through that of the prophet Daniel. Because we know what Daniel’s prophecy is about, we can deduce what the message of the song’s prophets are. Just like the Babylonian Empire of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar have imploded and were overrun by a new regime, the capitalist empire of the modern-day Western world will collapse under its own unbearable lightness. And just like only Daniel understands the writing on the wall, only those who live on the fringes of our capitalist society can do likewise in our days. The writing, as a spiritual resource for the future, is indeed on the wall, but only some of us can see and understand it.

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AN IMPORTANT CHAPTER IN THE FORMATION OF EUROPEAN IDENTITY: SAINT BASIL'S *AD ADOLESCENTES* (ADDRESS TO THE YOUNG MEN ON HOW THEY MIGHT PROFIT FROM PAGAN LITERATURE)¹

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The author of this work, which became especially popular in a Latin translation during the Renaissance, was born in AD 330 in Caesarea of Cappadocia. Basil was educated first probably by his own father, who was an eminent Christian rhetorician. Later he was sent to study philosophy and rhetoric in Constantinople and Athens. He returned to Caesarea in 355 with the intention to be a teacher of rhetoric himself, but her elder sister, Macrina persuaded him to become an ascetic in a retreat in Pontus. He spent several years there, meanwhile he was ordained priest. He got involved in church affairs already there and became the bishop of his native town in 370. He died probably in 379.

Basil was an admired preacher and a prolific writer. His works include dogmatic treatises (e. g. *Against Eunomius* and *On the Holy Spirit*), exegetical works (e. g. *Homilies on the Hexaemeron*), ascetic works (e. g. *Moral Rules*), and many letters.² It is a debated question when *Ad adolescentes*³ was written. Some scholars think that

¹ Its original title: ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΥΣ ΝΕΟΥΣ. Ὅπως ἂν ἐξ Ἑλληνικῶν ὠφελοῖντο λόγων.

² On the life and works of Basil of Caesarea and the other Cappadocian fathers (his friend, Gregory of Nazianzus and his younger brother, Gregory of Nyssa) see MORESCHINI / NORELLI, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature*, 81-135; see also MEREDITH, *The Cappadocians*.

³ Cited also as *Address*.

in the 370s, but Jennifer Helen Gane argues that ‘it should probably be dated between 365-369: a time before Basil became embroiled in his bishop’s activities, but was performing the role of parish priest, preaching sermons and regularly encountering his local congregation.’⁴ She bases this statement on some chronological data of Basil’s family. It is also discussed who were the addressees of this work. Most scholars accept that the ‘young men’ were the children of his younger sister, who were probably 12-15 years old and were being educated by a grammarian. At this second stage of education, they had to read aloud and memorize the works of classical Greek poets, the content of which was, of course, pagan.⁵ For this reason many Christians looked suspiciously at these texts, which narrated the immoral deeds of the gods of Olympus.

What made the situation even more problematic that during his short reign (361-363) Julian the Apostate issued a decree forbidding Christian rhetors to teach Greek literature to Christian young people. He intended to keep the next generations of the ‘Galileans’ uneducated. This prohibition would have prevented Christians to reach a higher social status. Outstanding Christian rhetors protested strongly against the decree. So, in this delicate situation Basil felt the necessity to handle this problem in a well-balanced way.

The work consists of ten chapters. In *Chapter One* Basil advises his audience not to accept everything they read and what his instructor says at school. In *Chapter Two* he emphasizes that the hope of Christians is eternal life, so temporary achievements are negligible. *Chapter Three* likens secular knowledge to the leaves of a plant which finally bears the fruit of Christian truth. In *Chapters Four, Five, and Six* Basil emphasizes the importance of good moral examples. Classical literature is rich also in good examples, he says. The nephews should not only imitate them, but they should play an active role in choosing virtue and rejecting vice. In *Chapter Seven* he focuses not on literary figures, but on historical persons, whose behaviour in some cases can be consistent even with the Sermon on the Mount. *Chapter Eight* argues that time should not be wasted on the wrong things, e. g. pursuing worldly fame. In

⁴ GANE, *Fourth Century Christian Education*, 15.

⁵ About the three stages of the education of the fourth century see *ibid.*, 2-5.

Chapter Nine he encourages his nephews to take care of their souls and not their bodies. Studying philosophy helps to make desires subject to the control of reason. In the final chapter Basil urges the nephews to acquire virtue immediately and he says that they will learn in the future from Scripture itself.

Now let us turn our attention to the authors whose works Basil either cites or summarizes. In *Chapter One* he quotes from Hesiod's *Works and Days* (293-297): 'He is best who, of himself recognizes what is his duty, and he also is good who follows the course marked out by others, but he who does neither of these things is of no use under the sun.'⁶

In *Chapter Four* he refers to Homer (*Odyssey* 12.39): 'But when they [the poets] portray base conduct, you must flee from them and stop up your ears, as Odysseus is said to have fled past the song of the sirens, for familiarity with evil writings paves the way for evil deeds.' In the same chapter he also quotes a Doric proverb: 'So, from the very beginning, we must examine each of their teachings, to harmonize it with our ultimate purpose, according to the Doric proverb, "testing each stone by the measuring line."' "

In *Chapter Five* he quotes Hesiod again (*WD* 286-292): 'If not to incite youth to virtue, pray what meaning may we suppose that Hesiod had in those universally admired lines, of which the sentiment is as follows: "Rough is the start and hard, and the way steep, and full of labor and pain, that leads toward virtue. [...] [H]e sees that the way is smooth and fair, easy and light to the foot, and more pleasing than the other, which leads to wickedness.'" In the same chapter Basil praises Homer again (*Od.* 6, 8. 19-20): '[A]ll the poetry of Homer is a praise of virtue, and with him all that is not merely accessory tends to this end. There is a notable instance of this where Homer first made the princess reverence the leader of the Cephallenians, though he appeared naked, shipwrecked, and alone, and he made Odysseus as completely lack embarrassment, though seen naked and alone, since virtue served him as a garment.' In the same chapter he quotes an adage of Solon, preserved in Plutarch's *Life of Solon* (3,1): 'But virtue is the only possession that is sure, and that remains

⁶ The quotations are from PADEFORD, *Essays on the Study and Use of Poetry*, 99-120.

with us whether living or dead. Wherefore it seems to me that Solon had the rich in mind when he said: “We will not exchange our virtue for their gold, for virtue is an everlasting possession, while riches are ever changing owners.” Then he refers to Theognis, a lyric poet, who lived around the sixth century BC (*Elegies* 157-8): ‘Similarly, Theognis said that the god, whatever he might mean by the god, inclines the balances for men, now this way, now that, giving to some riches, and to others poverty.’ In the final reference in this chapter Basil mentions Prodicus (460-380 BC), whose ideas are preserved in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* (2.1.21-34): ‘Also Prodicus, the sophist of Ceos, whose opinion we must respect, for he is a man not to be slighted, somewhere in his writings expressed similar ideas about virtue and vice. [...] While Hercules was yet a youth, being about your age, as he was debating which path he should choose, the one leading through toil to virtue, or its easier alternate, two women appeared before him who proved to be Virtue and Vice. [...] [Virtue] promised nothing easy, but rather infinite toils and hardships. [...] As a reward for these trials, he was to become a god, so our author has it.’

In *Chapter Six* Homer is referred to again (*Od.* 10.495): ‘Almost all who have written upon the subject of wisdom have more or less, in proportion to their several abilities, extolled virtue in their writings. Such men must one obey and must try to realize their words in his life. For he [Homer], who by his works exemplifies the wisdom which with other is a matter of theory alone “breathes; all others flutter about like shadows.”’ In the same chapter Basil quotes Euripides (*Hippolytus* 612): ‘But every man is divided against himself who does not make his life conform to his words, but who says with Euripides, “The mouth indeed hath sworn, but the heart knows no oath.”’ In this chapter we can find a reference also to Plato (*Republic* 86d): ‘But to seem to be good when one is not so, is, if we are to respect the opinion of Plato at all, the very height of injustice.’

In *Chapter Seven* he mentions Plutarch (c. AD 46-after 119) three times. He was a Middle Platonist philosopher, historian, biographer, essayist, and priest at the Temple of Apollo in Delphi. First Basil refers to *Chapter Five* of the *Life of Pericles*: ‘A fellow of the street rabble once kept taunting Pericles, but he, meanwhile, gave no heed; and they held out all day, the fellow deluging him with reproaches, but he, for his part, not caring. Then when it was evening and dusk, and the fellow still clung to him, Pericles escorted him with a light, in order that he might not fail in the practice

of philosophy.’ Next, he refers to another work of Plutarch (*Concerning the Cure of Anger*, 462c): ‘Again, a man in a passion threatened and vowed death to Euclid of Megara, but he in turn vowed that the man should surely be appeased and cease from his hostility to him.’ In the same chapter a tragedy of Euripides is also quoted (*Rhesus* 84): ‘How invaluable it is to have such examples in mind when a man is seized with anger! On the other hand, one must altogether ignore the tragedy [that of Euripides] which says in so many words: “Anger arms the hand against the enemy”, for it is much better not to give way to anger at all.’ The third reference to Plutarch in this chapter is to his *Of the Fortune or Virtue of Alexander the Great* (21-22): ‘One who has been instructed in the pagan examples will no longer hold the Christian precepts impracticable. But I will not overlook the conduct of Alexander, who, on taking captive the daughters of Darius, who were reputed to be of surpassing beauty, would not even look at them, for he deemed it unworthy of one who was a conqueror of men to be a slave to women.’ In the same chapter a work of a Neoplatonic philosopher, Iamblichus (AD c. 245-c. 325) is also used as a source. Basil refers to his *Life of Pythagoras* (144): ‘It is hard to believe that the action of Cleinias, one of the disciples of Pythagoras, was in accidental conformity to our teachings, and not designed imitation of them. What, then, was this act of his? By taking an oath he could have avoided a fine of three talents, yet rather than do so he paid the fine, though he could have sworn truthfully. I am inclined to think that he had heard of the precept which forbids us to swear.’

In *Chapter Nine* there are five references to the ideas of famous Greek persons. Diogenes Laertius, who lived in the 3rd century AD, was a biographer of philosophers. In his *Lives of philosophers* (6.54) he mentions the opinion of Diogenes (c. 400-325 BC), the founder of the school of Cynics: ‘Then to spend more time than is necessary on one’s hair and clothes is, in the words of Diogenes, the part of the unfortunate or of the sinful. For what difference does it make to sensible man whether he is clad in a robe of state or in an inexpensive garment, so long as he is protected from heat and cold?’ Plato’s *Republic* (498b, 533d) is referred to also in this chapter and his opinion is compared to that of Saint Paul: ‘In a word, he who would not bury himself in the mire of sensuality must deem the whole body of little worth, or must, as Plato puts it, pay only so much heed to the body as is an aid to wisdom, or as Paul admonishes somewhere in a similar passage: “Let no one make provision for the

flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof” (Rom. xiii. 14).’ An adage of Solon can be read also in this chapter of *Ad adolescentes*: ‘As Solon, the son of Excecestides, puts it, “No definite limit is set to a man’s wealth.”’ Theognis (*Epigrams* 1155-6) is also quoted in connection with richness: ‘Also, one should hear Theognis, the teacher, on this point: “I do not long to be rich, nor do I pray for riches, but let it be given me to live with a little, suffering no ill.”’ Finally, Plato’s *Republic* (365c) is referred to again: ‘For Socrates expressed an admirable thought when he said that a rich, purse-proud man was never an object of admiration with him until he learned that the man knew how to use his health.’

In the last chapter Hesiod’s opinion (*WD*, 360-1) is referred to again: ‘For those who carefully gather the useful from each book are wont, like mighty rivers, to gain accessions on every hand. For the precept of the poet which bids us add little to little must be taken as applying not so much to the accumulation of riches, as of the various branches of learning.’

As to the philosophers, we can observe that the authority of Plato and Plutarch is most noticeable. It is not surprising that Plato exercised a considerable influence on the Church Fathers, because they were generally well educated. All the three references to Plato quoted above are from the *Republic*, in which Plato describes the organization of the ideal state. The rulers of the state must be well trained, and they must subordinate their emotions to reason to identify what is good for the state. They must also be in possession of specific virtues, so that they will be able to govern the state properly. Basil agrees with him that education should start at an early age. In the *Republic* Plato discusses also how different musical modes (Dorian, Phrygian) influence emotions. Basil also describes the effects of them, and he suggests that only sober Doric mode is suitable for his nephews, who must be trained in virtue. He gives the episode involving Pythagoras and a group of drunkards, which had been mentioned by Plato, but he gives an example also from the *Bible*, notably how David calmed King Saul’s madness by playing on the lyre. We can note that in the *Address* the use of Platonic references serves several purposes. One of them is that Basil demonstrates the similarities of the thoughts of Plato and those of Saint Paul about the human body. In his mind the ideas of the Greek philosopher can be regarded as a kind of preparation, *propaideusis* to New Testament teaching. For Jennifer Helen Gane this parallelism ‘exemplifies the manner in which Basil seeks to make use of

classical literature in this work. He states in 3.1 that where there is a “relationship” between pagan and Christian writing, then a comparison of the two will identify the elements which are morally good and also highlight the things which should be disregarded. Although he is greatly influenced by Platonic thought and literature in his style and the content of his work, Basil does not intend to accept all that has been presented to him by a pagan philosopher, despite the fact that some of it is good, and just as he urges his nephews to be discerning about the literature they read, so Basil discriminates between the profitable and the superfluous in the literature he uses.⁷

The influence of some works of Plutarch⁸ on Basil’s *Address* was suspected as early as in 1600, and numerous publications have appeared on this topic. Now I am examining only the latest ones in some detail. In 2009 Olga Alieva gave a lecture on the similarities between Plutarch’s *De audiendis poetis*, *De profectu in virtute*, *De ira cohibenda* (which works form parts of the collection of moral treatises titled *Moralia*), his *De Alexandri fortuna* and Basil’s *Ad adolescentes*.⁹ First she summarizes the history of research, mentioning the studies of Georg Büttner (1908), Fernand Boulenger (1935), N.G. Wilson (1975), Ernesto Valgiglio (1975), and Mario Naldini (1984). These scholars have argued for or against Basil’s direct dependence on Plutarch and his creativity in handling his sources.¹⁰

After the summary of research carried out by previous scholars, O. Alieva examines the formal similarities between the *Address* and the *Moralia*. She finds the same figures of speech in *De audiendis poetis* (reflected sunlight, fruits and leaves, poison hidden in poetry) and in Basil’s work, but with significant differences. In *De profectu in virtute* she finds the image of a bee and the notion of three types of ill persons. The anecdotes used by Basil and found also in Plutarch’s writings are the following: the stories about Pericles, Euclid, Diogenes of Sinope, Socrates, and Alexander the Great, but the last two ones seem to be commonplace in popular philosophy. The passage about the power of music modes also shows remarkable similarities. O.

⁷ GANE, *Fourth Century Christian Education*, 41.

⁸ On Plutarch’s vast literary output of see BARROW, *Plutarch and his Times*.

⁹ Cf. ALIEVA, *On Plutarch’s Influence*, 1-9.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

Alieva then turns to the quotations from and allusions to the works of classical authors. She finds two parallels in *De audiendis poetis* (both about Odysseus) and three in *De profectu in virtute* (Solon's verse, a proverbial expression {σμικρὸν ἐπὶ σμικρῷ κατατίθεσθαι}, and Hesiod's verses from *Works and Days* 287-289.) After pointing at the quotations and allusions in other treatises of Plutarch, she concludes that Basil knew directly only *De audiendis poetis* and *De profectu in virtute*.¹¹

In the last part of her article, O. Alieva points at the similarities of the arguments of the two works of Plutarch. In *De audiendis poetis* Plutarch one point of contact is the concept of "usefulness" (χρήσιμον, ὠφέλιμον). In his mind philosophers should make poetry a kind of preparation (προπαιδεία) for the supreme knowledge, *i. e.* philosophy. A similar concept of προπαιδεία can be found in *Ad adolescentes* 7,38-40. O. Alieva summarizes Basil's ideas about the usefulness of poetry in the education of young men in the following way: 'Only those things are valuable for Christians that contribute to the other life, he asserts. The Holy Scriptures lead the way to that [eternal] life, teaching us "through mysteries" (δι' ἀπορρήτων 2.25), but they are too deep to be understood by the young. So, reading of pagan authors gives a kind of preliminary training to the eye of the soul [...]. Since for Plutarch philosophy is a synonym of virtuous life, his understanding of χρήσιμον turns out to be very close to that of Basil.'¹²

The way of argumentation in *De profectu in virtute* has a more general character than that of *De audiendis poetis*. To Plutarch's mind reading poetry for instruction and not for pleasure is one of the 15 signs of moral progress. O. Alieva points at five parallel features which are present in the ways of argumentation of both authors in *De profectu in virtute* and *Ad adolescentes*:

- 'Gradual growth in philosophy (virtue), illustrated with the image of road and the quotation from Hesiod (cf.: Plut. 76C.7, 76C.12-13, 76D.6 etc., Basil: 10.7, 5.8-18);
- Need of labor and practice for achieving virtue (Plut. 76F.4, 77D.8, 79F.1-3etc., Basil: ch. 8);

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 2-7.

¹² *Ibid.*, 8.

- Imitation of virtuous men (Plut.: ch. 14, Basil: ch. 7);
- Confirmation of words by acts (Plut.: ch. 10; Basil: ch. 6);
- Neglect of all the good things of life (Plut.: 77C.10-77D.1, Basil: 2.4-2.8) etc.¹³

I think that these parallelisms in their argumentation also demonstrate that Basil did utilize these two works of Plutarch extensively.

Following O. Alieva in her search for Basil's sources, Jeffrey Beneker directs our attention to Plato's *Republic* and some other works of Plutarch, namely the *Lives*. Beneker thinks that what is before Plutarch's eyes is Plato's criticism of poetry in *Rep.* 392c-398b. The founder of the Academy wanted to keep the guardian class from imitating the base men about whose repulsive deeds the actors and singers give their performances. In his mind they should leave the city. Although in *Rep.* 607b Socrates gives a chance to poetry to defend itself, but he is sceptic if it would be able to do so. He states that 'there is an ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy (παλαιὰ μὲν τις διαφορία τε καὶ ποιητικῆ)'¹⁴ They can return to the ideal state only if the defenders of poetry can demonstrate 'that it is not only pleasurable but also beneficial both to constitutions and to human life [...] 607d).'¹⁵ Quoting Glenn Most's observation that Plato's quarrel with the poets is persistently present in most of his works, J. Beneker rightly says that Plutarch must have been aware of Plato's arguments about the dangers of poetry. He dedicated his work *How to Study Poetry* to a certain Marcus Sedatus, to whom he gives advice about the education of his son, Cleander, who was about the same age as Plutarch's own son, Soclarus. Sedatus must manage the education of his son carefully: he should utilize what is useful in poetry for moral education by cutting of the harmful parts: 'Let us not cut out or destroy the Muses' poetic vine, but wherever the fabulous and dramatic part, being boldly encouraged toward glory because of immoderate pleasure, becomes insolent and runs riot, let us gain control over it by pruning and pressing it back. But wherever the sweetness of speech touches upon sophistication through grace and

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ BENEKER, *Plutarch and Saint Basil*, 98.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

as a guide is neither fruitless nor empty, let us bring in philosophy and mix it with the poetry (15f).¹⁶

Basil must tackle a similar problem, but he must respond to the concerns of Christians and not those of Platonists. J. Beneker thinks that he responds to the criticism in two ways. Basil also suggests the selective approach, but he uses another imagery: not that of the vinedresser, but that of the ship's pilot. He gives the advice right to his nephews: 'This is precisely the advice that I have come to share with you: that you should not once and for all hand over the rudders of your mind, as of a ship, to these [pagan authors] and to follow them wherever they may lead, but accepting from them whatever is profitable, you should also know what to overlook (1.24-28).'¹⁷

J. Beneker says that Plutarch often speaks of reason as the κυβερνήτης (pilot) of the soul, but the ultimate source is most certainly Plato's *Clitophon* 408b2. However, this image can be found also in *Book 6* of the *Republic*, where Socrates says that his fellow citizens treat philosophers like some sailors who are without any skill in piloting, but who can persuade the owner of the ship to turn the rudder. The pilot who does have experience in steering (*i. e.*, a philosopher) but who has less power of persuasion is judged "unprofitable" (ἄχρηστον). We have noticed that Basil warns his nephews not to give in to the persuasion of the Greek authors, even if there many of them. Their works may give pleasure, but they have nothing to offer which has real value. In *Chapter 6* Basil asserts that only learning about virtue is profitable (χρήσιμον): 'And nearly all [writers] who have some reputation for wisdom have recounted a praise of virtue in their works to a greater or lesser extent, depending on their ability. We must trust in these writers and attempt to demonstrate their words in the way we live (6.1-4)¹⁸

J. Beneker thinks that both Plutarch and Basil are joining a larger dialogue, initiated by Plato, which was going on how philosophers should read literature. He suggests that Basil's second element of response to his Christian critics might also have been

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 99.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 101.

influenced by Plutarch, who says that poetry in certain cases does contain philosophical elements which can be more easily understood by reading poems. So, poetry can become a kind of pre-philosophy, in other words, it “softens” philosophy. Basil answers similarly the question why Christians should read pagan literature when they have Holy Scripture: ‘So long, then, as it is not possible due to your age to grasp the depth of the meaning [in the Scriptures], with the aid of the other writings, which are not entirely different, as if with the aid of shadows and mirrors, we must in the mean time do preliminary exercises for the eye of the soul, imitating those who practice military maneuvers (2027–31).’¹⁹

J. Beneker reminds us that Plutarch gave advice to a young man’s the father, while Basil directly addressed his nephews. However, he refers not only to Homer and Hesiod, but also more “advanced” authors (*e. g.* Prodicus), which for J. Beneker seems to be problematic, because probably they had not studied them yet. He is of the opinion that mentioning Prodicus may show that Basil also addresses the boys’ parents, even if indirectly, or even a larger audience. About a decade earlier Christians had the shocking experience that Emperor Julian also came under the influence of pagan writers, although he had been educated in a Christian environment. They must have influenced him in a wrong way and lead him to reject Christianity when he became emperor. Basil implicitly may have warned the parents of Christian young people in general: they remain responsible for the selection of the edifying literature.

J. Beneker now directs our attention to one of the *Lives* of Plutarch, which contain anecdotes about famous personalities. In the *Life of Alexander*, he relates that the Macedonian king behaved with moderation when the wife and daughters of Darius were captured: ‘And yet it is said that Darius’ wife was by far the most attractive of all the royal women, just as Darius himself was the finest and tallest of the men, and that his daughters took after their parents. But Alexander, as it seems, believed that it was more king-like to master himself than to conquer his enemies, and so he

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 103.

neither touched these women, nor was he intimate with any other woman before marriage, except for Barsine (21.6–7).²⁰

So, in Plutarch's opinion Alexander's self-control displayed in this situation is fundamental to his identity as king. A somewhat similar anecdote is recounted by Xenophon (*Ages*. 5.6) when he praises the behaviour of a Spartan king, Agesilaus, who also exercised restraint in a comparable situation. Xenophon's conclusion is not unlike that of Plutarch: 'I am quite sure, however, that many more men are able to master their enemies than to master such desires as these.'²¹

Basil also narrates the anecdote about Alexander, and he draws a similar conclusion, but he connects it also to Christian moral teaching: 'Nor should we pass by the story of Alexander, who took the daughters of Darius prisoner and, although they were reported to exhibit an amazing beauty, he did not think it right to look upon them. Rather, he judged it to be a shameful thing for a man who had conquered other men to be defeated by women. For this amounts to the same thing as in that saying, that the one who has looked upon a woman with pleasure has committed adultery, even if he has not acted, but because he has admitted desire (ἐπιθυμίαν) into his soul, he is guilty of the crime (7,40–47).'²²

Here Basil refers to *Gospel of Matthew* 5,28, where Jesus says that 'anyone who looks upon a woman so as to desire (ἐπιθυμῆσαι) her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.'²³

J. Beneker is sure that in the opinion of these three pagan authors (Plato, Xenophon, and Plutarch) 'allowing ἐπιθυμία free reign is something that must be guarded against.'²⁴ Although not mentioning the evangelist by name, for his Christian audience Basil gives the anecdote a Scriptural interpretation. The connection between Plutarch's anecdote and the *Gospel of Matthew* is strengthened also by his

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 106.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, 107.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

use of the word ἐπιθυμία, which must have evoked for Christians the words of Jesus. The way Basil retells this anecdote is a good example how he can present certain episodes from the works of pagan writers as a kind of preparation, *propaideusis* to moral teaching of the New Testament. In J. Beneker's words '[Basil] adapts (or updates) the earlier, pagan interpretation of Alexander's self-restraint so that it matches the expectations of his contemporary, Christian audience.'²⁵

J. H. Gane also analyses Basil's two homilies on the topic of anger. She convincingly demonstrates that moral education was one of his main concerns in his pastoral work, and *Ad adolescentes* was an important part of his "project". As to his achievements we cannot but agree with her: 'The address acts as a *propaideusis* on two levels. On one hand Basil uses classical literature to point out examples of Christian precepts which the youths need to understand and remember, as well alluding to pagan writing which will become familiar to his nephews in the future, and so preparing them for the moral messages he wants them to discover. On the other hand, he uses the address as a means of introducing certain specific issues and moral principles which he knows will be relevant and important to adult Christians [...].'²⁶

We can add that accessorially he preserved a lot of treasures of Greek culture, and this way he contributed to the formation of European identity, which is open to all cultural achievements and moral values, whatever their original sources are.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ GANE, *Fourth Century Christian Education*, 99.

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THE INDULGENCE FROM DIVINE LAW: THEOLOGICAL CONTROVERSIES OF THE PORTIUNCULA MIRACLE*

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Key words: Portiuncula; Miracle; Francis of Assisi; Indulgences; Theological controversies

INTRODUCTION

The Francis' most beloved church of Portiuncula, more commonly recognized as the Church of Our Lady of the Angels in Assisi, features a composite fresco today, highlighting the central theme of the Annunciation amidst scenes from St. Francis's life. The most significant of these scenes is portrayed just above the Annunciation: in it, St. Francis kneels before Christ and the Virgin Mary, appearing above the church altar, and presents them with a wreath of red and white roses. This once highly popular but now largely forgotten motif of the establishment of the so-called Portiuncula indulgence can be found depicted in many churches and chapels throughout Europe. The fresco in Portiuncula, painted by Ilario da Viterbo in 1393, is its first representation.

Art historians have extensively documented the proliferation of the motif in Umbria and across Italy, and to some extent, even in other parts of Europe.¹ Scholars specializing in the history of the Franciscan order have elucidated the circumstances

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¹ Cf. OPATRŇÁ, *Porciunkulový zázrak*.

surrounding the legend's origin.² Nevertheless, little consideration has been given thus far to the theological controversies that accompanied the Portiuncula indulgence. The aim of this chapter is to delineate the primary contours of the disputes and elucidate their dynamics.

Starting with a summary of the legend, the examination then delves into the controversies surrounding the Portiuncula indulgence, with a specific emphasis on criticisms from Protestants and internal debates within the Catholic Church. This section is divided into two parts by the Council of Trent, given its profound impact on the relationship between Catholics and Protestants and the evolution of indulgence practices. The focus will be on authors who either supported or contested the miracle and indulgence, or incorporated them into their arguments, while texts merely expounding on the legend itself, along with additional narratives affirming authenticity through divine intervention, will be excluded.

The conclusion will address the question of whether and in what way the legend can be considered a spiritual resource for contemporary Christians.

THE LEGEND

In examining the origins and authenticity of the Portiuncula indulgence legend, it is essential to specify first what is meant by authenticity. This does not pertain to the truthfulness of every detail of the legend but rather to the core narrative asserting that St. Francis obtained plenary indulgence for the Church of Our Lady of the Angels. Historians continue to engage in debates regarding the historical accuracy of this event. Without delving into this debate here, it is worth noting that doubts about the authenticity of the indulgence arise from its absence in the earliest sources and its inconsistency with the teachings of St. Francis. Thus, we can posit that the Portiuncula acquired a certain indulgence (initially not plenary) only after the death of St. Francis.³

² Cf. LEA, *History of Auricular Confession*, 238-245; MUSCAT, *In Defence*, 7-19; THOMPSON, *Francis of Assisi*, 203; PACIOCCO, «*Tantum sufficit mihi verbum vestrum*», 279-299.

³ Cf. LEA, *History of Auricular Confession*, 240.

The subsequent evolution of the legend is well-documented and widely known: The earliest mention of an indulgence associated with Portiuncula appears in the writings of Francesco di Fabriano in 1267. He claims that St. Francis personally obtained this indulgence, as attested by Brother Leo.⁴ In the course of an investigation into its authenticity in 1277, Pietro Zalfani di Assisi references Francis' expressed intent to send everyone to paradise, suggesting that the indulgence was both free and plenary in nature.⁵

Bishop Teobald's testimony around the year 1310 marks a significant milestone in the evolution of the legend, contributing numerous details to its narrative.⁶ Saint Francis, responding to a nocturnal appearance of Christ, approached Pope Honorius to beg the indulgence from him. Initially resistant to the idea of granting the indulgence freely, the Pope sought information about the preferred duration. Francis replied, "Holy father, may it please your sanctity not to give years, but souls,"⁷ and the Pope approved the indulgence, acknowledging that Christ had sent Francis. The narrative proceeds to highlight the cardinals' apprehension about the indulgence's impact on Vatican finances, resulting in a limitation of the indulgence to one day. At the end of the conversation, Francis departing without the papal bull, responds to the surprised Pope, "Concerning this, I do not want any other instrument, but let the Blessed Virgin Mary be the charter, Christ be the notary, and the angels be the witnesses."⁸

The evolution of the legend reached its pinnacle in the work of Francesco della Rosa Bartholi titled "Tractatus de indulgentia S. Mariae de Portiuncula," likely composed in the year 1334.⁹ According to this version of the story, Francis experienced two visions of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. The first occurred during prayer when he was sent to the church, where a heavenly delegation awaited him. In response to Francis' plea and Mary's intercession, Jesus granted an indulgence, instructing the saint to

⁴ Cf. PAPINI, *Storia*, 36.

⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 38.

⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 39-41.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁹ English translation published in MUSCAT, *In Defence*, 21-108.

seek the Pope's approval, who happened to be in Perugia at the time. Pope Honorius III, as presented by Teobald already, negotiated the extent of the indulgence with Francis but yielded when he learned that Francis was sent by Christ himself. The subsequent dismay of the cardinals led to the restriction of the indulgence to a single, yet undetermined, day. The entire conversation concludes with the well-known dialogue about the missing bull.

The second revelation occurred one night in January when Francis, facing temptation, threw himself naked into thorns. Miraculously, white and red roses blossomed on the thorns, and angels appeared, inviting the saint to dress himself, pick twelve flowers of each color and come to the church to meet the Savior and His Mother. There Christ proclaimed August 2nd as the day for the indulgence and sent Francis with fellow brothers as witnesses and with the roses as evidence to Rome to petition the Pope for the official proclamation of the day of indulgence. The Pope complied, instructing seven bishops of Umbria to declare the indulgence. Despite their attempts to diminish its scope, they miraculously could only declare it in its entirety.

Bartholi's legend not only encompasses all the narrative details but also adds one theologically significant moment: it is Christ Himself who decides on the indulgence, albeit respecting the jurisdiction of the Pope. This signifies that the indulgence is derived from Divine law. Why is this detail so crucial? It stems from the fact that Assisi was under interdict from 1323 to 1367. The divine origin of the indulgence was intended to ensure its validity even during the church penalty.¹⁰

CONTROVERSIES BEFORE THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

The earliest contribution to the theological discourse on the Portiuncula indulgence predates the emergence of Bartholi's legend. Around the year 1280, Peter Joannes Olivi wrote *Quaestio*, wherein he defended the authenticity of the Portiuncula indulgence as a plenary indulgence granted to St. Francis by Pope Honorius III. The work is structured according to scholastic argumentation. Initially, Olivi poses the question "whether it is appropriate to believe that the indulgence of all sins was

¹⁰ Cf. LEA, *History of Auricular Confession*, 242.

given in the church of Saint Mary of the Angels, in which the Order of Friars Minor was founded.¹¹ Subsequently, he presents nine arguments against the appropriateness of such a belief, including potential harm to indulgences for the Holy Land, encouragement of immorality or lukewarmness, the unsuitable location, insufficient fame of the proclamation, inadequate evidence, and the improbability of the Pope granting such indulgence.

Olivi addresses this list, which probably reflects genuine contemporary objections, asserting:

“I answer that this was the most convenient thing to be done and to be believed by us; that is apparent from eight things concurring in this fact, namely, the dignity of the earner, the usefulness to people, the loftiness of the evangelical status, the evidence worthy of the trust of the witnesses, and the excessive magnificence of the giver, namely the Supreme Pontiff.”¹²

Furthermore, Olivi counters arguments against faith in the Portiuncula indulgence, denying that it obstructed pilgrimages to the Holy Land and accusing its adversaries of malicious envy. In the surviving paragraphs, Olivi rejects the notion that the indulgence, especially when conditioned on true repentance, could lead to immorality or lukewarmness. Unfortunately, the conclusion containing responses to remaining objections against the indulgence is not extant.

Olivi’s “Quaestio” is characterized by purely theological reasoning. It does not inquire about historical evidence but rather questions the appropriateness of the Pope granting such an indulgence and the suitability of believing in its authenticity.

Another testimony of opponents to the Portiuncula indulgence is found within Bartholi’s legend itself: the cardinals who unsuccessfully attempted to dissuade the pope from its proclamation and the Umbrian bishops who, also unsuccessfully, sought to impose restrictions during its declaration. Additional references to skeptics, particularly among bishops and Dominicans, appear in stories that

¹¹ OLIVI, *Questio*, 140.

¹² *Ibid.*, 141.

authenticate the miracle. However, all of these are indirect testimonies. Therefore, we will turn to an author who summarizes arguments supporting the authenticity of the miracle while elevating the figure of St. Francis of Assisi to such heights that it sparked criticism from Protestants over a century and a half later.

Italian Franciscan and chronicler Bartholomeo Rinonico (died 1401) is primarily known for his work *On the Similarity of the Life of Blessed Francis and the Life of the Lord Jesus*, commonly referred to as *Liber Conformitatum* (1385). This book, of varying historical value, contains both historical information and legendary accounts.¹³ Rinonico structures it around forty similarities or parallels between Jesus Christ and St. Francis. While Francis genuinely sought to align his life with that of the Savior, Bartholomew takes this concept to extremes, resulting in parallels often perceived as pedantic and strained.¹⁴ For Lutheran reformers, these parallels would have sounded blasphemous.

Portiuncula indulgence is addressed in similarity number 14, titled: “Jesus the Solicitous Shepherd - Francis Animated.” This section presents twelve proofs of Francis’s love for Christ and fourteen proofs of his “love for souls.” The fourteenth argument asserts “that he not only wished for the salvation of all but also obtained it through the sacred indulgence, which he obtained from Christ with the help of Blessed Mary.”¹⁵ Since there is no bull regarding indulgences, Rinonico presents seven pieces of evidence for their authenticity: divine witness (miracles), Mary’s witness (apparitions), saints’ witness (preachers), the witness of St. Francis’ companions (including the legend itself), Francis’ own witness, the witness of the popes, and the witness of the seven bishops of Umbria.¹⁶

In his treatise, Rinonico as a chronicler does not provide a theological analysis, opting instead to capture various legends. Importantly, he faced no confrontation with Protestant criticism of indulgences yet, as the practice remained undisputed. His task was solely to defend the remarkably generous indulgence lacking a papal

¹³ ROBINSON, *Bartholomew of Pisa*.

¹⁴ REBLIN, *Freund und Feind*, 73.

¹⁵ RINONICO, *Liber conformitatum*, 197r.

¹⁶ RINONICO, *Liber conformitatum*, 197v-200r.

bull. In this defense, he strategically appealed to what he deemed unquestionable authorities.

Rinonico was, however, a contemporary of Jan Hus and Jan Wycliffe, the precursors to the Reformation. The relationship of Martin Luther and his followers to St. Francis could initially be characterized as “critical sympathy,” but this gradually deteriorated as the Reformation grew critical of the Franciscans and their activities.¹⁷ The Portiuncula indulgence, too, did not escape its share of criticism.

During his visit to a Franciscan monastery, a German humanist, reformer, and poet Erasmus Alberus (1500-1553) encountered the *Liber Conformitatum*. Finding the book so scandalous, he penned a treatise against it titled *The Clown and the Koran of the Barefoot Monks* (originally written in German in 1542 and translated into Latin in 1543). What is this “Koran” or “Alcoranus” he refers to? Nothing else than the *Liber Conformitatum*, as the Franciscans, according to Erasmus, hold this book “in the same esteem as the Turks hold the Koran.”¹⁸ The book comprises excerpts from the *Liber Conformitatum* and other Franciscan sources, featuring a preface authored by Martin Luther himself. Unsurprisingly, Erasmus did not overlook the subject of Portiuncula indulgences.

Erasmus quotes the core of the legend supplemented by some details found in the accounts of Francis’ companions, yet surprisingly, he overlooks confirmations by St. Mary or the popes. The likely cause of this omission was that he came across more controversial or scandalous materials.

In his excerpts, Erasmus focused on the most sensational and dubious narratives surrounding the Portiuncula indulgence. One such narrative involved a Dominican monk dissuading pilgrims from visiting the Portiuncula church, followed by an angel proclaiming, “monks of the Preachers are bad and liars, they unfairly condemn the indulgence of the Barefooters.”¹⁹ Another account portrayed a devil affirming the

¹⁷ REBLIN, *Freund und Feind*, 71.

¹⁸ ERASMUS ALBERUS, *Der Barfüßer Münche Eulenspiegel und Alcoran, author’s preface (unpaginated)*. Cf. *Alcoranus Franciscanorum*, 380-382.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 459.

indulgence and praising the superiority of the Franciscan order.²⁰ Erasmus also shared a story about an adulterous priest who, upon expressing doubt about the indulgence, declared, “If the indulgence is true, I will not leave this place alive,” and promptly passed away.²¹ The final quote is presented as an instance of scandalous equivalence between St. Francis and Jesus himself: “Blessed Francis was a good shepherd; he gave his life for all his own.”²²

Erasmus, in his approach, did not employ sophisticated arguments against the Portiuncula miracle. Instead, he adopted a simpler and more effective strategy: by selecting the most absurd arguments used to justify the indulgence, he allowed them to speak for themselves.

CONTROVERSIES AFTER THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

A similar strategy was employed some thirty years after Erasmus by the Lutheran theologian and reformer Martin Chemnitz (1522-1586). Chemnitz wrote a book titled *Examen* in which he analyzed and critiqued the Council of Trent. Among his various points, he scrutinized the history of indulgences, cited significant sources, and concluded: “This I have copied only for the sake of example (...) that the knowledge of the cursed Papist insolence with their own words would be brought and kept on all descendants.”²³

Regarding the Portiuncula indulgence, he prefaced the legend with this sentence: “I will also just write down from the Rosengartem Bernhardini the most unashamed fable of the plenary indulgence in the church of St. Mary of the Angels of Assisi.”²⁴ The legend was considered expressive enough, no analysis or other resources were needed. Erasmus restricted his comments only to one verse from the Bible at the end of the section: “And so Paul's saying has been fulfilled: Because they did not

²⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 460-464.

²¹ *Ibid.*, no. 468.

²² *Ibid.*, no. 469.

²³ CHEMNITZ, *Examen*, 63v.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 64r; cf. BERNARDINO DE BUSTI, *Rosarium*, 76r-v.

accept the love of the truth, God sent them powerful errors so that they would believe lies” (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:10-11).

The book *Examen* was answered by Cardinal Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621), a prominent theologian during the Counter-Reformation. In his reply, he initially pointed out an error made by Chemnitz in transcribing the legend. Chemnitz had incorrectly extended Francis’ response to Pope Honorius, stating that the sign of the indulgence bull was his stigmata.²⁵ Cardinal Bellarmine clarified that Francis did not possess the stigmata at that time, and even if he had, he would not have boasted about them. To substantiate the authenticity of the Portiuncula indulgence, Bellarmine cited the testimony of holy men, the presence of crowds at the church when the indulgence was granted, and several accompanying signs. In conclusion, he underscored the significance of the Portiuncula indulgence as a crucial argument in the polemics against the Reformation:

*“But it is not without reason that Chemnitz wants this history to be considered false and legendary: since through that history three Catholic dogmas are confirmed: one about indulgences, the second about the great Pontiff, and the third about confession.”*²⁶

Bellarmino’s argument was taken up and expanded upon by Luke Wadding (1588-1657), an Irish chronicler of the Franciscan Order. After recapitulating the dispute with Chemnitz,²⁷ Wadding further developed Bellarmine’s arguments supporting the authenticity of the indulgence.²⁸ Additionally, he included the assertion that the foundations of the porch, from which the seven bishops proclaimed the indulgence, and the thorny bush were preserved. Wadding also recalled the vision of St. Bridget, wherein the authenticity of the indulgences is confirmed by Christ himself.

Notwithstanding, these arguments failed to persuade even all Catholics. Johannes Opstraet (1651-1720), a Flemish Jansenist theologian, penned *A Short Historical and*

²⁵ Cf. BELLARMINE, *De indulgentiis et jubileo*, 178.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 179.

²⁷ WADDING, *Annales minorum*, 18.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 55-63.

Theological Treatise on the Indulgence of Portiuncula. His work is structured into four chapters. The initial chapter provided an introduction to the legend, followed by the presentation of six arguments against its authenticity in the second chapter: (1) its absence from Bonaventure's records; (2) the lack of reference by scholastics, especially Thomas Aquinas, (3) and by popes; and (4) the contradiction with the Church's practice, maintaining a relationship between indulgences and acts of piety and penance. Furthermore, Opstraet argued that (5) the Pope's hasty decision was improbable and detrimental to his authority, and that (6) indulgences by divine authority could not be suspended in the Jubilee Year.²⁹ The first three arguments hinge on arguments *ex silentio*, while the remaining three highlight irregularities. In the third chapter, Opstraet summarized eight arguments from Wadding's *Annals* and responded to them. In the final chapter, he fortified his position by citing Charles Maurice Le Tellier (1642-1710), the Bishop of Reims, who had reacted irritably to the comparison of the Portiuncula miracle with the Incarnation.

"I recognize that the descent of the Word into the chaste womb of the Virgin to become a man, is a fundamental dogma of the Christian Religion established on the authority of the word of God: Spiritus S. superveniet in te. Luke 1. and that the descent of Jesus Christ in the form and figure of a man in the Chapel of the Portiuncula is only based on a few human testimonies which may not be true, to say nothing more."³⁰

For the sake of completeness, it should be noted that other Catholic authors have not so much contested the authenticity of the indulgence but rather the legal consequences of it being plenary. Andreas Möhr, a relatively unknown theologian, authored two treatises on the Portiuncula indulgence.³¹ In the first (1670), he expounded on its theology, and in the second (1689), he summarized the historical data: the legend's account, declarations by the popes, testimonies from various individuals, and prophetic signs confirming its authenticity. Of interest to us is the

²⁹ OPSTRAET, *Tractatus brevis*, 19-82.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 127-128.

³¹ MOEHR, *Portiuncula Theologica*, and MÖHR, *Portiuncula Historica*. Besides these two books, he is known to have co-authored a theological disputation on the divine nature in the spirit of John Duns Scotus: Möhr / Lürzel, *Hierotheca scholastica*.

theological treatise, composed of two parts. In the first, Möhr details the Portiuncula indulgence, encompassing its origin, scope, and prerogatives. The second part delves into the granting of indulgences in Franciscan and other churches.

In the second chapter of the first part, Möhr examines the privileges of the Portiuncula indulgence. He deems its validity during the Jubilee Year an unquestionable privilege but introduces other contentious privileges that he attempts to substantiate: “the ability to absolve from reserved and censured cases, to commute vows, and to dispose of things that have been taken away badly.”³² The reason is that “indulgence from all guilt and punishment includes the ability to choose a confessor who absolves from all sins and bonds, and removes other obstacles delaying salvation.”³³ Three additional arguments are provided, namely, that the indulgences granted by Christ are to be interpreted as broadly as possible, since no one can judge them; that they can only thus bring a person into a state of innocence as after baptism; and that Christ is certainly no less powerful, generous, and merciful than the popes who granted such privileges.³⁴

In 1766, Otto Sprug, a member of the Croatian Franciscan Province, countered this argumentation by rejecting the applicability of these three privileges outside the Church of Our Lady of the Angels.³⁵ Firstly, he expressed his lack of awareness regarding any papal decision explicitly granting these privileges. Furthermore, he emphasized the need for a restrictive interpretation of granted privileges, asserting that it is improbable that the popes intended to confer such broad concession. According to Sprug, privileges are typically delimited by considerations of public necessity rather than devotion, implying inherent limitations.³⁶

³² MOEHR, *Portiuncula Theologica*, 62-63.

³³ *Ibid.*, 64.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 64-66.

³⁵ SPRUG, *Historia insignis indulgentiae Portiuncula*, 74.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 73-74.

CONCLUSION

This historical overview has revealed the evolving focus of the disputes surrounding the Portiuncula indulgence across centuries. Initially, the indulgence was supported by theological arguments of suitability while the resistance against it motivated by its disruptive character was indirectly documented through accounts of defiant cardinals, bishops, and Dominicans. Simultaneously, within the Franciscan ranks, efforts were made to utilize the legend to present St. Francis as a perfect reflection of Christ, provoking criticism from Protestants. Notably, Erasmus Alberus criticized the superstitious testimonials meant to authenticate the miracle. After the Council of Trent, Protestant critique primarily targeted the doctrine of indulgences, with the Portiuncula being a significant representative. Alongside this, Catholics accused Protestants of slandering the indulgence as it served as evidence for Catholic dogmas. Arguments both for and against the authenticity of the indulgence, often relying on authorities of varying credibility or historical contentions, proliferated. The critical approach seemingly stemmed from a reluctance to endorse questionable privileges. Lastly, disputes among ecclesiastical jurists emerged, delving into the legal implications of the term “plenary indulgence.”

An exploration of historical debates reveals questions that continue to resonate today. If we concede that the historical arguments against the authenticity of the Portiuncula miracle legend are indeed compelling, it prompts consideration of the role this legend and its myriad depictions might hold in contemporary Catholic spirituality. Can a fictional narrative serve as a spiritual resource for Christians? The answer appears affirmative, considering that even the Bible contains seemingly “inauthentic” texts. In fact, Barholi’s legend employs a strategy akin to the book of Daniel in countering the *ex silentio* argument. Dating back to the 2nd century B.C., Daniel purports to be a text from the Babylonian captivity era (6th century B.C.) concealed for 400 years by divine instruction: “But you, Daniel, keep the words secret and the book sealed until the time of the end” (Daniel 12:4). The “time of the end” naturally alludes to the period when the book was actually composed. Similarly, the legend of the Portiuncula miracle provides an explanation for its long concealment:

“Blessed Francis told Brother Leo: “Keep this a secret nearly until the day of your death, since it is not to be divulged yet: in fact, this indulgence will be kept a hidden secret for a time, but the Lord will then reveal it and it will be manifested to all.”³⁷

It is intriguing that this strategy has been replicated so many times throughout history, despite the fact that the authors of subsequent texts were undoubtedly convinced of the truthfulness of their predecessors.

Nevertheless, let us revisit our question: What message might the Portiuncula miracle convey for today? Viterbo’s fresco establishes a connection between the legend and the Annunciation, akin to Rinonico’s *Liber conformitatum*, implying a parallel between the arrival of the Redeemer and the bestowal of the indulgence: just as Christ redeemed the faithful from eternal death, Francis sought pardon for them from temporal punishments.

Indeed, the significance of the Portiuncula indulgence lies in its inadvertent role within the ongoing quest for the delicate equilibrium between divine grace and human efforts. While the Old Testament emphasized adherence to the Law, Jesus, as Paul highlighted, ushered in freedom from the constraints of the Mosaic Law. In the ensuing centuries, severe public penances and specific punishments outlined in penitential books emerged. As a response, scholasticism introduced the doctrine that forgiveness is granted in the act of confession when accompanied by repentance and restitution. Simultaneously, it incorporated the concept of temporal punishments and paid indulgences, only to be countered by Francis’ liberating plenary indulgence.

It is somewhat ironic that Francis’ followers, perhaps seeking financial relief in challenging times, fabricated an indulgence that ultimately disrupted the entire indulgence system. Therefore, if the legend of the Portiuncula miracle is not authentic, Francis’s sense of humor, evident in its history of impact, is undeniably genuine.

³⁷ BARTHOLI, 13.

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IV.
REDISCOVERING BEAUTY, LITURGY AND
COMMUNITY

TRADITION AND IMAGINATION: ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DOGMA AND DEVOTION¹

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Keywords: tradition, imagination, dogma, devotion, Newman

The point of departure of my argument is that for tradition to be *tradition*, it must transmit something (*id quod traditum est*), and in the case of Catholicism, this *something*, a new covenant in Christ, “includes everything which contributes to the holiness of life, and the increase in faith of the People of God; and so the Church, in her teaching, life, and worship, perpetuates and hands on to all generations all that she herself is, all that she believes.”² What follows is a theological reflection on a vibrant theological imagination that makes such a transmission possible.

I will first offer some personal observations of Catholic religious practice in both America and Europe. Next, I will explore Stephen Bullivant’s thesis with respect to Catholic lapsation and disaffiliation over the last decades; then we will turn to the

¹ A version of this article was originally delivered as a lecture on 2 September 2023 to the European Society of Catholic Theology at a conference dedicated to theme of “Europe: Spiritual Resources for the Future,” held in Pécs, Hungary. The lecture’s original title was “Tradition and Imagination: A Theological View from an American European.” As the title suggests, my brief was to incorporate some autobiography into the address so that my dual identity could be brought to bear on theological reflection. Hence, the lecture was delivered in the last session entitled “Europe from Beyond its Borders.” While I have attempted to minimize the personal dimension, there inevitably remain elements of subjective observations. The import of such a first-person perspective is inherently limited to those for whom my experiences and observations resonate. But the main thrust of the paper is academic, such that its theological dimension aims to be more objective, involving argumentation and appeals to texts.

² *Dei Verbum, Dogmatic Constitution of the Second Vatican Council on Divine Revelation* (1965), no. 8.

thought of Karl Rahner and Jean Daniélou in order to compare different views of the devotional life. Finally, John Henry Newman will be brought into the conversation in order to shed light on the importance of the intellectual content of the Christian faith. What I hope to make clear through autobiographical observations and theological argumentation is that *both* doctrine *and* devotion (or religious practice) are vital for passing on the faith. In short, I will argue that both North American and European Catholicism offer us different treasures of the Catholic faith which, together, are especially helpful in handing on the faith.

EUROPEAN AND NORTH AMERICAN CATHOLICISM: SOME INITIAL OBSERVATIONS³

The observations in this paper are from one who has grown up in the US in an ethnically Hungarian and bilingual household. I completed my masters in England; I have a German wife; I did my doctroate in Belgium, a postdoctorate in Austria, and now live and work in Ireland. In short, I have lived in five different countries, and have close ties to an additional two.

Living in Europe for most of one's adult life, one comes to realize more than ever the wealth of Christian treasures that permeate Catholic life. Europe's incarnate, embodied, and inculturated Christianity is there for everyone who pays attention to see. And I do not simply mean the number of beautiful churches, monasteries, and cathedrals, although the significance of these cannot be underestimated. Practically every single country in Europe has some kind of Marian apparition site or shrine. There is Fatima, Lourdes, and Mariazell. English Catholicism devotes itself to our Lady of Walsingham and the Irish to Our Lady of Knock. By contrast, the first and

³ While I will be speaking from a uniquely North American and, indeed, US perspective. Nevertheless, many of these observations also apply to Central and South America, where too, Catholicism is indebted to its European missionary roots.

only approved Marian apparition site in the US is Our Lady of Champion. Before preparing this paper, I had never heard of it; google told me about it.⁴

Europe's country roads are dotted with road-side shrines and public, life-sized stations of the Cross. No such drive-by devotionals exist in the US; at most, you might see a Billboard with a Biblical quotation, usually paid for by evangelical Christians.

There are dozens of pilgrimage routes in Europe. The better-known ones, of course, are the Camino, and the Francigena, but countries have local, shorter, but nonetheless popular routes. On Pentecost, French Catholics walk to Chartres and Hungarians descend upon Csíksomlyó. Pilgrimage routes continue to develop in Europe.⁵ While the US is not completely bereft of shrines or walks, it simply does not compare.⁶

There are dozens of ossuary chapels in Europe: Sankt Ursula in Köln and Sedlec in the Czech Republic are just two of the better-known ones. To my knowledge, there are none in North America. Another example of a visceral and embodied Catholicism is Lough Derg, an island in the middle of a lake in Ireland where pilgrims say prayers bare-foot and deprive themselves of sleep and food. Again, nothing like this exists in the US. At Knock Shrine in Ireland, pilgrims wait in line in order to touch the gable wall while they pray.⁷ As far as festivals, is there anything that compares in terms of time, investment, and effort – ranging from the artistic to the sheer physical exertion – than Holy Week in Seville, Spain?

⁴ Cf. <https://championshrine.org/>. There are, of course, other Marian shrines but they are relatively new, imported, or attached to an older shrine or apparition site. E.g., The Guadalupe Shrine in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Cf. <https://www.guadalupeshrine.org/>.

⁵ E.g., in 2011 was established a c. 120 km-route connecting the hometown of St. Elizabeth, Sárospatak, Hungary, with the medieval cathedral dedicated to her in Košice (Kassa), Slovakia. ⁶ The National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, for example, is not only novel, but an organized, heavily coordinated event, obviously necessary for an event of such scale. Cf. <https://www.eucharisticpilgrimage.org/>. Whether it remains a one-off event or kickstarts a new custom or form of devotion in the US is an open question.

⁷ Cf. <https://www.knockshrine.ie/>. Ireland also has a long tradition of holy wells. For a brief history and collated map, see *Our Ancient Landscapes: Holy Wells in Ireland*. <https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/Holy-Wells-of-Ireland.pdf>.

In America, home-grown pilgrimage sites, shrines, visible signs, and traditions are few. And most North American Catholics do not live out their faith through such incarnate means typical of the European Catholic tradition. What incarnational Catholicism exists in the United States is heavily reliant on European ethnic traditions. There is no Lourdes in the US, but Americans build grottos. The history of Catholicism in the USA is one of simultaneous and dual desire for assimilation and acceptance, on the one hand, and the maintenance of ethnic, cultural, and Catholic identity, on the other.⁸

American Catholicism is, in this way, a second-hand Catholicism, and those raised as so-called 'ethnics' in the US experience this second-hand Catholicism first hand. I was baptized in a Hungarian Catholic Church, in Cleveland, Ohio, St Elizabeth of Hungary.⁹ My Hungarian scouting troop and folk ensemble met at the other Hungarian Catholic parish, St Emeric's, every Tuesday and Friday. In this community, the religious imagination was formed by turning towards Europe: we learned about the Hungarian saints, we sang Hungarian hymns and carols; unlike my US-American Catholic friends, I actually put my shoes out on the eve of St Nicholas. During Christmas the boys would go from house to house re-enacting the nativity through folk poetry (i.e. *betlehemezés*). For Easter we would carve and paint our eggs, like other central and Eastern Europeans. However authentic or inauthentic, this is a version of a Hungarian Catholicism that makes deep and lasting impressions on those who participate in them from a young age.

The story of American Catholicism's dual concern for identity maintenance and assimilation came to a high point in the post-conciliar period. With the election of a first Catholic president, and with demographic shifts dissolving ethnically Catholic neighbourhoods, encounters increased exponentially between ethnic Catholicism

⁸ DINGES, *Ritual Conflict*, 138–157. Dinges observes that, in terms of ethics, Catholics assimilated quite well into Protestant America. While the creed was somewhat distinctive, it did not compare to Catholic devotional life and ritual. "To the extent that the reformed liturgy of 1970 moved the mass in the direction of the Protestant and American cultural ethos, American Catholicism lost that "ritual counterpoint to secularism" and "cultural symbol of Catholic resistance to the pressures of assimilation" (147).

⁹ For more on the Hungarian Catholic experience in America, see SHIPMAN, *Hungarian Catholics in America*.

and a wider Protestant and suburban culture. By the 1990s, Hungarian Catholics were dispersed from once tight-knit neighbourhoods. What little remained of ‘ethnic Catholicism’ was typically lived out parallel to a more sanitized, suburban Catholicism. The architecture of my Catholic school and parish church, St Dominic’s, matched the protestant red-brick milieu; zoning laws of the 1940s had forbidden stained glass! The parish youth group mimicked charismatic forms of prayer. But in grade school we still crowned Mary in May.

My high school was an all-boys, Jesuit college prep school, and like many of its European equivalents, it prided itself on its academic rigour. There would be prayer every morning, mass and confession every month, theology class every day; all the teachers, no matter the subject, reminded the students that theology was the most important subject they would ever learn in those four years. Serving the poor in the neighbourhood was a part of that theology curriculum. Every written piece of homework was completed for God’s greater glory, and we students had to remind ourselves of this by writing AMDG – *ad maiorem Dei gloriam* – atop every written piece of homework, whatever the subject, whether English, Math, or Physics.¹⁰

Attending Boston College was also formative, and yet it was another example of how great things in America usually are inspired by European things. Its liberal arts core curriculum was centered on the Catholic intellectual tradition. The architectural heritage of Irish and Italian Catholicism of Boston stretched far-beyond the inner-city; the neo-Gothic architecture of BC was only the appetizer for the Gothic architecture I experienced at Oxford.

In sum, the North American Catholicism I experienced was very much indebted to European Catholicism. And it is from this reflection on my experiences growing up that I’d like to turn now, to the topics of tradition and imagination.

¹⁰ *After having lived in Europe now for over fifteen years, and having compared notes with other parents raising children, I’ve come to realize that St Ignatius High School in Cleveland, OH was exceptional with respect to the seriousness with which it took faith formation both on the affective and intellectual planes.*

DISAFFILIATION AND LAPSATION

In his fascinating sociological and theological study, *Mass Exodus*, Stephen Bullivant offers his own interpretation of the role that Vatican II played, if any, in the rapid decline of Catholic faith and praxis in the decades after the Council. His thesis is a nuanced one: while Bullivant acknowledges the so-called ‘external’ socio-economic and cultural factors that made faith credibility and transmission ever-more difficult, he also argues, persuasively, that certain reforms instigated by the Second Vatican Council, whether wittingly or unwittingly, also contributed to disaffiliation and lapsation. It is not so much the data and statistics of decline that are of interest, but the sociological theories to which Bullivant appeals in order to explain them. While rather intuitive, these theories have incredible explanatory power. They are four in number:

1. Social network theory
2. Plausibility structures
3. Credibility Enhancing Displays (CREDS)
4. Credibility Undermining Displays (CRUDs)

Social network theory tries to explain group dynamics with attention to how the relationships between members affects the whole. One insight among social network theorists is how network ‘density’ or ‘clustering’ affects religious commitment. Density or clustering simply means belonging to a community in which you not only have friends, but your friends are all friends with each other. Everybody knows everybody. “Congregations where...‘everyone knows everyone else’ have higher levels of commitment and identity...individuals with only few and weak ties within a given congregation...are far more susceptible to leaving.” If I belong to a closely-knit Catholic parish, I am more likely to maintain my Catholic identity than someone who attends more or less anonymously. Social density correlates with commitment.¹¹

¹¹ BULLIVANT, *Mass Exodus*, 94–95.

The second theory is plausibility structures, whose theorists study the social architecture that shapes and supports a specific worldview.¹² When different elements in one's ambient culture reinforce a particular view or message, the plausibility of that view or message increases. "Ideas are most convincing when they are universally shared. If everyone shares the same beliefs, they are not beliefs; they are just how the world is."¹³ I am more likely to view the world in a Catholic way, not only if my friends and family are Catholic, but also if my teachers are Catholic, if the media and newspapers I read corroborate a Catholic view of the world, and if my sports teams play in the Catholic League, and if I bowl in my parish's bowling club, and so on.

Credibility Enhancing Displays – or CREDs for short – is fancy socio-psychological jargon for something quite intuitive: namely, that "human beings are significantly more likely to adopt a belief, if those proposing it to them are seen to live out 'costly' implications of it."¹⁴ Covid restrictions are more credible when the politicians who impose them are seen to be following them; this is an example of a CRED; they become less credible when the politicians are dining at fancy restaurants, throwing parties, or having their hair done in salons that are meant to be closed; this is an example of a CRUD – a Credibility *Undermining* Display. The saint or the martyr who gives up his or her life for the gospel is the ultimate CRED; the priest who abuses children is an obvious CRUD. But CREDs and CRUDs need not be so dramatic. They can be quite subtle, as when someone simply sacrifices time or energy; a mother fasting is a CRED for her children; a father sinning is a CRUD.

At this point, it becomes clear that network clusters, plausibility structures, and Credibility Enhancing Displays all reinforce each other. Where Catholicism seemed vibrant before the Council, it was, at least sociologically, explicable by tightly-knit Catholic communities who not only worshipped together, but also went to school together, worked together, and socialized together. The plausibility of the Catholic worldview was corroborated by the believing community, the visibility of priests and

¹² *Ibid.*, 96.

¹³ Steve Bruce, quoted by BULLIVANT, *Mass Exodus*, 246.

¹⁴ Bullivant, appealing to the thought of Joe Henrich, in: BULLIVANT, *Mass Exodus*, 102.

religious, the Catholic newspapers, events, festivals, and traditions, all of which were public things experienced by individuals in a communal way. Queuing for confession was not only a private affair but something quite public; the practice of confession itself reinforced a host of Catholic sensibilities, such as a sense of sin and the need to atone, repent, or sacrifice. And the credibility of the Catholic worldview increased as the vast majority in these tight-knit communities all abstained from meat on Fridays, fasted on ember days, and gave up time, not only on Sundays, but during the week, to attend a holy hour, or pray a novena, or participate in some weekly sodality, or a rosary rally, or stations of the cross, or First Fridays, or First Saturdays. A pilgrimage requires time and energy. The public celebration of feasts, ranging from the feast of the Assumption to a child's Names Day requires, at a minimum, some thought, probably time and effort, and perhaps even some money; a Forty-Hours Devotion requires some sleep deprivation on the part of those who keep watch at night. In short, the devotional life of pre-conciliar Catholicism required time, effort, and expense, and thereby qualifies as a significant CRED.¹⁵

The story of Catholic disaffiliation and lapsation, according to Bullivant, has to do with how Catholic social networks, plausibility structures, and CREDS all began to erode, thereby weakening Catholic identity, and, ultimately, dealing a blow to Catholics' ability to pass on the faith to subsequent generations. How these were eroded, Bullivant affirms, is complex. While Bullivant identifies the abandonment of certain distinctively Catholic practices and devotions as having played a role in lapsation, he also acknowledges the dynamics of socio-economic and cultural factors that also contributed to this erosion, and which had already begun prior to the Council: new urban planning and suburbanization started to break up tight-knit Catholic ethnic communities; the war effort meant increased cooperation between Catholics and non-Catholics; social and economic mobility led to more opportunities away from one's home, increased socializing among a more diverse

¹⁵ Some of these examples are mine, some are from Bullivant in Ch. 4 (pp. 85–132). Bullivant's argument is corroborated by Dinges: "The religious identity of the vast majority of American Catholics rested primarily on cultic observances and devotional practices: private confession, Friday abstinence, Marian devotions, the cult of the saints, and above all, 'the Mass'—attendance at which functioned as both the minimum external criterion of Catholicism and as the most meaningful institutional requirement of the religion" (DINGES, *Ritual Conflict*, 146).

set of peers, and to increased inter-marriage between Catholics and non-Catholics; geographic mobility and the advent of the car meant that one began driving to church instead of walking; this also meant that one was more likely to worship in place A, and socialize in place B. And in the fifties, Sunday mass and weekday devotions had the television to compete with.¹⁶ The underlying social structures that once helped support a vital and rich Catholicism were now beginning to crumble.¹⁷

TWO TAKES ON SECULARISATION AND DEVOTION

As twentieth-century Catholics witnessed the dissolution of once-vibrant Catholic communities, the phenomenon became a subject of theological commentary. Below we consider the thought of two Jesuit contemporaries, Karl Rahner (1904–1984) and Jean Daniélou (1905–1974).

Karl Rahner

Karl Rahner, for instance, in recognizing the trends of secularization and the impact this has on what Bullivant calls ‘plausibility structures’, observes that the “spirituality of the future will not be supported or at any rate will be much less supported by a sociologically Christian homogeneity.”¹⁸ The “homogeneously Christian milieu” of which Rahner speaks took pressure off the *individual’s* decision for faith. “Today is different,” Rahner observes.

*Christian faith today (and consequently spirituality) must be continually freshly realized...In such a situation the lonely responsibility of the individual in his decision of faith is necessary and required in a way much more radical than it was in former times...Such a solitary courage however can exist only if it lives out of a wholly personal experience of God and his Spirit.*¹⁹

¹⁶ This is a short summary of a much more detailed narrative in BULLIVANT, *Mass Exodus*, 113–132.

¹⁷ BULLIVANT, *Mass Exodus*, 130.

¹⁸ RAHNER, *The Spirituality of the Church of the Future*, 149.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 149.

The Christian milieu, in other words, no longer provides the same social momentum for faith transmission and retention. It is in this context that Rahner makes his oft-quoted assertion: “the Christian of the future will be a mystic or he will not exist at all.”²⁰ Future Christians will be more conscientious and intentional; in order to maintain their faith, they will have to personally appropriate it because only the credibility of “personal experience of God and his Spirit” can withstand the competing credibility of the so-called techno-rational narrative of a secular age.

Rahner’s insight has lost none of its import today. For the Christian faith to be retained and transmitted (because one can only transmit that which one has), that faith must be, in Newmanian jargon, ‘realized’, or ‘made real’ for its practitioner. It must spark the imagination. In short, it has to be in some sense experiential. It would seem, at first glance, that the devotional life plays a key role in realizing the faith.

But Rahner’s comments on the future of Catholic devotional life does not seem to do justice to his insight into the necessity of a ‘real’ – i.e., existentially appropriated – faith. There are a few lines in Rahner’s writings that indicate that he does not at all want to be seen as somebody who would like to tear down completely the edifice of pre-conciliar Catholic devotional life.²¹ But he is explicit how aspects of this devotional edifice will change. In the past, when the fundamentals of the Christian faith were taken for granted,²² Christians had the freedom to spread their wings, as it were. “Devout people were deeply interested in the most diverse forms of devotion...there was devotion to the Precious Blood, devotion to the Child Jesus and to Mary’s Seven Dolours, a thoroughly organized intercession for the Holy Souls, and an intensively cultivated practice of indulgences, etc.” To this Rahner adds the different religious charisms of orders and mysticism, as well as “a widespread practice of pilgrimage, the veneration of certain sanctuaries and miraculous

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 149.

²¹ E.g., “It would also be deplorable if everything were to disappear in a grey homogeneous spirituality...” (147)

²² I do not use ‘fundamental’ here in the Lutheran sense of ‘fundamental articles’, but in a looser sense that comports with the *Unitatis Redintegratio*’s teaching of the hierarchy of truths. Accordingly, the contrast is not between essential and optional, but between central and peripheral where the latter is an effect, development, or explicitation, of the former.

pictures, and interest – sometimes scarcely intelligible today – in particular dogmas and theological opinions reflected in the piety of the time, etc.”²³

For Rahner, these peripheral devotions were made possible by the Christian milieu’s doctrinal stability. In a secular age where this stability is increasingly, if not completely, eradicated, Rahner envisions a spirituality focused on “the essential Christian beliefs” or “ultimate data of revelation.”²⁴ What are the consequences for the mainstays of Catholic devotional life?

There will certainly be Marian devotion and the veneration of saints in the future...But we shall speak of Jesus and not the Infant of Prague. We shall speak of Mary but have less to do with Lourdes and Fatima. In the future also there will be a eucharistic piety...But this does not mean that the eucharistic cult with all its developments will retain in a living spirituality of the future the same position as in the past.²⁵

The reader does not get the sense that Rahner is lamenting this future. On the contrary, it is, for him, the inevitable outcome of the dissolution of a particular form of Christian culture.

But there are a number of concerns raised by Rahner here that are worthy of consideration. First there is an assumption that certain devotions detract from attention to the central Christian mysteries. Such an assumption, however, relies on a zero-sum, either-or mentality. Rahner was not the only Catholic theologian who thought this way. For his part, Yves Congar tried to justify the diminishment of Catholic devotional life on the grounds that, on a purely practical level, with only a finite amount of time and energy for religion, the decrease in weekday devotions leaves more room – in terms of time, energy, and attention – for the liturgy (i.e.,

²³ *Ibid.*, 147.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 147–148.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 147 (*my emphasis*).

Sunday mass).²⁶ The truth is, however, that those engaged in so-called ‘week-day’ devotions are more, not less, likely to celebrate mass!

The second concern raised by Rahner is the extent to which devotion to a particular person can be abstracted from its concrete manifestation in the Catholic tradition of piety. How are Catholics to venerate Mary apart from Lourdes, Fatima, etc.? How is one to worship Christ except through the particular and concrete devotions to the sacred heart, the Child of Prague, etc. All devotions arise from a context, an historical event, a particular image, a singular title, a favourite saint. It is no accident that the post-conciliar iconoclasm in church decoration happened at the same time that pre-conciliar Catholic devotional life dried up, for it is the visible that elicits some devotional response. A generalized, abstract devotion to “Mary,” “Jesus,” and “the saints,” undercuts the very particularity of salvation history with its climax in the incarnation and the entire incarnational system it brings.²⁷ Perhaps Rahner is wanting to avoid the thorny issue of the miraculous, whether in the form of Marian apparitions or crying statues and paintings. But this brings us to our third consideration.

Rahner believes that a future Catholic spirituality focused on the essentials (i.e., the cross of Jesus) is fitting for the contemporary age because, among other reasons, Catholic devotion, shaped as it is by history, “should be credible even for non-Christians.”²⁸ Such an assertion is admittedly a loaded one and cannot be responded to adequately here. But the false assumption here is that the ‘more fundamental’ is ‘more credible’ than the (so-called) ‘peripheral’. But if the same principle of action is at work in both the fundamental and the peripheral (e.g., divine action), then the credibility of the latter, while subject to variation depending on the particular claim, might still be enough to warrant a response. In other words, from the Catholic perspective, devotions are credible precisely because of the affirmation of the

²⁶ CONGAR, *Report from Rome*, 113. *A more extreme view takes this a step further. According to this view, the post-conciliar decrease in devotion witnesses to the success of the reformed mass: now that the faithful actively and consciously participate in the mass, they no longer need the spiritual crutches of, for example, a vernacular devotional life.*

²⁷ *Perhaps there is no clearer example of this incarnational aspect than the Child of Prague: a baby boy is King of all Creation, the Word through whom all things were made.*

²⁸ RAHNER, *The Spirituality of the Church of the Future*, 148.

essentials.²⁹ As Newman observed, the incarnation – a doctrine undoubtedly deemed to be ‘fundamental’ by Rahner – is the basis for the entire sacramental system and its expansion in for example, the devotions to sacred objects, holy water, and relics.³⁰

Jean Daniélou

Another Jesuit who was registering these same trends of secularization was Jean Daniélou, but by comparison to Rahner, his concerns are rather different. Daniélou published his *L’Oraison. Problème politique* (or *Prayer as a Political Problem*) in 1965, as the Council concludes. Notably, he is not yet able to ascertain what affects the Council would have on Catholic life. But he is already observing what affects urbanization and the labour culture is having on the French working class’s religious life.

As the work’s title suggests, for Daniélou, prayer is a political issue because the state has a vested interest, nay, an obligation, to help form a society in which the human person can fulfil her religious needs and duties. Christian praxis, for Daniélou, is not solely a personal concern, nor is it solely an ecclesial concern. “A Christian people cannot exist without a milieu to sustain it. It cannot survive in a world where the institutions are morally perverse or ideologically misconceived.”³¹ “To the extent that the realization of their essential objects can be prevented by society, the survival of the Churches in a world of technology is a matter of politics.”³² The demands, however, are not one-directional: While the State is obliged to provide conditions conducive to social prayer, the Churches are obliged to facilitate an authentic encounter with God; otherwise, they forfeit their role in building up civilization.³³ In saying this, Daniélou is by no means reducing Christianity to the immanent frame, to an earthly ideal, or civilizational blueprint. The ultimate end of

²⁹ *By way of example, transubstantiation ought not to be seen as less ‘credible’ than the doctrine of creation. If God can make the world out of nothing, surely he can transform something into something else. If God can perform miracles in 1st c. Judea, why not in 19th c. Europe? If one accepts creation, it is not inconsistent to grant the incarnation and, by extension, a Marian apparition.*

³⁰ NEWMAN, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 94, 142, 407–407.

³¹ DANIÉLOU, *Prayer as a Political Problem*, 49.

³² *Ibid.*, 40.

³³ *Ibid.*, 41–42.

Christianity transcends this world and transcends the goods of civilization, but it nevertheless has influenced it historically.³⁴

In making this argument, Daniélou comes across as extremely sensitive to the sociological conditions necessary for Christianity to flourish. In a word, he is already identifying the importance of social clusters, plausibility structures, and CREDS without, of course, using such language. The red thread throughout Daniélou's work is that, in a socio-cultural milieu that offers no support for Christianity, only the Christian with a certain fervour will be capable of persevering. "There can be no mass Christianity outside Christendom."³⁵ By this phrase, Daniélou is not advocating some restorationism, but highlighting the need of a supportive culture. He is anxious for the masses, and averse to Catholicism becoming a religion of intellectuals or elites.³⁶ He fears a situation in which "mankind...will consist of a few monastic communities dedicated to pure contemplation, standing apart from an immense mass of atheists consecrated to the production of material goods."³⁷ The Church, for Danielou has a universal mission; it is meant for all, for the masses, for the poor. The Catholic Church is to be a "Church of Everyman."³⁸

If the goal is to be a Church for all, the means to achieve this, envisioned by Danielou, is by no means an ecclesial accommodation to the Zeitgeist. He is not advocating for a change in Church teaching for it to become more palatable for more people.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 46–47. Daniélou further recognizes that ecclesial engagement in temporary affairs is also a temptation that can distract from attention to the last things. (50). In this sense, he is very aware of the debate between so-called 'incarnationalists' and 'eschatologists'.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 15. Cf. "There cannot be a personal Christianity unless there is also a social Christianity. If personal religious life is to be able to flourish, it must have a certain minimum of help from outside, for without this it is normally impossible for the majority of men" (30). "Only a few would be able to find God in a world organized without reference to him...A world which had built up its culture without reference to God, a humanism from which adoration was completely absent, would make the maintenance of a positive religious point of view impossible for the great majority of men" (35).

³⁶ Daniélou is somewhat critical of the attitude that satisfies itself with a Church that is smaller and purer. He acknowledges that only a few will be able to "fully satisfy the requirements of the Gospel" (16), but, equally, if Christians en masse are not practicing religion in the Church, then, Daniélou observes, Christianity turns "into a sect and a religion for intellectuals" (16).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 73.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 29

Daniélou's much more interesting approach is to try and create the conditions necessary for religious practice.

Creating such conditions falls, in no small part, to the civil society, for the religious dimension of the human is an essential part of human nature.³⁹ "State atheism, which stifles religious life, and laicism, which ignores it, are both contrary to Natural Law," writes Daniélou.⁴⁰ Ignoring religion is dangerous for civil society because, in ignoring what is essentially human, society becomes inhumane.⁴¹ "A city," writes Danielou, "which does not possess churches as well as factories is not fit for men. It is inhuman. The task of politics is to assure to men a city in which it will be possible for them to fulfil themselves completely, to have a full material, fraternal, and spiritual life."⁴²

This spiritual life essentially consists of prayer, and this prayer must not only be personal, but also public. This might take the form of a public holiday or feast, but there are more quotidian examples: in Ireland, public radio programming is interrupted every day at 12pm and 6pm for the angelus bells to toll for one whole minute. A world without public prayer, for Daniélou, is a world deformed in the same way that the world is deformed by poverty, crime, thievery, and corruption. All of these attack the material, fraternal, and spiritual flourishing of the city.⁴³ For the city's *integral* human flourishing, humans must be able to develop their spiritual life through prayer. Otherwise, one inevitably tends towards a culture of Josef Pieper called "total work."⁴⁴

We return, then, to Daniélou's quest for the necessary conditions for developing religious practice. Although there are surely other factors, Daniélou highlights two prerequisites: time and solitude. Time is necessary because everyone needs at least a

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 83: "Religious activity is a constitutive part of man...it is an aberration on the part of modern laicism to imagine that humanism can exist apart from religion. A world without God is an inhuman world."

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 27. At a minimum, this would consist of ensuring the free practice of religion. However, it would seem to suggest more such as laws, policies, and budgets that facilitate religions' ability to carry out their work.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁴⁴ Cf. PIEPER, *Leisure as a Basis for Culture*.

minimal amount of time to ‘detach’ or ‘disengage’ from his or her environment. Technology attacks this. “There is a speeding up of tempo,” writes Daniélou already in the 60s, “ which makes it more difficult to find the minimum of freedom on which a minimum life of prayer depends...Prayer is thus rendered almost impossible for most men, unless they display a heroism and a strength of character of which – we must face it – the majority of men are not capable.”⁴⁵ It is not enough, for Daniélou, to claim that you can sanctify your work or your chores; you can only find God in all things, including your work, if you have found God “above and beyond everything.”⁴⁶ And this requires time that is sacrificed, or consecrated to God alone, a time that interrupts work, study, chores, and the quotidian pursuit and maintenance of temporal goods.⁴⁷

In tandem with a loss of time is a loss of the second condition for spiritual development: namely, solitude, or what Daniélou describes as “a minimum of personal life.”⁴⁸ It is some level of solitude that checks the absorption of the human person into a collective, and frees him from the relentless barrage of demands coming from without. “It is obvious,” writes Daniélou, “that some measure of solitude is essential for prayer to the extent that prayer is the meeting of faith and spiritual experience, the possibility, that is, for faith to become really part of a man.”⁴⁹ In other words, urban life and, we might add today, the incessance of social media, attack that solitude which is necessary to appropriate the Christian faith, or truly make it one’s own in a reflective, intentional manner. Time, solitude, and with

⁴⁵ DANIÉLOU, *Prayer*, 31. Daniélou is far from being a technophobe. In fact, his chapter “Technology and Man,” is incredibly optimistic about technology, going so far as to claim that technology leads us to rediscover “the permanent values of a complete humanism” (68). On the flipside, however, he also observes that the success of technology dulls humans’ capacity for humility (78–79).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 32. It is noteworthy that the twentieth-century champion of pursuing sanctification through work did not think that some conscious dedication of one’s tasks to God was enough. For José Escrivá, time dedicated solely to God (e.g., a rosary) is required. See BUFFER, *The Marian Spirituality of ‘Opus Dei’*, 142.

⁴⁷ Jean-François Millet’s painting, *Angelus* (1857), depicts this beautifully.

⁴⁸ DANIÉLOU, *Prayer*, 32. This phrase, “personal life” is repeated by Daniélou numerous times. A depersonalized person is one who is alienated, who “no longer knows who he is” (32-33). Personal existence or personal life is, for Daniélou, the irreducible datum of human existence that is threatened by collectivism.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

them, silence, are what allow humans to live an authentic life of prayer dedicated to something that transcends the immanent frame.

In making the case for the importance of religion for authentic human flourishing, Daniélou makes the common distinction between ‘Revelation’ and ‘religion’, the latter referring to the human desire for God, the former referring to the witness of God’s response in history to man’s desire.⁵⁰ Distancing himself from what might commonly be perceived as a Barthian attitude towards religion, Daniélou holds religion, that is, paganism, in high esteem. Pagan religion, as a human attempt to find God and order one’s life accordingly, is not an obstacle to Christianity, but its foundation. Christianity, in turn, assimilates the good elements in it, elevates, purifies, and transfigures them.⁵¹ Whereas atheism has no chronic vigour, religiosity is what endures, and the Christian is simply a pagan on the way to conversion.⁵²

In the contemporary West, Christian practice, without personal appropriation of the content of religion, degenerates into a kind of paganism. Under such circumstances, Christianity is reduced to a series of rites by which people mark and give some sacred meaning to life’s milestones. Here, Christianity is reduced to a religion, and not yet appropriated as a Revelation; it is more a sociological than a personal reality. It is religious ritual without solitude. Far from belittling such a paganized Christianity – or what some today call ‘cultural Christianity’ – Daniélou values it because it is evidence of a religious ground on which the Christian faith can grow.⁵³

And so while Christian Revelation consists of God’s saving action in history that delivers us from sin into eternal beatitude, Christian ritual is the means by which this saving action is ultimately communicated to us. And while some rituals are privileged – such as the sacraments – other rituals also have their place in this mediation of grace. Daniélou observes the importance of religious devotions and tokens of popular piety:

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 90–91. *The step of purification is significant. Daniélou is not blind to the deformity of sin that scars pagan religion (92–93). Cf. Rm 1:20ff.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, 100.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 101.

“The Church has always defended against those who wished to eliminate them – the cult of the Virgin and of the saints, processions and pilgrimages, blessings and exorcisms, medals and scapulars, candles and offerings.”⁵⁴

While these are liable to superstition or to being degraded to a Christian paganism because engaged in thoughtlessly or without supernatural faith, they are also the foundation for – and potentially the mediation of – a deeper appropriation of God’s saving grace. Where Rahner and Daniélou clearly agree is that Christians in the future must have some personal and experiential appropriation the faith, an appropriation which – Rahner acknowledges – will include devotion and which necessitates – Daniélou specifies – time and solitude. Where they seem to part ways is in their respective evaluations of devotions themselves. While Rahner’s and Danielou’s comments on devotion are embedded in pieces of writings whose concerns are different, it is nevertheless evident that the two manifest different attitudes to the pre-conciliar Catholic devotional life. Whereas Rahner thinks the credibility of devotions is bound up with a move away from the concrete, away from Fatima, Lourdes, and Prague, Daniélou makes no such concession. On the contrary, for Daniélou, traditional devotions are not tokens of an immature and benighted piety that needs to be overcome. They are the indications and expressions of what Jean Borella refers to as the “sense of the supernatural.”⁵⁵ And their public nature renders them what Bullivant calls Credibility Enhancing Displays. And here, it seems, Bullivant and Daniélou are in agreement: there is something lived and experiential about concrete devotions that build up a culture and contribute to faith retention.⁵⁶

Given the many other factors outside the Church’s control that contribute to disaffiliation, one wonders how we can continue to ignore the issue of devotion if

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁵⁵ Cf. BORELLA, *The Sense of the Supernatural*.

⁵⁶ *Inversely, the anti-devotionalism witnessed in the post-conciliar period strikes a blow against it. Now there is one significant CRED that has not subsided after the Council and that is Catholic social work and advocacy for justice. My argument is not that such service to the poor and outreach to the marginalized is unimportant. My point is that no one disputes its centrality to Christian discipleship. At no point was there a post-conciliar derision towards service to the poor or working for justice; in fact, its being an essential component of the Christian life was heavily emphasized. On the contrary, there was indeed a post-conciliar attack on pre-conciliar devotional life.*

we are serious about faith retention. The major question arises, however, as to whether a devotional life or an incarnate spirituality is sufficient to maintain and transmit the faith. What is it, for example, that both catalyses devotional practices and renders them intelligible or meaningful? What is it that prevents devotions from floating off into superstition or into an unthinking cultural inertia? What is it that anchors devotions to the central mysteries of the Christian faith?

The answer to all of these questions, I submit, is Christian doctrine.

Newman: Dogma and the Theological Imagination

I now turn briefly to the thought of John Henry Newman, who, in a way perhaps still under-appreciated, was able to hold together an uncompromising and robust sense of Catholic dogma with an equally trenchant attention to the subjective or personal appropriation of Christian faith. As the great anti-liberal in religion, Newman defended propositional revelation over against his peers who would try to relativize it.⁵⁷ And ever-sensitive to the incarnate character of a lived Christianity, Newman was protective of devotion and ritual observance,⁵⁸ observing that these are crucial for a lived, vital religious relationship with the triune God who addresses each of us person-to-person: *cor ad cor loquitur*. In short, dogma and devotion for Newman are absolutely essential in persevering in faith and in transmitting it.

I will spare the reader an extended exposition into Newman's distinction between apprehension and assent, and between the real and the notional. But *in nuce*, the notional pertains to notions, ideas, and abstractions; the real to things and experiences. The notional is seated in the intellect, whereas real apprehension and assent involves the heart, will, and imagination.⁵⁹ To assent to a dogma notionally is to let the terms in the proposition stand for notions, abstractions, ideas. A *real assent* to a dogma, on the other hand, means that the terms in that proposition stand for *things*, things which one has experienced or has heard others experience

⁵⁷ Newman writes: "From the age of fifteen, dogma has been the fundamental principle of my religion: I know no other religion; I cannot enter into the idea of any other sort of religion; religion, as a mere sentiment, is to me a dream and a mockery. As well can there be filial love without the fact of a father, as devotion without the fact of a Supreme Being" (NEWMAN, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, 49).

⁵⁸ NEWMAN, *Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans*, I, 215–218.

⁵⁹ CROSBY, *The Personalism of John Henry Newman*, 47.

and which, hence, impress themselves on our imaginations. Notional assent is what enables theological reflection.⁶⁰ Real assent is what moves the individual to worship. Notional knowledge that “There is a God” involves but a “cold and ineffective acceptance,” whereas a real knowledge of God “works a revolution in the mind,” enkindles and inflames the human heart to love, devotion, and action.⁶¹ This is what Newman calls *realizing* something; making something alive for someone; appropriating something as an existentially relevant fact in one’s life.

To use another example, I can assent to the proposition that “Christ is king” in a notional way when, for example, I read about it in a text book, and I proceed then, as a theologian, to parse out what all this kingship entails, and to compare and contrast it to what earthly kingship entails. Or I can assent to it in a real, vital, and imaginative way that moves me to submit my time, my priorities, and my behavior to Christ my king. And there are any number of ways that Christ’s kingship can be experienced by me and, hence, made *real* for me. I can closely observe a crucifix, or I can hear the haunting hymn by Isaac Watts surveying the thorns which “compose so rich a crown.”

Today, I think the devotional side of Newman is, for most people, fairly uncontroversial. It is the dogmatic side with which many struggle. It seems, in fact, that the religious liberalism to which Newman reacted in the nineteenth century is with us today, attempting to embrace religious experiences without dogma. “Here we have the solution of the common mistake, writes Newman,

of supposing that there is a contrariety and antagonism between a dogmatic creed and vital religion. People urge that salvation consists, not in believing the propositions that there is a God, that there is a Saviour...but in believing in God, in a Saviour...[But] Knowledge must ever precede the exercise of the affections...We love our parents, as our parents, when we know them to be our parents...Devotion must have its objects; those objects, as being supernatural, when not represented to our senses by material symbols, must be set before the mind in propositions. The

⁶⁰ *The theologian who parses, analyses, and compares one proposition with another handles them in a notional manner.*

⁶¹ *NEWMAN, An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent, 126.*

*formula, which embodies a dogma for the theologian, readily suggests an object for the worshipper...Sentiment, whether imaginative or emotional, falls back upon the intellect for its stay, when sense cannot be called into exercise; and it is in this way that devotion falls back upon dogma.*⁶²

Dogma and creeds, are for Newman, the “basis and rule of devotion.”⁶³ Without that “objective vision in your faith,” the use of and engagement with all the externals, the vestments, the rituals, the pilgrimage sites, the customs and traditions, the beautiful churches, etc., are like “feeding on flowers,” writes Newman.⁶⁴ Without a dogmatic faith, these things, in the long run, will not last; their use will have no chronic vigour.⁶⁵ They revert to a form of paganism, as Daniélou would describe it.

What can possibly explain the behaviour of those who get up and process down the streets, singing songs behind a smoking canopy but the firm, real adherence to the dogmatic propositions: “the Son is God” and “the Eucharist is the body of Christ”? On what other basis do Christians pray before the statue of an infant dressed as a priest or a king than a real assent to the dogma of the incarnation and, in particular the hypostatic union by which Cyril defended the thesis that Christ was, from conception, the divine Son and hence, Mary is fittingly addressed as *theotokos*?⁶⁶

Newman’s point is that these propositions – e.g., ‘Christ is king’ and ‘The Holy Spirit is God’ – can move the heart; they, like Catholicism, appeal to the imagination as great facts. They fascinate, possess, engross, and overwhelm.⁶⁷ They achieve all this, however, not by virtue of bypassing the intellect, but by virtue of their vivid

⁶² *Ibid.*, 120–121.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁶⁴ NEWMAN, *Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans, I*, 224–225.

⁶⁵ *Of course, such places may be transformed so as to house something else (i.e., a yoga session or a coffee shop), both of which might be spiritually significant for the individuals who avail of them. The problem is not the coffee house or the yoga session per se, but the displacement of dogmatic faith within the place or context of classical Christianity, or the transformation of “meaning” given to sacred places. Newman could never share the complacency (and even enthusiasm) with which some view these developments as natural progressions of religiosity in a secular culture. For Newman they are a “mockery.”*

⁶⁶ CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, *Second Letter to Nestorius*, 131–135.

⁶⁷ NEWMAN, *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England*, 224.

intelligibility. Doctrine, for Newman, not only spurs devotion, but explains its rationale. In a similar vein, the Cistercian Eugene Boylan held that “the proper foundation for devotion is dogma.”⁶⁸

What this means is that, for all of the importance Newman places on the imagination and the affections, the intellectual dimension of faith is still comes first. “Devotion falls back upon dogma.” As mentioned earlier, America has nothing of the rich devotional heritage of Europe. But in the absence of this incarnate spirituality, North American Catholicism has made, and continues to make, a significant contribution to the life of the Church. I am not referring especially to theology, especially as it advances as an academic discipline through scholarly research.⁶⁹ Besides theology, however, there are other activities that have a definite intellectual component, which include evangelization, catechesis, and apologetics. And here, I can say that I, and thousands, if not millions, of others have benefited from the American contribution. Perhaps it is because US-American Catholics have always been a minority in a largely Protestant country and therefore emphasised Catholic doctrine and education⁷⁰ – but whatever the reason, presenting the *content* of the Catholic faith in a compelling way – as well as through the latest media channels – has been something at which American Catholics have excelled. More than seventy years ago began a foray into radio, television, and Hollywood led by Irish-born, Patrick Peyton C.S.C.⁷¹ Also around that time Bp. Fulton Sheen’s weekly show, *Life is Worth Living*,

⁶⁸ BOYLAN, *This Tremendous Lover*, vii.

⁶⁹ *Americans never enjoyed the same theological tradition and reputation as the Europeans, which explains, for example, the relative dominance of European theologians at the Second Vatican Council. But this has been changing over the last number of decades. Expanding our consideration to the US American Catholic contribution (or lack thereof) to the intellectual life more generally at third level (e.g., college- and university-level), one telling historical indicator is the famous lament by John Tracey ELLIS, American Catholic and the Intellectual Life, 351–388; published anew online at <https://www3.nd.edu/~afreddos/papers/ellis-1955.pdf>.*

⁷⁰ DINGES, *Ritual Conflict, 145: American Catholicism’s “vast educational network was a key element in shaping, maintaining, and expressing Catholic identity,” but even the distinctive creed and educational system “were overshadowed by the saliency of ritual, the primary social context in which the vast majority of Catholics experienced themselves as ‘church’.*”

⁷¹ Venerable Patrick Peyton, known as “the rosary priest,” is most famous for his efforts to proliferate prayer of the rosary, which he also considered an evangelical and catechetical tool; he emphasized the recitation of the Creed at the beginning. He is credited with having played a role in the development of the *Luminous Mysteries*. <https://www.fatherpeyton.org/>.

drew 10 million viewers, rivalling the nation's other evening television programs.⁷² But today, the intellectual apostolate has mushroomed, and includes the successes of Bp Barron's *Word on Fire* youtube programming,⁷³ the Eastern Dominican Province's *Aquinas 101* program,⁷⁴ or the *Bible in a Year* podcast that topped the charts in 2021 and 2022.⁷⁵ Many other examples to this can be added.⁷⁶ What these examples indicate is that there is definitely a hunger there in the Church to know, to understand, and to be able to explain or defend the intellectual content of the Catholic faith. And furthermore, they testify to American Catholics' attempt to enact Vatican II's much-ignored document, *Inter Mirifica*, according to which "the Church claims as a birthright the use and possession of all instruments [of social communication] which are necessary or useful for the formation of Christians and for every activity undertaken on behalf of man's salvation."⁷⁷

⁷² Cf. http://www.archbishopfultonsheencentre.com/Life_is_worth_Living.htm.

⁷³ Cf. <https://www.wordonfire.org/>. Already in 2015, his programming had already received 15 million views. Cf. <https://www.wordonfire.org/articles/bishop-barrons-top-15-youtube-videos-of-all-time/>.

⁷⁴ Cf. <https://aquinas101.thomisticinstitute.org/>. In addition to its podcasts and reading schedule, *Aquinas 101* features now over 90 short, professionally-animated videos explaining some point of Catholic or Thomistic doctrine. These two attract views in the tens of thousands, sometimes hundreds of thousands. Tellingly, the front page of the *Aquinas 101* website echoes Newman in bold: "We can't love what we don't know."

⁷⁵ "Duluth Priest's 'Bible in a Year' Podcast Tops the Charts, With 238M Downloads and Counting," <https://www.cbsnews.com/minnesota/news/duluth-priests-bible-in-a-year-podcast-tops-the-charts-with-238m-downloads-and-counting/> and Joseph SERWACH, "The Bible in a Year Podcast Sees a 63% Leap – a new Fr. Mike Catechism Podcast is Due in January," <https://medium.com/catholic-way-home/the-bible-in-a-year-podcast-sees-a-63-leap-a-new-fr-mike-catechism-podcast-is-due-in-january-ce850c86817b>.

⁷⁶ The Augustine Institute: <https://www.augustineinstitute.org/>; The St Paul Center: <https://stpaulcenter.com/>; Catholic Answers: <https://www.catholic.com/>; Catholic-Link: <https://catholic-link.org/>; and the Catholic content streaming service, Formed: <https://formed.org/>.

⁷⁷ *Inter mirifica*, Decree of the Second Vatican Council on the Media of Social Communications (1964), no. 3.

CONCLUSION

Faith transmission is critically important not only for the academic theologian, but more immediately for the Catholic parent. All Christians serious about transmitting the faith ask questions such as: What are those treasures of the Catholic tradition that I receive as a Christian, and, as a disciple tasked with preaching the Gospel, for what treasures am I responsible for transmitting to others (e.g., my children)? And an exhaustive answer to this is impossible, I would submit that there are a number of lessons we can garner from the above.

Rahner reminds us of the urgency in a (post-) modern context of a personal, conscientious appropriation of the Christian faith. To this, Daniélou adds that a personal Christianity is extremely difficult – if not impossible for most – without a social Christianity; hence, he highlights for us the essential priorities of time and solitude as necessary dimensions of a culture that is hospitable to a life of faith. And Newman teaches us that the hinge between dogma and a conscientious, intentional religious life is a vivid theological imagination impressed with images of the religious objects. In this respect, the dogmatic proposition and devotion have a mutually re-inforcing relationship. In order for dogma to move me to pray or contemplate or act, I must have some real, experiential apprehension of its terms; prayer, contemplation, and action, in turn, reinforce, animate, and invigorate these images, and thereby strengthen my adhesion to the dogma and the God about which that dogma communicates something. These concrete practices not only reinforce my adhesion to dogma, but, if the socio-psychological theories are correct – they also play an essential role in mediating the beauty and credibility of the Catholic faith as a whole.

Hence, the role of devotion and ritual cannot be underestimated.⁷⁸ I would submit, then, that we ought to support and foster the variety of devotions that are still

⁷⁸ DINGES, *Ritual Conflict*, 147: “This ‘decomposition’ of Catholic identity was both stimulated by and symbolized in the reform of the liturgy... Catholics were discarding a core element of their religious identity – the Latin Tridentine liturgy – at precisely the time when social change in the American culture was reaffirming of symbols of group distinctiveness... The Church appeared to ‘de-mystify’ much of its ritual life at precisely a time when the winds of mysticism and the search for ‘sacred

practiced. Concomitantly, we ought to be suspicious of the mid-twentieth-century theological attitude – prominent in the post-conciliar implementation of the new liturgy – according to which popular devotions somehow detracted from, or stood in the way of, a fuller participation in the Catholic liturgy. An over-zealous Catholic puritanism and iconoclasm in the name of a more authentic and purer spirituality that moves beyond ‘mere cultural Christianity’ does not enhance adhesion to Christ, but endangers it.

Equally scandalous has been the post-conciliar lethargy towards – and on occasion, even disdain for – catechesis and our intellectual formation in the faith. As Catholic ignorance is at an all time high, we still witness a great deal of nose snubbing at the *Catechism* and the very idea of rote memorization of Catholic doctrine, as if these were terrible things. What Newman, and with him, the Catholic theological tradition as a whole, is suggesting, is that both dogma and devotion, both creed and religious experience, are integral components of the Catholic faith. While external rituals, observances, practices, and places are important, dogma is essential for their intelligibility.

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ASPECTS OF GENEROSITY IN THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION AS A NEW SPIRITUAL RESOURCE

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INTRODUCTION

The sacrament of confirmation contains the generosity of gifts of the Holy Spirit for every man willing to live the values of the gospel. Imposing hands of the apostles was a special sign of granting the abounding grace for the baptized as a reality of new spiritual resource for the future of the baptized. The generosity of God is symbolically shown in the seven gifts of the Spirit for Christians who can feel the generous amount of God's love to accompany their spiritual struggle in the world.

The ointment with the holy Myron points to the spiritual fulfillment and joy that the generosity of God towards men wants to get surrounded by in his life. With the new name the adult Christian receives a new mission to spread the faith with the testimony of his life, as an aspect of generous trust of God towards his creatures that they will maintain his salvation in the world as a spiritual renewal for everybody. „In confirmation the Spirit acts to enable this decisive mature confession and commitment, empowers the action and strengthens the Christian for living out the implications of that commitment.”⁷⁹ It is important to stress the aspect of generosity of God in our times, where people tend to be rigorous and austere. Every spiritual resource has to be positive to be true in its message. Sacraments are a special way of God to show his generosity. Confirmation as the sacrament of the Holy Spirit is a unique way of God to offer mankind a generous spiritual resource for the present

⁷⁹ Cf. CULLY, *Confirmation re-examined*, 49.

and the future. “For many confirmation is unfortunately a sacrament to break up with the church”.⁸⁰ But confirmation can really represent a valid spiritual resource if connected with pastoral care that aims at the good of man.

All these aspects of confirmation are reflected also in the pastoral work to transmit the values of highly positive spiritual resource. It means pastoral care aimed at prevention and fostering, understood in terms of pastoral therapy and ministry. The Spirit is always active in pastoral care as social action, he grants seven gifts – healing, sustaining, guiding, reconciling, nurturing, liberating and empowering. All happening in the midst of our own culture. This leads to empowerment as a generous spiritual resource for the present and the future.

IMPOSING HANDS AND PASTORAL CARE AIMED AT PREVENTION AND FOSTERING

The acts of the apostles describe in their second chapter pouring out the Spirit upon people. The spirit of God’s love fills the young church with God’s life. This enriching event continues in imposing of the hands of the apostles on the new baptized in Samaria and Efez (Acts 8, 14-17 and Acts 19,5f). The gift of the Holy Spirit is being communicated (Acts 2,38), or comes directly as a person of the Spirit (Acts 8,15.17-19 and Acts 19,2).

The gifts of the Spirit are a valuable spiritual resource for the future. In ancient times imposing of hands communicated new power and energy to the new elected king or prophet. Nowadays all Christians receive through the sacrament of confirmation a valuable spiritual treasure through the symbol of imposing hands by the bishop. „The symbolic and sacramental represent important dimension of the reality of men.”⁸¹

⁸⁰ „Firmung ist für viele leider nur noch Sakrament der Verabschiedung von der Kirche.” In: HAUKE, Die Firmung, 3.

⁸¹ „Das Symbolische und Sakramentale bilden tiefgreifende Dimensionen der menschlichen Wirklichkeit.” In: BOFF, Kleine Sakramententelehre, 11.

Imposing hands is a sign of relief. Man wants to feel protected and cared for. Pastoral care stresses this necessity of the human heart. In receiving the gifts of Spirit through imposing of hands during confirmation we have a valuable resource for the future in case of any anxiety or trauma that may and will appear in our lives. Emmanuel Latrey says pastoral care should be aimed also at preventing distress, where possible by creative anticipation and sensitive, non-intrusive awareness-building.⁸² People can examine situations before they occur in order to be prepared when they happen. When we receive the gifts of the Spirit through imposing of the hands, we anticipate situations of spiritual battle for good and love in our lives. This spiritual resource is aimed not only at the present but also for the future.

Pastoral caregivers are deeply involved in fostering and enabling human growth which is possible considered the enormous spiritual resource we have through the sacrament of confirmation.

When we receive the gifts of Spirit, we acknowledge the transcendent dimension to human life. We are able by the use of verbal or non-verbal help which may be direct or indirect to help people use their spiritual resource when in distress and facilitating the process of being interiorly cured and better to cope with fear and anxieties.

Confirmation creates holistic persons in their development towards a full life accompanied by the help of the Spirit. In the letter to the Hebrews imposing of the hands is a special kind of spiritual resource. (Heb 6,2).

Imposing of the hands can be seen in four circumstances – Jesus blesses the children, new ministries and service is accompanied by this symbol, healing of the sick and ritual ointment to develop the grace of baptism. It is a symbol of life as a blessing procedure /for example (Marc 10,13-16). A generous spiritual resource for the future is the gifts of the Spirit which lead the person to find new possibilities to do more good for himself and the others.

⁸² Cf. LARTEY, *In living color*, 31.

OINTMENT AS A SIGN OF GENEROSITY AND SYMBOL OF PASTORAL THERAPY

Ointment was originally a ritual to select new kings and giving Spirit to the prophets of the last times. Messiah the Christus is the „anointed“. The prophet Ezekiel during the exile promises that the Spirit of God will be poured upon the people of Israel (Ezekiel 39,29).

The promise is about the interior connection between God and man. The prophet Ezekiel announces renewal in God's Spirit and the capacity of people to follow God's law. (Ezekiel 36, 25-27).

The prophet Jeremiah tells us that to the new man will be given as a gift new covenant and God's law will be written directly to the heart of man (Jer 31,33). Jesus in his description as Christus or messiah receives the ointment of the Spirit and thus his new mission. (Isa 61,1). Luke uses this quotation at the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus (compare Luc 4,18n).

God gives as participation at his own Spirit (compare 2 Cor 1,21f). Through Christ we have received the seal of the promised holy ghost by accepting the faith (Eph 1,13). „The call to grow unto the full stature of Christ is addressed both to the individual and to the mystical body of Christ as corporate society.”⁸³

Ointment falls in the area of the touch. It reminds us of touching which Jesus used to cure. In the gospel of Mark Jesus uses his own saliva to touch the eyes of the blind (Mark 8, 22-25). The same procedure appeared in the healing of the mute and deaf. He is being taken aside of the crowd and Jesus puts his finger into his ears and touches his tongue, raises his eyes into heaven and says *effata*, which means open yourself. (Mark 7, 32-34).

In ancient Israel priests and kings were introduced to their office by ointment (Ex 29,7). "God's *anointed* " was used as a kings title (Psalm 2,2) and later became the

⁸³ Cf. CALABRETTA, *Baptism and Confirmation*, 184.

title of the long awaited savior of the last times. With the ointment the gift of the Spirit was connected (1 Sam 16,13).

God anointed us all and gave his seal and Spirit to our heart. (2 Cor 1,21). The image of a seal played in the system of law of ancient times an important role. The seal was a symbol of approval and also a sign of belonging. Even slaves were encarved with seals to point out to their master. The apocalypticism of the Jews unfolded the image of the final seal as a sign of those being saved.

Ointment with the oil followed especially after the bath because of their pleasant odor. Before a battle a man was anointed for his body to become slick and not approachable for the enemy. All these symbols point to the reality of precious spiritual resource for the heart of man. In the ointment we can literally feel the generosity of God and his good intentions towards our life.

Ointment in the sacrament of confirmation is also a symbol for care God gives us. His followers and pastoral care keepers use pastoral work as a therapy for the man's heart. As a spiritual resource for the future.

The Greek word *therapeo* from which also the English word therapy comes from means to heal. Healing means something has gone wrong in body, mind or spirit. The main understanding here is, that some kind of problem has arisen. Some malfunctioning has occurred and things are not running smoothly. In medicine we call it sickness, when the laws of biology go wrong and do not work properly. In theology we call it sin, when we run from the light and love of God to our own egoistic structures. „Under this model, the task of the pastoral caregiver is to remove, or correct, what is wrong and in some way or by some means to return the sufferer to function order.”⁸⁴

The main task here is to make us better, to feel better. It provides us with generosity of God towards us as a valuable spiritual resource for the future. The person who is trying to help imitates the Messianic function and purpose. In trying to help us, to

⁸⁴ Cf. LARTEY, *In living color*, 55.

save us the pastoral care giver creates the possibilities for us to really be helped saved and finally healed at least in some way.

By divine assistance and divine grace and intervention things can really be made better. It is like a spiritual ointment for our heart. The pastoral helper tries also naturally occurring things or ways of behavior and thought which have the power and ability to help. The main effort here is to offer some kind of solution to the existing problem.

The first thing is to diagnose and to recognize the root of the problem and find the best kind of cure. Without an acknowledgement of a problem, no solution can be sought. Psychotherapy is an effective means modeled upon theologies of redemption called soteriologies.

The danger of oversimplifying things and desire for quick fix cures still exist in our society. God offers generous help and spiritual resource that lasts for a lifetime. The next danger would be overdependence on the person of the caregiver not recognizing that only God can be the main spiritual resource. Potential abuse of the too powerful therapist is always here but every time we lie our hope in God as our Father new generous ways of spiritual resource arrive.

SPIRITUAL RESOURCE OF PRAYER AND PASTORAL CARE AS MINISTRY

The prayer used during receiving the sacrament of confirmation is full of a spiritual message as an expression of the generous treasure in sense of spiritual resource for the future of man. It connects with others in the spiritual family we call the church. „The statement that through the sacrament of confirmation the believers can be more efficiently connected with the church is a new teaching that has no direct parallel in common sources of the theology of confirmation.”⁸⁵

⁸⁵ „Die Aussage, dass durch die Firmung die Gläubigen vollkommener mit der Kirche verbunden werden bildet eine Neuheit, die keine direkte Parallele in den üblichen Quellen der Firmtheologie hat.“ In: HAUKE, Die Firmung, 206.

The Pentecost homily of Peter quotes the prophet Joel who speaks about a massive pouring out of the Spirit (Joel 3, 1-5). The book of Joel originated around 400 BC and announces the day of Jahve which brings cosmic signs in heaven and the judgment day of God, but the people of God will be saved from it.

The presence of God reveals itself in the prophetic gifts, including dreams and visions (Num 12,6). This desire goes back to the times of Moses, when the Spirit of God dwelled upon Moses and God took a part of it and gave it to the seventy men who prophesized at the tent of meeting. The purpose of all this is to be led interiorly by God's laws and be transformed by it as seen in the case of prophet Ezekiel. Now the difference consists of the gifts of the Spirit being offered not only to individual people but to Israel as a whole.

The spirit descends upon Jesus like a dove which reminds as of the Spirit dwelling upon the waters in the time of creation (Gen 1,2). During the flood the dove announces the end of suffering (Gen 8,11). The dove brings the end of judgment and creates a new covenant between God and Noe as a representant of humanity (Gen 9, 8-17).

This understanding of the Spirit leads us to accept his deeds on our efforts in pastoral activities. Pastoral care is understood as an operation and activity of particular persons in the sense of ministry. They are seen as agents or intermediaries. Those called interiorly by God for this ministry are established by specific rites, procedures and training schemes. They have to have motivation and dedication for this specific task. They can function either individually or cooperate in teams. It would be nice if they had proper communication skills and adequate knowledge of sacramental rites to foster well-being, growth and spiritual advancement of those seeking spiritual direction.

There are five aspects of ministry. *Kerygma* proclamation of the good news in which the core of belief is being presented. Followed by *didache* as the forth-telling prophecy. *Diakonia* service cannot be omitted as practical deeds of kindness done for other of the love of God including almsgiving to the needy and poor, comforting and visiting of the sick and elderly in one's community and providing shelter and food of the homeless. And as an integral part of the service also social and political

action for the good of others in public life. And as a bonus *koinonia* friendly fellowship in social interaction connected spiritually with God. Such communal activities include meals, games, commemorations and celebrations to recognize and affirm the social nature of human existence.

We cannot forget *oikonomia* administration and management and proper ordering of the institutional aspects of life in the society like financial affairs, property issues and legal matters that urgently need to be addressed.

And at the top *eucharistia* in the terms of worship as an occasion for the community to express faith and bring their spiritual aspirations and desires before God. The community understands worship as a privileged time, honor, space and recognition to God as the ultimate source of love. Worship has the social but also private context. In both case the object of worship is God in its fullness.

Pastoral ministry provides us with a spiritual resource willed with the generosity of the Spirit willing to be a positive part of life of every man.

PERSONAL ASPECT OF THE SPIRIT AND PASTORAL CARE AS SOCIAL ACTION

The precious spiritual resource of the sacrament of confirmation consists in the reality that we meet the Spirit in personal interaction. In every effort of pastoral care, we seek to ameliorate relations and to perceive it as social action. In this case the Spirit presents himself as the teacher. „Nothing gives us deeper insight into the action of the Spirit than Christ’s words at the last supper, when he speaks of the Spirit as a teacher John 14,26.”⁸⁶

The personal aspect of the Spirit, his vividness is seen in the Hebrew word *ruah* (similar as the greek *pneuma*) which originally meant wind and breath. The wind is a power of nature, that brings something else into motion. In the breath the power of life can be observed. In the first chapters of Genesis the *ruach* of God dwells upon the waters (Gen 1,2). God creates the man from the earth and gives him the breath

⁸⁶ Cf. COOKE, *Christian sacraments and christian personality*, 46.

of life (Gen 2,7). The Spirit of God creates extraordinary physical and psychical events.

Every spiritual resource needs to be seen in an active not passive way. Only than it can become relevant for the future. Pastoral care as social action sheds the light of the saving word on the reality of injustice so as to inspire the church to struggle for liberation. The model implied in this approach is being described as prophecy to structures and speaking truth to power.

Essentially it is based on a socio-economic and political analysis of a specific social context. „Such analysis is undergirded by historical criticism and theological reflection.”⁸⁷ Its aim is the transformation of societies and persons. The goal in view is a more socially just and equitable distribution of the human and material resources found in our world.

Through participation in the life of others an attempt is made to examine the life situation from the perspective of the gospel. Three words are crucial here – free, action and liberation. The action-oriented reflective process inspired by faith and commitment to the gospel is very much the shape and form pastoral care takes action of the Spirit. It becomes a valid option of a spiritual resource for the future of mankind.

SEVEN GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT – SEVEN WAYS OF PASTORAL CARE

The seven gifts of the Spirit in sacrament of confirmation point out the generosity and greatness of the spiritual resources he is willing to offer us. It is a hope for the future. The Spirit of God acts upon the interior values of man. He gives craftsmen their necessary abilities (Ex 31,3 and Ex 35,31), the judges soundness (Num 11,17) and Joseph reasonableness (Gen 41,38). He is connected with forgiveness of sins and a new life (Psalm 51,13).

⁸⁷ Cf. LARTEY, *In living color*, 59

The Spirit gives as a participation at the promised salvation (2 Cor 1,21f). The Spirit has an anamnetic function of knowing the treasures of salvation. „The confirmation shows an anamnetic dimension, in its celebration questions of faith are being asked which points to the treasure of belief in the God’s salvation acting.”⁸⁸

The Spirit is leading pastoral care givers to show men new generous ways of obtaining spiritual resources. As the Spirit himself they want to show the seven aspects of spiritual generosity – healing, sustaining, guiding, reconciling, nurturing, liberating and empowering.

As human persons we find ourselves broken and bruised in many ways. Frequently we need emotional, psychological and spiritual restoration. „Healing presupposes that we have lost something we once enjoyed and that it is possible to regain what we have lost.”⁸⁹

There is also a great hope that our restoration will takes us further or place us in a better position than we were before. The art of healing entails activities that facilitate the restoration sought for. The task of pastoral healers is openness and attentiveness.

In many situations of life healing in the sense of restoration to a former position of strength or ability does nor or will not occur. It is not easy to accept it. The massive growth of alternative therapies bears witness to humanity’s amazing resilience and will to live. Sustaining goes beyond restoration. No stoic silence or cynical resolution. Pastoral care givers give support in such times not by promising a favorable outcome or better times by enabling and facilitating coping mechanisms within them.

Confronted with any choice or decision in life ... how one is to choose? How does one weigh the relative merits and demerits of any option. How is one enabled to examine and decide among different possibilities? Crucial function of pastoral care is that of

⁸⁸ „Die Firmung zeigt eine anamnetische Dimension, schon in ihrer Spendung wird der Glaube der Kirche erfragt und dies weist auf die in den verschiedenen Glaubensbekenntnissen aufbewahrten Heilstaten Gottes hin.” In: LIES, *Sakramenten-Theologie*, 286.

⁸⁹ Cf. LARTEY, *In living color*, 63.

attempting to respond to these kinds of questions. Problem solving and decision-making skills are mostly important. Guiding is about enabling people through faith and love to draw out that which lies within them. Here the task of the Spirit as our spiritual resource is obvious. „The necessity of the gifts of the Holy Spirit shows clearly when we consider the truly godly greatness of our vocation in Christ.“⁹⁰

Another important spiritual resource of the Spirit is reconciling. Reconciling involves bringing together parties that have become estranged or alienated from each other. The quest is for harmonious relations between people. It is always important to distinguish between unity and uniformity. Harmony does not imply uniformity; it is the very fact of diversity and difference of view that makes harmony or unity possible.

The function of the pastoral practitioner is to be also a facilitator of growth. Nurturing is an ongoing process that is sensitive to the crucial life stages through which we go.

That leads us to the necessity of liberating. On a mental level bondage expresses itself in an inability to think for and by one's self. Liberating involves the intricate and delicate processes of raising awareness about sources and causes of oppression and domination in society.

And finally, a spiritual resource crucial for the future. Empowering. It means making choices and taking relevant action. Failing to achieve desired results in spite of pursuing the recommended paths is a situation that everyone experiences at least one time per life. It is the process of revaluing self and personal characteristics. The Spirit bring generously new forces and empowers us with his resources for the adventure of life.

⁹⁰ „Die Notwendigkeit der Gaben des Heiligen Geistes erscheint klar, wenn man über die wahrhaft göttliche Größe unserer Berufung in Christus nachdenkt.“ In: PHILIPON, Die Sakramente im Leben des Christen, 61.

THE SPIRIT GIVES US A MISSION LIVED IN OUR OWN CULTURE

The generosity of the Spirit as a powerful spiritual resource leads to an answer which is demanded from the side of the believer. He receives a mission as a sign of trust from God to be witness of hope for the future. It is a kind of seal of spiritual resource for his heart. „The seal is important because it is one of the first gifts and promise of the future goods.”⁹¹

In the time of judges, the Spirit chooses individual people who free the God’s nation in the times of war. The best example is Gedeon un who the Spirit of the Lord descended (Judg 6, 33f).

A special connection makes the Spirit of God with prophets. Under the term prophet we mean a man who speaks in the name of God. He is filled with the Spirit of God (Mic 3,8) and is a man of the Spirit (Hos 9,7).

This mission is active in our own culture as the ambient we live in. By culture we are referring to the way in which groups of people develop distinct patterns of life and give expressive form to their social and material life experience. The Spirit examines the signs of times in the sense of multi perspectival examination of whatever issue is at stake.

The principle of authentic participation is premised upon mutual concern for the integrity of the other and affirms the right of all to participate in discussion and examination of an issue on their own terms.

The spiritual resource of the gifts of the Spirit is a valuable treasure meant not only for ourselves but for the people living in our surrounding in our own culture. Every man receives a mission which leads to more mutual understanding in the world.

⁹¹ „Die Besiegelung ist deshalb notwendig, weil sie die Erstlingsgabe besagt, das Angeld auf die künftigen Guter.” In: SCHEFFCZYK / ZIEGENHAUS, *Katholische Dogmatik*, 235.

SPIRITUAL FULFILMENT REQUIRES POSITIVE ATTITUDE AND EMPOWERMENT

An important characteristic feature of the Spirit bringing spiritual resources for the future is the positive attitude of the Good News. The songs of the God's servant in the times of exile speak about a perfect God's servant who brings light and joy to the people of God. For this mission God gave him his Spirit (Isa 42,1). God anointed him with the oil of joy to bring the poor a message of Good News (Isa 61,1). Joy, fullness, and Spirit – these are the fruits of the sacrament of confirmation. „Confirmation is the sacrament of the gift of the Holy Spirit and is characterized as the sacrament of the fullness of the Spirit.”⁹²

In his farewell speech of Jesus we find specific promises in the gospel of John (John 14-16). God's spirit is the *paracletos* who is a Greek work designed for someone offering help and to bring consolation and encouragement. The Spirit has its origin in the Father and the Son. He comes from the Father and is being sent in the name of the Son (John 14,26 and John 15,26). He will offer testimony about Jesus (John 15,26). In the field of pastoral work, we must maintain the ambiance of positive attitudes. The Spirit is that one who brings consolation. Pastoral care as empowerment emphasis on the fact that there is something good, something of worth and value within human persons as they presently are. Drawing out and building up of the unnoticed strengths and resources within and around people and communities.

„Empowerment models by and large adopt educational and dialogical methods in facilitating the achievement of their goals.”⁹³ That's why we need the process of conscientization. Conscientization is a process within which people become more aware of their situation and of the resources they possess to respond to and change things. „Confirmation is viewed as an occasion for the assurance of the strengthening of the Spirit to accomplish the work we as Christians are given to do.”⁹⁴ This new power and spiritual resource helps the man to have a full life.

⁹² Cf. PONTIFICAL CONSILIUM PRO LAICIS, *Rediscovering confirmation*, 39.

⁹³ Cf. LARTEY, *In living color*, 59.

⁹⁴ Cf. CULLY, *Confirmation re-examined*, 39.

The spiritual resource for the future here is to see pastoral care as personal interaction. Relation skills are employed to assist people to explore, clarify and change or else cope more effectively with unwanted thoughts, feelings and behavior. Find new hope, new love, new spiritual resource valid for the future.

CONCLUSION

The sacrament of confirmation contains elements that are crucial for the spiritual life of man. It as a valid spiritual resource for an adult Christian as it contains the gifts of the Spirit. Especially in this sacrament the precious generosity of God can be observed. We have yet to rediscover this spiritual treasure. As a new spiritual resource for the future, it is worth to give it our attention in solid theological reflection.

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LA BELLEZZA COME LINGUAGGIO UNIVERSALE: UN MONDO IN ATTESA DELLA BUONA NOVELLA

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La missione principale di ogni battezzato è quella di annunciare la buona notizia (cf. Mc. 16, 15), una buona notizia che è in grado di trasformare coloro che la ascoltano. Questo ci viene rivelato nei Vangeli dove leggiamo, ad esempio, di un seme che, una volta gettato, cresce da solo anche quando il contadino dorme (cf. Mc 4,26-29) o anche che la buona notizia è capace di guarire i malati (cf. Lc 9, 6), di liberare i prigionieri (cf. Lc.4, 18). Papa Francesco aiuta a completare questa visione catartica ricordandoci che “la gioia del Vangelo riempie il cuore e tutta la vita”.¹

Una delle domande che ci si pone nel XXI secolo è come la Chiesa possa continuare ad annunciare alla società contemporanea questa Parola, che ritiene fondamentale e trasformante per l'umanità. Questo dubbio è già emerso a livello ecclesiale nella Costituzione *Gaudium et Spes*, nella quale i suoi redattori sottolineano che le condizioni dell'uomo moderno, che hanno subito cambiamenti negli aspetti sociali e culturali, ci portano a parlare di una nuova epoca della storia umana, la nascita di un nuovo umanesimo.² È proprio il messaggio evangelico affidato alla Chiesa che permette di proclamare i diritti umani e di riconoscere e apprezzare il dinamismo dell'epoca attuale³. Secondo il testo conciliare, i cristiani hanno l'obbligo di lavorare

¹ PAPA FRANCESCO, *Esortazione Apostolica Evangelii Gaudium* (24 novembre 2013), 1, in: AAS 105, 1019.

² Cf. CONCILIO VATICANO II, *Costituzione pastorale sulla Chiesa nel mondo contemporaneo Gaudium et Spes* (7 dicembre 1965), 55.

³ Cf. *Ibid.* 41.

insieme a tutti gli uomini per costruire un mondo più umano e, grazie al mistero della fede, offre loro eccellenti incoraggiamenti e aiuti per realizzare questo compito⁴. Esaminando la Costituzione nel suo insieme, possiamo notare come essa si nutra di una visione ottimista nell'analizzare il rapporto tra la fede e il mondo odierno. In un mondo che cambia, la Chiesa è chiamata più che mai a stabilire un rapporto con questa contemporaneità a partire dall'unità di realtà temporale che è anche spirituale. Come afferma Y. Congar, “il tempo è per noi la totalità della storia.”⁵ Questa posizione di dialogo è chiamata ad estendersi a campi concreti, come la cultura, che è espressa da uomini e donne che condividono un modo di pensare, vivere, esprimersi... Tuttavia, è necessario che trovi un linguaggio comune che riporti al dialogo tutte le parti coinvolte in questo desiderio di accompagnare il pieno sviluppo dell'essere umano e di realizzare il bene commune.⁶ Se esiste un linguaggio che risponde a quest'anelito di universalità, questo è la bellezza. Nello specifico, ci riferiamo alla Bellezza, quella che non si rivolge solo ai sensi ma a tutta la persona. È quella che risveglia l'anelito all'ineffabile, che prepara al sacrificio e all'abbandono di sé,⁷ bellezza così antica eppure così nuova.

Platone già ai suoi tempi si interrogava ricordando che quando un uomo percepisce le bellezze di questo mondo e si ricorda della vera bellezza, la sua anima prende le ali e desidera volare.⁸ *Bellum*, dunque, non è solo una proprietà formale ed esteriore, ma un elemento dell'essere a cui alludono termini come gloria, splendore, fascino: ciò che suscita attrazione gioiosa, sorpresa gradita, dedizione fervida, innamoramento, entusiasmo.⁹

Con questo primo tentativo di delimitare cosa sia la bellezza, si intuisce che è difficile parlare di essa, perché non può essere spiegata, ma solo intuita.¹⁰ Per

⁴ Cf. *Ibid.* 57.

⁵ Cf. CONGAR, *Eglise et monde dans la perspective de Vatican II*, 29.

⁶ Cf. PAPA FRANCESCO, *Esortazione Apostolica Evangelii Gaudium (24 novembre 2013)*, 238, in: AAS 105, 1116.

⁷ Cf. RATZINGER, *Caminos hacia Jesucristo*, 41.

⁸ Cf. PLATÓN, *Fedro*, 67.

⁹ Cf. MARTINI, *La bellezza che salva*, 104.

¹⁰ Cf. RAVASI, *La bellezza salverà il mondo*, 25.

colgierne al massimo la globalità, non possiamo dimenticare la sua interrelazione con concetti come bontà, santità, verità, vita... Essi, tutti intrecciati, creano una trama perfetta e omogenea.¹¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar descrive questo rapporto e considera la bellezza come l'ultima parola che l'intelletto può osare pronunciare perché corona il doppio cammino del vero e del bene.¹² Papa Giovanni Paolo II, alle soglie del nuovo millennio, invitava i filosofi a indagare queste dimensioni che abbiamo appena citato. Concretamente li esortava dicendo:

*“Mentre non mi stanco di richiamare l'urgenza di una nuova evangelizzazione, mi appello ai filosofi perché sappiano approfondire le dimensioni del vero, del buono e del bello, a cui la parola di Dio dà accesso. Ciò diventa tanto più urgente, se si considerano le sfide che il nuovo millennio sembra portare con sé: esse investono in modo particolare le regioni e le culture di antica tradizione cristiana. Anche questa attenzione deve considerarsi come un apporto fondamentale e originale sulla strada della nuova evangelizzazione.”*¹³

In questo caso, osserviamo come la *via pulchritudinis* diventa a sua volta una *via veritatis* nella quale l'uomo è impegnato a scoprire la bontà di Dio Amore, fonte di ogni bellezza, di ogni verità e di ogni bontà.¹⁴ In questa linea, Florenskij ci fa fare un passo ulteriore, considerando la verità dal punto di vista biblico, intendendola come "fedeltà" dell'uomo e del cosmo al disegno di Dio, all'*imago Dei*. Di conseguenza, vivere nella bellezza significa comporre e ricomporre l'immagine di Dio, riscoprendo così la nostra forma originaria di creature e figli di Dio Padre.¹⁵ Questa polifonia, tuttavia, non viola le leggi dell'umanità, né nega la dinamica della vita. Anche nella sofferenza, nella morte, nel dolore, nell'offesa c'è la bellezza, e il cristiano, soprattutto, la sperimenta osservando la croce: non si soffre nonostante la croce, ma proprio in virtù di essa.¹⁶

¹¹ Cf. FLORENSKIJ, *La sapienza dell'amore*, 166.

¹² Cf. BALTHASAR, *Gloria*, 10.

¹³ PAPA GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *Fides et ratio* (14 settembre 1998), 103, in: AAS 91, 84.

¹⁴ Cf. PONTIFICIO CONSIGLIO DELLA CULTURA, *La via della bellezza*, 34.

¹⁵ Cf. FLORENSKIJ, *La sapienza dell'amore*, 168.

¹⁶ Cf. BIANCU, *Mangiare la Bellezza*, 15.

Per non rimanere solo sul piano intellettuale, presentiamo ora alcuni dei modi in cui la Bellezza si incarna e manifesta il suo potere apotropaico. In particolare, ne esamineremo tre: la comunicazione attraverso la natura, l'arte e la liturgia.

Iniziamo con la creazione. “Dio vide quanto aveva fatto, ed ecco, era cosa molto buona” (Gn. 1, 31), dice la Genesi, narrando il sesto giorno, dopo la creazione dell'uomo. Ripetutamente in questo capitolo viene usato l'aggettivo *tôb*, che indica "bello-buono". Nella tradizione giudaico-cristiana, il termine "creazione" trascende il concetto di "natura", rappresentando l'impronta divina dell'amore, che conferisce a ogni essere un valore e un significato profondo. La natura è spesso affrontata come un sistema soggetto ad analisi, comprensione e gestione, mentre la creazione si rivela come un dono, una realtà splendente, intrisa di amore che ci invita alla comunione universal.¹⁷ Nella ricerca di questo legame di apertura all'Altro, non è un caso che da tempo memorabile innumerevoli comunità religiose si siano stabilite in paesaggi naturali di eccezionale bellezza per aiutare coloro che ne facevano parte a essere più ricettivi alla trascendenza. Torniamo, dunque, al punto di partenza: ritroviamo un generatore di trasformazione, l'Amore, capace di provocare il dialogo. Il catechismo ci ricorda: “*L'interdipendenza delle creature è voluta da Dio. Il sole e la luna, il cedro e il piccolo fiore, l'aquila e il passero: le innumerevoli diversità e disuguaglianze stanno a significare che nessuna creatura basta a sé stessa, che esse esistono solo in dipendenza le une dalle altre, per completarsi vicendevolmente, al servizio le une delle altre.*”¹⁸

Uno dei modi per lasciarsi avvolgere dalla creazione è la contemplazione. Guardare apertamente la natura e gli esseri che la compongono risveglia una ricchezza di sentimenti che invitano a "leggere dentro", *intus-legere*, a raggiungere l'invisibile a partire dal visibile; crea pace interiore; affina il senso dell'armonia e suscita domande come: chi è l'autore di un'immaginazione così potente? Chi è all'origine di tanta bellezza e grandezza, di una tale profusione di esseri in cielo e in terra? Nell'uomo religioso, allora, lo stupore e l'ammirazione si evolvono in atteggiamenti interiori più spirituali: adorazione, lode, ringraziamento verso l'autore di tanta

¹⁷ Cf. PAPA FRANCESCO, *Lettera enciclica Laudato si'* (24 maggio 2015), 76, in: AAS 107, 877.

¹⁸ *Catechismo della Chiesa Cattolica*, 340,
https://www.vatican.va/archive/catechism_it/p1s2c1p5_it.htm.

bellezza.¹⁹ Forse, il più noto esponente di una spiritualità di profonda connessione tra l'individuo e il Creato è San Francesco d'Assisi. La sua capacità di contemplare la creazione con stupore e rispetto ispira una lode sincera, come egli riportato nel suo famoso *Cantico delle Creature*.

Una delle proposte più antiche che suscita la dinamica dell'introspezione - ammirazione - lode è il pellegrinaggio. Milioni di pellegrini hanno percorso itinerari come, ad esempio, il Cammino di Santiago (Spagna), il Cammino di San Patrizio (Irlanda), il Cammino di Sant'Olav (Norvegia) o la Via Francigena (Italia). E nel corso della storia, queste vie hanno contribuito non solo alla crescita individuale, ma sono anche diventate un veicolo di scambi culturali. Per mostrare il segno che questa esperienza può lasciare, prendiamo la vivenza dello scrittore Paulo Coelho (1947), il quale intraprese una parte del Cammino di Santiago nel 1986. La stampa locale riporta la seguente dichiarazione dopo una visita dello scrittore tornato a Santiago de Compostela: "È sempre stato molto importante per me, perché la mia vita è cambiata dopo aver percorso il Cammino di Santiago."²⁰ Attraverso il suo primo romanzo, *El peregrino de Compostela*, scopriamo alcune delle sue riflessioni più personali e ci regala alcune interessanti confessioni per il nostro presente articolo: "Volevo cambiare? Non credo, ma questo cammino mi sta trasformando. Volevo conoscere i misteri? Credo di sì, ma il cammino mi sta insegnando che non ci sono misteri, che, come ha detto Gesù Cristo, non c'è nulla di nascosto che non sia stato rivelato. Insomma, tutto sta accadendo esattamente al contrario di quello che mi aspettavo."²¹ Vediamo quindi come il passaggio attraverso la natura abbia portato a un cambiamento interiore.

Ci sono anche proposte che manifestano apertamente l'obiettivo di lasciarsi trasformare dalla bellezza del Creato. Ritiri spirituali in mezzo alla natura, meditazioni alla contemplazione dell'alba o del tramonto; gruppi che si incontrano per fare esperienza della Terra come una realtà sacra e cercare di entrare in

¹⁹ PONTIFICIO CONSIGLIO DELLA CULTURA, *La via della bellezza*, 40–41.

²⁰ Notizia sul giornale *La opinión* (23 giugno 2008), <https://www.laopinioncoruna.es/cultura/2008/06/23/paulo-coelho-vida-cambio-despues-25412559.html>.

²¹ COELHO, *El peregrino de Compostela*, 9.

connessione con essa attraverso l'arte. È questa, ad esempio, la base del progetto Art LS', che si propone come una chiave di lettura per esplorare e approfondire l'enciclica Laudato Si'. Secondo i promotori, l'obiettivo è fare un'esperienza di unione con il creato che porta sia ad una trasformazione personale che a un modo più armonioso di vivere nel mondo. Per giungere a questo obiettivo, utilizzano l'arte come veicolo per la contemplazione della natura che, secondo loro, aiuta ad aprirsi a una maggiore consapevolezza di appartenere a quella che Papa Francesco chiama la Casa comune.²²

Questa iniziativa facilita il passaggio al prossimo passo scelto per il nostro cammino: la Bellezza attraverso l'arte. Il capitolo 7 di *Sacro Sanctum Concilium* ci ricorda proprio il suo valore:

“Fra le più nobili attività dell'ingegno umano sono annoverate, a pieno diritto, le belle arti, soprattutto l'arte religiosa e il suo vertice, l'arte sacra. Esse, per loro natura, hanno relazione con l'infinita bellezza divina che deve essere in qualche modo espressa dalle opere dell'uomo, e sono tanto più orientate a Dio e all'incremento della sua lode e della sua gloria, in quanto nessun altro fine è stato loro assegnato se non quello di contribuire il più efficacemente possibile, con le loro opere, a indirizzare religiosamente le menti degli uomini a Dio.”²³

In questo punto viene sviluppata una "teologia dell'arte" e una nascente "teologia della bellezza". La natura dell'arte sacra è legata alla bellezza divina e questa bellezza si esprime concretamente attraverso le opere degli uomini. Esse sono più adatte alla lode di Dio quando hanno lo scopo di aiutare le persone rivolgersi a Lui.²⁴

In questa ricerca di una comunicazione sincera, le arti svolgono un ruolo importante. Le questioni sollevate dalle nuove scoperte in campo scientifico, storico o filosofico stimolano i teologi a compiere nuove ricerche. Ma anche le arti hanno una grande importanza per la vita della Chiesa, poiché “cercano di esprimere

²² Si può approfondire di più su questo progetto attraverso la pagina ufficiale <https://www.justiciaipau.org/fem/art-ls>.

²³ CONCILIO VATICANO II, *Costituzione Sacrosanctum Concilium* (4 dicembre 1963), 122.

²⁴ Cf. BUA, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 153.

la natura propria dell'uomo, i suoi problemi e la sua esperienza nello sforzo di conoscere e perfezionare sé stesso e il mondo; cercano di scoprire la sua situazione nella storia e nell'universo, di illustrare le sue miserie e le sue gioie, i suoi bisogni e le sue capacità, e di prospettare una sua migliore condizione. Così possono elevare la vita umana, che esprimono in molteplici forme, secondo i tempi e i luoghi.”²⁵ Per questo è necessario che la Chiesa presti attenzione all'arte e accompagni le nuove tendenze. C'è bisogno di lavorare affinché gli artisti si sentano compresi dalla Chiesa e possano, in libertà, stabilire relazioni più facili con la comunità cristiana. L'arte ha la capacità di mettere a fuoco diverse sfumature del Messaggio, traducendolo in colori, forme, suoni...²⁶ Papa Francesco è un esempio di questo modo di intendere l'arte, ossia da un punto di vista legato alla “cultura dell'incontro.”²⁷ L'incontro non è un mezzo, è un fine, e l'arte, con la sua capacità trasformatrice, ci permette, da un lato, di allontanare il pericolo di vivere in un laboratorio, dall'altro, di uscire dalle nostre frontiere e di lasciarci sorprendere.²⁸ Realizzare un'immagine, quindi, significa far parte del continuum della creazione divina, della nuova Incarnazione di ogni epoca. Le opere d'arte diventano un'epifania di Dio e hanno il potenziale di poter rivelare il Mistero. Per questo motivo, il significato delle immagini, in generale, non è solo quello di spiegare o commentare un testo, né di insegnare o illustrare un contenuto (perché allora avrebbero una funzione meramente strumentale), ma di favorire una dimensione di dialogo.

Le scelte artistiche (i materiali, gli artisti, la collocazione di un'opera...) dovrebbero diventare di per sé un racconto teologico di testimonianza delle relazioni vitali tra la comunità e Dio, della dimensione intra-comunitaria e del rapporto della Chiesa con la sua propria tradizione e il mondo. Senza rendersene conto, la comunità rivela agli

²⁵ CONCILIO VATICANO II, *Costituzione pastorale sulla Chiesa nel mondo contemporaneo Gaudium et Spes* (7 dicembre 1965), 62.

²⁶ Cf. PAPA GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *Lettera agli artisti* (4 aprile 1999), in: AAS 91.

²⁷ Cf. PAPA FRANCESCO, *Por una cultura de encuentro, Misas matutinas en la capilla Domus Sanctae Marthae*, (13 de septiembre de 2016), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/cotidie/2016/documents/papa-francesco-cotidie_20160913_cultura-encuentro.html.

²⁸ Cf. *Intervista di Antonio Spadaro a Papa Francesco* (19 d'agost de 2013), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2013/september/documents/papa-francesco_20130921_intervista-spadaro.html.

altri e a sé stessa la propria spiritualità, la propria vita comunitaria e il proprio rapporto con lo spirito dell'epoca in cui vive.

Papa Francesco ritiene che la Chiesa debba promuovere l'uso dell'arte perché ha una dimensione salvifica e può offrire sia consolazione sia speranza. Egli stesso, nel suo libro *La mia idea di arte*, mostra la sua volontà di lavorare con i più svantaggiati. L'azione di aprire i musei ai senzatetto si colloca all'interno di questo scelto preferenziale con uno duplice obiettivo: perché possano anch'essi ammirare la bellezza ed essere loro stessi le opere che testimoniano le ispirazioni artistiche e spirituali dell'umanità e la ricerca della Bellezza ultima.²⁹ Secondo il pontefice, l'arte può aiutarci a combattere la cultura dello scarto perché ciò che fa risplendere la Bellezza guarisce e trasforma a livello individuale e sociale. Come sottolinea Romano Guardini, questa trasformazione è possibile perché l'opera d'arte permette all'uomo di uscire dalla propria realtà e gli concede uno dei doni più preziosi: la pace.³⁰

Infine, ci concentriamo sulla via della bellezza attraverso la liturgia. Secondo *Evangelii Gaudium*, l'evangelizzazione gioiosa diventa bellezza e la Chiesa evangelizza e si evangelizza attraverso la bellezza della liturgia. Così, la liturgia è piena di gioia perché celebra la presenza di Cristo risorto, che viene concretamente nelle situazioni più oscure e opera trasformazioni. Il Salmo 16 ci ricorda: "gioia piena alla tua presenza, dolcezza senza fine alla tua destra". Questo ci fa pensare che la gioia cristiana è la grazia di poter stare alla presenza di Dio in tutte le situazioni della vita, con il coinvolgimento di cuore, anima e corpo.

Nella liturgia, i gesti devono rispecchiare i gesti di Gesù. I suoi gesti sono belli perché è attraverso di essi che si irradia l'*agape* salvifica e in Lui nulla è fatto meccanicamente: Egli compie soltanto gesti teandrici. Cristo arricchisce e nobilita i nostri gesti umani e quotidiani e li pone su un tavolo dove partecipa la sua parte terrena e divina. Il rito autentico non soffoca i gesti essenziali, ma al contrario li sottolinea e la loro ragioni d'essere è solo quella di mettersi al servizio dell'atto

²⁹ Cf. PAPA FRANCESCO, *La mia idea dell'arte*, 10.

³⁰ Cf. GUARDINI, Romano, *L'opera d'arte*, 45.

liturgico.³¹ Le parole “fate questo in memoria di me”, riecheggiano eternamente e il loro mandato e la loro guida permettono all'umanità di continuare a muoversi in questo spazio dove l'intera comunità, presente e passata, si incontra di nuovo con il proprio Maestro.

Con quest'ultima idea che abbiamo esplorato, vediamo ancora una volta come il carattere apotropaico della Bellezza sia in grado di cambiare il modo di vedere la vita e diventi un motore di trasformazione per l'essere umano. L'intellettuale francese André Frossard (1915-1995) ci permette di illustrare questa affermazione.

“Non mi nascondo ciò che una conversione come questa, per la sua caratteristica di subitanità improvvisa, può avere di stridente, d'inammissibile addirittura, per gli spiriti contemporanei che preferiscono le vie del razioicinio ai mistici colpi di fulmine, e che apprezzano sempre meno gli interventi del divino nella vita quotidiana. Tuttavia, anche se sono desideroso di allinearli con lo spirito del mio tempo, non posso ricordare le pietre miliari di un'elaborazione lenta dove invece c'è stata una brusca trasformazione, non posso dare le ragioni psicologiche, immediate o lontane, di questa mutazione, perché queste ragioni non esistono; mi risulta impossibile descrivere il sentiero che mi ha condotto alla fede, perché mi trovo su tutt'altro cammino e pensavo a tutt'altra cosa quando caddi in una specie di imboscata.”³²

La liturgia, con tutti i suoi elementi, è in grado di creare uno spazio di incontro. Frossard sperimentò una conversione che egli stesso descrive nel suo libro *Dio esiste, io L'ho incontrato*. La luce delicata di una candela in una chiesa piena di gente che pregava toccò il suo cuore e lo trasformò. La celebrazione liturgica non è un ricordo di un evento avvenuto più di duemila anni fa, bensì è presente in mezzo a noi in modo sacramentale. Ma la liturgia non si esaurisce nella celebrazione. La liturgia ci attira nei misteri di Cristo e la vita ci attira nei misteri dell'uomo, creando un'osmosi in cui dalla liturgia si passa alla vita e dalla vita si passa all'azione liturgica³³. Insomma, in ogni celebrazione deve esserci spazio perché i simboli

³¹ Cf. CASSINGENA-TRÉVEDY, *La bellezza della liturgia*, 45-52.

³² FROSSARD, *Dios existe, yo me lo encontré*, 15.

³³ Cf. FLORES, *La belleza de la liturgia*, 46.

esprimano tutta la loro ricchezza, affinché l'esperienza della celebrazione porti il cristiano alla coerenza e alla testimonianza di vita.³⁴

Dopo aver percorso le tre vie proposte per questa comunicazione, possiamo concludere di avere la fortuna di poterci abbeverare a un Amore originario grazie alla bellezza che da questo traspare. La via della bellezza, dunque, apre la porta al Mistero, e ci permette di stabilire sia una relazione tra noi uomini e Dio, tra noi e i nostri fratelli, sia di comunicare senza barriere quella Buona Novella che, ne siamo convinti, trasforma chi vuole ascoltarla e accoglierla.

³⁴ Cf. *Ibid.* 79.

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„SPIRITUÁLIS” DÖMPINGÁRU: RITUÁLÉ ÚJ RITUÁLÉK KIÉRTÉKELÉSE, LITURGIA-TEOLÓGIAI BONCOLGATÁSA ÉS INSPIRÁLÓ HATÁSA KORTÁRS-LITURGIÁNK SZÁMÁRA

Diósi Dávid

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Manapság a „rituálék bőségének”,¹ illetve „bódulatának”² korában élünk. A különböző (javarészt, de nem kizárólag profán jellegű) rituálék egyre népszerűbbek lettek kortársaink körében.³ Aligha létezik életünknek egy olyan szegmense, személyes élettörténetünknek egy olyan jelentős, kiemelkedő aspektusa, vagy pedig egy olyan biográfiai fordulópont, amelyben ezek a bárki által saját személyes igényeinek megfelelően, nemegyszer receptszerűen összeállítható rituálék nem jelentek volna meg.⁴ A rituális rendszerek sokfélesége, amely korunk emberének úton-útfélen felkínálja magát, a szent koncepciójának a sokféleségéhez vezetett.⁵ A modernizálás örölmalmában a szent már nem kötődik kizárólagosan a valláshoz, sőt mi több olykor még magához a transzcendenshez sem, illetve pontosabban

¹ Lásd LUKKEN könyvének címét: *Rituals in abundance*.

² BRUNOTTE, *Ritual und Kritik*, 55: „Rausch der Rituale”.

³ A népszerű-irodalom rituáléival részletesen foglalkozott és elemezte azokat: LÜDDECKENS, *Neue Rituale*, 37–53.

⁴ A mai kor emberének rituálékat tartalmazó népszerű-irodalomból Lukken és Dücker könyvén kívül még a következőket említhetjük: WELTZIEN, *Rituale neu erschaffen*; KISS, *Zur Feier des Tages*; KIM, *Belső kisugárzás* („több mint 50 egyszerű, de annál hatásosabb »ragyogásrítus«” található meg benne – olvashatjuk a könyvreklámban); GARNSWORTHY, *Napi rituálék*.

⁵ Vö. DÜCKER, *Rituale*, 129.

fogalmazva a szent korróziója a transzcendenst immanenssé sorvasztotta.⁶ Korunkban olykor még vallásos téren is a vertikális horizontálódása tapasztalható.⁷ Ugyanakkor az sem hallgatható el, hogy amennyiben manapság már (szinte) minden lehet rituálé, akkor valójában már (szinte) semmi sem rituálé.⁸

Míg a múltban a rituálék sztereotípiáit és merevségét hangsúlyozták, mostanában egyre inkább előtérbe kerül a rituálék integráló ereje az egyén, a közösség és a kultúra számára. A rituáléokra az emberek manapság már nem úgy tekintenek, ahogyan azt még nem is olyan rég tették. Napjainkban – a közelmúlttól eltérően – a rituálék már nem annyira kultikus eredetű misztériumok irracionális kifejeződéseként jelennek meg. A rituálé manapság már nem egy távoli „túl-világ” evilági nyúlványa a láthatóban, hanem inkább erről a mi világunkról, evilági létünket meghatározó életterünkről szólnak, s így életszerűbbé – és ezáltal talán pragmatikusabbá is – váltak. Korunk emberének „élettér zsanérjai”,⁹ amelyek számára túlnyomórészt esztétikai (valójában inkább esztétizált), ugyanakkor nemegyszer etikai tartalmuk révén is biztonságot, azaz konkrét fogódzó pontot nyújt(h)a(t)nak jelenkorunk zűrzavaros társadalmában. A rituálé a mindennapok forgatagában a zihált lélek megnyugvását ünnepli, olyan számára, mint a hab a tortán.¹⁰ Könnyed rituálék ezek, melyek többnyire csupán az általuk kifejtendő hatásra fókuszálnak. Hiányzik belőlük a mélyreható, mítosz-szintű beágyazottság.¹¹ A rítusra utaló elemek egyike sem kapcsolódik sem a mélyen gyökerező archetipikus „logosz” rendjéhez, sem pedig egy bizonyos „ősi aktus” kinyilatkoztatásához.¹² A

⁶ Vö. HÖHN, *Soziologie in der Theologie*, 62–68.

⁷ Vö. ANDRÁS, *Horizontálódás*, 89–95.

⁸ Vö. KLIE, *Fremde Heimat Liturgie*, 185.

⁹ WULF / ZIRFAS, 7.

¹⁰ *Erről árulkodik a következő könyv címe: BIZIOU, Sahnehäubchen für die Seele.*

¹¹ Vö. RIVIÈRE, *Structură și antistructură*, 85.

¹² *A kultusz – s így a rítus – alapjául Isten cselekvése szolgál. A kultusz egy isteni mintakép valós megjelenítése egy emberi képmás-cselekedetben. Az emberi cselekedet értelme és értéke abban a tulajdonságában rejlik, amellyel egy az istenek, az ősök vagy a hősök által „azokban a napokban” (in illo tempore), vagyis a kezdetekben (ab origine) megszentelt őseredeti cselekedetet in concreto újra tud teremteni, egy bizonyos mitikus előképet, példát meg tud ismételni. „Minden rítusnak isteni mintája, archetípusa van. ...»Úgy kell eljárunk, amiként az istenek tették kezdetben.« (Satapatha-*

rituálé egészként, de részeire „boncolva” is csupán az egyéni vagy kollektív értékesítés, a szimbolikus élvezhetőség, illetve a társadalmi hatékonyság felszínén lebeg. Valós transzcendentális gyökerek nélkül „transzcendentáló” hatások reményét ígérő „rituális építmények” ezek. A modern mítoszok horizontján legfeljebb az utópia mereng.¹³

Lássunk konkrétan egy „Áldási rituálé” (*Segnungsritual*) kivonatát Daan van Kampenhout (*1963) holland író, terapeuta, énekes és művész „szertartáskönyvéből”:¹⁴

Időtartam: Ez a szertartás első alkalommal körülbelül egy órát vesz igénybe, ezután minden nap érdemes néhány percet szánni rá, olyan időpontban, amikor neked megfelel.

Cél: Ez a rituálé akkor hasznos, amikor egy új projektbe kezdünk, legyen az kicsi vagy nagy. Ez lehet házvásárlás vagy autóvásárlás, sportiskola indítása vagy egy stratégia kidolgozása, egy jobb állás megtalálására. A rituáléban kapcsolatot létesítesz a kozmosszal, és kívülről mozgósítod a segítséget.

Anyag: Egy oltár (ez lehet olyan, amelyet már használasz), papír, toll és boríték. Előkészületek: Nincs, kivéve az anyaggyűjtést.

A rituálé: Fogj papírt és tollat, és írd meg egy levelet az őseidnek, a szellem-segítőidnek, a szellem-vezetőidnek, az erőállatoknak és a Földnek. A levélben részletesen írd le a projektet, amit szeretnél megvalósítani. Azt is írd meg a leveledben, hogy mindent megteszel azért, hogy a terved sikerrel záruljon, de azt is elfogadod, ha a vezetőidnek más tervei vannak veled. Amikor a levél elkészült, menj az oltárodhoz. Először köszöntsd az összes erőt, akiktől segítséget és támogatást kérsz, majd olvasd fel hangosan a levelet. Ezután tedd a levelet egy borítékba, pecsételd le, és

bráhmana, VII, 2, 1, 4) »Így cselekedtek az istenek, így cselekednek tehát az emberek is.« (Taittirija-bráhmana, I, 5, 9, 4). Ez az indiai adalék summázza azt a felfogást, amelyen a rítusok a világ minden táján alapulnak. Éppen olyan hiánytalanul találjuk meg ezt a felfogást az úgynevezett primitív népeknél, mint a fejlett kultúrákban.” (ELIADE, Az örök visszatérés mítosza, 41).

¹³ Vö. RIVIÈRE, *Structură și antistructură*, 85.

¹⁴ KAMPENHOUT, *Heilende Rituale*, 76.

tedd az oltárra. Ezután hagyd a levelet néhány hétig az oltárán. Minden nap meditálj rajta néhány percet. Meditációdát fejezd be azzal, hogy mélyen kilélegzel közvetlenül a levél felett. Ezzel szó szerint életet lehelsz a projektbe, és így a segítségül kért erőbe is.

A népszerű-irodalom nagyjából „házi használatra” szánt rituáléi azt a benyomást keltik az olvasóközönségben, hogy azok mindig és mindenhol érvényesek. Használói számára ugyanis általuk egy olyan egyetemes horizontot nyílik meg, amelyen belül a „közkinccsé tett” rituálék antropológiai állandóként, azaz minden kultúrában és korban fellelhető valóságként értelmezhetjük. Tudniillik ezek a rituálék – jóllehet eredetileg bizonyos hagyományokon belül léteznek, mégis – egyrészt univerzális struktúrával rendelkeznek, másrészt pedig univerzálisan érvényes törvények alapján működnek: transzkulturális jelenségek, amelyek alapvetően inkább az emberi léthez, mintsem egy adott kultúrához tartoznak.¹⁵ A szóban forgó népszerű-irodalom rituáléinak három fő jellegzetessége domborodik ki: az individualitás, a kreativitás, valamint az institutionális függetlenség.¹⁶

A rituálék következetesen individualizáltak. Azokat rendszerint mindössze egy résztvevőre tervezik. Ha mégis csoportok számára kerültek összeállításra, akkor ezek általában egyszeri csoportokat tart szem előtt, vagy pedig kis egységekre (pl. párokra vagy családokra) vonatkoznak. Jellegzetességükhöz tartozik továbbá, hogy alapvetően az egyes résztvevők igényeihez, individuális élethelyzetéhez, magánéleti történetéhez igazodnak. Sőt mi több, az elvégzendő rituálé ereje, sikeressége általában éppen abban rejlik, hogy az az egyéni szükségletek, perspektívák és törekvések egyedi kifejeződése. Minden egyén egyedi módon megtervezheti, összeállíthatja és végre is hajthatja saját rituáléját. S ezzel már meg is érkeztünk a „kreativitás” címszóhoz. Az egyén – aki „saját élettörténetének forgatókönyvírója, rendezője és főszereplője”¹⁷ – a „testre szabás folyamatában” olyan rituális szegmenseket vesz át (akár több) különböző vallásos hagyományok szertartás-tárházából (egyidőben) és épít bele sajátújjlenyomatú rituáléjába,

¹⁵ Vö. LÜDDECKENS, *Neue Rituale*, 41.

¹⁶ Vö. LÜDDECKENS, *Neue Rituale*, 47–51.

¹⁷ HÖHN, *Sinnsuche und Erlebnismarkt*, 363.

amelyeknek különleges relevanciát, értéket tulajdonít pl. korukból, hozzájuk fűződő bölcsesség-töltetükből kifolyólag. Mégis ezeknek a propagált rituáléknak az értéke nem a hagyomány továbbadásában rejlik, hanem azok újszerű voltában. A különböző – akár ősrégi – rituális szegmensek kizárólag azért kerülnek beépítésre az egyéni rituáléba, mert a rituálé résztvevőjének meglátása szerint azok a konkrét átvett elemek összhangban vannak saját igényeivel. Ezáltal válnak egy rituális kollázson belüli egyéni pillanatokká. Itt a rituálé nem egy egyéni kívüli, mondhatnánk transzcendens létvalóság „üzenetét” törekszik e-világon, mégpedig kézzelfogható közelségben „megmintázni”, hanem az egyén „rabszolgájaként” az egyén élményérzetét igyekezik igenlően fokozni, kielégíteni. Élménytársadalmunk¹⁸ élmény-racionalitása az elérendő célokat magában a szubjektumban határozza meg, a külső körülményeket pedig úgy rendezi, hogy ezeket a célokat szolgálja.¹⁹ A rituálé teljesen az önmaga körül körhintázó szubjektum szolgálatába kerül. A transzcendens szuverenitásától „higiénizált”, valamit az egyén élményigény-kielégítésére „optimalizált” és így „tetszetősre” faricskált rituálé arra hívatott, hogy az individuumban olyan kellemes, pozitív asszociációkat keltsen (pl. biztonságérzet, vigasz, megértettség, stb.), amelynek legfőbb célkitűzése, hogy általa a rituálé résztvevője egyensúlyba kerülhessen önmagával, környezetével, illetve esetlegesen egy közelebről nem meghatározott rajta kívüli, azaz az anyagi világot meghaladó erővel. S mindez a magatartás nemcsak az egyház-távolaikat jellemzi. Sokan manapság az egyház liturgiáját, rítusait is az egyén „szűrőjén” keresztül közelítik meg. Vallásos téren is az egyéni tapasztalat a mérvadó:²⁰ boldogságérzet megtapasztalása „itt és most” a földön. Most, ebben az adott pillanatban kell a vallás és annak rituális megnyilvánulása boldoggá tegyen, nem pedig majd valamikor a „most” pillanatától mégiscsak távolnak tűnő túlvilágon. Korunk embere nem azt várja el a vallástól, hogy a túlvilági boldogságra érett, beteljesedett embert faragjon belőle, hanem egy olyan érzést generáljon lelki, szellemi és testi értelemben, ami számára megnyugvást, békét, egyensúlyt garantál „itt” (jelenlegi

¹⁸ Az élménytársadalom (*Erlebnisgesellschaft*) fogalma Gerhard Schulze (*1944) német szociológus és bambergi egyetemi tanár nevéhez fűződik. Vö. SCHULZE, *Erlebnisgesellschaft*; SCHULZE, *Entgrenzung und Innenorientierung*, 405–419; SCHULZE, *Projekt des schönen Lebens*, 13–36.

¹⁹ HÖHN, *Sinnsuche und Erlebnismarkt*, 363.

²⁰ Vö. SUDBRACK, *Neue Religiosität*, 230; ENDERS, *Ist der Mensch*, 216–222.

életterében, vagyis ezen a földön) és „most” (élethelyzetének ezen pillanatában). A rituálé itt már nem az emberi fejlődési folyamat szerves része, amely az egyént a Transzcendenssel folytatott (huzamosabb) „nyílt terepű” kommunikáció révén egyre érettebbé teszi a majdani „nagy találkozásra”, hanem ő minden egyes alkalommal punktuálisan a vallásos elemek azon pszichikai-terapeutikus hatásait vadássza, amelyek őt pillanatnyi állapotában, jelen élethelyzetében igenlően megerősíti. Ezért is van az, hogy sok kortársunk vallásossága a vallásos érzés kategóriájába tartozik, amely gyakran kimerül a pusztán önigenlésben, a jó kedélyű önigazolásban, illetve önmegerősítésben. Az élményorientált vallásosság kora világra hozta azt a „vallásos virtuózt”,²¹ aki legszívesebben az élményhullámok sík felületén „szörföl” mégpedig úgy, hogy voltaképpen az e-világ egyik bugyrából úgyszintén az e-világ másik bugyrába katapultáló „katarzist” keresi. Ez a katarzist már nem az igazsággal való találkozásból születik, hanem ízelményt nyújtó „étvágygerjesztő falatkaként”²² kínálja fel magát fogyasztásra „kultúra-gourmet” egyénünk számára.

Ettől eltérően a keresztény rituálé valójában az Isten és ember között zajló kommunikáció tere.²³ A performativitás erejének köszönhetően, amelyben a transzcendentális karakterrel bíró verbális és nonverbális cselekedetek kulcsfontosságúak, az a kapcsolati struktúra, amely lehetővé teszi, hogy az ember – nemcsak szubjektív módon (pl. az érzelm szintjén), hanem ontológiai értelemben is – Istennel szembe kerüljön. Vagyis itt nem a *mintha*, az *úgy érzem mintha* kategóriákról, hanem életünket reálisan (meg)érintő szemben-való-létről beszélünk. A performativitás a rituálét az Isten és ember szembenállásának kapcsolat-„otthonává” teszi, vagyis egy olyan kommunikációs közzé, amelyben az „itt és most”-ban az egyedi és így, ebben az egyediségében egyszeri és megismételhetetlen liturgikus performansz megvalósulhat. A performansz egyediségét az a bizonyos és ebből kifolyólag sajátos „pillanatban” történő

²¹ HÖHN, *Sinnsuche und Erlebnismarkt*, 366.

²² SCHULZE, *Auf der Suche*, 284.

²³ Vö. WINTER, *Am Grund*, 12–27.

találkozás hordozza. S így mondhatnánk, jóllehet minden liturgia ugyanaz, mégis a benne létrejövő találkozás egyedi és ebben az egyediségében megismételhetetlen.

„Megismételné még egyszer ezt a vízzel, kérem? Nem igazán sikerült a fotó.” Ez a mondat valóban egy keresztelő után hangzott el – írja Franziska Beetschen doktori disszertációjában.²⁴ Bizonyára egy ilyen kérés hallatán nemkevés lelkipásztornak nagy erőbedobásába kerül, hogy megőrizze nyugalmát, illetve ne nevesse el magát hangosan. „Hová jutottunk? Hogy lehet ilyet kérni?” – kérdezik. Ez a – számunkra fura – kérés nemcsak a fotós teológiai ismerethiányáról árulkodik, hanem tanúságot tesz arról is, hogy a keresztség ezen aktusa nagy jelentőséggel bír a keresztelő szülők számára. Ha nem volna oly fontos számukra, minek is kérnék a megismételhetetlen „pillanat” „megismétlését”. Persze korántsem biztos, hogy a pillanat kézbevehető „megörökítése” a láthatatlan háttérbeli – minden eddigit „elsöprő” – teológiai hordozóereje miatt történik, mégis – ha talán a pusztá külsőség miatt is – fontos. Legalább valami (még) fontos!

Egyházunk liturgikus magközsége kicsi, míg a körülötte lévő perem széles és sokszínű. Közösségeink nagy része az ünnepi keresztyénekhez tartozik, akik többnyire csak életutuk bizonyos szakaszaiban igénylik szertartásainkat, vagy liturgikus repertoárunk bizonyos elemeit „nyersanyagként” általános-vallásos módon értelmezik, illetve terápiás megfontolásból használják. Egyszóval időközben nemcsak marginális egyházi, hanem egyházon kívüli hitről és ünneplésről is beszélhetünk.²⁵

S habár a rituálék túlburjánzásának korát éljük, ugyanakkor – és ez csak látszólag ellentmondásos – a „rítus eltűnését”²⁶ konstatálhatjuk, hiszen az igazi, – ha szabad így fogalmaznom – nagykaliberű, azaz olyan értékeket és szabályokat áthagyományozó és megjelenítő rítusok, amelyek egy adott közösség alapjául szolgálnak, hiánycikkek lettek korunk társadalmában. Keresztyén, vallásos szempontból, talán a leghelyesebben úgy fogalmazhatnánk, hogy nemcsak az Isten által az ember számára alapított rítusok (szentségek), hanem az egyház

²⁴ Vö. BEETSCHEN, *Alternative Taufe*, 3.

²⁵ Vö. POST, *Das aktuelle Panorama*, 247.

²⁶ HAN, *A rítus eltűnése*.

(para)liturgikus hagyományában évszázadokon át – többé-kevésbé konstansul – élő rítusok „trónfosztásának” lehetünk szemtanúi. Az „egyén” vette át a hatalom „jogarát” a rítusok felett. S habár a rituálé-faló „egyén” „trónra szállásával” – amint ez már előbb láthattuk – megváltozott nemcsak a rítus rendeltetése, hanem maga a rituális játék szabályrendszere is, mégis – már magát a rituálék iránti élénk érdeklődést és erőteljes éhséget szem előtt tartva – van okunk a reménységre, mégpedig olyan reménységre, amely nemcsak felülmúl, hanem felülír minden merő optimizmust. Hiszen pontosan a rítusok értetik meg mély reménytelenségben szenvedő,²⁷ könyörtelen termelésre és „korgó hasú” fogyasztásra kalibrált, brutálisan felgyorsult²⁸ félelem-²⁹ és élmény-társadalmunkban öreggő válás nélkül megöregedő³⁰ kortársainkkal, hogy a liturgia rituális világában az ember Isten előtt ismét ifjúságának nyitott frissességén örvendező „gyerek” lehet, aki lemond a felnőttek életére oly jellemző céltudatos cselekvésről és teljesen átadja magát Isten jelenlétében annak a játéknak az örömének,³¹ amelyben – felszabadító erejéből kifolyólag – szabadon árad a létezés.³² A rítusban – reményünk szilárd és biztos alapja – a rajtunk kívül létező másik cselekvő Lény³³ látogat meg bennünket. A rítus szimbólumai révén köti össze – az integrálás elvét követve – a látszólag ellentétes pólusokat: megmutatja számunkra a láthatatlant a láthatóban, az érinthetlent az érinthetőben.³⁴

Eszmefuttatásunk végén – záróakkordként – tegyük fel magunknak a kérdést tanulhatunk-e valamit (is) korunk rituális éhségéből? Biztosra állíthatjuk: igen! Kortársaink vágyait és rituális cselekvésmódozatait fogékony lelkülettel vizsgálva, több fontos dologra is figyelmesek lehetünk. A hangsúlyeltolódásnak vannak pozitív hozadékai is. Olyan szegmensek kidomborítására, rituális cselekedet-attitűdökre figyelhetünk fel, amelyek ugyan elméleti szinten számunkra sem idegenek, sőt

²⁷ Vö. HAHNE, *Schluss mit lustig*, 142.

²⁸ Vö. ROSA, *Beschleunigung*.

²⁹ Vö. BUDE, *Gesellschaft der Angst*.

³⁰ Vö. HAN, *A rítus eltűnése*, 49.

³¹ Vö. GUARDINI, *Von Geist der Liturgie*, 89–105.

³² Vö. RATZINGER, *A liturgia szelleme*, 11.

³³ Vö. RATZINGER, *Krisztusra tekintve*, 41.

³⁴ Vö. BONACCORSO, *Ästhetik und Ritus*, 72.

olykor teológiai kontextusban is alapvető jelentőséggel bírnak, mégis a gyakorlatban megannyiszor háttérbe kerülnek. A következőkben csupán egy szemensre szeretnék kitérni.

Kortársaink rituális gyakorlatában figyelemreméltó ugyanis a szimbólumokra való fókuszálás, valamint a verbális és nonverbális elemek harmonikus szimbiózisára való törekvés. A liturgia rituális világában a verbális és a nonverbális dimenzió közötti egészséges egyensúlyt megőrizve arra kell törekedjünk, hogy a szimbólumok szóhoz jussanak. Igen, a szimbólumoknak hangjuk van hangjuk, minket meg- és felszólító hangjuk. A szimbólum a csend „ruhájába öltözve” hallgat s hallgatva kimond valamit. Maga a beszélő csend. A liturgia ugyanis hangot ad a kimondhatatlannak és hallhatóvá teszi a hallatlant.³⁵ Ha a szimbólumok elnémultak, akkor az azért van, mert mi elhallgatattuk őket azáltal, hogy helyettük „szövegelünk”, s így üresre beszéljük őket, vagy pedig méltóságuktól megfosztva s „vakvágányra” helyezve őket nem performáljuk azokat hivatásuknak megfelelően, pedig rajtuk keresztül Isten üzenete jut el hozzánk. Itt a csend lesz maga a szó.³⁶ A csend ugyanis nem azért takarja le a misztériumot, hogy elrejtse azokat, hanem pont az ellenkezője az igaz: hogy kinyilatkoztassa azokat.³⁷ Kevesebb beszéd, több „játék”, tudniillik a „liturgia értelme »csupán« ez: eljátszani Isten jelenlétében, szabadságban, szépségben és szent vidámságban”.³⁸ A liturgiában a hit dogmatizálása és moralizálása mellett nagyobb hangsúlyt kell fektetni a hit esztétikájára, vagyis egy olyan dimenzióra, amely a hitet nem csupán a beszéd és a hallás útján közvetíti, hanem igyekszik ebbe a közvetítési folyamatba minden érzéket bevonni, s ekképpen a kultikus beszéd és cselekedet ikonvoltát³⁹ kiemelve a nagy Ismeretlent, a titokzatos Istent konkrét megtapasztalhatóságában prezentálni. Így a kultikus esemény résztvevőjének – legyen az a „liturgia hordozója”, azaz egyházilag integrált, hívő személy, vagy a liturgiát csak (főünnepek, keresztelesek, első áldozás, bérmálás, esküvők, temetések, illetve más

³⁵ Vö. WOHLMUTH, 39.

³⁶ Vö. SARAH, *A csönd ereje*, 158.

³⁷ Vö. SARAH, *A csönd ereje*, 196.

³⁸ KERÉNYI, *Misztikus élmény*, 135.

³⁹ *Erről részletesebben: LEPAHIN, Ikon és ikonikusság, 70–79.*

életrajzi sarokdátumok esetében) alkalomadtán⁴⁰ „vendégként”/ „látogatóként” felkereső ember⁴¹ – sokkal jobban megnyílik a lehetősége arra, hogy egészen realiztikusan, valóságghűen megtapasztalhassa, miként Isten megérinti életét a „pillanatban”. A liturgiában a szimbólumok fátyla alatt önmagát kinyilatkoztató transzcendensnek azonban rezonáló közegre kell találnia, e nélkül csupán egy absztrakt világ. Éppen ezért mindenkinek, aki azt akarja, hogy számára a liturgia életbevágó történésé váljon, külön-külön vállalnia kell életének vertikális kalandját, különben az élmény-tapasztalatok halmozására beállított élet mókuserékből aligha tud kiszállni. El kell hagynia vallásos kiskorúságát, a vallási tudatlanság és kényelmesség zsákutcáját, ahová a szubjektum emancipációjának délibábját kergetve juttatta magát. Ezért a liturgiának nem közönségre, nézőkre és látogatókra van szüksége, hanem kereső, kérdező, kételkedő és figyelmes magatartást tanúsító résztvevőkre,⁴² akik készek belemenni az liturgiában megjelenő Istennel való kommunikációs játékába. A liturgia nem követheti a posztmodern rituálék egyoldalúságát, amelyek csupán az evilági létét problematizálják, s arra törekednek, hogy az életet itt és most befolyásolják, irányítsák, hanem lényege éppen abban áll, hogy az evilági valóságokon túlmutasson, azokat a transzcendenssel való viszonyukban felértékelje, azokat – egy bizonyos minőségi ugrást ajándékozva nekik – az üdvtörténet folyamjába pozitív elemként bevonja, abba az üdvösségi tervbe, amelyet az evilági rendben immanens módon lehetetlen megteremteni, illetve önfejűen kierőszakolni. A liturgia ünneplésében mindig a szimbólumokban feltárulkozó üdvösség megjelenítéséről van szó, mégpedig a konkrét történelemben. A liturgia a szubjektum konkrét üdvösségtapasztalatának a helye. Így a liturgia sohasem egy elvont valóság, s jóllehet mindig ugyanaz, mégis minden alkalommal más és más. Az újat Isten műveli benne, Ő adja meg minden liturgia újdonságát, innovatív erejét. Az emberi egzisztenciát érintő innováció nem lehet emberi erőlködés eredménye,

⁴⁰ Sokan ma az egyházban csupán egy vallásos szolgálatot nyújtó társadalmi szervezetet látnak (vö. KEHL, *Perspektiven*, 271).

⁴¹ Vö. HAUNERLAND, *Träger und Gäste*, 185–187; HAUNERLAND, *Participatio actiosa*, 592–594.

⁴² Vö. JEGGLE-MERZ, *Kirche*, 50–51.

hisz a liturgiában az ember olyasmit „tesz”, amit az ember valójában, alapvetően nem tehet meg.⁴³

Korunk vallásosságának belső motivációja, még akkor is, ha annak külső megnyilvánulásaival nem értünk – nem érthetünk – elgondolkoztathat bennünket: az értelem-keresés és az élmény-tapasztalat. Ha jól megfontoljuk, kortársaink valami olyan után fürkésznek, amit az egyházban is felfedezhetnek, olyas valomit keresnek, ami a liturgia tárházában bőséggel létezik. Az egyház tehát – liturgiájával egyetemben – nem nevezhető „kifutó modellnek” egy olyan világban, ahol az értelem-források kimerülőben vannak.⁴⁴ Éppen ezért az egyháznak sokkal jobban kellene tudatosítania, hogy kincsestárában az emberek vágyaira reális gyöngyszemeket tartogat. Ezeket azonban meg kell hitelesen csillogtatni. Talán pontosan ez segíthet bennünket abban, hogy értékeinket féltőbben őrizzük, s meggyőzőbben prezentáljuk. Talán pontosan ez vezet el arra, hogy liturgiánkban nemcsak elméleti, hanem gyakorlati síkon is ismét felismerjük az Isten-találkozás élmény-tapasztalatát.

⁴³ Vö. KOCH: *Menschliche und kirchliche Schönheit der Liturgie*, 107.

⁴⁴ SCHÖNBORN, *Idegen test*, 51.

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DIE SPIRITUELLE KRAFT DER GREGORIANIK

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Keywords: Gregorianik, Spiritualität, Quelle, Wort Gottes, Gebet

1. HINFÜHRUNG ZUM THEMA

Christliche Spiritualität basiert auf der Beziehung zwischen Gott und Mensch. Diese Perspektive erlaubt uns in medias res die Frage zu stellen: aus welchem Grund kann der sog. Gregorianische Choral als Quelle der Spiritualität für die heutige Zeit, für den gegenwärtigen Menschen betrachtet werden und sogar in die Zukunft weisen? Worin liegt sein unschätzbare Wert sowohl für die Kirche als auch für kirchenferne Menschen? Geht es da nicht um etwas Archaisches, was in längst vergangene Zeiten gehört? Ist die lateinische Sprache, in der der Choral gesungen wird, nicht ein unüberwindbares Hindernis, da viele Menschen kein Latein mehr im Unterricht hatten? Dazu kommt noch ein ernsthaftes musikalisches Problem, das der große französische Komponist des 20. Jh., O. Messiaen in seiner „Rede in Notre Dame“ sinngemäß so in Worte fasste, dass Gregorianik wenig gesungen und wenig geliebt wird, weil sie so schlecht gesungen wird. Wenn seine Beobachtung stimmt, wird sie verständlicherweise intuitiv abgelehnt. Was kann man aber bei ihrem Vortrag falsch machen, wenn sie einstimmig und so einfach ist, vielleicht deswegen sogar zu eintönig und langweilig klingt? Wer schon den Versuch gemacht hat, diese angeblich simple musikalische Gattung bei Gelegenheit zu singen, konnte feststellen, dass es anspruchsvoll und anstrengend ist. Unser Ohr sucht außerdem eher die ab dem ersten Jahrtausend weitgehend entwickelte Mehrstimmigkeit und genießt ihre Vielfalt in der Vokal- und Instrumentalmusik statt der auffälligen Schlichtheit des Gregorianischen Chorals, der im Unterschied zu den Kirchenliedern ohne Begleitung zu singen ist. Als Begleitinstrument und Teil dieser Entwicklung ist die Orgel aus der Kirche selbstverständlich nicht mehr wegzudenken.

Trotz dieser zu bedenkenden Argumente hat das Zweite Vaticanum in der Liturgiekonstitution *Sacrosanctum concilium*, Art. 112-117¹ über die Kirchenmusik die Gregorianik ausdrücklich als den der Römischen Kirche ureigenen Gesang definiert. Kurz nach seinem Amtsantritt hat ihn schon davor Papst Pius X. 1903 in seinem *Motu proprio Tra le Sollecitudini* zum Modell jeglicher gelungenen Kirchenmusik hingestellt. Aus welchem Grund und für welche Aspekte hält die Kirche sogar mit dieser höchsten Wertschätzung immer noch am Gregorianischen Choral fest?

Um eine mögliche Antwort auf diese Frage zu eröffnen, versuchen wir zuerst das Wesen der Gregorianik zu beschreiben, dann den daraus sich ergebenden Anspruch auf verschiedenen Ebenen. Daraus können wir schließlich ihren spirituellen Wert erschließen.

2. BERÜHRUNGSPUNKTE MIT DER GEGENWART

Zunächst eine realistische Frage zur Bestandsaufnahme: wo erklingt heute noch dieser archaische Gesang – die Wurzel der abendländischen Musik – und wie kann man ihn überhaupt kennenlernen, erleben? Bis zum Zweiten Vaticanum war der Choral in der Eucharistiefeyer beheimatet und wurde überwiegend auch gepflegt – heute hört man ihn dort eher selten, vielleicht in Kathedralen. Nach wie vor singen viele – meist benediktinisch geprägte – Ordensgemeinschaften das Stundengebet auf dieser Basis (zum Teil im Original, teilweise übernommene Melodien in Übersetzung). Vereinzelt gibt es die Möglichkeit, den Choral in Konzerten zu hören, die so zwar nicht direkt in der Liturgie erklingen, und doch unverkennbar an ihren Gehalt sowie Gestalt erinnern, wo der Choral seinen Sitz im Leben hat. Es ist vielen Zeitgenossen nicht bewusst, dass die gesungenen Teile der Priester-Gebete in der Eucharistiefeyer sowie die Akklamationen der Gemeinde alte Gregorianische Melodien sind. Dadurch gibt es eine gewisse, wenn auch unbewusste Vertrautheit der katholischen Christen mit den

¹ Art. 116 der Konstitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* handelt über die Arten der Kirchenmusik. „Die Vorrangstellung des Gregorianischen Chorals als des der römischen Liturgie eigenen Gesangs wird unterstrichen, auch wenn die Kirchen, in denen die römische Liturgie regelmäßig mit Gregorianischem Gesang gefeiert werden kann, nicht sehr zahlreich sind.“ Peter HÜNERMANN / Jürgen HILBERATH (Hgs.), *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 191.

Gregorianischen Modi, mit dieser eigenen musikalischen Welt. In der Praxis sind diese Berührungspunkte im Vergleich zur Kirchenmusik an Sonntagen sehr gering. Nur die konkrete Erfahrung kann einem den „Geschmack“ der Gregorianischen Kompositionen vermitteln, damit sie den ihnen gebührenden Stellenwert erlangen und zur Spiritualität in der eigenen Kirche werden können.

Beleuchten wir also einige Wesensmerkmale der Gregorianik, die es verständlich machen, warum sie eine echte spirituelle Quelle ist, bzw. wieder dazu werden kann.

3. AUSWAHL UND GESTALTUNG DER TEXTE

Im absoluten Mittelpunkt steht der **Text** der Gesänge, der überwiegend aus der Hl. Schrift stammt, wenn es nicht um hymnische Poesie bzw. Prosa geht. Der kompositorische Vorgang beginnt nicht mit einer Melodie, die dann nachträglich mit einem passenden Text unterlegt wird, sondern genau umgekehrt: an erster Stelle, als Ausgangspunkt gilt der Bibeltext, der von den Komponisten, die wahrscheinlich Mönche in einer (bzw. mehreren) Gemeinschaft waren, täglich über Jahre in tiefer Stille meditiert wurden. Durch weitere Stufen des Umgangs mit dem Wort Gottes – die Ruminatio und die Contemplatio – wurde der Schrifttext von ihnen immer tiefer verinnerlicht, so dass er dann zu einem hoch künstlerischen und expressiven, rhetorischen Vortrag gereift ist. Im Frühmittelalter ist das Studium der Bibel nicht nur in Gedanken geschehen, sondern man hat den Text laut gelesen, nach dem Prinzip „omne verbum sonat“. Das Wort sollte also nicht nur in den Gedanken bleiben, es sollte laut zum Klingen kommen. Durch diesen Umgang wird das Wort ganzheitlicher, leibhaftig aufgenommen. Aus dieser lauten Vortragsweise entstand die jeweils eigene Art der Rhetorik der einzelnen Texte, die ihren „Leser“ ins Herz getroffen haben. Der Text wurde im objektiven Verständnis und in persönlicher Betroffenheit gefomrt und artikuliert – in einem leib-seelisch-geistigen Vorgang. Der sog. dreifache Schriftsinn, die Bibelauslegung des Origenes war damals schon bekannt und wurde sicher auch angewendet. Die meditierten und oft durchgesprochenen Texte haben eine Klanggestalt erhalten, die der ausdrucksvollen Rhetorik entsprach. Der Choral ist demnach in erster Linie Wort-Interpretation in der gehobenen Sprache mit dem Ziel, das Wort für sich selbst besser zu verstehen, und es in der Liturgie Gott als Antwort zurückzugeben, sowie

Beispiel für die Gestaltung der **Personalpronomina** findet sich im Graduale des Psalmsonntags „Christus factus est“.³

Post lectionem II:

Grad. V.

CHRISTUS factus est pro nobis obé- di- ens

us- que ad mor- tem, mor- tem au- tem cru- cis.

¶. Propter quod De- us ex- altá- vit il- lum,

Notenbeispiel: Graduale Novum, S. 108-9

³ Notenbeispiel „Christus factus est“: in DOSTAL (eds.), *Graduale Novum*, 108-109. Das *Graduale Novum* ist das Ergebnis langjähriger Forschungsarbeit: die Restitutionsgruppe in Deutschland arbeitet mit der Synopse adiastematischer und späterer, diastematischer Handschriften und präsentierte 2011 die erste Ausgabe des Messrepertoires (Sonntage und Feste) mit restituierten Melodien aus dieser Zusammenschau im 1. Band des zweiteiligen Werkes. Tonkorrekturen betreffen in den meisten Fällen starke Strukturtöne im jeweiligen Modus. In der Fachzeitschrift *Beiträge zur Gregorianik* wurden wissenschaftlich belegte restituierte Stücke vereinzelt bereits vor dem Erscheinen des ersten vollständigen, liturgisch geordneten Bands veröffentlicht.

In Vers 8 des Philipperhymnus Kap. 2 heißt es: „Er erniedrigte sich und war gehorsam bis zum Tod (...)“ Der Komponist fügt das Pronomen „für uns“ ein: „Christus factus est obediens *pro nobis*“, das auf der Akzentsilbe *no-* mit 9 Tönen, also einem Melisma, einer aufwändigen, ausgeschmückten Melodie vertont ist. Die Einfügung des „*pro nobis*“⁴ (insgesamt 10 Töne auf *nobis*) läßt die Wichtigkeit der persönlichen Betroffenheit des Komponisten über die Kenosis Christi, des Gottessohnes erkennen. Wenn das Graduale viele Jahrhunderte nach der Entstehung der Komposition erneut Generationen von betenden Interpreten verlebendigen und zum Klingen bringen, berührt die Bewussterwerden des „*pro nobis*“ Sänger wie Zuhörer bis heute.

Schauen wir nun auch die **textliche Komprimierung** einer Neutestamentlichen Perikope aus dem Evangelium an einem konkreten Beispiel an: Die Communio „*Lutum fecit*“ lautet: „*Lutum fecit ex sputo Dominus, et linivit oculos meos: et abii, et lavi, et vidi, et credidi Deo.*“ (Joh 9,6.11.38). Aus der langen Erzählung über die Blindenheilung, die sich über 41 Verse des ganzen 9. Kapitels erstreckt, und essentielle Dialoge Jesu mit dem Blinden, seinen Eltern und den Umstehenden beinhaltet, wurden für die kurze Communio – die als Gattung in der Messe oft das gehörte Evangelium wiederholt – prägnante Stellen herausgegriffen. Es ist bemerkenswert, dass dieser einzige Satz 6 Verben aus der Perikope herausgreift, die in dieser Dichte den Text weder entstellen, noch verfälschen, sondern die Großtaten Gottes am geliebten Menschen durch Jesu Handeln in den Mittelpunkt stellen: Sinngemäß übersetzt: „Der Herr machte mit dem Speichel einen Teig, und bestrich damit meine Augen: ich ging hin, wusch mich und sah, und glaubte Gott.“⁵

⁴ Die bedeutsame melodische Floskel auf „*nobis*“ wurde in den Gradualien des V. Modus öfter verwendet, z. B. im Graduale des 4. Sonntags im Jahreskreis „*Quis sicut Dominus*“, mit dem Melisma auf dem Akzent des Wortes *Dominus*. *Ibid*, 235.

⁵ Notenbeispiel „*Lutum fecit*“: *Ibid*, 87.

Quando legitur Evangelium de caeco nato:

Comm.
VI.

L U-TUM fe-cit ex spu-to Dómi-nus, et li-ní-vit ó-cu-los
me- os: et áb-i-i, et la- vi, et vi-di, et cre-di-di De-o.

Notenbeispiel Graduale Novum, S. 87

Die ganze Kraft der Erzählung in einem Satz ist intensiviert in der Kürze der Verben. Hier wird der Sänger zum Subjekt des Handelns Jesu und kann das Evangelium ganz persönlich erleben, an sich selbst erfahren und sich heilend berühren lassen. Diese Berührung Jesu geschieht durch den Glauben, der als letztes Verb in der Communion aufscheint, im Text aber so nicht vorkommt. Der Glaube des Blindgeborenen scheint durch, im Unterschied zu den Pharisäern im Streitgespräch, die zweifelnd bleiben. Die Sinnspitze der Communion ist der Glaube an Jesus. Der Höhepunkt der Aussage ist die Antwort des Komponisten auf das verinnerlichte Bibelwort als Zeugnis und Glaubensbekenntnis, **und** es erzeugt im Sänger und im Zuhörer Vertrauen und Zuversicht, eine Gewissheit im Glauben auf den Heiland, und erleichtert einladend die eigene Antwort hinzuzufügen. Der Sänger spricht in der ersten Person und sein Glaube aktualisiert sich durch das Hier und Jetzt der gefeierten Liturgie.

Wie anfangs schon erwähnt, entsteht in der Gattung der Gregorianik die Melodieführung vom Wort ausgehend, in einem dichten Wort-Ton-Verhältnis. Es gibt jedoch auch das Phänomen der *Adaptation* einer bestehenden Melodie z. B. für ein späteres Fest, durch eine neue Textunterlegung. Dies kann am Introitus des Trinitätssonntags veranschaulicht werden, dessen Melodie vom 1. Fastensonntag

übernommen wurde,⁶ und so zugleich bis zum Dreifaltigkeitsfest einen großen theologischen Bogen bildet. Der Zusammenhang des Christusgeschehens vom Geheimnis der Versuchungserzählung bis zu Christi Verherrlichung nach seiner Auferstehung und Himmelfahrt wird so in der Fülle der Trinität verständlich.

DOMINICA PRIMA QUADRAGESIMAE

Intr.
VIII.

I
N-VO-CA BIT me, et e go exáu-di-am e- um:
e- rí- pi- am e- um, et glo-ri- fi-cá- bo e- um:
longi-tú-di-ne di-é- rum ad-implé- bo e- um. Ps. Qui

⁶ Notenbeispiel „Invocabit me“ vom 1. Fastensonntag, *Ibid*, 60 und der Introitus „Benedicta sit“ vom Dreifaltigkeitssonntag, in: DOSTAL (eds.), *Graduale novum*, 360. Die melodische Adaptation des Introitus des 1. Fastensonntags auf das Dreifaltigkeitsfest schafft in theologischer Tiefe den inhaltlichen Bogen durch die Passion Christi hindurch bis zu seiner Auferstehung bzw. Himmelfahrt, die sich im Geheimnis der Dreifaltigkeit erfüllt. Schon innerhalb des Introitus „Invocabit me“ drückt sich das Vertrauen des Beters aus, der die Zusage bekommt, erhört und verherrlicht zu werden. Den ersten Fastensonntag durchzieht im ganzen Proprium der Text von Psalm 91 über den Schutz Gottes. Der Introitus zitiert verkürzt die Verse 15–16: „Wenn er mich anruft, dann will ich ihn erhören. Ich bin bei ihm in der Not, befreie ihn und bringe ihn zu Ehren. Ich sättige ihn mit langem Leben und lasse ihn schauen mein Heil.“ Der Höhepunkt in „Invocabit me“ entfaltet sich auf der Akzentsilbe von „glorificabo“, hingegen in „Benedicta sit“ befindet sich dieser Höhepunkt auf der Nachsilbe von „confitebimur“ (-bi-). Auf diesem inhaltlich zentralen Wort dieser Tatsache entsprechend ausgeführt, sollte weniger ausgesungen werden als in der Vorlage von „glorificabo“, dem Original. Auch bei einer gelungenen Adaptation wie dieser, können solche Verschiebungen vorkommen, die ihre Vollkommenheit ein wenig trüben, jedoch durch eine bewusste Interpretation den Ausdruck des Stückes doch textgerecht zum Klingen bringen.

SANCTISSIMAE TRINITATIS

Intr.
VIII.

BENE-DI-CTA sit san-cta Trí-ni-tas, at-que indi-
ví-sa Ú-ni-tas: confi-té-bi-mur e-i, qui- a fe-

The image shows a musical score for the Sanctissimae Trinitatis. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff is labeled 'Intr. VIII.' and contains a melodic line with various notes and rests. The second staff begins with a large 'B' and contains the Latin text 'BENE-DI-CTA sit san-cta Trí-ni-tas, at-que indi-'. The third staff continues the text 'ví-sa Ú-ni-tas: confi-té-bi-mur e-i, qui- a fe-'. A red circle is drawn around a specific melodic phrase in the third staff, which corresponds to the text 'confi-té-bi-mur e-i'. The fourth staff continues the melodic line. The score is written in a traditional style with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat.

Notenbeispiel Graduale Novum, S. 60 und S. 360

Eine mehrfache Verwendung gleicher oder weitgehend ähnlicher Floskeln des melodischen Ablaufs in einer doch weitgehend originellen Art der Zusammenstellung nennt sich *Centonisation* von Typusmelodien und kommt z. B. in Gradualien oft vor. Die kurzen Floskeln haben oft eine textliche Signalfunktion, da sie im Repertoire schon bekannt sind und erfüllen dadurch eine zusätzliche Rolle.

4. RHYTHMISCHE ARTIKULATION – DYNAMISCHE BELEBUNG DES KLINGENDEN WORTES GOTTES

Nachdem wir uns der Entstehung der Textgrundlage der Gesänge gewidmet haben, wenden wir uns ihrer Interpretation zu. Streng vom Text ausgehend, können wir von einer spezifischen rhythmischen **Artikulation** sprechen, die im Vorgang von der Kontemplation bis zur durchdachten Klanggestalt eine prägende Rolle spielt. Die Aussprache des Textes behält ihre Natürlichkeit in dem Sinn, dass bei einem Wort

nicht beliebige Töne hinzugefügt werden, sondern die Eigenheit des Wortes sich im melodischen Ablauf widerspiegelt. Natürlich kann man dasselbe Wort auch in verschiedenen „Vertonungen“ finden, es wirkt jedoch nie aufgesetzt oder unnatürlich – der Sprache gemäß: Mehrere Psalmverse finden sich in verschiedenen Gattungen des Propriums, bzw. im Stundengebet (z. B. „Ave Maria“) Über die Klanggestalt eines Wortes entscheidet der Kontext und sein Stellenwert im Bedeutungsgehalt. So kann sogar das Wort „et“ oft nur mit einem Ton, an anderen Stellen aber sehr aufwändig komponiert sein etc. Eine noch kleinere Einheit im Text, die für die Ausführung immer entscheidend ist, bleibt der jeweilige **Wortakzent**, den wir schon erwähnt haben. Er steht immer im Mittelpunkt als Träger des einzelnen Wortes und wird herausgehoben, egal, welche Stellung das Wort im Satz hat. Der Akzent kann unterschiedlich zum Ausdruck kommen: mit einem gewichtigen Ton auf einer wichtigen Stufe des jeweiligen Modus, oder mit mehreren Tönen, bzw. einem langen Melisma, z. B. auf der Akzentsilbe beim Wort „*immolates*“ im Vers des Osteralleluia „*Pascha nostrum*“:⁷ mit 48 Tönen.

The image shows a musical score for the Easter Alleluia "Pascha nostrum". It consists of three staves of music with Latin lyrics underneath. The lyrics are: "A LILIU- IA. Pascha no- strum immo- la- tus est Chri- stus." The score is written in a traditional style with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. There are two red circles highlighting specific parts of the melody: one around the word "immolates" and another around the word "tus". The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and ornaments.

Notenbeispiel: Graduale Novum, S. 167

⁷ Notenbeispiel „Alleluia Pascha nostrum“: Ibid, 167.

Die besondere Verehrung Christi, der sein Leben für uns hingab, kommt nicht nur durch den Reichtum der Vielzahl der Töne zum Ausdruck, sondern auch durch die feierlich exponierte Höhe der Melodieführung, und lädt damit zur dankbaren, anbetenden Haltung ein.

Die *Artikulation* des Textes ergibt einen sehr variablen Sprachrhythmus, der in der Mehrstimmigkeit schwierig auszuführen wäre, weil dort die einzelnen Stimmen im Metrum zusammenklingen müssen. Der sog. freie Sprachrhythmus der Gregorianik wurde in den Neumen der mittelalterlichen Handschriften niedergeschrieben, die durch langjährige Forschung in ihrer jeweiligen Wertigkeit für die Ausführung der einzelnen Töne in ihrem Umfeld wiederentdeckt wurden. Aequalistisches Metrum ist also der Gregorianik nicht eigen, wenn sie auch in der näheren Vergangenheit oft so gesungen wurde – nicht nur als *cantus firmus* in mehrstimmigen Chorwerken, sondern als Folge des unwissenschaftlichen Umgangs mit dem Notenmaterial.

FAZIT

Damit kommen wir zum Anspruch an die *Aufführungspraxis*. Der Gregorianische Choral gewinnt seine Schönheit und Kraft dann, wenn die einzelnen Aspekte der richtigen Artikulation in der je eigenen rhythmischen Art präzise beachtet werden. Zusammenfassende textlich-musikalische Bögen, die der Atem durchträgt, erzeugen das lebendige Tempo der Stücke. Gottes Schönheit kann in den ausdrucksvollen Gesängen so zur Geltung kommen, und seine Herrlichkeit aufscheinen, die am Leben der Feiernden, Singenden auch Spuren hinterläßt, zur Liebe zu Gott erhebt, in die Ruhe und Stille führt, reinigt, heiligt und heilt, und zur Einheit zusammenführt. Der Gebetscharakter der Stücke ist beziehungsstiftend und schenkt Trost, Freude an Gott, die einen die eigene Tiefe bei Gott erfahren läßt.

Wenn der Sänger bzw. Zuhörer die Autorität des Wortes Gottes hörend walten läßt, entwickelt es im Klang der Gregorianik seine wohltuende Wirkung und nimmt Wohnung im Menschen. Emotionen haben durchaus Platz im Choral und widerspiegeln die Stimmungslage des Beters, die z. B. in den Psalmen von Trauer, dramatischer Bedrängnis, Bitte um Befreiung bis zum dankbaren Lob reicht.

Ordensgemeinschaften sowie Kirchenmusiker haben die Chance, aber auch die Verantwortung, diesen ältesten Schatz der Abendländischen Kirche so zu pflegen, dass er als hohe Kunst in der authentischen Schlichtheit zu universaler Spiritualität werden kann, die nicht einer traditionalistischen Richtung gehört, sondern der ganzen Kirche, mit ökumenischer Bedeutung, da die Entstehung dieser liturgischen Musik weit vor der Zeit der Reformation zurückliegt und als Spiritualität des Wortes dazu besonders geeignet ist. Wer Gregorianik hört und singt, wird von der Kraft des Wortes ergriffen und verwandelt.

Gregorianik ist in ihrer Bedeutung für die Universalkirche „zeitlos“ und unterliegt keiner „Mode“. Ähnlich wie die Ikone für die Kirche des Ostens, ist sie ein Fenster in den Himmel. Der anbetende Gebetsvortrag der Gregorianik erweckt und verstärkt die Sehnsucht, in der Gegenwart Gottes zu leben und besitzt daher die Fähigkeit zur Evangelisierung und Neu-Evangelisierung.

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V.

THEOLOGY ORCHESTRATING
THE INTERDISCIPLINARY DISCUSSION

THE CHOSEN: APOCRYPHAL GOOD NEWS FOR THE FUTURE?

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Keywords: Bible, cinema, film, *The Chosen*, apocrypha

Thirty years ago it seemed that biblical films had exhausted their formula: the golden age of biblical cinema had passed and film adaptations of the Bible no longer attracted audiences to cinemas.¹ Indeed, the ambitious series *The Bible* (1993–2002)² was made as an international television production, and no biblical film provoked discussions in the 1990s. However, *The Passion of the Christ* (dir. Mel Gibson, 2004) has generated a new wave of interest in the Bible and especially in the figure of Jesus Christ in the cinema. The international success of the Gibson's film revived the biblical spectacle, and it is interesting to observe that the Bible continues to play a role also in horror films and „one of the growing arenas for biblical stories in film appears to be in comedies (e.g., *Bruce Almighty*, 2003; *Evan Almighty*, 2007; *The Ten*, 2007, with others in production)”.³

In a book about film adaptations of the Gospels read as contemporary audiovisual apocrypha I identified about 70 films produced between 2001 and 2018.⁴ Since then, new films have been made, and more are expected: for many years now, Mel Gibson's film to be a sequel to *The Passion of the Christ* has been announced,

¹ BABINGTON / EVANS, *Biblical epics*, 7–8.

² The series of 21 films covers selected stories of the Bible, from the creation of the world (*Genesis: La creazione e il diluvio*, dir. Ermanno Olmi, 1994) to the Revelation of St John (*San Giovanni: L'Apocalisse*, dir. Raffaele Mertes, 2002). Cf. KRESS / LULEY (eds.), *Die Bibel*; ZAHNER (ed.), *Die Bibel: Das Alte Testament - die Filme: Genesis - Die Schöpfung, Abraham, Jakob, Josef*; ZAHNER (ed.), *Die Bibel: Das Alte Testament - die Filme: Moses*.

³ WALSH, *Bible Movies*, 225.

⁴ LIS, *To nie jest Jezus*, 125–127.

Terrence Malick has delayed the release of his christological film *The Way of the Wind* (initially planned in 2020) where the role of Jesus would be played by the Hungarian actor Géza Röhrig, and Martin Scorsese, director of the controversial *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988) declared in May 2023 his desire to direct a new film on Jesus (*A Life of Jesus*).

Jesus of Nazareth has been present on screens for more than 125 years in hundreds of films produced in diverse cultural and religious contexts.⁵ The popularity of the Gospel has not diminished in spite of increasing secularisation: cinema, television and Internet films are still being made, presenting different interpretations of the Gospel and its main protagonist, sometimes provoking heated disputes (e.g. *The Last Temptation of Christ* or *The Da Vinci Code*, dir. Ron Howard, 2006). The filmmakers, creating a kind of audiovisual apocrypha, become theologians in their own way, albeit without academic degrees (or at least studies) in theology. With a certain sense of humour, Conrad Ostwalt notes that among his students, a millenarian horror film obscured the understanding of the Book of Revelation: „It soon became apparent that more of the class had seen the movie than had read Revelation, and much of what the students knew about the Christian Apocalypse had been informed more by *The Seventh Sign* than their reading of the Bible.”⁶

Since these new audiovisual *loci theologici* appear in competition with established sources of teaching in the Church, therefore theologians cannot be indifferent to films that create ideas about the Gospel, about Jesus Christ and his teaching.

I. AN INNOVATIVE SERIES: *THE CHOSEN*

For the past few years, an American film project entitled *The Chosen*, directed by Dallas Jenkins, has become popular, running from 2019.⁷ The series, which is an independent production of Angel Studios, Out of Order Studios and The Chosen

⁵ Cf. MALONE, *Screen Jesus*; VIGANÒ, *Gesù e la macchina da presa*.

⁶ OSTWALT, *Teaching Religion and Film*, 35. *The Seventh Sign* (dir. Carl Schultz, 1988) is an apocalyptic horror film, its title and plot reference the seven seals in the Book of Revelation.

⁷ The first 20-minute part, *The Shepherd*, a look at the birth of Jesus Christ through the eyes of shepherds in Bethlehem, was already produced in 2017, before *The Chosen* series was conceived.

Texas,⁸ is being developed as a crowdfunding project: 3 complete seasons of 8 episodes each are available (2019; 2021; 2022), and first films of season 4 premiered in February 2024. The entire project is expected to span 7 seasons.

The scale of the project, the first-ever multi-season TV show about the life of Jesus and His disciples, shows that we are dealing with the most extensive film project, initially broadcast online, inspired by the Gospels. The international television series *The Bible* (1993–2002) consisted of 21 episodes (including five based on the New Testament: *Jesus*, dir. Roger Young, 1999; *Saint Paul*, dir. Roger Young, 2000; *The Apocalypse*, dir. Raffaele Mertes, 2002), Franco Zeffirelli's monumental *Jesus of Nazareth* (1977) in its full TV version lasted 390 minutes, while each season of *The Chosen* lasts about 8-9 hours, and as many as 7 seasons are planned, screening time is almost 60 hours!

What is new is the way in which the film is distributed: conceived as a socially-funded venture, it was initially available online (as a free app for mobile devices and on a dedicated website),⁹ but eventually went into theatrical and television distribution, as well as on DVD and blu-ray discs.

If we could indicate reasons for making a religious film, these four seem to be the most popular: “the use of (1) religion to interpret movies, (2) movies to critique religion, (3) movies to promote religion, and (4) movies to expose cultural values.”¹⁰ The official website of the series' producer encourages people to watch as follows: „*The Chosen* is a groundbreaking historical drama based on the life of Jesus, seen through the eyes of those who knew him,”¹¹ while the Polish distributor's website adds information that the film has been translated into 62 languages, has had 442 million views, and that the film maintains a ranking in the top 50 apps in the 'entertainment' category of iOS and Android.¹²

⁸ Cf. https://www.imdb.com/title/tt9471404/companycredits/?ref_=tt_dt_co.

⁹ Cf. <https://watch.thechosen.tv/#carousels>.

¹⁰ BLIZEK / DESMARAIS, *What We Are Teaching*, 17.

¹¹ Cf. <https://thechosen.tv/en-us>.

¹² Cf. <https://thechosen.pl/>. These declared numbers remain unchanged since summer 2023.

But what does it mean that this series about the life of Jesus allows us to see Him „through the eyes of those who knew Him”?

2. PROTAGONISTS OF THE *THE CHOSEN* SERIES AND ITS INEVITABLE APOCRYPHALISM

Protagonists of the series are characters we know from the Gospels: they are “the chosen”. From the first episode of the series, characters familiar from the Bible come to the fore: Mary Magdalene (Elizabeth Tabish), Nicodemus (Erick Avari), Matthew (Paras Patel), Peter (Shahar Isaac) and Andrew (Noah James), Jesus (Jonathan Roumie)... but what do we know about them from the Scriptures? Of course, as in previous Jesus films, there are characters created for the purposes of the narrative: these include Simon Peter’s wife and the Roman officer Quintus (Brandon Potter), or quite invented ones, such as Ramah, a wine producer (Yasmine Al-Bustami), who felt in love with Thomas (Joey Vahedi).

One of the main protagonists of the series is Matthew: but what do we really know about this figure? According to the first canonical Gospel, Matthew was called by Jesus while working as a tax collector (Matt 9:9–13), but the parallel passages give Levi as the tax collector’s name (Mark 2:13–17; Luke 5:27–32). Matthew (not Levi) is listed among the twelve disciples of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels (not in John) and Acts (Matt 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). Probably Matthew and Levi are the same person (with two names?), and Frank Dicken explains, that: “1) Matthew and Levi are the same person, 2) Matthew’s name was changed to Levi, 3) Levi’s name was changed to Matthew, 4) it was common in antiquity for people to have two names, 5) the name «Matthew» is chosen for its symbolic significance as it is related semantically to the term for «learner, disciple» (μαθητής), and 6) they are two different people and the stories have been conflated by the Gospel authors.”¹³

The information about Matthew in the Scriptures is very residual, and any information about the apostle’s missionary activity and martyrdom is later and

¹³ DICKEN, *Matthew*, 168–169.

difficult to verify.¹⁴ For the purposes of the film, the character therefore has to be constructed from fragmented pieces of information, leading to significant apocryphalism.

Matthew, the tax collector and evangelist, is a figure who has long attracted the interest of artists: who is not familiar with the scene of the vocation imagined over 400 years ago by Caravaggio in the Contarelli Chapel in the Roman church San Luigi dei Francesi? There are more Baroque paintings dealing with this theme: one need only mention Michaelina and Charles Wautier, Michael Willmann or Giovanni Lanfranco works.

Matthew, the tax collector, also has his place in cinema: the scene of the tax collector's vocation can be found in *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (dir. George Stevens, 1965), *Il Messia* (dir. Roberto Rossellini, 1975), *Jesus of Nazareth* (dir. Franco Zeffirelli, 1977), among others. The vocation of the disciples was interestingly shown by Denys Arcand in *Jesus of Montreal* (1989), a contemporary passion story. In contrast, this episode is omitted in, among others, *King of Kings* (dir. Nicholas Ray, 1962), where the calling of the apostles is not shown, but only recounted in the report of a Roman officer; in *Il vangelo secondo Matteo* (dir. Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1964) Jesus selects the apostles by saying their names one by one; there is no calling in the musical film *Godspell* (dir. David Greene, 1973), nor in the television film *Jesus* (dir. Roger Young, 1999). The absence of the scene of the calling of the disciples in films focusing on passion events is to be expected (Norman Jewison's *Jesus Christ Superstar*, 1973; Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ*, 1988; Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, 2004).

In *Il Messia*, a film rejecting the grand epic style and spectacularity, Jesus comes to the square where the grain is brought and measured: the tax collector is watching. While the apostles express their disapproval of the dishonesty of the collectors, betraying their own people, Jesus, who is listened to by the Pharisees, teaches about the need for forgiveness and mercy. He rises and approaches Matthew with three disciples: to his greeting ("Welcome") he replies "Follow me". Matthew, surprised, asks: "What did

¹⁴ Cf. DEINES, *Matthew*, 169–175.

you say?” Smiling, Jesus repeats: “Follow me, come with us.” The answer is immediate: “Yes. But, listen, the meal is ready. If you and your friends want to accept the invitation.” The next sequence takes place during the meal in front of the tax collector’s house, where the Pharisees comment on Jesus’ behaviour.

Zeffirelli in *Jesus of Nazareth* expands the Matthew/Levi tax collector episode to over 15 minutes. It is preceded by a scene of a miraculous catch of fish on the Sea of Galilee: Matthew, portrayed at the tax-collector’s point as a greedy man, learns of Simon Peter’s unexpected good fortune, so he goes to him to claim his outstanding tax dues. In the courtyard of Peter’s house, dozens of people are listening to Jesus teaching about the Kingdom of Heaven. The tax collector entering the house hears hostile comments (“Tax collectors cannot even enter the synagogue”) and is met with a violent reaction from Peter, but Jesus asks the tax collector’s name and adds “Today I want to dine with you”. This desire to visit Matthew creates a crisis in Peter; he does not want to accompany Jesus. In the evening, encouraged by the participants at the feast (outlined extremely colourfully), he begins to tell the parable of the prodigal son, his departure, his return and reception by his overjoyed father with the protest of his brother, who had always been at his father’s side. Matthew and Peter, who nevertheless came there, understand that this parable is addressed to them. In this sequence Zeffirelli introduces the parable from Luke (15,11-32).

Unlike films reconstructing the ancient world of the Gospels, Arcand’s *Jesus of Montreal* is set in 1980s Montreal: Daniel, an unemployed actor, is commissioned by the priest of the local shrine to prepare a revamped Passion play. In search of an actor for the show, Daniel arrives at the studio where Martin is recording the dubbing of a pornographic film. As Daniel and Martin leave the studio after the recording, on the stairs Martin asks: „When do you want to start? – Immediately.” The decision is immediate: „Let’s go then.” When asked by a puzzled Constance, “After all, you have to finish,” he replies, „They can manage without me.”

The Canadian film does not quote the words of the Gospels in this sequence; the calling scene lacks an invitation of Daniel/Jesus, although there is Martin’s response: he immediately agrees and abandons his job, reminiscent of Matthew’s response when called by Jesus. There is a parallelism on a symbolic level between Matt 9:9 and Martin’s decision: he is engaged in a despised job (porn film), and when

Daniel comes, Martin leaves his occupation and immediately follows him to become one of the disciples. In Palestine, tax collectors were despised, which is not clear to the modern reader (or viewer): negative feelings are rather aroused by the vulgarity of the dubbing scene.¹⁵

The series *The Chosen* develops the character of Matthew the most: a tax collector in Capernaum employed by the Romans is treated with contempt by the Jews; in the 1st episode (*I Have Called You by Name*, 2019, S1-E1) the film portrays Matthew, played by Paras Patel, an American actor of Indian descent, as a gifted accountant who nevertheless has difficulty in relating to people. He was a bright, gifted child, and as a teenager began working for the Romans, causing his family to become estranged. Matthew is conflicted with both his father and the fishermen, Simon and Andrew, who are threatened with bankruptcy due to unpaid taxes. An extraordinary catch of fish - a miracle performed by Jesus - makes it possible to repay the debt. Matthew witnesses the healing of a paralytic; at Jesus' invitation, he leaves his office as a tax collector to become one of the disciples. In the background, however, the conflict with Peter returns for quite a long time. It is not until the 2nd episode of the season 4 (2024) that Matthew and Peter's reconciliation takes place: Peter asks Jesus how many times he should forgive his brother, and Matthew realises that he has never apologised to Peter for what he did against him as a tax collector.

In contrast to earlier films, *The Chosen* develops a psychological portrait of Matthew, revealing his history from childhood, outlining the inevitable conflicts within the variegated circle of Jesus' disciples, and finally suggesting the method of both Jesus' preparation of his teaching and Matthew's editing of the gospel manuscript. The authors of the film try to imagine Matthew as an evangelist aware of his role: in his notebook he regularly records the events and words of Jesus, with him he prepares the content of the Sermon on the Mount! Already after the martyrdom of James, when John notes reminiscences of Jesus' disciples, his Mother recalls that Matthew also prepares his memoirs (*Thunder*, 2021, S2-E1).

¹⁵ Another portrayals of Matthew in films are described by BURNETTE-BLETSCH, *Matthew*, 180–182.

Thus a complex film character is created from minimal information contained in the Gospels. Constructing the figure of Matthew in this way is also a novelty in films: until now, he was only a background character. Of the protagonists known from the Gospels, only Mary, Mary of Magdala, Peter, Thomas and Judas had “their” films: “The disciples/apostles appear as a group in every film. Their call, even if it is just a listing of the apostolic band, and their presence at resurrection appearances configure them as Jesus’ successors. John, Thomas, and Peter appear often, but the followers with the most screen focus are Judas, Mary Magdalene, and the Virgin Mary.”¹⁶

Does all this mean that there is inevitably a distortion in films that involves showing content that is not in the Gospels? There are such films too: *The da Vinci Code* does indeed misrepresent historical reality.

None of the Gospels is a ready-made film script: they lack description of scenes, description of characters, including their appearance. Recognising that, we could conclude that virtually every biblical film must be apocryphal. A simple comparison of the content of the film and the biblical text would confirm such conclusions: “Every Jesus biopic contains scenes and/or dialogue that are not found in their primary sources, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Most invent speeches for Jesus, from everyday interactions with his mother and disciples, to cryptic sayings and pious discourses. [...] While some films consult the works of ancient historians such as Josephus Flavius, many draw heavily upon works of legend, liturgy and imagination.”¹⁷

The variety of images of Jesus in culture, their inconsistency and the appropriation of this figure by different groups and circles is nothing new: Jaroslav Pelikan shows the impact of Jesus not only on religious, but also on cultural, social, political, and economic history of humanity – and how the figure of Jesus has been transformed, used or appropriated for various purposes, both cultural and political¹⁸.

¹⁶ WALSH, *Paul and the Early Church, 500–501*.

¹⁷ REINHARTZ, *Jesus Movies, 212*.

¹⁸ PELIKAN, *Jesus through the centuries*.

The young Church, in deciding to establish a New Testament canon and selecting the 4 canonical Gospels, considered that the other texts did not belong to this canon, did not constitute texts on which the teaching of the Gospel should be based. Apocryphal texts, though attractive, nevertheless use elaborate fantasies. Today the function of apocrypha, widespread in the audiovisual world, is performed by films, which, especially for viewers unfamiliar with the source text of the Gospel, become an alternative – or perhaps the unique? – version of the Gospel. Film adaptations of the Scriptures will always be marked by the personal approach of their authors, and perhaps films express more their personality and beliefs than the actual protagonist of the Gospel?

3. BETWEEN ORAL AND AUDIOVISUAL GOSPEL

Let us turn to a document published in 1964 by the Pontifical Biblical Commission: the *Instruction on the Historicity of the Gospels* „*Sancta Mater Ecclesia*” draws attention to 3 stages in the creation of the Gospels. The first is the teaching of Jesus, witnessed by the chosen disciples; the second stage is the proclamation of Jesus’ teaching, above all his death and Resurrection, by the disciples; the third stage is the editing of the Gospel books with a precise goal:

“From the results of the new investigations it is apparent that the doctrine and the life of Jesus were not simply reported for the sole purpose of being remembered, but were «preached» so as to offer the Church a basis of faith and of morals. The interpreter (then), by tirelessly scrutinizing the testimony of the Evangelists, will be able to illustrate more profoundly the perennial theological value of the Gospels and bring out clearly how necessary and important the Church’s interpretation is.”¹⁹

¹⁹ “Dai nuovi studi risulta che la vita e l’insegnamento di Gesù non furono semplicemente riferiti col solo fine di conservare il ricordo, ma «predicati» in modo da offrire alla Chiesa la base della fede e dei costumi; perciò l’esegeta scrutando diligentemente le testimonianze degli evangelisti sarà in grado di illustrare con maggior penetrazione il perenne valore teologico dei vangeli, e di porre in piena luce di quale necessità e di quale importanza sia l’interpretazione della Chiesa.” in: PONTIFICIA COMMISSIONE BIBLICA, *La verità storica dei Vangeli*.

The instruction leaves no doubt: the Church-approved Gospels, edited as we know them, are not a transcription of the entire teaching of Jesus, but a final work produced at the third stage. At the editing stage, the evangelists made choices about which events and words of Jesus to recount and in what order to present them. This also means which ones to omit: isn't this what the final sentence of John's Gospel says, "Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written" (Jn 21:25, NIV)?

It seems that now the films are new – a 4th? – stage of creating the Gospels, and this remark corresponds to the declaration expressed by the series authors: „*The Chosen* is based on the true stories of the gospels of Jesus Christ. Some locations and timelines have been combined and condensed. Backstories and some characters or dialogue have been added. However, all biblical and historical context and any artistic imagination are designed to support the truth and intention of the Scriptures. Viewers are encouraged to read gospels.”²⁰ In this way, the intention of the filmmakers is not only to continue the earlier tradition of religious films, but also to create new audiovisual adaptations of the Gospels: “One of the most popular interests in religion and film is the use of movies to encourage people to be better practitioners of their particular faith.”²¹

I would venture the thesis that the perspective of the Pontifical Biblical Commission makes it possible to look at the films, including *The Chosen*, as another stage in the editing and transmission of the Gospels: their authors, starting from the established canonical text of the biblical book, attempt to raise questions about what was left out at the editing stage of the Gospels. It is almost an archaeological work: past layers of content have to be uncovered, reconstructed, going back to stage one, the teaching of Jesus.

²⁰ *Opening credits of the 1st episode of The Chosen.*

²¹ *BLIZEK / DESMARAIS, What We Are Teaching, 24.*

4. CONCLUSION

The advertisement for *The Chosen* series emphasises that the film “allows us to see Him through the eyes of those who knew Him”. This is a problematic statement as, under 20 centuries, we are not given a glimpse into the memories and gazes of Jesus’ disciples. Rather, in the series, we see them from the perspective of the series authors’ imagination.

However, film is a popular medium: arguably more people will watch the series than read the Gospel. This may have catechetical implications: the audiovisual medium is, after all, more attractive than an ancient printed book. Even if there is no *volvatur*, i.e. an ecclesiastical licence to make films, or *videatur*, to watch them, analogous to an *imprimatur*, we need to reflect on the theological dimension of cinema, which also shapes the audience’s imagination and religious knowledge.

Theologians’ response should be ecumenical and interdisciplinary: joint research efforts should be made in the areas of film studies, biblical studies, dogmatic and fundamental theology, and catechetical studies. The questions raised by films also lead to the need for a renewed responsibility for dialogue between the Church and the world of culture and art, too often neglected. After all, for decades we have not had a major statement from the *Magisterium* of the Church relating exclusively to film: the last one was Message of John Paul II for the 29th World Communications Day “Cinema: Communicator of Culture and of Values” published in 1995²², in the year of the cinema centenary, and the list of “Some important films” published by the Pontifical Council for Social Communications at the time, which contains 45 films divided equally into three categories – religion, values and art²³. Almost 30 years have passed since then.

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²² POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Message for the 29th World Communications Day*.

²³ ZWICK, *Das Kino im Dienst der Religion*.

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LIBRARIES OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES: FUTURE PERSPECTIVES OF DUSTY WITNESSES TO THE CULTURE AND SPIRITUALITY

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Keywords: libraries, religious communities, cultural heritage, culture reading, spirituality

I. INTRODUCTION

In Croatia there are 54 women's religious communities/provinces (36 apostolic and 18 cloistered) and 23 men's religious communities/provinces (21 apostolic and 2 monastic). In total, there are 77 religious communities/provinces. There are 2,449 women religious and 874 men religious who live in about 450 local communities/cloisters.¹

There are around 9,700 registered libraries in Croatia. Libraries of religious communities would belong to private special libraries but most of them are not registered.²

In Croatia, a very limited amount of research on libraries/collections of religious communities has been carried out so far. There are some publications at the level of individual religious communities,³ but there is not any extensive research which would include all communities.

The reason for such situation could be founded in consequences rooted in communist regime. The regime implicated great distrust of religious communities

¹ Cf. *Statistički podatci za 2022*, https://www.redovnistvo.hr/images/uploads/statistika_2022.pdf.

² Cf. *Upisnik knjižnica u Republici Hrvatskoj*, <http://upisnik.nsk.hr/upisnik-knjiznica>.

³ For example: *DUJMOVIĆ, Knjižnica benediktinskog samostana sv. Nikole u Trogiru*.

in government and all public institutions, including the National and University Library in Zagreb.

According to their primary aims – religious, pastoral, cultural – libraries of religious communities should be field of great interest⁴ and that's why comprehensive research is necessary.

2. METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out by the Croatian Conference of Religious in cooperation with the National and University Library in Zagreb. The goal of the research was to collect relevant data (number and distribution of libraries/collections, period of foundation, scope, type, organization and use of library holdings) on libraries/collections owned by religious communities. The purpose of the research was to consider the possibilities and strategies for the potentially subsequent creation of a database of the library heritage of religious communities in order to improve their mission.

The request for participation and the questionnaire were sent via email to superiors of 77 religious communities in Croatia. Approximately 50%, precisely 39 religious communities agreed to participate in the research: 23 apostolic women's communities (Table 1), 6 women's cloister monasteries (Table 2) and 10 men's communities (Table 3).

⁴ *Ecclesiastical Libraries and their Role in the Mission of the Church*,
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_commissions/pcchc/documents/rc_com_pcchc_19940319_biblioteche-ecclesiastiche_en.html.

Table 1. Local Communities of Apostolic Women’s Religious Communities That Participated in Research

Apostolic Women’s Religious Communities	Number of Local
Daughters of Divine Charity	1
Daughters of Mercy	10
Sisters of Mary of the Miraculous Medal	3
Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross	11
Sisters of Merciful Jesus	1
Sisters of the Queen of the World	1
Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul (2 Provinces)	2
Little Sisters of Jesus	1
Sacred Heart Sisters	5
Servants of Little Jesus (2 Provinces)	2
School Sisters of St. Francis of Christ the King (2 Provinces)	3
Carmelite Sisters of the Divine Heart of Jesus	4
Adorers of the Blood of Christ	1
Ursulines of the Roman Union	1
Dominican Sisters	2
Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Assisi	1
Franciscan Sisters of Immaculate Conception in Dubrovnik	3
Daughters of Mary Help of Christians	1
Handmaids of Charity	1
Handmaids of Christ	1
Total	55

The most represented in the research were Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross (11 questionnaires, for 11 local communities) and Daughters of Mercy (10 questionnaires, for 10 local communities).

Table 2. Women’s Cloister Monasteries That Participated in Research

Women’s Cloister Monasteries	Number of Monasteries
Benedictine Sisters – Rab	1
Benedictine Sisters – Trogir	1
Poor Sisters of St. Clare – Požega	1
Carmelite Sisters – Brezovica	1
Carmelite Sisters – Marija Bistrica	1
Carmelite Sisters – Breznica Đakovačka	1
Total	6

Women’s Cloister Monasteries provided 6 questionnaires in total.

Table 3. Local Communities of Men’s Religious Communities That Participated in Research

Apostolic Men’s Religious Communities	Number of Local Communities That Participated in Research
Dominicans	3
Jesuits	1
Franciscans – OFM (2 provinces)	26
Franciscans – TOR	10
Franciscans – OFMConv	1
Salesians	3
Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus	1
Sons of the Immaculate Conception	1
Missionaries of Mary	1
Total	47

Among the male religious communities, the most represented were two Croatian Franciscan Provinces that supplied data on 26 libraries. Women’s communities supplied 55, men’s communities 47, and cloister monasteries 6 filled questionnaires. It is 108 local communities in total.

The research was conducted by a survey containing 19 questions spread out on 5 pages in the period between 22 March 2021 (when the questionnaire was sent to superiors of religious communities) and 18 May 2021 (when the last filled questionnaire came). Superiors sent data by e-mail.

3. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

Results of a survey conducted using questionnaire are presented into 2 points: general facts about libraries/collections of religious communities and use of library holdings.

3.1. General facts about libraries/collections of religious communities

General facts about libraries/collections of religious communities point out: number and distribution of libraries/collections, period of libraries' establishment, scope, script, fields, type and organization of library holdings.

a) Number and distribution of libraries/collections

The survey results show that each convent has its own library or at least a library collection. Provinces of apostolic women's religious communities, whose administrative office is located in Croatia, have a provincial/central library, while their local communities have library collections. Each convent of apostolic men's religious communities, whose administrative office is located in Croatia, has its own independent library. Very often, members of religious communities also have personal collections of books and journals.

b) Period of libraries' establishment

Regarding the period of libraries' establishment, Tables 4–6 represent the year/century in which religious community was founded or came to Croatia, but it also represents the year/century in which the library holdings started to accumulate.

Table 4. Year of Foundation or Coming of Apostolic Women's Religious Communities to Croatia

Apostolic Women's Religious Communities	Year of Foundation or Coming to Croatia
Dominican Sisters ⁵	13 th c.
Ursulines of the Roman Union ⁶	1703
Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul ⁷	1845
Handmaids of Charity ⁸	1853
Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross ⁹	1868
Sacred Heart Sisters ¹⁰	1899
School Sisters of St. Francis of Christ the King ¹¹	1904
Servants of Little Jesus ¹²	1905
Carmelite Sisters of the Divine Heart of Jesus ¹³	1917
Daughters of Mercy ¹⁴	1920
Daughters of Divine Charity ¹⁵	1922
Franciscan Sisters of Immaculate Conception in Dubrovnik ¹⁶	1925

⁵ Cf. ŠANJEK, *Redovništvo u Hrvatskoj*, 93.

⁶ Cf. SVALINA / ĐURAN (eds.), *Hrvatske uršulinke povodom 275. godišnjice uršulinskog samostana u Varaždinu*, 40.

⁷ Cf. VRAČIĆ / KOVAČIĆ, *Sestre milosrdnice sv. Vinka Paulskoga s kućom maticom u Zagrebu (1845–1995)*, I, 38.

⁸ Cf. ŠANJEK, *Redovništvo u Hrvatskoj*, 94.

⁹ Cf. RADIČEVIĆ, *Milosrdne sestre sv. Križa Hrvatske provincije. O 150. obljetnici dolaska u Đakovo (1868–2018)*, 22.

¹⁰ Cf. ŠPEHAR, *Riječ vrhovne glavarice*, 13.

¹¹ Cf. NAZOR, *Lovretske sestre*, 31.

¹² Cf. LUČIĆ et al., *Vez ljubavi u tkanju jedne povijesti*, 108.

¹³ Cf. ZOVKIĆ, *100 godina sestara Karmelićanki Božanskog Srca Isusova u Hrvatskoj*, 70.

¹⁴ Cf. PARLOV (ur.), *Marija Propetog Isusa Petković*, 156.

¹⁵ Cf. CARATAN / MUTIĆ, *Provincija Božje Providnosti Kćeri Božje ljubavi 1882–1982*, 146.

¹⁶ Cf. *Franjevke od Bezgrješnog Začea iz Dubrovnika*, https://www.redovnistvo.hr/redovi-i-druzbe/instituti/franjevke_od_bezgrjeshnog_zachea_iz_dubrovnika.

Sisters of Mary of the Miraculous Medal ¹⁷	1926
Adorers of the Blood of Christ ¹⁸	1933
Daughters of Mary Help of Christians ¹⁹	1940
Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Assisi ²⁰	1960
Sisters of the Queen of the World ²¹	1963
Little Sisters of Jesus ²²	1969
Handmaids of Christ ²³	1977
Sisters of Merciful Jesus ²⁴	1999

Apostolic Women's Religious Communities came to Croatia in the period between the 13th century when the Dominican sisters came to Croatia and the 20th century - or 1999, the year in which Sisters of Merciful Jesus came (Table 4). Benedictines monasteries are the oldest one in Croatia. Benedictines came to Croatia in the 11th century (Table 5).

¹⁷ Cf. *Povijest Družbe*, <https://marijine-sestre-os.hr/o-nama/povijest-druzbe/>.

¹⁸ Cf. ŠUTIĆ / KEZIĆ, *S povjerenjem u Krv Jaganjčevu*, 139.

¹⁹ Cf. *Povijest*, <https://www.kmp.hr/povijest/>.

²⁰ Cf. *Franjevke misionarke iz Asiza*, https://www.redovnistvo.hr/redovi-i-druzbe/instituti/franjevke_misionarke_iz_asiza.

²¹ Cf. MARINOVIĆ, *Povijest Družbe sestara Kraljice svijeta (1963–2013)*, 49.

²² Cf. *Isusove male sestre*, https://www.redovnistvo.hr/redovi-i-druzbe/instituti/isusove_male_sestre

²³ Cf. TOLIĆ (ed.), *Služavke Kristove 1972–1982*, 113.

²⁴ Cf. *Sestre Milosrdnog Isusa*, https://www.redovnistvo.hr/redovi-i-druzbe/instituti/sestre_milosrdnog_isusa

Table 5. Year of Foundation or Coming of Women's Cloister Monasteries to Croatia

Women's Cloister Monasteries	Year of Foundation or Coming to Croatia
Benedictine Sisters – Rab ²⁵	11 th c.
Benedictine Sisters – Trogir ²⁶	11 th c.
Carmelite Sisters – Brezovica ²⁷	1939
Carmelite Sisters – Breznica Đakovačka ²⁸	1988
Carmelite Sisters – Marija Bistrica ²⁹	1994
Poor Sisters of St. Clare – Požega ³⁰	2000

²⁵ Cf. PALAC, *Djelovanje ženskih crkvenih redova na razvoj hrvatskog školstva*, 86.

²⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*

²⁷ Cf. *Stepinčev Karmel – povijest Karmela u Brezovici*, <https://brezovica.karmel.hr/povijest-karmela-u-brezovici/>.

²⁸ Cf. *Breznica Đakovačka*, <https://karmel-breznica.hr/o-nama/breznica-djakovacka/>

²⁹ Cf. *Kronika Samostana Majke Božje Bistričke i blaženog Alojzija Stepinca, 17. studenoga 1993.*, in: *Arhiv Karmeličanki u Mariji Bistrici*.

³⁰ Cf. *Osnivanje Samostana sv. Klare u Požegi*, in: *Dopis od poglavarice Samostana sv. Klare u Požegi (elektronička pošta, 2023 Aug 22)*.

Table 6. Year of Foundation or Coming of Apostolic Men’s Religious Communities to Croatia

Apostolic Men’s Religious Communities	Year of Foundation or Coming to Croatia
Dominicans ³¹	13 th c.
Franciscans – OFM ³²	13 th c.
Franciscans – OFMConv ³³	13 th c.
Franciscans – TOR ³⁴	13 th c.
Jesuits ³⁵	16 th c.
Salesians ³⁶	1913
Missionaries of Mary ³⁷	1976
Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus ³⁸	1985
Sons of the Immaculate Conception ³⁹	2010

³¹ Cf. *Povijest Reda u Hrvatskoj*, <https://www.dominikanci.hr/tko-smo/povijest-reda/povijest-dominikanskog-reda-u-hrvatskoj-1>.

³² Cf. *PATAFTA, Povijest provincije*, <https://ofm.hr/povijest-provincije/>.

³³ Cf. *Ibid.*

³⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*

³⁵ Cf. *Družba Isusova u Hrvata*, <https://www.isusovci.hr/nasa-provincija/>.

³⁶ Cf. *Kako smo nastali*, <https://donbosco.hr/>.

³⁷ Cf. *Monfortanci – Družba Marijina*, https://www.redovnistvo.hr/redovi-i-druzbe/instituti/misionari_monfortanci_druzba_marijina_smm.

³⁸ Cf. *Povijest Reda u Hrvatskoj*, <https://dehonijanci.hr/povijest-reda-u-hrvatskoj/>.

³⁹ Cf. *Sinovi Bezgrješnog Začeca*, https://www.redovnistvo.hr/redovi-i-druzbe/instituti/sinovi_bezgrjeshnog_zachea_cfic/.

In context of men's religious communities in Croatia, one could notice that Dominicans and Franciscans came to Croatia in the 13th century. Many incunabula, old and rare books are stored in their libraries.⁴⁰

c) Library holdings: scope, script, fields

Library collections hold from 500 to 50,000 volumes. Private collections of some members hold from 50 to more than 500 volumes. Religious men and women who are engaged in pastoral or catechetical activities or work at school, have more volumes in their private collections.

Volumes are written in different scripts: Latin, Cyrillic, Gothic, Glagolitic, Bosnian and also in different languages. Most of the library holdings belong to the field of theology, especially spirituality, while a considerable number of books belong to the fields of history and literature.

d) Library holdings: type and organization

The libraries material ranges from incunabula to recently printed materials. In general, online public catalogues are not available. Only a few religious communities use accession registers and card catalogues.

Only one women's community answered positively to the question regarding professional librarians. Unfortunately, local communities rarely have a person who would be responsible for library collections in local communities. In provincial/central libraries, there is a person who takes care of the library's holdings, but that person is usually not an expert.

In religious communities, there is a lack of superiors' recommendations regarding libraries/collections, which means that there is no plan for the acquisition of books or their circulation between the central/provincial library and the local communities.

Religious communities cannot take the necessary steps in the matters of the library holdings' digitisation or obtaining cultural heritage status, because that represents a huge bureaucratic issue and requires a lot of time and many people to work on it.

⁴⁰ Cf. LOKMER, *Franjevačke knjižnice – riznice nacionalne kulturne baštine*, 9.; 26.

The place – along with the furniture, where the holdings are stored is not always quite appropriate. The material conditions for the protection against humidity, fire and robbery are not fully met.

3.2 Use of library holdings

Results regarding use of library holdings are focused on use in community, personal respondents use, encouraging community members to use library holdings, purpose of a community's library/collection and suggestions or comments regarding library/collection.

a) Use of library holdings in community

In general, libraries of religious communities are opened for everybody, but there are not many interested persons. So library holdings are mostly used by women and men religious. Depending on the number of community members, library holdings are used from under 50 to more than 850 times per year. In average, each member uses library holding 10 times a year. There are members who do it more often, but there are also members who do not use library holdings at all. It cannot be presumed that they do not read; they may have their own books. Some respondents claim that members of religious communities do not read as much as they should, while others claim that they read a lot: "Even before a book reaches a library, it has already been read by numerous members of that religious community."

b) Personal use of library holdings

In the questionnaire, there were 4 personal questions. The first question was: "How often do you use library holdings and to what end?" The vast majority answered that they use library holdings very often for the purposes of spirituality development and permanent religious formation. Sometimes, the holdings are used to acquire professional and general knowledge or to enrich a person's vocabulary. Only few respondents declared that they read books for leisure.

c) Encouraging community members to use library holdings

The second question was: "How often do you encourage sisters and brothers in your community to use library holdings and to what end?" Most respondents do it sometimes, for the purposes of spirituality development and permanent religious

formation. They very rarely encourage sisters and brothers to read to acquire professional and general knowledge, to enrich their vocabulary or for leisure.

d) Purpose of a community's library/collection

The third question was: "In your opinion, what is the purpose of the library/collection of your community?" Almost all the answers were related to the notion of religious community – "the library represents cultural and spiritual heritage of a religious community"; or related to the members of their community: spirituality development, initial and permanent religious formation, resources for members who are students, or for members engaged in education, or in pastoral and catechetical activities in the parish, etc. Only a few answers mentioned people outside the community.

e) Suggestions or comments regarding library/collection

The fourth question asked the respondents to note down any suggestions or comments regarding the topic of this research. Many respondents expressed their support and joy because of this research in the hope that it would serve as an impetus to take better care of libraries. "I am delighted that this research is being carried out. (...) I'm glad for every encouragement and work on the systematization and arrangement of this written part of our consecrated life."

Many answers mentioned the lack of financial or material resources – "Libraries of religious communities need financial support from the Ministry of Culture similarly to the way the Ministry supports public libraries." or the need for professional staff and expert guidance from the competent church and other public institutions. "It would be excellent to catalogue the library materials, but while the older community members would have difficulties doing it, the younger ones are often overloaded with obligations, so they lack time for it. But if there were expert instructions on how to do it, I believe it would be easier and faster. I also think that if a volunteer - an expert could do it, it would be done much better."

Some respondents have identified challenges within their religious community: "We are always in a hurry, so the library holdings remain unorganized, often in several places around the convent. Disorganization comes from not taking enough care of our books." Or another quote: "At this moment in history, libraries are not a priority

for women and men religious. Some other mission fields, other pastoral activities are more important. Perhaps such an attitude is due to the assumption that contemporary man does not express any tendency towards reading.”

3.3. Libraries of religious communities: past, present and future

Although religious communities are aware that their libraries/collections present the precious cultural heritage from the past, they have limited options for dealing with it. In order to preserve and protect library holdings, religious communities have to face the lack of material and professional human resources. Other challenges in promoting and presenting library holdings are the global reading crisis and syncretistic spirituality. Considering the future of libraries/collections of religious communities, into account must be taken decline of number of women and men religious.

a) Reading crisis

The future of libraries of religious communities depends on the answer to the following question: Are printed books a matter of the past? Despite the general reading crisis, libraries could be a precious tool in missions. It is necessary to creatively adapt the offer to the needs of a modern man: activities for children (reading aloud, competitions revolving around the number of books that a member has read...), for young people and adults (Christian meditation, *lectio divina*...), as well as to organize different workshops, initiate volunteering, improve cooperation with other local libraries: public, parish, academic, school, et cetera.

b) Syncretistic spirituality

Nowadays, when the syncretism and spirituality rooted in emotions flourish, holdings in libraries of religious communities could be used for the promotion of spirituality which is not syncretistic or dependent on emotions and during the spiritual accompaniment. Libraries could also represent the opportunity for contact with consecrated men and women, a space where one can experience a special kind of silence and closeness to God, with content that presents a certain way of seeking God.

c) Diminishing religious communities

The future of libraries of religious communities depends on the future of the community itself. The number of men and women religious is rapidly decreasing (Table 7).

Table 7. Number of Women Religious and Men Religious in Croatia in Period 2018–2022⁴¹

Year	Women religious	Men religious
2018	2,650	988
2019	2,631	945
2020	2,589	930
2021	2,523	896
2022	2,449	874

CONCLUSION

Libraries of religious communities are a kind of mirror of the time and society in which they existed; they are a resonation of the interests of community members and an invaluable treasure of cultural and historical worth. They have served community members by providing theological education, spiritual development, cultural enrichment, and mission fulfilment.

The research encourages religious communities to be more creative in using library holdings for the improvement of mission and pastoral activities, especially in terms of promoting spirituality.

Although the conducted research is just a starting point in the research on the libraries/collections of the religious communities in Croatia, it provides opportunities for its development.

⁴¹ Source: *Statistički podatci za 2018, in: Arhiv Hrvatske redovničke konferencije. Statistika; Statistički podatci za 2019, in: Vijesti Hrvatske redovničke konferencije i Konferencije viših redovničkih poglavara i poglavarica Bosne i Hercegovine 2/2020, 31.; Statistički podatci za 2020, in: Vijesti Hrvatske redovničke konferencije i Konferencije viših redovničkih poglavara i poglavarica Bosne i Hercegovine 1/2021, 72–73.; Statistički podatci za 2021, in: Vijesti Hrvatske redovničke konferencije i Konferencije viših redovničkih poglavara i poglavarica Bosne i Hercegovine 1/2022, 93–94.; Statistički podatci za 2022, https://www.redovnistvo.hr/images/uploads/statistika_2022.pdf.*

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NEW CHALLENGES AND GOOD PRACTICES. THE INNOVATIONS OF EPISCOPAL THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE OF PÉCS FOR THE RENEWAL OF RE TEACHERS' TRAINING

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Keywords: Episcopal Theological College of Pécs, training teachers of religious studies, development of the personality, reflective mentoring, learning training

Pécs has a long history as an intellectual centre, shortly after the founding of the universities of Prague, Krakow, and Vienna, King Louis the Great founded Hungary's first university here in 1367.⁴² It had no theological faculty, the seminary was founded by Bishop Zsigmond Berényi in 1746.⁴³ Later, Bishop György Klimó, Berényi's successor, realised the need for well-educated priests in his diocese, so he made improvements in education: he raised the theological program from two to four years,⁴⁴ ordered daily visits to the library for senior students, and created three new departments. An important moment in his work was the creation of the first public library⁴⁵ in Hungary from Berényi's library and the books of the bishop's council. After the First World War, Bishop Gyula Zichy gave the library to the university for perpetual use.

In the almost 300-year history of the institution, there have been periods of interruptions in education, most recently in the second half of the 20th century,

⁴² BAJKÓ, Pécsi egyetem, 755.

⁴³ BORSY, Klimó György, aki megszerette Pécs városát, 21.; Kovács, Visions of a Catholic College in Hungary, 46-54.

⁴⁴ POHÁNKA, 300 éve született Klimó György, 32.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

when secularisation brought church property into state ownership and religious freedom was severely curtailed.⁴⁶

Between 1951–1991 the priests-in-training of Pécs prepared for their vocation at the seminary in Győr. The training of lay theologians was initiated by Bishop Mihály Mayer in 1991. Since its re-establishment, the college has been in continuous operation, offering four fields of study: Theology, Teacher's Training - Catechist, Pastoral counselling, and Social work. (Since 2007, those preparing for their priestly vocation have been studying at the Central Seminary in Budapest.)

Over the past decade, several challenges have emerged in teacher training that could not be ignored. The rapid spread of digitalization (of which mostly young people increasingly fall), the significant increase in the number of children/students with learning and other disorders, the breakdown of families, the uncertainty caused by the pandemic, isolation from peers, and loneliness among young people, have shown, among other things, that these problems must be dealt with in theologian and catechist training. In this paper, we describe three programs or activities that we offer to help our students.

The first is self-awareness and interpersonal skills training, the benefits of which need no explanation. At the same time, we offer first-year students training in learning methods. A real innovation, at least in Hungary, is the reflective mentoring of students who are completing their teaching practice.

This means that not only do we provide them with a mentor for methodological tasks, but everyone also has a so-called reflective mentor with whom they can process their experiences gained in the practice lessons.

At the College, personalization, approachability, and immediacy are core values. On the one hand, this means that during the training process, we try to create a direct atmosphere where students feel free to share their thoughts in public and with each other. On the other hand, we teachers try to remain approachable and accessible to our students. We are lucky because the college is a small institution, and we can get

⁴⁶ TAKÁCS, Pécsi Hittudományi Főiskola, 759.

to know everyone personally - something that is not possible in a university with hundreds of students.

We also try to involve them as much as possible in the life of Catholic secondary schools, for example by helping at events. The work of the college is complemented by the activities of the John XXIII College, in which a significant number of our students are involved. This is not only a professional activity, but also a way of developing students' social skills. Of course, they are also allowed to develop their faith: this academic year, the University Parish of Pécs was relaunched in the College building, which (with the help of our students) regularly organises spiritual programs for young people.

I. SELF-AWARENESS AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS TRAINING

We support the process of becoming a teacher with two types of training: Self-awareness and Interpersonal Skills Training. Both trainings have a lot of common factors: 8-12 people per group, individual and pair and small-group exercises, experience in a playful way, an accepting and safe atmosphere (not having to share everything), community-building effect, etc. In the training process there are no right or wrong answers: everyone works with their own personality. We ask those who like to stay in the background not to be completely passive: „As much as you put in, as much as you can take out in the end". Our students are at the age when the self-image is still unstable, malleable, evolving, developing. Later in life a solidified self-image is resistant, difficult to change, less open to new information about the self. One of the central problems at this age is the success-failure, relationship and the future. Our aim is during the training to help self-development, strengthening positive parts of self. It makes self-esteem more stable, and helps to avoid low points or crises. The training unfolds the additional effects of being in a group, which have a reciprocal effect on the personality of the participants. One of the most important of these is that they receive realistic feedback about themselves. Years of experience have shown that the relationships developed during the training have a positive impact on relationships outside the classroom, so we plan the sessions mainly for the beginning of the semester.

2. LEARNING METHODOLOGY TRAINING FOR FIRST-YEAR FULL-TIME AND DISTANCE LEARNING STUDENTS

The College is offering a course on learning methods for first-year students from the academic year 2019/2020. During the practice-oriented course, the first-year students learn about and become aware of the specifics of their own learning process. The course interprets the concept of learning in the field of pedagogical practice, which is based on an accurate and professional learning theory. The training aims to positively reinforce students' attitudes towards learning and to "overwrite" any negative feelings related to learning.

Effective individual learning - self-reflection

The training mobilises the development of perceptual, attentional, memory, thinking, emotional and volitional functions with tasks and varied situations used in educational habilitation. With the simultaneous development of thinking skills (cognitive skills), social-emotional skills, motor skills, fine motor skills, speech and language skills, the training is the scene of active learning. Getting to know one's own learning process is a self-study whose aim is for students to become self-regulated learners. By learning about their own learning characteristics, they become more effective students and later more competent teachers. During the course, interactive and reflective learning techniques are learned and applied to develop critical thinking. Through the development of language skills, students acquire appropriate, coherent and well-articulated oral and written communication. During the course, reading, reading comprehension, writing and spelling skills, text comprehension, short-term memory, working memory, associative thinking, highlighting the essential, vocabulary, auditory and visual processing are developed.

The requirement for completing the first semester of Learning Methodology is to write a self-reflective essay on the development of your own learning. Look with pleasure at your own learning ability, notice the development, define areas for further self-development! Be self-reflective and self-learning students!

Reciprocity - Cooperation - Respect - Acceptance

In addition to developing individual learning skills, students also learn to learn based on mutual cooperation. Within the framework of cooperative learning

organisation, students learn to know and master cooperative structures. The training contributes to the formation of group cohesion in the joint learning activity. In simultaneous, active and reciprocal learning situations, they get to know themselves and their fellow students better and learn to accept diversity. Through the course, they get to know fellow students who help them prepare for exams. By developing cooperation skills, the course contributes to strengthening the inclusive approach.

Inclusive approach

During the course, students learn about the concept of inclusion in the unity of theory and practise. Due to the diverse abilities and individual differences of children/students, they need to have a rich pedagogical methodology in their later practise as teachers of religion. For this, however, it is necessary that they get to know the conceptual system of special treatment/special educational needs and its content-related features. Therefore, the course introduces terms such as learning disorders (dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia), ADHD and ASD.

Creativity

We encourage the participants to creatively produce their own assignments using the tasks they have worked on during the learning methods training and the situations they have experienced. They will be able to communicate the content of religious education to the students in a variety of ways. They should be creative, mobilise multiple channels of perception and plan lessons on religion with a multi-sensory approach! To do this, they can also use the rich content of the Teams training folder.

The requirement of the Training on learning methodology 2nd semester is to create a collection of ideas and a collection of games based on the content of the subject of religious education by the end of the course

Conscious research and use of resources

A very rich professional material is available to the students on the online interface of the group education teams. Thematically structured, it consists of about 600 elements. It is the resource of assignments of professional literature, collections of games, excerpts, edited materials, collections of links, online repositories in

thematic collections, sources for digital applications. The resource library, which was developed in cooperation with

Tasks of specialist literature, game collections, extracts, edited materials, link collections, online repositories in thematic collections, sources of digital applications. The resource library, which is constantly being expanded by the head of the training, is an up-to-date and reliable library that students can use in educational practice and expand their professional knowledge. The folder system is an open, freely usable store of knowledge for all students.

Personality - individual mentoring

During the Learning Methodology training, a very personal relationship based on trust and respect develops between the instructor and the students, which is not limited to the framework of the course. Among the possibilities of the online space, the instructor offers the possibility of immediate interaction through the transmission of written, visual or audio messages. The connection is the possibility of immediate help on demand, which students often take advantage of. The mutual expression of trust, love and respect enhances learning and supports progress in education. Comfort, encouragement, affirmation, shared thinking between teacher and student. A close bond that lasts until the end of the education, as needed.

„...Knowledge is the result of joint creation, so the source of feedback can be not only the teacher, but also peers.”⁴⁷

3. REFLECTIVE MENTORING

Reflective mentoring has been developed and offered by the Sisters of The Community of the Beatitudes to students of catechist studies at the Episcopal Theological College of Pécs since the fall semester of 2013. The three sisters are: Sister Krisztina Mikovics CB (catechist, learning skills advisor), Sister Margit Valter CB (biblical theologian, learning skills advisor), and dr. Beáta Mária Versegi CB

⁴⁷ ARATÓ / VARGA, *Handbook of Cooperative Learning*, 24.

(Christian anthropologist, reflective coach supervisor), author of this short presentation.

How is reflective mentoring embedded into catechist studies?

Students of catechist studies receive reflective mentoring (in the form of a compulsory module) during their internship of teacher practice training.

What is reflective mentoring?

The basic meaning of the words are our starting points. What does „reflection” mean? The fundamental meaning of the term is: mirroring, resonating, reverberating. The aim of reflective mentoring is learning to reflect, enabling students to reflect without prejudice upon the experiences gathered during teacher practice training, to make them capable of learning and growing based on their very experience.

Reflective mentoring is the task of assisting students in acquiring the skill of reflection, thereby contributing to the career and personality development of students.

Reflective mentoring is a process that is not evaluated by traditional criteria such as grades. What we insist upon is that students participate in this reflective process. This kind of „evaluation” makes it possible for students to attain the attitude of reflection in a well-defined context but in a free and non-judgemental manner.

What forms does reflective mentoring take?

Reflective mentoring is offered individually or in small groups of four students. It is up to students to decide which form of mentoring they choose. Individual mentoring is offered in 3x45 minutes format, while small group mentoring is offered in 3x90 minutes format.

How is reflective mentoring realised?

In both forms, students present one of their own teacher practice experiences, a case that the student is motivated to look into in more detail. The experience can be a difficulty or a joyful experience.

While mentoring, questions, and conversation assist students not only in describing their experience but also in understanding their teacher practice training: their joys, hopes, motivations, fears, and unconscious copying strategies. As a result of reflective mentoring, students „learn themselves”.

Educating and enabling

Western-style learning is often interpreted in a narrow sense. We teach something but do not really enable our students to apply knowledge. We make students learn a great amount of factual knowledge. From this perspective, a person is knowledgeable if they master a lot of information, can recite various authors, and discuss and analyse their thoughts.

A different modality of knowledge is when we „learn ourselves and become familiar with our own personal professional life. In the context of university education, it is more and more important to **enable** students to use their knowledge consciously, always with regard to their own skills and to the skills of those entrusted to them. Students have to grow in their ability to reflect and discern their own and others’ psychological, mental and physical conditions. By relying on this reflective competence (developed in the course of reflective mentoring), they are capable of applying their factual knowledge in an optimal, i.e. authentic manner.

Analytical thought and striving for synthesis

Western scholarship prioritises the analytical perspective. We are convinced that by breaking things into ever smaller units, we gain more knowledge. In reality, our world can function if we are capable of synthesis as well; we not only dissemble but also assemble our endeavours into units that can function well. We aim at synthesis during reflective mentoring: we search for the ways in which prospective catechists can be in harmony with themselves, with their knowledge, their calling and with those entrusted to them.

Focus on problems vs focus on solutions

In education we frequently encounter focus on problems. We judge that which is not good. Grading itself is many times focused on that which students do not know. Therefore, those who know it „all” are excellent, and those who know less, receive

less points, and therefore are devalued. That is a prime example of focus on problems.

Under the paradigm of focus on solutions, we concentrate on the person's – the student's – resources. This way, students can learn to experience their self-worth and evaluate themselves in a positive manner, along their values. The resources we focus on have many factors, comprise students' factual knowledge, their personality traits, emotional intelligence, motivations, attachments, their failures, and successes as well. Reflective mentoring serves the purpose of enabling students to pursue a solution focused perspective. Not to concentrate on that which does not work, but on that which brings them closer to realising their objectives. In this context, it counts as vital knowledge to be able handle and solve certain problems in an optimal way, instead of finding the ideal solution.

„For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21)

As a church professional – e.g. as a catechist – it is an expectation and also an inner drive to do our job with heart and soul. In doing so, we can be caught in between two extremes. On the one hand, we can throw ourselves into action, in the service of God and our fellow men. On the other hand, at the other extreme, we can be reluctant, freeing ourselves from all things and all people, wishing we could „go on vacation” from giving ourselves away. Usually, we do not have bad consciousness in the case of active service. Passivity too can sometimes be interpreted as something „we deserve” but at times, we have bad consciousness along the way. It is only natural that we have active periods, and we need passive times as well. But the question is, where keep our treasure, our heart in the meantime? What it is that enables us to bring harmony to these two extremes?

The routinized ability to reflect helps us to take a distance from our momentary situation, feelings, impulses, no matter whether we are in a fundamentally active or passive disposition. We can take a moment, step back, and look at that which is happening, or that which is present. Without any judgement and evaluation, we can become conscious of our own and our surroundings' condition: we can even say, „that's how it is”. We can learn to accept that which is there or is given. Accepting our current situation, our position opens a gate so that „that which is there” can

show us its hidden treasures. Every single „that which is there” experience that manifests itself and is made conscious, carries value. A new horizon of self-knowledge and connecting to God can manifest itself. For it is exclusively the very current condition, the lived experience of the moment that can open us to God, always present in all things, striving to communicate himself. Discovering him in any situation equals to finding the most valuable treasure hidden in the field.

It is reflection that can lead us, either in active or in passive times, to the gate of contemplation, to the act of encountering God.

Reflective mentoring, therefore, also intends to help those active in promoting the faithful life, both during times of active service as well as during times not spent in service, to become capable of opening up to the presence of the Eternal.

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VI.
PHD-RESEARCH PAPERS

SPIRITUAL RESOURCE – A POWER CRITICAL MARKER IN AND OF ITSELF?

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*Keywords: power-knowledge-relations; contextuality;
spiritual self-determination; resource; Francois Jullien*

INTRODUCTION: THEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS ARE FORMED BY POWER DYNAMICS

When considering power-critical theories, like postcolonial theories, feminist theories etc., it becomes evident, that power-critique in an epistemological sense describes an analysis of the conditions of construction of a certain concept or narrative, at least as much as a content related re-reading of certain narratives and concepts. This means, that engaging with the issue of what could be spiritual resources of the future within a European context, this then also inherently poses the question of what the epistemological implications of the concept of “spirituality” are, in the respective ways it is being invoked in different contexts and structures. A recent and important shift in the understanding of spirituality consist of the fact, that it is coming to the fore more and more, not only as a source, a positive force or a potential that allows to reach a deeper meaning of the world and life, but also as something that can be instrumentalised and abused – possibly even as a concept of instrumentalisation itself, depending on its entanglement and position within the system of (theological) knowledge¹. In his article *Spiritual abuse in the Catholic church: Crisis - contexts—contours—collusions—consequences*, the German practical theologian and pastoral psychologist Klaus Kießling outlines, how

¹ When referencing speaking theologically or spiritually, I always mean in the widest sense. It then also concerns spaces of theological talk that are traditionally believed to be practical fields as opposed to academic theology.

the phenomenon, structures and conditions of spiritual abuse signify the necessity of a self-critical assessment of theology and therefore also of theological concepts of spirituality.² This article aims to demonstrate that any kind of instrument of such self- or power-critique needs to strongly emphasise the contextuality of any kind of theology, as power dynamics are themselves an inherent part of the constitution of a specific context. It will explore, if and how the concept of ‘spiritual resource’ itself could be a contextual, power-critical signifier for theologically speaking about spirituality. To substantiate this, I will demonstrate, how spirituality when used as an overarching concept of God-talk, creates distinct levels of vulnerability, that a usage of the concept needs to account for. At the same time, I will elaborate how – conversely – spirituality, can only be understood and conceptualised in the way it is being constructed within the specific entanglements and influences of the context it is occurring in. A third step will present the French philosopher Francois Jullien’s concept of *resource* to then conclude with how this concept of *resource* could serve as a power critical marker within a Christian theology of spirituality.

PERSONAL AND STRUCTURAL – DIMENSIONS OF SPIRITUAL REALITIES

The assumption that the concept of spirituality is shaped by power, becomes especially tangible at a significant point of intersection: at the intersection between the individual right to spiritual self-determination and institutionalised narratives of spirituality. The focus here will be on institutions and spaces that understand themselves through spiritual and religious narratives, which is not to be said, that institutions that do not make such narratives explicit do categorically not invoke them.

The German theologian and philosopher Doris Reisinger defines spirituality as the desire, capacity and instrument of human beings to understand their lives and actions as meaningful. Therefore, it is a basic human variable, subject to maturing processes during the course of a life – analogous to sexual, emotional, moral maturing. In a spiritual maturing process, a person learns to develop and adapt resources of meaning – and therefore spiritual resources – and to handle them

² Cf. KIEBLING, *Spiritual abuse*, 137.

dynamically, depending on what the situation or the context requires. This for example also signifies having a choice between different potential sources or the ability to reject sources – ergo, saying no. Reisinger clearly marks her definition as a working definition – not as a comprehensive definition of spirituality – on which basis, she further explores the phenomenon of spiritual abuse, and thereby makes a strong case for spirituality as being an anthropological element that signifies self-determination. It is the person itself, that decides which spiritual resources lets them create and experience meaning, and which ones do not³.

While this situates spirituality within the personal realm of self-determination of an individual, it can at the same time be understood as a form of contextualisation of spirituality. The individual itself and their entanglement in the structures and relationships they live in, become the context of the unfolding of spirituality. Whether a person has access to appropriate spiritual resources, has the possibility to choose between distinct spiritual resources or has learned to self-determinedly “use” them for their own specific challenges, is therefore among other things a contextual issue. Conclusively, the accessibility of spiritual resources is also a structural responsibility. There are countless overarching, spirituality invoking narratives, that define or influence the self-understanding of specific groups, contexts, institutions. These narratives are not mere offers, given to a person as a potential personal spiritual source, but they heavily influence or maybe even define discourses of identity, of boundaries, of belonging etc. Therefore, they contribute to forming the structure of a specific group, context, institution. Consequently, these narratives also influence mechanisms of who gets access to what, who is being allocated what space within that structure, who gets to define what and speak on what and therefore also who does not. Consequently, the question of how these discourses are structured is also one of how the right to individual spiritual self-determination is being protected, as it is within these structural settings that some spiritual narratives are being established as the defining and dominant ones that can trump other less powerful spiritual narratives or (self-)understandings.

³ Cf. REISINGER, *Spiritueller Missbrauch*, 30-31.

This precarious intersection between individual and structural spirituality then becomes relevant to the overarching questions of justice and equality. The creation of spiritual hegemonies by degrading or erasing spiritualities derived from specific languages or cultures must be considered a colonial instrument. Not only has it been used to delegitimise the spiritualities of specific peoples and parts of the world as primitive or even barbaric but also to enforce spiritualities on colonised people that spiritualised their suffering as a spiritual challenge instead of naming it for the violence that it is. This not only violates the individual right to self-determination but also invokes spirituality as a strategy of creating hegemony.⁴ Especially, when doing theology within a European context, the questioning of Eurocentrism⁵ within concepts of spirituality is crucial within a power-critical assessment of theological concepts. The legitimacy of spiritual concepts is created through and by the system they are entangled in (as stated before that decisively includes the individual person with their right to structural self-determination) and not by measuring it against a hegemonic system of spiritualities.

Although it is not my aim to compare and equate distinct occurrences of spiritualisation or spiritual abuse, it can be stated that the creation of hegemonies of spiritualities by the way in which spiritual narratives are being used is a phenomenon that can be found in very distinct structural settings. In the context of the Catholic Church the list of institutionalised spiritual narratives and the settings in which they are invoked are manifold. A crucial example here are probably liturgical settings and the role sacraments play in questions of belonging and identity and the way these spaces invoke the spirit. Other Church spaces, like for example, charitable institutions also draw on narratives of spirituality, that stabilise definitions of identity. Explorative-empirical research in a big Catholic social foundation in the south of Germany that holds care and pedagogical facilities for elderly, disabled people and youth and children has shown that the general

⁴ See for example: WELCH LITTLE, *A womanist holistic soteriology*, 3-4; DE JONG, *Feminist Postcolonial Theory*, 136-137.

⁵ When using the term “Eurocentrism” here it is always done based on the underlying assumption that Europe is a diverse, complex and varied context that needs to be treated in a differentiated way. Eurocentrism describes a construction that creates a homogenous entity (“Europe”) that in reality does not exist and that the rest of the world is being measured by.

declaration of a specific spiritual narrative does not constitute the way people understand themselves, their roles, and their jobs within such a setting. Staff members much more subsequently dynamically and individually adapt and reject such interpretative patterns and make them work according to their own individual convictions. While employees – often care or pedagogical staff – on lower levels of the hierarchy that are often deeply involved in the operational work in the facilities have rather pragmatic understandings of how they ended up working in a Franciscan-catholic foundation to begin with, their adherence and engagement with the Franciscan spirit of the foundation is listed as a job requirement on a structural level. Consequently, spirituality becomes a structural influence and condition that needs to be reconciled with other structural influences of the institution, which in this case – among others – would be economics, professional care, and the professional capacities of individual staff members.⁶ This is one of many examples of how within church structures, spiritual narratives form the context that spiritually self-determining individuals then navigate in between all other kinds of influences.

As is always the case, when speaking about contextuality or conceptually unfolding contextuality, one encounters the problem that the notion of context itself is a construct. It has to be understood as a demarcation that is inherently contingent. Nevertheless, the power-formedness and therefore dangers of spirituality-talk become epistemologically more and more accessible the more nuanced the way, in which its situatedness is being brought to the fore. Any kind of institutionalised or structuralised form of talking about spirituality therefore faces the same challenges of having to structurally safeguard the individual right to spiritual self-determination, exactly because it is such a structurally relevant variable. At the same time, it is also these respective structures that give or deny people access to the sources that they can adopt, use and adapt as the necessary resources to understand their life as meaningful to begin with. Consequently, church and theological spaces can be understood as high-risk spaces in a twofold sense: firstly, because they oftentimes are spaces for the most vulnerable to begin with (bereavement, charitable institutions, schools etc.). Secondly, because the almost

⁶ Cf. SCHÜßLER / STRAUB, *Seelsorgliche Ressourcen*.

always explicitly touch on the vulnerable spiritual sphere of the individual by invoking spiritual narratives as forms of self-legitimation and identity. As Kießling writes: “For nowhere on earth does power appear more powerful than when it is accompanied by heavenly insignia.”⁷.

The question that arises is that of what this means for theologically speaking about spirituality, if theology aims to take into account the dangers of spiritual narratives, while at the same time wants to contribute to the provision of meaning-constituting narratives.

RESOURCE AS PRESENTED BY FRANCOIS JULLIEN

Francois Jullien is a French philosopher and sinologist. In *Ressourcen des Christentums* which is the German translation and publication of a lecture that he gave in 2016 in France, he explores, what Europe has/had to gain from Christianity. While the first association with the title might be, that his interest lies in a European identity discourse along the lines of questions like *Is Europe Christian? Or Are European cultures upheld by Christian values?* he is much more interested, in what Christianity has to offer when it comes to finding ways of thinking. Phrased differently: he explores what Christianity has to offer for the mind, which in his understanding equals what it can do for life itself^{8,9}. Even though Jullien follows a highly theoretical approach, I argue that his understanding of resources nonetheless offers points of reference for the conceptualisation of a theology of spirituality, that accounts for the constructing power-dynamics. The following cannot be understood as a comprehensive presentation of Jullien’s approach but much more a presentation of the crucial points of his concept of resource that could be applied to the question of spiritual resources.

Jullien approaches Christianity as a quarry of intellectual resources that can be exploited, not primarily as a religion that you are either a part of or not and that you

⁷ KIEBLING, *Spiritual abuse*, 134.

⁸ Cf. JULLIEN, *Ressourcen*, 25.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 7-9.

therefore have an inside or an outside view of. According to Jullien, resources are not something that one possesses or does not possess, but they only exist to the extent that they are constituted and unfolded (Jullien uses the terminology exploited and researched)¹⁰. He therefore demarcates them from other concepts like values, riches, or roots. These variables are either in competition with each other (values) or something that one achieves or does not achieve, something that you own or do not own (riches). Resources are neither of these things. They exist in plurality, can be shared, can complement each other and during the process of exploiting them, one does not necessarily know their limits and where the exploitation will take one.¹¹ At the same time, they are accessible to everyone and not reserved for a certain group of people, for people with a specific denomination or worldview or for people with a specific attitude. Resources can then be understood as universal while at the same time deeply contextual as they only exist to the extent that they are exploited within a certain context, at a certain time, by a certain person.

In this vein of universality, Jullien also claims that this understanding dissolves certain dichotomies that must be considered as powerfully influencing what spirituality is and how it is being used. He argues that understanding resources as only existing to the extent that they are being exploited and researched (therefore practiced) deconstructs the dichotomy between theory and practice. The mere fact that you must exercise, practice, unfold a certain resource to access it in the first place, makes it impossible within this logic, to separate the two spheres of theoretical narratives and practiced spirituality. The second dichotomy that Jullien claims to deconstruct is that between holiness and profanity.¹² Through the assertion that holiness is not something that the resources “own” as a characteristic but that a resource unfolds within its meaning when being exploited, holiness can ever only be found within the contextual practice of exploiting resources. For the question of spirituality this would signify that spirituality is not a separate sphere that can be adapted on to contingent practices, artefacts or others, but that it unfolds contextually to the extent that it is meaningful to the exploiting person. This

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 26-29.

¹² *Ibid.*, 23-25.

also draws a significant distinction from the understanding of spirituality that Jullien refers to and heavily criticises, in which concepts of spirituality are oftentimes being used as some artificial smallest common denominator when contradictions within or in between worldviews, contexts or religions occur. According to Jullien this is not only obstructing the exploitation of potential resources but also denies the possibility of a plurality of resources (sometimes contradictory), existing alongside each other (depending on who is exploiting them, when how and where).¹³

While these outlines may enforce the notion that resources cannot be defined, unless within the act of creating the resource, Jullien offers an example of what he considers an exploitation and research of Christian resources to be, by analysing the Gospel of John. In the course of this analysis unearths convictions within the Gospel of John that he defines as resources of Christianity. Two examples of these convictions that he sees relayed in the Gospel of John, are firstly, “that an event is possible” (meaning that something unexpected, unplanned, uncontrolled and not-self-made can occur) and secondly, the conviction “that something can be said, that has never been said before”.¹⁴ To summarise: these convictions state, that something completely new is possible and that exploiting these convictions for one’s own life makes them resources of Christianity. Even though it cannot be comprehensively demonstrated here, how Jullien arrives at these insights and how the methodologically process was, these formulations still give insights on how broad his understanding of a resource is. He speaks of spiritualisation, when the conviction that there is chance that something new and unforeseen can occur amounts to something life-giving¹⁵. In the vein of Reisinger, one could maybe say a spiritual resource is being exploited, when a conviction amounts to an instrument and capacity of creating and presenting meaning (although Jullien rejects the term meaning).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.

LIMITS AND CHANCES OF JULLIEN'S *RESOURCE* AS A POWER-CRITICAL CONCEPT

Like any theoretical approach Jullien's understanding of resources has strengths and weaknesses when considering it as a relevant concept for a power-critical reassessment of theologically talking about spiritual resources. Introducing this approach as a possible instrument of power critique that comes from the concept of spirituality itself (in the sense that something is only ever a spiritual resource to the extent that it is exploited by a self-determined individual) by no means claims that it can account for all the dangers that are implied in the intersection between individual and structural spiritual narratives. In regard to this adaptation there are two apparent weaknesses of Jullien's approach that especially concern questions of justice and protection. Firstly, it has to be questioned whether the quarry of resources is really accessible to everyone and how this access could be guaranteed? There is a case to be made that Jullien does not ask the question of what the conditions of the possibilities of even getting a chance of exploiting resources are. The question is, how theology could account for that. Secondly, the question of how practices of exploitation and research are to be understood remains open (researching and exploiting is as far as Jullien defines them). While Jullien himself enters into a very cognitive journey of discovering resources within the Gospel of John, he also states clearly that resources show themselves in the event itself. The fact that Jullien leaves it open as to what can be understood by exploiting and researching can be understood as a strength and a weakness: while it protects personal spiritual practices from being hierarchised, it also invites the danger of new hegemonies of practices as it cannot be fully transparent how a resource came into existence to begin with.

These limits again require a strong focus on the contextuality (and individuality) of any exploitation of spiritual resources. Regarding a power-critical usage of the concept of spiritual resources, the fact that he does not focus on identity discourse and the questions of a Christian/Catholic proprium could be considered Jullien's main achievement as it significantly widens the scope of what can be considered spiritual resources and practices. Through his lens, identity discourses are simply not decisive when talking about resources. I would argue that there are three main points of reference that could be beneficial for a theology of spirituality, when engaging with his concept.

CONTEXTUALITY

Firstly, Jullien's concept accounts for the claim that there is no power-critical engagement with theological concepts without reaching and ever deeper understanding of their respective contextual embeddedness. Against this backdrop (spiritual) resources can only ever be understood as a contextual phenomenon and therefore this understanding of resource is an effective tool against certain forms of epistemological and practical transgression. Contextuality and the way it is being upheld by Jullien's approach can be an effective instrument against definitions of spirituality that do not take into account the context from which it is being constructed and against their implementation on a person, an institution or an entire culture. Contrarily, resources then are only valid – or only exist at all – within the system of reference they are being exploited in. Therefore, the approach does justice to the claim to self-determination while at the same time upholding the structural aspect by being accessible to everyone.

CONTINGENCY/AMBIVALENCE

In relation to the first aspect, this signifies that spiritual formulations are always contingent and ambivalent. They may also not be spiritual resources. This is a very effective instrument against any kind of elevations of specific resources, narratives, institutional organs or people as absolute, holier, or exclusively spirituality-defining. When considering the problem of spiritual abuse the awareness of the contingency of any spirituality de-potentialises the “spiritual” power any person or artefact can hold. It forbids a hegemonic structure of spiritual resources, but much more assigns relevance to a specific resource to the extent that it is practiced by a certain subject.

OPEN-ENDED

Jullien's approach allows for a plurality of spiritual resources and the list remains perpetually open. Spirituality can therefore not be used as an excluding or stigmatising factor within the logic of specific structures. It can also not function as a warrantor for a specific identity, profile or proprium and therefore not for the inclusion or exclusion of people.

CONCLUSION

By understanding resources as something that one exploits and researches, spiritual resources and spirituality itself can become power-critical markers as they can never be separated from the practices and contexts that make them spiritual resources in the first place. A spiritual resource is therefore only a spiritual resource in its execution and cannot be imposed on others as a spiritual resource. While Jullien significantly widens the scope of legitimate access to resources themselves, the question of how equal access to spiritual resources could be guaranteed remains a theological task. Nevertheless, he offers a theoretical blueprint that allows to radically understand spirituality in its contextual construction and his approach can therefore function as a corrective, when questioning power dynamics acting in the intersection between individual spiritual self-determination and structural spiritual narratives.

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EVE'S PENITENTIAL PRAYER IN THE *GREEK LIFE OF ADAM AND EVE*

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Keywords: Gen 2-3, Life of Adam and Eve, Penance, Eve, Culpability

INTRODUCTION

The perception of women has been largely shaped by the Jewish-Christian tradition, more specifically the reception of the biblical narratives about the creation and fall.¹⁶ My paper explores the penance narrative of the *Greek Life of Adam and Eve*, Eve's prayer in GLAE 32,2, as one that emphasises her culpability.

In the Bible there is no detailed description of the lives of the protoplasts after the Fall and their expulsion from Paradise, nor of how they have reflected on their sin, nor how they have tried, or even **if** they have tried, to win God's favour again. Therefore, as a relecture of the Fall, the GLAE fills a gap.¹⁷ The writing adds some new aspects to the story, to blame Eve exclusively for the fall. Genesis 3 does not single out the responsibility of the woman, it just serves as an etiological explanation for the origin of suffering and distorted human relations.¹⁸ The GLAE goes further and blames Eve because her weakness and her behaviour have brought suffering on the man.¹⁹

Besides this the GLAE is based on the most important issues humanity faces.²⁰ As Johannes Tromp pointed out, GLAE addresses the most fundamental issues of

¹⁶ Cf. ARBEL, *Forming Femininity*, 2-3.

¹⁷ Cf. TROMP, *Literary and Exegetical Issues*, 25.

¹⁸ Cf. LEVISON, *The Prayers of Eve*, 221.

¹⁹ GLAE 7,1; 14,2; 21,6; 23,5; 11,1; 9,2; 10,2; 32,2; 42,6; 29,8-9.

²⁰ Cf. LEVISON, *The Greek Life*, 6.

everyday life: death, forgiveness, illness, the unity of husband and wife.²¹ In his recent commentary on the GLAE, John R. Levison argues that the text can be relevant for us even „a trillion heartbeats later”, because, although it is a fictional story, it is more than what the rewritten Bible genre could cover.²² It is a story told by the most vulnerable: Adam and Eve are on their deathbed. Eve gives her children ethical instructions²³, warns them not to fall again, as they did. So, the GLAE is just as relevant in the present days, as it outlines the challenges that every man must face: sin, sickness, seeking and obtaining forgiveness, and death.

In her very last hours, when feeling that death is near, Eve confesses her sin in a prayer. This prayer will be the focus of this paper. This section can be considered as the deepest part of her reflection on her deeds, and her confession is set right before Adam’s death, and he being carried to the heavens. We could see here a self-conscious Eve, who admits her fault. From this perspective, her deep regret over her sins can be seen as a “spiritual resource” for later readers as well. As for a renewal to be truly fruitful, one must go back to the roots. Taking the good example of the protoplasts can be this way, a good starting point. However, I argue that interpreted critically this prayer is just another way in which the author of GLAE emphasizes Eve’s culpability.

THE IMPACT OF GLAE

The GLAE is part of the *Life of Adam and Eve* tradition, which covers an immense number of manuscripts with several translations and versions of the text.²⁴ I cannot give here detailed statistics, but the large number of manuscripts shows that the *Life of Adam and Eve* was very popular and influential in early Christianity.²⁵ The writing

²¹ Cf. TROMP, *The Story of Our Lives*, 218.

²² Cf. LEVISON, *The Greek Life*, 6.

²³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁴ Cf. TROMP, *Literary and Exegetical Issues*, 25.

²⁵ Cf. STONE, *A History of the Literature*, 1-22. We know about 26 Greek manuscripts (ranging from the 11th to the 18th century), listed and organised, most recently by John R. Levison. Cf. LEVISON, *The*

had a significant influence on the perception of women, since it blames Eve exclusively for the Fall.²⁶

THE FIGURE OF EVE

For a closer look at the figure of Eve, I turn to Vita Daphna Arbel's remarkable work on the perception of Eve in the GLAE. She emphasizes the many faces of Eve in the whole story. On the one hand Eve is Adam's „devoted and dutiful”²⁷ wife, keen to do anything for her husband's well-being. On the other hand, she is portrayed “as the Devil's vessel”²⁸ and as the one who is guilty of Adam's unendurable pain. According to Levison „what Arbel does not say, but might have, is that the nexus of these contrasting images of Eve is GLAE 32.2, in which Eve prays in utter earnestness, in utter self-abnegation, and, as her truest self, in utter awareness of the damage she has done.”²⁹

EVE, THE ONE TO BLAME

As mentioned before, we have to keep in mind, that the author of GLAE shapes the story in a way that Eve is the **only** one to blame for the Fall. There is one single verse, 27,2, which exonerates Eve, and puts the blame on Adam, (your father Adam begged the angels, saying, “Allow me a little [time] so that I may beg God to have compassion and show me mercy, for I only sinned.”). But this verse is also part of

Greek Life of Adam and Eve He based his work mainly on J. Tromp. Cf. Tromp, The Life of Adam and Eve in Greek. The first one to discover and organise the manuscripts was C. von Tischendorf, Cf. TISCHENDORF, Apocalypses apocryphae. The Latin version is preserved in more than 100 manuscripts. (Cf. PETTORELLI / KAESTLI / FREY (eds.), Vita latina Adae et Evae. There are also Armenian (cf. STONE, The Penitence of Adam), Georgian (MAHE, Le livre d'Adam georgien, 227-260) and Slavonic manuscripts JAGIĆ, Slavische Beiträge zu den biblischen Apocryphen I, 1-104).

²⁶ GLAE modifies the story of the Fall, so that Adam is exonerated from the first sin. GLAE emphasizes that Eve is alone (GLAE 15,3; 17,1) when talking to the tempter and when she accepts the fruit of the forbidden tree. (GLAE 17-19)

²⁷ ARBEL, *Forming Femininity*, 113.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁹ LEVISON, *The Greek Life*, 799.

Eve's testament. So, his confession is only found in a quote by Eve.³⁰ Adam himself does not say one single time that he is the one to blame for the sin.

Conversely, there are ten passages (7,1; 14,2; 21,6; 23,5; 11,1; 9,2; 10,2; 32,2; 42,6; 29,8-9) that reflect on the sin Eve committed.³¹ Mostly she is blamed by Adam and other characters, but there are some cases when she blames **herself**. Eve blames explicitly herself three times throughout the whole work. First, when she asks Adam to give her half of his pain, as „*it was because of her, that all these came upon him*” (9,1-2). Second, when Eve and Seth meet with the beast, Eve weeps: “*Ah me! Ah me! Because if I come to the day of the resurrection, all who have sinned will curse me, saying, ‘Eve did not keep the command of God.’*” (10,2). And lastly, in 32,2 when she prays for forgiveness, right before Adam's death.³² She also admits that she is „a worthless sinful one” on her deathbed (42,6).

THE PENANCE NARRATIVE

In the penance narrative (32,2) Eve confesses:

*“I sinned, God, I sinned, father of all, I sinned against you. I sinned against your chosen angels, I sinned against the cherubim, I sinned against your immovable throne, I sinned, Lord, I sinned much, I sinned in your presence, And all sin because of me has come about in the creation.”*³³

With regard to this verse there is no significant difference in the manuscripts reviewed by Levinson.

³⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, 797.

³¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 713.

³² TROMP, *Literary and Exegetical Issues*, 27.

³³ LEVISON, *The Greek Life*, 790 (ἤμαρτον ὁ θεός, ἤμαρτον ὁ πατήρ τῶν ἀπάντων, ἤμαρτόν σοι. ἤμαρτον εἰς τοὺς ἐκλεκτούς σου ἀγγέλους, ἤμαρτον εἰς τὰ χερουβίμ, ἤμαρτον εἰς τὸν ἀσάλευτόν σου θρόνον, ἤμαρτον κύριε, ἤμαρτον πολλά, ἤμαρτον ἐναντίον σου, καὶ πᾶσα ἀμαρτία δι' ἐμὲ γέγονεν ἐν τῇ κτίσει).

The fact that she says her prayer at Adam's prompting (31,4: "Get up instead. Pray to God...") might point to her dependence on her husband.³⁴ Eve „confesses her sin repeatedly and is subsequently instructed by an angel to watch Adam's ascent.”³⁵

The penance narrative follows Eve's testament, which covers almost half of the work, where she tells the story of the first transgression. Her penitence is an element of novelty compared to Genesis 3.³⁶ The prayer sounds like a "litany" where Eve enumerates all those against she has sinned. At the end of her confession we read explicitly that Eve's sin is the source of all sin, and her transgression affects the whole creation, not only the human race („*And all sin because of me has come about in the creation*").³⁷ This idea also appears when Eve and Seth are attacked by the beast.³⁸ Eve asserts that she had sinned not only against the creation, and against God, but her sin affects the whole transcendent world as well.

As we take a closer look on the prayer, we can observe a few things: the verb *I sinned* (ἥμαρτον) appears 9 times. Levison highlights perfect symmetry of the prayer, as it can be divided in three parts. Each of the three parts contains three elements.³⁹

- I. I sinned, **God**, I sinned, **father of all**, I sinned **against you**.
- II. I sinned against **your chosen angels**, I sinned against **the cherubim**, I sinned against **your immovable throne**,
- III. I sinned, **Lord**, I sinned **much**, I sinned **in your presence**.

³⁴ LEVISON, *The Prayers of Eve*, 224.

³⁵ LEVISON, *The Greek Life*, 5.

³⁶ LEVISON, *The Exoneration*, 255.

³⁷ LEVISON, *The Greek Life*, 797.

³⁸ GLAE 10,2-3: »Then the wild animal cried out, saying, "Oh, Eve, your greed is not about us, nor your weeping, but about you, since the dominion of the wild animals came to be from you."«

³⁹ LEVISON, *The Greek Life*, 796.

In the first part: God, father of all and you (as well referring to God); in the second part: the chosen angels, the cherubim and God's immovable throne; in the last part: Lord, sinned much – the only one where is no reference to anything or anybody, and lastly, God's presence. So, God is at the heart of the first and the last section. The second part is an insertion listing those from the divine court.

CONCLUSION

The GLAE reinterprets the second creation narrative and the story of the Fall, while painting an increasingly negative picture of Eve. She is the weak, easily tempted creature who succumbs to Satan's temptation, breaking the divine command and thus becoming the source of sin and the cause of man's suffering, and she admits all of this. This narrative contributed to the shaping of the negative early Christian perception of women that endured over centuries. However, her deep regret over her deeds expressed in her prayer can serve as a spiritual resource for us all.

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IMAGO DEI AND HUMAN DIGNITY: GENESIS 1:26–28 IN THE LIGHT OF THE INTERPRETATIVE TRADITIONS

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human dignity*

Some papal statements, the documents of the Pontifical Biblical Commission (*What is man?*, 2019), and the International Theological Commission (*Communion and Stewardship. Human Persons Created in the Image of God*, 2004) are referring several times to the biblical and theological anthropology based on Gen. 1:26-28 and the importance of recognizing in every human being that he or she is created in the image of God. Indeed, this passage from the Old Testament has been the most commented on also by the Church Fathers.¹

In this contribution I intend to focus on a comparative analysis of the biblical, rabbinical, and patristic exegesis, with an eye toward assessing the influence of the ancient interpretations upon later rival readings of the image of God and human dignity, namely its cultural and social effects. Chantal Delsol writes that we are in the age of a paradigm shift, very similar to the fourth century, when there was a break in the paradigm, both in a philosophical and an ethical sense.² I think if we are now living at a breaking point where the primordial ontological choices – concerning the meaning of life and mankind’s place in the universe, the nature of

¹ Cf. LOUTH, *Genesis 1–11*, 55.

² Cf. DELSOL, *La Fin de la Chrétienté*.

the world or that of God – are overturned, it is fruitful to turn back and rediscover the message of the ancient times.

I. BIBLICAL APPROACHES

Concerning the biblical text we have two problems, which have consequences also on the human dignity discourse.³ (1) There is little consensus surrounding the question of what it means that human beings are made in the image of God, and (2) the decontextualization allows theologians to lift the phrase “the image of God” out of its context and to make the word mean just what they choose it to mean. As Paul Ricœur says: “each century has the task of elaborating its thought ever anew on the basis of that indestructible symbol which henceforth belongs to the unchanging treasury of the Biblical canon”.⁴

Having a look at the Hebrew and Greek texts, it can be seen that in Hebrew we have *tzelem* and *demuth*, while the LXX translates it as *κατ’ εἰκόνα καὶ καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν*, inserting an “and” (conjunction), implicating that these words (image and likeness) may have different meanings: “Let us make *ἄνθρωπος* according to our image and according to our likeness”. This insertion is of great importance, because this is the starting point of the anthropology of the Church Fathers. The dominant view is that in Hebrew the words are synonyms or hendiadys⁵ – based on Gen. 5:3, where we find the word order in reverse: “Adam begot a son in his own likeness, after his image” –, and in Greek these terms are unrelated constituents, distinguishing image (as “nature”) from likeness (as “assimilation”). For centuries, biblical scholars have been doing their best to define the precise meaning of these two concepts and have referred to almost every aspect of divine glory (following Psalm 8) and man’s spiritual and physical nature, from intelligence

³ Cf. JANČOVIČ, *An Exegetical and Theological Reappraisal*, 183-206.

⁴ RICOEUR, *The Image of God*, 110.

⁵ For the grammatical analysis of these verses see GARR, *In His Own Image and Likeness*, 85-115. *Tzelem* appears 18 times in OT, 4 times refers to the image of God (for example in Gen. 9:6, having an ethical dimension); *demuth* occurs 25 times in OT, and 3 times refers to *imago Dei*: Gen. 1:26, Gen. 5:1 and v. 3: “When God created mankind, he made them in the likeness of God. (...) he had a son in his own likeness”. The LXX translates *tzelem* as *εἰκών*; *εἶδωλον*, *τύπος*, *ὁμοίωμα*, and *demuth* as *ὁμοίωμα*, *ὁμοίωσις*, *ὥς*, *εἰκών*, and *εἶδέα*.

to the human body. In the case of the doctrine of *imago Dei* – for which these verses are the *locus classicus* – it is noteworthy that this paradigm involves a question about not only humankind, but also about God. As Origen writes in *Contra Celsum* (IV, 23, 74-80; VI, 62-64), Celsus accused Christians of inconsistency, since they reject the statues of gods and at the same time, they teach that the mankind is created in the image of God. Indeed, the term *tselem* which is frequently used in an inculpatory sense for man-made images of God, as well as the term *demuth*, of which Isaiah claims (40:18), no *demuth* or likeness can be applied to God – are employed in denoting man as an image and likeness of God. This implicates that within human beings, created in the image of God, there exists an enigmatic quality, akin to the mystery of God, making it elusive to exact description.

Regarding the critic of biblical anthropocentrism, the theocentric emphasis of the passage could enlighten its proper meaning: it is anthropocentrism based on transcendental finalism. Concerning the context of the biblical verses, it is noteworthy that after the documentary hypothesis (the critical study of Wellhausen) appeared the supplementary hypothesis (*Ergänzungshypothese*), according to which the guideline of the primeval history is the priestly account and the non-P (earlier termed “*Jahwist*”) texts are merely additions to it, dating it to the postexilic period (post-P); as such, Gen. 2–3 is an elaboration upon the analysed three verses. The re-evaluation of these texts resulted in a complete shift of paradigm in the interpretation of creation stories.⁶ It means that the biblical author is writing about human being’s place and role in the creation: the unique dignity of the human, his/her prominent place in the world and the duty of pastoral ruling of it: to work and take care of it, as Gen. 2 states.

The concept of the *imago Dei* was not unusual in ancient Near East (Mesopotamia, Egypt): rulers like pharaohs were the image of God, representing God in the earthly world.⁷ What are really new in the biblical, priestly creation story is that every human

⁶ Cf. SKA, *Genesis 2-3: Some Fundamental Questions*, 1-4.; GIUNTOLI, *Genesi 1,1-11,26, 29-45*.

⁷ Cf. JANČOVIČ, *An Exegetical and Theological Reappraisal*, 191-194. However, the Instructions of Merikare and the Instruction of Ani display several parallels to Gen 1, speaking about human beings bearing the image of gods, namely that all human beings were created in the image of the gods, and the king is merely the par excellence of divine imagery.

being is *created* in the image of God and it changed also the ancient way of looking at human and the world: the man is no longer the image of the cosmos, as in Hellenic thought, is no longer a microcosm, nor is the world a macro-anthropos. As Pope Francis highlighted in his address at the conference (*Re*)*Thinking Europe*: “This was one of the foundational values brought by Christianity: the sense of the person created in the image of God. This principle led to the building of the monasteries, which in time would become the cradle of the human, cultural, religious and economic rebirth of the continent.”⁸

Concerning the ways of understanding the image of God, all the substantialist (as intellectual abilities), the relational (as unique relationship with God), and the functional interpretation (as cultural mandate) seem to be a result of being created in God’s image rather than a definition of what it means to be made in God’s image.⁹ The diversity of possible interpretations within Scripture does not provide a definitive understanding of the precise meaning of the image of God. However, this is not to say that we are left as agnostics about the biblical meaning of the image of God. The hermeneutical and theological task is to weave these scriptural images into a consistent and coherent whole.¹⁰ We have at least four challenges confounding any attempt to write a definition of the *imago Dei*¹¹: (1) the biblical challenge arises from the fact that nowhere in Scripture is the image of God defined in an unambiguous way; (2) the uniqueness challenge tries to accentuate characteristics or capacities that are uniquely human (it is not reflected in animals and cannot be duplicated by any form of AI) ; (3) the functional challenge relates to the limitations of defining personhood according to a particular set of abilities, capacities or functions (but if rationality and relational abilities are designated as fundamental and irreducible marks of humanness, persons with profound mental illness, for instance, may not meet these criteria); and (4) the bioethical challenge is that what could be utilized in making decisions regarding bioethics (*i.e.*, recognizing *imago Dei*). Of course, all the three approaches have weaknesses and a set of

⁸ POPE FRANCIS, *Address to the Commission*.

⁹ Cf. JANČOVIČ, *An Exegetical and Theological Reappraisal*, 194-200.

¹⁰ Cf. LEMKE, *Theology (OT)*, 6:455.; ERICKSON, *Christian Theology*, 512-513.

¹¹ Cf. LEMKE, *The Intelligent Design of Humans*.

difficulties; for example, the functional and relational perspectives – although these are at least partially correct and faithful to the biblical witness – do not consider that the function and the relationship presupposes substance and requires an ontological foundation. I propose that an essentialist definition could avoid the above-mentioned challenges and objections, seeing the essential, foundational qualities at the centre of our being, rather than the exercise of particular functions.

Regarding the Christian understanding of the *imago Dei* motif¹², from the Pauline theology Jesus Christ is “the image [εἰκὼν] of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15), being “in the form of God” [ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων] (Phil. 2:6). Cullmann, following Jean Héring, affirms that the “form” represents here, in accordance with the *Peshitta*, the Hebrew *demuth* of Gen. 1:26.¹³ The image motif acquired a central theological significance: in the patristic literature the Christological and the Trinitarian kinds of interpretation oscillate, and although there was a debate on the consequences of the Fall, the role of Christ as the restorer of the image seems undisputed.

2. PATRISTIC APPROACHES

Regarding the “distinctive” exegesis of the Church Fathers, Clement of Alexandria – following Plato’s *Theaetetus* (“to escape [from earth to the dwelling of the gods] is to become like God, so far as this is possible; and to become like God is to become righteous and holy and wise” [Pl., *Tht.* 176b]¹⁴) – asks in the second book of the *Stromateis*: “Is not this the way in which some of our people accept the view that a human being has received ‘according to the image’ at birth, but will secure ‘according to the likeness’ later, as he attains perfection?” (Clem., *Str.* II, 131,6).¹⁵ Thereby – most likely referring to Irenaeus’ view¹⁶ – Clement distinguishes εἰκὼν and its protological meaning (as permanent structure given to mankind by God at creation that sin cannot destroy) and ὁμοίωσις with its dynamic and eschatological

¹² Concerning *imago Dei* in NT see JERWELL, *Imago Dei*, 70.; SCHWANZ, *Imago Dei*, 21-26.

¹³ Cf. CULLMANN, *Die Christologie des Neuen Testaments*, 180.

¹⁴ PLATO, *Theaetetus*, 129.

¹⁵ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Stromateis*, 245.

¹⁶ For citation and interpretation of Jean Kirchmeyer’ thought (*Dict. Spirit. VI,814*) see RAPONI, *Il tema dell’immagine-somiglianza*, 120.

meaning. However, while Irenaeus – against the Gnostics – refers the *imago Dei* to the incarnate Word and in this way also to the human body (*imago qua Verbum caro*), the Alexandrians refer it to the pre-existent Logos (*imago qua Deus*), and primarily count it to the human soul: to self-consciousness, reason, and free will. The clear distinction between “image” and “likeness”, *i.e.*, the philosophical distinctions (the disposition and its development) are then traced back to the features present in *Genesis*.¹⁷

As John Meyendorff states, there is no *consensus patrum* for a complete exegesis of the analysed verses. “There is, however, an absolute consistency in Greek patristic tradition in asserting that the image is not an external imprint, received by man in the beginning and preserved by human nature as its own property independently of its relationships with God. ‘Image’ implies a participation in the divine nature.”¹⁸

3. RABBINIC APPROACHES

Hereinafter I intend to explore and underline three issues regarding the image of God: its universality (as a trait shared by every human person), its immutability (as a permanent quality regardless of one’s actions), and its role as a fundamental principle of Scripture.

3.1 Targums

In the followings I intend to give examples to the “theological profiles” of the texts; Michael Weitzman refers with this term to the interpretative divergences from the Hebrew source text that imply a particular theological view.¹⁹ It is noteworthy that the Aramaic translations are not only translations, but also incorporate the contemporary right and acceptable interpretations based on the rabbinic tradition. Regarding the Torah-targums it is really difficult to date the exegetical materials of

¹⁷ Cf. RAPONI, *Il tema dell’immagine-somiglianza*, 101-120.; CANTALAMESSA, *Cristo «Immagine di Dio»*, 366-371.

¹⁸ MEYENDORFF, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, 114.

¹⁹ “It follows that, rather than devise a litmus test between two possibilities called ‘Judaism’ and ‘Christianity’, we have to build up a theological profile of the translation, and only then compare it with different movements, Jewish and Christian, known to us.” WEITZMAN, *From Judaism to Christianity*, 150.

the manuscripts, which include also the actualization and re-reading of the Hebrew passages.²⁰ Following the Babylonian tradition with *Targum Onqelos* and the Palestinian tradition with the *Fragment-targum* or *Targum Neofiti* and *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* the problematic theological nature of the “image of God” becomes visible in its translations.

In the case of *Targum Neofiti* and *Fragment-targum* when God is referred to, the texts avoid using the word “image”, which Hebrew term they render by the more abstract “likeness” (*dmwt*), and they translate the second term with the synonymous phrase (“in similar fashion”). Thus, the emphasis is completely shifted from the image to the likeness to God, which carries the association of *imitation Dei* with it, rather than any anthropomorphic concept of God. Similarly, Gen. 9:6 (“Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind”) is translated by *Targum Neofiti* as “in a likeness from before the Lord he created Adam”.²¹

Furthermore, it is interesting that *Targum Onqelos* does not dismiss the concept of “image”, however, it tries to avoid the translation and the theological reflection on the nature of mankind (it speaks about the creation of the individual Adam in the image of God). Instead of using the common word for God, the Aramaic equivalent of the Tetragrammaton, it has the Hebrew ‘*bešalam* ^ʔ*lōhi*’, thus this phrase is without translation in the text: the Targum leaves it unchanged and untranslated, as if the translator did not wish to tamper with the original Hebrew text. The reason for this procedure may be simply due to a desire to abstain from meddling with a phrase so much was burdened with theological ambiguity.

Finally, *Targum Ps-Jonathan* has a long gloss, incorporates a great deal of midrashic material (therefore being more of an elaborate paraphrase than a straightforward translation) and translates the “likeness” with a word (*dyywqn*), which corresponds

²⁰ Cf. LEVINE, *The Aramaic Version of the Bible*, 37-42.; HAYWARD, *The Aramaic Targums*, 218-241.

²¹ *The Aramaic Bible*, Vol. 1A, 79.

to the Greek *eikōn*²², hence – shedding new light on it – it implicates not-physical, symbolic representation, referring to the attributes, thus also avoiding the anthropomorphism. Thus, the Targum affirms that – regarding his *icon* – man is not identical with God, but only similar to Him.

And God said to the angels who minister before him, who were created on the second day of the creation of the world, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them have dominion (...).’ And God created Adam in his own likeness, in the image of God he created him, with two hundred and forty-eight members, with six hundred and sixty five nerves, and he formed a skin over him, and filled it with flesh and blood; male and female in their appearance he created them.²³

Nevertheless, the gloss writes about the 248 members and 365 nerves of the body. In a figurative language it refers to the 248 commandments and 365 prohibitions of the Law; thereby the essence of representation is fidelity to the Law, and man’s “icon”, that is bearing resemblance to God, is embodied in the Law – the image of God in human is the Law itself. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that regarding the formation of man from the dust Targum Ps-Jonathan says that God “took dust from the site of the sanctuary” (Gen. 2:7) and on Gen. 2:15 writes that “the Lord God took Adam from the mountain of worship, the place whence he had been created, and made him dwell in the garden of Eden to labour in the law and to keep its commandment”.²⁴

To sum it up, the Targums strengthen the symbolic interpretation (human being can only represent symbolically the attributes of God, not the deity himself), and seeing its complex theological topic they try to avoid speaking of the “image of God”: there

²² Cf. JASTROW, *A Dictionary of the Targumim*, 297. Levy’s view is that Ps.-J.’s word is composed of two Greek words, *dyo*, “two,” and *eikōn*; meaning that this icon is a “second” representation, which is not identical to the original. LEVY, *Chaldäisches Wörterbuch*, 170.

²³ *The Aramaic Bible*, Vol. 1B, 19-20. Interestingly, by the rendering “in an image the Lord created him” the Targum seems to make Elohim the subject of the clause and separate it from the ‘image’ (thus separating the word God from the word image); meaning that God created man in some image specific to him alone. As Abraham Geiger pointed out, the Greek version of Symmachus seems to follow this definite trend in rabbinic exegesis: “And God created man in a superior image, upright created He him” (Gen. 1:27). See ALTMANN, *Homo Imago Dei*, 237-239.

²⁴ *The Aramaic Bible*, Vol. 1B, 23.

is apparently no objection to using the phrase “similitude of God”, but the mention of *imago Dei* was felt to be dangerous and too extreme. Furthermore, they avoid the danger of misunderstanding, for example the anthropomorphic expressions: the radically anti-anthropomorphic interpretation which separates the notion of “image” from that of God is confined to the Aramaic versions and to a line of tradition which most probably was taken over by the Karaites. The Targums also fight shy of the terms of idolatry (as it is known, Bible used the term “image” in an inculpatory sense for man-made images of God), and finally, the Targums tend to defend the unity or singularity of God: there are no (diminished) images, no plurality in the Godhead.²⁵

3.2 Midrashim

There is a long fascinating tradition of Jewish philosophers and theologians speculating on the nature of what it means to be created in the image of God. According to a contemporary approach, *tzelem Elohim* is not just one concept in the Jewish tradition but the foundational premise of the entire religion.²⁶ In the followings I seek to explore and highlight the above-mentioned three issues regarding *tzelem Elohim*: the question of its universality, its immutability, and its role as a fundamental principle of Torah through which all other decisions ought to be filtered.²⁷

Regarding the rabbinic midrashim *parashah* (chapter) 8 of the *Berishit Rabbah* speaks about the interpretation of Gen. 1:26–28. *Bereshit Rabbah* or *Genesis Rabbah* is a midrash compilation, the earliest rabbinic commentary on the book of *Genesis*,

²⁵ Cf. *Targum Ps-Jonathan: The fact that God’s words, “let us make,” are in the plural, and might be taken to indicate that there is a plurality in the Godhead, gave rise to the opinion that God spoke these words to the angels.*

²⁶ For example, R. Avi Weiss writes, “Perhaps the most fundamental principle in Judaism is that every person is created in the image of God.” WEISS, *Principles of Spiritual Activism*, xv.; and according to R. Yitz Greenberg, “tselem elokim is the core of the entire tradition – not only of the interpersonal mitzvot, but the ritual commandments as well.” GREENBERG, *Judaism and Modernity*, 11.

²⁷ Following the source sheets and thoughts of Rabbi Josh Yuter (“Sacred Slogans”) and ALTMANN, *Homo Imago Dei*, 235-259.

composed in Roman Palestine around the fifth century CE,²⁸ where a variety of interpretations is offered.

Interestingly the rabbinic sources contradict the (Christian) premise that *imago Dei* is a universal characteristic of every human being, and many of them argue that it no longer applies to all humanity, perhaps from already Adam onwards (GenR 23:6²⁹, *B. Bava Batra* 58a), or on the contrary, it appears only after Adam and Eve (GenR 22:2). Other sources suggest that the special qualities endowed by the image of God can be nullified by a person's deeds (*T. Yevamot* 8:7).³⁰ Although we have sources that indicate the opposite (GenR 8:11), we can firmly state that the traditional understanding of *imago Dei* as a universal and immutable attribute of humanity – seeing the rabbinic approaches – is by no means an undoubted dogma in Torah. As to its role as a fundamental principle of the Torah, I would suggest that *tzelem Elohim* may be a significant principle, but the parameters of how human dignity fits with Torah requirements depend on the Torah itself, and they do not form the overarching principle to which Torah must conform.

As Alexander Altmann states, “[t]he Mishnah thus accepted the *homo imago Dei* concept in its Philonic and, ultimately, Platonic sense, but rather than dwell on its theological implications, it put it to good use in the context of Halakah”.³¹ It was used to be a reminder of the dignity and value of every human being. Apparently, the important thing for the Rabbis was to be able to translate the concept of *imago Dei* into halakhic categories, to put and use it in pragmatic rather than theological context.

²⁸ Cf. *Genesis Rabbah in Text and Context*, 1-33.

²⁹ This midrash states not only that *tzelem Elohim* ended entirely after three generations, but that it is (or was) a visible quality in the respect that humans actually looked like God, and after Enosh men's faces became ape-like.

³⁰ See *Tosefta III. Nashim*, 50. R. Akiva interprets Gen. 9:6 to mean someone who commits murder “מבטל את הדמות” – “nullifies the image [of God]”. The word “nullifies” typically refers to a status that existed before, but no longer does. It is not clear from this statement that R. Akiva refers to the murderer or the victim, but in either case, the use of “nullifies” would imply that *tzelem Elohim* is not a permanent state.

³¹ ALTMANN, *Homo Imago Dei*, 243.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: *IMAGO DEI* AND HUMAN DIGNITY

Following Matthew Puffer³², it is noteworthy that St Augustine, who remains an influential voice within the Christian tradition, exhibits in his writings three distinct conceptions and interpretations of the *imago Dei* that corresponds to three accounts of the *imago Dei* and human dignity offered by subsequent thinkers, like (the Italian Renaissance humanist) Giovanni Pico, Martin Luther, and Thomas Aquinas. A detailed examination would go beyond the scope of this paper, but it is noteworthy to outline the developments in Augustine's expositions. In his initial interpretations, disavowing Manichaean understandings³³, Augustine argues that the image of God is an extrinsic *telos* and human beings were created with a disposition or orientation toward the image of God (*ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei*; not *in* but *to* the image and likeness of God), where the image and likeness is understood to be the Son of God (based on Col. 1:15). After the year 400 he refers *imago Dei* to the Trinity rather than solely the Son – examining the image of the Trinity in the human rational soul (*memoria, intellectus, voluntas*) –, and stating that human being is the image of God (*est imago Dei*³⁴), so *imago Dei* became something intrinsic. While in *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* he asserts that the image of God is lost in the Fall (not only deformed or tarnished but destroyed) and only restored in regeneration, later (for example in *Retractationes*) he cites 2 Cor. 3:18 (“we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory”) as a warrant for the revised interpretation that the image of God is not lost but only veiled, which leads to identifying the image of God with an inherent, persistent capacity for the contemplation of God, which can be empowered or activated by God’s love as the Holy Spirit. As Matthew Puffer

³² PUFFER, *Human Dignity*, 65-82.

³³ Augustine’s forty-five-year writing career includes five major expositions of Genesis 1, more than eight hundred explicit references to the image of God. The profound interest in the image of God already constitutes a remarkable development for the former Manichee who had once considered the affirmation that human beings are created *ad imaginem et similitudinem* as a chief shortcoming of Catholic teachings (i.e., an ascription of a human form to God).

³⁴ A literal reading of 1Cor 11:7 (“a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man”) allows him to contend that human beings other than Jesus Christ are the image of God, whereas a figural reading of the same text enables him to affirm that male and female equally are the image of God (ontologically), even as he interprets the text’s ascription of the image exclusively to the male in terms of gendered offices or roles (functionally).

argues, it is remarkable how Augustine's writings on the *imago Dei* might shed light on contemporary human dignity discourse and on debates about the sources, uses, and translations of these two terms, since each of three competing, prevalent meanings of human dignity (as honourable social status³⁵, as Kant's *Menschenwürde*³⁶, and as the more liberal construal of autonomy³⁷) "finds its theological analog in a version of the image of God already present in Augustine's writings".³⁸

Regarding human dignity, it is noteworthy that the Latin *dignitas* refers by Cicero already to the term dignity in the sense of an inner property of all human beings (in his work *On duties*). Christianity during the persecution recognized that human dignity had an interior character, and contrasted it with the exterior, social honour, to which the Latin term *dignitas* originally referred.³⁹ Theophilus of Antioch's work *Ad Autolycus* displays us the first Christian commentary on the beginning of the *Genesis* and refers to the basis of human dignity with the concept of *imago Dei*. As he writes, "[w]hen God said, 'Let us make man after our image and likeness' [Gen. 1:26], he first reveals the dignity of man (πρῶτον μὴνύει τὸ ἀξίωμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου). For after making everything else by a word, God considered all this as incidental; he regarded the making of man as the only work worthy of his own hands" (*Autol.* 2,18).⁴⁰

³⁵ Cf. CICERO, *De Officiis*.

³⁶ Cf. KANT, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics*, 4:434-445.

³⁷ As liberty to act in accordance with a life plan one chooses for oneself. Cf. MILL, *On Liberty*.

³⁸ Matthew Puffer states that "seeing Augustine's influence upon later rival interpretations of the image of God and human dignity (...) [his] thought in no way resolves, but rather anticipates and mirrors, debates about sources and uses of human dignity that emerged in the earlier modern period and echo even more today". PUFFER, *Human Dignity*, 68.

³⁹ Cf. MÜLLER, *Concepts and Dimensions of Human Dignity*, 30-36. "Without using the term dignity, the biblical text already brings some of the elements of our contemporary understanding of human dignity to the fore. (...) [C]omparisons to the oriental context provide evidence that the text confirms the fundamental equality of all human beings and that all are endowed with responsibility. It is therefore consistent with the intention of the text when it is used today to support the philosophical and political claims for the universality of human dignity and basic human rights". *Ibid.* 27-28.

⁴⁰ THEOPHILUS OF ANTIOCH, *Ad Autolycum*, 56-57.

From *Genesis* to the Pauline *corpus* to the Hadiths, the sacred texts of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (regarding the Islamic conceptions of *fitra*) affirm that human beings were created in the image of God and have made the image of God central to questions of religious thought and life. As Alexander Altmann states, “[t]he chasm that divides Jewish from Christian theology manifests itself most clearly in the interpretation of topics which, at first blush, might seem to provide common ground between the two religions”.⁴¹ An example to this is the biblical idea that man was created in the image of God. Both Jewish and Christian exegetes agree that the *imago Dei* motif is to be understood as an affirmation of man’s dignity and primacy over the creation. However, when theological considerations enter, divergences emerge. The concept of *imago Dei* has gone through different stages of development. The difference has not so much concerned the philosophical notion of the dignity of man as a rational creature (having rational soul or intellect) – that has remained a common ground –, but the theological equivalence of the Logos and Christ. In Altmann’s words, “[h]istorical conditions prevented a continuous dialogue across the fence, but there were occasional exchanges of a polemical nature, and beneath many a rabbinic utterance one may discern a silent reference to Christian doctrine”.⁴² As Matthias Morgenstern claims, examining *Genesis Rabbah*, the Midrash is the document of a critical but constructive discourse between Jewish scholars and contemporary Christianity in late antiquity.⁴³

In the context of current discussions, the term “human dignity” has become pivotal and emerged as a key term, prevalent not only in daily speech, but also in philosophical, legal, and political discourses. However, nowadays it is the grammar of human dignity rather than the language of the image of God that is in ascendancy. Pope Francis, for example, appeals to the image of God and human dignity almost interchangeably (as well as recent theorists often treat human dignity as the secular analog of *imago Dei*), and yet the Pope invokes human dignity ten times more frequently than the image of God both in ecclesial documents and in the public

⁴¹ ALTMANN, *Homo Imago Dei*, 235.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Cf. MORGENSTERN, *Die große Genesis-Dichtung*, 26-32.

square.⁴⁴ Since “theorists and advocates on both sides of a range of contemporary social and political issues – from abortion, assisted suicide, and genetic experimentation to torture, immigration policy, and reparations – invoke human dignity to buttress their respective claims and positions”⁴⁵, it would be very important to specify which meaning of each term that one has in view. Regarding the translatability of the image of God into the language of human dignity, the diverse historical sources and meanings of these terms should not remain unspecified, thus unlike Jürgen Habermas (who asserts that this translation of religious terms into a secular idiom occurs “without emptying them through a process of deflation and exhaustion”⁴⁶), I would say – with Jeremy Waldron⁴⁷ – that the image of God does not simply translate directly as human dignity without loss or remainder. Moreover, by initiating quite diverse yet legitimate modes of interpretation and having influence upon later rival interpretations, Augustine’s practice of critical engagement with sacred texts offers an opportunity for contemporary translations of the image of God into the grammar of human dignity. Augustine’s own development in conversation with the Scripture suggests that the critical reconsideration and reassessment of the writings, taking into consideration omitted texts⁴⁸, highlighting theological or ethical facets of the image of God – by Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike – would be fruitful for contemporary

⁴⁴ Cf. PUFFER, *Human Dignity*, 65-66.; tallies for *imago Dei* / human dignity are the followings: *Evangelii gaudium*: 2x/28x; *Laudato si'*: 3x/28x; *Address to United Nations*: 0x/8x.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 66.

⁴⁶ Habermas argues for the straightforward translation of *imago Dei* into human dignity (with the original meaning, without any inflation), and its potential for grounding human rights. Cf. HABERMAS / RATZINGER, *The Dialectics of Secularization*, 45.

⁴⁷ “If [the image of God] is looked to as a ground [for human rights], [which interpretation we select], may make a considerable difference to the character of the rights theory we erect on its foundation”. WALDRON, *The Image of God*, 216.

⁴⁸ Such as Gen 9:6, where the protection of the life of every person is the logical consequence of the *imago Dei* paradigm. However, it can be interpreted as a prohibition of murder, or as a sanctioning of blood vengeance (i.e., delegating the power by God to punish human blood-shedding). Cf. JANOVIĆ, *An Exegetical and Theological Reappraisal*, 193-194.

understanding: the potential for grounding human rights⁴⁹, its implication for abortion and euthanasia (the question of human dignity), or how could we rethink the concept of *imago Dei* in front of the question of the Artificial Intelligence: what makes humans genuinely distinctive and in the image of God.

Seeing this, does the concept of *imago Dei* have any other function than to express the dignity of man? Speaking solely of “human dignity” without anchoring it in some kind of theology would seem rather futile. Is there a way to speak of man as created in the image of God without appearing shallow and trivial? Following Pope Benedict’s thoughts in his book *Christianity and the Crises of Cultures*: in examining history, it becomes evident that when God’s will was disregarded, the focal point shifted to an individual’s personal will to power. In such instances, the recognition of the divine image in humanity, deserving of respect, was replaced by a view of individuals as mere “human material” to exploit. In fact, man was disdained and disfigured in exactly the same way as God himself was being disdained and disfigured. With Ratzinger’s words: “This means that man enters the world, no longer as a gift of the Creator, but as the product of our activity – and a product that can be selected according to requirements that we ourselves stipulate. In this way, the splendour of the fact that he is the image of God – the source of his dignity and of his inviolability – no longer shines upon this man; his only splendour is the power of human capabilities. Man is nothing more now than the image of man – but of what man?”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ *Taking into consideration the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* Pope Francis confirmed that “the commitment to human rights is never ended”. However, there have been growing disagreements worldwide and especially within the Western world in the last decades as to what human rights are. Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), examining the effects of Enlightenment, states that “when Enlightenment transformed these words [image and likeness of God] into a human right, this was a great advance. But when other advances joined this one – scientific freedom, the autonomy of technology, women’s self-determination – this resulted in problems that are difficult to solve. RATZINGER, *Christianity and the Crises of Cultures*, 11.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 15.

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RECHTSPRECHUNG DES MÜHLDORFER - SALZBURGER HEXENPROZESS VON 1749/50 DER VERMEINTLICHEN DELINQUENTIN, MARIE PAUERIN. UNTERSUCHUNG UND QUELLENDOKUMENTATION

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*Keywords: Marie Pauerin, Salzburg-Mühldorfer-Hexenprozess, Schadenszauber,
Constitutio Criminalis Carolina, Folter*

I. HISTORISCHER UMRISS

Der Glaube an übernatürlichen Kräften mit welchen andere geschädigt werden können, war in verschiedenen Kulturen verbreitet. Alle nicht christlichen Völker des Abendlandes, also die Kelten, Römer usw. aber auch die antiken Griechen und Germanen waren sich der Existenz magischer und dämonischer Kräfte bewusst.¹ Fast alle Bevölkerungsschichten der griechischen und römischen Antike befassten sich mit Wahrsagekunst, die Vogel oder Eingeweideschau. Sowohl aus der griechischen als auch der römischen Antike sind deshalb Bestimmungen gegen schädigende Zaubersprüche und -mittel bekannt.² Die ersten schriftlichen Aufzeichnungen des alten römischen Rechts aus den Jahren 451/450 v. Chr., dem *Zwölftafelgesetz*, legen Bestimmungen insbesondere gegen Schadenszauber dar. Zauberei an sich sollte im antiken Rom nicht strafrechtlich verfolgt werden, um ihre hilfreichen Anwendungsvarianten weiterhin dem römischen Senat zu Verfügung zu stellen. Nichtdestotrotz wurde magischer Ernstdiebstahl, die Schädigung von

¹ Vgl. SEELER, *Hexen, Schamanen und Priesterinnen*, 13.

² Vgl. HANSEN, *Von der Ketzerverfolgung*, 56.

Feldfrüchten und Wettermachen bestraft.³ In Anbetracht des Schadenaubereiverdachts führte die Aufdeckung der sogenannten Bacchanalien-Verschwörung im Jahr 186 v. Chr. mutmaßlich zur Hinrichtung von 5000 Bürger. Eine scheinbare Ursache für diese Hinrichtungen konnte der zunehmende Einfluss fremder religiöser Kulte gewesen sein, von denen sich die römischen Magistrate bedroht fühlten.⁴

2. HEXENGLAUBE IM MITTELALTER

Der Hexenglaube in Europa war keineswegs eine Erfindung der Frühen Neuzeit, sondern war schon im Mittelalter fester Bestandteil des menschlichen Lebens, der in verschieden Erscheinungsformen auftreten konnte. Die weltlichen und kirchlichen Obrigkeiten befassten sich im Mittelalter nur marginal mit der im Volk verbreiteten Magie. Das bedeutet nicht, dass sie ihnen gleichgültig gewesen wäre. Die von Inquisitor Heinrich Kramer publizierte Abhandlung „Malleus Maleficarum“ ging durchaus auf diese Thematik ein. In seinem 1487 erschienen Traktat gab er Fallbeispiele zu Delikten wie Schadenszauber, Lehre der Hexerei, Teufelspakt, Hexensabbat oder Gotteslästerung an. Den überwiegenden Glaubensabfall der Frauen interpretierte er als ein sicheres Vorzeichen für das bevorstehende Ende der Welt. Nach den Beschreibungen des „Hexenhammers“ konnte der Teufel nur dadurch Macht und Einfluss auf Körper und Seele des Menschen gewinnen, wenn er sich mit einer Frau fleischlich verbinde.⁵ Bestätigt durch das 2. Buch Mose 22,17. „Zauberinnen sollst du nicht am Leben lassen“ und den Kirchenlehrern Augustinus und Thomas von Aquin unterstrich Heinrich Kramer seine Glaubwürdigkeit. Der „Hexenhammer“ war eine grundlegende Rechtfertigungsschrift, kombiniert mit einer Prozessordnung für die Hexenjagd. In Deutschland übernahmen zunehmend Fürsten und Städte die Hexenverfolgung in die Hand. Für sie war Hexerei, wie Heinrich Kramer es empfohlen hatte und wie es der mittelalterlichen Tradition des Schadenszaubers entsprach, vor allem ein weltliches Verbrechen, ein Angriff auf die

³ Vgl. SCHARFF, *Zauberei*, 20-23.

⁴ Vgl. RUMMEL / VOLTMER, *Hexen und Hexenverfolgung*, 34.

⁵ Vgl. BÖSKEN, *Hexenprozess Gerresheim 1737/38.*, 183f.

Gesellschaft. Der Hexenwahn⁶ erhielt später im Zeitalter der Aufklärung in den Alpenregionen eine neue Dimension.

3. VERFOLGUNGSFÖRDERNDE FAKTOREN IN DEN ALPENREGIONEN

Mitte des 16. Jahrhunderts kam es in Mitteleuropa erneut zu Missernten und Hungersnöten und der Lebensstandard der Bevölkerung begann rapide zu sinken, was zur Folge hatte, dass sich in der Bevölkerung Epidemien ausbreiteten.⁷ An diesen Katastrophen seien vor allem Menschen schuld, deren Schlechtigkeit und Abfall vom Gottesglauben die Krise hervorrief, und dem daraus resultierenden Wirken des Satans. Im Mittelpunkt der ländlichen Territorien stand die Kunst des Wettermachens und des Schadenzaubers. Das Wettermachen wurde Gott als Schöpfer zugeordnet, daher könne eine Hexe nur mit Hilfe des Satans auf das Wetter einwirken. Die Grenzen zwischen weit verbreiteter volkstümlicher Magie mit hoher sozialer Akzeptanz einerseits und Schadenszauberei andererseits, waren in ländlichen Gebieten fließend.⁸ Der Hexenglaube verlangte keine Veränderung im persönlichen Lebensstil - anders als der Glaube.

Bevor die Verfolgungen beginnen konnten, mussten bestimmte Anhaltspunkte erfüllt worden sein. Die staatliche und kirchliche Obrigkeit gab dazu nun ein Reglement vor, wer wegen Hexerei zu bestrafen sei. Die Positionen des Territorialherrn hingen wesentlich davon ab, welches Gottesbild sie sich machten – gnädig oder strafend. Denunziationen über Schadenszauber und Teufelspakt wurden oft von den feindseligen Nachbarn aus Wut und Neid vor den Gerichtsdienere gebracht. Wiederum wurde von manchen Priestern der Willensmoment eines Teufelspaktes als so wichtig erachtet, dass selbst diejenigen, die sich die Zusammenkunft mit dem Teufel nur einbildeten, zu bestrafen seien, da sie den bösen Willen hatten. Durch die Betonung des Willenselementes wurde der schädigende Wille in den Vordergrund gestellt dieser Wille drückt sich mit der

⁶ Vgl. *RABANSER, Hexenwahn*,

⁷ Vgl. *SPATZ, Wege der Beschuldigung*, 181.

⁸ Vgl. *POHL, Zauberglaube und Hexenangst*, 10f.

Übereinkunft des Teufels aus.⁹ Diese Anhaltspunkte reichten bereits aus, um eine Person bei Gericht anzuzeigen. Im Jahr 1532 wurde die „Peinliche Halsgerichtsordnung“ Kaiser Karls V. eingeführt. Der Anlass für die Einführung der „Constitutio Criminalis Carolina“ kurz die „CCC“ war die Vielfältigkeit der gewohnheitsrechtlicher Straf- und Verfahrensnormen zu vereinfachen, und Missbräuche im Inquisitionsverfahren einzudämmen. Sie ist das erste reichseinheitliche Strafgesetzbuch mit Strafprozessordnung im Heiligen Römischen Reich deutscher Nation

4. ANWENDUNG DER CONSTITUTIO CRIMINALIS CAROLINA

Im Jahr 1532 wurde die *Constitutio Criminalis Carolina*, kurz die „Carolina“, auf dem Regensburger Reichstag von Kaiser Karl V. ratifiziert und bildete den Abschluss einer Reichsreform der Strafgesetzgebung.¹⁰ Um von den Kurfürsten und Landesständen die Einwilligung der Reichsreform zu erhalten, wurde im Vorwort die sogenannte „Salvatorische Klausel“ angeführt, welche den Kurfürsten und Ständen weiterhin ihre wohl hergebrachten Bräuche garantierte. Durch diese Klausel wurde das Zugeständnis des partikularen Rechts dem Territorialherrn nochmals bekräftigt. Nichtsdestotrotz wurde unter Art. 218 CCC „*Von mißbreuchen vnd bösen vnvernüfftigen gewohnheyten, so an etlichen orten und enden gehalten werden*“¹¹ verdeutlicht, dass viele hergebrachten Bräuche mit dem kaiserlichen Recht nicht zu vereinbaren sind. Insofern kam die „Salvatorische Klausel“ in einigen Territorien nicht zur Anwendung. Einen erheblichen Einfluss auf die Entstehung der „Carolina“ hatte die Bambergische Peinliche Halsgerichtordnung, die sogenannte „Bambergensis“ des Johann Freiherrns zu Schwarzenberg. Zeitlebens interessierte sich der Adelige für Theologie, Philosophie und Jurisprudenz. Obwohl er weder eine Lateinschule besucht noch Jura studiert hatte, wurde er vom Fürstbischof Georg III. Schenk von Limpurg als Oberrichter in Windsheim bestellt. Während seiner Tätigkeit

⁹ Vgl. SPATZ, *Wege der Beschuldigung*, 180-229.

¹⁰ Vgl. BASCHWITZ, *Hexen und Hexenprozesse*, 145f.

¹¹ RADBRUCH, *Die Peinliche Gerichtsordnung*, 129.

als Richter verfasste er nicht nur die *Bambergensis*, sondern deckte erhebliche Missstände in der deutschen Strafrechtspflege auf.

Das primäre Ziel der „Carolina“ war, die Vielzahl an gewohnheitsrechtlichen Straf- und Verfahrensnormen im Heiligen Römischen Reich zu verringern¹² und Missbräuche im Inquisitionsverfahren einzudämmen. In der prozessrechtlichen Hinsicht führte die CCC den am kanonischen Recht orientierten Inquisitionsprozess ein, der in der Klageanwendung *ex officio* ausgeführt wurde. In diesem Sinne war die CCC im Prozessverfahren sicher ein Fortschritt.¹³ Ihre Artikel strebten in erster Linie der Beibehaltung des ordentlichen Strafprozesses, *processus ordinarius*, und des akkusativischen Verfahrensprinzips. Grundsätzlich setzt sich das Strafgesetzbuch aus Strafbestimmungen und materiellem Prozessrecht zusammen, und in einigen Artikeln bezog er sich auf Verbrechen der Zauberei. Die Bedeutung der „Carolina“ lässt sie kontrovers im Rahmen der unzähligen Inquisitionsprozesse erscheinen, da irreführende Überzeugungen, die mithilfe der „Salvatorischen Klausel“ durchgesetzt werden konnten, unendliches Leid über viele Menschen gebracht hatten.¹⁴ Dennoch übernahm die *Constitutio Criminalis Carolina* keineswegs das Regelwerk des „Hexenhammers“,¹⁵ der dem Delinquenten keine Zeugen zubilligte und nur einen Pflichtverteidiger zusprach. In Anbetracht der schwerwiegenden Tat von Zauberei, die zudem keine unverdächtigen Zeugen zuließ, kam dem Geständnis des Angeklagten eine grundlegende Bedeutung zu: Angesichts des Grundsatzes „*Confessio regina probationum*“. Dabei galten die Aussagen von mindestens zwei Zeugen. Der Art. 22 CCC verdeutlicht die Wichtigkeit von Zeugen.

„Item es ist auch zu merken, daß niemant auff eynicherley anzeygung, argkwons warzeichen oder verdacht, entlich zu peinlicher straff soll verurtheylt werden, sondern alleyn peinlich mag man darauff fragen, so die anzeygung [...] vnd nit auff vermutung oder anzeygung.“¹⁶

¹² RUPPRECHT, *Das „Crimen magiae“*, 264.

¹³ Vgl. POHL, *Zauberglaube und Hexenangst*, 154.

¹⁴ RUPPRECHT, *Das „Crimen magiae“*, 264f.

¹⁵ Vgl. BEHRINGER, *Hexen und Hexenprozesse*, 313-316.

¹⁶ RADBRUCH, *Die Peinliche Gerichtsordnung*, 41.

Die Entscheidung, ob und wann bei Hexerei Ermittlungen eingeleitet und eine Anzeige zu Protokoll aufgenommen wurde, lag zunächst beim Pfleger des zuständigen Pflegegerichts. Die Verurteilung des Delinquenten aufgrund einer bloßen Annahme, der *Fama*, wurde zu keiner Zeit gebilligt. In der „Carolina“ wurde auch der so genannte „Ordal Prozess“ genannt, der auf einem Gottesurteil beruhte, bei dem sowohl die „Nadelprobe“, „Aufziehen“ als auch die „Wasserprobe“ durchgeführt wurden.¹⁷ Der Ordal Prozess, der auf der Vorstellung basierte, dass die unschuldige Person erfolglos sein wird und der Täter mit Hilfe Satans überlebte, wurde später von einem Indizien- und Geständnisprozess abgelöst.¹⁸ Dass sie im Falle von Zauberei und teuflischem Einfluss als Verdachtsmoment nicht ausreichte, regelte Art. 44 CCC. Als „*Von zauberey gnugsam anzeygung*“ galt die Zauberei nach Art. 44 CCC¹⁹, wenn mehrere Indizien durch unabhängige Zeugen des Schadenszaubers bestätigt wurden, oder wenn die Angeklagte noch verdächtige Requisiten bei sich trug.²⁰ Die Verdachtsmomente der Hexerei wurden hierbei von mehreren Zeugen protokolliert, und nach ihrem mittelbaren oder unmittelbaren Bezug auf das angebliche Verbrechen und des Grades des Delikts nach unterschieden in *indica remota* Art. 24-28 CCC und *indica proxima* Art. 33-44 CCC.²¹ Ob es um die Feststellung einer Anzeige durch Zeugen im Sinne von Art. 44 CCC ging, die Verhängung eines peinlichen Verhörs, lag in der Entscheidung des übergeordneten Gerichts.²² In der Peinlichen Halsgerichtsordnung begründet der Art 60 CCC.²³ die Aufgabe des Pflegers oder Hofrats, die Glaubwürdigkeit der Zeugen nach Akteneinsicht zu überprüfen.

¹⁷ Vgl. RUMMEL / VOLTMER, *Hexen und Hexenverfolgung*, 46-50.

¹⁸ Vgl. KÖNIG, *Geschichte der Hexenprozesse*, 61.

¹⁹ RADBRUCH, *Die Peinliche Gerichtsordnung*, 52.

²⁰ POHL, *Zauberglaube und Hexenangst*, 156f.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 156-164.

²² RADBRUCH, *Die Peinliche Gerichtsordnung*, 59.

²³ Vgl. *ibid.*, 59f.

5. DER MÜHLSDORFER-SALZBURGER HEXENPROZESS VON 1749-1750

Im Folgenden werden entsprechende Originaldokumente aus dem Landesarchiv Salzburg transkribiert wiedergegeben und in Auszügen dokumentiert. Unter Heranziehung einiger Quellen des genannten Mühltdorfer-Salzburger Inquisitionsprozesses wird die Entwicklung des *crimen magiae* und seiner prozessualen Behandlung im ausgehenden 18. Jahrhundert anhand des Inquisitionsprozesses der 16-jährigen Marie Pauerin abgebildet.

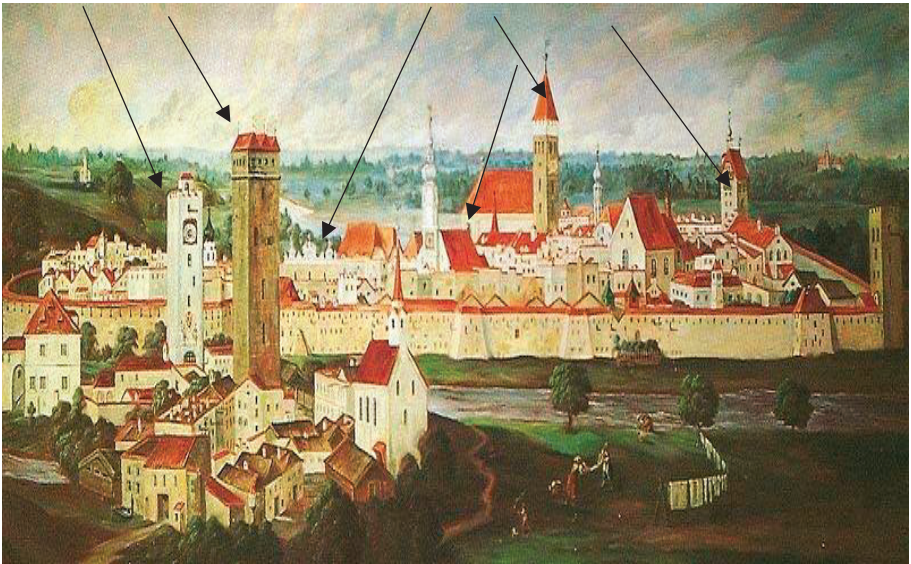


Bild: Barock Anton Schröck 1736

Stadtverwaltung Mühldorf a. Inn Pfeile v. recht nach links 24

²⁴ Ansicht von links nach rechts: Nagelschmiedturm mit drei Wappen: Mühltdorfer Rad; Bayern und Salzburger Land; Voitturm mit Gefängnis. Keuche im Erdgeschoss des heutigen Rathauses am Stadtplatz, kleine Frauenkirche der Kapuziner Brüder. Stadtkirche Sankt Nikolaus, Altöttinger Tor. Die Tore beinhalteten Gefängnisse für Bewohner die nicht in der Stadt lebten. Die Keuche war nur für die Stadtbürger vorgesehen. Nur wenige Kilometer außerhalb der Stadt war die Grenze zu Bayern. Kurfürst Maximilian III. Joseph herrschte in Bayern von 1745 bis 1777.

In diesem strittigen Prozess genügte es dem weltlichen Pfleger, diese teils nur auf Hörensagen beruhenden Indizien der Hexerei, die bezichtigte Marie Pauerin, in die Keuche zu inhaftieren. Noch am selben Tag wurde Marie vom Pfleger gütlich vernommen, mit den Malefiztaten zu konfrontiert und ihre Aussagen, Gebärden und ihr Mienenspiel sorgfältig protokolliert. Am 27. Januar 1749 wurde die erste Vernehmung der mutmaßlichen Delinquentin Marie Pauerin, zum Teil mit der Androhung der Folter vor dem Mühldorfer Pflegegericht abgehalten. Bereits hier wird die Abfolge des Mühldorfer - Salzburger Hexenprozesses der Jahre 1749 bis 1750 erkennbar: Denunziation, gütliches Verhör, Androhung der Folterinstrumente und Geständnis, Peinlicher Rechtstag lauten die Stationen eines weitgehend von der Routine bestimmten Verfahrens. Vor allem die Anleitung, andere Personen zu diffamieren, ließ die Ermittlungen und Verhöre rasant ausufern. Bei einem Hexenprozess in der Frühen Neuzeit wurde ein Verteidiger regelmäßig gar nicht oder nur der Form halber zugelassen. In der Stadt Mühldorf gab es wenige Pflichtverteidiger, da die Verteidigung von Hexen kaum einen Ertrag einbrachte.

6. ANMERKUNG HEXENPROZESS GEGEN DIE 16-JÄHRIGE MARIE PAUERIN

Aufgrund der Quellen lassen sich folgende Rahmenbedingungen und handelnde Personen rekonstruieren:

Zeit:	Jen. 1749 bis Oct. 1750
Ort:	Pflegegericht Mühldorf bis 1803 Enklave Salzburg; Stadtgericht (Hofrat) Salzburg
Angeklagt:	Marie Pauerin, Kindsmensch, 16 Jahre alt
Mitangeklagte:	Liesl Gusterer
Gerichtspersonal:	Stadtschreiber Nikolaus Mitterer
Zeugen:	Jacob Altinger, Höllschmied; Maria Altingerin, Höllschmiedin; Maria Mittermayerin, Dienstmagd; Maria Kronabitingerin; Naderin; Lorenz Spreng, Naglschmied; Joseph Paullus, Tuchmacher; Maria Rämblspergerin, Dienstmagd

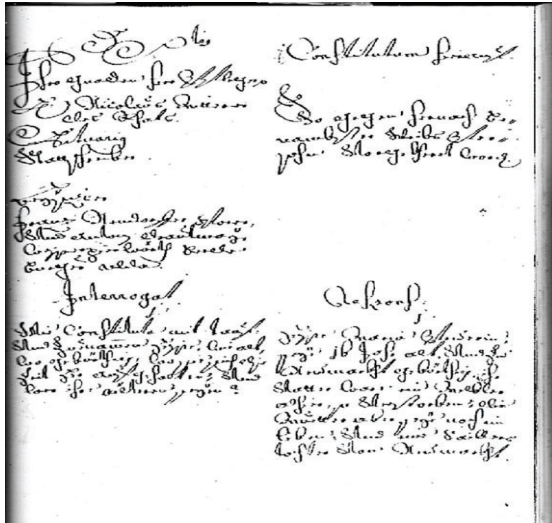
Am 27. Januar 1749 wurden sieben Zeugen vor das Mühlendorfer Pflegegericht zitiert, um eine Anzeige bezüglich der Bezeichnung der Marie Pauerin abzulegen. Die Aussagen waren alle übereinstimmend und berichteten von der folgenden Begebenheit: Am vergangenen Samstag früh beim Höllschmied Jacob Altinger sei ein Lärmen entstanden, sodass die Stadteinwohner zusammengelaufen seien. Im Haus des Schmieds sind Gewichte, Ziegeltrümmer, Hufnägel, Glasscherben und Eicheln von der Aufhängung und Bank runtergefallen. Während des Lärmens war die Kindsmagd Marie Pauerin anwesend, lachte nur und fürchtete sich als einzige nicht vor diesem Lärm. Aufgrund der Zeugenaussagen wurde am 27. Januar 1749 die Kindsmagd Marie Pauerin in Mühlendorf festgenommen. Noch am selben Tag wurde die Delinquentin vom Amtsknecht zu einem ersten gütlichen Verhör abgeholt, in dem ihr der gegen sie bestehende Verdacht mitgeteilt wurde. Dabei wurde alles vorgetragen, was die Zeugenaussagen bzw. Ermittlungen bis zu diesem Zeitpunkt zutage gefördert hatten, angefangen vom Gerücht bis zur Denunziation durch andere Beschuldigte. Die Anzeige hatte nicht nur die Aussagen der Zeugen zu enthalten, sondern auch deren Namen, denn wie sonst wären Einreden gegen deren Person möglich, zum Beispiel sie seien Feinde der Beklagten, zu jung, notorische Lügner oder sonst wie als unglaubwürdig zu betrachten.

Im Falle von Zauberei reichten Verdachtsmomente allein nicht aus. Dies bestimmte der Artikel 44 CCC, um Verleumdungen aus einem Racheakt vorzubeugen. Als „genugsam angezeigt“ galt in diesem Artikel, wenn mehrere Indizien verschiedener Straftaten vorlagen. Je nach Schwere der Delikte und dem Verhalten der vermeintlichen Hexe gestaltete man die Vernehmung unterschiedlich. Die *Interrogatoria Generalia* bezog sich auf die Erhebung der Personalien der Angeklagten, Name, Alter, Stand, Wohnort, Beruf, Konfession etc.²⁵.

²⁵ Vgl. POHL, *Zauberglaube und Hexenangst*, 157-172.

7. QUELLENDOKUMENTATION: *INTERROGATORIA GENERALIA* VOM 27.1.1749

<p>Wie Constituta²⁶ mit Tauf- und Zunamen</p> <p>heiße, wie alt, wo gebürtig, wo sie sich</p> <p>diese Zeit her aufgehalten und wo ihre</p> <p>Eltern seyen?</p>	<p>Heiße Maria Pauerin, sey 16 Jahre alt und zu Neumarkt gebürtig. Ihr Vater war ein Melker allhier, schon verstorben. Die Mutter sey aber noch am Leben und eine Seilerstochter von Neumarkt. Heiße Maria Zöttlin und habe sie in ledigen Stand erzeugt. Dermalen sey sie beim Höllschmid (Höllschmied) und habe 2 Jahr und 5 Wochen im Diensten gestanden. Vorher aber habe sie beim Klostermetzger zu Neumarkt ein ¼ Jahr gedient. Ansonsten aber sey sie bei der Mutter zuhaus gelassen.</p>
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1. Vernehmung 27.1.1749 Marie Pauerin *Interrogatoria Generalia* Mühldorf 1.Seite

²⁶ Constituta [Angeklagte]

Da sich die Delinquentin nicht immer nach Wunsch des Gerichts verhielt und sich mehrmals verstockt²⁷ gab, beschloss das Gericht, sie zu einigen der gestellten Fragen nochmals genauer und strenger zu befragen, im schlimmsten Fall sogar durch Zeigen der Folterinstrumente. Während der Befragung und der Konfrontation mit den Zeugenaussagen achtete das Gerichtspersonal auf die Körpersprache der Delinquentin, ob sie in Verlegenheit geriet, Angstschweiß hatte oder sogar in Ohnmacht fiel.²⁸ Marie bestritt zunächst die schwerwiegenden Taten, jedoch bejahte sie in späteren Verhören die vorgeworfenen Delikte. Im Pflegegericht Mühldorf wurde die Folter gegen Marie Pauerin, die sich im Laster der *crimen magiae* vergangen hatte, nie angewendet, denn die Aburteilung und das eigentliche Prozessverfahren, lagen in den Händen des Hofrats im Fürsterzbistum Salzburg.

8. QUELLENDOKUMENTATION: PFLICHTMÄßIGE ANZEIGE

Actum den 27. Jenner 1749

Anwesend: Pfleger, Bürgermeister, Ratsmietglied..., Stadtschreiber, Beisitzer Johann Paul Kärchner, Stadtamtman allda tuet bei seinen Pflichten die Anzeig, daß vergangen Samstag in der Früh, wie es dazumalen schon bei dem löbl. Pflegegericht mündlich angezeigt, bei dem Jakob Altinger, Höllschmidt in der Wörstatt²⁹ ein Lärmen entstanden und die Leut zusammen gelaufen und gesehen, wie daß es in selbigen Haus mit Schmiedehammer, Gewichter, eiserne Kugeln, Hufnägel, Ziegeltrümmern, Glasscherben, Eicheln, Schweinklown³⁰ und Propfen³¹ so herum geworfen. In gemeldetem Haus sei ein gewisses Kindsmensch³², und wenn dieses aus dem Haus gegangen, so ist es mit dem Werfen still worden und da sie wieder nachhause gekommen, so hat es wieder angefangen

²⁷ verstockt [schweigend]

²⁸ Vgl. POHL, Zauberglaube und Hexenangst, 172.

²⁹ Wörstatt [Werkstatt]

³⁰ Schweinklown [Schweineklauen]

³¹ Propfen [Stopfel]

³² Kindsmensch [Kindsmagd]

mit oben erzählten Sachen zuzuwerfen. Das Kindsmensch ist niemals, sondern nur andere wurden getroffen: nicht aber verletzt worden, und haben die Leut gesagt, daß sie nur etwas Weniges empfunden, ob es schon ein Steinwurf oder anders gelassen. Und da man das Kindsmensch, wenn sie ins Haus hineingegangen gefragt, ob sie ihr nicht fürchte, so habe sie mit nein geantwortet und gelacht. Er, Anzeiger habe auf obrigkeitliche Befehlung das Kindsmensch selbige Nacht zu dem Hofpauern die Hardgassen mit dessen Verwilligum geführt, um zu erfahren, ob es in dem Schmidthaus alsdann still werde? Und obzwar die Leut im selbigen Haus nichts mehr gehört oder gesehen, so hat es doch in der Kammer bei der Pauern in der Hardgassen, wie dessen Knecht erinnert, öfters bei dem Fenster angeklopft und mit Mauerwerk, auch Taubenkot auf die Dienstdirn geworfen, also zwar, daß sie nicht in der Kammer bleiben können, sondern in die Stubn gehen müssen, da es sodann, wie er anzeige, seinen Knecht abgeleset, wieder stillgeworden. Weiter nun die Leut auf dieses Kindsmensch solchen Gestells halber eines Verdachts geworfen, so habe es sich auf obrigkeitliche Verbefehlung, derselben Person versichert und sie zu ihm in die Stubn³³ gebracht.

Franz Jacob, des hiesigen Amtmann Knecht, 18 Jahr alt, erinnert gleichfalls pflichtmäßig, daß in vorbesagter Kammer bei dem Pauern in der Hardgassen es öfters bei den Fenster angeklopft und mit Mauerbrocken, auch Taubenkot auf die Dienstdirn, so bei den Kindsmenschen war, geworfen, welche auch die Mauer- oder Mörtelbrocken, dem Taubenkot in die Stubn hineingebracht. Da aber des Kindsmensch in die Stubn geführt worden, habe die Dienstdirn und 2 Töchter von dem Hofpauern wieder eine Ruhe gehabt und schlafen können.

³³ Stubn [Zimmer, Kammer]

9. EIDLICHE ERFAHRUNG³⁴

VOM 27. JENNER 1749

Actum den 27. Jenner 1749

Erste Person

Jacob Altinger, bürgerlicher Höllschmied allda, bei 30 Jahre alt, verheirateten Standes *legalis* sagt nach abgelegtem Eid, es vergangenem Freyda³⁵ um halb 3 Uhr nachmittag, da seine Naderin einen Födericht,³⁶ bzw. einem Böth³⁷ zusammengemacht, die Schmiedin das Kindsmensch zu denen Hochwürdigen Herrn Capuziner um etwas geweihtes, solches zum Einnähen geschickt habe. Da nun das Kindsmensch mit den geweihten Sachen, wovon sie den Ablaßpfennig, welcher der Pförtner ihren Vorgeben nach ihr geschenkt hatte, anfänglich behalten wollen, solchen aber nachgebend freiwillig wieder hergegeben, in das Haus gekommen, so habe es angefangen, bei der Stubentür, wie ihm das Weib gesagt, 3 mal anzuklopfen und ob sie zwar darauf vermeldet: Herein: so habe sich doch niemand sehen lassen, habe auch, nachdem sie die Tür alsdann selbsten eröffnet, niemand gesehen, welches sie der Naderin³⁸ erzählt, und da sie hernach³⁹ in die Wörstatt zu ihm Deponenten⁴⁰ und ihn gefragt, ob er geklopft? Sei sie nach erhaltener Antwort, daß er es nicht gewesen sei, wieder in die Stubn zurück zu der Naderin gegangen, welche vermeldet, daß während der Zeit die Schmiedin hinabgegangen, sey vor der Stubntür⁴¹ in Strumpfsockan⁴² jemanden gehen gehört. Mittlerweilen da die Schmiedin und Naderin miteinander geforchten, seye das Kindsmensch von der oberen Kammer, allwo sie der Naderin aufgebettet, wieder herab kommen und habe vermeldet, daß sie auch gehen gehört. Nach diesem habe die Schmiedin auch

³⁴ *Eidliche Erfahrung [die „Deponenten“ mussten unter Eid aussagen]*

³⁵ *Freyda [Freitag]*

³⁶ *Födericht [Bettbezug zu einem Bett zusammennähen]*

³⁷ *Böth [Bett]*

³⁸ *Naderin [Näherin]*

³⁹ *hernach [später]*

⁴⁰ *Deponenten [in Verwahrung gegebenens]*

⁴¹ *Stubntür [Zimmertür]*

⁴² *Strumpfsockan [nur Strümpfe]*

gehört, daß es den vor der Stubntür stehenden Kasten, so ehevor⁴³ versperrt, zugemacht hat. Jedessen sey es Nacht geworden, und da sie nach dem Essen den Rosenkranz gebetet, habe es auf die Naderin geworfen, ihr aber so wenig weh getan als auch die andern, wann es gleich Stein oder Hämmer gewesen, wehe getan. Deponent habe sich hierauf niedergelegt, es habe aber die Schmiedin zum zweiten Mal zu ihm vor das Bett kleine Steindl und ein Ziegeltrum gebracht und ob er sie zwar das erste Mal ausgelacht, so sey er doch das andere Mal aufgestanden und in die Stubn herausgegangen, da alsdann vor einer alten Kerzenstumpen, bald drauf wieder Stein und Nägel, auch Beiner⁴⁴ geworfen. Die Schmiedin seye alsdann mit der Naderin zu Herrn Pfarrer Edler gegangen und habe ihm ein solches erzählt, der ihr aber nichts draus gehen lassen, worauf sie beide zu den Herrn Hochw. Patres Capuzinern gingen, in der Meinung, daß ein Herr Pater hinaus kommen solle. Es habe aber der Pförtner vermeldet, eine Frau sey so krank und dafür einen anderen Pater geschickt, welcher aber vermeldet, er habe keine Stollen⁴⁵ und Büchl⁴⁶ bei sich. Im Fall es aber nicht aufhören solle, zu werfen, so möchten sie nur wieder zu ihm kommen, welches dann auch durch Deponenten um 12 Uhr nachts geschehen. Ob nun zwar der Pater in sein Stubn kommen, geräuchert und benediziert, so habe es doch bald drauf vor dem Pater ein altes Nageltrum⁴⁷, sodann auch ein Kettenstück, so er wissentlich in der Wörstatt gehabt, niedergeworfen, worauf endlich der Pater in das Kloster und sie sämtlich aus dem Haus zu der Altmutter in das nächst entlegene Haus gingen. Die Nacht hinweg seye er und seine Leut, auch andere Nachbarn bei 3tem aber wieder in das Haus gegangen, um zu sehen, ob dieses Gespiel noch nicht aufgehört? So oft sie aber ins Haus kommen und das Kindsmensch vorgeleuchtet, habe es allzeit angefangen zu werfen, niemand aber einen Schaden getan, wann auch der Wurf mit Steinen, Hämmer oder eisernen Kugeln geschehen. Am Freyda⁴⁸ habe es nur mit kleinen Steindl, Ziegeltrümmern, Nägeln und Bändern geworfen, am Samstag aber mit Steinen, eisernen Kugeln,

⁴³ Ehevor [zuvor]

⁴⁴ Beiner [Knochen]

⁴⁵ Stollen [Stola]

⁴⁶ Büchl [Buch]

⁴⁷ Nageltrum [Nagel]

⁴⁸ Freyda [Freitag]

Hämmern und geweihten Büchlein, Kinderstühlerl⁴⁹, Eicheln, Schweineklowen. Mit großen Glasscherben und 2 Stück von einer Beschlagzeug geworfen. Er, Deponent, ist nur einmal, da er zum Fenster hinausgeschaut, in den Buckel⁵⁰ geworfen worden, die anderen Würf⁵¹ aber sind nur vor ihm niedergefallen. Sooft das Kindsmensch aus dem Haus war, ist es still gewesen, da sie aber wieder in das Haus kam, ist das Werfen wieder angegangen. Sie aber mehrmals getroffen worden und ob sie zwar sonst ganz erschrocken gwesen und wann ein starker Wind gegangen, sich nicht einmal aus der Stubn hinausgetraut, so hat sie sich doch nicht bei diesem Gespiel geforchten, sondern immerhin gelacht. Da nun dieses Kindsmensch am Samstag auf die Nacht zu Deponentas⁵² den Pauern der in der Hardgassen, allwohin sie nicht gehen wollen, durch den Amtmann begleitet worden, haben sie in dem Haus nachts nichts mehr vermerkt.

Concludit imp. hil. dimissa⁵³

10. ANMERKUNG ÄRZTLICHES GUTACHTEN

Um der Angeklagten Marie Pauerin verübte Delikte nachweisen zu können, mussten neben den Zeugenaussagen noch weitere Hilfsmittel zur Verfügung gestellt werden, die geeignet waren, die Delinquentin der Schuld zu überführen. Ein probates Mittel waren die Hexenproben, die ursprünglich als gewichtiges Indiz für die Schuld der Angeklagten galten. Die Nadelprobe, die am häufigsten angewandt wurde, zielte auf das Finden des Hexenzeichens am Körper der Delinquentin Marie Pauerin. Als Hexenmale galten alle Unregelmäßigkeiten auf der Haut, in die zur Überführung der Hexe eingestochen wurde. Solche Teufelsmale ließen sich auch ohne Nadeln aufspüren.

⁴⁹ *Kinderstühlerl [Kinderstuhl]*

⁵⁰ *Buckel [Rücken]*

⁵¹ *Würf [plural f. Würfe]*

⁵² *Deponentas [auch Hinterleger; der/die das Aufgeschriebene niedergelegt od. ausgesagt haben]*

⁵³ *Concludit imp. hil. dimissa [Befragung beendet, entlassen]*

11. QUELLENDOKUMENT: ATTESTATUM CHYRURGICUM

Ich, David Günthner, bürgerli. Chyrurgus allhier, urkunde hiemit, daß ich die auf dem Rathaus allhier verhaftete Maria Pauerin bei dem, den 9. July vorigen Jahres gegen selbe vorgekehrten Examen hinter dem rechten Ohr, wo sie von dem bösen Feind aufgeritzt worden zu sein vorgab, allen Fleißes besichtigt, einiges Kennzeichen aber von einer geschehenen Aufritzung nicht gesehen oder wahrgenommen.

Salzburg, den 24. Jenner 1750

David Günthner, bürgerl.
Chyrurgus zu St. Sebastian

12. SCHLUSSFOLGERUNG

In Anbetracht der Tatsache, dass die Anzeige nahezu ausnahmslos von Seiten der Bediensteten, Nachbarn und Dienstherrn erfolgte, kam der Beurteilung der Indizien dennoch eine große Bedeutung zu. Ob das Stadtgericht Salzburg im Fall Marie Pauerin sich nach der Peinlichen Halsgerichtsordnung hielt, und die gleichen Maßstäbe der Befragung auferlegten oder Schwankungen und Auslegungssache unterworfen waren, ist nach unzureichender Aufzeichnung aber auch hinsichtlich der Frage der Zulässigkeit einer Androhung der „peinlichen Befragung“, Dauer und Intensität auf der Folterbank, sowie die Einräumung eines Widerrufs, zu hinterfragen. Nachbarliche Irrungen, soziale Spannungen, Verleumdungen waren nicht unerhebliche Faktoren in diesem Prozess. Die Grenzen zwischen Blasphemie mit hoher sozialer Akzeptanz einerseits und Schadenszauberei andererseits waren durchaus fließend und mit dem sozialen Umfeld der Delinquentin Marie Pauerin verbunden. Selbst wenn man die Wirkung durch zeigen der Folterinstrumente bedenkt, stellt sich aus heutiger Sicht zumindest die Frage, woher die Angeklagte Marie Pauerin das Detailwissen über Schadenszauber, Teufelspakt oder Gotteslästerung hatte, was sie veranlasste, ihre unter Androhung einer Folter abgepressten Geständnisse später mit dem Tod vor Augen „freiwillig“ zu bestätigen? Sie weiß Einbildung und Sinnestäuschung nicht mehr auseinanderzuhalten. Heutzutage würde man die mutmaßliche Hexe Marie Pauerin wohl zur Beobachtung in eine Psychiatrie einliefern. Zu keiner Entlastung der Beklagten führten das eigens angeforderte Ärztliche Attest durch den Chirurgus David Günthner. Dieser Prozess war kein planmäßiges Vorgehen der Gerichte

Mühdorf und Salzburg und des Fürsterzbischofs gegen eine ignorante Jugendliche in Form eines angestifteten Hexenprozesses. Der letzte Prozess auf österreichischen Boden war vielmehr eine Zeiterscheinung des Zeitalters der Hexenprozesse.

Blasphemie ist auch 21. Jahrhundert noch ein Thema und vor allem ein Problem der „Multikulturelle Gesellschaft“, der gegenseitigen Achtung und Toleranz. Es ist nicht zu bestreiten, dass es bei Großevents, in den Medien neben geistreichen Reportagen, manche antichristliche Darstellungen, ja sogar antichristliche Häme gibt. Die Gesellschaft mit vulgären, ordinären und obszönen zu konfrontieren, scheint einen gewissen Reiz auszuüben. Es muss doch für Christen in Europa heute noch möglich sein, ihren Glauben frei zu leben, ohne mit Polemiken überschüttet zu werden. In Zukunft wird die Kirche für christliche Werte mehr eintreten müssen als je zuvor, als gesellschaftlicher Motivator, als Mahnerin für Menschenrechte, die sich mit Perspektiven in den gesellschaftlichen Dialog einbringt.

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THE FORGETFUL LEADER: MEMORY IN AUGUSTINE AND WORDSWORTH

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Keywords: memory, autobiography, transformation, Augustine, Wordsworth

What link could there be between a bishop in 400, serving a community in the African part of the Roman Empire, and a poet in 1800, translating the beauty of the English Lake District into verse? How could they help us in search of spiritual resources for the European continent, and more to the point of this essay, how could they do so together?

Well, I don't think they can; or rather, I don't think they work together. However, spiritual resources for the future involve reflection on the past, they involve memory; and memory is an important key theme in the most self-reflective works of both Augustine and Wordsworth. Their approaches are very different, and yet I think they both have something to teach us. The point of this essay is to develop what that could be.

Furthermore, I do think there is a structural link between those self-reflective works. We are speaking here of the *Confessions* of Augustine and the *Prelude* of Wordsworth, which are autobiographical stories of a spiritual evolution and transformation. As such, they do not just present a chronicle of the writer's life; they connect individual experiences to grand visions of nature/creation and of human society. They present worldviews, and are written not primarily to inform (as 'non-fiction'), but to draw the audience into the transformation experienced by the author.

In this essay, I will discuss the backgrounds of both authors, the existential crises they underwent, the transformative role that memory plays in their works, and the demands they make on their audience.

SOCIAL AND INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND

Augustine lived from 354 to 430, in a political constellation (the Western Roman Empire) which was heading for collapse. He was born in the province of Africa, and became a teacher of rhetoric in Carthage (374), then was promoted to teach in Rome (383) and in the imperial capital of Milan (384).

Under the guidance of Ambrose, bishop of Milan, Augustine converted from Manicheism to Catholic Christianity, the faith of his mother. His conversion was coupled with his decision to renounce marriage and to live a monastic life in search of wisdom with a group of friends. He then became a priest and was elected to be bishop of Hippo (395).

Hippo was also in the province of Africa, where Augustine was not universally accepted. People were aware of the years he had spent as a pupil of the Manichees (383-393). He was suspect in the eyes of more rigorist African Christians because he had been baptized in Milan, and because he introduced the practice of shared monastic life, which was uncommon for Catholics in Africa at the time. So, he came across as ‘un-African’, associated both with the Roman Empire and with Persian doctrines.¹ On some level, his *Confessions* attempt to answer these objections.

William Wordsworth lived from 1770 to 1850. For most of his life he lived in the Lake District in England. He was a poet in the Romantic tradition, and wrote much about the emotional impact of everyday sights and events. This made him different from his friend Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), who was also a Romantic poet, but who preferred to imagine faraway and/or fictional situations (cf. his *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, about a lone sailor adrift on a cursed ship). Both of them reflected deeply on the nature of the human mind, but Wordsworth wrote contemporary events into his poetry.

With regard to his religious views, Wordsworth has been characterized as a “Church of England Pantheist”. On the one hand, he grew up in the Anglican Church and seems to have been content as a member; on the other hand, nature and the divine are closely interlinked in his poetry, whereas the Christian idea of a God who stands

¹ Cf. CHADWICK, *Self-Justification*, 1161-1175.

in some sense opposite his creation hardly features at all.² When Wordsworth was almost twenty years old, the French Revolution broke out. This had a huge impact on him; much of the action of the *Prelude* revolves around the hope of a new world of freedom evoked by the Revolution. What Wordsworth does not mention in the poem, but what we know from other sources, is that he also experienced romantic love and became a father for the first time, though financial troubles forced him to go back to England and he did not see his daughter until she was 9 years old.

The *Prelude* has undergone revision throughout Wordsworth's life; it was only published shortly after his death in 1850, but there is also a fragmentary version from 1799 and a much more complete version from 1805. I will be referring to the latter text, which many literary critics favour as more spontaneous and authentic.³

EXISTENTIAL CRISIS

Augustine was a talented teacher of rhetoric, but after a number of years, he becomes dissatisfied with the academic community and his place in it. He feels alienated in a culture which prizes speeches for their emotional impact, rather than their truth-value; and he wonders what goal all these speeches serve, if not the speaker's own ambition.

In the area of religion and philosophy (strongly overlapping domains at the time), Augustine has become disenchanted with Manicheism, and for a while he flirts with scepticism, losing all trust in human systems of thought. However, when he encounters the metaphysical ideas of the Neoplatonists, he once again becomes intrigued, and hopeful that certain truth can be received by the human mind.

His family life is troubled. At the insistence of his mother, he sends away the woman with whom he has lived for fifteen years and with whom he has a son. His mother believes that he should marry into a distinguished family, and so a marriage is

² Cf. THOMPSON, *Wordsworth: Pantheist Heretic*.

³ Cf. BROMWICH, *Disowned by Memory*, 144.

arranged, but is delayed for two years until the bride-to-be will have reached the legal age for marriage (twelve).

Ambrose plays a major role in Augustine's transformation to Christian monk, by his sophisticated interpretation of the Scriptures. But the moment of conversion itself occurs when a friend of Augustine tells him about two fellow courtiers who leave the service of the Emperor to serve God in a monastery, a story which greatly impacts Augustine. In *Confessions*, at this moment, he addresses his own tongue: "Did you not keep saying that you did not want to throw off the burden of vanity in favour of an uncertain truth? Look, it is certain now, but that burden still presses you down; and others receive wings on freer shoulders, who are not so exhausted from seeking" (VIII.7).⁴ A text from Scripture confirms that Augustine should follow the new monks' example, and this brings him the peace of mind he is looking for.

Wordsworth's imagination is fired by the French Revolution, and he embraces the hope of a free world without tyranny and contempt for the lower classes. In the *Prelude* he tells about his voyage to France, and the conflict between the old and the new order comes into view, as Wordsworth walks down the streets of Paris where massacres have recently taken place. The atmosphere of the poem at this point is tense and ambivalent: promise is accompanied by bloodshed, and Wordsworth feels both exhilarated and scared.

When he is forced to return to England because his money is running out, he is horrified when England declares war on France. His own country has joined forces with the old order, and Wordsworth feels alienated and homeless. In a poignant passage, he describes how he attends a church service (churches usually console him) and everyone around him is praying for a national victory, while he sits silent, in an isolated agony of anger.

But the worst is yet to come. France does more than successfully defend itself against foreign aggressors; in the country itself, the Reign of Terror is initiated, and people from all ranks of society become victims to its paranoia. Wordsworth feels betrayed, he becomes suspicious of all great narratives, demands proof of all

⁴ Cf. AUGUSTINE, *Confessions*.

appeals to his loyalty and faith, until mathematics seems the only reliable form of knowledge. All this is much like Augustine after his departure from Manicheism.

Wordsworth describes this mental struggle as “Dragging all passions, notions, shapes of faith, / Like culprits to the bar” (*Prelude*, X.889-890).⁵ But in another revealing passage, he is not the court’s minister – he himself is on trial, and the jury may be against him, as in the show trials of Robespierre’s Reign of Terror:

*I scarcely had one night of quiet sleep,
Such ghastly visions had I of despair,
And tyranny, and implements of death,
And long orations which in dreams I pleaded
Before unjust tribunals, with a voice
Labouring, a brain confounded, and a sense
Of treachery and desertion in the place
The holiest that I knew of – my own soul.*

(X.376-383)

TRANSFORMATIVE ROLE OF MEMORY

In Book X of his *Confessions*, Augustine asks what he loves when he loves his God. Trying to answer this question, he reflects on the nature of his own power of memory: a power which he sometimes associates with remembering things, but which he also gives a broader application. Memory is the mind’s eye: as such, it can be fixed not only on past things or events, but also on universal truths or present states of affairs.

He uses multiple metaphors: memory as fields and headquarters (*campi et praetoria*); a treasury (*thesaurus*); a great courtyard (*aula*). Many sights, sounds and smells are stored there, but these are not the only treasures. To his surprise, Augustine runs into himself (*ibi mihi et ipse occurro*, X.8); he is within his memory, as one of many items. And yet, on the other hand, he does not quite grasp himself, he

⁵ Cf. WORDSWORTH, *The Major Works*.

is more than what his memory can contain. Is he part of his memory, or is his memory part of him? And if the latter, where are the other parts?

Augustine then discusses the way in which things are present to memory. Some things are present as an image (e.g. a mountain once seen), but some things are present as themselves (e.g. understanding of mathematical laws). Emotions may be present in image, but also in actuality, and sometimes they coexist on multiple levels: Augustine remembers his sorrow over past sins, but this sorrow now brings happiness to his mind. Working through this, Augustine comes upon the idea of forgetfulness. When something is forgotten, it is not present to the mind, and yet its absence is present. I may have forgotten someone's name, and yet be sure that it was not John: how do I know this, when I have lost the memory of the name against which to compare it? Forgotten things are inexplicably absent and present at once.

When Augustine loves his God (the question he was trying to answer), he loves a happy life in the deepest and most fundamental sense of the word. But there is nothing against which he can compare it: no moment when he completely possessed that happy life. And yet his mind, along with other minds, is occupied with it as though they have once seen it and then forgotten it. The happy life is both absent and present to the mind's eye.

At this point, Augustine asks where God is, and his metaphor changes. Rather than the field, the treasury or the courtyard, he asks: "What resting-place (*cubile*) have You fashioned? What sanctuary (*sanctuarium*) have You built?" (X.25) God, like the happy life, is both absent and present; He may choose to take up residence in Augustine's mind, manifesting his own presence and so blazing a trail in Augustine's memory. Realizing this, Augustine is strengthened to face the battle for virtue and truth in his daily life.

Wordsworth, too, is searching for a happy life in the face of disappointment and scepticism. He connects this happy life to his childhood, when the earth and Nature spoke to him things worthy of remembrance; these remained dormant at the time, "doom'd to sleep / Until maturer seasons called them forth / To impregnate and to elevate the mind" (l.622-624).

His youthful experiences have taught him reverence for Nature and humanity alike, and he wishes to communicate this primal wonder. He cannot quite share the nature of the experience by describing it, and so he encourages other minds to look inward; he wants to make “Breathings for incommunicable powers” (III.188), which he is convinced are accessible to each person.

Speaking for himself, he is thankful for his upbringing in the countryside, because the love of Nature gradually leads him to the love of humanity. For instance, he recalls the sight of a shepherd against the setting sun, which makes a lasting impact on him; he writes, “hence the human form / To me was like an index of delight, / Of grace and honour, power and worthiness” (VIII.418-420). Social engagement is born of such memories.

It is Wordsworth’s belief that memories like these are in principle accessible to every man: “spots of time, / Which with distinct preeminence retain / A renovating virtue” (XI.258-260). That does not mean that everyone recovers them. In Book IX of the *Prelude*, Wordsworth abruptly introduces a young man, Vaudracour, who is separated from the love of his life by social strictures and institutions, a harsh father, and lack of money. They do have a child together, but it dies in Vaudracour’s care. At the end of the story, Vaudracour refuses to speak to anyone and lives almost like a ghost in his own house. Vaudracour seems to be Wordsworth’s shadow, the man he is afraid to become.

To safeguard the unity and health of his own psyche, Wordsworth has to believe that the possibility of restoration is always present in human nature. Memory can always function as a source of mental strength and hope, even after the greatest sufferings. This creed is summed up in the following lines of the *Prelude*:

*If from the affliction somewhere do not grow
Honour which else could not have been – a faith,
An elevation, and a sanctity –
If new strength be not given, or old restored,
The blame is ours not Nature’s.*

(X.428-432)

IMPLIED AUDIENCE

As a former teacher of rhetoric, Augustine would have known a thing or two about how important it is for a speaker to address the needs and preconceptions of his audience. Yet where a speaker can try to read the room and respond to cues from his audience, the author of a text does not encounter his audience directly. This is not only a problem when the text is 1600 years old, but becomes an issue from the moment of the text's production.

Augustine is aware of this, and thus he tries to encourage a certain attitude in his audience. Firstly, the human audience is not directly addressed; they overhear Augustine speaking to his God (who is addressed as "You" throughout the *Confessions*), a God who has a much more discerning and comprehensive judgment of the text than any human reader could have. Augustine also praises God for his mercy; in the presence of such a reader who combines wisdom with clemency, it would be shameful to be overly critical or suspicious.

Augustine tells God that his aim in writing *Confessions* is to move the hearts of his fellowmen to praise God together with him, so that their hearts will be joined in the love of God's mercy. Thus, the implied audience of *Confessions* consists of people who are willing to forgive Augustine's failings, to be sorrowful over his sins (not gleeful and mocking) and joyous about the good work that God has begun in Augustine. Augustine questions the motives and moral uprightness of any reader who is trying to find fault, while rejoicing in an audience united with him, the author, by God's holy spirit of charity:

"What have I to do with humans, that they should hear my confessions, as if they were the ones to cure all my ailments? They are a species curious to know about someone else's life, but lazy to correct their own. Why do they want to hear from me who I am, when they do not want to hear from You who *they* are? ... They will believe me, whose ears Love opens to me ... Love within them will believe me." (X.3)

Wordsworth, too, writes his poem in first instance for a single reader: his contemporary Coleridge. In the poem he addresses him mostly as "Friend", but he also mentions his name twice, so that there is no doubt about the identity of the friend.

At the beginning of the *Prelude*, Wordsworth shows himself somewhat uncertain and anxious whether he will not be criticized for writing so extensively about himself, including his early childhood, in which he has obviously not accomplished anything of historical importance. However, he takes solace in the ready sympathy of his friend, believing that the Friend will listen to him, even if his story should fail in its intended effect. This sympathy is reinvigorating all by itself: it enables Wordsworth to continue writing the poem about his life, rather than indulging in procrastination (l.669-672).

The Friend will forgive the things of which Wordsworth is ashamed – youthful folly sometimes, like getting outrageously drunk in the apartment that had once belonged to the poet John Milton (III.295-329). The Friend is portrayed as a thoughtful and intelligent person, who knows Wordsworth well and will not judge him harshly. Most importantly, Wordsworth is grateful to him because the Friend helped him overcome the crisis he suffered, which almost shattered his faith in humanity. Or, in Wordsworth's words:

*“Ah, then it was
That thou, most precious friend, about this time
First known to me, didst lend a living help
To regulate my soul.”*

(X.911-914)

CONCLUSION

Augustine and Wordsworth lived in different times and saw the world through different eyes. Nevertheless, I think we can learn from them both, in search of spiritual resources for the future of Europe.

In Augustine, memory (the mind's eye) finds God after becoming aware of its own inability to contain itself. It looks upward to its source, not seeing a definite form, but knowing that the multiplicity of one's own life is made whole and entire in God.

In Wordsworth, memory looks back to certain privileged spots of time, to recover from them a sense of reverence and hope for humanity. But although Wordsworth insists on the self-sufficiency of every mind, it seems as if the mind is greatly helped by a sympathetic friend who helps to regulate it through careful listening and speaking.

Looking towards the future, we may remember Augustine as teaching us that our lives are fully contained in the attentive love of God's spirit, who is also active among humanity; and Wordsworth, that we are called to listen to each other with sympathetic understanding, even when it is not certain that our friend will find the way towards the goal.

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A LÁTHATATLAN MEGMUTATKOZÁSA. A LITURGIA NONVERBÁLIS DIMENZIÓJÁNAK FONTOSSÁGÁRÓL

Faragó István

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*Keywords: Liturgia; Nonverbális kommunikáció; Úrfelmutatás;
Megtetesülés, Szimbólumok*

I. BEVEZETÉS

„Az idők jeleihez tartozik, hogy a jelek világában élünk, egy olyan kultúrában, amelyben a valóságok optikai prezentálása dominál. Csak az számít tekintélynek, ami megtekinthető, ami az érzékek révén megvizsgálható.”¹

A mai posztmodern világban csak az valóság, illetve csak az tűnik valóságnak, ami megmutatható. Mindaz, ami nem prezentálható, homályban burkolózó, ködös valóság. Aki megfelel a mai szépségideálnak, és van egy ennek megfelelő kisugárzása, az jobban érvényesül az életben. Úgy is lehetne fogalmazni, hogy a nyugati világban a megjelenés, a szépség a hatalom képviselője.² A virtuális valóság világa az internet világa. Úgy élhetünk ebben az elképzelt világban, mintha maga a realitás volna. Képzelet és valóság között ez a világ nehezen tesz különbséget.³ A lét kirakatlétté vált – csak a felszín, a látható számít. A felszínességet istenítő világban, amelyben az önkeresés nárcizmusa csillog, a magamutogatás uralkodik, ez a világ a valóságot egészen kisminkeli, a valóságot elrejt, hazugságokkal kozmetizálja. Virtuális világban élünk, ahol csak a kirakott kép számít. Képhangulat uralkodik,

¹ Diósi, Egyház, 111.

² Vö. *Ibid.*

³ Vö. RADCLIFFE, *Affektivitás*, 10.

amelyben a szomorúságnak, a valóságnak nincs helye. A képeberek, a virtuális világ hősei lesznek, mindenki olyan akar lenni mint ők, boldogok, szépek, makulátlanok.⁴ A Facebookon, Instagramon követhető ez a jelenség, ez a reprezentálás, ez a *maga mutogatás*, amely rabul akarja ejteni mások érzelmi vagy szellemi világát. A posztmodern ember számára a lét csak akkor teljesül, akkor van értelme, ha ez látszódás, önmutogatás kiegészül a *kapcsolatban állással*. Minél több emberrel kapcsolatba kerülni, minél több like-ot gyűjteni. Aki nem látszik, és akinek nincsenek kapcsolatai, az halott, az nem is létezik. A jelenlét, a megmutatkozás nem egyéb, mint mások számára való láthatóság (online jelzés).⁵ A TikTok videomegosztó hálózat is ezt szolgálja, mutogatja magát, *like-okat* gyűjt. Néha nem is szólal meg, csak nonverbálisan, mutogatva adja át az üzenetet, gyűjti, vadássza a like-okat (így lett milliomos egy olasz fiú, Khapy Lame⁶ a COVID időszakában, aki meg sem szólalva, rövid kisfilmekkel parodizált). A prezentálás, a mutogatás like-vadászatra irányul. A mai világban az esztétika esztétizálást jelent, a valóság csillámporral való behintését, a realitás csinosítását. A forma már nem tartalomnak a hordozója, a csomagolás lényegesebb lett az árunál. A modern ember ennek a fényben éli az életét, és az árut sem magáért az áruért vásárolja meg, nem reális szükséglet hajtja, hanem önmagát látja bele az áruba. Az esztetizált életstílus nélkülözhetetlen kellékeként viszonyul az áruhoz, és azonosul vele. A reklámok ezt elő is segítik, az érzékekre hatva, illetve az emberi önértékelés, az ember értékének mércéjévé téve a reklámozott árucikket és/vagy szolgáltatást: „L' Oréal – mert megérdemlem”. A modern ember számára jó az, amit hasznosnak és szépnek tart, és pillanatnyilag kielégítő számára. Csak az számít értéknek, amit most, ebben a pillanatban annak tart (lehet már holnap másképp látja). A szépség tehát manapság teljesen az egyén értékítéletétől függ. Szubjektív és nem objektív jelenség. *A forma*, a látható tehát átveszi a tartalom szerepét a mai posztmodern korban.⁷

⁴ Vö. DIÓSI, *A posztmodern*, 206–207.

⁵ Vö. TÖRÖK, *Megfontolások*, 77.

⁶ Vö. *Khapy LAME, Tiktok*.

⁷ Vö. DIÓSI, *Időzés*, 101–102.

II. TÉMAKIFEJTÉS

A „megmutatás”, a jelzés nem idegen a liturgiától!

Érvelésünket három pontból kiindulva szeretnénk kifejteni. Elsőként a teológiai érvelést használom. Ezt követően a liturgiából merítke, majd egy liturgiátörténeti példával zárom okfejtésemet.

a) Megtestesülés

Az Isten a történelem folyamán az ember számára kézzelfoghatóan, fizikailag megtapasztalhatóvá vált, *megmutatta magát*. Az Ige testet öltött, olyannyira, hogy „látták az Ő dicsőségét” (vö. 1Jn 1,14). Isten kinyilatkoztatta magát, megtestesült, Krisztus által megmutatkozott, emberi szóban szólt és szól hozzánk. Isten Fia emberré lett, hogy Istent „megmutassa”. Isten emberré vált Jézus Krisztusban, az „Ige testté lett” (vö. Jn 1, 14), Jézus Krisztus lesz a kinyilatkoztató, hiszen ő a megtestesült Logosz-Fiú, aki magából, belülről Istenből mutathatja be az Istent. Krisztus úgy jelenik meg, mint Istennek kinyilatkoztatást hozó Fia, ezt önmagáról szóló magasztos kijelentésekben is közli: „Én vagyok”!⁸ A megtestesülés célja, hogy kiengeszteljen minket Istennel, üdvözítsen, hogy megismerjük Isten irgalmát, szeretetét, és minket is isteni természetében részesítsen, ezáltal megistenüljünk.⁹ Jézus új Mózesként befejezi, ami a csipkebokornál kezdődött. Isten új módon lesz jelen az emberek között – aki Jézust látja, az Atyát is látja, hisz Ő és az Atya egy (Jn 14,9). Isten Jézusban lett emberré, Krisztus megismerése Isten megismerése. Valóban Krisztus által van jelen az Isten, Ő az Emmanuel. Hogy velünk az Isten, az ószövetségi „Isten arca” keresésének típusát, az ember Isten látására irányuló ősi vágyát Fülöp apostol terjeszti az Úr elé: „Uram, mutasd meg nekünk az Atyát, és az elég nekünk” (Jn 14,8). Jézus válasza öntudatának a mélységébe vezet: „Aki látott engem, az Atyát is látta” (Jn 14,9). Krisztus az Atya dicsőségének kisugárzása és lényegének képmása. „Mi láttuk az Ő dicsőségét” (Jn 1,14)¹⁰

Jézus a passióban dicsőül meg, itt válik láthatóvá (vö. Jn 12,24). A passióba való bekapcsolódással látjuk az Atyát is. A passiótörténet végén, a prófétai szó a maga

⁸ Vö. KESSLER, *Krisztológia*, 334.

⁹ Vö. István DIÓSI / János VICZIÁN (eds.) *Magyar Katolikus Lexikon*, „Megtestesülés”- szócikke.

¹⁰ Vö. DIÓSI, „Láttuk”, 248.

nagyságában felszínre tör: „Feltekintenek arra, akit keresztülszúrtak” (Jn 19,37; Zak 12,10); az Eucharisziára. Az isteni arc számunkra láthatóvá válik, az *Eucharisztia* titkában válik egész közelivé. Az Eucharisziában felismerhető, a kenyértörésben világozzá válik számunkra, mint az emmauszi tanítványoknak.¹¹ A tanítványok és követői is a hit szemével ismerték fel a közöttük járó Jézust. A tanítványok hitbeli tapasztalata Jézusban a szentségek révén (is) hagyományozódott tovább, és vált fizikai tapasztalattá a későbbi nemzedék számára. Az Egyház a Szentlélek sugallatára ráeszmél, hogy ami Jézusban látható volt, ami szemmel megfigyelhető és kézzel megérinthető, szavai és testbeszéde, a szentségek ünneplésének és kiszolgáltatásának formájává vált.¹² Feltámadása és mennybemenetele nem jelenti azt hogy, magunkra hagyott bennünket. Csupán megmutatkozásának láthatóságának módja változott: a szimbólumok fátyla alatt a szentségekben, az Ő nevében összegyűlt közösségben és az Igében jelen van. Az Egyház a liturgikus cselekményben a hitben történő találkozást készíti elő, amely letisztult formában valósul meg a reálszimbólumokon keresztül.

b) A liturgia szimbólumvilága, nonverbális csatorna (Krisztus ma a liturgiában a szimbólumok révén van jelen, szimbólumnak az a funkciója, hogy láthatóvá teszi)

Ahogy az emberek a kommunikációjuk során közvetítő közegeken keresztül, szimbólumok által kommunikálnak, ugyanúgy Isten is, elfogadva az emberi szabályokat, közvetítő közege révén lép kapcsolatba az emberrel. A világ Isten önközlésének a helye, a liturgia pedig Isten önkinyilatkoztatásának a helye szimbólumain keresztül, ahol Isten érzékelhető módon kilép rejtett isteni szférájából, megmutatja magát az embernek. A szimbólumban a profán a szent dicsőségét magára ölti, s igazolja, hogy a találkozás megvalósult.¹³

A szentségek a látható, érzékelhető szimbólumok révén teszik számunkra hozzáférhetővé az isteni jelenlétet, az isteni tevékenységet. Az Egyház a „hétköznapi” szimbólumot a liturgiájában szakrális, rituális dísz réteggel körül fogja, rituális réteggel felöltözteti, amely azt szolgálja, hogy rávilágítson arra a helyre –

¹¹ Vö. RATZINGER–XVI. BENEDEK, *A Jézus-arc*, 14.

¹² Vö. DIÓSI, *A liturgia*, 63.

¹³ Vö. DIÓSI, *A szimbólum*, 49–50.

nevezetesen a szimbólumra –, ahol Isten megjelenik.¹⁴ A liturgia anyanyelve a szimbólumok.¹⁵ A liturgia „szentsége” Isten önkinyilatkoztatásának a helye szimbólumain keresztül. A Megmutató érzékelhető módon kilép elérhetetlen isteni szférájából, és megmutatja magát. A szimbólum igazolja, hogy a találkozás létrejött, a kommunikáció megvalósult.¹⁶ Isten legtökéletesebb szimbóluma, reálszimbóluma Krisztus, az emberé lett Ige. Isten rejtett és valóságos jelenléte Krisztusban nyilvánult meg.¹⁷ Úrfelmutatáskor, az Eucharisztia szentesíti, hogy a láthatatlan láthatóvá válik, az isteni doxát visszatükrözi, a látható a láthatatlant egyrészt szimbolizálja, másrészt jelenvalóvá teszi.¹⁸ Hogy ez realizálódjon és a találkozás megvalósuljon a liturgia a test mind az öt érzékszervét megmozgatja, igénybe vesz nonverbális csatornákat és szimbólumokká alakít természetben található illetve az ember által alkotott entitásokat, hogy létrejöjjön az istenlátás, a theorein (Theo – Isten, horao – látás).¹⁹

A liturgia a test nonverbális kommunikációs képességein keresztül az ember számára érzékelhető módon valósítja meg az Istennel való kommuniót, és eléri, hogy az elrejtett Istent az érzékek számára hozzáférhetővé tegye (vö. Lk 24,31). A felmutatás, megmutatás gesztusa különösen az Eucharisztia ünneplésében válik különösen fontossá, a hívő ember számára A felmutatott kenyér és bor, amelyek fölött elhangzottak Jézus szavai, bekapcsolnak abba az isteni létformába, benne és általa láthatóvá válik.

c) Liturgiátörténeti példa: az Úrfelmutatás szertartása

Az isteni misztériumba való betekintés vágyát a középkor emberében az eleváció szertartásával töltötték be. Az Eucharisztiaiban megjelenő Istent látni szeretnék volna. Ennek az igénynek feleltek meg, amikor a konsekráció után az Eucharisztia a nép felé fordulva felmutatták. A háttal miséző pap eltakarta a hívek szeme elől a szentostyát. A konsekráció alatt a melléig emelte fel, majd Jézus szavainak

¹⁴ Vö. DIÓSI, *A liturgia*, 64.

¹⁵ Vö. VÁRNAGY, *Liturgia*, 45.

¹⁶ Vö. DIÓSI, *A szimbólum*, 49–50.

¹⁷ Vö. LUKÁCS, *Kommunikáció*, 93.

¹⁸ Vö. KUNZLER, *Az egyház*, 115.

¹⁹ Vö. CSELÉNYI, *Az öt érzékszerv*, 35.

elmondása után a nép felé fordulva felmutatta. Ezzel jelezték, hogy Jézus szavai elhangzottak a kenyér és a bor fölött, és az átlényegülés megtörtént. A kenyér és bor immár Krisztus teste és vére. A felmutatás gesztusa tehát a láthatóvá tételen túl azt is jelezte a latinul nem értő hívek számára, hogy az élő Krisztus az Eucharishtiában jelenvalóvá vált.

Az eleváció szertartásáról szóló első középkori forrás *Odo de Sully* († 1208) párizsi püspök zsinati határozata, amely előírta a papoknak hogy amikor a misekánonjában az átváltoztató szavakat – *Qui pridie* – kezdik, a megfogott ostyát ne emeljék olyan magasra, hogy a nép lássa, hanem tartsák a mellük magasságában. **Miután kimondták** Jézus szavait: *hoc et corpus meum*, emeljék fel, úgy hogy mindenki láthassa.²⁰ Az Egyház számára fontos volt az időzítés: az ostyát csak akkor lehetett felmutatni, miután az átlényegülés megtörtént. Ez az előírás egyben az első hír az átváltoztató szavak utáni elevációról, Úrfelmutatásról, amely gyakorlat mind a mai napig fennmaradt.²¹

A momentumot, amelyben Krisztus jelenvalóvá vált Oltáriszentségben, különböző figyelemfelkeltő aktusokkal vették körül. Mivel a nép nem értette a szentmise latin szövegét, csengőszó jelezte a nagy pillanatot. Ekkor a **harangokat** is megszólaltatták, hogy akik a templomon kívül voltak (mezőn, úton) hallhassák, és boruljanak térdre e szent pillanatok. Annak érdekében, hogy még felemelőbb legyen az Úrfelmutatás, a szemkommunió, bevezették a **füstölést**. Amikor a pap felemelte az Oltáriszentséget, megfüstölték.²²

Az oltárokat kezdték díszíteni, értékes selyemszövet hímzéseivel, oltárfátylat, **háttérfalat** alkottak. Az oltárok mindkét felén, vasrudakon jó minőségű szöveteket húztak ki, amelyeket csúszó gyűrűkkel szerelték fel. Az oldalsó függönyöket csak akkor húzták el, amikor a kánon kezdetét vette, hogy az emberek akadálymentesen szemlélhessék Úrfelmutatáskor az átváltoztatott Krisztust. Németországban ezzel

²⁰ Vö. JUNGSMANN, *Missarum sollemnia*, 257.

²¹ Vö. DIÓSI, *Die „Heilige und heilbringende schau“*, 6.

²² Vö. *Ibid.*, 18.

még játszottak is egy kicsit, a kánon kezdetén éppen csak előrehúzták függönyöket, az elevációkor ismét visszahúzták, majd rögtön újra előrehúzták.²³

Spanyolországban és Angliában **fekete ruhát** feszítettek az oltár hátsó felébe, hogy a fehér Szent Ostya még szembetűnőbb legyen, lenyűgözően, látványosabban hasson. Angliában még olyan gépezetet is kitaláltak, hogy az Úrfelmutatás pillanatában fából készült **angyalkák** repkedtek fel-alá, amely a látványt ünnepélyesebbé tette.²⁴ A szemkommunióhoz hozzájárultak az elevációs **gyertyák is**. A gyertyák számát növelték, valamint nagyobb és szebb gyertyákat készítettek, hogy teljesen pompában láthassák az Urat.

Az Úrfelmutatásnak mintegy folyományaként az **Oltáriszentséget kihelyezték**, kitétték, hogy a hívek szemkommunióba részesüljenek. Azt a liturgikus gyakorlatot is magával hozta az Úrfelmutatás, hogy a szentséget egy nyitott edényben vitték magukkal körmenetkor – úgy is fogalmazhatnánk, hogy az *Úrfelmutatás* pillanatának a meghosszabbítása történt a körmenetkor időben és térben.²⁵

III. KONKLUZÍÓ

Láthatjuk, hogy a mai világ számára elsődleges fontos az, ami látható. Ez fontosabb, mint az a valóság, amely mögötte van. Ennek következménye az a kirakat-lét, amelyben a valóság torzítva jelenik meg. Ez viszont a valóságtól való elszakadottság állapotát idézi elő. Ez a látszódás, látszat-valóság kiegészül a kapcsolatban állás igényével, amelyben a kapcsolatok száma, nem pedig a hitelessége és mélysége a fontos. A forma már nem tartalom hordozó, hanem átveszi a tartalom szerepét.

Isten esetében a láthatóvá válás, a megmutatkozás, kinyilatkoztatás Jézus Krisztusban valósult meg. Benne és általa mutatja meg magát a láthatatlan Isten. Miután Krisztus visszatér az Atyához, a liturgia lesz az a közeg, amelyben Isten jelenléte kézelfoghatóvá, érzékelhetővé válik az ember számára. A liturgia ezt a szentségek és a hozzájuk kapcsolódó szimbólumrendszer segítségével valósítja

²³ Vö. *QUIRIN, Die Elevation, 87–80.*

²⁴ Vö. *RADCLIFFE, Miért járjunk misére, 19–20.*

²⁵ Vö. *BROWE, Entstehung der Sacramentsandachten, 84–85.*

meg. A liturgia fő feladata felmutatni, megmutatni a köztünk élő Istent. Isten valóságos létezőként mutatja meg – nem egyfajta látszatvalóságon keresztül akarja a híveket valamiféle áltapasztalat részeseivé tenni. A megtestesülés dinamikáját tárja fel újra és újra: az Ige testben jött el (1Jn 2,42), benne emberré lett (Jn 1,14) az Isten. Isten és ember közötti kommunikáció valóságos kizár minden kétértelműséget és látszatot. Az eucharisztikus tapasztalatban, a kenyérben és borban az a valóság jelenik meg, amely Krisztus megismételt szavainak hatására jön létre. Ez *teljes kommunióként* a szentáldozásban történik meg. A kirakatkép látása nem azonos a valóság megtapasztalásával, pont az hiányzik belőle, ami megtapasztalható. Az eucharisztikus tapasztalat azonban valóságfeltáró, beteljesítő, a leghitelesebb létmegértés mozzanata.²⁶

Fontos láthatóvá tenni a láthatlan Istent, hisz a világ látni akar. Mi a liturgia által megmutatjuk, hogy tényleg köztünk van a Megmutatkozó. A liturgia láthatatlant láthatóvá téve kihangsúlyozza a vizuális dimenziót, ugyanakkor egyensúlyra törekszik, amikor más érzékszerveket is bevon ebbe a tapasztalatba: auditív szenzitív képességeinket, érzésvilágunkat is megmozgatja. A vizualitás igényéből következik, hogy a látványnak méltónak kell lenni ahhoz a tartalomhoz, amelyet meg akar mutatni. Alkalomhoz illő és szép kell legyen a ruha, a liturgikus tér. Minden liturgikus kelléknek pompázni kell, és harmóniában kell legyenek egymással. Az Egyháznak van kit felmutatnia a világnak. A liturgia nem virtuális reality show, hanem a liturgikus ünneplésben a reálisan köztünk lévő Krisztus mutatkozik meg.

A posztmodern ember számára a láthatóság egyfajta bizonyítékjelleggel bír: aki/ami látszik, az biztos hogy létezik. Éppen ezért a belső tartalmon túl a liturgiában fokozottabb hangsúlyt kell fektetni a láthatóságra, az esztétikára, a figyelem felkeltésére. A liturgia nonverbális dimenziója kiemelt szerepet kap, missziós jelleget ölt. A látványon keresztül is megpróbálja megérinteni, elérni a látszatvalóságban élő mai embert, akinek a kommunikációban egyre inkább háttérbe szorul a verbalitás, a szöveg (a hosszú szövegeket unalmasnak tartja, nem tudja értelmezni nem tud rá emlékezni). Egy jól előkészített nonverbális élmény adott esetben evangelizáló hatással is bírhat. Az Egyháznak feladata, hogy

²⁶ Vö. TÖRÖK, *Megfontolások*, 77–79.

jelenlővő tegye az Istent, ezért kell a nonverbálisra is fektetni a hangsúlyt, bátran tegyünk rendet a templomba, díszítsünk, füstöljünk, csengessünk, mutassuk fel az Urat, hisz ez távolról is hatással van, erőteljesen kifejezi a velünk találkozni akaró Úr jelenlőségének a megtapasztalását.

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A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH TO ETHICS

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Keywords: realist phenomenology, experience, consciousness, act, personalism

ON THE MEANING OF PHILOSOPHY

For philosophy, values are extremely important. From the very beginning of the history of philosophy they constitute one of the central problems of defining “How to live correctly”. What are the conditions for a good life? If you will: what makes human life happy? What is the meaning of human life? Or what is the human vocation?

If we examine the word philosophy, what does it mean? The original Greek term suggests, it is love of wisdom. But what is the wisdom? We can say wisdom is correct judgment, correct life management. Ultimately, the wisdom is search for truth. “Human beings can only be free in the truth, and the measure of truth is reality”, says John Paul II.²⁷ Judgement is a mental act (understanding), through our intellect. At this point, we come to a question of infinite complexity: How does it work in practice? How do we make decisions? This is exactly what Wojtyła examined.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL SCHOOL AND THE ETHICS OF KAROL WOJTYŁA.

My own research focuses on a bioethical topic and its relation to moral theology - birth control. Obviously, this is a very complex issue and there are huge controversies concerning how to approach it. However, right judgment is at the

²⁷ WEIGEL: *Wojtyła among*, 35.

foundational basis of all moral questions. It is therefore of basic importance to understand how human beings work.²⁸ John Paul II., in his series of catechesis known as The Theology of the Body, tried to understand the truth of man's body (as male and female) in the light (of the words) of Christ. In this work and in his earlier works the starting point is the person that has a spiritual soul. The human body is imbued with a soul. The body forms an indivisible unity with the soul. Man becomes a person - who is the image of God - through the spiritual soul.

John Paul II, in all of his works and in all of his magisterial documents, has a strong criticism of the dualistic, Cartesian (Descartes) anthropology, according to which the body is independent from the soul and it is part of nature, therefore we control our bodies. In this Cartesian anthropology the body is in the position of "object" of human power. Since body and soul are inseparable from each other, thus in a person, in the carefully considered act and in the deliberate action, they stand or fall together.

At this point Wojtyła relies on some of the results of the investigations performed by the school of realist phenomenology, which emphasizes, instead of many type of relativities, we need to (re)discover the truth and we have to be ready to cling to the raw, undistorted reality. Phenomenological philosophy in the search for truth is realistic, and specifically personalist. Let's look at these two central features:

- 1) *Realism* - In opposition of subjectivism, skepticism and relativism, realism's main goal is the search for objective truth.
- 2) *Personalism* - As a principle, personalism means here that the triune God is at the center of the research. And in this context the man who is created in the image of God.

Wojtyła meticulously tries with to grasp the human person's emotions, decisions and actions in the consciousness. One of his biggest innovations, which is a good starting point even today, is that he takes into account man's personal subjectivity

²⁸ „If philosophy could help the world get a firmer purchase on the truth of the human condition in a way that was both distinctively modern and grounded in the great philosophical tradition of the West, the future might be different.” (WEIGEL: Wojtyła among, 38.)

and his endless value. Thus, the individual human being is not merely one member of the species, but a personal subjective reality. In this context subjectivity means something individual (suppositum), not a subjective attitude.

The personalist phenomenological method carried out by Wojtyła treats man as a dynamic being. It gains primary source data about man by examining the experiences of real actions.²⁹ The phenomenological method makes it easier to analyse the subjective aspect of experience.

In his book – *Acting Person* – (which is a detailed phenomenological analysis) he attempts to understand man from the standpoint of action. According to Wojtyła, by examining the conscious - and therefore free - action of a mature person, we can gain an adequate insight into the reality of the person.³⁰ The phenomenological method can help to analyse the moral experience that is manifested in man's free act.

THE ROLE OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN COGNITION³¹

Wojtyła emphasizes that without studying consciousness we cannot understand human subjectivity. According to him, consciousness³² does not participate in the cognitive act, but it has two roles in cognition:³³

- 1) A type of reflective role ('reflectivity'), by which it mirrors the content already known by the intellect, and it reflects the subject's own objective self-knowledge.
- 2) A reflexive role, by which it subjectivizes the contents of the subject's personal experience, i.e. the person experiences his own subjectivity and

²⁹ ZUZIĄK: *Karol Wojtyła fenomenológiai hozzájárulása*, 24.

³⁰ Cf. ZUZIĄK, *Karol Wojtyła hozzájárulása*, 25.

³¹ Cf. WOJTYŁA: *Acting person* 25-27.

³² "Consciousness is not a cognitive subject, but an aspect of existence." *Acting Person* 24.

³³ He emphasizes that individuals are not determined solely by external factors or circumstances but have the ability to exercise freedom and make morally responsible choices.

that he is the effective cause of his actions. Consciousness internalizes³⁴ the human self, what is effectively a lifelong process.

Precisely because of the dynamic reality of the human being, every experience has in some way on future decisions. As we know, these experiences can be from a long time ago, as well. It is useless to say that something is objectively good, if the person in question has not had a good experience of it, or if it does not work well in his subjective life. (That is why Pope Francis recommends “accompanying”)

RECOGNIZING A VALUE

The starting point for morally relevant actions is not only experience but also material knowledge. Recognition of values as values comes about through education: therefore, the individual's life path and circumstances are decisive for his or her own value system.

In Wojtyła's view, the starting point for anthropology or ethics should not be a general theory of being/existence, but a description of the person's experience, and a description of reality and the experience of morality.³⁵ In his analysis, the act itself shows the essence of the person: it is revealed in who I am, what I do.

In Wojtyła's analyses, he starts from Revelation, but according to his conviction, the insights gained in this way only have a transformative power if they are consistent with the facts of human experience and consciousness.

Wojtyła's phenomenology tends so exploration of facts, which allow us to confront reality in a dramatic way. This reality is at the same time meaningful and transcends our understanding. Only such a radically free confrontation can be expected will lead a man, who is disconnected from reality, to find himself. If he finds himself, then

³⁴ *internalize = to make (attitudes or behaviour) part of one's nature by learning or unconscious assimilation; to adopt or incorporate as one's own*

³⁵ Cf. ZUZIAK, *Karol Wojtyła fenomenológiai hozzájárulása*, 26.

he will recognize what he belongs to and what he is part of. Only by recognizing this can he freely obey and take responsibility.³⁶

THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD IN ETHICS

The phenomenological method offers a way that leaves intact everybody's freedom, even though it starts with subjective human experiences. From the experience that one knows himself from the inside, he can look at his own "self". The experience of examining the "self" can resonate with the experience of other people, because it is human experience.

This method can be an effective communication strategy on the path from objective truth to subjective truth (i.e. the subject's acceptance of truth). After all, only if a person make objective truth his own will, he become morally motivated to act accordingly. This is a truth what he himself experiences, lives and understands.³⁷ It is, of course, a challenging task to formulate experience in an adequate, clear and precise way, but it is worth the effort. Maybe it is precisely what makes academic work truly meaningful.

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³⁶ Cf. SZALAY: *Meztelenség*, 64.

³⁷ Cf. WIERZBICZKI: *Karol Wojtyła filozófiája*, 45.

ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN MATHEMATICS AND THEOLOGY IN JOHN HENRY NEWMAN'S *A GRAMMAR OF ASSENT*

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Keywords: mathematics, theology, John Henry Newman, Grammar of Assent, encounter

John Henry Newman was an English intellectual of the 19th century and the *Grammar of Assent* is one of his major works. In this work, Newman is exploring religious knowledge and the rationality of personal belief.¹ He is developing a way to articulate how we come to apprehend (understand) and hold (assent) to the ideas of the Christian faith and doctrine, by looking at how we apprehend things in general, and draw conclusions about the world around us. The *Grammar* has been described by Nicholas Lash as Newman's most "technically elaborate" work, and by Etienne Gilson as the most "difficult to understand"² of Newman's writings. This characterisation may, in part, be due to Newman's use of ideas from mathematics and the sciences to illustrate the knowing of God and matters of religion and theology.

This research has identified 156 references to mathematical concepts, theories, metaphors, and definitions in the *Grammar of Assent*. This can vary from a brief mention of a concept, such as a logarithm³, a sweeping statement about the simplicity of mathematical proof⁴, a two page discussion of the limitations of

¹ NEWMAN / LASH, *An Essay*, 5.

² GILSON, *Introduction*, 9.

³ Cf. NEWMAN, *An Essay*, 45

⁴ Cf. *Ibid*, 217.

algebra⁵, and everything in between. Some of the concepts identified as Newman’s mathematics could also be classed as science or philosophy. Newman’s references to the sciences and philosophical ideas are included and classed as mathematics where there is reference to relationships or use of mathematical concepts.

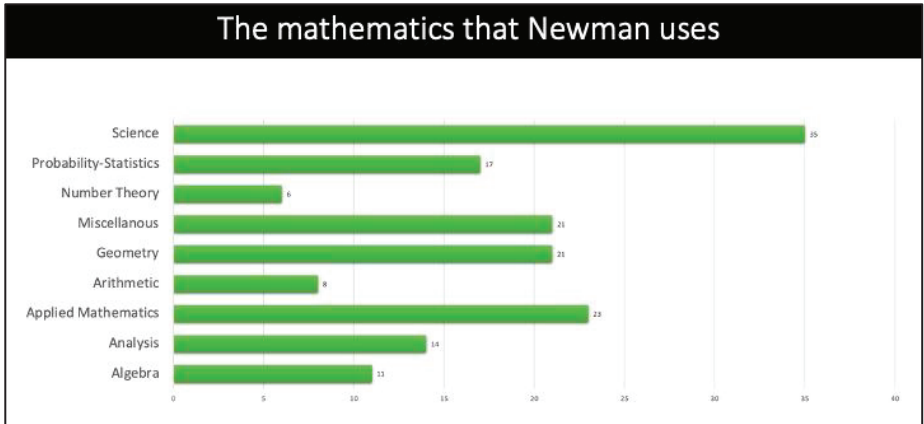


Figure 1. The mathematics that Newman uses in *A Grammar of Assent*

Newman makes reference to eight different types of mathematics⁶ throughout the Grammar, with the Miscellaneous class⁷ including references that do not directly fall into the other categories (as illustrated by Figure 1). Newman draws most frequently on instances from the Sciences⁸ (35), Applied Mathematics⁹ (23), Geometry (21) and

⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, 57-58.

⁶ These are: *Analysis, Algebra, Applied Mathematics, Arithmetic, Geometry, Number Theory, Probability-Statistics, and Science.*

⁷ In the case of the *Grammar of Assent*, the majority of instances that fall into the Miscellaneous category are around *Logic and Truth* and suggest the greatest overlap with philosophy (so I’m not really going to explore this area today)

⁸ ‘Science’ is for those instances where Newman refers to the physical universe where one could apply mathematics (such as chemistry, gravity, the scientific method), but Newman does not use mathematical language in these cases, such as chemistry (Cf. *NEWMAN, An Essay*, 31), variations in the earth’s orbit (Cf. *Ibid.*, 73), gravity (Cf. *Ibid.*, 74), the earth as a sphere (Cf. *Ibid.*, 149), the scientific method (Cf. *Ibid.*, 171, 223, 227), comparing the discipline of science to theology (Cf. *Ibid.*, 195).

⁹ *Applied Mathematics* denotes where Newman refers to directly applying mathematics to the world, such as mechanics (Cf. *NEWMAN, An Essay*, 31), as a speculative investigation (Cf. *Ibid.*, 75-76), Neptune’s orbit from geometry (Cf. *Ibid.*, 222).

Probability-Statistics (17) to illustrate his thinking. This suggests that Newman had a familiarity and competence across mathematics and the sciences. At Oxford, he studied both Classics and Mathematics, and attended lectures in the sciences out of general interest.¹⁰ He remained interested in mathematics and the sciences, so much so that Gillian Evans calls Newman a “well-informed layman” in this regard.¹¹ Paul Shrimpton describes him as “one of the go to intellectuals of the nineteenth century for those rattled by scientific advances.”¹² Newman showed continued knowledge of and interest in religion and theology, mathematics and the sciences, throughout his life.

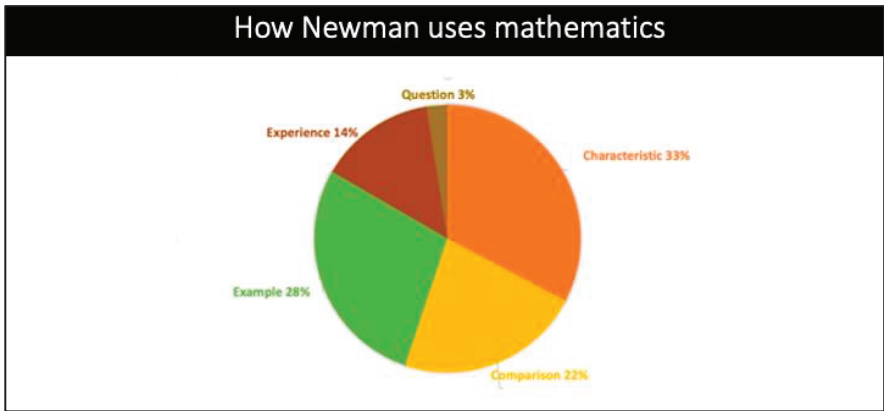


Figure 2. How Newman uses mathematics in *A Grammar of Assent*

There are five main ways that Newman uses mathematics to illustrate his thinking in the *Grammar of Assent*: as a characteristic, to make a comparison, as an example, as an experience, or to pose a question (as illustrated by Figure 2). Newman’s most frequent use of mathematics is as a characteristic, when he takes a term or theory from mathematics to describe a key quality or component of one of his ideas on

¹⁰ Cf. EVANS, *Science and Mathematics*, 248-249.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² SHRIMPTON, *Knowledge and Truth*, 1-2.

religion or theology.¹³ Newman cites instances from mathematics as an example of whatever idea or process it is that he is discussing. It's usually quite factual, brief, almost a throw-away remark or aside in his work.¹⁴ Another way that Newman uses mathematics is as comparison, a metaphor or analogy.¹⁵ The fourth way that Newman uses mathematics is as experience, where he refers to an idea or concept from mathematics as the experience of the person doing the mathematics to illustrate the experience of inference, assent or belief that he is describing. The last, and least frequent, way that Newman uses mathematics is to pose a question.¹⁶

To consider the intersection and overlap between mathematics and theology, this research applies a Framework of Encounter to Newman's use of mathematics in the *Grammar*. The framework draws on the work of Stenmark and the relatedness between science and religion,¹⁷ Kurniawan and Hidayati on encounters between mathematics and religion¹⁸, and James Bradley, on an Augustinian perspective of mathematics.¹⁹ There are five dimensions where an overlap between mathematics and theology: the Social, Teleological, Epistemological, Theoretical and Ontological. An encounter is where there is an overlap or intersection between mathematics and theology on one or more dimensions. Many of the instances suggest encounters between mathematics and theology occurring on multiple dimensions.

¹³ When discussing the Illative Sense, Newman's faculty of the mind that allows humans to reach conclusions, he often refers to the characteristic of certainty in mathematical proof, to illustrate a quality of proof and reasoning in theological and religious matters (see for example in *A Grammar of Assent: on certain truths* 194; the certainty of truth 196; the certainty of inference, 251-252).

¹⁴ See for example a notional proposition (*Grammar*, 29), gravity (*Grammar*, 73), and the square root of -1 (*Grammar*, 262).

¹⁵ For example when Newman compares adding up a series of terms (summing up an algebraic series) to how we might bring together multiple probable arguments, weighing them up so as to reach a conclusion (*Grammar*, 232-233).

¹⁶ For instance, Newman is discussing how mathematics can reach an abstract truth, but is limited when considering truths in the concrete. The question that Newman poses here is perhaps beyond the scope of mathematics to answer, but Newman uses maths to ask it (*Grammar*, 244).

¹⁷ STENMARK, *How to relate science and religion*.

¹⁸ KURNIAWAN / HYDAYATI, *In search of the encounter*.

¹⁹ BRADLEY, *An Augustinian Perspective*.

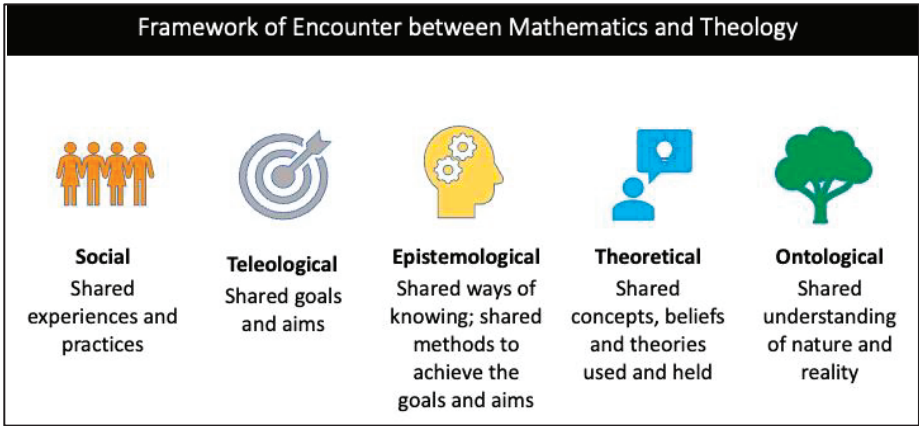


Figure 3. A Framework of Encounter between Mathematics and Theology

The framework is applied to Newman’s use of mathematics in *A Grammar of Assent*, to identify encounters between mathematics and theology in his work. Some of these encounters are explicit and obvious from the text and some of these encounters require an awareness of mathematics or theology outside the text. There are numerous examples, only a few of which will be included in this paper to illustrate the different dimensions. Most of the instances included are taken from Newman’s discussion on the Illative Sense.²⁰

On the social dimension, an encounter between mathematics and theology is in the shared experiences and practices of doing mathematics and theology. Newman often refers to the practices of mathematics generally, or to the practice of particular individuals, to illustrate his thinking. An example of an such an encounter is where Newman is describing how the Illative Sense can appear, using the experience and practice of “the calculating boys:”

“Such is the gift of the calculating boys who now and then make their appearance, who seem to have certain shortcuts to conclusions, which they cannot explain to

²⁰ See Chapter 9 of the *Grammar*, “The Illative Sense.”

themselves. Some are said to have been able to determine off-hand what numbers are prime, - numbers, I think, up to seven places.”²¹

Newman describes this experience to illustrate how the illative faculty approaches concrete reasoning, such that the conclusion or truth the mind reaches seems to be almost magical, and beyond explanation. This is an experience that the “calculating boys” have, and is an experience shared when the illative faculty is applied to matters of mathematics, as well as religion and theology. This is an encounter on the social dimension because it describes a specific experience of doing mathematics to highlight the experience of doing religion and theology.

Encounters on the teleological dimension are where the common goals of mathematics and theology are indicated. These include the goals of the search for intelligibility²², seeking truth,²³ and the ultimate reality²⁴ or achieving certainty.²⁵ An example that illustrates this in the *Grammar* is where Newman articulates the aims of his discussions on certitude and the Illative Sense. He writes:

“... my aim is of a practical character ... without excluding, far from it, the question of duty, I would confine myself to the truth of things, and to the mind's certitude of that truth.”²⁶

By articulating his aims, Newman indicates an encounter between mathematics and theology on this dimension in Newman's these shared goals of seeking truth and certitude in the application of the illative sense in religious and theological matters. The third dimension of the framework of encounter is the epistemological dimension, where the focus is on the methods used to achieve the goals of mathematics and theology. An example of an encounter between mathematics and theology on this dimension in the *Grammar* is where Newman is describing the ease of persuading people of the truth of Christianity. He concludes (again) that this truth

²¹ NEWMAN, *An Essay*, 262-263

²² STENMARK, *How to Relate Science and Religion*, 29.

²³ *Ibid.*, 31-32.

²⁴ KURNIAWAN / HYDAYATI, *In search of the encounter*, 208.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ NEWMAN, *An Essay*, 271.

and its proof are only determined by the mind - the illative sense - not scientific proof.²⁷ The encounter is that to know a mathematical or epistemological truth requires a valid proof. However, Newman is also limiting this encounter by distinguishing between what constitutes a valid proof. He suggests that a valid proof in mathematics is determined by a scientific test but in theology and religion, a valid proof is determined by the illative sense.²⁸ This is an encounter on the epistemological dimension because Newman is considering how to achieve the common goals of truth and certainty in both mathematics and theology.

The theoretical dimension is concerned about the theories, beliefs, stories and metaphors generated and used by both mathematics and theology. One example is where Newman is discussing some of the arguments made against the Illative Sense, suggesting that it is not reliable and should not be used in determining religious and theological matters. He writes:

“Here, if they only mean that the fact of that system of laws, by which physical nature is governed, makes it antecedently improbable that an exception should occur in it, there is no objection to the argument; ... They are saying - What has happened 999 times one way cannot possibly happen on the 1000th time another way, because what has happened 999 times one way is likely to happen in the same way on the 1000th. But unlikely things do happen sometimes.”²⁹

These remarks indicate at least two encounters between mathematics and theology on the theoretical dimension, where theories and beliefs are shared in common. Firstly, Newman recognises that the physical universe operates according to system of laws, which is a shared theory and belief of both mathematics and theology. Secondly, he draws on the theory of probability, a theory from mathematics and philosophy, to make his argument. This is also an example of how a concept from mathematics might be borrowed and used by theology to support or challenge its beliefs and concepts.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 321.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 298.

On the ontological dimension, the potential for encounter between mathematics and theology is in the nature and reality of mathematical and theological objects and operations. An example from the *Grammar* to illustrate this is where Newman gives reasons for the Illative Sense being so essential in religious and theological matters. He writes:

*“As the structure of the universe speaks to use of Him who made it, so the laws of the mind are the expression, not of mere constituted order, but of His Will.”*³⁰

For Newman, both the universe and the human mind are of God. This echoes St Augustine, who held that as human beings our ability to recognize mathematical objects is because mathematical objects reside in the mind of God, and this ability is part of his gift to us.³¹ This indicates an encounter on the ontological dimension, where Newman suggests that both mathematics objects and the theological object (God) have a common nature and reality.

The breadth and use of mathematics throughout the *Grammar* by Newman gives a wide variety of potential encounters between mathematics and theology to explore. It is significant because it highlights Newman’s familiarity with mathematics, and the high esteem that Newman gives to mathematics, especially in regard to the shared mathematical and theological concepts of certainty, proof, and truth. This suggests that Newman’s use of mathematics does indicate encounters between mathematics and theology, in the intersection and overlap of mathematics and theology as fields of knowledge. Newman’s use of mathematics in the *Grammar of Assent* gives us a wide variety of encounters to explore, as he uses mathematics to explore the knowing of religious faith and the rationality of personal belief. This Framework gives us a way to perceive the encounters between mathematics and theology that take place at different levels: on the social dimension, the teleological, the epistemological, the theoretical and the ontological.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 275.

³¹ BRADLEY, *An Augustinian Perspective*, 165.

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HOUSE VISITS: A FORGOTTEN RESOURCE FOR HERMENEUTICAL PRACTICAL THEOLOGY AND PASTORAL CARE

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*Keywords: House Visits, Hermeneutical Pastoral Care,
Culture of Encounter, Ministry of Presence*

INTRODUCTION

While discussing Christ's charisma and mission in this world, one thing that often comes to discussion is Christ's habit of visiting families, villages and communities. Gospels present Christ as an itinerant preacher than as a stationery leader who waited to be visited by others. Following this model, pastors are often advised to make visits to families and communities entrusted to their care. However, in an effort to find recent academic titles in the field, a search in major databases including Web of Science, ATLA (Religion), ProQuest, JSTOR, IxTheo, and IndexReligiosus with the key words, pastoral visit AND families/homes/houses yielded only less than five books or articles written in the last ten years. And many of the other relevant results were dating from before 20 years. This points to the minimum attention that the topic of pastoral visitations received in recent academic researches. This paper tries to analyse this age-old practice in the Church and its feasibility and relevance in the contemporary world. Primary inspiration for this paper comes from this author's personal experiences during the pastoral training. Visits to families have often helped in realising that that real is quite different from the ideal, and the invisible side of people's lives is often different from the visible one.

This paper is structured as follows: After giving a very brief historical introduction to the practice of pastoral visitation, this paper first presents three models of pastoral care namely kerygmatic, therapeutic and hermeneutical. The relevance and meaning of pastoral visitation to families in these three models are discussed further. Later on, the paper briefly introduces pastoral visitation as a ministry of

presence and also as a platform for nourishing the culture of encounter of Pope Francis. In the final discussion, pastoral visits are hence proposed as a spiritual resource for a gracious future of the Church and society.

1. PASTORAL VISITS

In Acts of the Apostles, Paul is seen visiting the communities that he nourished; the purpose of these visits was sometimes maintaining discipline and doing necessary corrections. He hoped to strengthen them in their faith. It also served as an occasion for financial matters.¹ The letter of St. Peter also exhorts pastors to be overseers of their flock. The word Greek word *Episkopos* clearly points to the role of Bishops as overseers of their communities.² Visitations by Bishops are mentioned in the writings of various Church Fathers including Ignatius of Antioch (30–107), Athanasius (c.295–373) and John Chrysostom (c.337–407). With the council of Trent there came an effort from the Church carry out the pastoral visitations of bishops in a systematic and extensive manner.³ Most of these visitations in the historical documents refer to visitation of Bishop to the parishes. However, it will only be right to assume that priests, the local representatives of bishops, also carried out such visits to the families in their parishes. The present practice of house blessings in the Easter season could be seen as a continuation of such practices.

2. MODELS OF PASTORAL CARE

Karlijn Demasure presents three models of pastoral care: kerygmatic, therapeutical and hermeneutical. K. Barth and E. Thurneyson were the proponents of kerygmatic model, whereas the therapeutic model was promoted by A. Boisen and S. Hiltner. Hermeneutical model is inspired by the philosophy of Paul Ricœur and was advanced by C. Gerkin and D. Capps.⁴ The following section explains these three models in a bit more detail.

¹ SMITH, *Canonical Visitation of Parishes*, 16–18.

² *Ibid.*, 18–19.

³ RAMOS, *Pastoral Visitations*, 41.

⁴ DEMASURE, *Three Ways of Interaction*; DEMASURE, *Pastorale Zorg*, 227–237.

2.1 Kerygmatic Model of Pastoral Care

This model gave prominence to Word of God than any human sciences. The incompetence of human beings and the need for depending on God was the focal point of this model of pastoral care. Here care process was fulfilled through preaching and reprimanding. Admitting one's sins was the first step to come back to a life of grace and perfection.⁵ Thus, divine story (the Word of God) was more important than human story (human experiences) in this model of pastoral care.

2.2 Therapeutical Model of Pastoral Care

In the therapeutic model pastor became almost equal to a counselling psychologist. The proficiency of the pastor here was determined more in terms of their expertise in psychology and counselling than in terms their knowledge of the Word of God. Thus, theology became of least significance in this model. Verbatims and protocols for interaction with the pastoral care receivers was part this model of pastoral care. Client-centred therapy of Carl Rogers was a key tool promoted by S. Hiltner in this model of pastoral care.⁶ It can be noted that human story becomes the prime factor here than the divine story.

2.3 Hermeneutical Model of Pastoral Care

Hermeneutical model of pastoral care tries to seek a balance between the two previous models presented. Whereas the human story narrated by the care receiver is considered important and tried to be understood using psychological knowledge, the (divine) stories of Christian tradition function as the primary tool in interpreting the human story further and in finding a meaning for life.⁷

3. PASTORAL VISITS IN VARIOUS MODELS OF PASTORAL CARE

This section tries to understand how pastoral visits were/are practised in the above discussed various models of pastoral care. In the Kerygmatic model of pastoral care, pastors went after their sheep to bring them back to the Church. They tried to convince

⁵ ESCHMANN, *Towards a Pastoral Care*, 420; DEMASURE, *Three Ways of Interaction*, 2.

⁶ DEMASURE, *Three Ways of Interaction*, 5–6; ESCHMANN, *Towards a Pastoral Care*, 421.

⁷ DEMASURE, *Three Ways of Interaction*, 10–12; RANDALL, *Reminiscing in the Elderly*, 212–215.

them about the need of living up to the expectation of the Word of God and invited them to realise their sinfulness and the need of confession and a renewed life.⁸ Thus, bringing the lost sheep back to the Church would necessitate a visit to their families.

In the therapeutic model of pastoral care, the care to be provided was almost equal to a counselling.⁹ A counselling relationship often begins at the request of the counselee. Hence, the initiative of the pastor to go to the care receivers must have reduced to the minimum. Moreover, since “the pastor is not supposed to pursue his or her own goals,”¹⁰ this model of pastoral care may not support initiatives from the pastor to visit his clients.

In the hermeneutical model, the care process is more of an interpretation of the life stories of the care receiver and finding meaning. In this process of interpretation, both pastor and care receiver are actively involved. This meaning is to be sought by linking the life story of the care receiver with the stories in the Christian tradition.¹¹ “The aim is to provoke a change, a transformation in such a way that life on all levels is experienced as meaningful.”¹² Unlike the kerygmatic model that maintained a pessimistic view of human being and the therapeutic model that maintained an optimistic view, hermeneutical model tries to be more realistic.¹³ “The role of the pastor is neither dominant nor passive.”¹⁴ A pastor in this model skilfully links the human story of the care receiver with the divine story and helps the human person find a meaning in life that is also connected to the divine story. Hence, pastoral visits can be very well incorporated into this form of pastoral care and such visits can contribute to the hermeneutical process in such pastoral care initiatives. Understanding the life context and life story of the care receiver becomes easier with a personal visit to the care receiver. However, the purpose of house visits here is never to condemn and call back a sinner who has deserted the Church. Instead, the

⁸ ESCHMANN, *Towards a Pastoral Care*, 420; DEMASURE, *Three Ways of Interaction*, 2–3.

⁹ ESCHMANN, *Towards a Pastoral Care*, 421; DEMASURE, *Three Ways of Interaction*, 9.

¹⁰ DEMASURE, *Three Ways of Interaction*, 8; For the published journal article version of all these citations from Demasure see, DEMASURE, *Pastorale Zorg*, 227–237.

¹¹ DEMASURE, *Three Ways of Interaction*, 10.

¹² *Ibid.*, 10.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

proposed visits in a hermeneutical pastoral care are open-minded.¹⁵ Its intention is to read the “living human document”¹⁶ in its genre and original context so that one can understand its meaning and causes more accurately. It is also to be noted that this ‘original context’ need not be always their homes; it can also be their work places, places of recreation, and other places wherever they live their concrete human lives.

4. MINISTRY OF PRESENCE AND CULTURE OF ENCOUNTER

Evans N. Nwaomah and Sikhumbuzo Dube state, “Visitation is a ministry of presence.”¹⁷ Adapting Smith T. D., Neil Holm describes presence as “self-giving to the other person at the moment at hand.”¹⁸ In other words, ‘presence’ would mean “being available at the disposal of the other person with all the self for that period of time”.¹⁹ Hence, ministry of presence is to be available to the care receiver. Personal visitation makes this self-giving very clear because in a visitation to a family, a pastor is making oneself available to the care receiver. Since a priest or pastoral caregiver theologically represent Christ and also the Church²⁰, the presence of a pastoral caregiver at the service of the faithful makes one feel the presence of both Christ and Church with them. However, Holm reminds that, Being present does not mean always being totally in agreement with the other. It does not mean totally accepting the other. Being present involves a deep connection with an awareness of the other. This awareness may lead the parties to confront or challenge each other in some way.²¹ It underlines that being present to the other does not burden the caregiver with the burden to be in agreement with the varied viewpoints of people. Additionally, as comments, pastoral visits need not always have a rigid or readymade agenda. Being present to the faithful with a free and open mind would keep the pastoral visits more acceptable for both the faithful and the pastoral

¹⁵ DIXON, *A Theology of Pastoral Visiting*, 267.

¹⁶ DYKSTRA, *Images of Pastoral Care*, ePUB.

¹⁷ NWAOMAH and DUBE, *Pastoral Visitation*, 132.

¹⁸ HOLM, *Toward a Theology of the Ministry*, 10.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁰ https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P9M.HTM (19.02.2022).

²¹ HOLM, *Practising the Ministry*, 41.

caregivers.²² Yes, this aspect needs to be stressed to avoid any uneasiness to the care receivers: it must be an agenda-free visit.

“Culture of encounter” is an often-used phrase in the speeches and writings of Pope Francis.²³ He presents it as an antonym of today’s culture of insensitivity towards others. The culture of encounter is Pope’s “proposed solution for our contemporary world to counter the steadily prevailing cultures of individualism, nationalism, indifference, and consumerism”.²⁴ The encounter he proposes is an encounter that respects the other and act for their good. It is also an invitation and catalyst to universal fraternity that emanates from the fact that everyone is created in the image and likeness of God.²⁵ Hence a respectful openness and readiness to learn from the other is part of the encounter culture that Pope Francis puts forth. This respectful openness, responsiveness and availability to the faithful is necessary for any fruitful pastoral care. Creating a culture of encounter that Pope Francis envisages requires a wilful going to the other; he says, “if I do not stop, if I do not look, if I do not touch, if I do not speak, I cannot create an encounter and I cannot help to create a culture of encounter”.²⁶

Pastoral visits are an opportune moment to practise this culture of encounter. It requires the pastors to go an extra mile to stop, look at, touch and speak to people at their varied life situations. Here there will be a mutual learning and sharing of Christian charity.

5. PASTORAL VISITS: A SPIRITUAL RESOURCE FOR THE FUTURE

Pastoral visits are both hermeneutically and pastorally resourceful as these visits are mutually beneficial for the pastoral caregiver and care receiver. Firstly, looking

²² DIXON, *A Theology of Pastoral Visiting*, 264–267.

²³ EJIOWHOR, *Pope Francis’s Culture of Encounter*, 200; KULSKA, *Pope Francis’ ‘Culture of Encounter’*, 34.

²⁴ EJIOWHOR, *Pope Francis’s Culture of Encounter*, 201.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 200.

²⁶ As quoted in https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/cotidie/2016/documents/papa-francesco-cotidie_20160913_for-a-culture-of-encounter.html.

through the eyes of hermeneutical dimension of pastoral theology,²⁷ one can understand how helpful pastoral visits are, in interpreting the living documents, the life stories of people to grasp their real meaning and message. While the Christian tradition can be helpful in giving meaning to the life stories of people, the tradition itself can be enriched by the lived experiences of people.²⁸ In hermeneutical pastoral care, it is not just the care receiver getting changed, but the caregiver and hence Church also gets transformed by the stories brought in by the care receiver. In the contemporary world, where the Church is often criticised to blind-eyed to the lived experiences of people, visiting the faithful in their life contexts can be of real help for Church to discern well in which direction the Holy Spirit is inviting the Church to move forward. Thus, pastoral visits can be resourceful in theological reflections of the Church.

Secondly, it is also important to stress that such visits can be of help to many who are in search of meaning in life. Though the story of the tradition may be available to people through their participation in the services of the parish, many may not be always successful in linking this tradition with the reality of their lives. Hence, the tradition remains a lifeless seed in them. In such situations pastors can do the task of interpreting their lives through light of the Gospel and give a Christian meaning to the varied life experiences that they may be going through. This author's personal experience in the pastoral field has revealed that visits to families help a pastoral caregiver to see an unknown side of people's lives. In community gatherings, people often appeared to be happy and well-dressed, but the situation at some of their families was entirely different. A personal visit has often revealed their personal struggles, extreme financial struggles, marital issues, terminal illnesses, etc., which they undergo. While they are not comfortable sharing such issues in public settings, they are often eager to share these things in a house visit, and they are comforted by the prayers that the minister offers and his presence. In such a setting, pastoral ministers can really function in three modes as 'story listeners', 'story stimulators', and 'story enhancers' as Robert L. Randall notes. 'Story listeners': pastoral caregivers can be active listeners in hearing the stories of people with an empathic

²⁷ DILLEN, *Hermeneutics in Real Life*, 374–379.

²⁸ DEMASURE, *Three Ways of Interaction*, 10–11; DILLEN, *Hermeneutics in Real Life*, 374–379, 386–387.

ear. ‘Story stimulators’: sometimes, when people go totally blank in a meeting, pastoral caregivers can ask some open-ended questions to initiate the storytelling. ‘Story enhancers’: finally, the caregivers can enhance the stories (experiences or situations) of care receivers by taking materials from the faith and religious tradition. This enhancement can be really important because this gives their human stories a link to the faith tradition and helps them look at their lives with an eye of faith.²⁹ In some cases, pastoral visits may function as a starting point towards further pastoral counselling sessions. Hence, such pastoral visits can be a very resourceful tool for the spiritual nourishment of the faithful. Moreover, it helps also in keeping the Church vibrant in the hearts and minds of the believers.

While discussing house visits in contemporary society, it is unavoidable to discuss consent, which can be considered a mandatory requirement for house visits in today’s world. Unsolicited visits to houses can be considered as an intrusion into the privacy of people. However, this does not mean that consent be necessarily obtained in a documented format. Instead, it can be verbal or even an implied consent. In pastoral contexts, consent comes as an organic outcome of the relationship that a pastoral caregiver builds with one’s faithful.³⁰ Another practical difficulty often pointed out against the feasibility of pastoral visit is the lack of time for the pastors. As solution for this, expert suggestions emerged from the discussions during the 14th ESCT Congress held at Pécs proposed incorporation of a wider group of trained pastoral team members into this mission of pastoral house visits. An example for this approach can be found in the immensely successful movement initiated by Dr. Zilda Arns, (a paediatrician) in Brazil and is now taken up by the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops.³¹

²⁹ RANDALL, *Reminiscing in the Elderly*, 212–215.

³⁰ BUSH JR., *Gentle Shepherding*, 44–69; PEETERS, *Codes of Ethics*.

³¹ <https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2021/05/05/covid-19-pandemic-brazil-elderly-catholic-church-pastoral-care-240585>.

CONCLUSION

This paper was trying to propose the relevance of the often unattended, yet resourceful practice of pastors visiting the faithful in their varied life settings where they live their concrete lives. Following the model of Jesus and Apostles, house visits have been a long-standing practice in the pastoral arena of the Church. As theology developed, the meaning and purpose of pastoral visits also started to develop. It evolved from 'a search for the lost sheep' in the kerygmatic pastoral care to a hermeneutical tool for grasping the living human documents and a platform for adding meaning to the life stories of people. It is a ministry of presence that makes Christ and Church actively and graciously present and available in the lives of people. Looking pastoral visits through the eyes of the culture of encounter that Pope Francis wishes to cultivate, one finds a platform for mutual respect, learning and sharing in such visitations. Hence, it would only be right to consider pastoral visitations to families as a tool for hermeneutical practical theology and the spiritual nourishment of the whole Church.

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