

On Man, Theology, and the University

Sławomir Nowosad

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Selected Issues in Moral Theology



TOWARZYSTWO NAUKOWE KUL

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TOWARZYSTWO NAUKOWE  
KATOLICKIEGO UNIWERSYTETU LUBELSKIEGO  
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SŁAWOMIR NOWOSAD



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Sławomir Nowosad

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Lublin  
TOWARZYSTWO NAUKOWE  
KATOLICKIEGO UNIWERSYTETU LUBELSKIEGO JANA PAWŁA II

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## Introduction

It may happen that even years later some reflections can be of some interest to their author, and perhaps to their reader as well. With this in mind I have decided to collect some of my previously published texts, to make minor adjustments where necessary and to present them in this volume. They all reflect and refer to the literature of the day when they were first published. The reader will be well aware a lot of newer literature has appeared ever since. The author is fully mindful of this but is at the same time willing to share his considerations comprised in the following chapters of this book. Though focused on different topics the consecutive parts of the book draw inspiration upon theological insights in order to understand different realities and aspects of man's individual and social life. Therefore as such they belong to theology, particularly moral theology. In some of those texts the leading thread touches upon an anthropological issue with its different dimensions being a major concern for Christian thought. An important motive is also theology itself in its broader context, including an ecumenical one. Some considerations refer to a the university, also a Catholic one, as a key institution amidst the transformations of culture and society. Readers will easily spot how often the author's reflections refer to what is called the official teaching of the Church, Catholic above all but also to what is expressed in non-Catholic documents or formulations. In many places the reader can notice an attention that has long been precious to the author of this volume, namely the necessity for an authentic and humble encounter and dialogue among various Christian denominations and their theological convictions, including those of ethics.



The first few chapters deal with the human being, man's integral concept or some specific aspects of his life and vocation. The origin of chapter 1 *From Anthropology to Solidarity and Social Justice* (originally published in *Theological Ethics in a Changing World: Contemporary Challenges – Reorientation of Values – Change of Moral Norms?*, ed. Konrad Glombik, Opole: Redakcja Wydawnictw Wydziału Teologicznego Uniwersytetu Opolskiego 2015, p. 87-98) was a paper delivered at a conference organized by Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church, which gathered in Kraków, Poland a large group of European and American theologians and ethicists. The text puts stress on what has been called an integral concept of the human person, in order to point to social virtues like solidarity and justice. To remain fully human man's life in society cannot neglect these and other attitudes while always, realistically, continue to keep in mind human sinfulness that induces all to selfishness both in individual and social life.

A similar emphasis on an integral understanding of the human being will be found in the following chapter *Anthropology as a Basis for Ecology* (first published in "Roczniki Teologiczne" 54(2007), no. 3, p. 19-36) that contributes to ecological debates. An endeavour to perceive the whole creation in all its truth, authenticity and beauty needs a sound and integral vision of man but above all needs one's openness to the Creator. Thus theology and an integral theological vision of the human being are indispensable for a proper perception of the created world. Finally this text indicates moral and theological implications of the basic vision.

In the section entitled *Christian Martyrdom Never Expires: Some Theological and Ethical Aspects of Obedience usque ad sanguinem* (first appeared in "Seminare" 39(2018), no. 4, p. 21-30) a particular ethical aspect of human life and faith is underlined, which calls upon believers to bear witness to faith in God even to the shedding of blood. This part of the book is based on the author's paper delivered at a conference on contemporary martyrdom of Christians held in Nairobi, Kenya. Such a testimony of love for Christ is a unique sign of faithfulness that imitates the Lord himself who was obedient to the Father *usque ad mortem*. Since "faith possesses a moral content" faith (*credenda*) cannot be separated from moral life (*agenda*). Consequently, in particular circumstances Christians are called to be ready to lay their lives

both for love of God and acceptance of his commandments. Through imitating their Lord *usque ad sanguinem* his disciples demonstrate and defend their human dignity received from the Creator, the holiness of God's law as well as the holiness of the Church.

The subsequent chapter presents John Paul II's vision of the Church as *communio*. In its initial form this text was delivered as a lecture at the Theology Symposium in Dublin and then published under the title *Responding to the Great Challenges Facing the Church Today: Blessed John Paul II and the Ecclesiology of Communion* (in: [50<sup>th</sup> International Eucharistic Congress 2012] *Proceedings of the International Symposium of Theology: The Ecclesiology of Communion Fifty Years after the Opening of Vatican II*, Dublin: Veritas Publications 2013, p. 302-325). Drawing upon mainly John Paul II's so-called continental exhortations first some aspects of the current complex situation of the world and culture are being outlined. Then the essence and major aspects of *communio ecclesialis* are presented, and finally the text points at all the essential fruits of *communio*.

The chapter *Contemporary Pluralism and a Theological Cooperation* (published in: *Kościół w życiu publicznym. Teologia polska i europejska wobec nowych wyzwań*, vol. 3, Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL 2005, p. 671-683) is based on an address given during an assembly of the Conference of Catholic Theological Institutions (COCTI), which took place in Lisbon in 2004. It is an attempt to better perceive the growing modern cultural pluralism, which obviously creates particular circumstances in individual and social life. Referring to COCTI, some examples of a much needed cooperation among those theological institutions are put forward.

The following part of the book contains a report on an international and interfaith meeting of representatives of world major religions, which was convened by the Park Ridge Center for the Study of Health, Faith and Ethics from Chicago in Belgium in 1994. The report appeared in "Ethos [Quarterly of the John Paul II Institute at the Catholic University of Lublin and the International Academy of Philosophy in the Principality of Liechtenstein]" (1996, Special Edition no. 2, p. 291-296, transl. Jan Kłos). The consultation in Belgium was an attempt to critically refer to the Draft Final Document of the 1994 UN Conference on Population and Development in Cairo. Its lack of

a religious perspective in discussing population issues provoked the participants of the Belgium consultation to stress the significance of a religion, religious values and traditions that should be part of any sound population policy. The report also shows how much various religions may differ when dealing with such basic concepts like the dignity of every human person, the family, human rights etc.

The paper *Moral Theology Ecumenically Oriented* was published in the leading Polish theological journal "Roczniki Teologiczne" (61(2014), no. 3, p. 97-115). Though Christians are now more willing to admit that ecumenism to be an imperative for all Christ's disciples, the formal ecumenical dialogues have so far only occasionally attempted a thorough analysis of the Christian moral vision in its various traditions. Moral theology (Christian ethics), too, needs to adopt a more ecumenical stance and become more eager to enter in a mutually enriching common study of moral life. The text provides several encouraging examples of moral theologians or theological ethicists of different traditions of Christianity who proved to be engaged in the study of morals from a serious ecumenical perspective.

A similar ecumenical aspect is considered in the consecutive chapter of the book which first appeared under the title *Non-Catholic Reactions to Veritatis splendor* ("Studia Oecumenica" 15(2015), p. 97-122). A growing ecumenical awareness among Christian theologians and ethicists has found in John Paul II's moral encyclical *Veritatis splendor* a fresh impetus for a development of common studies of moral issues. Not few Protestants expressed their comments on the way the Pope discusses and defines fundamental moral problems of Christian moral teaching in his encyclical. Some of those comments were apparently positive, some even enthusiastic while others displayed a mixed reaction. Some authors approached *Veritatis splendor* critically and in some cases even rejected it altogether.

Anglicanism is one of the major Protestant traditions, which in its moral teaching underwent a renewal attempt in the 20<sup>th</sup> c. Natural law is one of its fundamental issues and found its vision in the paper *Natural Law in the 20th c. Renewal of Anglican Moral Theology* (in: *Das Naturrecht und Europa. [Ad fontes. Schriften zur Philosophie, vol. 3]*, ed. Tadeusz Guz, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang 2007, s. 443-462). In the broader context of the premises of the renewal of Anglican moral

theology and its premises the text shows how Anglicanism defends the place and role of law in Christian morality. What follows is an analysis and exposition of the doctrine of natural law based mainly on Sacred Scripture, on Aquinas and Anglicans' own Caroline tradition.

Over the centuries it has been a long-lasting concern for all Christians to determine a moral assessment of war and peace. The next chapter *War – Just or Justifiable? A Christian Orthodox Perspective* (first published in “Studia Oecumenica” 16(2016), p. 113-122) is an attempt to explain the Christian Orthodox perception of an ethical dimension of war. While the Western tradition rather early developed a just war doctrine, the East took a different path. War has constantly been perceived there as evil though in some circumstances necessary and hence justifiable (but strictly speaking neither “just” nor “good”). Both the Greek Fathers and later Eastern authors and Church figures would develop their understanding of warfare as “irrational” and an obstacle on every Christian's path to *theosis*. The Russian Orthodox Bishops' statement *The Basis of the Social Concept* is a rare example of a more elaborated theory of the justification of warfare in Christian Orthodoxy.

The last two chapters in this book turn to the university as an old and always relevant institution of human culture. The chapter *Man as the Primary Way for the University* (“Roczniki Teologii Moralnej” 1(2009), p. 93-105) takes up the university's task of responsibility for culture and the world. Those who belong to *universitas magistrorum et scholarium* cannot neglect their duty to continue to discern *signa temporum*, to distinguish good from bad, and above all to search for truth – the truth of the human person, of human life and of the world, in which all men and women live. Thus it is man – the human being who is to become – following John Paul II's phrasing – the primary way for every university.

In the last section of this book entitled *Catholic Universities and Contemporary Culture* (appeared in “The Living Word. Journal of Philosophy and Theology” [India] 111(2005), no. 5, p. 281-294) some aspects of a Catholic university are described so that its role and duties in modern culture turn out more explicit. Even if the current cultural situation tends to be ever more secular, relativistic and individualistic, Catholic universities must not lose their full identity and essential obli-

gations. Rather, they shall continue to promote a theological inspiration as vital also in the world of science, to show their rootedness in the Church and to fruitfully influence contemporary societies in the light of Christ's truth and light.

My many thanks are due to many people – my professors, colleagues and friends from my own country and from abroad for sharing their wisdom and knowledge, friendship and kindness in so many ways. I am fully aware how much I have benefited from the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, which has been my Alma Mater. Gratefully acknowledging all the gifts I have received from the Lord Jesus through so many good people I remain deeply indebted.

## From Anthropology to Solidarity and Social Justice

Why “social values”? Why “solidarity” and “social justice” and so on? Is it not too idealistic to talk about justice and solidarity in a world where what is at the centre is an individual – my own self and my own interests, my own future and my own fulfilment? Why not let the individual go his or her own way and thus let him or her be happy and satisfied in a way he or she chooses? Why remind him or her – all of us – that we are to “carry each other’s burdens” (Gal 6:2)? Is it not unwisely utopian? Is no other, more “modern” way of life available 14 years into the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Why not be more down-to-earth, and take more seriously how the land lies, and respect one’s own decision about which way to go?

Whatever the circumstances society needs values in order to remain authentically human – fraternal and just, to remain an authentic community of persons. Being a “group of persons bound together organically by a principle of unity” it is “at once visible and spiritual”<sup>1</sup> which corresponds with the nature of the human person that is both body and soul. Thus social values, solidarity and justice, continue to be indispensable regardless of the problems, transformations or misconceptions, individual desires and dreams, modern man faces and attempts to cope with.

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<sup>1</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, London: Geoffrey Chapman 1994, no. 1880.

## 1.

50 years on the Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes* remains a text not yet fully understood, both within the Church and outside of it, and not yet sufficiently shared with the world. Still much less it has been implemented in the Christians' perception (both self-perception and their perception of the created world) and mission that all Christ's disciples are to make their own in front of the world. The human person "is and ought to be the beginning, the subject and the object of every social organization"<sup>2</sup>. An implication of this is that the shape of society depends first and foremost upon the proper conception of the human person (who is a subject and *animal sociale*), upon the truth of *conditio humana*.

The so-called new cultural model of man, increasingly widespread these days, seriously distorts the conception of the human person that Christianity has developed over centuries and which became a cornerstone of modern civilization. This new cultural model perceives the human being in the individualistic and utterly subjective terms; man is a religiously indifferent being whose religious concerns continue to turn distant and eventually absent; nomadism is a feature that aptly describes his constant internal and spiritual migrations from one cult or religion or rite or magic to another; he is becoming ever more dependent upon the mass media whose influence is often invasive and inclusive. Finally, this "new man" is a radically natural being, he is no longer *corpore et anima unus*, he is not "body and soul", but rather "body and mind" while the soul has vanished being irrelevant for modern mentality<sup>3</sup>. What is problematic about it is that it is the spiritual element of the human being that goes beyond oneself, crosses the limits of one's own self. Without the spiritual dimension one can see no way how to truly reach out to another and recognize him and her as a brother and a sister. In purely natural terms the other becomes

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<sup>2</sup> Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, no. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Sławomir Nowosad, *Współczesny spór o człowieka*, in: *Kościół – pluralizm – Europa*, ed. Marcin Hintz, Warszawa: Komitet Krajowy Światowej Federacji Luterńskiej 2005, p. 50-53.



a separate individual, someone alien. This easily results in perceiving relations with others as something artificial, transitory or utilitarian. Solidarity has no base to originate and develop. There is no room for solidarity, because only self-interests remain and govern one's life and the life of society. The same is true for justice. If one is focused on oneself, one finds no reason to care for another and to give to each his own (*suum cuique tribuere*). My life is only about myself – about giving to me my own. This is no real justice. Hence, the first condition for sound and lasting interpersonal bonds is a sound integral conception of the human being.

Secularism (which is close to liberalism – with its notion of unrestricted freedom, detaching freedom from truth), being one of major features of modern society, deprives man of his transcendence. If so, it is in fact a rejection of *conditio humana* and thus can be defined as a lie (Card J. Ratzinger), it is not true to what and who the human being is. Thus secularism brings about a flawed picture of man. When transcendence disappears, man remains closed in immanence, closed in upon himself, an individual human being remains left alone. Consequently, secularism creates a mess in the world, which becomes a “collection of individuals”, selfishness can easily flourish. Secularism even leads to suffering – John Paul II described modern deeply secularised societies as “suffering from horizontalism”<sup>4</sup>. Another result of such a state of societal life is individualism sometimes described as a “broken whole” leading to a “state of the lost equilibrium, where an ‘integrated totality’ has been replaced by a decentred universe – a pluriverse – where no centre holds weight”<sup>5</sup>.

Secularism is a highly complex phenomenon or process that cannot be described or explained easily. Essentially, however, it contains elements that contradict religion and tend to either overcome it or at least remove it from the public sphere to the most private one. In this

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<sup>4</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2003, no. 34.

<sup>5</sup> “As an integrated unified totality, the whole has been irreparably broken [...]. Everything now seems swept of balance; there is no equilibrium”. Thomas E. Reynolds, *The Broken Whole: Philosophical Steps Toward a Theology of Global Solidarity*, Albany: State University of New York Press 2006, p. 3.



sense secularism is an reductionist attempt which aims at flattening human existence and to confine it to a horizontal dimension<sup>6</sup>.

A lot of important and illuminating arguments and explanations of these issues can be found in Vigo Auguste Demant (d. 1983), an unjustly forgotten Regius Professor of Moral Theology at Christ Church, Oxford. In one of his unpublished essays and sermons he offers this elucidation:

„These [secular] interpretations see the universe and man's place in it, as accounted for entirely in terms of the world process itself – without any reference to an eternal, divine reality, transcending the world while acting in and upon it; in another dimension, as it were. This dismissal has little to do with modern confidence in the scientific method and the great benefits it has brought about. I can only assert [...] that there is no conflict between natural science and religion. There is a conflict between the religious view of things and modern thought. Modern thought is secularist, but it is not based on science, though it often thinks it is. The unbelieving modern world is not composed of intellectuals who have looked at religious belief and rejected it. It is comprised of millions for whom the religious understanding of man, with its reference to a divine reality, has just ceased to have any meaning for men coping with the intellectual and practical problem of life.”<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> See Philip Egan, *Irrelevant? Should Christianity Still Have a Voice in the Public Square?* [A lecture delivered at King's College, London on 6.03.2014], ([www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](http://www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk) accessed: 20.03.2014). For an extensive description of secularism, secularisation, desecularisation etc. see Janusz Mariański, *Sekularyzacja, desekularyzacja, nowa duchowość. Studium socjologiczne*, Kraków: Nomos 2013. Interesting remarks on the Christian concept of secularity as different from secularism see Martin Rhonheimer, *The Common Good of Constitutional Democracy: Essays in Political Philosophy and on Catholic Social Teaching*, Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press 2013, p. 304-315.

<sup>7</sup> Vigo Auguste Demant, *Has Religion a Future?*, in: *Not One World, but Two* [typescript], p. 141-142 [published later as: Vigo Auguste Demant, *Not One World, but Two: A Miscellany of Preachments*, ed. Sławomir Nowosad, Lublin: TN KUL 2017, p. 113-114].

## 2.

A secularist epistemological error leads to a false ontological creation – man is reduced to a radically natural being, there is nothing supernatural in him. There is no room for faith and for God. This is entirely contrary to what Vatican II emphasised in the famous and often referred to phrasing: “[...] only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. [...] Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear”<sup>8</sup>.

The Church, being an “expert in humanity” (Paul VI), continues to defend and promote an integral concept of the human person. The idea has returned afresh in the context of the extraordinary Synod on the Family held in October 2014 with the *Humanae vitae*’s message and its concept of integral anthropology. The integral understanding of the human being is indispensable for understanding what solidarity and social justice are all about, because those values (as well as other values and principles of social life) are concerned with human beings as inter-related, inter-dependant in the fullness of their lives and supernatural vocation. It is obvious that social and human sciences provide valuable data for a better understanding of man as a social being and subject of social relations. Hence, not just Catholic social teaching but all social visions ought to draw upon those sciences being a constant source of deeper and thorough knowledge of the human being as a social creature. However, man needs not just *ratio* but also *fides* for a complete perception of his nature and life in all its dimensions. Man must use his both wings to come to know the truth: “Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth – in a word, to know himself – so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves”<sup>9</sup>. Only the “wing of faith” can help one (one

<sup>8</sup> Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, no. 22.

<sup>9</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et ratio*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1998 (opening statement).

as created) recognize and accept what is being revealed (by the Creator) about one's very nature and vocation. Thus the Church believes that "man's true identity is only fully revealed to him through faith", otherwise he will easily lose or not find at all his "path of salvation"<sup>10</sup>.

The Christian tradition brings to light what enables one to see the human being in the integrity of his life, consequently it is crucial for making human life authentic both in personal and social aspects, with a particular stress on justice, solidarity and love above all:

"Universalistic egalitarianism, from which sprang the ideals of freedom and a collective life in solidarity, the autonomous conduct of life and emancipation, the individual morality of conscience, human rights and democracy, is the direct legacy of the Judaic ethic of justice and the Christian ethic of love. This legacy, substantially unchanged, has been the object of continual critical appropriation and reinterpretation. To this day, there is no alternative to it. And in light of the current challenges of a postnational constellation, we continue to draw on the substance of this heritage. Everything else is just idle postmodern talk"<sup>11</sup>.

In order not to fall into a trap of reductionism of any sort, the Church is particularly committed to integral concepts and attitudes. An integral picture of a reality prevents from partiality and its biased treatment. Thus, a sound perception and ordering of society is to be based on a sound integral picture of the human being. In order to "grasp the most significant facets of the mystery and dignity of human beings" the Church in her social teaching "stops to dwell above all on the principal and indispensable dimensions of the human person"<sup>12</sup>. Only then an integral development of the human being is possible

<sup>10</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus annus*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1991, no. 54.

<sup>11</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Time of Transitions*, ed. and transl. Ciaran Cronin, Max Pensky, Cambridge: Polity 2006, p. 150-151 (original interview of 1999).

<sup>12</sup> Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2004, no. 124. „In the past there has been no lack of various reductionist conceptions of the human person, many of which are still dramatically present on the stage of modern history. These are ideological in character or are simply the result of widespread forms of custom or thought concerning mankind, human life and human destiny. The common denominator among these is the attempt to make

and will promote the “good of every man and of the whole man”<sup>13</sup>. The integral conception of the human person includes the following principal dimensions: the unity of the person (*corpore et anima unus*), uniqueness and openness to transcendence, freedom, equal dignity of all men and women, social nature<sup>14</sup>.

What is particularly relevant to the subject here is the recognition of the social nature of the human person that is based on a “relational subjectivity” and on the person’s capability of communion. Every man and woman was created in the image of the Triune God who is a perfect communion in Himself. Hence, men and women are capable of creating and living in a society. Some forms of societal life, like the union of man and woman in marriage, can become a unique reality of *communio personarum*. It is also worth stressing that the concept of *communio* became the foundation of the Vatican II’s ecclesiology, subsequently developed extensively by St. John Paul II<sup>15</sup>.

### 3.

It is a fundamental conviction of the Church that only by bringing back God to the fore and restoring the primacy of God that man can come to the full understanding of his life and vocation. It is not about any god, but God who made Himself visible to man – the Word made flesh. Jesus Christ, the “Image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15), is for Christians “the perfect man who has restored in the children of Adam that likeness to God which has been disfigured ever since the first sin”. Being conformed to God’s only Son, man comes to know and believe

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the image of man unclear by emphasizing only one of his characteristics at the expense of all the others”. Ibidem.

<sup>13</sup> Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum progressio*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1967, no. 14; Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in veritate*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2009, no. 18.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 127-151.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Sławomir Nowosad, *Responding to the Great Challenges Facing the Church Today: Blessed John Paul II and the Ecclesiology of Communion*, p. 302-325.

that he is the “only creature on earth that God has wanted for its on sake”<sup>16</sup>. It is on this belief that man is to base his unique dignity which is universal. All can and should enjoy the same inherent worth in the eyes of God as well as in the eyes of other men and women. Then one will recognize, believe and accept (and will build his community upon it) that “God desired that all men should form one family and deal with each other in a spirit of brotherhood”<sup>17</sup>. Solidarity and social justice continue to be relevant as ever due to sound anthropology, an integral concept of the human person which is a *conditio sine qua non* for fully human life in society. This includes a basic conviction that every human being has inviolable dignity that is to be always honoured<sup>18</sup>.

Vigo Auguste Demant is one of those (Anglican) theologians who have consistently emphasised the need for an authentic complete vision of the human person. The major aim of all his efforts was to rehabilitate a true full humanism, which was in many ways threatened by a neglect and even rejection of the spiritual. This is guaranteed only thorough and in man’s union with God: “Without the supernatural link with God nature is not true to itself, i.e. to the order of Creation. Christ is the unique answer to the question of man [...]. Because man in Christ knows what he himself is”<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, no. 22 and 24.

<sup>17</sup> Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, no. 24.

<sup>18</sup> „Persons have dignity and must be respected. It is not identity as a citizen or producer that establishes a person’s dignity; it is the conviction that humans are made in the image and likeness of their divine Creator. It is the theology of the creation narrative of Genesis that provides the foundation for CST’s [Catholic social teaching’s] commitment to the dignity of each person. [...] human beings are creatures of God-given dignity and each person has equal standing to claim that he or she be respected” Kenneth R. Himes, *Globalization with a Human Face: Catholic Social Teaching and Globalization*, “Theological Studies” 69(2008), no. 2, p. 275.

<sup>19</sup> Vigo Auguste Demant, *Christian Polity*, London: Faber and Faber 1936, p. 100. Elsewhere he put it in a slightly different fashion: „[...] the world needs three kinds of men: working men; fighting men; and praying men. Working men so that society may continue to exist, to plant the potatoes, as it were; fighting men to protect those who work, to preserve the social cohesion of the group, as it were; and praying men, so that the human race shall be continu-

Only when men and women living in a society recognize one another as persons, solidarity will become not only possible but necessary, as binding all into one family. Seeing the “other” as a person, and thus as a “neighbour”, does not apply only to individual human beings but also to a people or nation – those too are to be seen as a “neighbour”, a “helper”, “to be made a sharer, on a par with ourselves, in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God”. Here one finds another reason to stress the “importance of reawakening the religious awareness of individuals and peoples”<sup>20</sup>. Thus social life and man’s social inclination are then not an option but reflect a fundamental and universal unity of all.

Solidarity, which can too be described as social charity or friendship, is both a social principle and a moral norm. From a Christian perspective one finds and acknowledges an ethical imperative of solidarity in Christ’s words: “Feed the hungry” (Matt 25:35)<sup>21</sup>. Solidarity,

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ally reminded that life is not planting potatoes in order to live to plant more potatoes; or even protecting men in order to save society in order to go on protecting them. It is for realizing of certain values over and above mere social cohesion, and for the Christian all these values are summed up in the worship of the Creator”. Ibidem, p. 62. See also other publications by Demant: *God, Man and Society: An Introduction to Christian Sociology*, London: SCM 1933; *Faith that Illuminates*, London: The Centenary Press 1935; *Our Culture: Its Christian Roots and Present Crisis*, London: SPCK 1947.

<sup>20</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1987, no. 39. This encyclical letter has come to be the most commonly cited Catholic Church document on solidarity. Cf. Kenneth R. Himes, *Globalization with a Human Face: Catholic Social Teaching and Globalization*, p. 276. “Pope John Paul II developed the virtue of solidarity into a host of insights into concrete right moral conduct in such a way that the language is foundational to Catholic social tradition” James F. Keenan, *A History of Catholic Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century: From Confessing Sins to Liberating Consciences*, London-New York: Continuum 2010, p. 87.

<sup>21</sup> Of course solidarity cannot be limited to feeding the hungry but this, too, is its important and urgent aspect in the context of a contemporary global situation: „[...] the elimination of world hunger has also, in the global era, become a requirement for safeguarding the peace and stability of the planet. Hunger is not so much dependent on lack of material things as on shortage of social resources, the most important of which are institutional. What is missing, in other words, is a network of economic institutions capable of

as indeed true social charity, demands that everyone accepts his or her responsibility for everyone. Hence, solidarity is a distinctly moral attitude and virtue being a personal obligation to act in accordance with moral law, which for believers is based on “God’s will, the only true foundation of absolutely binding ethics”<sup>22</sup>. As already stressed above, solidarity cannot be confined to relations between individuals; it is a requirement of the moral order also in both a national and international perspective. Solidarity leads to sharing all goods, material and spiritual, with, indeed, the stress on the latter: “Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well” (Matt 6:33). In the context of a growing globalization solidarity can become an assurance that “the emerging global order is one that will truly serve the well-being of all people and not simply a segment of the world’s population at the expense of the rest of humankind”<sup>23</sup>. In order to build an authentic “globalization of solidarity”, to which humanity has been called upon many times by John Paul II, it is human life and freedom that should be at the centre of people’s attention and engagement. Global community needs to be more aware of its spiritual essence and condition, which is again based on the integral concept of the human person. This makes it clear how indispensable and vital is theology as well as a theological perception of all reality, including the human being. This will eventually result in authentic and lasting solidarity where all men and women matter and get respected, with the poor and marginalized above all<sup>24</sup>.

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guaranteeing regular access to sufficient food and water for nutritional needs, and also capable of addressing the primary needs and necessities ensuing from genuine food crises, whether due to natural causes or political irresponsibility, nationally and internationally. The problem of food insecurity needs to be addressed within a long-term perspective, eliminating the structural causes that give rise to it and promoting the agricultural development of poorer countries”. Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in veritate*, no. 27.

<sup>22</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, no. 38.

<sup>23</sup> Kenneth R. Himes, *Globalization with a Human Face: Catholic Social Teaching and Globalization*, p. 277. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1941-1942.

<sup>24</sup> “The central questions about globalization ultimately are not about efficiency or profitability but about human life and human freedom. Christian theology’s principal task in the modern world is not to reject globalization but to humanize it, to make it more risk-averse to human costs than to financial costs,



Pope Francis in his *Prefazione to Povera per i poveri: La missione della Chiesa*, recently published by Card. Gerhard Ludwig Müller, emphasizes an anthropological and moral connection between solidarity and poverty. It is due to the truth of the human person who is himself a gift and a task. Goods that men possess are to be used not only to receive solidarity but rather to offer solidarity. When reminded of his essential solidarity with others, man “knows he cannot keep for himself the good at his disposal”. When man is aware of his own “poverty of limitation”, his “original, creaturely poverty”, it becomes for him a “resource, through which what enriches each person, and is freely given, is a good and a gift from which everyone can benefit”. This shows that solidarity and justice are interrelated<sup>25</sup>.

Justice in its subjective dimension is based on the “will to recognize the other as a person”, while objectively it constitutes the decisive moral criteria in social life. Social justice (beside the classical forms of justice – commutative, distributive and legal) gets ever more attention nowadays. It can be described as regulating “social relationships according to the criterion of observance of the law”. It is to be found in the sphere of the social question, even the “world’ question (to which the Church is now particularly committed) and as such is concerned with the “social, political and economic aspects and the structural dimension of problems and their respective solutions”<sup>26</sup>. Justice is not to be understood exclusively or even mainly in economic terms. It should include and apply not only to individuals and communities but also to cultures, which get threatened in different ways in the current context of globalization<sup>27</sup>.

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and above all to challenge people to become more interested in the human and spiritual assets of the global community than in the financial and material portfolio of its individual members”. Daniel Groody, *Globalizing Solidarity: Christian Anthropology and the Challenge of Human Liberation*, “Theological Studies” 69(2008), no. 2, p. 267.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Francesco, *Prefazione*, in: Gerhard Ludwig Müller, *Povera per i poveri. La missione della Chiesa*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2014, p. 5-10.

<sup>26</sup> Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 201. Cf. John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in terris*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1963, no. 282-283.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Kenneth R. Himes, *Globalization with a Human Face: Catholic Social Teaching and Globalization*, p. 281-282.



Social justice (*suum cuique* in its social aspect) demands that both individuals and associations in society obtain “what is their due according to their nature and their vocation”. It is preserved when the transcendent human dignity is respected. Since the person is prior to society, it refers both to authority (in society) and to legislation. Only then society becomes truly fraternal, when every man is a “neighbour”: “everyone should look upon his neighbour (without any exception) as ‘another self’, above all bearing in mind his life and the means necessary for living it with dignity”<sup>28</sup>. Charity is a necessary enrichment of social life with its “logic of gift”. Consequently, this makes room for the principle of gratuitousness without which social life in fact ceases to be authentically human<sup>29</sup>. Since all men and women are equal in their dignity, it is thus a moral imperative to eliminate all unjust (sinful) inequalities.

The contemporary context of serious violations of the principle of justice and basic human rights as regards the defenceless and weakest members of many societies has made the Magisterium of the Church to expressly emphasise that deliberate depriving innocent human beings of their life “is always morally evil and can never be licit either as an end in itself or as a means to a good end”. Such acts contradict “the fundamental virtues of justice and charity”<sup>30</sup>. This teaching finds clear explanation in Robert P. George who repeatedly reaffirms his unwavering pro-life position based on a rational, fundamental conviction that “human embryos and fetuses [...] are living individuals of the species *Homo sapiens* – members of the human family – at early stages of their natural development”. Consequently, just law is just as long as it respects and protects every human being as a member of the human

<sup>28</sup> Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, no. 27. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1928-1933.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in veritate*, no. 34-36. „The Church’s social doctrine holds that authentically human social relationships of friendship, solidarity and reciprocity can also be conducted within economic activity, and not only outside it or ‘after’ it. The economic sphere is neither ethically neutral, nor inherently inhuman and opposed to society. It is part and parcel of human activity and precisely because it is human, it must be structured and governed in an ethical manner”. Ibidem, no. 36.

<sup>30</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Evangelium vitae*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1995, no. 57.

family. Hence to “exclude anyone from the law’s protection is to treat him unjustly”<sup>31</sup>.

It is not a futile idealism but a sound realism when the Church emphasises the necessity of an integral, comprehensive understanding of the human being and only then explains why life in society must be life in community, why solidarity and justice are never to be dismissed if life in society is to remain fully human. This realistic approach needs to acknowledge another aspect of the overall picture – that of man as a sinful creature. This was well elaborated by Reinhold Niebuhr (d. 1971), an important figure in the 20<sup>th</sup> c. Protestant theology and ethics in America, into a theory that came to be known as Christian realism:

“Christian realism attempts to deal with the human social condition as ‘the way things are,’ rather than how one might wish they were [...]. It advocates an approach to political and social realities in a democratic society from a Christian anthropological perspective, accenting the doctrine of original sin and the testimony of history regarding human tendencies toward selfish social behaviour. In other words, it aims to avoid either a too optimistic or a too pessimistic view of human nature and their implications for individual and, especially, for societal structures”<sup>32</sup>.

Hence, for a Christian to be realistic, one has to keep in mind and acknowledge human sinfulness. Catholic social teaching has spoken not once since the 1960s of sin as social. Since sin distorts the original relationship between the Creator and the creature, among creatures

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<sup>31</sup> Robert P. George, *Conscience and Its Enemies: Confronting the Dogmas of Liberal Secularism*, Wilmington: ISI Books 2013, p. 95. „As modern embryology confirms beyond any possibility of doubt, we were never parts of our mothers; we were, from the beginning, complete, self-integrating organisms that developed to maturity by a gradual, gapless, and self-directed process. Our foundational principle of the profound, inherent and equal dignity of every human being demands that all members of the human family be respected and protected irrespective not only of race, sex and ethnicity but also of age, size, location, stage of development, and condition of dependency”. Ibidem. See also Charles J. Chaput, *Render unto Caesar: Serving the Nation by Living Our Catholic Beliefs in Political Life*, New York: Doubleday 2008, p. 207-212.

<sup>32</sup> Tony L. Ritchie, *A Politics of Pluralism in American Democracy: Reinhold Niebuhr’s Christian Realism as a National Resource in a Post-9/11 World*, „Journal of Ecumenical Studies” 45(2010), no. 3, p. 472-473.

themselves and the self's internal balance, contradictions and conflicts ensue. Injustice (rather than justice) and individualism and selfishness (rather than solidarity) arise and spread. The mystery of "communion in sin" allows to see that social sin destroys the human person, society and the world: "Every soul that lowers itself through sin, writes the pope, drags down with itself the Church, and, in some way, the whole world"<sup>33</sup>. Of this all, in particular Christians, should be fully aware and thus acknowledge that they are in constant need of help from above. This saving and redemptive intervention does come to man as *mysterium pietatis* (i.e. Christ himself) – which is God's response to man's *mysterium iniquitatis*: "The mystery of pietas, on God's part, is that mercy in which our Lord and Father [...] is infinitely rich. [...] it is a love more powerful than sin, stronger than death"<sup>34</sup>. Only then solidarity will turn real and renew human society. It is a solidarity that can be described as a fact, a social principle or norm, a human virtue and a Christian calling<sup>35</sup>. And then justice will rule societal life, in fact all man's life.

<sup>33</sup> Christine Firer Hinze, *The Drama of Social Sin and the (Im)Possibility of Solidarity: Reinhold Niebuhr and Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, "Studies in Christian Ethics" 22(2009), no. 4, p. 444. Both Hinze and many other authors refer to a thorough analysis of man's sinfulness and its social dimension by John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1984, particularly no. 16.

<sup>34</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, no. 19.

<sup>35</sup> „Solidarity denotes the fact of human interrelatedness, rooted in Christian anthropology [...]. Solidarity as norm bespeaks the obligation to take appropriate responsibility for the relations in which one is enmeshed. [...] Enacting solidarity as a social principle by which institutions [and individuals – my note] are ordered to the common good requires practices and patterns of action – solidarity cultivated as a moral virtue. This virtue's heart is a disposition to acknowledge and to take active responsibility for the common good". Christine Firer Hinze, *The Drama of Social Sin and the (Im)Possibility of Solidarity: Reinhold Niebuhr and Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, p. 447.

## Anthropology as a Basis for Ecology

It was in July 2006 that Catholic moral theologians from all the continents gathered in Padua, Italy to discuss the most important issues facing the contemporary world. Among those most pressing ones ecology, or environmental issues, has been singled out as the one in need of a particular concern. Several sessions were dedicated to the issue and so the problem has been seriously debated pointing to different aspects of the question, particularly to its ethical dimension<sup>1</sup>. Both the presentations and the discussions that followed proved how complex and urgent was the whole ecological question in the context of the contemporary development of the world's economy which often remains unfriendly toward the natural world. The seriousness of the issue clearly needs new studies as well as decisions by those responsible for the way the world development is heading for. One can easily see ever growing serious consequences of the present ecological crisis in all spheres of life. Now and then one can hear about disastrous events brought about by the unrestricted exploitation of the world's resources.

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<sup>1</sup> Among those speaking on environmental issues were: David Clairmont (*Time of Creation, Order of History: Resources for Environmental Ethics in Bonaventure's Moral Theology*); Karl Golser (*Il Compendio della dottrina sociale della Chiesa e l'etica dell'ambiente*); Paulachan Kochappilly (*Christian Ethos and Environmental Ethics*); Paul Lourdasamy (*Environmental Degradation: The Poor as the Most Vulnerable Victims*); Ann Marie Mealey (*Ego – or Ecological Virtues?*); Giuseppe de Virgilio (*Modelli etici nell'ambiente delle Lettere Pastorali: un esempio di dialogo culturale con il mondo ellenistico*).

However it does not mean that just those holding high positions in politics and economy are to face the ecological crisis and endeavour to solve it. One of the leading Anglican theologians has recently stressed the complexity of the problem pointing particularly to its ethical and religious dimensions: "The environment has become one of the major moral issues of our time. [...] it is increasingly obvious that human beings are set on a path of unprecedented environmental destruction and that a profound moral and spiritual change is now needed. Human over-population and over-consumption have resulted in appalling pollution, soil erosion, deforestation and species extinction. More debatably, human beings may also be responsible for ozone depletion and global warming. We desperately need to change. We desperately need a change of spirit. The environmental debate is as much about religion and morality as it is about science"<sup>2</sup>. As rational and free, and so responsible, moral agents all men and women are to understand that it is a "serious obligation to care for all of creation". It stems directly from the belief in God who is the Creator of all that exists<sup>3</sup>.

What is also important here is not to limit the whole issue to what can be called nature. Doubtless to say it is necessary to admit the irrational and grave destruction of the natural environment as a result of the present ecological crisis. At the same time it cannot be disregarded that there has been a more serious destruction of the "human environment": "Although people are rightly worried about preserving natural habitats, too little effort has been made to safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic human ecology. Such an ecology will place the human person 'at the centre of environmental concerns, while

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<sup>2</sup> Robin Gill, *Changing Worlds*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark 2002, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> "The commitment of believers to a healthy environment for everyone stems directly from their belief in God the Creator, from their recognition of the effects of original and personal sin, and from the certainty of having been redeemed by Christ. Respect for life and for the dignity of the human person extends also to the rest of creation, which is called to join man in praising God" John Paul II, Message for the World Day for Peace *Peace with God the Creator – Peace with All of Creation* (1.01.1990), The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1989, no. 16. A broader study on anthropological, theological and moral dimensions of the ecological issue cf. Sławomir Nowosad, *Antropologiczno-etyczny wymiar ekologii*, in: *Ekologia. Przesłanie moralne Kościoła*, eds. Janusz Nagórny, Jerzy Gocko, Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL 2002, p. 57-85.

simultaneously promoting an urgent sense of human responsibility for the earth, be it at the level of states, commerce or individuals”<sup>4</sup>. The ecological issue, in all its complexity, has to do with the integral vision of man and his life and vocation.

## 1. Toward a biblical-theological vision of the world

The present context of a multi-faceted ecological crisis needs a profound and serious analysis that will lead not only to the identification of its technological or practical causes (though they may not be overlooked), but above all of the philosophical, ethical and even theological sources of the problem. It is a fundamental conviction that any endeavour to uncover and describe any reality, in this context ecology, requires taking into account a theological dimension. Thus it will become achievable to see the issue in its deepest aspects and consequently will allow to specify major obligations that people face in their responsibility for the whole creation. The aim is not just to describe or even to explain the issue, but also to stress the basic moral principles, which should shape man's activity in relation to God's creation. It is clear that theology will not be able to provide the humanity with “a technical recipe for the resolution of the ecological crisis”, but it can help people to see their natural environment “as God sees it, as the space of personal communion in which human beings, created in the image of God, must seek communion with one another and the final perfection of the visible universe”<sup>5</sup>.

In his *Commentary on Psalm 41* St. Augustine wrote: “I think about the earth and I see that it was created. Its beauty is great but

<sup>4</sup> Celestino Migliore, *Address during a Session of the UN Economic and Social Council's Commission on Sustainable Development* (New York, 11.05.2006, [www.zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org) accessed: 10.06.2006).

<sup>5</sup> International Theological Commission, *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2004, no. 78.

it had a Creator. I look at the vastness of the sea surrounding us, it amazes me and I admire it, but I seek out its Creator. I raise my eyes to heaven, I admire the beauty of the stars and the sun's splendour; I see the moon; they are marvellous all of them: I admire them, I exalt in them, but I thirst for the One who created them"<sup>6</sup>. It is above all the first three chapters of the Book of Genesis that occupy a unique place in regard to the Christian understanding of the origin of the world (of all that exists) and its end. In the very first words of Sacred Scripture: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1), three things are affirmed: that God alone is Creator; that He gives a beginning to all that exists; that the totality of what exists depends on God who gives it being. It can be summarized in the words that "Nothing exists that does not owe its existence to God the Creator"<sup>7</sup>.

The world was created for the glory of God – this thought is clear as well. St. Bonaventure says that God created all things "not to increase his glory, but to show it forth and to communicate it", for God has no other reason for creating than his love and goodness. The world was created according to God's wisdom and proceeded from his free will, and thus not of any necessity. The creation is both ordered and good: it is ordered because it came into being through God's wisdom, it is good because it came from God's goodness and so shares in that

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<sup>6</sup> Quoted from: Peter E. Bristow, *The Moral Dignity of Man: An Exposition of Catholic Moral Doctrine with Particular Reference to Family and Medical Ethics in the Light of Contemporary Developments*, Dublin: Four Courts Press 1997, p. 199. "I will consider the earth, for the earth was made. Great is the beauty of earth's many faces, but it was an artist who made it. Great wonders there are in seeds and in the generation of living things, but all of them come from their Creator. I point to the immensity of the sea all around us; I am astonished and filled with wonder, and I look for the artificer. I look up to the sky and the loveliness of the stars; I marvel at the sun's radiance with its power to awaken the day, and the moon that relieves the darkness of night. These things are marvellous, we must praise them, even be astounded at them, for they are not earthly things; they belong to the heavens. But not yet is my thirst slaked, for though I admire them and sing their praises, it is for him who made them that I thirst". St. Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms 33-50 in: The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, vol. III/16, transl. Maria Boulding, ed. John E. Rotelle, New York: New City Press 2000, p. 244.

<sup>7</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 338 and 290.



goodness: “God saw it was good” (Gen 1:4ff). It has to be stressed that God as Creator always transcends his creation, is always greater (*Deus semper maior!*). According to St. Augustine God is “higher than my highest and more inward than my innermost self”. God not only gave being to everything but still at every moment upholds and sustains all his creation and brings everything to its final end<sup>8</sup>.

All the creation was not made as complete. The Creator destined it to its ultimate perfection yet to be attained and so it can be said the creation is *in statu viae*. God himself guides the world towards its end always caring for all things. Being “in a state of journeying” the world is not yet perfect, it is not free of defects that came onto it through man’s sin to whom the creation had been entrusted. Thus man and woman were called to share in the unfolding of the Creator’s plan of creation. This “established a fixed relationship between mankind and the rest of creation. Made in the image and likeness of God, Adam and Eve were to have exercised their dominion over the earth with wisdom and love”<sup>9</sup>. However they chose to sin (*peccatum originale*) going against God’s plan, which resulted in destroying the original harmony between them and the rest of creation. The essential relationship between man’s activity and the created world, disturbed by man’s sin, led to a disorder not just in man himself and in his relation to the Creator, but also brought about serious repercussions on the whole visible creation. The broken harmony made the creation alien and hostile to man<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 293-301.

<sup>9</sup> John Paul II, Message for the World Day for Peace *Peace with God the Creator – Peace with All of Creation*, no. 3.

<sup>10</sup> “The harmony in which they [man and woman] had found themselves, thanks to original justice, is now destroyed: the control of the soul’s spiritual faculties over the body is shattered; the union of man and woman becomes subject to tensions, their relations henceforth marked by lust and domination. Harmony with creation is broken: visible creation has become alien and hostile to man. Because of man, creation is now subject ‘to its bondage to decay’. Finally, the consequence explicitly foretold for this disobedience will come true: man will ‘return to the ground’ for out of it he was taken. Death makes its entrance into human history”. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 400.



## 2. Toward a fuller understanding of man

The theological analysis opens up the way to perceive the whole ecological issue as essentially founded in the human person who, created by God, rebelled against him which has had essential impact on all that exists. Since the Creator wanted man to be the steward of all that was created, man's sin has mysteriously affected all that was entrusted to him. Thus it is not only the common sense that can come to the conclusion about man's responsibility for the state of the world now, but still more profoundly and seriously the theological understanding of the issue leads to a more comprehensive grasp of the ecological state of affairs. Consequently a fundamental thesis can be set down: the ecological issue is essentially an anthropological one. Hence any serious possibility of finding and implementing effective solutions to the problem first needs an elaboration of major dimensions of what has come to be called the integral Christian anthropology.

It is important to stress both components – “integral” and “Christian” – as it is the Christian message based on God's revelation, given to the humanity and safeguarded and interpreted by the Church, that can lead to an authentic and full vision of man and his supernatural vocation. The basic conviction of the Christianity is that “only in the Church can one find this wisdom about man, and, at the same time, the gift of divine grace which renders possible a life in accord with this vision”<sup>11</sup>. This very important point is clearly made by the II Vatican Council when its Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes* emphasises that “it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear [...]. [Only Christ] fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling”<sup>12</sup>.

It is a well-known fact that modern culture often displays its strong inclination to get rid of its religious content and even its appearance. The process of secularization turns out ever more present, at times

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas McGovern, *The Christian Anthropology of John Paul II: An Overview*, “Josephinum Journal of Theology” 8(2001), no. 1, p. 138.

<sup>12</sup> Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, no. 22.

being inimical or even hostile to everything that comes with religion. It is among many “troubling signs” that bring about “the dimming of hope” and clouding the horizon of European culture. Following John Paul II in his analysis of the contemporary cultural context in Europe<sup>13</sup> it is to be stressed that all this emerges from a certain vision of man considered apart from God. This “anthropology without God” considers man as the absolute centre of the whole reality and makes him live as if God did not exist. Secularism then results in a essential confusion about man where he is seen only as a radically natural being<sup>14</sup>.

Under certain conditions secularism could be considered as a legitimate way of understanding the reality but only when it does not exclude transcendence. In fact transcendence is an exigency of secularism and hence is the necessary condition for secularism not to fall into the trap of relativism<sup>15</sup>. Nevertheless it can be observed that the recent developments of the European secularism seem to guide it in the opposite direction. Nigel Biggar, an Anglican theologian, recalls Jürgen Habermas’s interview in “Le Monde” (of 20 December 2002), in which the German philosopher calls modern societies “post-secular”. He opined that secularisation “had come off the rails, and that what is required to restore it is ‘a respectful approach to religious traditions that have the distinction of a superior capacity for articulating our moral sensibility’”<sup>16</sup>.

In the European historic and religious context Christianity has played a particular role, being the major foundation of Europe’s culture. Thus it is the Christian tradition that gives “a superior capacity” rooted in the revealed truth from God, which enables man to uncover the vision of his life and vocation. It was Carl Braaten, a Lutheran theologian, who in 1974 wrote that „the ethicists of the future must

<sup>13</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, no. 7-9.

<sup>14</sup> Secularism, next to individualism and relativism, is correctly considered an obvious fruit of the Enlightenment, still easily noticed among major characteristics of modern culture. Cf. Sławomir Nowosad, *Catholic Universities and Contemporary Culture*, “The Living Word” [India] 111(2005), no. 5, p. 288-289.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Bp Giampaolo Crepaldi’s lecture at the Bologna-based Veritatis Splendor Institute on 2.02.2006 (cf. [www.zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org) accessed: 14.05.2006).

<sup>16</sup> Nigel Biggar, ‘God’ in *Public Reason*, „Studies in Christian Ethics” 19(2006), no. 1, p. 10-11.

carry a vision of the *humanum*, of the essential humanity of man, into the forums of planning and decision-making. They may not leave the planning of the future to the technological types. These may be giants in stature when it comes to technical means, but moral pygmies of issues of human concern. Jacques Ellul is correct when he says of Einstein: 'It is clear that Einstein, extraordinary mathematical genius that he was, was no Pascal; he knew nothing of political or human reality, or, in fact, anything at all outside his mathematical reach. The banality of Einstein's remarks in matters outside his specialty is as astonishing as his genius within it'<sup>17</sup>.

A close analysis of Christian anthropology shows that it includes two fundamental points of reference, where both refer to the most important events of the history of salvation. The Christian vision of man refers to God as Creator and to Christ as Redeemer. Thus it first goes to the mystery of creation, in which man is made "to the image of God". The other aspect is the mystery of Christ who "reveals man fully to himself". It can then be properly stated that it is the anthropology of the Creation, the Incarnation and the Redemption. In this way the Christian understanding of man starts from God and arrives to God, in God it has a point of departure and a point of arrival. It is also to be stressed that between these two points the mystery of sin intervenes with its consequences for man's own interior life, for his relation to God, to others and to the rest of creation. According to traditional theology God's image in man reveals itself in the faculties of intellect and will. In his thorough analysis of the creation accounts Pope John Paul II additionally emphasizes man's capacity for relationship with God. He describes it as a man's capacity to enter into a covenant with God<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Carl E. Braaten, *Eschatology and Ethics: Essays on the Theology and Ethics of the Kingdom of God*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publication House 1974, p. 181.

<sup>18</sup> "[...] at the same time that same man in his own humanity receives as a gift a special 'image and likeness' to God. This means not only rationality and freedom as constitutive properties of human nature, but also, from the very beginning, the capacity of having a personal relationship with God, as 'I' and 'you', and therefore the capacity of having a covenant, which will take place in God's salvific communication with man. Against the background of the 'image and likeness' of God, 'the gift of the Spirit' ultimately means a call to friendship, in which the transcendent 'depths of God' become in some way

“God’s invitation to a shared life is a gratuitous, unmerited gift to man who from the beginning was made *capax Dei*”<sup>19</sup>.

*Communion and Stewardship* is an enlightening study of the theme of *imago Dei* that has been recently carried out by the International Theological Commission. It will be useful to refer to it here in order to identify major aspects of the Christian anthropology in its significance in the field of the proper understanding of the ecological issue. It rightly underlines the fundamental meaning of the entire creation with the creation of man in its heart. According to the creation accounts from the Sacred Scripture the whole of man is created in the image of God and he is in no way an isolated being. Created in the *imago Dei* human persons are enabled and called to enjoy personal communion with the Triune God and with one another, while at the same time to be responsible stewards of the created world. This makes it possible to distinguish two basic theological aspects of the *imago Dei* – communion and stewardship.

The concept of *imago Dei* has always been present in Catholic theology and in the teaching of the Magisterium, including the teaching of the Vatican Council II. The image of God in man is basically seen in man’s orientation to God and thus man can know God and love Him. A clear emphasis should be put on man’s innate dignity and flowing from it his inalienable rights. The Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* draws attention to the Christological dimension of the *imago Dei* when it quotes St. Paul’s words of Christ as the “image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15). It is Christ who reveals man’s full dignity: “only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a figure of Him Who was to come, namely Christ the Lord. Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself

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opened to participation on the part of man”. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dominum et vivificantem*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1986, no. 34.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas McGovern, *The Christian Anthropology of John Paul II: An Overview*, p. 137; cf. Sławomir Nowosad, *Orędzie moralne Jana Pawła II jako pamięć i tożsamość Kościoła*, in: *Kościół w czasach Jana Pawła II*, eds. Marian Rusecki, Krzysztof Kaucha, Jacek Mastey, Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL 2005, p. 135-137.

and makes his supreme calling clear”<sup>20</sup>. This fundamental understanding of the *imago Dei* can be then supplemented by its other aspects<sup>21</sup>. However, the above mentioned two basic themes of the *imago Dei* need more elaboration.

## Communion

God himself is the perfect communion of the three Persons. Man, made in the image of the triune God, is in his very being destined and oriented towards communion with God and with God’s other rational creatures. Created in the divine image all men and women by nature bodily and spiritually are made for one another. It is this essential likeness to the divine communion of the Father, the Son and the Spirit that makes them capable and called to share Trinitarian life as well as the communion of all creaturely beings.

In order to describe this concept of communion one needs to affirm several aspects of the subject, which eventually create its integral understanding<sup>22</sup>. First an essential union of body and soul in man has to be stressed which allows to exclude any dualism. In the view of the Sacred Scripture the human person is one being where both the bodily and the spiritual dimensions are equally essential to his personal identity. The entire person is created in the image of God, both

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<sup>20</sup> Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, no. 22.

<sup>21</sup> „The Council also underscores the Trinitarian structure of the image: by conformity to Christ (Rom 8:29) and through the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:23), a new man is created, capable of fulfilling the new commandment (*Gaudium et spes*, no. 22). It is the saints who are fully transformed in the image of Christ (cf. 2 Cor 3:18); in them, God manifests his presence and grace as a sign of his kingdom (*Gaudium et spes*, no. 24). On the basis of the doctrine of the image of God, the Council teaches that human activity reflects the divine creativity which is its model (*Gaudium et spes*, no. 34) and must be directed to justice and human fellowship in order to foster the establishment of one family in which all are brothers and sisters (*Gaudium et spes*, no. 24)”. International Theological Commission, *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*, no. 23.

<sup>22</sup> International Theological Commission, *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*, no. 26-55.

body and soul. This body-soul union finds its particular expression in the creation of man and woman. Made in the image of God, all men and women are called to love and communion, which find their distinctive realization in the procreative union of husband and wife. It follows that the difference and plurality of the sexes belong to the very constitution and identity of human beings existing only as masculine and feminine. Though impaired by sin, the harmonious communion between man and woman has been restored by Christ. God's rational creatures are out of their very nature social beings. Thus every person is a relational creature and all persons are capable of love that will bring about their true and lasting community. Both every individual and the entire human family share in the *imago Dei*.

The above mentioned three aspects of the theme of communion as a result of the *imago Dei* need further clarifications due to man's failure to accept God's invitation to communion. The Bible clearly shows that when man turned away from his Creator, it led to divisions not only between the Creator and the creature, not only between body and soul within himself, but also in his relations with others and with the rest of the world. Thus the *imago Dei* has been disfigured by sin though not entirely destroyed. The *post lapsum* man finds himself in need of salvation, which entails the restoration of the image of God by his Son who is the perfect image of the Father. In consequence, as St. Paul says, it is the will of God the Father that all his children "be conformed to the image of his Son, who is the firstborn of many brothers" (Rom 8:29). Together with man all things have been reconciled to God (cf. Col 1:20). The *imago Dei*, impaired in man by sin, has been restored to the *imago Christi* by Christ, through his incarnation, death and resurrection. Seen in a dynamic way, the image of Christ, through collaboration with the Holy Spirit, is to be constantly growing and thus perfecting man's being and the whole life until his final eschatological communion with the triune God.

### Stewardship

It was the Creator's will that man exercise sovereignty over all visible creation. However man must always keep it in mind that it is a gift and a privilege from God, hence he is to imitate the divine rule,

to share in the divine dominion and not to displace it in any way: "The steward must render an account of his stewardship, and the divine Master will judge his actions [...]. Human stewardship of the created world is precisely a stewardship exercised by way of participation in the divine rule and is always subject to it"<sup>23</sup>. According to the *Communion and Stewardship* three following aspects of this theme should be discerned<sup>24</sup>.

Throughout all his history, man, being a rational creature, has always strived to understand his own being and life as well as the world around. It is the Creator who conferred this will and longing for truth in man's heart and thus human beings exercise the stewardship over the created world. It is to be stressed here that behind all this lies a deeply personalist understanding both of God the Creator and of human nature. In this men and women are to acknowledge God as the Maker of all and the source of the order of the universe. Therefore this stewardship of knowledge is an essential element of the integral stewardship over the visible creation. Understood from a Christian perspective this scientific endeavour to understand the universe should be put within the context of the theology of creation.

As human, i.e. rational and free, stewards of the creation, men and women possess a specifically human moral responsibility for the world entrusted to them. Having discovered biological laws that govern the visible world, man must remember he is above all subject to the moral order that springs from God's eternal wisdom and love. "As one called to till and look after the garden of the world (cf. Gen 2:15), man has a specific responsibility towards the environment in which he lives, towards the creation which God has put at the service of his

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<sup>23</sup> International Theological Commission, *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*, no. 61. „Man was created in God's image and was commanded to conquer the earth and to rule the world in justice and holiness: he was to acknowledge God as maker of all things and relate himself and the totality of creation to him, so that through the dominion of all things by man the name of God would be majestic in all the earth". Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, no. 34.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. International Theological Commission, *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*, no. 62-94.



personal dignity”<sup>25</sup>. Thus the ethical dimension of men’s responsibility for the world is rooted in the Christian theological understanding of the creation and of God’s human creatures sharing in the divine rule over it.

One more particular aspect of man’s stewardship cannot be missed when taking into account the contemporary context of the advanced scientific and technological progress. The new techniques give rise to both hopes (especially when providing new diagnostic and therapeutic tools) and fears. It is becoming more and more possible to so deeply interfere in man’s nature so that it can be seriously affected or even altered, particularly in its biological integrity. As being created in the image of the Creator himself, man must see in himself a unique good, hence in the area of bioethics he is to observe fundamental ethical principles that safeguard human dignity, including the body as an intrinsic part of the human person. Man’s competence, also where medicine and its new technologies apply, is clearly limited and needs a basic acknowledgement of fundamental values and undeniable moral norms<sup>26</sup>.

### 3. Moral-theological implications

The above outlined theological understanding first of the world as created and then of man as the only creature made in the image of the Creator, now allows to specify major moral-theological implications within the sphere of the ecological issue. It is a basic conviction that the Christian ethics has to remain theological in order to remain Christian.

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<sup>25</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Evangelium vitae*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1995, no. 42.

<sup>26</sup> “Our ontological status as creatures made in the image of God imposes certain limits on our ability to dispose of ourselves. The sovereignty we enjoy is not an unlimited one: we exercise a certain participated sovereignty over the created world and, in the end, we must render an account of our stewardship to the Lord of the Universe. Man is created in the image of God, but he is not God himself”. International Theological Commission, *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*, no. 94.



Any endeavours to better understand the problems the world faces, including the ecological one, and to find appropriate solutions, need to stay theologically-oriented. This is the way one – in the light of the faith – can and should grasp an issue (any issue) not just in its natural but also supernatural dimensions. It was symptomatic that one of his major statements concerning the ecological problem – the Message for the Word Day for Peace of 1990 Pope John Paul II entitled *Peace with God the Creator – Peace with All the Creation*. Following this, one can understand that the key to the whole ecological issue lies not so much in technical answers, in a transformation of world economies, of local and global environmental policies (though they are not to be disregarded!), but rather in man's heart. The problem is anthropological and theological at its basis – it is about man as a creature and his relation to God as the Creator. It is about who man is and what is in man. Hence it is right to say that the major source of the problem is the so-called anthropological error. It is in fact all about man, the way he perceives himself and his life, his vocation and the sense of his many activities. Consequently, if “it is only in the light of the incarnate Word that the truth of man becomes clear”, then it also applies to this particular ecological dimension of human life. Hence, only Christology makes anthropology possible. The whole truth about man can be seen above all in his relation to God. As a result the truth of man's relations to others, or in this case to all creation, is to be seen in the light of his fundamental relation to the Father which was revealed and restored by Christ.

During his 1999 visit to Poland John Paul II said in Zamość: “Over the consecutive days of creation God was looking at his work and saw that it was good [...]. At last God created man. He put all the wonders of the world into man's hands, so that – while being pleased with it and making good use of its goods – he [man] creatively cooperate in the perfection of God's work in a free and rational way [...]. However, after man's original fall the world, being his particular property, so to speak shared in man's fate. [...] The shadow of death was cast not only on humankind but on all what was to live so to speak for man<sup>27</sup>”. The Christian perception of the creation points to an essential

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<sup>27</sup> John Paul II, Homilia *Piękno tej ziemi woła o zachowanie jej dla przyszłych pokoleń* (Zamość, 12.06.1999), no. 3, „L'Osservatore Romano” [Pol.] 20(1999), no. 8, p. 71.

relationship not only between the Creator and the created world but also to a unique interdependence between man and the rest of creation. Since it was man to whom the world was entrusted so that he continue God's creative work, man's choices and activity affect what God himself made.

There was a particular plan of the Creator for the creation that was "good" and the rational creature whose creation allowed God to call it "very good". God gave man dominion over the material creation but not over human life. Adam and Eve "were to share in God's plan by subduing their environment and developing it. Hence, we can say that the material world is for man but man is for God. There is a harmony and order in the universe; but man destroyed this harmony to some extent, by deliberately going against God's plan through sin. Apart from the death, suffering and fratricide this brought upon him, it also resulted in the earth's 'rebellion' against him and in the disharmony of nature"<sup>28</sup>. Thus when man lost his peace with God, he lost it all, including his relation with the earth. The earth itself was also deprived of peace<sup>29</sup>. Rejecting God's plan on the part of man inevitably provokes negative consequences on all the creation. Hence the proposition is that ecology starts with anthropology. Failing to understand the integral – both natural and supernatural – meaning and sense of his being, activity and vocation man gives rise to a disorder known as an ecological issue. The experience and plenty of scientific date prove that the co called ecological threat in today's world "results from the behaviour of people who show a callous disregard for the hidden, yet perceivable requirements of the order and harmony which govern

<sup>28</sup> Peter E. Bristow, *The Moral Dignity of Man*, p. 195. As regards this harmony one can refer to Ecclesiastes who says: "Into the sea all rivers flow, and yet the sea is never filled, and still to their goal the rivers go" (Job 1:7).

<sup>29</sup> „Cursed be the ground because of you! In toil shall you eat its yield all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to you, as you eat of the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face shall you get bread to eat" (Gen 3:17-19). Bristow stresses that this is the background to St. Paul's Letter to the Romans' teaching: "For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God; for creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it, in hope that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that all creation is groaning in labour pains even until now" (8:19-22).

nature itself”<sup>30</sup>. At the bottom of the ecological issue lies a profound anthropological and moral crisis<sup>31</sup>.

Since it is God who gives life and is the only source of life, life is always a good. The Divine Revelation shows clearly that there is an essential difference between the life man was given by the Creator and the one of all other living creatures because he, being made in the image of God, is to become his manifestation, the sign of his presence and his glory: “Man has been given a sublime dignity, based on the intimate bond which unites him to his Creator: in man there shines forth a reflection of God himself”<sup>32</sup>. Nevertheless all life, being God-given, is a good and therefore deserves respect. According to John Paul II it is the lack of respect for life that underlies the ecological problem<sup>33</sup>.

Another essential cause of the problem becomes clear when one realizes how often and how seriously human activity disturbs the balance of nature for instance by the uncontrolled destruction of animal and plant life or by a reckless exploitation of natural resources, as the Pope’s Peace Message of 1990 states it. Hence a lack of respect for the laws of nature is evidently another fundamental reason of the ecological threat. These two aspects of man’s moral attitude form the basic moral grounds for the serious environmental issue that the world now faces. It seems then that the whole question needs to be placed and considered within the context of the Church’s fundamental positions,

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<sup>30</sup> John Paul II, Message for the World Day for Peace *Peace with God the Creator – Peace with All of Creation*, no. 5.

<sup>31</sup> A very recent report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change unequivocally states that “most of the observed increase in globally averaged temperatures since the mid-20th century is very likely due to the observed increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations”. Quoted from “The Daily Telegraph” of 2.02.2007. The report *2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories* can be found at <http://www.ipcc.ch> (accessed 23.02.2007).

<sup>32</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Evangelium vitae*, no. 34.

<sup>33</sup> “[...] it is evident in many of the patterns of environmental pollution. Often, the interests of production prevail over concern for the dignity of workers, while economic interests take priority over the good of individuals and even entire peoples. In these cases, pollution or environmental destruction is the result of an unnatural and reductionist vision which at times leads to a genuine contempt for man”. John Paul II, Message for the World Day for Peace *Peace with God the Creator – Peace with All of Creation*, no. 7.

which could be called the “pillars of the theology of the environment”: the priority of ethics over technology, the primacy of the person over things, and the superiority of spirit over matter<sup>34</sup>.

From the theological perspective then an appropriate and in-depth analysis and solution of the ecological crisis requires a new emphasis on the fundamental questions like the concept of man and his moral life, the vision of the world as created and God-given and an acknowledgement of the basic ethical principles. Doubtless to say the political and economic policies have to be modified as well as numerous practical decisions are to be taken. However, the real and decisive character of the issue is anthropological and moral. Hence, man is to return to the authentic truth about his nature and his vocation known as the integral anthropology. Having renewed and reconciled himself with his Creator, man consequently will be able to understand and to properly look after all creation by subduing it and treating it responsibly with wisdom and love. It is God the Creator’s plan for all He created which makes man perceive how to serve creation. “Only through man’s reconciliation with God can harmony be restored to the universe. When final union with God is achieved, the integrity of man’s being and the balance of nature will return to the order they enjoyed at the time of creation. Thus, the ecological problem is intimately connected with man and his transcendent vocation and, therefore, moral life”<sup>35</sup>.

Next, it is evident here that the Christian (moral theological) understanding of the ecological issue has to be Christocentric. It is in Christ that both man and the world have become reconciled to God and thus have become good again – as the Creator called His creation in the beginning. Accordingly, if it was man’s sin and rejection of God’s will that lied at the root of the breach of the harmony and order of all creation, theologically speaking it is now man’s conversion that is his primary task. Here St. Paul stresses that it is only through Christ that “a single new man” is created and peace with God and the world is being restored<sup>36</sup>. The environment seen in an integral

<sup>34</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor hominis*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1979, no. 16.

<sup>35</sup> Peter E. Bristow, *The Moral Dignity of Man*, p. 199.

<sup>36</sup> „His purpose in this was, by restoring peace, to create a single New Man out of the two of them, and through the cross, to reconcile them both to God in

way will only regain its value and purpose when man becomes reconciled to God. Eventually this will lead to a transformation of the mentality and attitudes of the contemporary society, also in respect of the ecological issue.

The Church emphasizes that man, reconciled to God, must respect the God-given order of the creation that is the integrity of the created universe, its own internal balance it has from the Creator. All men and women must see the created world as a common heritage because God destined the earth and all it contains for the use of every individual and all peoples, as the II Vatican Council stressed<sup>37</sup>. It is also necessary to remember that all this refers both to individual persons as well as to the states and to the entire international community. Contemporary societies are in need of a profound transformation of a consumerist life style so common among them where there is ever less respect for man: "If an appreciation of the value of the human person and of human life is lacking, we will also lose interest in others and in the earth itself. Simplicity, moderation and discipline, as well as a spirit of sacrifice, must become a part of everyday life". What is particularly urgent is "education in ecological responsibility", responsibility for oneself, for others, and for the earth. "Thus true education in responsibility entails a genuine conversion in ways of thought and behaviour". The aesthetic value of creation is not to be omitted: "Our very contact with nature has a deep restorative power; contemplation of its magnificence imparts peace and serenity". However the ultimate guiding norm for any sound economic, industrial or scientific progress should be "respect for life, and above all for the dignity of the human person"<sup>38</sup>.

This fundamental theological and moral teaching of the Church needs to be converted into a more pastoral approach. An interesting example of this can be found in the New Mexico Bishops' Pastoral Letter "Reclaiming the Vocation to care for the Earth" (1998). In it the Bishops recognize the moral nature of the ecological issue, affirm

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one Body; in his own person he killed the hostility" (Eph 2:15-16).

<sup>37</sup> Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, no. 69.

<sup>38</sup> All quotations in this paragraph come from: John Paul II, *Message for the World Day for Peace Peace with God the Creator – Peace with All of Creation*, no. 7-9, 13-14.

a sacramental dimension to the created universe and finally call for more authentic activity in this area in the name of Catholic social justice teaching. Such activity would include: examining our behaviour, practices and policies as individuals, families, parishes etc.; teaching (especially) children how to love and respect the earth and to take delight in nature; inviting celebrants and liturgists to incorporate in their prayers these issues; inviting public policy-makers to work for an environmental-friendly economy<sup>39</sup>. This shows that the Church not only teaches about fundamental theological and moral aspects of the ecological issue but can also be more practical when creating pastoral programmes.

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Evidently the ecological issue has recently become one of the most urgent and threatening problems of the contemporary world. As such it needs a serious and in-depth analysis as well as appropriate solutions. The Christian theological perception of this question points to its most basic aspects which stress the importance of a proper understanding of man his life and of the rest of the world seen as created by God and entrusted to man. Thus it is in man's turning away from the Creator that the ecological threat has its root causes, which becomes evident especially in a lack of respect for life and for the laws of nature on the part of man. Consequently, what is needed is man's true conversion to God, is to restore peace with him and then to restore peace and harmony within all creation. Essentially then the ecological issue is a moral one and has its basis in an integral anthropology.

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. John E. Carroll, *Catholicism and Deep Ecology*, in: *Deep Ecology and World Religions: New Essays on Sacred Grounds*, eds. David Landis Barnhill, Roger S. Gottlieb, Albany: State University of New York 2001, p. 177-180.



## Christian Martyrdom Never Expires: Some Theological and Ethical Aspects of Obedience *usque ad sanguinem*

Two millennia of Christian history have proved that those who believed and followed Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour learnt to believe “God is always greater” (*Deus semper maior*). Many of them have matured in their faith to the point of offering their lives for the sake of the One they believed in. Undoubtedly various religions have known such radical ways of belief in God (or gods) but for Christians martyrdom encompasses their witness *usque ad mortem* specifically for the sake of Christ. In whatever historical circumstances Christian men and women have lived, martyrdom “has always accompanied and continues to accompany the life of the Church even today”<sup>1</sup>. It is then right to say it has been part of Christian history and Christian life both in the early days of the Apostles and most recently for Jesus’ disciples to profess their faith always ready to lay down their lives.

### 1. Following the example of the Crucified Lord

When the Risen Lord appeared to the Apostles in the cenacle he sent them to be his “witnesses” (Greek: sing. *martyrs*, pl. *martyres*; see Acts 1:8.22). Hence the initial meaning of “martyr” was a witness to

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<sup>1</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1993, no. 90.



Christ's life and resurrection. Later the term was reserved to those of Christ's disciples who experienced hardships and sufferings for their faith in him. Its meaning was finally modified and limited only to those who suffered death for their faithfulness to Jesus Christ<sup>2</sup>.

In order to properly understand an act of Christian martyrdom it is necessary to look to the principle example of the Lord himself who said: "No one takes my life from me, I lay it down of my own free will" (Jn 10:18). It was deeply in Jesus' heart that his salvific mission meant to be one with the Father because he has come to the world not to do his own will but that of the Father who sent Him (Jn 6:38). In Christ's long conversation with the Samaritan woman he expressed it again when saying that it was his "food to do the will of the one who sent me" (Jn 4:34). Hence obedience to the Father's will played a central role in the life of the Son. It was this living relation with his Father that made Jesus "give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45). It is at the very heart of Christian faith to believe that "the sacrifice of Jesus 'for the sins of the whole world' (1 Jn 2:2) expresses his loving communion with the Father" and consequently the "desire to embrace his Father's plan of redeeming love inspired Jesus's whole life"<sup>3</sup>.

Everyone's path through life, when seen in the light of Christ's life in this world, is to express that same relation of obedience to the Father. Thus all men and women who have come to believe in the Lord as the source of their lives are to find in Christ the direction and shape of their earthly existence and to be guided by his example. The disciples of the Lord Jesus are thus "invited to live in the sight of the Father"<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Paul Middleton, *What Is Martyrdom?*, "Mortality" 19(2014), no. 2, p. 120-121; *Martyr*, in: *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, eds. Frank L. Cross, Elizabeth A. Livingstone, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1997, p. 1046. On *martyrium* of Christ himself and of those who remained faithful to him during the communist persecutions of the Church in Central-Eastern Europe see John Paul II's address to the participants of the Congress of Theologians of Central and Eastern Europe entitled *Theo-logia – Boho-słowie* delivered in Jasna Góra, Poland on 15 August 1991. See John Paul II, *Discorso ai partecipanti al Congresso Teologico Internazionale "Theo-logia" cioè "Boho-słowie"*, (www.vatican.va accessed: 15.09.2018).

<sup>3</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 606-607.

<sup>4</sup> „Christ Jesus always did what was pleasing to the *Father*, and always lived in perfect communion with him. Likewise Christ's disciples are invited to live

The Son's obedience toward the Father finds its many expressions in the Gospel. In a special way it is St. John that shows Jesus in whom "everything is a listening to and acceptance of the Father; all of his earthly life is an expression and continuation of what the Word does from eternity: letting himself be loved by the Father, accepting his love in an unconditional way, to the point of deciding to do nothing by himself but to do always what is pleasing to the Father. The will of the Father is the food which sustains Jesus in his work"<sup>5</sup>.

Christians, when following their Lord, must remember that Christ was "obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross" (Phil 2:8). Obedience may be defined as another name of Christ and similarly the same may be said about those who follow him. Being obedient to God who is love (1 Jn 4:8) a Christian makes love his own way through life even *usque ad sanguinem* and so will become until the end "fully obedient and fulfilled [...] with him and in him"<sup>6</sup>. Christians believe in the truth of the Lord's words about love that finds its paramount expression in the act of laying down one's life for one's friends (Jn 15:13). Thus martyrdom, when originated from the love for Christ and

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in the sight of the Father 'who sees in secret', in order to become 'perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect'. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1693.

<sup>5</sup> Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Instruction *The Service of Authority and Obedience "Faciem tuam, Domine, requiram"*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2008, no. 8. "So Jesus said, 'When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak these things as the Father instructed me. And the one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him' (Jn 8:28-29); 'Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work'" (Jn 4:34).

<sup>6</sup> „With an act of obedience, even if unaware of it, we came to life, accepting that good Will that has preferred our existing to non-existence. We will conclude our journey with another act of obedience that hopefully would be as much as possible conscious and free but above all an expression of abandonment to the good Father who will call us definitively to himself, into his reign of infinite light, where our seeking will have found its conclusion and our eyes will see him in a Sunday without end. Then we will be fully obedient and fulfilled, because we will be saying 'yes' forever to that Love that has made us happy with him and in him'. Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Instruction *The Service of Authority and Obedience "Faciem tuam, Domine, requiram"*, no. 29.

offered for brothers and sisters, is considered by the Church as a *supreme testimony* of this love. Therefore every act of martyrdom is „an exceptional gift and [...] the fullest proof of love”, by which a „disciple is transformed into an image of his Master by freely accepting death for the salvation of the world – as well as his conformity to Christ in the shedding of his blood”<sup>7</sup>.

Consequently, Christian martyrdom is not just being ready to give life for the sake of some good cause but rather being ready to lay down one’s life for God – like our Lord himself did for the Father. It is then right to claim that “at the centre of the experience of martyrdom is a testimony on behalf of the martyr’s faith and love for Christ”<sup>8</sup>. Thus, to be precise, authentic martyrdom requires not just the fact that “the prosecutor inflicts death explicitly and uniquely because of belief in Christ”; the essential and “decisive component is rather the conscious and courageous affirmation by the Christian of the sovereignty and kingship of Christ”<sup>9</sup>. That is why in the ecclesiastical process of the recognition of a martyr it is required that the cause be clear – that the question of faith in Christ was directly involved. One lays one’s life *for the sake of Christ*.

Martyrdom is possible because life for man is not an absolute value. Were it absolute, one could not give one’s life for something else. God is the supreme value for the human being and so is salvation. Thus one can give one’s earthly life in order to achieve God, life everlasting, salvation, life in God, Christ who is the life (Jn 14:6). Hence man is called to be ready to lay down his life and all he has and he is in order to achieve God himself – who is the supreme good man can achieve, and is called to achieve. Martyrs’ witness to the truth originates from what characterizes man as man – it is only man that is capable of finding and choosing what should be done and not what can be done. In this the human being is open to the claims of truth and so confirms

<sup>7</sup> Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, no. 42.

<sup>8</sup> Servais Th. Pinckaers, *The Spirituality of Martyrdom... to the Limits of Love*, transl. Patrick M. Clark, Annie Hounsokou, Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press 2016, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Servais Th. Pinckaers, *The Spirituality of Martyrdom... to the Limits of Love*, p. 71.

one's likeness to God<sup>10</sup>. A martyr's readiness to lay his life for the sake of truth makes him a true witness of conscience, in which a man is "alone with God"<sup>11</sup>. Accordingly the act of martyrdom guarantees one's likeness to the Creator and one's lasting dignity.

In all its realism two basic orientations may be distinguished in martyrdom. While on one hand it is a sign of a choice that displays one's faithfulness to the Gospel, on the other hand it is an act of a "prophetic judgment against any culture which professes an *odium fidei*". As a result, three important issues are being emphasized and expressed in the act of martyrdom: "one's sense of what it means to be a human being, liberty in the face of death, and the prospect of eternal life"<sup>12</sup>. Vatican II saw martyrdom within the universal call to holiness and so it belongs not only to the mystery of Christ but also to the ecclesial tradition as the history of Christianity has demonstrated. Every Christian martyr can be said as the one who – in the words of Nicholas Lash – "performs' and 're-enacts' the Word of God by imitating the example of Christ even unto death" and thus explains the Word of God "not by reflection but by action"<sup>13</sup>.

At the very heart of the Christian message and tradition lies the Gospel principle of charity that "never ends", which over the centuries has been handed down from one generation to another. Those who received it in faith became capable of laying down their lives in an often complex and demanding reality of their earthly pilgrimage to God. This act of offering oneself would apply and fulfil in all sorts of different circumstances, including those "in the field of justice and

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, *Opera omnia* [Polish edition], vol. 4: *Wprowadzenie w chrześcijaństwo. Wyznanie – chrzest – naśladowanie*, eds. Krzysztof Góźdz, Marzena Górecka, transl. Robert Biel, Marzena Górecka, Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL 2017, p. 637-638.

<sup>11</sup> Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, no. 16. "[Conscience] bears witness to the authority of truth in reference to the supreme Good, to which the human person is drawn, and it welcomes the commandments. When he listens to his conscience, the prudent man can hear God speaking". *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1777.

<sup>12</sup> Lawrence S. Cunningham, *Saints and Martyrs: Some Contemporary Considerations*, "Theological Studies" 60(1999), no. 3, p. 536.

<sup>13</sup> Lawrence S. Cunningham, *Saints and Martyrs: Some Contemporary Considerations*, p. 536.

peace” which has been “attested by the saints and by those who gave their lives for Christ our Saviour”<sup>14</sup>. A particular example of martyrdom was found by the Church in the case of St. Maximilian Kolbe, a Polish Franciscan friar who offered to go to death of starvation for his fellow prisoner in the concentration camp in Auschwitz in 1941. In his homily for St. Maximilian’s canonization John Paul II saw in that death “a clear witness borne to Christ” as well as “the witness borne in Christ to the dignity of man”. Thus “Maximilian did not die but gave his life [...] for his brother” when he “offered himself up to death out of love”<sup>15</sup>. It is interesting to note how understanding of the *odium fidei*, a necessary criterion for ascertaining an act of Christian martyrdom, has developed in the doctrine of the Church in this context. While in the light of testimonies one could not see a clear indication that Maximilian was starved and finally killed with a lethal injection out of hatred of the faith, the Pope declared him martyr seeing in the Nazi ideology a systematic hatred and rejection of the sanctity of human life and thus implicit *odium fidei*<sup>16</sup>. Pope Benedict XVI later pointed out to the changing “cultural contexts of martyrdom and the strategies

<sup>14</sup> Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in veritate*, no. 12.

<sup>15</sup> John Paul II, *Homily for the Canonization of St. Maximilian Maria Kolbe* (Rome, 10.10.1982, [www.piercedhearts.org/jpii](http://www.piercedhearts.org/jpii) accessed: 23.08.2018).

<sup>16</sup> Interesting remarks about understanding of *odium fidei* have been recently made by Card. Gerhard L. Müller in his short essay about Oscar Romero whom he called a “true martyr for Christ” who “proclaimed God’s love and was prepared [...] to give his life for his sheep”. Because some questioned the Christian nature of Romero’s violent death claiming he had been killed for political reasons, Müller explained: “In martyrdom, the motivation of the perpetrator is never decisive. Even if those who murdered Romero believed they were doing so not out of *odium fidei* but for political reasons, this would be irrelevant. What matters is Romero’s own intention. One can see this by looking at the death of Christ, the prototype of every martyrdom. The motives of the executioners were not what gave Christ’s death on the cross its redeeming dimension. If that were the case, then the soldiers who crucified him would be the priests of the sacrifice. That is impossible. Jesus Christ is the High Priest of the New Covenant, who offered himself as the sacrifice through which we are redeemed once and for all. In an analogous sense, a Christian becomes a martyr by uniting himself to Christ through his willingness to suffer and die for the faith”. Gerhard Ludwig Müller, *Oscar Romero, Martyr and Saint*, “First Things” 2018, no. 283, p. 52.

*ex parte persecutoris* that [...] stimulate different reasons, for example, of a political or social nature”<sup>17</sup>.

## 2. Faith – morality – martyrdom

Christian faith, when taken in its entirety, encompasses both its doctrinal and moral content. Hence being a Christian cannot be reduced to believing in what has been revealed to us (*credenda*) but has to include moral consequences of the faith that shape the life of those who came to believe in Jesus Christ as Saviour (*agenda*). Not only in the context of ecumenical dialogue the Church continues to point out to the “moral principles of the Gospel and their implications”<sup>18</sup>. It is worth noting it is precisely in weakening the essential link between the Gospel and moral teaching that Catholic moral theology has repeatedly suffered fundamental crises both in the past and nowadays. What always needs to be reasserted is an integral perception of Christian faith, which is based on believing in Christ and living out one’s faith in all circumstances<sup>19</sup>. Faith cannot be separated from morality because

<sup>17</sup> „The martyrs of the past and those of our time gave and give life (*effusio sanguinis*) freely and consciously in a supreme act of love, witnessing to their faithfulness to Christ, to the Gospel and to the Church. If the motive that impels them to martyrdom remains unchanged, since Christ is their source and their model, then what has changed are the cultural contexts of martyrdom and the strategies ‘*ex parte persecutoris*’ that more and more seldom explicitly show their aversion to the Christian faith or to a form of conduct connected with the Christian virtues, but simulate different reasons, for example, of a political or social nature. It is of course necessary to find irrefutable proof of readiness for martyrdom, such as the outpouring of blood and of its acceptance by the victim. It is likewise necessary, directly or indirectly but always in a morally certain way, to ascertain the ‘*odium fidei*’ [hatred of the faith] of the persecutor”. Benedict XVI, *Letter to the Participants of the Plenary Session of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints*, (24.04.2006, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va) accessed: 24.08.2018).

<sup>18</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ut unum sint*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1995, no. 68.

<sup>19</sup> „An essential condition for any true renewal of the teaching of moral theology is the reestablishment of a profound and sustained contact with the primary



faith “possesses a moral content [and] it gives rise to and calls for a consistent life commitment”<sup>20</sup>. Consequently Christian faith does not appeal just to human intellect, which is to accept some propositions. It is to embrace the whole life. In this sense Christians understand their faith as “a lived knowledge of Christ, a living remembrance of his commandments, and the truth to be lived out”<sup>21</sup>.

It has been repeatedly proved in the history of the Church how essential it is to remain faithful and to bear witness to the entire truth of the faith. Not only Catholics but also other Christians have had martyrs in their communities of faith who “have preserved an attachment to Christ and to the Father so radical and absolute as to lead even to the shedding of blood”<sup>22</sup>. It is an important dimension of the ecumenical commitment now so generously present among the followers of Christ. It also proves that despite the divisions among them the grace of God has not been withdrawn from anyone who shows perseverance in Christian life and thus becomes a witness to the faith in Christ. A Christian then becomes united to the crucified and risen Lord by true charity. It was stressed by St. Thomas Aquinas that martyrdom as an act of bearing witness *unto death* is an act of charity as well as of fortitude<sup>23</sup>.

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source of inspiration for Christian life and theology that is the Word and Person of Christ”. Servais Th. Pinckaers, *An Encyclical for the Future: Veritatis splendor*, in: *Veritatis splendor and the Renewal of Moral Theology*, eds. J. A. DiNoia, Romanus Cessario, Princeton: Scepter Publishers 1999, p. 13.

<sup>20</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 89.

<sup>21</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 88.

<sup>22</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ut unum sint*, no. 83. “In a theocentric vision, we Christians already have a common *Martyrology*. This also includes the martyrs of our own century, more numerous than one might think, and it shows how, at a profound level, God preserves communion among the baptized in the supreme demand of faith, manifested in the sacrifice of life itself. The fact that one can die for the faith shows that other demands of the faith can also be met”. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 84.

<sup>23</sup> „Within the act of the martyr’s endurance of death, then, Aquinas sees courage and charity working in concert, charity being the final motive cause that commands the act, and courage being the formal motive cause that elicits it. Hence, Aquinas concludes that ‘martyrdom is an act of charity as commanding, and of fortitude as eliciting’. Patrick Clark, *Is Martyrdom Virtuous? An Occasion for Rethinking the Relation of Christ and Virtue in Aquinas*, “Journal

It should be obvious to everyone that the way one lives out one's faith – which is moral life – turns into “confession”. St. Paul reminds all Christians it is love that makes one's life true and authentic and allows to make life a witness just like the Lord himself did. His was the supreme witness through a *total gift of self* on the Cross when he “loved the Church and gave himself up for her” (Eph 5:25). In this context St. John Paul II continues to point to Christ whose witness is “the source, model and means for the witness of His disciples”<sup>24</sup>. Not once the Lord would stress that it is his love and obedience to the Father that lie at the heart of his witness (offering and sacrifice) because he has come to do not his own will but that of the Father (Jn 5:30). Being called to follow the example of the Lord all his disciples through their love and obedience “in conformity with the radical demands of the Gospel” can be led to the “supreme witness of martyrdom”<sup>25</sup>.

In the third chapter of his moral encyclical John Paul II offers a particular appreciation of morality as an indispensable and compelling element of Christian truth of faith. Since it is in the “splendour of truth” that the document locates the solution to the current problems with “certain fundamental questions of the Church's moral teaching” (as the Pope puts it in the very title of the document), the Pope in the brief preamble of his encyclical reminds that it is truth that “enlightens man's intelligence and shapes his freedom”. St. John calls Jesus Christ “the true light that enlightens everyone” (Jn 1:9). It is this truth of Jesus Christ, or the truth that Jesus Christ is (Jn 14:6), which enables a Christian to endure martyrdom. At the very centre of the argument lies the conviction that faith has to be understood as a personal “encounter, a dialogue, a communion of love and life between the believer and Jesus Christ”. In it man acquires and accepts

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of the Society of Christian Ethics” 30(2010), no. 1, p. 146. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2473.

<sup>24</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 89.

<sup>25</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 89. In the context of modern secularization an interesting problem does arise whether martyrdom can survive ever more common perception of the world and human life as radically secular. If God seems not to exist can one offer his life for God and for life eternal? See Lacey Baldwin Smith, *Can Martyrdom Survive Secularization?*, “Social Research” 75(2008), no. 2, p. 435-460.



the Lord as a “truth to be lived out”<sup>26</sup>. This truth is being heard and found in one’s conscience, “the most secret core and sanctuary”<sup>27</sup>, where one recognizes “truths and moral values for which one must be prepared to give up one’s life”<sup>28</sup>.

Recalling martyred saints from the history of the Church John Paul II formulates several arguments for martyrdom that believers ought to perceive as a unique way of imitating their Lord who died on the Cross. Since faith and morality cannot be separated, the moral law and its demands Christians recognize in the faith become signs and proofs of their dignity that God has set in them. Over the centuries the Church has continued to teach that the God-given moral law contains norms that are universal and immutable. As such, they both make manifest and serve to protect the dignity and inviolability of every human person, “on whose face is reflected the splendour of God”<sup>29</sup>. This is to emphasize that in an act of faithfulness to those moral norms to the *total gift of self* the Christian manifests and exalts the holiness of God’s law. Every act of such an affirmation of the moral order that was given by God, being an act of martyrdom, bears “splendid witness both to the holiness of God’s law and to the inviolability of the personal dignity of man, created in God’s image and likeness”<sup>30</sup>.

The Church has never ceased to produce martyrs who remained faithful to God and his law. This is also true in the context of ecumenism. Christians of different traditions, though divided among themselves, can be proud of those who proved in their lives the power of grace. In following the Lord in his suffering and death their faithfulness and witness showed the permanence of communion of salvation, which is communion with Christ in heavenly glory<sup>31</sup>. Not only in the

<sup>26</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 88.

<sup>27</sup> Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, no. 16.

<sup>28</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 94. “In an individual’s words and above all in the sacrifice of his life for a moral value, the Church sees a single testimony to that truth which, already present in creation, shines forth in its fullness on the face of Christ” Ibidem.

<sup>29</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 90.

<sup>30</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 92.

<sup>31</sup> “While for all Christian communities the martyrs are the proof of the power of grace, they are not the only ones to bear witness to that power. Albeit in an

early centuries of Christianity but also in our times they proved to be ready to defend “moral truth even to the point of enduring martyrdom”. Those holy martyrs continue to demonstrate that the “love of God entails the obligation to respect his commandments, even in the most dire of circumstances, and the refusal to betray those commandments, even for the sake of one’s own life”<sup>32</sup>. This formulation is an unambiguous assertion of the seriousness of moral life as part of Christian faith in God. St. John Paul II offers another proof of the importance and continual significance of martyrdom when he calls martyrdom an “exaltation of a person’s perfect ‘humanity’ and of true ‘life’”<sup>33</sup>. It is so because in the act of laying down one’s life man through the affirmation of God’s law rejects as false any violation of the law by committing a sin, a morally evil act. Sin is always a *violation of man’s ‘humanity’* (as created by God in his image). In his apostolic exhortation *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* the Pope calls sin “a suicidal act” because in it man, being a creature, rejects the Creator “the very one from whom he came and who sustains him in life”<sup>34</sup>.

In another argument for a better understanding of the significance of martyrdom St. John Paul II calls it an *outstanding sign of the holiness of the Church*. It shows its particular importance in modern society in the days of such a widespread *confusion about good and evil*. Martyrs, being faithful in their lives to God’s holy law *usque ad sanguinem*, make the moral truth shine before all people. It is a unique and valu-

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invisible way, the communion between our Communities, even if still incomplete, is truly and solidly grounded in the full communion of the Saints – those who, at the end of a life faithful to grace, are in communion with Christ in glory. These *Saints* come from all the Churches and Ecclesial Communities which gave them entrance into the communion of salvation”. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ut unum sint*, no. 84.

<sup>32</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 91.

<sup>33</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 92. “[...] as is attested by Saint Ignatius of Antioch addressing the Christians of Rome, the place of his own martyrdom: ‘Have mercy on me, brethren: do not hold me back from living; do not wish that I die... Let me arrive at the pure light; once there *I will be truly man*. Let me imitate the passion of my God’”. Ibidem.

<sup>34</sup> “As a rupture with God, sin is an act of disobedience by a creature who rejects, at least implicitly, the very one from whom he came and who sustains him in life. It is therefore a suicidal act”. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, no. 15.

able witness to the splendour of moral truth and a contribution that lights up, as the Pope puts it, “every period of history by reawakening its moral sense”<sup>35</sup>. When quoting Prophet Isaiah John Paul II reminds that this *mysterium iniquitatis* has accompanied humanity through all its history: “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter” (Is 5:20).

As the history of Christianity attests, martyrdom is not a common vocation, relatively few are called to it, but it always embodies the “high point of the witness to moral truth”. All Christians should remember, however, that Christ’s disciples must be “daily ready to make” a “consistent witness [...] even at the cost of suffering and grave sacrifice”<sup>36</sup>. In this assertion the Pope clearly enhances the notion of martyrdom to “include those public acts of witness, by which Christians stand against the countervailing forces of culture”<sup>37</sup>. Every Christian should not dismiss an obligation to fidelity to the moral order in ordinary circumstances, as well as with the “grace of God invoked in prayer, to a sometimes heroic commitment” sustained by the virtue of fortitude<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 93. In a similar way, when speaking about the historical role of saints, Hans Urs von Balthasar argued: “The saints are a living out of the Gospel reality by which its inner depth becomes transparent in their life and their doctrine. [...] The great saints make the Gospel real in ways pertinent to the age and culture in which they live”. Lawrence S. Cunningham, *Saints and Martyrs: Some Contemporary Considerations*, p. 531.

<sup>36</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 93.

<sup>37</sup> Lawrence S. Cunningham, *Saints and Martyrs: Some Contemporary Considerations*, p. 535.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 93. Fortitude, being one of the four cardinal virtues, is defined as “the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. [...] It enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice one’s life in defence of a just cause”. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1808.

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Every Christian martyr, being a witness of Christ, whether in the first centuries of Christianity or in our own days, becomes an undeniable sign appealing to all other Christians to offer their own testimony to the truth of faith in their own life, following the Lord himself when he stood before the judges. In this sense, in the words of Servais Pinckaers, the martyrs call upon Christ's disciples to bear witness to the faith in Jesus Christ with "intelligence and patience, faithfully and proudly, relying on the grace of the Spirit and on prayer more than on our own abilities and resources, whether personal or technical. [They invite us to bear witness] through every difficulty, contradiction, temptation, and humiliation that we may encounter, so that we too may prove to be good servants of divine Providence in the present world, good seeds planted in the soil of God for future harvests"<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> Servais Th. Pinckaers, *The Spirituality of Martyrdom... to the Limits of Love*, p. 8.



## Ecclesiology of Communion

The world today, though rightly proud of its scientific and technological progress, is at the same time a restless place. There returns always anew a question whether that “progress, which has man for its author and promoter, make human life on earth ‘more human’ in every aspect of that life? Does it make it more ‘worthy of man’? There can be no doubt that in various aspects it does. But the question keeps coming back with regard to what is most essential – whether in the context of this progress man, as man, is becoming truly better, that is to say more mature spiritually, more aware of the dignity of his humanity, more responsible, more open to others, especially the neediest and the weakest, and readier to give and to aid all”<sup>1</sup>. All those questions and concerns, expressed by Saint John Paul II at the threshold of his pontificate seem to have lost none of their relevance several decades later. Amidst all the restlessness of the modern world the Church of Christ proclaims and gives witness to the truth of God who is communion and therefore calls all men and women to come and share in that same Trinitarian communion. Because “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).

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<sup>1</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor hominis*, no. 15.

## 1. Complexity of the world

Perceiving man as her “primary and fundamental way”, the Church is to discern always anew the overall situation and state of the world in which man lives. All that happens, phenomena and trends are to be interpreted *in the light of the Gospel* and thus the Church will be able to answer the questions of the men of our time who continue to experience “the joy and hope, the grief and anguish”<sup>2</sup>. It is in almost all John Paul II’s documents and in so many speeches that a serious attempt to understand *signa temporum* can be found so that the proclamation of the Gospel is not done *in abstracto*, but in the context of man’s current situation which is in no way uniform. The Pope does not describe that situation by enumerating sheer facts but rather strives to see them in the perspective of Christian faith as having both roots and consequences for man’s life and supernatural vocation.

There are over seven billion people inhabiting our planet now. Regardless of all aspects of globalization, its (good and bad) effects and the degree of its advancement, the world remains an “intricate mosaic” of nations, cultures, languages, traditions and religions. They all, however, comprise the one rich patrimony of the human family. In so diverse a world a common longing for freedom should be noticed: “an extraordinary global acceleration of that quest for freedom [...] is one of the great dynamics of human history”<sup>3</sup>. This shows that the world, though so diverse and mixed, can experience phenomena common to all men and women.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, no. 1 and 4; John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor hominis*, no. 14.

<sup>3</sup> „This phenomenon is not limited to any one part of the world; nor is it the expression of any single culture. Men and women throughout the world, even when threatened by violence, *have taken the risk of freedom*, asking to be given a place in social, political, and economic life which is commensurate with their dignity as free human beings”. John Paul II, *Address at UN Headquarters*, no. 2 (New York, 5.10.1995, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va), accessed: 10.02.2011). Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1999, no. 6.

In order to identify more important *signa* as challenges the Church has to face, this paper will often refer to several documents often overlooked, namely to the apostolic exhortations, which followed continental synods of bishops convoked by John Paul II. They are a valuable source enabling to understand the panorama of the modern world. Though some of the characteristics relate to some parts of the world more than others, they all in some way allow us to better apprehend the complexity of the world.

Though an ever more globalized reality, the world remains deeply divided and marked by many injustices. The globalization itself is an ambiguous phenomenon with different implications. There are positive consequences like efficiency, increased production, growing economic links between countries and nations – thus bringing greater unity among peoples. But it is also true that ruled by merely laws of the market, it serves mainly the powerful. Economy is being absolutized, the distance between rich and poor continues to grow (including poor nations, not just parts of a society which find themselves in abject poverty), it brings about unemployment, reduction of public services, little regard for the integrity of the environment etc. Not only in the American context the growing urbanization is accompanied by external debts, corruption, the drug trade and ecological concern<sup>4</sup>.

A lot of modern societies undergo all kinds of rapid changes. Like the above mentioned emergence of huge urban conglomerations in which some sectors of society are being exploited and terrorism, organized crime and prostitution thrive in large depressed areas. Another major social event is internal and external migration through which people become vulnerable to uncertain and difficult economic and cultural problems and situations, causing destructive effects on individual and family life<sup>5</sup>. While some nations are highly developed or rapidly developing, others see no hope for a better future living in the persistent reality of poverty and the exploitation of people.

Social and political difficulties like famine, wars, racial tensions and divisions, political instability, social disorientation and despair, the

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1999, no. 20-25.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 7.



violation of human rights and the threats to the family, including the spread of AIDS and even the survival of the practice of slavery, are in fact true not only in many African nations. The international debt, the arms trade, growing numbers of refugees and displaced persons are also present in Latin American and Asian countries where there is little regard for safety and dignity of people. Another group of problems are those related to demography where it is often overlooked that the population growth is not merely an economic or political problem but above all a moral one, as it involves the essential issue of human promotion where human dignity and inviolable rights of every person should be respected. It refers also to the problem of poverty and exploitation of women who need their authentic liberation. The awakening of women's consciousness to their dignity and rights is a striking *signum temporis* in the modern world<sup>6</sup>.

A particular question is the vast field of social communication facing an unusually rapid and deep transformation. While the modern information and communication technologies are a true human achievement and can be an important force for good, it happens often that the modern mass media have a negative influence on human and social life being intrusive and manipulative, full of images of violence, hedonism and materialism, imposing "a distorted vision of life and of man, and thus fail to respond to the demands of true development"<sup>7</sup>.

When referring to Europe and Euro-Atlantic civilization John Paul II puts a strong emphasis on the philosophical and cultural dimension of the current transformations of society. Not disregarding corruption, ethnic conflicts, the re-emergence of racism or interreligious tensions, the family and marriage crisis as well as social selfishness, he points out to *signa temporum*, which are especially "clouding the horizon of

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1995, no. 47-51; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 7. „In a world controlled by rich and powerful nations, Africa has practically become an irrelevant appendix, often forgotten and neglected". John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 40.

<sup>7</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 52. „New forms of behaviour are emerging as a result of over-exposure to the mass media and the kinds of literature, music and films that are proliferating on the continent". John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 7.

the European continent". Among those he draws attention to existential fragmentation, inner emptiness and the loss of the meaning of life, loneliness, practical agnosticism and religious indifference, prevalent concern for personal interests and privileges. All this leads to "the emergence of a new culture, largely influenced by the mass media, whose content and character are often in conflict with the Gospel and the dignity of the human person. This culture is also marked by a widespread and growing religious agnosticism, connected to a more profound moral and legal relativism rooted in confusion regarding the truth about man as the basis of the inalienable rights of all human beings. At times the signs of a weakening of hope are evident in disturbing forms of what might be called a 'culture of death'"<sup>8</sup>. More and more Europeans continue to live in the world closed to transcendence and so European societies – as John Paul II puts it – are "suffering from horizontalism". A vision of the world with no spiritual roots is being created where its religious, particularly Christian heritage is ignored. It is all based on a "vision of man apart from God and apart from Christ"<sup>9</sup>.

This flawed concept of man yielding to the temptation of self-sufficiency is sometimes called "a new cultural model of man" and was for John Paul a major concern. Such a reductionist anthropological vision is comprised of radical individualism and subjectivism, secularism, spiritual nomadism, materialistic naturalism accompanied by a perniciously invasive impact of mass media. When speaking to Polish academia gathered at the Jagiellonian University during his pastoral visit to Poland in 1997 the Pope stressed that the crucial debate about man had not been finished with the collapse of communism and Marxist ideology, quite the opposite – it continues to intensify in the contemporary cultural context<sup>10</sup>.

Looking at the world and living one's life *as if God did not exist* lead to secularism, which is characteristic to many parts of modern society. A tendency to live and develop contemporary individual and social life without reference to God seems to be on the rise. Religion

<sup>8</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, no. 9.

<sup>9</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, no. 9 and 34.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Sławomir Nowosad, *Współczesny spór o człowieka*, p. 49-53; Sławomir Nowosad, *Man as the Primary Way for the University*, p. 93-105.

is both moved to the margin of public life and regarded as belonging strictly to the private sphere. Consequently, the natural religious sense is being weakened and religious convictions are denied their role in forming people's moral life and consciences. It follows that the Church has a diminished role in public affairs. According to John Paul II, a growing number of people "are no longer able to integrate the Gospel message into their daily experience; living one's faith in Jesus becomes increasingly difficult in a social and cultural setting in which that faith is constantly challenged and threatened. In many social settings it is easier to be identified as an agnostic than a believer. The impression is given that unbelief is self-explanatory, whereas belief needs a sort of social legitimization which is neither obvious nor taken for granted"<sup>11</sup>.

Obviously, all those negative and disturbing realities of the modern world do not exhaust the Pope's description. In many of his documents and addresses he would stress that signs of hope are in no way lacking both in Church life and in the world. Men and women today are ever more conscious of their human dignity and inalienable rights as well as ready to safeguard them. Despite growing secularism and materialism, among many nations in Africa, Asia and Latin America people have preserved a profound sense of the existence of God and of a spiritual dimension of life. A strong sense of community, respect for the family and for human life, a powerful sense of solidarity as well as of religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence are held dear in many parts of the world. There can often be found openness and new forms of cooperation in the spirit of fraternity accompanied by hard work and discipline. In places like Europe, North America and Australia, while legitimate diversity is being respected and fostered in civil societies, just democratic procedures in administration and government are being introduced leading to the growing unity of the continents. Being very Western in cultural patterns or social structure, often multicultural and technologically developed, those nations refuse to accept structural poverty, reject terrorism and violence as means

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<sup>11</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, no. 7. Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 29; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2001, no. 7.

of political or social change, foster the right to education and health care for all<sup>12</sup>.

Though modern societies are often marked by increasing secularization and spiritual “deserts”, one cannot leave unnoticed positive and praiseworthy *signa temporum* among Catholics and all Christians. Though in some the sense of God and of His providence has diminished, there are a lot of Catholics with a growing awareness of belonging to the Church and accepting responsibility for her mission in the world. They bear clear witness to the primacy of ethical and spiritual values in daily life. Though restrictions are being imposed on the freedom of religion, so many of Christ’s disciples bear daily testimony to the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ living their lives of authentic holiness and thus leaving a most precious inheritance to the future generations. There are also those who amid situations of hostility or even persecution, are ready to make the supreme sacrifice and shed their blood for the Lord of life, thus proclaiming the Gospel of hope in the most radical way<sup>13</sup>.

In all these complex situations of mankind today the Church is to find new effective ways in order to respond to questions of men and women. As in the past, she is now to proclaim and testify to her deepest conviction and faith that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life to man of every age. Though so many people face “dimming hope” and seem disoriented and uncertain, the Christian message brings new hope to all presenting them the gift of communion offered in Christ. When the man of today finds himself threatened by the result of the

<sup>12</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 6-8; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 42-43; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, no. 12; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania*, no. 7.

<sup>13</sup> „[...] they tell us that martyrdom is the supreme incarnation of the Gospel of hope: ‘In this way, martyrs proclaim the Gospel of hope and bear witnesses to it with their lives to the point of shedding their blood, because they are certain that they cannot live without Christ and are ready to die for him in the conviction that Jesus is the Lord and the Saviour of humanity and that, therefore, only in him does mankind find true fullness of life’”. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, no. 13. Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania*, no. 6.

work of his hands, the Church cannot allow “her voice to be silenced or her witness to be marginalized”<sup>14</sup>.

## 2. *Communio ecclesialis* – its essence and aspects

Among the many contributions of Vatican II (1962-1965) to the Church’s self-understanding the concept of *communio* (Greek: *koinonia*) should be regarded as the central one expressing the very heart of the mystery of the Church established by Christ as His Mystical Body and as the People of God: “*The reality of the Church as Communion is, then, the integrating aspect, indeed the central content of the ‘mystery,’ or rather, the divine plan for the salvation of humanity*”<sup>15</sup>. These two other concepts make the necessary context for a proper understanding of the Church as *communio*. It was in 1985 that the Catholic bishops gathered at the extraordinary synod declared that “the Church is essentially a mystery of communion, a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This sharing of the life of the Blessed Trinity is the source and inspiration of all Christian relationships and every form of Christian community”<sup>16</sup>.

In his early study of the post-conciliar years *U podstaw odnowy* (*At the Foundations of the Renewal*) the young Card. Karol Wojtyła stressed *communio* as a notion and reality that would most explicitly reveal the catholicity of the Church, referring to *Gaudium et spes*: in *communio personarum*, which the Church is in her deepest nature,

<sup>14</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania*, no. 7. Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor hominis*, no. 15; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, no. 7.

<sup>15</sup> “The ecclesiology of *communio* is a central and fundamental concept in the conciliar documents”. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1984, no. 19.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted from: John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania*, no. 10. “From the beginning, Jesus associated His disciples with His own life [...]. And He proclaimed a mysterious and real communion between His own body and ours: ‘He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him’”. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 787.

all men and women can fully discover their true selves in the sincere giving of themselves. Hence, through this giving the good belonging to one person is being shared by all, consequently it becomes universal (catholic). When the good becomes a gift, the community (the Church) becomes universal (catholic). In this sense *communio* is the foundation of catholicity<sup>17</sup>. As Vatican II teaches: "In virtue of this catholicity each individual part contributes through its special gifts to the good of the other parts and of the whole Church. Through the common sharing of gifts and through the common effort to attain fullness in unity, the whole and each of the parts receive increase". In this way the *communio* of the Church bears fruit when the members of the Church share these goods in common. *Communio* is a characteristic bond of the community of the People of God, which brings with itself both "a distinction" and "a union" among the members of the Church. Its fruit is also the fact that "all share a true equality with regard to the dignity and to the activity common to all the faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ"<sup>18</sup> – all are truly equal in the Church. For this and other reasons it is of utmost significance that all in the Church were conscious of *communio*. The meaning of *communio* is fundamentally theological and ecclesiological, but Wojtyła would as well stress its ethical dimension, because it makes it possible to form a truly Christian social morality which would be introduced by the Church both *ad intra* and *ad extra* (introducing *communio* among all people, not just among the faithful)<sup>19</sup>.

Basically *communio* signifies union with God brought about by Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Hence, the *communio* of the Church is a gift of the Blessed Trinity. It is the fruit of God's love to mankind, which was accomplished by the Saviour in the Paschal Mystery and brought to completion by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. It en-

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Karol Wojtyła, *U podstaw odnowy. Studium o realizacji Vaticanum II*, Kraków: PTT 1988 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1972), p. 116-117; Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, no. 24.

<sup>18</sup> Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, no. 13 and 32.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Karol Wojtyła, *U podstaw odnowy. Studium o realizacji Vaticanum II*, p. 120-125; Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, no. 32.



abled the Church to share in the divine *communio* of love between the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit. As St. Paul says to the Romans: “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (5:5). Consequently, the gift of *communio* brings about a double union – the communion of the believer with the Triune God (vertical) and the communion with other believers and the rest of mankind (horizontal). The vocation of the Church in her pilgrimage on earth is to preserve and strengthen communion with God and communion among those who believe in Him<sup>20</sup>.

It is the Word of God and the sacraments that make the communion present in the Church while at the same time it is essential to see *communio* in the proper relationship with the mystery of the Church as a sacrament. A person is introduced to the communion of the Church by faith and by Baptism. All three sacraments of Christian initiation play a fundamental role here. Baptism is the door to *communio*, it incorporates a believer into the Body of Christ. In Confirmation the Christian is more perfectly bound to the Church becoming a true witness of Christ and His communion of love with the Father. In the Holy Eucharist the Church sacramentalizes the communion between the Christian and the Triune God and the intimate bonds of communion among all the faithful (cf. 1 Cor 10:16)<sup>21</sup>. The Eucharist is “the supreme sacramental manifestation of communion in the Church”, the culmination and perfection of our “communion with God the Father by identification with His only-begotten Son through the working of the Holy Spirit”<sup>22</sup>. The Eucharist, being a sacrament of Sacrifice, Communion and Presence, is the “living and lasting centre around which the entire community of

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion *Communio notio*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1992, no. 3; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, no. 19; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania*, no. 10.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, no. 11; Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion *Communio notio*, no. 1 and 5; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, no. 19.

<sup>22</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2003, respectively no. 38 and 34.

the Church gathers”<sup>23</sup>. Since it unites every Christian with Christ, the Eucharist is both the source and force of communion, it manifests and fosters communion (cf. 1 Cor 10:17). Following St. Paul’s teaching to the Corinthians (1 Cor 11:17-34) it becomes obvious that an authentic communion with Christ taking place in the Eucharistic celebration urges everyone to renew fraternal communion with brothers and sisters. This made John Paul II emphasize the importance of Sunday Mass for every faithful to be a true witness and promoter of communion in daily life. The Sunday Eucharist is “the privileged place where communion is ceaselessly proclaimed and nurtured. Precisely through sharing in the Eucharist, the Lord’s Day also becomes the Day of the Church, when she can effectively exercise her role as the sacrament of unity”<sup>24</sup>.

Ecclesial communion has both invisible and visible aspects. In the invisible dimension it is Christ himself who unites us to God in the Holy Spirit and among ourselves. In the visible dimension it involves communion in the teaching of the Apostles, in the sacraments and in the hierarchical order of the Church, which are “outward bonds of communion”. Full and authentic communion needs both dimensions just as the Church is both an invisible and visible reality and the only sacrament of salvation. Additionally, the invisible aspect of communion extends also to the saints – those who belong to the heavenly Church, who have left this world in God’s friendship and His grace. It is on this foundation that the traditional devotion to the saints, and especially to the Blessed Virgin Mary has always been based in Christian piety. This also points to a mutual relationship between the pilgrim Church on earth and the heavenly Church and thus again reflects the mystery of the Church as a *communio* transcending the earthly reality<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, no. 35.

<sup>24</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2001, no. 36; cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, no. 40-41.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, no. 35-36; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion *Communio notio*, no. 4-6; Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, no. 14. “This Assembly [...] was of profound significance for the universal Church [...] because of the very nature of ecclesial communion which transcends all boundaries of time and space. In fact the Special



Ecclesial communion, being an organic communion, is very diverse and complementary. Just like a living body, it is marked by a *diversity* and a *complementarity* of vocations, ministries, charisms and responsibilities. The Holy Spirit is the principle of diversity and unity in the Church because it is He who distributes His different gifts for the welfare of the one Church: He “gives life to, unifies and moves the whole body”<sup>26</sup> (cf. 1 Cor 12:1-11). According to John Paul II “the universality of the Church involves, on the one hand, a most solid unity, and on the other, a plurality and a diversification, which do not obstruct unity, but rather confer upon it the character of *communion*”<sup>27</sup> (1989). This plurality is about diverse forms and ministries of life as well as traditions in liturgy and culture. All this does not contradict the unity of the one Church but rather enriches it. This *unity in diversity* needs to be safeguarded and fostered and the task belongs to the Pope universally, to every bishop in his local Church and to everyone as a member of the one Body in the daily life by means of charity<sup>28</sup>.

In 1992 John Paul II devoted a series of catecheses to *communio ecclesialis*, which can be seen as a review of the topic. First he states that in order to make this communion real and to accomplish the communion of all with Christ, Jesus gives a commandment, which He calls *my commandment* – the commandment of love. Jesus speaks of himself not only as the living model of that love (“as I have loved you”) but also as the source of that love being the *vine*: “The members of this community love Christ and in him they love one another. It is a love

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Assembly inspired many prayers and good works through which individuals and communities of the Church in the other continents accompanied the Synodal process. And how can we doubt that through the mystery of ecclesial communion the Synod was also supported by the prayers of the Saints in heaven?” John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 19.

<sup>26</sup> Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, no. 7.

<sup>27</sup> See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion *Communio in notio*, no. 15.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, no. 20; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion *Communio in notio*, no. 15-16.

with which Jesus himself loves them, and it is linked to the source of the God-Man's love – the communion of the Trinity"<sup>29</sup>. In fact, it is the intimate *communio* between the Father and the Son, which is the supreme model of the *communio* of the Church (and of any *communio*). This love, that Jesus teaches, is the same love with which Father loved His Son (cf. Jn 17:24) and which is the deepest need of man: "Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life Apostolic Exhorta senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it"<sup>30</sup>. On this love the Church as *communio* is founded. This implies that she is to bear witness to this love, to practice it and make it visible. Finally, the Eucharist is the sacramental expression of this love and so the Church as *communio* is continually reborn and renewed in the Eucharist<sup>31</sup>.

The first image of the Church as *communio* after the Ascension of the Lord is the community devoted to prayer. The Holy Father says that prayer, especially prayer in common, was the basic feature of the Church's *communio* in the beginning and so it will always be. The prayer expresses the spiritual communion, creates it and deepens, it produces spiritual unity. Worth noting is also the fact that "Mary was there", thus she was at the origin of that communion of the Church. Since it is the Eucharist which is the supreme sacrament of the unity among the disciples of Christ, it is also the Church's special prayer to the Father for His gift of the Holy Spirit who can make all "one body, one spirit in Christ"<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> John Paul II, Catechesis *The Church Is a Communio of Love* (15.01.1992, [www.totus2us.com](http://www.totus2us.com) accessed: 24.02.2012).

<sup>30</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor hominis*, no. 10.

<sup>31</sup> "Communion is the fruit and demonstration of that love which springs from the heart of the Eternal Father and is poured out upon us through the Spirit which Jesus gives us (cf. Rom 5:5), to make us all 'one heart and one soul' (Acts 4:32). It is in building this communion of love that the Church appears as 'sacrament', as the 'sign and instrument of intimate union with God and of the unity of the human race'. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, no. 42.

<sup>32</sup> The Eucharistic Prayer III. Cf. John Paul II, Catechesis *The Church: A Communio of Prayer* (29.01.1992, [www.totus2us.com](http://www.totus2us.com) accessed: 13.03.2012); John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, no. 43.

*Communio ecclesialis* has Christ at its centre according to John (cf. 1 Jn 1:1-2). St. Paul would point to “sharing in Christ’s sufferings” which in fact is sharing in His whole Paschal Mystery. Consequently, “communion in Christ’s Passover becomes a source of reciprocal communion: ‘If one part [of the community] suffers, all the parts suffer with it’ (1 Cor 12:26)”<sup>33</sup>. In order to make the *communio ecclesialis* real, nourished and accomplished, the Holy Spirit must intervene, and the fruit is the “participation in the Spirit” (cf. Phil 2:1).

St. Peter in his First Letter describes the Church as a “communion in God’s holiness”. As such the Church is realized through “spiritual sacrifices” which have their source in Christ’s own sacrifice and should be offered according to His example. The communion in God’s holiness brings about the sanctification accomplished in the faithful by the Holy Spirit in virtue of Christ’s sacrifice. On the part of the faithful the communion in holiness leads to a true commitment to the salvation of all men and women<sup>34</sup>. Taking into account the importance of the sacrament of Holy Orders the Pope says the Church “is and functions as a priestly community”<sup>35</sup>. In his several consecutive catecheses the Pope spoke about all the sacraments and their role in the Church as communion<sup>36</sup>. Hence, Baptism brings us into the Church the Body of Christ, when we are baptized we enter the ecclesial community. The Sacrament of Confirmation brings to perfection the gift of the Holy Spirit already received in Baptism, so that the confirmed Christian is able to witness to Christ in speech and with his life. Ecclesial community comes to fulfilment above all in the Eucharist. If sin is a wound inflicted upon the Church and harms the ecclesial community, reconciliation with God is also reconciliation with the Church and heals the wound on the Body of Christ. At the same time in the Sacrament of Penance the Church shows that she is a priestly community of

<sup>33</sup> John Paul II, Catechesis *The Church Lives in the Mystery of Communio* (5.02.1992, [www.totus2us.com](http://www.totus2us.com) accessed: 13.03.2012).

<sup>34</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Catechesis *The Call to Holiness Is Essential for the Church* (12.02.1992, [www.totus2us.com](http://www.totus2us.com) accessed: 14.03.2012).

<sup>35</sup> John Paul II, Catechesis *The Church Is a Priestly Community* (18.03.1992, [www.totus2us.com](http://www.totus2us.com) accessed: 14.03.2012).

<sup>36</sup> What follows see Catecheses of 18.03-6.05.1992, ([www.totus2us.com](http://www.totus2us.com) accessed: 15.03.2012).

mercy and forgiveness. The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick brings not only the personal welfare of the sick person but also the spiritual growth of the whole Church. In this way the suffering members of the Church contribute greatly to the intimate union of the whole ecclesial community with Christ. Through the Sacrament of Matrimony the married couple participates in the unity and love between Christ and His Church and the whole family is called to bear witness to the life, love and unity which derive from the very nature of the Church as a sacred community: "The communion of love between God and people [...] finds a meaningful expression in the marriage covenant which is established between a man and a woman"<sup>37</sup>. It is also worth noting that when teaching about the sacraments, the Sacrament of Holy Orders and of Matrimony are called in the Catechism of the Catholic Church "the sacraments at the service of communion"<sup>38</sup>.

The Church being the witness to God who is *communio* of the Father with the Son in the Spirit, is to be a sign and instrument of that communion before the world. It is rooted in the truth that the members of the Church share the life of Christ just like branches remain part of the vine (cf. Jn 15:1-17). Communion is a part of the plan of God for all men and women. It is willed by God and destined for completion in the fullness of God's Kingdom<sup>39</sup>.

It is the bishops in the Church who hold a particular task as builders of ecclesial communion. Since each one of them is the visible principle and foundation of the unity of his particular Church, they are duty-bound to promote communion in their dioceses. Communion in the Church, signifying life, must constantly be nourished and increase. When the local Church is gathered around her bishop, the *communio ecclesialis* is expressed and lived in a special way. Hence,

<sup>37</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1981, no. 12. Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, no. 46.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1533ff.

<sup>39</sup> „We must proclaim that this communion is the magnificent plan of God the Father; that Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Lord, is the heart of this communion, and that the Holy Spirit works ceaselessly to create communion and to restore it when it is broken". John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, no. 33. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 775.

the bishops in their collegiality and in communion with the Successor of Peter are those who are called to safeguard and promote the ecclesial communion among all the faithful<sup>40</sup>. The Eucharist, being the supreme manifestation of communion in the Church, when celebrated in a particular local community transcends its borders and participates and co-builds the universal *communio ecclesialis*. In fact, the endeavour of fostering communion needs priests as well as religious and lay women and men as its agents. While the role of priests and religious is rather clear, the lay faithful fulfil their vocation in the service of communion in two areas: intra-ecclesially where they are delegates of the word, catechists, group leaders etc. and in the secular world where they evangelize family, social, professional, cultural or political life<sup>41</sup>.

*Communio ecclesialis* among local Churches is thus based not only on common faith and the sacraments but also upon the unity of the episcopate – the unity of all the bishops united with the Bishop of Rome as the visible head of the Church<sup>42</sup>. The valid celebration of the Eucharist necessitates real communion with the Pope who is the source and foundation of the unity of all the bishops and of the faithful. Local Churches, under the guidance of their bishops, are Churches in which the Church of Christ – one, holy, catholic and apostolic – is present. However, the universal Church is not a sum or a federation of particular Churches. It is then possible to speak of one Church as a communion of Churches only in an analogous fashion. The one

<sup>40</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, no. 39 and 42; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, no. 36-38; John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, no. 44; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania*, no. 9-11.

<sup>41</sup> “The presence and mission of the Church in the world is realized in a special way in the variety of charisms and ministries which belong to the laity. [...] lay people are called to embody deeply evangelical values such as mercy, forgiveness, honesty, transparency of heart and patience in difficult situations. What is expected from the laity is a great creative effort in activities and works demonstrating a life in harmony with the Gospel”. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, no. 44.

<sup>42</sup> “Gathered around the Successor of Peter, praying and working together, the Bishops of the Special Assembly for Asia personified as it were the communion of the Church in all the rich diversity of the particular Churches over which they preside in charity”. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 25.

Church is not “the result of the communion of the Churches, but, in its essential mystery, it is a reality ontologically and temporally prior to every individual particular Church”<sup>43</sup>. When a believer is incorporated into the Church through faith and Baptism, it does not happen in a mediate way through a particular Church, but becomes a member of the Church in an immediate way. The *communio ecclesialis* between the universal Church and particular Churches is then rooted in the same faith and in one Baptism as well as in the Eucharist and in the Episcopate. The Church clarifies that “the universal communion of the faithful and the communion of the Churches are not consequences of one another, but constitute the same reality seen from different viewpoints”<sup>44</sup>.

The Church, being the universal sacrament of salvation (and thus sent to save all mankind) is not closed and cannot be closed on herself, rather it is open to “ecumenical endeavour”, sent to witness to the mystery of communion she had received from God in order to share it with all people and gather them into one God’s family. Though divided among themselves, there exist elements of communion between the Catholic Church and other Christian Churches and ecclesial communities. They should be nourished and promoted through dialogue, cooperation, promotion of justice, common prayer, sharing in the Word of God and in the experience of faith in Christ. Since the Catholic Church does not believe that “beyond the boundaries of the Catholic

<sup>43</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion *Communio notio*, no. 9. Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania*, no. 11.

<sup>44</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion *Communio notio*, no. 10. Cf. Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, no. 23; John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, no. 39; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 25. Every Eucharist celebrated in a local community is the one Eucharistic Sacrifice offered by Christ for all. The same applies to the unity of the entire Episcopate with its head – the Roman Pontiff being the head of the Body of College of Bishops. Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion *Communio notio*, no. 11-14.



community there is an ecclesial vacuum”<sup>45</sup>, a certain, albeit imperfect, communion needs to be acknowledged among all those baptised in the name of the Holy Trinity. An ecumenical commitment, being a “binding imperative” for all those incorporated in Christ, should lead to a new conversion to the Lord. Important priorities for all should be prayer, penance, study, dialogue and collaboration. Although it is not possible to celebrate the same Eucharist where there is no full communion in the profession of faith, in the sacraments and in ecclesiastical governance, all Christians should desire to join in celebrating the one Eucharist of the Lord thus fostering communion among those who are divided<sup>46</sup>.

The Church, being a witness to God who is communion of love between the Father and the Son in the Spirit, is called to become “the home and the school of communion” for all. Having been sent to the world by the Lord, the Church is to share this gift with the world and thus to invite the world to the common home and the common school. But first, through contemplation and prayer, rather than her pastoral activity, the Church must continually receive the gift of communion from God Himself. In this context John Paul II points out a spirituality of communion to be promoted as a guiding principle of education for all who make up the community of the Church. This spirituality of communion indicates four more detailed issues like: “the heart’s contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us”; thinking of brothers and sisters in faith as “those who are a part of me” (so we can share their joys and sufferings); seeing what is positive in others (which is also a gift for me); bearing each other’s burdens (and thus making room for others)<sup>47</sup>. The spirituality of communion – being a gift as well as a task – is like blood in the Church’s veins, which makes her live and bear fruits. Consequently, all the faithful who constitute the

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<sup>45</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ut unum sint*, no. 13.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, no. 44; John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ut unum sint*, no. 45; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, no. 49; John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, no. 48; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion *Communio notio*, no. 17-18.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, no. 43.

Church are invited to renew their baptismal commitments, to make room for the gifts of the Spirit. The spirituality of communion makes all the baptized active members of the Body of Christ and promoters of the Kingdom of God in the world “by their work for the evangelization and the sanctification of people”<sup>48</sup>.

### 3. Fruits of *communio*

The mystery of *communio ecclesialis* shows that the bond of communion between Christ the Bridegroom and all His disciples is at the heart of the mystery of the Church. Being members of the Lord’s Mystical Body they are all united to the Father, which – as a consequence – brings about the communion among all Christians who share it with one another through Christ in the Holy Spirit. Hence, the Church of Christ is the sacrament of a double union – of man’s *communio* with God and of the unity of the whole human race that flows from people’s union with God. Since it is in the Lord Jesus that the communion between God and His people finds its definitive fulfillment, the Church being Christ’s Body is where man can experience the loving presence of the Saviour Himself – the Incarnate Word who said He would remain with His disciples to the end of time (cf. Matt 28:20). The Church as *communio* is then a *place* of encounter of man with Jesus Christ so that He can “walk with each person the path of life”<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>48</sup> „Therefore the Church of the Third Millennium will need to encourage all the baptized and confirmed to be aware of their active responsibility in the Church’s life.” John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, no. 46.

<sup>49</sup> „The Church therefore sees its fundamental task in enabling that union to be brought about and renewed continually. The Church wishes to serve this single end: that each person may be able to find Christ, in order that Christ may walk 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 and the Redemption and with the power of the love that is radiated by that truth.” John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor hominis*, no. 13. Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, no. 13; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 24.



For man this encounter is of indispensable significance. The Church proclaims a fundamental truth of man as being created by God and in His image and likeness. If “God is love and in Himself He lives a mystery of personal loving communion”, the human person has the vocation of love and communion. It is his fundamental and innate vocation. Being created through love, man is called to love. In Jesus love is full and to the end (cf. Jn 13:1), without Jesus man cannot live nor love. Hence, the communion of the Church, where man is being incorporated in the communion of the Triune God’s love, is a life-giving mystery for all men and women. It is the task of the Church as *communio* to bear witness to the faith in God who is *communio* in love. This is the answer the Church offers to the world with all its problems and challenges and thus offers the world authentic hope<sup>50</sup>. John Paul II expressed that in New York when speaking to members of the UN General Assembly: “We Christians believe that in his Death and Resurrection were fully revealed God’s love and his care for all creation. *Jesus Christ is for us God made man, and made a part of the history of humanity. Precisely for this reason, Christian hope for the world and its future extends to every human person*”<sup>51</sup>.

Authentic communion, revealing the true dignity of the human person rooted in God the Creator, shows that dignity and protects it in various circumstances of earthly life. It is truly at the service of human promotion and integral development. Authentic development of man and society “begins and ends with the integrity of the human person created in the image of God and endowed with a God-given dignity and inalienable human rights”<sup>52</sup>. The Redeemer took on human

<sup>50</sup> „The Church ‘is not entitled to express preferences for this or that institutional or constitutional solution’ for Europe, and for this reason she consistently desires to respect the legitimate autonomy of the civil order. Nevertheless, she has the task of reviving faith in the Trinity among the Christians of Europe, knowing full well that this faith is the herald of authentic hope for the continent”. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, no. 19. Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, no. 11.

<sup>51</sup> John Paul II, *Address at UN Headquarters*, no. 17.

<sup>52</sup> “The various international declarations on human rights and the many initiatives which these have inspired are a sign of growing attention on a worldwide level to the dignity of the human person”. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 33.

nature and died that all may be free, thus advanced and defended the dignity of man – God’s masterpiece which is common to all, without exception<sup>53</sup>.

Living in communion with Christ – true God and true man, allows man understand better who he is and what is his final destiny: “[...] it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear”<sup>54</sup>. Referring many times to this expression John Paul II would strongly emphasize its importance to show the necessity of God-made-man for man to finally know the truth of himself. All the words and actions of Jesus, in a special way His suffering, death and resurrection reveal before every man depths of what it means to be human: “Jesus’ perfectly human life, devoted wholly to the love and service of the Father and of man, reveals that the vocation of every human being is to receive love and give love in return [...]. Jesus became once and for all both the revelation and the accomplishment of a humanity re-created and renewed according to the plan of God”<sup>55</sup>.

The Church is to proclaim and transmit her own mystery of *communio* so that man, being “the meeting point of many conflicting forces” and experiencing in his heart symptoms “of the deeper dichotomy”, can find the way amidst “his real problems, his hopes and sufferings, his achievements and falls”<sup>56</sup>. Therefore, the basic task of Jesus’ disciples is the proclamation of the Good News, that is, evangelization – the vocation proper to the Church and her profound identity. It is another fruit of the deep union – *communio* – with God achieved through Christ. In this sense to evangelize is to proclaim the Word of the Lord and share His gift of *communio* so that each man can enter into that communion and renew his life and hope. “Many are the paths on which each one of us and each of our Churches must travel,

<sup>53</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, no. 57.

<sup>54</sup> Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, no. 22.

<sup>55</sup> “In Jesus then, we discover the greatness and dignity of each person in the heart of God who created man in his own image (cf. Gen 1:26), and we find the origin of the new creation which we have become through his grace”. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 13.

<sup>56</sup> Respectively Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, no. 10 and John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor hominis*, no. 18.

but there is no distance between those who are united in the same communion, the communion which is daily nourished at the table of the Eucharistic Bread and the Word of Life”<sup>57</sup>.

The main purpose of evangelization is “transforming humanity from within and making it new”. The Church believes that the proclamation of the Word and sharing the Lord’s grace of *communio* will be able to transform all people of good will who are ready to open their hearts to the Holy Spirit. However, in order to fulfil her mission of evangelization with credibility, the Church must first evangelize herself and thus make constant conversion and renewal her own path among the paths of the world. It will make the task of evangelization more profound and more fruitful<sup>58</sup>.

When teaching about the tasks of the Church in the missionary context, the Holy Father would stress that the communion with the Lord is to bear fruit in mission. The communion is not something to accept and keep, rather, it is something to sow and share. The call to mission, rooted in the very identity and vocation of the Church of Christ, is addressed to all the faithful being participants of the ecclesial *communio*<sup>59</sup>. Those who are united with Jesus through faith and Baptism should recognize the call to “go forth from Jesus in His power and with His grace”. The Church is being called by the Lord always anew to “share in His mission with new energy and creativity”<sup>60</sup>. Spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ is a fruit of encountering Him in one’s life and then accepting His call to “cast the nets once more” (cf. Lk 5:1-11). “The way of Jesus is always the path of mission”. He invites His followers to proclaim the Gospel so that “culture and Gospel proclamation will meet in a mutually enriching way and the Good News

<sup>57</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, no. 58. Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, no. 66.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 55 and 47-48.

<sup>59</sup> „Some members of the Church are sent to people who have not heard of Jesus Christ, and their mission remains as vital as ever. But many more are sent to the world closer to home, and the Synod Fathers were keen to stress the mission of the lay members of the Church. In the family, in the workplace, in the schools, in community activities, all Christians can help to bring the Good News to the world in which they live”. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania*, no. 13.

<sup>60</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania*, no. 3.

will be heard, believed and lived more deeply. This mission is rooted in the mystery of communion<sup>61</sup>. The more difficult and unpromising the times are, the clearer and unambiguous the call of the Lord is. The Church as a sacrament of unity is always open to missionary endeavour so all men and women may come to know Jesus Christ in whom the Father receives all into a communion of love and life<sup>62</sup>.

When according to St. John's Gospel Jesus tells the parable of the true vine (cf. 15:1ff), it becomes obvious that entering into the communion with Him is to bear fruit, while the opposite is also true – where there is no fruit, there is no real communion there<sup>63</sup>. Hence, real fruitfulness depends upon the communion with Christ and its result, which is communion with other people. It is then clear that there exists a crucial union between *communio* and mission: "They interpenetrate and mutually imply each other, so that 'communion represents both the source and fruit of mission: communion gives rise to mission and mission is accomplished in communion'"<sup>64</sup>.

In the perspective of an encounter of the Gospel and culture, there is an essential need for a true and balanced inculturation in order to preserve the integrity of the Gospel as well as to avoid cultural confusion. It is based on a double respect – both for the Gospel and for the culture. Hence, authentic inculturation becomes a significant fruit of the proclamation of the God given *communio* to all peoples and is in fact the way leading to the fullness of ecclesial *communio*. It is an insertion of the Gospel message into a particular culture. Inculturation has its roots in the mystery of the Incarnation when God chose a particular people with a distinctive culture in order to reveal to all

<sup>61</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania*, no. 10.

<sup>62</sup> „From this sacramentality it follows that the Church is not a reality closed in on herself; rather, she is permanently open to missionary and ecumenical endeavour, for she is sent to the world to announce and witness, to make present and spread the mystery of communion which is essential to her: to gather together all people and all things into Christ; so as to be for all an 'inseparable sacrament of unity'". Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion *Communio in notio*, no. 4.

<sup>63</sup> Jn 15:5: „He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit"; Jn 15:2: "Each branch of mine that bears no fruit [my Father] takes away".

<sup>64</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 24.

humanity and all cultures His gift of love and life. It needs to discern carefully among all values of any culture to see what is of the Gospel and what is not. The Church accepts that a culture can offer its values and forms with which the Gospel can be preached more fruitfully, while at the same time the Gospel challenges and transforms some values or forms. It is in the light of the Mystery of the Incarnation and of the Redemption that all values and counter-values can be discerned and then those authentic values will be purified and restored to their full meaning. Thus every culture is to be renewed in the light of Christ's Paschal Mystery<sup>65</sup>.

*Communio* is strongly linked to dialogue, in fact they are both "two essential aspects of the Church's mission which have their infinitely transcendent exemplar in the mystery of the Trinity, from whom all mission comes and to whom it must be directed"<sup>66</sup>. In the above mentioned context of inculturation the dialogue makes the meeting of the Gospel and culture effective and leads to identifying the deepest values in any culture. It is also necessary in fostering relations with the followers of other religions, particularly for the sake of peace. Dialogue has to "be conducted and implemented with the conviction that the Church is the ordinary means of salvation and that she alone possesses the fullness of the means of salvation"<sup>67</sup>.

The salvific mission of the Lord has restored communion between God and people and at the same time established a new communion between all people, divided by sin, who can now live as brothers and

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<sup>65</sup> „Every culture needs to be transformed by Gospel values in the light of the Paschal Mystery'. It is by looking at the Mystery of the Incarnation and of the Redemption that the values and counter-values of cultures are to be discerned. Just as the Word of God became like us in everything but sin, so too the inculturation of the Good News takes on all authentic human values, purifying them from sin and restoring to them their full meaning". John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 61. Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 21-22; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania*, no. 16.

<sup>66</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 31.

<sup>67</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1990, no. 55. Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, no. 54-56.

sisters<sup>68</sup>. This makes the disciples of Christ aware that they are called to serve and support one another in all needs. Consequently, solidarity and service are another fruit of ecclesial communion which is grounded in the mystery of Trinity and seeks the good of others, first of all of the poorest and thus most in need. In this Christian love is expressed in a “commitment to reciprocal solidarity and the sharing of the spiritual gifts and material goods [...], fostering in individuals a readiness to work where they are needed. Taking the Gospel as its starting-point, a culture of solidarity needs to be promoted”<sup>69</sup>.

John Paul II’s concept of the spirituality of communion encompasses many particular tasks and is expected to bring about certain effects. Among those the Pope details: promoting vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life; promotion of various ecclesial associations and movements; pastoral care of the family and the promotion of the vision of marriage as “a mutual and total bond, unique and indissoluble”; an ecumenical task – fostering reconciliation and communion among divided Christians; respect for the life of every human being; a new commitment to charity and works of mercy with the awareness that “beginning with intra-ecclesial communion, charity of its nature opens out into a service that is universal”<sup>70</sup>.

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To the humanity deeply hurt after the original sin, whose union with the Creator has been broken, God offers his gift of a new and eternal communion. Not disregarding all external individual and social signs of the lost communion John Paul II would see their root in man’s heart implicated in sin. Thus the Church, being *communio* of all with the Father in His Son, is the response and the gift offered to the world in all the stages of its history.

When a new millennium was opening before the Church “like a vast ocean”, St. John Paul II called all to go forward in hope. *Duc in*

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<sup>68</sup> „There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus”. Gal 3:28.

<sup>69</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, no. 52.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, no. 46-51.

*altum!* The missionary mandate urges and impels all faithful to start out anew and “our steps must quicken” as we cross the roads of the world we now live in. We believe that “there is no distance between those who are united in the same communion, the communion that is daily nourished at the table of the Eucharistic Bread and the Word of Life”<sup>71</sup>. When expecting the Year of Faith, Pope Benedict XVI reminded that the door of faith is “open for us ushering us into the life of communion with God”<sup>72</sup>. This gift of *communio* with God we are to share with all men and women, because we believe all people were touched by God and thus made receptive to the mystery of *communio* offered to all in Christ<sup>73</sup>. We do it by renewing our own faith and Christian life and bearing witness in the world to the Lord who is forever the only *Redemptor hominis*.

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<sup>71</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, no. 58.

<sup>72</sup> Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter *Porta fidei*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2011, no. 1.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania*, no. 7.

## Contemporary Pluralism and Theological Cooperation

It is only recently, after a series of political, economic and social changes took place in Central and Eastern Europe in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century that theological institutions have realized what new challenges must be faced. In the days of communist dictatorships the Church was oppressed in many ways and confined to her “internal business” such as liturgy and prayer. The theological activity could not have been carried out or was to a high degree restricted by the state authorities. It was hardly possible to keep contacts with other, particularly foreign partners or to have access to new theological literature. Recently the academic institutions of the Church, like theological faculties or Catholic universities, have had to become aware of a new situation that has been created by the overall transformation of societies, which affected the Church as well. Among others, a new understanding and need for a deeper and stronger cooperation has turned out evident.

### 1. In the context of contemporary pluralism

The present age has been declared by many as an age of a growing pluralism on almost all levels and in all spheres of life. The process of globalization has made it easier and more frequent for peoples, their cultures and religions to encounter and interact. Migrations of peoples,



brought about by various reasons, mostly economic and political ones, are taking place in the contemporary world on an unprecedented scale. All this is accompanied by a growing impact of the mass media that bring foreign cultures, customs, ideas etc. into the homes and public institutions in remote places.

One has to notice that various religions respond in different ways to this phenomenon of pluralism<sup>1</sup>. Some, like Buddhism, get adapted rather easily to a new cultural environment, which may be due to the absence of common organization or hierarchy. It is not so with Hinduism or other world religions. Still Hinduism seems to remain more tolerant while Judaism or Islam are less tolerant. They endeavour to influence and change new ideas or attitudes rather than being changed by them. In the Christian religion dialogue is and should be a privileged instrument of dealing with other religions, hence it is an ongoing process between religions as well as cultures. The basic and fundamental attitude would be such that on one hand a person is committed and faithful to his/her own faith and on the other hand he/she is always open to the others' religious convictions and ready to enter into dialogue with others. It is right to emphasize here "inter-religious dialogue is a part of the Church's evangelizing mission. Understood as a method and means of mutual knowledge and enrichment, dialogue is not in opposition to the mission *ad gentes*; indeed, it has special links with that mission and is one of its expressions"<sup>2</sup>.

Being ready to enter into dialogue with others should never mean giving up one's own identity. Such relativism would make the whole process of dialogue irrelevant and fruitless. As Catholics or theologians we must take our faith convictions seriously and not relativize them in order to be "open" to others. Affirming one's faith and being true

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<sup>1</sup> For a more extensive study of pluralism, particularly in the Asian context, see two books by Michael Amaladoss: *Globalization and Its Victims: As Seen by the Victims*, Delhi: VIEWS/ISPCK 1999 and *Making Harmony: Living in a Pluralist World*, Delhi: ISPCK-Chennai: IDCR 2003. During the 9<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Conference of Catholic Theological Institutions, held in Lisbon in 2004, Michael Amaladoss, Peter Stilwell and a few others delivered interesting and enlightening papers on this subject, to which I sometimes refer in this part of my study. This study is based on my own lecture delivered in Lisbon.

<sup>2</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, no. 55.

to one's identity while being open for dialogue will lead to a better understanding of the richness of the faith. It will also help clear one's own convictions and positions and learn how to talk about the faith convincingly. An attitude of dialogue includes fundamental respect and openness to the freedom of the Holy Spirit who is present and acts in all peoples and cultures as well as respect for the dignity of the partners in dialogue.

Various aspects of contemporary pluralism obviously affect theological and Catholic academic institutions like Catholic universities or faculties of theology. This can be seen in Western countries on a larger scale but it is becoming more and more evident in Central and Eastern Europe as well. Among the students of the Catholic University of Leuven, one of the oldest Catholic universities in Europe, foreigners now make almost a quarter of all the students enrolled. Among those the fastest growing number refers to students from Asia, particularly from China. For obvious reasons one can see that process ever more advanced in American academic centres. The same process, however, appears among the nations that have only recently regained their freedom in the post-Soviet countries. Every year more and more foreign students come to study at the Catholic University of Lublin (KUL) while its students go abroad to study in ever growing numbers.

These circumstances have made KUL redesign its study programmes in line with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) so an exchange of students is possible with many European academic institutions. There are over 900 foreign students at KUL and most of them come from former Soviet-bloc countries. This is the highest figure among Polish universities proportionally to the number of students enrolled. The University has ongoing cooperation agreements with over 50 foreign partners and it participates in such European programmes as Socrates-Erasmus and Ceepus. A growing number of professors is involved in the international research projects. Recently the first attempts have been made by some of the staff to join research projects sponsored by the European Commission under the Sixth Framework Programme. KUL's Faculty of Theology is a good example of this. It has been invited and has joined two consortia that have submitted their projects to the European Commission. One is Theology and Religious Studies in European Societies – Thematic Network and is coordinated

by the Swedish University of Uppsala. It includes some 30 partners coming from different European countries. The other one is An European Perspective on the Religion-State Relationship and is coordinated by the University of Groningen from the Netherlands. There are seven partners in it and KUL Faculty of Theology is one of them. It should be noted that one of the partners is a Muslim academic institution from Turkey, which gives the whole project an inter-religious dimension while remaining within the European context. Recently this project has been finally accepted by the EC and so KUL's Faculty of Theology will take a full part in its realization within next three years. These are only two examples of how Catholic and theological institutions must discern new circumstances, face new challenges in an ever more pluralistic environment and try to enter into cooperation with other theological schools and centres.

Theology has always been in close relations with philosophy, which is still vital for its sound development. There has been an increasing awareness, however, that at present theology needs to broaden its dialogical attitude towards the human and social sciences such as psychology and sociology, politics and economics or medical sciences. Theological principles, being particularly relevant to the effort of uncovering man's sense of life and supernatural vocation, need more cooperation with the human sciences to let men discern their daily choices, concrete actions and tasks to fulfil. The Christian view of the world and all its affairs is based on a conviction that "nothing exists that does not owe its existence to God the Creator". The Church stresses here the concept of "the rightful autonomy of earthly affairs" which means that all the creation by its very nature is endowed with its own stability, truth and excellence, its own order and laws that man must respect. All "methodical research in all branches of knowledge, provided it is carried out in a truly scientific manner and does not override moral laws, can never conflict with the faith, because the things of the world and the things of the faith derive from the same God"<sup>3</sup>. So science is indispensable for understanding the created reality and its structures. Theological research then must be in constant dialogue

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<sup>3</sup> Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, no. 36.

with the human and social sciences and use the tools of science to analyze and understand the world. The theological institutions then, theological faculties among them, should develop and deepen their cooperation with social scientists while theologians themselves are to be more and more familiar not only with philosophy but with human and social sciences as well. It is worth stressing, however, that the mutual and particular relationship between theology and philosophy cannot be abandoned: “The ultimate purpose of personal existence, then, is the theme of philosophy and theology alike. For all their difference of method and content, both disciplines point to that ‘path of life’ (Ps 16:11) which, as faith tells us, leads in the end to the full and lasting joy of the contemplation of the Triune God”<sup>4</sup>.

Pluralism, though legitimate in itself, easily creates an environment that can lead to some forms of relativism. It is clearly a particularly sensitive issue in the field of ethics and moral theology. Any dialogue needs both openness to one’s partner and faithfulness to one’s own identity and convictions. If on one hand it is right to say that no one can impose his own views or value systems on others, on the other hand Christians are called on to proclaim persistently the Gospel of Jesus Christ in any circumstances. The growing pluralism of ideas, convictions, ways of life and systems of ethics makes it even more urgent a task. All Catholic theologians, and perhaps moral theologians particularly, should remember they are to fulfil their vocation in the service of the Church, which is called to evangelization. The document *Donum veritatis* is clear about this mission of the theologians in and with the Church: “His [theologian’s] role is to pursue in a particular way an ever deeper understanding of the word of God found in the inspired Scriptures and handed on by the living Tradition of the Church. He does this in communion with the Magisterium, which has been charged with the responsibility of preserving the deposit of faith”<sup>5</sup>.

Theology as such is a deeply ecclesial science and in order to carry out its task it needs to constantly affirm its deep-rooted connection with the Church. Being true to its own identity theology must “grow in

<sup>4</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et ratio*, no. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian *Donum veritatis*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1990, no. 6.

the Church and work on the Church". It is the Church that preserves and bestows God's gift of new life that was won for us by the Saviour. Theology and theologians, moral theologians among them, are to develop an ever deeper understanding of the reasons that underlie the teachings of the Church so the faithful can understand, accept and bear fruits of the gift and commandment of new life. All this still more applies to the present situation of the growing pluralism where theology and theologians can easily lose their sense of direction and their authentic embodiment and participation in the Church as a "community of faith". John Paul II puts a special stress on this essential connection between the Church and moral theologians in particular who are "to clarify ever more fully the biblical foundations, the ethical significance and the anthropological concerns which underlie the moral doctrine and the vision of man set forth by the Church"<sup>6</sup>.

The contemporary culture, ever more pluralistic on one hand, on the other hand displays its prevalently scientific and technical character. It is then exposed to numerous dangers of relativism, pragmatism and positivism. In some parts of the world, particularly in Europe, a steady advance of secularism can be noted. In such a cultural and social setting it becomes more and more difficult for many people to live their faith in Jesus Christ and many become unable to integrate the Gospel message into their daily experience and life vocation. It is legitimate to say that all this proves "the emergence of a *new culture*, largely influenced by the mass media, whose content and character are often in conflict with the Gospel and the dignity of the human person. This culture is also marked by a widespread and growing religious agnosticism, connected to a more profound moral and legal relativism rooted in confusion regarding the truth about man as the basis of the inalienable rights of all human beings. At times the signs of a weakening of hope are evident in disturbing forms of what might be called a <culture of death>". As is often evident, false ideas and visions of life come into being on the level of anthropology and in this present cultural situation one should notice that in many cases it is a false vision of man apart from God that stands at the root of the problem.

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<sup>6</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1993, no. 110.

Consequently a certain kind of anthropocentrism emerges where man is being considered as the absolute centre of reality<sup>7</sup>. Theologians, as well as all Christians, must remember that within this society and culture “suffering from ‘horizontalism’ and in need of openness to the Transcendent” it is only the Gospel of Jesus Christ that can reveal the full truth about man, his moral life and his supernatural vocation. Facing the pluralistic and in some respects mistaken visions of man and his life theologians must continue to root their service in Christ’s gift of truth and life which has been entrusted to the Church.

When speaking about the present variety of cultures and other aspects of pluralism in the context of the Christian faith, the issue of inculturation cannot be omitted. All peoples live in some cultures. A culture is a system of values and attitudes, of symbols and rituals that enable people to express their identity, to celebrate and to live it. The faith and theology with it need to be inculturated. The faith is always rooted in a certain culture but Christians believe that the Gospel of Jesus Christ transcends all cultures. The Church, and theologians with her, when preaching the Gospel to all peoples, needs to incarnate it in peoples’ cultures. It is here that the problem of inculturation emerges and is understood as “the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures”. It is then to be seen as a profound and all-embracing process, involving both the Gospel message and the Church’s reflection and practice, where the distinctiveness and integrity of the Christian faith cannot be compromised. Culture, being a man’s creation, is never perfect and marked by man’s sin, and so is to be carefully analyzed and discerned while not being overestimated. All human cultures need healing and perfection. “Through inculturation the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community. She transmits to them her own values, at the same time taking the good elements that already exist in them and renewing them from within”<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, no. 9.

<sup>8</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, no. 52. Cf. Vatican Council II, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad gentes*, no. 22.

## 2. COCTI as a forum for cooperation

It was after the great and illuminating event of the Vatican Council II that among Catholic theologians there emerged an idea of constituting a forum for a permanent and more constructive cooperation. The growing process of modernization from the 60s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century came to be seen as a new challenge that Catholics cannot fail to face as well as other challenges coming from contemporary culture. There also was an increasing awareness of the *signa temporum* that the Church continues to encounter in various and changing circumstances on all continents. Theology itself has been done in the context of a new experience of ecumenical, cross-cultural and international contacts. In the changing world the theology's place in the university as well as in society has begun to undergo a systematic and ever more profound change.

It was during the General Assembly of the International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU) held in Boston in August of 1970 that first important discussions took place. Several delegates from different countries realized that the new challenges experienced by theological institutions need deep consideration and analyses. Among the themes to be discussed were for instance: the relationship between theology and the humanities; the importance and role of theological faculties within the university; theology in a secular society; academic freedom in theology; the collaboration between Catholic theological institutions and theological institutions of other denominations. After early discussions and four regional meetings the IFCU's General Assembly in Salamanca in 1973 decided that the special session would take up the task. It was in New Delhi in August of 1975 that deans and other representatives of theological faculties and departments held a meeting which finally came to a conclusion that there was a necessity of a network which would create a new and lasting forum for cooperation and would bind the Catholic theological institutions. It was agreed that a permanent organization be established that would have its own structure and be autonomous from the IFCU. All delegates were convinced that was the way to better serve the Church and promote contact and cooperation among the Catholic institutions for the benefit of all.



As a result of the process the Conference of Theological Catholic Institutions (COCTI) was established and held its first General Assembly in Porto Alegre in 1978. COCTI is not meant to be an association of theologians, rather it was set up as a network organization concerned with institutional problems and so it is comprised of Catholic theological institutions. As its official mission states, COCTI “considers itself to be at the service of Church, society and the university” so it “maintains good relations with the Holy See”. It is necessarily an international body and its members come from all the continents. Since the problems of today turn out more and more global as well as serious, the international Catholic theological community will deal with them more efficiently when sharing specific everyone’s own experience and ideas for a solution. COCTI then is conceived as an exchange and cooperation network working on two levels – regional (continental) and global. It promotes exchanges of professors and students as well as exchanges of educational methods and theological research. Among the major purposes of the Conference – as the COCTI’s mission states – are these: “to be a means whereby the cooperative effort and mutual understanding might grow among the member institutions and between them and the larger community of the Church which they serve; to take the initiative, in a theological context, to understand and respond to opportunities and problems in contemporary life, and to encourage similar initiatives on the part of member institutions; to provide a means of communicating information, ideas, and policy among the members and with appropriate official entities of the Church both on the local and the universal levels; to serve in whatever consultative capacity might be appropriate when asked to do so by various bodies within the Church; to cooperate in ecumenical relationships with Christian and non-Christian theological schools and institutions”<sup>9</sup>.

At the moment COCTI is comprised of some 120 member institutions representing over 40 countries. Since membership is institutional, it is open to theological faculties, departments, schools and academies, which are recognized as Catholic by designation of the Church. There are two categories of members – ordinary members and associate members. Ordinary membership is open to those institutions

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<sup>9</sup> COCTI, *The Statutes* ([www.cict-cocti.org](http://www.cict-cocti.org) accessed: 15.01.2005).



of theology, which both offer and regularly confer advanced academic degrees (at least a licentiate or a master of divinity) or do research in theology at an advanced level. Associate membership is offered to theological institutions, which cannot fully meet the criteria for the ordinary members but are a part of an institution already a member of IFCU or are affiliated with an institution already a member of COCTI. All institutions are represented by their deans or other chairpersons or chief officers. It was at the recent General Assembly of COCTI in Lisbon that the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University of Lublin was granted ordinary membership on 5 August 2004.

So far COCTI has held nine general assemblies, each dedicated to a specific theme. The first one took place in Porto Alegre on 17-19 August 1978 with the subject: The Catholic university, path of cultural pluralism, at the service of Church and society. The following session in Washington on 17-20 August 1981 discussed future prospects and preparation for the ministries of theology students. The 3<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly was held in Jerusalem on 16-18 August 1984 and had the issue of theological training as its topic. Next time COCTI gathered in Salzburg on 12-16 August 1987 to analyse the mutual relationship between Catholic theological institutions and the contemporary society. The meeting in Bangalore on 7-11 August 1990 took up the problem of the academic situation of Catholic theological institutions. The 6<sup>th</sup> assembly was held in Bogota on 2-6 August 1993 and discussed the social functions of Catholic theological institutions. The following meeting took place in Sherbrooke on 1-6 August 1996 and its theme was the role of theological faculties within the existing context of identity claim. The last General Assembly of the 20<sup>th</sup> century gathered in Leuven on 5-10 August 1999. Its theme was the growing diversity of religion and religious phenomena, including a committed indifference, affecting Catholic theological institutions.

It was again in Europe, i.e. in Lisbon that the most recent and first in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – 9<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of COCTI was held on 1-6 August 2004. Over 30 institutions coming from several continents were represented there. The host institution was the Faculty of Theology of the Portuguese Catholic University. The main topic of the conference was again the impact of the diversity of professors and students on theological faculties in the context of a growing cultural

pluralism. As can be easily noted from all previous themes of COCTI's assemblies, it is a major interest of its members how to define the identity of Catholic theological institutions in order to let them better serve the Church and society by conducting theological education and research in today's context of diversity and pluralism. Those Catholic theologians who represented different cultural backgrounds, two from each continent, delivered a series of lectures. From Asia the papers were delivered by Noel Sheth (Pune, India) and S. Suratman (Yogyarkata, Indonesia); from North America by Jean-Marc Charron (Montreal, Canada) and Lawrence Cunningham (Notre Dame, USA); from Latin America by Samuel Fernandez (Santiago, Chile) i Luiz Carlos Susin (Porto Alegre, Brasil); from Africa by Susan Rakoczy (Hilton, RSA) and Nathanaël Yaovi Soede (Abidjan, Ivory Coast); from Europe by Peter Stilwell (Lisbon, Portugal) and Sławomir Nowosad (Lublin, Poland). All the lectures brought along a vast amount of information and analyses and consequently made the participants again deeply aware of rapid and all-embracing changes taking place on various levels of the contemporary culture, which eventually affect theological institutions in their identity and mission. On the last day of the session the General Assembly elected prof. Nilo Agostini from the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro as COCTI's new president who took over from prof. R. Collins who had served for two terms.

Since COCTI encourages regional cooperation as an important part of the Conference's mission and task, several such meetings have been organized so far. Worth noting are the following: The theological faculties and the Europe of tomorrow (Milan, 8-10 April 1980); Theological faculties and the spiritual development (Frankfurt, 5-8 April 1983); The position of theology within theological faculties in the triangle of the Church, social state and today's universities (Barcelona, 28 March – 1 April 1989). During the General Assembly in Lisbon in 2004 it was emphasized that such regional meetings based on previous research and studies can be a highly valued contribution to the whole COCTI's activity.

After John Paul II's Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor* appeared in 1993, one of his most significant documents, COCTI decided to conduct a special survey covering all the participant institutions. It became clear that such surveys can be of real use and interest to

theological centres and such method should be included in COCTI's activities in the future. It is right to say, however, that the growing impact of multiculturalism and secularism all over the world makes some institutions lose or at least weaken their indispensable contact and cooperation with the teaching authority of the Church. It does happen that some fundamental teaching by the Pope or some of the Vatican Congregation's documents, important for the Catholic theological research and training, do not draw appropriate attention from Catholic institutions in some cases. In order to promote and offer support to institutions, often situated far away from one another, the Conference has created an International Index of Theological Research. Though there has been some inattention in keeping it regularly updated, it does provide a valuable means for many institutions to keep abreast of the subjects and issues being researched.

COCTI understands how important the cooperation and relations with other Catholic and theological organizations are. The Conference has regularly informed the Congregation for Catholic Education on its activities and future plans and projects. A special type of relations has been continued with the International Federation of Catholic Universities being one of its sectorial groups. The current president of the IFCU, prof. J. Peters was present at COCTI's Lisbon General Assembly and made an important contribution to the discussions on the organization's identity and tasks in the changing milieu of Catholic universities. COCTI has also collaborated in the IFCU's several projects, especially in the field of bioethics. The Conference has maintained relations with another similar and global organization, which is the International Network of Societies for Catholic Theology (INSeCT), based in Tübingen. COCTI is also in contact with the World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions (WOCATI), which is an international body as well with the Association with Theological Schools (ATS), which is an American organization. These two include non-Catholic theological institutions so the cooperation with them has a strong ecumenical dimension.

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The need for a more profound cooperation among Catholic (and not only) theological institutions is ever more needed and sought after in the present context of cultural pluralism. They all have their own part in the essential mission of the Church, which is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all the nations to make disciples of them. The Church needs “the knowledge of theologians” – and of Catholic theological institutions as centres of theological research, study and education – in her work of teaching and applying faith and practice of the Gospel<sup>10</sup>. The Conference of Catholic Theological Institutions, though at times imperfect as all human works, can and should make its own significant contribution to the mission of the Catholic Church in the contemporary world.

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2038.



## The Religions of the World before Cairo

Long before it started in Cairo, the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development<sup>1</sup> stirred interest, provoked discussion and criticism of some of its underlying presuppositions and proposed solutions to demographic problems on the global scale. After many months of work the Preparatory Committee published the Draft Final Document – the Program of Action on 24 January 1994. The Preparatory Committee continued its work, which is why a few alterations were later introduced into the original text. These alterations however did not introduce any essential change.

Among the principal objections to the project of the Cairo document, its peculiar lack of a religious perspective comes to the fore. While discussing the demographic questions of the contemporary world and pointing to the ways of solving current problems, the document completely omits the fact that religion and faith are part of the life of both individuals and of whole societies. On the one hand, population policy fails to notice the necessity of respecting religious values, traditions and religious customs, and differences between particular religious traditions as well as the place which religion occupies in man's life in general. On the other hand, the document failed to benefit from the potential of human religiousness as a resource for

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<sup>1</sup> The International Conference on Population and Development was convened by the Population Division of the United Nations in Cairo, Egypt on 5-13 September 1994.

solving the demographic problems. The latter does have a fundamental significance for all the peoples of the world. In opening man to the supernatural, religion confers a new dimension to the demographic questions and is a considerable support where it is morally admissible to influence the lives of particular people or of whole nations.

It is exactly this circumstance, which has created the need to organise a meeting of the representatives of the greatest religions of the world, to criticise and, as it were, supplement the project of the UN document. The American Park Ridge Center for the Study of Health, Faith and Ethics from Chicago prepared such an international and interfaith consultation to be held on 4-7 May 1994 in Genval, Belgium. The consultation was held under the motto: The Religions of the World and the 1994 Conference of the United Nations on Population and Development. One must add that conferences of a similar character, though on a smaller scale, also took place earlier in the USA<sup>2</sup>.

The consultation held in Belgium gathered around 30 representatives for the greatest religious traditions of the contemporary world. There were among the Christians (Catholics from Peru, Colombia, USA and Poland, Protestants from the Republic of South Africa, Canada, Brazil, Zaire and Germany), a Jewish woman (from France), Muslims (from Egypt, Bangladesh, Pakistan and India), a Buddhist (from Thailand), a Confucian (from China), a Shintoist (from Japan) and representatives of Traditional African Religions (from Ghana). They were not official representatives delegated by the leaders of particular religions, yet they all were entrusted with the task of presenting and explaining the official stance of their own religion towards the problem under discussion. Some admitted having ideas differing from the official teaching of their religion. There took part in the consultation the representatives of the United Nations Population Fund, the Park Ridge Center, the Ford Foundation and the Pew Global Stewardship Initiative, which sponsored the endeavour. Among the Catholics there were laypersons and two clergymen (apart from the author of this report, a Jesuit from Colombia).

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<sup>2</sup> For instance Religious Perspectives on Population, Consumption and Environment. A Report of an Interfaith and Interdisciplinary Forum, 11-13 February 1994; Roundtable on Ethics, Population and Reproductive Health. Declaration of Ethical Principles, New York City, 8-10 March 1994.

Four-day debates concentrated around the main questions of the project of the Cairo draft final document. The fact that believers joined the discussion on the contemporary questions of demography stems from the conviction that such realities as population and development are also essentially rooted in religion. The believer feels obliged to present the religious perspective of the demographic questions. It is important here to understand the values and the role, which each man plays as a person created by God and in the image of God. As a work of God, man should never be treated as an object or an instrument. This is important at the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when in some countries there are repressive methods to hold down the birth rate, methods which are opposed to the dignity of man (India, China, or even Brazil, where in some regions 75% of women undergo sterilization).

The participants of the Belgium consultation unanimously stressed that any International debate concerning social policy should take into account the importance of religion and the role of religious fellowships in society (in the nation). Such basic human rights as the freedom of religion and conscience must be guaranteed. The governments and other organisations responsible for population policy cannot enforce the realisation of their programmes against the will of a particular people. On the other hand, religious communities should be prudent and sensitive, since they are free to lead their faithful according to the tenets of their faith and morality. They should be open to fair criticism, if it should happen that some of their views or practices infringe upon fundamental values, such as the sanctity of life and human dignity.

An exchange of opinions among people coming from different cultural and religious circles of the world allowed us to state that one can rightly speak about a population development crisis in our world. All participants noted that this problem was very complex, the interrelations among its various elements many-sided, and that it is difficult to formulate one solution, which all could accept. Undoubtedly, there must be cooperation between all international communities, in which one would listen to and take into account the input of small and poor nations as well. The members of the African countries pinpointed that the conception of development alone demanded a detailed definition of its contents. These countries usually associate it with the period of colonial exploitation, hence it ceases to bear a positive character,



carrying rather quite the opposite. One participant underlined that for them this exploitation has not ended at all. Therefore, in speaking about development one should take a firm stance against any forms, in which the poor are exploited by the rich. It is necessary to stress firmly a profound respect for justice and equality, sensitivity to local culture, and a broad understanding of human nature and its needs.

All religions emphasize a necessity to put more value on human labour and on a fair access to the means and fruits of development. The present state of distributing natural resources and produced goods is tainted by an unjust disproportion, which is particularly visible between the rich North and the poor South of our planet. This should mobilize to a radical change in this state of affairs. The inhabitants of the developing countries in particular appealed for this mobilization. Every religion turns its attention especially to people in need, and calls for openness and sensitivity towards them. Here we find a special point of cooperation between various religions, societies and lay organisations, in order to help people living in countries at war, the poor, the homeless, immigrants etc.

An important question arises in this context. It is a question about the world of nature and the whole natural environment, which is the environment of man's life. A religious outlook on nature recognizes in it the work of the Creator and perceives it as holy. Most sacred texts within different religious traditions perceive in nature an inherent value. Therefore, not only man, being a unique creature, is holy. Nature is holy, too. Man should discover in this his task as a responsible governor and warden of the whole of creation and its riches. One should also spurn that attitude to the world of nature, which leads to its inordinate and unjust exploitation.

Much time in daily discussions of demographic questions was devoted to the woman, her role and rights in contemporary society. Some participants of the consultation put such a strong stress on this and that at times it was almost impossible to address other questions, for instance, the problems of the family. This feministic bent characterized primarily, though not exclusively, the majority of women present there – Christian, Muslim and Hindu alike. One has to admit and that in some regions of the world, women have it in the past, and in the present as well, been treated unfairly in their private and social lives.

Accordingly, it is important to stress that they are equal to men in dignity, and should have the same rights, which are accorded to men.

However, some disputants seemed to tip the scale the other way, and conceived the question of women's rights in a manner, which could not be reconciled with the principle of equal dignity for all. Such an understanding of women's rights includes also the right to abortion and grants a woman the exclusive right of decision in the matter. The author of this report was not of the general opinion on that issue, and demanded that the right of the unborn child to life be taken into consideration. The sweeping majority of disputants did not accept the principle of the sanctity of life from conception, and argued for the availability of abortion to a greater or lesser extent. The arguments, which were put forward referred, for instance, to the importance of the health of mother and child now and in the future, possible threats to the mother's life, and respect of women's rights to act fully as an moral subject (!). Such arguments, among others, argue for abortion in many contemporary religions and justify it in chosen circumstances. Apart from the Catholic teaching, some Muslim traditions decidedly reject abortion (the majority of Islamic traditions allow it within 120 days from conception).

One could notice a related standpoint, characteristic of the individualistic philosophy. It was clearly manifested during the debate on the questions of sex education and of contraception. For the majority of participants the project of the Cairo document was worthy of support in its proposal of a general access to contraception. The author of this paper was of the opposite opinion. Why perceiving especially among affluent societies the attitudes of liberalism and moral permissiveness, some disputants, instead of seeking to change such behaviours rather supported various theses of the Cairo text, which condones the dissemination of sex education in the form of instruction in the so-called "safe" sexual activity. The Catholic teaching, based on a defined anthropological vision, discovers the true and full of sense of human sexuality in the context of love, marriage and the family. It seems, however, that though other religions in the majority officially call, for instance, for the preservation of sexual continence before marriage, the majority of disputants in Genval practically accepted an individualistic understanding of the so-called reproductive and sexual

rights and of reproductive health (which accepts sexual activity before and outside of marriage).

The problems in question are bound closely with the understanding of the structure and function of the family. The Cairo document speaks about a crisis of the traditional family and therefore promotes the so-called contemporary forms of it, which, as it were, better correspond to the aspirations of people today. We mean here, for instance, the right of a single woman to have a baby or the right to establish a family without marriage. Such understanding was confirmed by a representative of the United Nations. Most participants however – excluding perhaps the representatives of feminist groups – defended the traditional form of the family and its rights. Only the family is the proper place and environment for a new life to come into the world and receive the love that it needs and the upbringing to moral responsibility, including preparation for responsible parenthood. In spite of the fact that some participants accepted the liberal attitudes that young people adopt, they were all anxious about whether non-family *milieus* or organisations could provide young people with a proper upbringing to responsibility and maturity, especially in the delicate area of sexuality. All unanimously stressed the children's upbringing to responsibility here is a matter of right, but is at the same time the duty of every family. The Catholic delegation made a point that only spouses have the right and duty to freely decide about the number and the time of the conception of the offspring. That is why any national or international programmes that limit the parental freedom must be discarded.

On the periphery of the discussion it is worth noting how contemporary philosophical and social tendencies influence the change in the teaching of particular religious communities. To give an example, among the representative of Islam one could notice distinctly different interpretations of the Koran as to the question of the position and role of the woman in social life. There were also differences as to moral permissibility of abortion. The Catholics from North and South America present at the meeting in Genval, while presenting Catholic moral principles, almost unanimously did not take advantage in a positive way of the documents of *Magisterium Ecclesiae*. Rather, they expressed their own opinions or the opinions of the *milieus*, which at times

clashed with the doctrine of the Church. Therefore it is important and pertinent to repeat what John Paul II wrote: “[...] the unity of the Church is damaged not only by Christians who reject or distort the truths of faith but also by those who disregard the moral obligations, to which they are called by the Gospel”<sup>3</sup>, and which Magisterium Ecclesiae interprets and presents as morally obligatory<sup>4</sup>.

The meeting in Belgium allowed for the emphasis and confirmation that the greatest religions of the world are crucially interested in discussing and finding solutions to contemporary demographic problems. It also showed that religious communities can and should creatively contribute to the forming and putting into practice of the resolutions of population and development policy. Undoubtedly, the multid denominational and multicultural context of the meeting met the need for understanding and collaboration in these areas. All present agreed that one must support the initiatives to organize such meetings on an international, national or local scale.

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Today, after the Cairo Conference on Population and Development, one can see that the course of its debates confirmed previous fears. The conference maintained its principal thesis on the necessity of limiting birth rate as the main way to solve demographic problems. The proposal to basically revise the socio-economic order of the world and the very model of development was not articulated loudly enough. The present model of unjust development (which should read: the development of some parts of the world and underdevelopment of many

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<sup>3</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 26.

<sup>4</sup> „The Church’s Magisterium intervenes not only in the sphere of faith, but also, and inseparably so, in the sphere of morals. It has the task of ‘discerning, by means of judgments normative for the consciences of believers, those acts, which in themselves conform to the demands of faith and foster their expression in life, and those which, on the contrary, because intrinsically evil, are incompatible with such demands’. In proclaiming the commandments of God and the charity of Christ, the Church’s Magisterium also teaches the faithful specific particular precepts and requires that they consider them in conscience as morally binding.” John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 110.

others) leads to specific threats to mankind, to an unjust distribution of natural resources and in like manner to an increasing and blatant disproportion between the wealthy North and the poor South. Such being the state of affairs, we may speak about global injustice. The delegation of the Vatican See adopted an active and firm stance during the Conference. A number of Catholic and Muslim countries did the same, with the effect that some alterations were made in the wording of the final document of the Conference (Programme of Action), a text which had aroused the greatest fear. Among these alterations one must above all mention the statement about non-permissibility of promoting abortion as a method of family planning: "In no case should abortion be promoted as a method of family planning"<sup>5</sup>. This does not mean that the Cairo document rejected abortion entirely. In some places though, the tendency of the document was changed for the better, by turning negative theses into positive ones (e.g. rather than as in the original text in the draft version in chapter 8B: "Infant and child mortality" we have: "Child survival and health"; in 8C: "Maternal morbidity and mortality" was changed into: "Women's health and safe motherhood"). It is important that the Cairo Report decidedly condemned any forms of constraint in population policy. Generally speaking, however, the Cairo Document in its final version, among other problems, does not accept the principle that human life is inviolable from its conception, it accepts extramarital sex, calls for the popularising contraceptives, and apparently promotes and extends the concept of the family into other relationships.

The final report from the meeting in Genval<sup>6</sup> in accord with the promise made by a consultant member on behalf of the UN was sent to all delegations at the Cairo Conference. The author of this paper, who was a participant in Genval, expressed his fears in the above report. His fears were confirmed in many parts of the final version of the Programme of Action of the Cairo Conference. It is encouraging, however, that some positive changes, some of which mentioned above,

<sup>5</sup> United Nations, *International Conference on Population and Development: Report. Programme of Action*, 1994, no. 8:25.

<sup>6</sup> *World Religions and the 1994 UN Conference on Population and Development. A Report on an International and Interfaith Consultation* [Genval, Belgium, May 4-7, 1994], Chicago: The Park Ridge Center 1994.

came into existence also thanks to the Belgium discussion. Certainly a fruit of the meeting is the rule introduced in Chapter 2, which states that there is a necessity to fully respect “various religious and ethical values”<sup>7</sup> when putting into practice the Programme of Action in individual states.

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<sup>7</sup> „The implementation of the recommendations contained in the Programme of Action is the sovereign right of each country, consistent with national laws and development priorities, with full respect for the various religious and ethical values and cultural backgrounds of its people, and in conformity with universally recognized international human rights”. United Nations, *International Conference on Population and Development: Report. Programme of Action*, 1994, no. 2: Principles [Introduction].





## Moral Theology Ecumenically Oriented

God as Creator and Redeemer of mankind has not left His creatures alone but in His only Son bestowed on them His truth. When receiving God's gift with his mind and heart, man finds in it the light for his life. He not only finds out who he is and who God is, but also discerns his ultimate destiny: "Those who believe, see; they see with a light that illumines their entire journey, for it comes from the risen Christ, the morning star which never sets"<sup>1</sup>. This revealed truth, illumining all life, is a gift to be shared with others. The task of moral theology is to discern that moral truth, to explain and systematically describe and then to proclaim. Thus Christian moral teaching is unveiled as part of the treasure of the Church and as such needs to become a subject of the ecumenical dialogue among various traditions of Christianity. Only Divine truth can enlighten man's intelligence and shape his freedom, and consequently it can lead all to know and love the Lord<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Francis, Encyclical Letter *Lumen fidei*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2013, no. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, [Blessing].

## 1. Ecumenical endeavour as an imperative for the Christian Church

William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury and a great protagonist of ecumenism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century post-Reformation Christianity, was convinced that a broken and divided church bears poor witness to a broken and divided world. It took a long time before deeply divided Christians of various traditions realized that they continue to be unfaithful to the will of the Lord. In his *Letter to the Ephesians* St. Paul keeps reminding all Christ's disciples that "there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all" (4:5-6). The word of God is a continuous appeal to the hearts of those who believe that they can never live in comfort as long as they remain divided. Christians must be ready to admit their "ecclesial communion has been painfully wounded" by divisions in the course of history and those wounds as "sins of the past unfortunately still burden us and remain every present temptations". The Christian community, when crossing the threshold of the third millennium, is still marked by "the sad heritage" of its past<sup>3</sup>.

Amidst many ecumenical initiatives, undertaken particularly in recent decades, a theological dialogue constitutes a singular role in an effort of mutual understanding and finding the common ground. Numerous agreed statements have been produced so far by ecumenical theological commissions which make all sides more aware how much they have in common and at the same time where their paths diverge. It can be easily noticed, however, that while those theological discussions cover all sorts of theological, historical or pastoral subjects, rather rarely they take up moral issues. This fact calls for a renewed interest in Christian moral vision which ought to become part of ecumenical endeavour and discussions. The Church's deepest conviction encourages her not only to preserve the treasure of truth and grace but also to share it as the "very nature of the gifts which Christ has given the Church demands that they be extended to others

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. respectively: John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Tertio millennio adveniente*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1994, no. 34; John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, no. 48.

and shared with others”<sup>4</sup>. Therefore the Church and all her members, having accepted an obligation to enter into dialogue with the world, must also be ready to develop a constant dialogue among themselves.

On many occasions did John Paul II underline his belief, expressed clearly in his Encyclical Letter *Ut unum sint*, that there is “much room for dialogue concerning the moral principles of the Gospel and their implications”. The Vatican II Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis redintegratio*, when explaining the method and content of ecumenism, did not overlook the ethical dimension of Christian life nor did it limit itself to its spiritual, moral and cultural aspects. Since so many Christians do not understand the Gospel and its moral message in the same way, while a vast number of questions of ethical character become increasingly urgent nowadays – all this confirms how important and vital is the ecumenical dialogue on moral issues<sup>5</sup>. The Catholic Church believes that Divine truth, including moral truth, is not confined to her own ecclesial boundaries. Paraphrasing John Paul II, it can be said that all Christians should be ready to admit that beyond the boundaries of their own communities there is no moral theological vacuum<sup>6</sup>. On the contrary, each Church and each community, when entering into a sincere and creative dialogue with other Christian partners, can learn about the life in Christ as the ideal of evangelical living according to the mind of the Lord. Since the whole ecumenical endeavour is an indispensable imperative so too is ecumenical dialogue concerning a common Christian moral vision.

<sup>4</sup> Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesiam suam*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1964, no. 64.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ut unum sint*, no. 68. “[...] the need for an ecumenical discussion of ethics and ethical questions is ever more important, both because of the need for the church to give a common moral witness and because of the appearance of new, potentially church-dividing or communion-hindering ethical disputes between and within the churches”. Michael Root, *Ethics in Ecumenical Dialogues: A Survey and Analysis*, “Journal of Ecumenical Studies” 45(2010), no. 3, p. 357.

<sup>6</sup> „It is not that beyond the boundaries of the Catholic community there is an ecclesial vacuum. Many elements of great value (*eximia*), which in the Catholic Church are part of the fullness of the means of salvation and of the gifts of grace which make up the Church, are also found in the other Christian Communities”. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ut unum sint*, no. 13.

While a lot of theological dialogues and ecumenical commissions have managed to agree on numerous significant documents over recent decades, only a couple of them chose to take up Christian morality as the subject of their discussions in a comprehensive manner. One is *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church* signed in 1993 and then published by Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission II (ARCIC II), the other is *The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues: Potential Sources of Common Witness or of Divisions* prepared and signed in 1995 by the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches<sup>7</sup>. Apart from these two complete agreed statements, only selected individual questions of moral or moral-pastoral character were addressed to some degree in some of other ecumenical documents<sup>8</sup>.

The members of ARCIC were fully aware that their attempt was the first to directly take up the subject of Christian morals. Despite a different popular belief, they expressed their conviction that “Anglicans and Roman Catholics derive from the Scriptures and Tradition the same controlling vision of the nature and destiny of humanity and share the same fundamental moral values”<sup>9</sup>. This substantial area of common conviction is accompanied by an urgent need for a shared witness to the Gospel whose proclamation cannot be divorced from the Christian daily life. Christian doctrine and Christian morals are

<sup>7</sup> See respectively: Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission II (ARCIC II), *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church*, London: Church House Publishing/Catholic Truth Society 1994; Joint Working Group Between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, *The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues: Potential Sources of Common Witness or of Divisions. A Study Document*, “The Ecumenical Review” 48(1996), no. 2, p. 143-154.

<sup>8</sup> A useful and interesting list of dialogues as well as of ethical topics addressed see Michael Root, *Ethics in Ecumenical Dialogues: A Survey and Analysis*, p. 371-375. Root’s whole text (p. 357-375) is in fact a survey of the discussions of ethics in various ecumenical dialogues, which almost persuades the reader that in no way can ethics be regarded as absent in those dialogues. Nevertheless, ethics continues to be perceived in this field as an evidently lesser issue after doctrine.

<sup>9</sup> ARCIC II, *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church*, no. 1. For a broader review of the document see Sławomir Nowosad, *Życie w Chrystusie. ARCIC II na temat zagadnień moralnych*, “Ethos” 8(1995), no. 2-3, p. 369-377.

closely inter-connected. Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams has stressed that it is crucial to perceive Christian ethics as rooted in the doctrine of creation and salvation, i.e. in the theological understanding of God and His purpose for all men and women. Thus, “Christian ethics is about the character of the Body of Christ. [...] This is part of the common heritage of Anglicans and Roman Catholics, as heirs together of both biblical and pre-modern theological concerns”<sup>10</sup>. ARCIC’s document highlights the fundamental areas of a shared vision, which include: an understanding of Christian moral life as “a response in the Holy Spirit to God’s self-giving in Jesus Christ”, of the true goal of the moral life as “the flourishing and fulfilment of that humanity for which all men and women have been created”, of Christian freedom as “a freedom of responsiveness and interdependence”, of the new life in Christ as “entrusted to the Church for the good of the whole world”, of natural justice and natural law as not denied but “renewed, transfigured and perfected” in Jesus Christ, of Christian morality as “the fruit of the faith in God’s Word, the grace of the sacraments and the appropriation, in a life of forgiveness, of the gifts of the Spirit for work in God’s service”<sup>11</sup>.

When it comes to common heritage, strongly underlined by ARCIC, it covers a shared tradition of over fifteen hundred years, which continues to nourish their respective theological and moral visions. Both Anglicans and Catholics believe in a common Christian life, which is based on love, centred in the Eucharist and worship and expressed in service. Drawing their vision from the revealed Scriptures taught and interpreted over two millennia, they treasure, for instance, an example of discipleship manifested in the saints and acknowledged by devotion and piety. A missionary imperative and the spirit of openness to the world together with a Christian engagement with culture are also attitudes both partners regard as part of their shared tradition. As its basic motive the document takes the mind of Christ, which has to be discerned, accepted, followed and grown into by all those who decide to live in the service of the Lord. Both individual believers and

<sup>10</sup> Rowan Williams, *Life in Christ: Considerations for Synod Group Discussions* [26.06.2009], no. 1-2 ([www.churchofengland.org](http://www.churchofengland.org) accessed: 4.12.2013).

<sup>11</sup> ARCIC II, *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church*, no. 4-10.

the Church as a community have to live in the fidelity to the mind of Christ. In the continuous process of prayer and reflection the mind of Christ can be discerned and thus Christian moral life will find its most authentic expression in the new life in the Holy Spirit<sup>12</sup>.

Clearly, the above presented agreement on the fundamental vision and basic moral values did not prevent both Communions from diverging in moral teaching on different elements of individual and social life. *Life in Christ* affirms, however, that both sides believe the disagreements originated not so much from the sources of moral authority but rather from different emphases as regards elements of moral life. It is the structures of authority and the formation of moral judgement that paved the way to eventual disagreements in moral teaching. In the context of structures and institutions of the teaching ministry of the Church Anglicans and Roman Catholics diverged and developed their own ways "in which authority is most fruitfully exercised and the common good best promoted. Anglicans affirm that authority needs to be dispersed rather than centralised [...] and that therefore official moral teaching should as far as possible be commendatory rather than prescriptive and binding. Roman Catholics, on the other hand, have, for the sake of the common good, emphasised the need for a central authority to preserve unity and to give clear and binding teaching"<sup>13</sup>. Two specific issues have been treated more broadly in *Life in Christ* to show where both traditions clearly diverge. They are remarriage after divorce and contraception, explained here in the wider context of human sexuality and of marriage and family life<sup>14</sup>. Though these disagreements are at present real, all members of ARCIC believe those conflicting opinions "need not constitute an insuperable barrier to progress towards fuller communion"<sup>15</sup>. Notwithstanding various

<sup>12</sup> Cf. ARCIC II, *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church*, no. 12-35.

<sup>13</sup> ARCIC II, *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church*, no. 49.

<sup>14</sup> For comments on this part of the document see Sławomir Nowosad, *Życie w Chrystusie. Moralność, komunika i Kościół*, nos. 59-77, "Forum Teologiczne" 13(2012), p. 201-219.

<sup>15</sup> ARCIC II, *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church*, no. 101. „Continuing study is needed of the differences between us, real or apparent, especially in our understanding and use of the notion of law. A clearer understanding is required of the relation of the concept of law to the concepts of moral order and the common good, and the relation of all these concepts

opinions and viewpoints have been formulated after *Life in Christ* was signed and published, including somewhat critical voice from Rowan Williams, it should be seen as a serious and much needed attempt to better understand, express and clarify the Christian moral vision as proclaimed by the two traditions<sup>16</sup>.

*Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues* is of a different character as it does not intend to discuss specific issues in order to arrive at norms but rather to describe the contemporary context of moral life and to show possible ways of dialogue rather than its results. In its two parts the Joint Working Group first turns attention to moral areas and issues of potential common witness or discord, and subsequently offers some guidelines for such an ecumenical dialogue. It has to be stressed that particularly the present context of a rapid scientific and technological development provokes questioning of traditional moral values and convictions as well as raises new ethical problems. If Christian community is to offer moral guidance to its own members and to the world at large, Christians of all traditions must find ways of dealing with controversial ethical dilemmas. It is crucial for the common witness and mission of the Church if she is to remain faithful to God and to “discern how ethical beliefs and practices relate to that unity in

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to the vision of human happiness and fulfilment as persons-in-community that we have been given in and through Jesus Christ. [...] We are convinced, therefore, that further exchange between our two traditions on moral questions will serve both the cause of Christian unity and the good of that larger society of which we are all part”. Ibidem, no. 102.

<sup>16</sup> See for example: „There is a rather perfunctory air about the report’s treatment of Anglican moral theology, as several commentators have noted. [...] Given that [Bishop Joseph] Butler is arguably the most important moral thinker of Anglican history (and someone who had a substantial influence on John Henry Newman) it is strange to find no mention of him and of the world of reflection he represented. This lack of historical perspective explains (though it does not justify) the implication that notions of absolute moral law are somehow foreign to the Anglican ethos”. Rowan Williams, *Life in Christ: Considerations for Synod Group Discussions*, no. 3. For a broader examination of the Anglican-Roman Catholic theological dialogue cf. Sławomir Nowosad, *Anglikanizm*, in: Jan Paweł II. *Encyklopedia dialogu i ekumenizmu*, ed. Eugeniusz Sakowicz, Radom: Polwen 2006, p. 33-60.



moral life which is Christ's will"<sup>17</sup>. Any serious dialogue demands not only an attitude of discipleship based on prayer and worship rooted in community life, but also a common understanding of basic notions like moral vision, virtue, value and obligation. Not disregarding differences among various traditions and churches, Christians believe they can "reach reasonable judgement and decisions" for their moral life by "prayerfully studying the Scriptures and the developing traditions of biblical interpretations, by reflecting on human experiences and by sharing insights within a community"<sup>18</sup>.

Since each Christian tradition developed its own vision of nature and structure of authority, which may vary even to a large degree in comparison with others, the formation of conscience and arriving at an ethical position may follow different pathways. Consequently, ecumenical dialogue on Christian moral life will need to take into account those different stances, different ways of determining moral norms of Christian life and acting upon them<sup>19</sup>. Such circumstances of the dialogue should be perceived as a challenge rather than a hurdle. They can undermine *koinonia* of faith and life, but they can also enhance it and become a reconciling factor in ecumenical relations. It is always necessary to agree that "the manner and the methods by which the churches publicly commend their own moral convictions must respect the integrity of others and their civic rights and liberties"<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Joint Working Group Between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, *The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues: Potential Sources of Common Witness or of Divisions*, no. I 4.

<sup>18</sup> Joint Working Group Between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, *The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues: Potential Sources of Common Witness or of Divisions*, no. III 1.

<sup>19</sup> John W. Crossin offers his own suggestion that virtue ethics as such could be a particularly useful instrument for discussions on ecumenical morality. Additionally, the contemporary revival of virtue ethics has found its ground in many ethicists of different Christian traditions. Cf. his *Prudence and the Future: An Ecumenically Shaped Ethic*, "Journal of Ecumenical Studies" 45(2010), no. 3, p. 426-432.

<sup>20</sup> Joint Working Group Between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, *The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues: Potential Sources of Common Witness or of Divisions*, no. VI 3.

With all this in mind, based on fundamental Christian convictions about the Triune God and man's dependence upon Him, the Joint Working Group has outlined useful guidelines for such ecumenical theological dialogue on moral issues that would promote the visible unity of all Christ's disciples in one faith and a common vision of personal and social moral life<sup>21</sup>. Those guidelines refer to the spirit of understanding and respect of mutual dialogues, to the necessary affirmation of specific ideals and practices of respective communities and to a common recognition of substantial unity among various traditions. There is a mutual acknowledgement that all communities find the basis of their moral teaching in the Scriptures, in moral traditions, liturgies, in the proclamation of the Gospel, pastoral practice and in common human experience. In some specific moral problems it is always vital to seek the best available knowledge from the empirical sciences before a moral position can be formulated. Any serious dialogue must take into account that some communities may be at variance with one another as regards for instance methodology of the Scripture's interpretation, the ways of identifying moral problems and their formulation, communication of values and moral discipline or the role of ministerial leadership in moral guidance. Every community must be clearly aware of its own moral convictions and be ready to admit disagreements with others where they occur. It is also essential that Christian communities do not neglect to stay in touch with non-Christian groups or societies in order to be able to know about their moral opinions. Even if moral differences between Christian communities seem irreconcilable, they all must believe that God never stops bestowing His gift of *koinonia* on His children<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> „We assume that churches are seeking to be faithful to God in Christ, to be led by the Holy Spirit and to be a moral environment which helps all members in the formation of Christian conscience and practice. We affirm the responsibility of every church to provide moral guidance for its members and for society at large”. Joint Working Group Between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, *The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues: Potential Sources of Common Witness or of Divisions (Guidelines for Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues – Introduction)*.

<sup>22</sup> „When the dialogue continues to reveal sincere but apparently irreconcilable moral positions, we affirm in faith that the fact of our belonging together in Christ is more fundamental than the fact of our moral differences”. Joint

## 2. Toward a more ecumenically sensitive moral theology

Among moral theologians and Christian ethicists of various traditions a growing awareness has become visible that doing moral theology in isolation is not an option. Even if the subject of morals has not yet found its due place in official theological dialogue, theologians and ethicists engage in making their own contribution to a deeper and comprehensive understanding of Christian moral life faithful to Divine Revelation. Publications of this character may examine methodological assumptions or fundamental convictions of a moral conception or may endeavour to describe and compare specific ways of moral reasoning or particular moral issues. It also happens that some international events or statements concerning urgent ethical issues, like the dignity of human life or environmental protection, provoke ethicists to get involved in public debates, often from an ecumenical perspective. Mutually enriching exchange of views and analyses can also evolve from official pronouncements on Christian morality by Church bodies, as it was the case with John Paul II's *Veritatis splendor*.

In the English-speaking world a particular impact on ethical theological literature came from the Protestant ethicist James M. Gustafson. He has written a lot about Christian, theological and theocentric understanding of ethics where the central topic is often the role of Christ in man's moral life. His academic teaching and interest has also included research in possible mutual relations between Protestant and Roman Catholic perceptions of Christian ethics<sup>23</sup>. His contribution to

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Working Group Between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, *The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues: Potential Sources of Common Witness or of Divisions* (*Guidelines for Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues*, no. 10).

<sup>23</sup> Gustafson's major work on a Protestant-Catholic understanding of ethics is *Protestant and Roman Catholic Ethics: Prospects for Rapprochement*, Chicago-London: University of Chicago Press 1978. His other books include: *Theology and Christian Ethics*, Philadelphia: United Church Press 1974; *Can Ethics Be Christian?*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1975; *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective*, vol. 1-2. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1981-1984; *Moral Discernment in the Christian Life: Essays in Theological Ethics*,

ecumenical discussions in ethics is still relevant though he himself was at times sceptical about authentic willingness of both parties to get involved in such debates: “there is no longer much interest in developing ecumenical consensus, per se, between Protestant and Roman Catholic ethics [...]. My impression is that no similarly concerted effort occurs [in ecumenical dialogue] on moral matters, on social-ethical issues, on matters of ethical method, and on theological aspects of ethics”<sup>24</sup>.

James T. Bretzke SJ has been one of those few American Catholic moral theologians who would try to directly construct an ecumenical outlook on Christian morality. He used to lecture on ecumenical ethics at the Graduate Theological Union and the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley and at the University of San Francisco. He is now professor of moral theology at Boston College as well as at Ateneo de Manila in the Philippines. Mainly from the Roman Catholic perspective in his teaching on ecumenical ethics he looks into a Vatican II paradigm shift towards ecumenism and thus describes post-Vatican possibilities in developing ecumenical Christian ethics. Interesting and often more detailed analyses of leading figures in Christian ethics, both Protestant and Catholic, are included. Bretzke shows examples of mutual misunderstanding as well as of polemics before the Council and then the change of atmosphere and growing awareness in favour of ecumenical collaboration after Vatican II. He also points out to the attempts at avoiding the so-called progress or superficial harmony. In his conviction “any viable model for ethics must also meet the basic formal and substantive criteria of internal coherence, comprehensiveness, and overall credibility consonant with lived experience. Christian ethics in turn must demonstrate fidelity to the Scriptures, Tradition (even if conceived differently), expressed religious authorities as well as the larger ecclesial community of believers and practitioners”<sup>25</sup>.

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eds. Theodoor Adriaan Boer, Paul E. Capetz. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press 2007; *Christ and the Moral Life*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press 2009.

<sup>24</sup> James M. Gustafson, *Roman Catholic and Protestant Interaction in Ethics: An Interpretation*, “Theological Studies” 50(1989), no. 1, p. 57-58.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. James T. Bretzke, *Ecumenical Ethics, History and Vatican II*, “Josephinum Journal of Theology” 6(1999), no. 2, p. 18-38. His books include: *A Morally Complex World: Engaging Contemporary Moral Theology*, Collegeville: Li-

Bretzke has compiled extensive bibliographies on many compelling moral problems, including the issue of ecumenical Christian ethics.

Rufus Black, now a minister in the Uniting Church in Australia and a practising lawyer as well as an academic teacher at Melbourne Law School, did his doctorate at the University of Oxford under prof. Oliver O'Donovan. His dissertation was a bold ecumenical undertaking: *Towards an Ecumenical Ethics: Reconciling the Work of Germain Grisez, Stanley Hauerwas and Oliver O'Donovan*<sup>26</sup>. This book is an interesting attempt to compare and to some extent reconcile three visions of Christian morality – Catholic, Methodist and Anglican. The aim was to show how these different views all present a realistic character of Christian ethics, thus excluding its subjectivism or voluntarism. All three authors perceive Christian ethics always in the context of Christian worship, which results in highlighting its ecclesial, pneumatological and sacramental dimensions. For Catholic moral theology, for instance, it should be a promising challenge to appreciate O'Donovan's strong emphasis on the Christ's resurrection in moral life and Hauerwas's stress on liturgy as a unique *locus theologicus* for moral theology. Black's publication is a fine example of a fruitful effort how three different ethical positions can be mutually enriching and show the way for ecumenical discussions on Christian morals.

The Catholic Church has a long tradition of clearly articulating her faith both in doctrine and in morals, which often assume the form of papal pronouncements. The moral teaching of Pope John Paul II often crossed the borders of Catholic Church and provoked reactions from non-Catholic ethicists. In this regard his two crucial encyclicals – *Veritatis splendor* of 1993 and *Evangelium vitae* of 1995 – played a particular role and received a considerable attention in Protestant circles. The collection of eleven essays entitled *Ecumenical Ventures in Ethics* is a proof of how a serious ethical and theological conversation can be pursued aiming at a better understanding of the Chris-

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turgical Press 2004; *Handbook of Moral Terms*, Washington: Georgetown University Press 2013.

<sup>26</sup> Later published as *Christian Moral Realism: Natural Law, Narrative, Virtue and the Gospel*, Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press 2000. See its review by Sławomir Nowosad in "Roczniki Teologiczne" 50(2003), no. 3, p. 203-204.

tian moral vision<sup>27</sup>. John Paul II's moral teaching is perceived here as relevant not merely for Catholics but for "all ecumenically concerned Christians who seek both the greater visible unity of the church and also the critical discussion and mutual learning that such unity should bring"<sup>28</sup>. These contributions, which are mainly Lutheran (American and European) and Anglican (one), deal with both ethical methodology and specific ethical problems in a critical but also constructive way, and thus can promote the framework of the ecumenical dialogue in Christian morals. The essays "probe, examine and identify potential and actual points of consensus in the basic theological and ethical perspectives"<sup>29</sup>. It is legitimate to say that this publication is both a valuable tribute to the work of John Paul II and to all those who seek new ways and areas of concern in the ecumenical discussions of ethics.

Beside *Veritatis splendor* it was John Paul II's encyclical *Evangelium vitae* that contained momentous moral teaching, potentially compelling for ecumenical relations<sup>30</sup>. The character or temper of the encyclical as evangelical and clearly Christocentric could be appealing to many Protestants as well as – in another manner – its emphasis on a rational way of discovering moral truth. Not only traditionally consequential notions as the concept of man and his sinful condition will be relevant for ecumenical discussions but also, in the context of increasingly secular modern culture, possible forms of the common Christian witness in favour of human life. These and other issues mutually significant could again bring about discussions on individual conscience and liberty, particularly where John Paul II's authoritative declarations are concerned. That might be understood as an issue that "has to do with the *public* character of the church's witness in matters of faith as well as morals" and thus searching for the best possible ways

<sup>27</sup> *Ecumenical Ventures in Ethics: Protestants Engage Pope John Paul II's Moral Encyclicals*, eds. Reinhard Hütter, Theodor Dieter, Grand Rapids-Cambridge: Eerdmans 1998.

<sup>28</sup> Michael Root, *Foreword*, in: *Ecumenical Ventures in Ethics: Protestants Engage Pope John Paul II's Moral Encyclicals*, p. VII.

<sup>29</sup> Reinhard Hütter, *The Project*, in: *Ecumenical Ventures in Ethics: Protestants Engage Pope John Paul II's Moral Encyclicals*, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Paul J. Wojda, *The Ecumenical Significance of Evangelium vitae*, "Word and World" 16(1996), no. 1, p. 52-59.



the Church should speak before the world<sup>31</sup>. Another ecumenically provocative aspect of the Pope's teaching is his call not to limit the defence of human life and dignity to subjective endeavour, however devoted, but to do it in the liturgy which is "the preeminent form of Christian action": "In this perspective John Paul II's call for genuinely ecumenical celebration among the Churches, of both the 'Gospel of Life' and of the approaching third millennium, takes on a dramatically new urgency"<sup>32</sup>.

Ecumenical discussions in Christian ethics must not remain within Catholic-Protestant relations but should also relate to the Eastern tradition of Christianity. Though not so well and distinctly developed – as far as Western standards are concerned – as an independent concept of Christian ethics or moral theology, it is a vital part of Christian moral heritage. It is mainly Basilio Petrà who in the European context demonstrates rather unknown richness of Orthodox moral teaching to the wider audience<sup>33</sup>. He has been lecturing on Orthodox theology and morality for decades in Rome, Florence and Bari. Of Greek origin himself, in a uniquely able manner and referring to numerous Orthodox authors, he describes the task of Orthodox ethics as an explanation and development of life in Christ perceived as man's fulfilment according to the truth. Christian ethics cannot in any way be confined to a human ethic but of its nature has to be open to spiritual life which is man's new creation aiming at divine perfection<sup>34</sup>. Clearly,

<sup>31</sup> „If Christians can agree that the transformation of culture, as understood by *Evangelium vitae*, is both an individual and an ecclesial task [...] the ecumenical dialogue around papal authority should be thought of not in Paul Ramsey's phrase, 'Who speaks for the church?' but rather 'How ought the church to speak?'. Paul J. Wojda, *The Ecumenical Significance of Evangelium vitae*, p. 58.

<sup>32</sup> Paul J. Wojda, *The Ecumenical Significance of Evangelium vitae*, p. 59.

<sup>33</sup> Among his publications are the following: *Al cuore dell'Ortodossia. La teologia ortodossa e le nuove frontiere del dialogo tra Ortodossia e Cattolicesimo*, "Rassegna di teologia" 41(2000), no. 5, p. 737-748; *Letica ortodossa: alcune fondamentali caratteristiche*, "Studia Moralia" 43(2005), no. 1, p. 153-180; *La contraccensione nella tradizione ortodossa: Forza della realtà e mediazione pastorale*, Bologna: EDB 2009; *Letica ortodossa. Storia, fonti, identità*, Assisi: Cittadella 2010.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Basilio Petrà, *Letica ortodossa. Storia, fonti, identità*, p. 69-71. „L'unione dell'uomo con Cristo che raggiunge il suo culmine nella comunione eucaristica, si attua nella vita quotidiana con il conformarsi della sua volontà alla

this way of understanding moral life as a life deeply rooted in Christ leading man to *theosis* (deification), can be a challenge as well as an opening of new theological and spiritual horizons to every Christian whose final destiny is God in His Communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit.

Valuable attempts to present major assumptions and principles of Orthodox moral vision can be found in several American authors. Stanley S. Harakas, an Orthodox priest himself, has taught theology and ethics in such leading Orthodox schools as Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline or St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in New York. Most of his publications deal with fundamental as well as various specific aspects of Orthodox ethics where the central accent is put on the "wholeness of faith and life"<sup>35</sup>. Harakas explains that though Orthodox Christianity does not focus on the normative dimension of faith, "when such attention is given, almost every dimension of Orthodoxy reveals that some aspect of ethics is present. The direction and guidance, the commandments and rules, the prescriptions and the proscriptions, which are integral parts of the Christian tradition, are the specific content of its ethical tradition"<sup>36</sup>. Covering personal, ecclesial and social aspects of human life, Orthodox ethics is to guide the Christian to the real renewal in freedom of his God-likeness to which he is led in many ways – theological, spiritual, liturgical, sacramental and ethical. In his outlook of

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volontà di Cristo [...]. Cristo come perfetto Dio e perfetto uomo manifesta all'uomo l'ethos divino e lo chiama ad avanzare verso la perfezione divina". Georgios I. Mantzaridis, *Etica cristiana* [Greek, transl. Basilio Petrà], Tessa-lonica: Pournaras 1995, p. 34.

<sup>35</sup> Harakas's books include: *For the Health of Body and Soul: An Eastern Orthodox Introduction to Bioethics*, Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press 1980; *Contemporary Moral Issues Facing the Orthodox Christian*, Minneapolis: Light and Life Publications 1982; *Toward Transfigured Life: The Theoria of Eastern Orthodox Ethics*, Minneapolis: Light and Life Publications 1983; *Living the Faith: The Praxis of Eastern Orthodox Ethics*, Minneapolis: Light and Life Publications 1992; *Of Life and Salvation: Reflections on Living the Christian Life*, Minneapolis: Light and Life Publications 1996; *Wholeness of Faith and Life: Orthodox Christian Ethics*, vol. 1-3, Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press 1999.

<sup>36</sup> Stanley S. Harakas, *Wholeness of Faith and Life: Orthodox Christian Ethics*, vol. 2: *Church Life Ethics*, Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press 1999, p. 27.



an Orthodox Christian ethics, based on the reciprocal relationship between God and man – fallen, but still called to achieve authentic humanity – the following fundamental ethical notions or concepts can be enumerated: the good, sin and evil, human moral capacities, conscience, the natural moral law, the Evangelical ethic, being moral as conformed to the image of God, ethical decision-making, the “politeia of theosis”<sup>37</sup>.

If ecumenical dialogue, as it seems, has been only slightly interested in ethics and now not few Christians hope for its enhancement, in Harakas’s opinion it is in fact a mistaken expectation. Viewing the issue from an Orthodox perspective he claims that ethics cannot be the appropriate means for restoring the visible unity of the Church. The reason for this is that it is only faith and doctrine that can found a proper basis for ecclesial unity. Ethics is secondary because it “has no standing outside of the belief system from which it is drawn”<sup>38</sup>. Having stressed this “ecumenical incapacity” of ethics, nevertheless Harakas does see a specifically Orthodox contribution to ecumenical dialogue on ethical issues. It is about a proper understanding of Christian ethics itself, which remembers that its source is not itself, not philosophy, not human experience but “the light of the historic Christian faith of the scriptures and authentic Holy Tradition”<sup>39</sup>. His approach is typically Orthodox, i.e. balanced and holistic which is at the same time personal, ecclesial and outreaching (“to what is not church”). It is a model which would be true to Christian tradition (patristic above all) where “the personal, ecclesial, and outreach dimensions are to be held integrated together and understood as a holistic interpenetrating, mutually informing, illuminating, and guiding model. All three aspects are properly integrated, so that every ethical reflection, normative

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. Stanley S. Harakas, *Christian Ethics in Ecumenical Perspective: An Orthodox Christian View*, “Journal of Ecumenical Studies” 15(1978), no. 4, p. 638-643.

<sup>38</sup> Stanley S. Harakas, *What Orthodox Christian Ethics Can Offer Ecumenism*, “Journal of Ecumenical Studies” 45(2010), no. 3, p. 378.

<sup>39</sup> Stanley S. Harakas, *What Orthodox Christian Ethics Can Offer Ecumenism*, p. 384.

imperative, inner motive, and intention is mutually illuminated by the personal, ecclesial, and outreach dimensions”<sup>40</sup>.

Coming from the Armenian background, Vigen Guroian is yet another Orthodox theologian and ethicist whose publications essentially contribute to the integral picture of Christian ethical vision<sup>41</sup>. Having taught in several North American universities, including St. Mary's Seminary and University as well as Loyola College in Baltimore, he is now professor at the University of Virginia. He is also active in the ecumenical field having worked for the World Council of Churches. Since Orthodox tradition does not easily allow of a distinction between theology (dogmatics) and ethics Guroian's conviction is that “Orthodoxy is never likely to grant ethics the autonomy that it has attained historically in Roman Catholic theology and more recently in Protestantism”. However there must be “room within Orthodoxy for a more direct and developed approach to ethics than in the past”<sup>42</sup>. In a very accessible way he introduces the reader into the rich Orthodox tradition of theology and spirituality drawing on its cardinal concepts like image and likeness, *theosis* or love. Since Orthodox ethics does not intend to be formally systematic and does not rely on “a formal or conscientious adherence to rules and a dispensing of duties”, it can be rather understood as primarily concerned with “the realization of love, righteousness and divine similitude in persons and social institutions”<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> Stanley S. Harakas, *What Orthodox Christian Ethics Can Offer Ecumenism*, p. 380.

<sup>41</sup> His books include: *Ethics after Christendom: Toward an Ecclesial Christian Ethics*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1994; *Life's Living toward Dying: A Theological and Medical-Ethical Study*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1996; *Incarnate Love: Essays in Orthodox Ethics*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 2002.

<sup>42</sup> Vigen Guroian, *Incarnate Love: Essays in Orthodox Ethics*, p. 3.

<sup>43</sup> „Orthodox theology rejects all forms of utilitarian, deontological or teleological ethics that intend the world as either utility, law, or unfolding rationality [...]. Orthodox theologians and ethicists will remain steadfast, believing that the goal of Christian morality is, after all, salvation”. Vigen Guroian, *Incarnate Love: Essays in Orthodox Ethics*, p. 27.

John Breck's influence in Orthodox (and not only) circles in the West, mainly in the USA, can be recognized without much difficulty<sup>44</sup>. A convert from Protestantism, now an Orthodox priest and well known professor of theology and ethics, he teaches at two major centres of Western Orthodoxy – St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute in Paris and St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in Crestwood. He briefly describes morality as a life of virtue and obedience to the commandments. While stressing the legitimacy to have an Orthodox ethic as such, his main concern is with bioethics where life and death issues are increasingly vital for a true Christian living. Especially in this field a sincere and broad collaboration is needed among all Christian traditions – Roman Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox: "These [Roman Catholic and Protestant] traditions could benefit greatly from an Orthodox perspective [...]. And we Orthodox certainly could benefit from mutual exchange of ideas, experiences and apprehensions, as we seek to make the voice of the Church heard in this increasingly pluralistic and militantly secular society"<sup>45</sup>. In his moral convictions Breck points out above all to the theological perception of reality, including God as Creator and Saviour, where a particular attention should be put on a sound and clear vision of man as the human person. Then not only his dignity and rights can be effectively protected but God is not excluded from His creation<sup>46</sup>. In his bioethical views Breck is

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<sup>44</sup> Breck's most important books on ethics are the following: *The Sacred Gift of Life: Orthodox Christianity and Bioethics*, Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press 1999; *God with Us: Critical Issues in Christian Life and Faith*, Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press 2003; [with Lyn Breck] *Stages on Life's Way: Orthodox Thinking on Bioethics*, Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press 2005; *Longing for God: Orthodox Reflections on Bible, Ethics and Liturgy*, Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press 2006.

<sup>45</sup> John Breck, *God with Us: Critical Issues in Christian Life and Faith*, p. 20-21.

<sup>46</sup> „The human person, created in the image of God and called to progress toward the divine likeness, is unique and of infinite value. Any attempt to reduce the person to a reservoir of genetic components or to reproduce that person through cloning is an offense not only against human rights and human dignity. It is above all an offense against the God who creates and loves this person, and calls each one without exception to share for ever in His divine life". John Breck, *God with Us: Critical Issues in Christian Life and Faith*, p. 31.

under a strong influence of H. Tristram Engelhardt, another American convert to Orthodoxy and a medical doctor himself<sup>47</sup>.

### 3. KUL's contribution to an ecumenically oriented moral theology

The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (KUL) has had a relatively long tradition of its ecumenical engagement in almost a hundred years of its existence. Several decades of the activity of KUL's Ecumenical Institute has been in some way supplemented by the establishment of Chair of Ecumenical Moral Theology (within the Institute of Moral Theology) in the early 2000s. It was obvious that Catholic moral theology does need to cross the borders and look beyond Catholic ethics in order not only to better understand other ethical traditions of Christianity but in this context to better understand its own content, its past and possible future developments. The principle of the exchange of gifts should have its place in the field of morality as it has elsewhere where so many of Christ's disciples find it necessary to enter into authentic dialogue and collaboration. An indispensable condition of any dialogue, still more in ecumenism, is not only consciousness of one's own identity but also one's readiness to listen and to learn. Over the last decade or so a lot of promising examples of research and study in non-Catholic concepts and trends of Christian ethics have been successfully carried out by those who teach and study at KUL. Among the courses offered to doctoral students are "Anglican Moral Theology" and "Protestant Ethics" as well as a seminar on an ecumenical context of Christian moral theology. A particular research interest is directed at the post-Reformation development of

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<sup>47</sup> Engelhardt's major work is *The Foundations of Bioethics* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press 1986, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1996). For a more detailed survey on Engelhardt's bioethical convictions see Sławomir Nowosad's review of *At the Roots of Christian Bioethics: Critical Essays on the Thought of H. Tristram Engelhardt* (eds. Ana Smith Iltis, Mark J. Cherry, Salem: M&M Scrivener Press 2010) in "Roczniki Teologii Moralnej" 5[60](2013), p. 226-229.

Christian ethics, above all its Anglican tradition. This research has resulted in many publications on Anglican ethics and moral theology, mainly in its 20<sup>th</sup>-century developments<sup>48</sup>, while a wider Protestant context has not been neglected<sup>49</sup>. In several publications some basic and specific problems of ecumenical dialogue on moral matters were dealt with<sup>50</sup>. Another sign of an authentic ecumenical exploration in Christian morals (and of course not only morals) is found when those ecumenically oriented follow new titles on the subject in the publishing market. Numerous reviews of recently printed books on various aspects of Christian morals have been appearing mainly in the issue 3 of "Roczniki Teologiczne" (briefly renamed "Roczniki Teologii Moralnej").

KUL's Theology Faculty, including the Institute of Moral Theology, is a uniquely well-equipped and qualified theological environment with numerous specialists in all fields of theology. A high number of graduate and postgraduate students come to KUL to continue their studies and research in theology. Some of those choose ecumenically shaped

<sup>48</sup> See particularly the following books by Sławomir Nowosad: *Nazwać dobro po imieniu. Sumienie w anglikańskiej teologii moralnej* [To Call the Good by Name: Conscience in Anglican Moral Theology], Lublin: RW KUL 1996; *Odnowa anglikańskiej teologii moralnej w XX wieku* [The Renewal of Anglican Moral Theology in the 20th Century], Lublin: RW KUL 2001; *Moralne konsekwencje wiary. Szkice anglikańskie* [Moral Consequences of Faith: Anglican Essays], Lublin: TN KUL 2016; *Moralne konsekwencje wiary. Szkice ekumeniczne i protestanckie* [Moral Consequences of Faith: Ecumenical and Protestant Essays], Lublin: TN KUL 2016.

<sup>49</sup> See for example Sławomir Nowosad's articles: *Etyka w ujęciu protestanckim* [Ethics from a Protestant Perspective], "Roczniki Teologiczne" 53(2006), no. 3, p. 153-170; *Z zagadnień etycznych luteranizmu w kontekście ekumenicznym* [Ethical Problems of Lutheranism in an Ecumenical Context], in: *Różnić się w zgodzie*, ed. Sławomir Pawłowski, Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL 2008, p. 209-226; *Protestanci wobec prawa naturalnego* [Protestants and Natural Law], „Roczniki Teologiczne” 55(2008), no. 3, p. 31-47.

<sup>50</sup> See Sławomir Nowosad, *Moralność w dialogu ekumenicznym* [Morality in Ecumenical Dialogue], „Roczniki Teologiczne” 47(2000), no. 3, p. 47-77; *Teologia moralna w kontekście ekumenicznym* [Moral Theology in an Ecumenical Context], in: *Polska teologia moralna po Soborze Watykańskim II*, eds. Janusz Nagórny, Jerzy Gocko, Lublin 2006, p. 127-161; *Problematyka moralna w dialogu katolicko-anglikańskim* [Moral Issues in the Catholic-Anglican Dialogue], in: *Ekumenia a współczesne wyzwania moralna*, ed. Tadeusz Kałużny, Zdzisław Kijas, Kraków: Wyd. Naukowe PAT 2009, p. 121-152.

research and specialization in Christian moral teaching when preparing their doctoral dissertations. Among them was Janusz Podzielny with his dissertation on the concept of marriage in Evangelical theological ethics (2009)<sup>51</sup>. Jacek Uchan wrote his dissertation on the Jehovah's Witnesses' understanding of marriage and family life (2008). Jan Kobyłecki's dissertation *The Catholic Vision of Marriage and Family in the Teaching of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen*, while focused on Catholic ideas, referred extensively to a non-Catholic religious and social context of American society (2008). It is also a good sign that in other Polish universities an ecumenical approach to theology and ethics is not overlooked. S. Nowosad was asked to act as a formal reviewer of Krzysztof Gryz's habilitation thesis in Orthodox theology in Kraków<sup>52</sup> as well as of Tomasz Józefowicz's doctorate in John Howard Yoder's Mennonite political ethics in Warsaw (2013).

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<sup>51</sup> Published as *Wizja małżeństwa w świetle ewangelickiej etyki teologicznej*, Opole: Redakcja Wydawnictw Wydziału Teologicznego Uniwersytetu Opolskiego 2009.

<sup>52</sup> Krzysztof Gryz, *Antropologia przebóstwienia, Obraz człowieka w teologii prawosławnej*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo UNUM 2009.





## Ecumenical Responses to *Veritatis splendor*

Morality has not been a favourite subject for those involved in ecumenical dialogues. Ever since formal debates started in the post-Vatican II years their areas of interest have been predominantly dogmatic, pastoral or historical issues. In fact just two examples could be adduced as comprehensive and bold attempts to bring moral issues up for discussion from different Christian perspectives and thus to know more clearly where the paths diverge and in what all interested parties share the same moral vision<sup>1</sup>. Fifty years on the Second Vatican Council's call to unconditionally engage in the endeavour of the "restoration of unity among all the followers of Christ"<sup>2</sup> remains an urgent task. John Paul II's Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor* (1993), being a major papal pronouncement on fundamental questions of the Church's moral teaching, has provoked a considerable wave of discussions regarding Christian understanding of moral life. Though often critical, non-Catholic comments and reactions to the Pope's teaching

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. ARCIC II, *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church*, London: CHP/CTS 1994; Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, *The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues: Potential Sources of Common Witness or of Divisions*, "The Ecumenical Review" 48(1996), no. 2, p. 143-154. For comments on both documents see Sławomir Nowosad, *Moralność w dialogu ekumenicznym*, p. 50-74; Sławomir Nowosad, *Teologia moralna w kontekście ekumenicznym*, p. 142-145; Sławomir Nowosad, *Moral Theology Ecumenically Oriented*, p. 99-104.

<sup>2</sup> Vatican Council II, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis redintegratio*, no. 1.

may be seen as a contribution to a deeper perception of Christian morality and to a common Christian witness the Church continues to bear in the world.

## 1. Toward a genuine dialogue on moral problems among Christians

Any serious endeavour to search for common ground between different Christian traditions must take into account an integral character of the Christian message. It includes both the fundamental doctrinal aspect as well as arising from it the moral ideal of Christian life. Hence, an authentic Christian engagement in the ecumenical endeavour must cover not only what the tradition has come to call the truths of the faith (*credenda*) but also moral consequences of believing in God who is both Creator and Saviour of man (*agenda*). To meet the requirement for the integrity of teaching, morality is to be regarded as an essential part of the Christian truth without which no serious ecumenical dialogue can reach its final end. Though briefly, Vatican II did point to the spiritual, moral and cultural aspects of Christian life that need to be included in the debates Christ's disciples take up and continue in their search for a real and lasting unity. This made John Paul II emphasize that there is "much room for dialogue concerning the moral principles of the Gospel and their implications"<sup>3</sup>. Both the complicated historical course of events of Christianity and man's impaired *post-lapsum* capability of comprehension have led to different, sometimes mutually exclusive ways of understanding the moral message of the Gospel.

Another reason for a necessary ecumenical dialogue on ethical questions is the "need for the church to give a common moral witness and because of the appearance of new, potentially church-dividing or communion-hindering ethical disputes between and within the churches"<sup>4</sup>. It was clearly pronounced in the Catholic-Reformed ec-

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<sup>3</sup> Encyclical Letter *Ut unum sint*, no. 68.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Root, *Ethics in Ecumenical Dialogues: A Survey and Analysis*, p. 357.

umenical document that made its own a call for common confession in order to speak jointly to the world into which Christ has brought His message of salvation. All the Lord's followers should take and use every opportunity to "render decisive witness" particularly with regard to pressing contemporary issues like justice, peace and the integrity of God's creation. Otherwise, failing to do this, they would undermine their evangelical credibility and the integrity of their teaching would be endangered<sup>5</sup>.

The Church believes that due to the real presence of the Word of God the boundaries of the active presence of the Holy Spirit do not coincide with the boundaries of the visible Church. Consequently the Church also exists in some form beyond her own boundaries<sup>6</sup>. This allows to express and stress a similar conviction concerning the Christian moral vision, which is to be found also in some form beyond its Catholic concept. A sincere dialogue and exchange of theological opinions on Christian moral life can lead to a mutual enrichment and deeper comprehension of the "life in Christ" being a universal vocation for all Christ's faithful. What *Ut unum sint* articulated in the context of ecclesiology, can be applied to the Christian moral vision. All Christians are to be "ready to admit that beyond the boundaries of their own communities there is no moral theological vacuum"<sup>7</sup>.

A closer analysis of the Christianity's picture almost 20 centuries after Christ prayed so "they all be one" proves ever more clearly that an ecumenical engagement on the part of all Christ's disciples continues to be a necessary and urgent duty. It is not only about two great

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Reformed/Roman Catholic International Dialogue, *Towards the Common Understanding of the Church (1984-1990)*, no. 157-160 (www.vatican.va accessed: 20.11.2015).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, *Opera omnia* [Polish edition], vol. 12: *Głosiciele słowa i służy waszej radości. Teologia i duchowość sakramentu święceń*, eds. Krzysztof Gózdź, Marzena Górecka, transl. Marzena Górecka, Monika Rodkiewicz, Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL 2012, p. 65-66.

<sup>7</sup> Sławomir Nowosad, *Moral Theology Ecumenically Oriented*, p. 99. „It is not that beyond the boundaries of the Catholic community there is an ecclesial vacuum. Many elements of great value (*eximia*), which in the Catholic Church are part of the fullness of the means of salvation and of the gifts of grace which make up the Church, are also found in the other Christian Communities". John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ut unum sint*, no. 13.

schisms of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> c. but in fact the whole range of issues that Christians continue to perceive and proclaim differently in the area of both doctrine and morality. The more unlikely the possibility of finding a common explanation of the Divine message presents itself, the more pressing the dedication for unity is to be. In order to be faithful to the integrity of Christian revelation one must believe that ethics is inextricably united with faith. John Paul II puts a strong emphasis on the indispensable and crucial union between the truths of faith and the norms guiding moral life of those who believe: “[...] an opinion is frequently heard which questions the intrinsic and unbreakable bond between faith and morality, as if membership in the Church and her internal unity were to be decided on the basis of faith alone, while in the sphere of morality a pluralism of opinions and of kinds of behaviour could be tolerated, these being left to the judgment of the individual subjective conscience or to the diversity of social and cultural contexts”<sup>8</sup>.

## 2. Non-Catholic responses to *Veritatis splendor*

The moral encyclical of John Paul II is a significant example of a necessary reaffirmation of the moral teaching the Catholic Church continues to offer both to her own members and to the world at large<sup>9</sup>. An increasingly matured ecumenical sensitivity among Christians of various traditions has made some theologians and ethicists to react to the Pope’s teaching. It is a real proof that not only Catholic moral theologians but also others, being ecumenically concerned, “seek both the greater visible unity of the church and also the critical discussion and mutual learning that such unity should bring”<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 4.

<sup>9</sup> According to some commentators it was Prof. Andrzej Szostek from the Catholic University of Lublin who was among major contributors to *Veritatis splendor*. See Richard McCormick, *Some Early Reactions to Veritatis splendor*, „Theological Studies” 55(1994), no. 3, p. 485-486.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Root, *Foreword*, p. VII.

The volume *Ecumenical Ventures in Ethics* is a rare case of a serious ecumenical dialogue on the Christian moral vision in which several non-Catholic ethicists both appreciate and challenge John Paul II's teaching as expressed in his two moral encyclicals<sup>11</sup>. It is a valuable collection of mainly Lutheran contributions in which Protestant ethicists discover, discuss and confront selected issues of the Pope's moral vision. The encyclical *Veritatis splendor* (and of course *Evangelium vitae*) has thus become a significant and fruitful point of reference for Protestants who had the courage and ability to purposefully engage this teaching.

It is clear that any attempts to discuss concrete issues, including the moral ones, have certain starting points and assumptions proper to one's own theological and ecclesial tradition. Thus Protestant theologians would use their own pattern of thought and the Reformation premises when attempting to comment on Catholic ethics. A good example of this is Gilbert Meilaender who would appreciate John Paul II's stress on the central role of grace and of faith in the Christian life (which is in some way matching the Reformation *sola fide* and *sola gratia* principles)<sup>12</sup>. However, when referring to Karl Barth's explanation

<sup>11</sup> Though rare this volume is by no means the only one. See e.g. *A Preserving Grace: Protestants, Catholics, and Natural Law*, ed. Michael Cromartie, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1997 or André Birmelé (et al.), *Paroles de Pape, Paroles Protestantes*, Paris: Les Bergers et Les Mages 1995. Another good example of ecumenical discussions on Christian morals – though prior to *Veritatis splendor* – is Oswald Bayer (et al.), *Zwei Kirchen – eine Moral?*, Regensburg: F. Pustet 1986. Some other examples of scholarly ecumenical publications on ethics see Reinhard Hütter, *The Project*, p. 1-2 footnotes 2-3. An extensive overview of commentaries on *Veritatis splendor* mainly by Catholic authors that appeared soon after its publication see Angel Rodríguez Luño, “*Veritatis splendor*” *un anno dopo. Appunti per un bilancio* (I), “*Acta Philosophica*” 4(1995), no. 2, p. 223-260 and “*Veritatis splendor*” *un anno dopo. Appunti per un bilancio* (II), “*Acta Philosophica*” 5(1996), no. 1, p. 47-75.

<sup>12</sup> Gilbert Meilaender, *Grace, Justification through Faith, and Sin*, in: *Ecumenical Ventures in Ethics: Protestants Engage Pope John Paul II's Moral Encyclicals*, p. 60-83. Gilbert Meilaender (b. 1946) is a well known and influential American Lutheran theologian and ethicist, teaching for many years at the Valparaiso University, publishing mainly in bioethics. Both here and elsewhere he is deeply dependent on Karl Barth's reformed theological perspective: “From a Barthian perspective any acknowledgement of a continuing validity in nat-

of the young man's encounter with Jesus (Mt 19:16-22), Meilaender points to – in his view – a lack of grace in the Pope's text. The Lutheran ethicist admits that it is with "the Reformation disputes in mind" and its principle of *sola gratia* that "one may legitimately wonder whether it would not be better, even from John Paul's perspective, to say that keeping the commandments is a *description* of being on the way toward fellowship with God, not a *condition* of it. The language of 'conditions' in these contexts risks undercutting the centrality of grace in the journey toward God"<sup>13</sup>. Again, after discussing another part of *Veritatis splendor* about faith and fundamental option, he would – still from a Protestant perspective – insist on diminishing of the significance of faith as *fiducia* in that document. This finally leads Meilaender to express his conviction that if "*Veritatis splendor* grasps – albeit a bit haltingly in places – the importance of *sola gratia*, it fails to enunciate clearly the *sola fide*". However, he is also quick enough to admit that Protestants should "be thankful for *Veritatis splendor*" and its thoroughly theological character and language that can help them think their own "doctrine through to the end"<sup>14</sup>. Meilaender returned to *Veritatis splendor* 20 years after its publication. In this comment his central issue is the relation of agent and act at which he looks in the light of Helmut Thielecke's *Theological Ethics*<sup>15</sup>. He refers mostly to the concept of fundamental option whose certain explanation has been rejected by the Pope while from the Lutheran perspective it comes close to the concept of man as *simul iustus et peccator*. In his lengthy argumentation Meilaender comes to a conclusion that the "connection between person and work must be tighter than Thielicke

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ural reason to come to an understanding of the natural law is dangerously misguided". David Albert Jones, *John Paul II and Moral Theology*, in: *The Legacy of John Paul II*, eds. Michael A. Hayes, Gerald O'Collins, London – New York: Burns & Oates 2008, p. 97.

<sup>13</sup> Gilbert Meilaender, *Grace, Justification through Faith, and Sin*, p. 64.

<sup>14</sup> Gilbert Meilaender, *Grace, Justification through Faith, and Sin*, p. 82-83.

<sup>15</sup> Gilbert Meilaender, *Works and Righteousness: What We Do both Expresses and Determines Who We Are*, „First Things“ 2013, no. 237, p. 41-46. Cf. Helmut Thielecke, *Theological Ethics*, vol. 1-3, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1979.

sometimes seems to have in mind, even if perhaps not quite so tight as it sometimes is in *Veritatis splendor*"<sup>16</sup>.

When asking about an impact of *Veritatis splendor* on ecumenical dialogue, Lewis S. Mudge has turned to a broader cultural perspective. He thinks the papal document endeavours to highlight fundamental values that can "illuminate the challenges now faced by humankind – issues of the dignity of the human being in civil society and therefore of justice, peace, the integrity of creation"<sup>17</sup>. In this sense the Presbyterian theologian, not disguising his "antipathy to the encyclical's often authoritarian tone", is certain the document needs a thorough attention and reading. At the core of the Pope's argument is a common modern separation between freedom and truth, which results in perceiving personal and social life merely as an assertion of preference or power. Mudge recalls A. MacIntyre's belief that "the issue today comes down to a choice between Nietzsche and Aristotle: between deconstructive anarchy and the classical moral tradition underlying Catholic thought"<sup>18</sup>. Mudge highlights a few positive aspects of the encyclical as he perceives it, namely its completeness and carefulness in argumentation and setting forth the fundamental questions of the Catholic moral teaching, its improvement on some traditional conceptions like natural law, as well as the Pope's precise analysis of the concepts and theories he criticizes (like proportionalism, consequentialism etc.). Mudge is at the same time not sure whether John Paul's language and argumentation can contribute to the "conversation of humankind" aiming at achieving some agreement on common issues of the tradition like moral order of human society or basic values for

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<sup>16</sup> Gilbert Meilaender, *Works and Righteousness: What We Do both Expresses and Determines Who We Are*, p. 44.

<sup>17</sup> Lewis S. Mudge, *Veritatis splendor and Today's Ecumenical Conversation*, „The Ecumenical Review“ 48(1996) no. 2, p. 158. Lewis S. Mudge (d. 2009) was a Presbyterian theologian and ecumenist who in his years before retirement taught in San Francisco Theological Seminary and Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley.

<sup>18</sup> Lewis S. Mudge, *Veritatis splendor and Today's Ecumenical Conversation*, p. 159. Cf. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, London-New York: Bloomsbury 2013, p. 127ff.



public life<sup>19</sup>. The Presbyterian scholar is ready to admit that Catholic moral teaching – not only in this encyclical – is often principled and in-depth while some Protestant statements on ethics seem “spasmodic and even opportunistic”. Thus another useful ecumenical fruit of John Paul’s encyclical could and should be – on the part of Protestant and Orthodox ethicists – accepting “as a challenge the effort to put the moral content of their traditions into coherent restatements which could stand alongside what the pope has given us in *Veritatis splendor*”<sup>20</sup>. Though often critical, Mudge sincerely finds in John Paul II’s moral encyclical a valuable challenge to non-Catholic Christian traditions that cannot be simply dismissed.

It has been obvious for many readers of Karol Wojtyła and John Paul II that it is freedom that is at the centre of his concerns and intellectual and theological investigations. It is put very clearly in *Veritatis splendor* where the Pope on one hand notices how human freedom has been exalted and made an absolute, the source of values, and on the other hand that same freedom has been questioned and finally denied when the human being is reduced to the conclusions of the so-called behavioural sciences, legitimate in themselves but not sufficient to describe the human person in his fullness<sup>21</sup>. Jean Bethke Elshtain highlights John Paul’s understanding of human freedom going back to as far as his early plays and writings. Freedom for him has been the most unique feature of every “acting person” who – in the light of Christ’s words about truth making one free (cf. Jn 8:32) – must come to know that freedom is fundamentally dependent upon truth. Still in his early play “Jeremiah” of 1940 Karol Wojtyła articulated “a central

<sup>19</sup> „[...] without such [religious] traditions in the picture we have what Richard Neuhaus has called ‘the naked public square’, a spiritually impoverished, normless public space overwhelmed by fragmenting and sometimes demonic forces which threaten to make it unlivable for human beings”. Lewis S. Mudge, *Veritatis splendor and Today’s Ecumenical Conversation*, p. 161.

<sup>20</sup> Lewis S. Mudge, *Veritatis splendor and Today’s Ecumenical Conversation*, p. 162.

<sup>21</sup> „Certain currents of modern thought have gone so far as to exalt freedom to such an extent that it becomes an absolute, which would then be the source of values”. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 32. „Side by side with this exaltation of freedom, yet oddly in contrast with it, modern culture radically questions the very existence of this freedom”. Ibidem, no. 33.

premise of *Veritatis splendor*: 'In truth are freedom and excellence - / in untruth go you to slavery. /O Jerusalem! – Jerusalem!'"<sup>22</sup>. Elshtain notices how deeply the Pope rooted his teaching on human freedom when he repeatedly stresses the implications of the first three chapters of Genesis for understanding the creation of male and female in the image of God so they live in *communio*. All these aspects are indispensable for John Paul's personalistic theological anthropology, which would let him unfold his teaching on love, sexuality, marriage and the family. Though wounded by original sin, every person is capable of the disinterested gift of the self for which Christ set the pattern offering Himself to the Father for all. With an authentic admiration prof. Elsh-tain writes that the Pope was "broken-hearted about human sinfulness" but too believed that the human person, open to grace, is still "capable of communion" and thereby confirms the other as a person. Referring to her own book on St. Augustine she describes John Paul II as the "man who desired 'not only a devout reader, but also an open-minded critic' [who] gets too few of each, or both, in our harsh and cynical time"<sup>23</sup>. In many ways Elshtain perceives John Paul's message as relevant not only for Catholics and not even Christians but for all who live "in our harsh time". It is obvious that Elshtain's "major claim is that, consistent with his theological personalism, the pope embraces the absolute ontological equality, an equality on the level of being, of rights and dignity between man and woman"<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> Jean Bethke Elshtain, *A Pope for All Seasons? The Many-Sidedness of John Paul II*, in: *Ecumenical Ventures in Ethics: Protestants Engage Pope John Paul II's Moral Encyclicals*, p. 20. Jean Bethke Elshtain (d. 2013) was an acknowledged American ethicist of Lutheran background who in her last years taught at the University of Chicago.

<sup>23</sup> Jean Bethke Elshtain, *A Pope for All Seasons? The Many-Sidedness of John Paul II*, p. 37; cf. Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Augustine and the Limits of Politics*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 1996, p. 128. „To say that John Paul's way of understanding the self in relation to other and the mind in relation to reality is opaque to us in late modernity is to understate. We no longer appreciate the meaning of putting ourselves at the disposal of another: the donative gift of self looks like self-abnegation if not masochism. Mary's radical 'yes' to God is an image that no longer computes". Jean Bethke Elshtain, *A Pope for All Seasons? The Many-Sidedness of John Paul II*, p. 36.

<sup>24</sup> Reinhard Hütter, *The Project*, p. 4.

Another basic concept in Reformation theology is God's law. It is Reinhard Hütter who, in the light of Martin Luther's writings, discusses the concept as it was developed in John Paul's moral encyclical<sup>25</sup>. He does see a useful contribution of the encyclical to possible ecumenical debates about the law of God and its role in human life. The Lutheran ethicist would agree with many of the Pope's points, particularly about the inherent link between one's moral life and one's salvation which lies at the centre of the papal message. Hütter puts an emphasis on the way the encyclical presents "an impressive and coherent vision of human life, integrating the fulfillment of the moral good, that is, the creaturely destination towards the good, with the comprehensive fulfillment of the human destination toward communion with God"<sup>26</sup>. In this moral teaching of John Paul II it is all about the sound relationship between God's eternal law and man's freedom in which Hütter frequently notices a continually developing debate at least since St. Thomas Aquinas. Various traditions of interpreting Aquinas' theology in this respect are clearly shown with reference to numerous theologians and philosophers contributing to this debate<sup>27</sup>. Hütter argues that at times the encyclical is one-sidedly focused on the subject of law, especially in the relation to the new law as expounded by Aquinas. From the characteristically Protestant perspective Hütter discerns that *Veritatis splendor* insufficiently explores the fundamental notion of human freedom, which being *post lapsum*<sup>28</sup> is in need of liberation by Christ.

<sup>25</sup> Reinhard Hütter, *God's Law in Veritatis splendor: Sic et Non*, in: *Ecumenical Ventures in Ethics: Protestants Engage Pope John Paul II's Moral Encyclicals*, p. 84-114. Born in 1958 in Germany, Reinhard Hütter is a former Lutheran theologian and philosopher, now teaching at Duke Divinity School in Durham, USA. In 2004 he became a Roman Catholic.

<sup>26</sup> Reinhard Hütter, *God's Law in Veritatis splendor: Sic et Non*, p. 87.

<sup>27</sup> See for example footnotes 13 and 14 on p. 90.

<sup>28</sup> „Man comes to realize that his freedom is in some mysterious way inclined to betray this openness to the True and the Good, and that all too often he actually prefers to choose finite, limited and ephemeral goods. What is more, within his errors and negative decisions, man glimpses the source of a deep rebellion, which leads him to reject the Truth and the Good in order to set himself up as an absolute principle unto himself: 'You will be like God' (Gen 3:5)". John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 86.

It is in many points that Hütter refers to Luther whose ideas he, understandably, perceives as strongly helpful to illuminate some aspects he finds not developed enough by the Pope. An example of this can be found in relation to the understanding of the concept of man's being sinful and on his way to perfection where "an overall harmonious and continuous relationship between creation and salvation [...] is obscured by the fact that a serious theological acknowledgment of human sin is missing as a constitutive element of the encyclical's anthropology". This makes some claims of the encyclical "problematic" because it does not presuppose clearly enough "with Aquinas – the 'new law' already being effective in the person or – with Luther – that this person already is 'in faith'"<sup>29</sup>. But Hütter also emphasizes that in other elements Luther would fully accept John Paul's thesis that "human freedom finds its authentic and complete fulfilment precisely in the acceptance of that law [i.e. the commandments]"<sup>30</sup>. There can be found more basic points in which *Veritatis splendor* should be seen as a potentially fruitful contribution to Reformation ethics. One of them is how the encyclical, focusing on the centrality of God's law in Christian life, can be for Lutherans "a welcome catalyst for rethinking God's commandments and, thereby, being reclaimed by them. Despite the whole range of problematic issues, the encyclical reminds us to understand in a renewed way God's closeness in the goodness of his will, whether communicated *via* the natural or the revealed law". Hütter too sees a similarity between the Pope's exposition of the intrinsically evil acts doctrine and the Lutheran idea of the "habitual, intentional, publicly insisted-upon and nonrepented breaking of the Decalogue's commandments". When reacting in a positive way to John Paul's insistence on God's good will shown in the commandments Lutherans could even "slowly relearn the practical knowledge of the 'natural law' or – to say it with Luther – to receive an ongoing training in God's good 'orders of creation'"<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> Reinhard Hütter, *God's Law in Veritatis splendor: Sic et Non*, p. 102-103.

<sup>30</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 35.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Reinhard Hütter, *God's Law in Veritatis splendor: Sic et Non*, p. 111-113, including particularly footnote 47. A similar discussion and comparison with Luther's theological views with regard to intrinsically evil acts and works of faith see Bernd Wannewetsch, *Intrinsically Evil Acts; or, Why Abortion and*

Nature, and consequently human nature and natural law are crucial concepts in *Veritatis splendor*. It is to these notions that Risto Saarinen turns his attention, delineating both agreements and disagreements with the Pope's teaching<sup>32</sup>. While some Protestant opinions seem critical as regards the papal view of nature and thus human nature, Saarinen points out to a few topics that at least Lutherans could agree with, for instance the rejection of a false dualism between body and soul which implies a stress on the unity of the human person, also the conviction that a moral act cannot be separated from man's bodiliness. As has been stressed by another Lutheran ethicist, this John Paul II's "high regard for the significance of the bodily dimension of acts could well have appealed to Luther, for whom bodily existence is at once the ground and the testing ground for good works"<sup>33</sup>. Saarinen marks, too, a growing Protestant consensus (at least among Scandinavian Lutherans and Anglicans) about the meaning of natural law as based on man's nature and so being a rational order and not a biological one<sup>34</sup>. However, the Finnish theologian discusses in a more detailed way some parts of *Veritatis splendor* where he discerns some Averroist tones. These he finds in the encyclical's treatment of human dignity, which seems to him as sharing in common nature rather than being based upon the person as an individual. Saarinen even asks a (evidently absurd) question whether *Veritatis splendor* approaches the "monis-

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*Euthanasia Cannot Be Justified*, in: *Ecumenical Ventures in Ethics: Protestants Engage Pope John Paul II's Moral Encyclicals*, p. 213-215.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Risto Saarinen, *Protestant Undertones, Averroist Overtones? The Concept of Nature in Veritatis splendor*, in: *Ecumenical Ventures in Ethics: Protestants Engage Pope John Paul II's Moral Encyclicals*, p. 115-136. Risto Saarinen (b. 1959) is a Finnish Lutheran philosopher and theologian living and teaching in Helsinki, engaged in the Lutheran-Orthodox ecumenical dialogue.

<sup>33</sup> Bernd Wannenwetsch, *Intrinsically Evil Acts; or, Why Abortion and Euthanasia Cannot Be Justified*, p. 211. „In free submissive love our bodily outward-directed existence is conformed to the 'new creation' that we have by God's grace become. So for Luther, too, the unity of the person is central, and any judgment on works flows out from it". Ibidem. Bernd Wannenwetsch is a German Lutheran ethicist recently teaching at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, a former president of the Society for the Study of Christian Ethics.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *Protestant Undertones, Averroist Overtones? The Concept of Nature in Veritatis splendor*, p. 122-127.

tic Averroistic views that deny the uniqueness of individual souls”<sup>35</sup>. His charge is that the encyclical follows in this respect Martin Rhonheimer’s view of nature as well as the role of the human body, which in Averroism is treated as the “principle of individuation”. Saarinen notes that the Pope refers to the human body (in unity with the soul) as the bearer of personality though not stating explicitly the body to be constitutive for human personality. This however can be found in Rhonheimer for whom the “body is ‘constitutive’ for personality; [and] thus the Averroist view of the body as the only principle of human individuation, which is implicit in *Veritatis splendor* 48-49 becomes explicit in Rhonheimer’s study”<sup>36</sup>.

Unsurprisingly, not one Protestant author would be critical about the authority of *Magisterium Ecclesiae* as expounded in the papal teaching. It is widely discussed in the context of conscience and law in Theodor Dieter’s treatment of conscience in *Veritatis splendor*<sup>37</sup>. As stressed by Dieter, both Catholics and Lutherans agree on the authority and dignity of conscience that speaks in the name of the truth about the good, though their perception of the reality conscience

<sup>35</sup> Risto Saarinen, *Protestant Undertones, Averroist Overtones? The Concept of Nature in Veritatis splendor*, p. 129. “The perspective from which this conflict becomes visible is that of *Averroism* or *monopsychism*, that is, the view according to which human souls are finally clones that instantiate the one and the same archetype when they inhabit different individual bodies. According to *Veritatis splendor*, individual human beings receive their personal dignity not because of any individual or unique characteristics but because they share in a common nature”. Ibidem.

<sup>36</sup> Risto Saarinen, *Protestant Undertones, Averroist Overtones? The Concept of Nature in Veritatis splendor*, p. 135-136. Saarinen refers here to Martin Rhonheimer’s *Natur als Grundlage der Moral. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit autonomer und teleologischer Ethik* (Innsbruck: Tyrolia 1987).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *Conscience and Magisterium in Veritatis splendor*, in: *Ecumenical Ventures in Ethics: Protestants Engage Pope John Paul II’s Moral Encyclicals*, p. 137-158. He refers mainly to two parts of the Encyclical where conscience is discussed – no. 31-32 and 54-64. Theodor Dieter (b. 1951) is a German Lutheran theologian, since 1997 director of the influential Lutheran Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg. He was deeply involved in the drafting of the Joint Declaration of the Doctrine of Justification of 1999. In 2012 he was invited to the Castel Gandolfo gathering of Pope Benedict’s former disciples to present the key points of Lutheran theology.



depends on will differ. Both here and elsewhere the German theologian highlights a lack of a precise mediation between the objectivity of moral law and subjectivity of (personal) morality; when discussing the concept of erring conscience he finds no explanation how and in what sense such conscience is binding; in his conviction the encyclical fails to distinguish between different meanings of law which leads to an ambiguous perception of the expression “morally good”<sup>38</sup>. Dieter, while describing in eight theses the conception of the Magisterium as presented throughout the encyclical<sup>39</sup>, takes a critical look at the understanding itself of the idea as well as at the high claim the Pope attributes to its authority. Evidently, this is in many ways dependent upon the Lutheran theological assumptions with their *sola Scriptura* principle and the common sinfulness of all. Thus, Dieter states that the “magisterium consists of human beings, none of whom is free from sin and error, but they refer in such a strong way to the assistance of the Holy Spirit that the voice of the magisterium is identified with the voice of Jesus Christ”<sup>40</sup>.

Another topic that may be treated critically by Protestant ethicists is the concept of freedom and truth which is a major line in John Paul II's encyclical. Lois Malcolm in her essay finds in *Veritatis splendor* not primarily an effort to reinforce papal and ecclesial authority (as not few moralists and theologians stressed) but a more fundamental modern cultural trend of detaching human freedom from its essential relationship to truth that the Pope endeavours to face. Malcom thus

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<sup>38</sup> „There is a fundamental difference, however, in the meaning of ‘law’ when Paul says that ‘law brings only consciousness of sin’ (Rom 3:20b) or ‘Christ bought us freedom from the curse of the law’ (Gal 3:13) and when Thomas Aquinas states that ‘the law of the Spirit of life in Jesus Christ’ (Rom 8:2) can be understood as the Holy Spirit dwelling in the soul or as faith working through love (cf. #45). These (necessarily) different meanings of ‘law’ entail different concepts of conscience because it is constitutive for conscience to be related to law (or the word of God)”. Theodor Dieter, *Conscience and Magisterium in Veritatis splendor*, p. 150. On the phrase “morally good” cf. p. 152-154.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Theodor Dieter, *Conscience and Magisterium in Veritatis splendor*, p. 139-141.

<sup>40</sup> Theodor Dieter, *Conscience and Magisterium in Veritatis splendor*, p. 154-155. Cf. a similar brief remark by Saarinen in his *Protestant Undertones? Averroist Overtones? The Concept of Nature in Veritatis splendor*, p. 127.



classes John Paul II with “a range of theologians, philosophers, social scientists, and moral theorists who question whether a moral discourse restricted to the decisions and choices of autonomous moral agents is rich enough to provide moral resources for the pressing problems of our time [...] in the face not only of cultural pluralism but the rise of technological power”<sup>41</sup>. The American theologian’s concern is mainly with the Pope’s concept of freedom rooted in the encounter with Christ, which she perceives as the crucial idea worth discussing also among non-Catholic Christians. It is only in the light of this understanding of human freedom, enlightened by the evangelical narrative of the meeting of Jesus with the rich young man, that the personalist and deeply Christian conception of freedom finds its root pattern and thus leads to the idea of true theonomy. This theonomy is called in the encyclical “participated theonomy” because “man’s free obedience to God’s law effectively implies that human reason and human will participate in God’s wisdom and providence”<sup>42</sup>. The concept of “participated theonomy”, against both a false autonomy and a false heteronomy, assumes that man’s freedom does not create its own values and norms but rather receives them as originated from God’s wisdom and love. Though she also finds in *Veritatis splendor* another understanding of freedom as based in natural law, its personalist conception and depiction should be regarded as the central one because it unambiguously shows the uniqueness of the human persons and their orientation toward communion with God and consequently with others. Malcolm finally comes to a conclusion that the personalist view of human freedom is rooted in the crucified Christ who is – following the text of the encyclical – the “living personal summation of perfect freedom in total obedience to the will of God. His crucified flesh fully reveals the unbreakable bond between freedom and truth, just as his Resurrection from the dead is the supreme exaltation of

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<sup>41</sup> Lois Malcolm, *Freedom and Truth in Veritatis splendor and the Meaning of Theonomy*, in: *Ecumenical Ventures in Ethics: Protestants Engage Pope John Paul II’s Moral Encyclicals*, p. 160. The whole text see p. 159-184. Lois Malcolm is a professor of systematic theology at the Lutheran Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota.

<sup>42</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 41.

the fruitfulness and saving power of a freedom lived out in truth”<sup>43</sup>. Such argumentation allows a comprehensive as well as deeply Christological understanding of Christian moral life that Lutherans would welcome. In her conviction the “foundation for the Christian morality in the personalist view is neither an abstract and impersonal good nor an absolute conception of power, but Jesus’ self-giving for his fellow human beings [...]. As Christ’s identity – Christ’s exercise of freedom and power – is constituted by self-giving, so the way of discipleship is constituted by obedience to the radical and unconditioned command of the gospel”<sup>44</sup>. Thus come to the surface so dear to Lutherans notions of discipleship and obedience, which have found their exemplary fulfilment in recent Protestant history in the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer<sup>45</sup>.

There is a widely accepted assumption that in the Lutheran vision of Christian life law (order) and grace (the Gospel) are two separate realities opposed to each other, which makes it unlikely to agree that “an ordered moral demand can be, in and of itself, evangelical”<sup>46</sup>. Order (moral order) has nothing to do with grace or the Gospel and it is in fact “necessary where grace is *absent* [...]”. But when grace arrives on the scene, moral order has reached its limit and termination; the gospel initiates a relationship between God and human beings which is not only *more* than moral, but altogether *other* than moral”<sup>47</sup>. As Yeago points out, such a Lutheran vision of Christian life would create an obvious opposition to what John Paul II describes in his encyclical

<sup>43</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 87.

<sup>44</sup> Lois Malcolm, *Freedom and Truth in Veritatis splendor and the Meaning of Theonomy*, p. 178.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Sławomir Nowosad, *Świętość w perspektywie ekumenicznej*, „Studia Nauk Teologicznych PAN” 6-7(2011-2012), p. 112-118.

<sup>46</sup> Oliver O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics*, Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press 1986, p. 153.

<sup>47</sup> David S. Yeago, *Martin Luther on Grace, Law, and Moral Life: Prolegomena to an Ecumenical Discussion of Veritatis splendor*, „The Thomist” 62(1998), p. 163-164. „[...] for most Lutheran theologians, grace is grace precisely because it in no way seeks to put the life of the sinner ‘in order’ – if it did so, it would be law, not grace. On the contrary, grace simply embraces the sinner in God’s unconditional favor, an acceptance and affirmation that are wholly indifferent to right and wrong, good and evil, order and disorder”. Ibidem. David Yeago is a Lutheran theologian recently teaching at the North American Lutheran Seminary in Ambridge, Pennsylvania.

as an “inseparable connection” between God’s grace and man’s freedom and life. Grace in fact “*does not lessen but reinforces the moral demands of love*: ‘This is my commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another just as he has commanded us’ (1 Jn 3:32). One can abide in love only by keeping the commandments”<sup>48</sup>. In light of this teaching any serious ecumenical dialogue would seem impossible for Yeago. His conviction is that such an understanding of Luther’s theology among Lutherans is mistaken. He argues that what the Reformer really has in mind is not the separation but an integration of grace and moral order: “Far from being indifferent to good and evil, order and disorder, the bestowal of God’s grace through the gospel is for Luther the only true formation of the human heart, that which alone sets the heart truly in order”<sup>49</sup>. This new way of the interpretation of Luther’s theological conviction as regards moral life paves the way for interesting and promising discussions between Lutherans and Pope John Paul II’s exposition of fundamental questions of Catholic moral teaching in *Veritatis splendor*.

The Methodist ethicist Stanley Hauerwas was enthusiastic in his reaction to *Veritatis splendor*, which he found uniquely rich and full of insights for anyone wishing to understand better and more theologically moral life of the Christian. It is a proof of an authentic and unbiased reaction to a serious exposition of Christian doctrine that can be and should be of interest and profit also for those who do not share the same ecclesial affiliation. Hauerwas, who is a well known and widely read theologian, sees in the encyclical “a unique and remarkable document” which is “a great gift not only to Roman Catholics but [...] to all Christians struggling to discern how we are to live in this strange time between times. That John Paul has written so eloquently on the nature of the Christian moral life is a great testimony to the Catholic ability to withstand the ethos of freedom and accordingly is a service to all Christians”<sup>50</sup>. In Hauerwas’s view it is important to

<sup>48</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 24.

<sup>49</sup> David S. Yeago, *Martin Luther on Grace, Law, and Moral Life: Prolegomena to an Ecumenical Discussion of Veritatis splendor*, p. 164.

<sup>50</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, [untitled], „Commonweal” 120(1993), no. 18 [22 October 1993], p. 16. That text was republished as *The Pope Puts Theology Back into Moral Theology* in “Studies in Christian Ethics” 7(1994) no. 2, p. 16-18. Stanley

note that the Pope not just describes moral life Christians are called to live but refers to how moral theologians think about it and to what this may lead. Writing profoundly theologically John Paul II reminds all Christians, Catholics and Protestants alike, that their moral life “cannot be separated from the one who has called us into existence” because “ethical order” cannot be divorced from the “order of salvation”. It is impressively presented in the discussion of martyrdom in the last chapter of *Veritatis splendor*. Being himself critical about the concept of natural law as a pattern for moral life, Hauerwas admits he finds in the encyclical a lot he is ready to share. A similar case is for him with intrinsically evil acts but here this discussion is put by the Pope rightly when he argues that “such actions cannot be made part of the well-lived life”<sup>51</sup>. Hauerwas finds not one thing in *Veritatis splendor* that may remind Protestants of John Calvin’s or Karl Barth’s teachings and writings.

In his other comment Hauerwas stresses a theological, or rather biblical and ecclesial method employed throughout the encyclical *Veritatis splendor*: “begin with Scripture, show how rational argument contributes to faith seeking understanding, and return to a church life and practice informed by Scripture”. This finally becomes in fact Christocentric because it is “Jesus, not ‘natural law’ [that is] the paradigm throughout” and “one must always return to the figure of Jesus”<sup>52</sup>. With the utmost attention the Methodist theologian follows John Paul’s argumentation, which he finds constantly focused on truth as the only context for human freedom to mature and direct man to Christ, the same way the young rich man was drawn to Him. In his comment Hauerwas can be rightly described as a personalist who together with the Pope comes to find in the Crucified Christ “the authentic meaning of freedom [who] lives it fully in the total gift of

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Hauerwas (b. 1940) is a very influential and widely read American Methodist theologian and ethicist teaching at Duke University.

<sup>51</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, [untitled], p. 17-18.

<sup>52</sup> David Burrell, Stanley Hauerwas [untitled part of *The Splendor of Truth: A Symposium*], „First Things” 1994, no. 39, p. 21-22. This comment was written by Stanley Hauerwas together with David Burrell (b. 1933), a Catholic philosopher and theologian who taught for many years at the University of Notre Dame.

himself and calls his disciples to share in his freedom". In this sense freedom is "ultimately directed towards communion"<sup>53</sup>. Interestingly, in this context Hauerwas makes references to Vaclav Havel and his deeply moral perception of politics and public activity. The Methodist ethicist finds Havel's discernment to have much in common with the papal vision of moral life, though in Havel it is not, at least expressly, biblical or theologically warranted<sup>54</sup>.

It is not in one case that *Veritatis splendor* has compelled its Protestant readers to think again and more seriously about their own ways of viewing Christian moral life. This could be another fruit of an encounter with a text deeply rooted in Christian theological and moral tradition that cannot be passed by indifferently. According to Robert Benne the "Pope's clarity and weight" as well as "solidity, richness and thickness of the moral tradition" expressed in *Veritatis splendor* makes him acknowledge the "present state of Lutheran ethics sadly confused and confusing"<sup>55</sup>. This shows again that the substance of the encyclical is grounded in the rich Catholic tradition of moral theology and as such can become a common field of research and a mutually enriching exchange of gifts. It, too, proves that the existence of teaching authority, as has always been the case with the Catholic Church, can be an authentic service to the unity of all Christ's disciples<sup>56</sup>. The insights that are contained in the Pope's moral encyclical letter allow to clarify other issues that not only Catholics need to see clearly, like the calling

<sup>53</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 85-86.

<sup>54</sup> „So however it may be articulated, 'by acknowledging and teaching the existence of intrinsic evil in given human acts, the Church remains faithful to the integral truth about man; she respects and promotes man in his dignity and vocation.' Such a summary statement recalls us to the context of Vaclav Havel: there are certain actions that no human being is entitled to perpetrate, whatever ideological justifications may be forthcoming. This is not only because of the harm such acts do to others but, equally important, the harm such acts do to the perpetrator". David Burrell, Stanley Hauerwas [untitled], p. 23.

<sup>55</sup> Robert Benne, *Reflections on the Splendor of Truth*, „Pro Ecclesia" 3(1994), no. 3, p. 272. Robert Benne is professor emeritus at Roanoke College, Salem, Virginia, a well-known Lutheran social ethicist.

<sup>56</sup> „The absence of theologically-based moral theory is an effect of the loss of teaching authority in the Protestant churches. [...] authority has been split off from ordination, particularly at the regional and national expressions of the church's life". Robert Benne, *Reflections on the Splendor of Truth*, p. 272.

and the service that moral theologians (or Christian ethicists – as Protestants would more frequently say) should offer to the Church and even to “human society and culture” and so “develop a deeper understanding of the reasons underlying its [the Magisterium’s] teachings and to expound the validity and obligatory nature of the precepts it proposes, demonstrating their connection with one another and their relation with man’s ultimate end”<sup>57</sup>. Benne seems to miss such a much needed and significant churchy role for moral theologians within his own Lutheran tradition. He sees in the Pope’s argument, in this case concerning the role of bishops as pastors, an inspiration for Protestants to take “faith and its moral tradition seriously”. Even if in more specific problems he will disagree with John Paul II, Benne is ready to stress that the “weight, clarity and grandeur of his proposal make me long for a church that has an authoritative and true word to speak to Christians and to the world”<sup>58</sup>.

John Paul II’s moral endeavour, as all his teaching, carries a clear theological and Christological character. It has become obvious ever since his first encyclical with its strong emphasis on Christ as the only one who is capable of responding to man’s questions. L. Gregory Jones stresses it in his comment when pointing out to the question of the young rich man about his salvation, with which the Pope has started his encyclical<sup>59</sup>. The theological issue of salvation is to shed light on all man’s moral questions and thus enable to have God always at the centre of one’s life. In connection with this observation Jones highlights the universality of moral questions of all men because “questions how I ought to live, and more particularly what I must do to be saved are being raised not only by Christians but by others as well”<sup>60</sup>. The Methodist theologian refers several times to *Veritatis splendor* as a “theological inquiry” in which he sees its central feature. He finds this as the Pope’s particular concern in the context of contemporary culture, which has been deprived of any theological character resulting

<sup>57</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 110.

<sup>58</sup> *Reflections on the Splendor of Truth*, p. 274.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. L. Gregory Jones, [untitled part of *The Splendor of Truth: A Symposium*], „First Things” 1994, no. 39, p. 19-20. Jones (b. 1960) is a Methodist theologian, currently vice-president at Duke University.

<sup>60</sup> L. Gregory Jones, [untitled], p. 19.



in a “theological bankruptcy”. Hence he argues that the encyclical is to be understood as an “invitation to join in the rigorous, yet life-giving, demands of a comprehensive theological inquiry ordered by, and directed towards, the truth as that is discerned in fidelity to the God of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit”. This theological inquiry would gradually reclaim a “theological *imagination*”<sup>61</sup>. Such a deeply theological perception of John Paul II’s moral teaching, unsurprisingly, allows Jones to ask for more which is an argumentation for a more eschatologically rather than teleologically understood moral theology.

For the Anglican theologian Oliver O’Donovan the Pope’s exposition of Christian morality is a significant pastoral and evangelical attempt to respond to modern man’s existential questions<sup>62</sup>. What is stressed in the papal letter is that moral life cannot be separated from following Christ, from the Holy Spirit’s grace and must be rooted in the ecclesial community of faith. It is in this that the generations to come will continue to see the particular splendour of *Veritatis splendor*. This makes the Church’s moral teaching an authentically evangelical proclamation. John Paul II is right in his criticism of opinions, which question “the intrinsic and unbreakable bond between faith and morality” being influenced by “currents of thought which end by detaching human freedom from its essential and constitutive relationship to truth”<sup>63</sup>. It is clearly highlighted by the Anglican moral theologian that the “Pope has undertaken a review of trends in formal ethical theory – an unexpected but by no means unpersuasive strategy. His thesis is the necessity of truth as the condition of freedom. Objectivity humbles tyrants. Totalitarianism is the child of moral skepticism, having cast itself loose from the critical authority that can challenge social structures”<sup>64</sup>. It is obvious that John Paul’s target is not primarily

<sup>61</sup> „[...] we need not only the encyclical’s invitation to theological inquiry but also, and perhaps more determinatively, a reclamation of biblical and theological *imagination*”. L. Gregory Jones, [untitled], p. 20.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Oliver O’Donovan, *A Summons to Reality*, „The Tablet” 1993, no. 247 [27.11.1993], p. 1550-1552. Oliver O’Donovan (b. 1945), a leading Anglican moral theologian, was for over two decades Regius Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology at Christ Church, Oxford. He now teaches at the University of Edinburgh.

<sup>63</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 4.

<sup>64</sup> Oliver O’Donovan, *A Summons to Reality*, p. 1550.



some selected specific questions (discussed in the second part of the encyclical) but a critical look at the foundations of culture and its basic intellectual trends. O'Donovan joins the Pope in his critical account of the theories which fail to offer "developed account of the field of moral action, that is to say, of the created world with all its infinite variety of created goods and ends, into which any act that we design has to be projected, within which any act has to be justified"<sup>65</sup>. Though with respect to some elements of the Pope's argumentation O'Donovan is not sure whether the position taken is the best possible way to deal with the analysed problems, he finally expresses his laudable conviction about not only the encyclical's exposition of a general philosophical situation relevant for all Christians, but also about a possible service and role of a Petrine office in the universal Church for which *Veritatis splendor* appears to be a convincing example<sup>66</sup>.

Michael Banner, an acknowledged Anglican ethicist, reminds that not only John Paul II but also some important Protestant theologians like Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Karl Barth had both reflected on the Gospel on the young man asking the Master about good that is to be done in order to have eternal life<sup>67</sup>. While he finds a lot to praise in

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<sup>65</sup> „The world appears as an empty stage for human merit to parade on, formless, undetermined, infinitely plastic, like the universe before God's first creative word. Action, in consequence, is shaped to the service of the agent-mind or agent-will, rather than to the service of the world. It loses its world-determined meaning as action — so that in some theories it comes to look like an expressive gesture revealing the secrets of the heart, in others like an instrumental technique manipulating the world to some end, and in still others virtually irrelevant to moral evaluation. The underlying connexion is the paradoxically 'unworldly' character (in this specialist sense) of twentieth-century ethics: that is, its tendency to refuse the world that is given it in favour of some other world which it invents". Oliver O'Donovan, *A Summons to Reality*, p. 1551. Cf. Sławomir Nowosad, 'Veritatis splendor' w 'The Tablet', „Studia Theologica Varsaviensia" 32(1994), no. 1, p. 104-105 here.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Oliver O'Donovan, *A Summons to Reality*, p. 1552. Interestingly enough, in his commendable opinion O'Donovan gets criticized for not being critical enough by some who have found themselves criticized in the Pope's letter. See Richard McCormick, *Some Early Reactions to Veritatis splendor*, p. 492.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Michael Banner, *Veritatis splendor*, „Studies in Christian Ethics" 7(1994), no. 2, p. 8-10. Michael Banner (b. 1961) has been Dean and fellow of the Trinity College in the University of Cambridge since 2006.

the beginning and in the conclusion of John Paul II's moral encyclical, he is clearly dissatisfied with the central section. It seems to him highly too philosophical and rational, not in line particularly with the biblical introduction. Banner, who is himself deeply embedded in Barth's theology with his radical *sola Scriptura* principle, deplores the unbiblical and unevangelical character of that part of the Pope's argument. He thinks *Veritatis splendor* should have taken a different path and not try to defend "a set of curiously modern philosophical commitments", but rather to offer the "narrative of God's creation, reconciliation and redemption of the world which is known in Jesus Christ". Only on this path, Banner argues, the Church would rediscover the "newness of the faith and its power to judge a prevalent and all-intrusive culture"<sup>68</sup>.

Not once the prophetic character of *Veritatis splendor* has been underlined by some of its commentators. One of them is Nigel Biggar, now Regius Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology at Christ Church in the University of Oxford. He calls John Paul II's encyclical "a piece of prophecy" and appreciates his sharp criticism of some tenets of post-modern contemporary culture, for which "morality is simply a matter of individual feeling or preference. He [the Pope] contends instead that it is ultimately a matter of truth"<sup>69</sup>. He follows the Pope's line of reasoning into such issues as moral law, conscience, consequentialism or fundamental option finding a lot he can agree upon, including the "validity of absolute prohibitions" about which he finds *Veritatis splendor* "cogent". Nevertheless, Biggar makes his objections to some particular questions he finds unconvincing, like the negative moral assessment of sexual acts that do not intend procreation. His argumentation is in accordance with the Anglican position expressed quasi officially in some statements<sup>70</sup>. Unsurprisingly

<sup>68</sup> Michael Banner, *Veritatis splendor*, p. 10. Banner refers to *Veritatis splendor* no. 88.

<sup>69</sup> Nigel Biggar, *Veritatis splendor*, „Studies in Christian Ethics” 7(1994), no. 2, p. 11. Nigel Biggar (b. 1955) has been one of the most influential Anglican moral theologians. He took up Oxford's Regius Chair of Moral Theology in 2007, before he taught moral theology first in Leeds, then at Trinity College Dublin.

<sup>70</sup> See for example ARCIC II, *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church*, no. 78-82.

for a Protestant theologian, he does not conceal his disapproval of the encyclical's treatment of the role of moral theologians in which "criticism of current doctrine would appear to have no place among the moralist's proper functions"<sup>71</sup>.

A comment or opinion, in this case on *Veritatis splendor*, originates from its author's fundamental assumptions and key values, which is clearly observable in a very critical estimation of the papal document by Harry M. Kuitert<sup>72</sup>. Strangely, for him John Paul II's basic failure lies in his "total remoteness from real life, in anthropology as well as morals". He states that ethics has in fact nothing to do with revelation nor nature but solely with "experience". Consequently, that experience enables to acknowledge not only the plurality of Western culture but also of non-Western world. Finally it is "up to us to find out [...] the ways in which we serve humanity and the ways in which we do not"<sup>73</sup>. Thus Kuitert's vision of morality is entirely individualistic, subjective, and hence relative. It even seems to be deprived of its Christian character.

It is a basic theological message that man's final end is to shape all his life. God, being that ultimate end for all, is also "alone all-good, alone makes good". Hence, when man turns from his final end, it can be publicly visible through his behaviour, "certain negative acts – mortal sins" which reject good and choose evil. Thereby John Milbank shows how the Pope "locates the ethical primarily in the human act"<sup>74</sup>. He believes that it is an authentic teaching when John Paul defends universal negative precepts and helps to recover "a genuine Thomist perspective on natural law" and to reject the transcendentalist "modern

<sup>71</sup> Nigel Biggar, *Veritatis splendor*, p. 13.

<sup>72</sup> See Harry M. Kuitert, *Veritatis splendor*, „Studies in Christian Ethics” 7(1994), no. 2, p. 19-21. Kuitert (b. 1924), has been a noted Dutch Reformed theologian who taught for many years at the Free University in Amsterdam. Recently regarded by some as an agnostic and no longer a Christian theologian.

<sup>73</sup> Harry M. Kuitert, *Veritatis splendor*, p. 20-21. He even states that for the Pope „human beings are [...] equated with men, women do not come into the picture”. Cf. *ibidem*.

<sup>74</sup> John Milbank, *Magisterial... and Shoddy?*, „Studies in Christian Ethics” 7(1994), no. 2, p. 29. John Milbank (b. 1952) is an acknowledged Anglican theologian and philosopher, the founder and leader of the movement Radical Orthodoxy, teaching at the University of Nottingham.

perversions of this tradition”<sup>75</sup>. Milbank is at the same time unwilling to accept for example those parts of the encyclical which tend to supplement reason with the authority of the Church while he admits that “clearly the encyclical does not intend this: the magisterium is a prod to conscience, external law an aid to self-governing freedom”<sup>76</sup>. Even if some fragments of the text and modes of argumentation that offer an account of man’s sexual sphere and treat the human body “in primarily functional terms” and thus are too phenomenological for Milbank, the Anglican theologian acknowledges the positive and desired role for the magisterium to “speak profound truth in a genuinely public voice”<sup>77</sup>.

In Ronald Preston’s commentary on *Veritatis splendor*, his initial perception of John Paul II’s encyclical is that it is an “attempt to recover from the disaster of *Humanae vitae*” and in fact has a lot to do with an “internal power struggle involving the position of the Curia and [...] the negative attitude of the official Roman Catholic authority to other churches”<sup>78</sup>. It is several times that the idea of the infallible magisterium is challenged in this comment. Preston undermines the encyclical’s teaching on intrinsically evil acts as well as on issues like fundamental option or proportionalism. As a matter of fact all these he sees as the Pope’s secondary targets while the central one is to discipline moral theologians. He hopes that those Roman Catholic theologians who disagree with the Pope will not be silenced because “dissentients are far too numerous to be silenced”<sup>79</sup>.

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<sup>75</sup> John Milbank, *Magisterial... and Shoddy?*, p. 30.

<sup>76</sup> John Milbank, *Magisterial... and Shoddy?*, p. 31. „Yet it [the magisterium] is incredible [...] in its overstated claims to exclusive power to interpret, to inevitable rightness, to absolute consistency and consequent requirement of obedience”. Ibidem, p. 34.

<sup>77</sup> „[...] the papacy needs a looser and more mystical (more eucharistic) account of the Spirit’s guarantee of continuing truth in the body of the Church [...] in order to guide the faithful”. John Milbank, *Magisterial... and Shoddy?*, p. 34.

<sup>78</sup> Ronald Preston, *Veritatis splendor: A Comment*, „Studies in Christian Ethics” 7(1994), no. 2, p. 38. Ronald Preston (d. 2001) was an influential Anglican social theologian who taught for several decades at the University of Manchester.

<sup>79</sup> Ronald Preston, *Veritatis splendor: A Comment*, p. 42. „[...] Moral theologians are required to give it [the magisterium] loyal assent, both internal and external (110). This is the core position of the Encyclical”. Ibidem, p. 41.

Another example of a brief and in a sense allergic reaction to John Paul II's encyclical is *Some Anglican Comments on Veritatis splendor* by Helen Oppenheimer<sup>80</sup>. Her general disapproval of the Pope's teaching makes her refer to the encyclical as "a new piece of obscurantism" whose English translation "hurts" and is "tactless" because it has learnt nothing from feminism. She points to Christian freedom as a main theme of the document but "because freedom given its head is dangerous" the Pope equates the freedom of love with the teaching of the Magisterium<sup>81</sup>. Oppenheimer correlates – in a bizarre way – John Paul II's teaching with that of St. Paul because it is "not quite trusting its own insights"<sup>82</sup>.

Not few Protestant reactions to John Paul II's moral teaching as found in *Veritatis splendor* have not been supplemented by similar Orthodox comments. Alexandre M. Stavropoulos's brief remarks cannot be taken as a real discussion with the Pope's teaching<sup>83</sup>. His text does show, however, that from the Orthodox perspective rational argumentation should be followed by a "pastoral approach" to moral issues. The Greek theologian seems to welcome *Veritatis splendor* as a "presentation of basic Christian truths [...] addressed to an age, which has largely abandoned gospel ideals", all the more so because it offers an "opportunity for detailed study of biblical texts and of the opinions quoted from the great fathers of the church"<sup>84</sup>. Stavropoulos does not conceal his expectations that the exhortations of this range, being

<sup>80</sup> See „Studies in Christian Ethics” 7(1994), no. 2, p. 35-37. Helen Oppenheimer (b. 1926) is an Anglican theologian and ethicist, well-known and active in the British public and Church life.

<sup>81</sup> „This Encyclical is not cold, nor legalistic; but, hardly surprisingly, paternalist”. Helen Oppenheimer, *Some Anglican Comments on Veritatis splendor*, p. 36.

<sup>82</sup> „The Encyclical is Pauline in its understanding of what Christian morality is about. It is also Pauline in not quite trusting its own insights. St. Paul saw that in Christ ‘there is neither male nor female’ (Gal 3:28) but could not treat women fully as equals”. Helen Oppenheimer, *Some Anglican Comments on Veritatis splendor*, p. 36.

<sup>83</sup> Alexandre M. Stavropoulos, *Veritatis splendor: An Orthodox Reaction*, „The Ecumenical Review” 48(1996), no. 2, p. 155-157. Alexandre Stavropoulos (b. 1937) has been for many years professor of pastoral studies and theology at the University of Athens.

<sup>84</sup> Alexandre M. Stavropoulos, *Veritatis splendor: An Orthodox Reaction*, p. 156-157.

a “message for the whole world”, should be in some way preliminarily consulted with the representatives of other Christian traditions before they are published in order to avoid an impression of disagreements among Christians. In this sense he seems to believe the encyclical contains an implicit criticism of non-Catholic positions with regard to the discussed problems. Nevertheless, his own reading of *Veritatis splendor* leads him to offer – “in a spirit of truth and love (Eph 4:15)” – a brief outline of an Orthodox perspective of Christian moral life that would be, characteristically, rooted in the Patristic literature<sup>85</sup>. Again, one should not dismiss this inspirational effect of John Paul II’s (not only) moral teaching.

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As might have been expected, John Paul II’s encyclical *Veritatis splendor* was met with a diverse reception on the part of non-Catholic Christians. For most theologians and ethicists the Pope’s letter can be described as a “divided document”. While some underline its prophetic and even universal message in its vision of Christian moral life, others look at it critically pointing out to its flawed or at least inaccurate understanding of the considered issues. Both the opening and the final parts of the encyclical have often been applauded in many ways as rightly placing Christian morality in its own theological, especially Christological context. O’Donovan goes as far as to declare that *Veritatis splendor* is a serious attempt of a “systematic unfolding of a coherent account of Christian ethics” and hence ought to be read as putting forward three dimensions of Christian ethics – teleological, deontological and eschatological<sup>86</sup>. However, the central part of the encyclical,

<sup>85</sup> „These last remarks are an attempt to outline an Orthodox approach to moral issues and a way of thinking that reflects the thoughts of the fathers on morality. [...] to offer some comments from an Orthodox point of view on a first reading of *Veritatis splendor*, which sheds light, the light of Christ, on some decisive points concerning family and sexual morality. My concern has been to read and react to it in a spirit of truth and love (Eph 4:15)”. Alexandre M. Stavropoulos, *Veritatis splendor: An Orthodox Reaction*, p. 157.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Linda Woodhead, *Veritatis splendor: Some Editorial Reflections*, „Studies in Christian Ethics” 7(1994), no. 2, p. 5. Linda Woodhead (b. 1964) is an active

including the Pope's critique of some aspects and moral theories of modernity, has been judged differently. Nevertheless and surprisingly enough, there seems to be more non-Catholic commentators who share the Pope's concern about the condition of contemporary Christian ethics than among Catholic moral theologians, not referred to in this paper, who have often expressed their very critical reaction and even disapproval of the positions presented in *Veritatis splendor*. For many non-Catholic authors (following not few Catholic ones in fact) John Paul II's emphasis on the ecclesial character of moral theology and moral theologians' obligation to work with Magisterium Ecclesiae<sup>87</sup> is seen as something (almost) authoritarian and so unacceptable. Whatever the comments, it is promising that Christian theologians and ethicists of diverse traditions are ready to approach seriously the particularly significant document on the Church's moral doctrine by John Paul II and thus contribute to a better understanding of Christian moral life considered in a changing context of modern culture.

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member of the Church of England, a professor of theology and sociology of religion at Lancaster University.

<sup>87</sup> „Moral theologians, who have accepted the charge of teaching the Church's doctrine, thus have a grave duty to train the faithful to make this moral discernment, to be committed to the true good and to have confident recourse to God's grace [...]. Opposition to the teaching of the Church's Pastors cannot be seen as a legitimate expression either of Christian freedom or of the diversity of the Spirit's gifts". John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 113.



## Natural Law in the 20th c. Renewal of Anglican Moral Theology

From its beginnings the Christian theological tradition has borne witness to the significance of natural law in moral life. A serious attempt to impair the concept of natural law came with the Reformation when it became considered to be in opposition to the Reformers' interpretation of the original sin as well to their conviction of the *sola Scriptura*. The Anglican moral tradition in its mainstream distanced itself from those extreme positions and adopted the classical Catholic doctrine of natural law. It was reaffirmed by the moral theologians in the 20<sup>th</sup> c. when they undertook to revive moral theology in the Church of England.

### 1. Major premises of the renewal of moral theology<sup>1</sup>

After over three centuries of its history the 20<sup>th</sup> c. saw a serious attempt to renew Anglican moral theology. One of the basic requirements for the renewal was the restoration of its theological character.

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<sup>1</sup> For a more comprehensive exposition of the main assumptions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century renewal of Anglican moral theology see Sławomir Nowosad's *Odnowa anglikańskiej teologii moralnej w XX wieku* (Lublin: RW KUL 2001).

Kenneth Escott Kirk (d. 1954), who initiated the renewal, as well as other moral theologians such as Robert Cecil Mortimer (d. 1976), Lindsay Dewar (d. 1976) and Herbert M. Waddams (d. 1972) realized that Christian morality is religious in essence because it is based on God and His revelation. When morality is integrated with religion it secures and inspires moral progress. The moral life of the Christian ought to be bound up with his faith and to draw its authority from God himself as the foundation of ethics. Since God has revealed himself in His only Son, the full understanding of Christian ethics has to be Christocentric. The New Testament teaching shows that both faith and the moral life are to be a personal relation with God in Jesus Christ. Christian morality can be described here in terms of communion and dialogue with the living Saviour. This also opens up the way to the fully theological concept of man. As a being created in the image of God, man is capable to respond to the call of the Creator and enter into dialogue with Him. In this sense the Christian's moral life is more than right conduct or the keeping of rules.

The revival of moral theology needed a new understanding of man, which was to come above all from psychological sciences, the conclusions of which make it possible to have a deeper grasp of the subjective aspect of the moral life, especially in the area of human act and conscience. They also enable pastoral care and spiritual direction to be more effective and comprehensive. Anglican moral theologians realized however that one has to preserve a critical approach to scientific evidence. The experimental methods can help us establish factual evidence but one cannot hope to draw moral norms from them. What is especially unacceptable are the various forms of the extreme psychological or sociological determinism which contradict human freedom and responsibility. Moral theology also needed to be more sensitive to the social dimension of the moral life and to relate faith and its demands both as an imperative and as a judgment to politics and economics. Among those who wrote about it were Lindsay Dewar, Cyril E. Hudson (d. 1957), Maurice B. Reckitt (d. 1980) and Vigo Auguste Demant (d. 1983). Christian theology had to indicate the anthropological and theological foundations of interpersonal relations and man's activity in this world. It is a primary task of the Church to restore the original order of social life by proclaiming the Good News

and administering the sacraments. Moral theology in fact failed to cover all these problems, which found their place rather in Christian sociology.

Kirk and his followers rooted their theology in the Hooker and Caroline tradition, and so in Thomistic theology. They affirmed both the natural law and the word of God as the basis of Christian moral theology. Their conviction was that the idea of law was not inconsistent with morality as some people thought. So there is no objection to a moral theology based on law. Moral law should be seen as the expression of God's *agape* towards man. Natural law here is what St. Paul calls 'law written in men's hearts'. Despite man's sinfulness its precepts remain in his heart and are open to natural reason and conscience but only when aided by Revelation it can lead men to know the fullness of the natural moral order.

To preserve its unique Christian character moral theology has to root its reflection in the Bible, most of all in the New Testament and particularly in Jesus' teaching. The ethics of Jesus, while being in continuity with the Old Testament Hebrew ethics, is at the same time radically new. It deeply combines reason and Revelation and welds ethics and religion as never before. It is positive and refers to the heart rather than being an ethic of external acts. It is Christocentric and eschatological because Christ himself is its centre and it leads to eternal life. *Agape* comes to be the principle of the whole of the Christian's moral life. God himself is *agape* and so all those who are born of Him in Christ reflect the inner life of God through *agape* in their lives. This *agape* sums up the character of Christ and in consequence is the criterion of Christian conduct. Of all the biblical ideas that of *imitatio Christi* is regarded as the one, which is embedded in the very heart of New Testament ethics. It reveals the theological virtues in the new context of the person and life of Jesus Christ as He is the supreme example of faith, hope and love. *Imitatio Christi* also brings into relief the personalistic aspect of the Christian ethics, and so the Christian life is understood as a life of following Christ and not of following rules.

Anglican moral theologians were well aware that moral theology, if it was to be true to the New Testament, had to be a moral theology of the Holy Spirit. Just as the Christian moral life is a life

in the Spirit, so moral theology must be deeply pneumatological in character. Jesus promised to send His Spirit on His followers so that the Spirit as Paraklete would *take of the things of Christ and show them unto men*. Thus the Christian ethics becomes an ethic of grace. One of its characteristic features is that it supplies not only moral standards but also grace as the power to reach them. Descending on the community of Christ's disciples the Holy Spirit transformed them into the Church – the *koinonia* or the fellowship of the Spirit. Thus the pneumatological dimension of Christian morality points to its ecclesial character. The Holy Spirit's power and guidance come to the many members of the one Body and only to individuals as parts of that Body. Anglican moral theology does not share the predominantly individualistic interpretation of the Christian life that was characteristic to the reformers. The Church is seen here as a moral community and it is only in the fellowship of the Church that the Christian life both in its moral and spiritual aspect can be fully lived. The Church then holds a high position of authority in the matter of morals, its task is not just to define what is the Christian faith but also to define what is the Christian conduct which follows from the faith. All Christians are morally bound to pay special attention to it. Still, however authoritative the Church's teaching may be, the last word lies with conscience. The Anglican approach avoids laying down detailed prescriptions. The Church however is not merely to proclaim the Gospel but to be *the Gospel in action*. Through worship, sacraments and pastoral work the Church is to restore man to his true status as God's child destined to enjoy full fellowship with Him in all spheres of life.

Finally, Anglican tradition emphasizes the indispensable relationship between the moral and spiritual aspects of life, which was stressed as early as by the Caroline Divines. The total Christian moral life cannot be seen merely on the natural level but in full cooperation with grace. The so-called "interior life" of prayer and devotion is the necessary foundation of any truly Christian moral life and of all genuine witness to Christ. Thus the personal dimension of moral life is emphasized as Christian growth is directed not to some idea but to the living person of the Lord. The sacraments here express their meaning and social character as instruments which put at man's disposal the spiritual power to achieve real union with God and with one another

in a fellowship of love. In this context Anglican theology, particularly Kirk's theology, points to *visio Dei* as the goal of all moral life. The example of numerous Christian saints bears witness to the fact that a foretaste of *visio Dei* is possible even in this life; it depends upon moral rectitude and leads to an increase in personal holiness. This concept points again to Christ as it is in Christ that the Church saw God and can see Him now. In consequence *visio Dei* is both corporate and ecclesial in its character.

It is in worship that man experiences God in the deepest and most personal way. It is not so much the practices of worship that matter but rather the spirit of worship, which is of primary importance. Christian worship finds its fulfilment when men through Christ achieve communion with God and get involved in His redemptive activity in the world. Anglican moral theology lays stress on the moral dimension of worship. Worship relates faith and life. The participant is changed and renewed in worship and so strengthened in his moral life. It is through his authentically Christian conduct that man worships God. Christian worship, being deeply Christocentric, focuses the whole moral life on Christ. It also endows life with the ecclesial character as it is the Church – the Worshipping Body of Christ – that gives perfect worship to the Father.

## 2. Natural law in Christian ethics

Anglican moral theological tradition unequivocally defends the place and role of law in Christian morality. In this it remains in harmony with the Thomist tradition, which was introduced and grounded by the Caroline divines of the 17<sup>th</sup> c. It was first Richard Hooker (d. 1600) and then Robert Sanderson (d. 1663) and Jeremy Taylor (d. 1667) who were responsible for developing an ever mature reflection on natural law in the doctrine of the Church of England. Within the process of the renewal of Anglican moral theology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century this conviction has been reaffirmed and deepened.

### a. Law in morality

For Kenneth E. Kirk the issue of law seemed obvious and did not need any special reflection and demonstration and so he did not write much about it. While stressing the necessity of a renewal of Anglican ethics, Kirk was much under the influence of neothomistic manuals. It can easily be observed in his writings on conscience, which is often faced by a conflict between law and freedom. Following Aquinas Kirk clearly admits the existence of moral principles as being an expression of God's will for people to direct their conduct. Then "morality assumes the existence of immutable principles of right and wrong which may be called the perfect law of God"<sup>2</sup>. The whole of moral law has been traditionally divided into two classes – divine law and human law. Natural law and revealed law are two branches of the divine law. While the natural law can be known by reason, the revealed law is accessible through faith. These are two ways of discovering the will of God who leads men to recognition of good and bad as the source of men's moral order<sup>3</sup>.

A serious attack on the sense and place of law in morality came with an idea of the so-called situation ethics or new morality. It was an emanation of ethical existentialism and its main proponents were the Episcopal priest Joseph Fletcher (d. 1979) in USA and the Anglican bishop John A. T. Robinson (d. 1983) in England<sup>4</sup>. This new concept of

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth Escott Kirk, *Conscience and Its Problems: An Introduction to Casuistry*, London: Longmans, Green and Co. 1927, p. 72.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Kenneth Escott Kirk, *Conscience and Its Problems: An Introduction to Casuistry*, p. 71-75. In his *The Threshold of Ethics* (London: Skeffington and Son 1933) Kirk seems to point to some kind of a mutual opposition between law and conscience, which at the same time does not mean that law and conscience have nothing to do with each other. Cf. p. 21-26.

<sup>4</sup> See particularly Joseph Fletcher's publications: *The New Look in Christian Ethics*, "Harvard University Bulletin" 1959, no. 7, p. 7-22; *Situation Ethics: The New Morality*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press 1966 [London: SCM 1966]; *Moral Responsibility: Situation Ethics at Work*, London: SCM 1967; Joseph Fletcher, Thomas Wassmer, *Hello Lovers! An Introduction to Situation Ethics*, Washington: Corpus Books 1970. Out of many John A. T. Robinson's books worth reading are: *Honest to God*, London: SCM 1963; *Honest to God and the Debate*, London: SCM 1963; *Christian Morals Today*, London: SCM 1964; *Christian Freedom in a Permissive Society*, London: SCM 1970. Worth reading

ethics, sometimes also known as “contextual ethics”, radically rejected law and the whole of ethics limited to a single fundamental principle of love. It is up to an agent to discern what should be done in given circumstances in order to express love. Such an ethic – “an ethic of love” – rejected authority in morals making it individualistic and subjective. There is no room for natural law here nor for any revealed moral law<sup>5</sup>.

Lindsay Dewar, in his biblically grounded ethics, refers to Christ’s teaching when defending the place and meaning of law in Christian morality and so in moral theology. According to him three main objections have been raised against the conception of law (and then of natural law) as alien to the Christian ethic<sup>6</sup>. The first objection is directed to the idea of rules as such as they are considered as inconsistent with the whole idea of Christian morality. In this sense it is being stressed that holiness cannot be achieved by means of a system of rules<sup>7</sup>. Here, however, Dewar goes back to Richard Hooker’s *Ecclesiastical Polity* for a true understanding of law. Christians believe that all moral laws disclose to man the mind of God. And so there is no real contradiction between morality and law assuming the latter is properly understood. Moral law is seen as an insight into the mind and love of God to men who leads all to goodness and perfection. In the New Testament it is mainly St. John who teaches such an understanding of love. Consequently, there is no real inconsistency between

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are also two Douglas A. Rhymes’s books: *No New Morality: Christian Personal Values and Sexual Morality*, London: Constable 1964 and *Prayer in the Secular City*, London: Lutterworth Press 1967.

<sup>5</sup> It is particularly Lindsay Dewar who in his analyses rejects propositions of the “new morality” and demonstrates how “the present-day advocates of an all-love ethic” while appealing to St. Augustine misrepresent his quote of “dilige et quod vis fac”. They reject authority in morals in all its forms saying there are no binding rules or laws. His point goes to the Christian concept of man where these “new moralists fail to recognize [...] that something has gone radically wrong with mankind, in consequence of which man is a disappointing being”. Cf. Lindsay Dewar, *Moral Theology in the Modern World*, London: Mowbray 1964, p. 50-66; Lindsay Dewar, *An Outline of Anglican Moral Theology*, London: Mowbray 1968, p. 202-214.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Lindsay Dewar, *Moral Theology in the Modern World*, p. 40-49.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Helen Oppenheimer, *Law and Love: A Study in Practical Ethics*, London: Faith Press 1962, p. 19.



considering moral principles as proceeding from the will of God and reflecting His mind and at the same time being considered as the moral law of man's nature. Since man by means of his reason participates in the mind of God.

In the second objection it is argued that even if no morality, including the Christian one, can dispense with basic moral principles, the principles of natural law are so vague that practically they turn out useless and of little value. It is said then that the whole Christian morality should be based on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Here, however, according to Dewar, it would be a serious mistake to assume a contradiction between Jesus' teaching on the Mount and natural law morality. The Christian moral teaching should always be seen in the context of the whole teaching of the Gospel. The Sermon on the Mount is of primary importance to sound Christian moral theology showing the very essence of Jesus' and other New Testament authors' moral (and not only) teaching that does not reject natural law. It is obvious, however, that it is needed to distinguish law from legalism while the opponents of natural law seem to confuse the two as well as moral principles with legislation.

The last objection is based on a conviction that Jesus himself never legislated. Here again one can easily notice a confusion between law and legalism or moral principles and (human) legislation. Our Lord did not legislate as people do but he did lay down the law. It is clear that at the Last Supper he instituted a new covenant, which meant instituting a new law. The difficulty is not in the fact of law or in regarding morality in terms of law or in seeking to obey moral rules. Christ insists that it is rather in the thinking that for fulfilling the law man can gain credit. Man cannot gain credit for anything he does because man's duty is what he owes to God: "We are useless servants: we have done no more than our duty" (Lk 17:10). So finally there is no objection either to thinking of morality in terms of law or to a moral theology based on law. Two provisos are not to be omitted according to Dewar. One is to recognize law as a glimpse into the mind of God and this cannot be known by individuals but only by the Church, which it has been revealed to and which is constantly inspired by the Holy Spirit. The second proviso is the truth that men can never fulfil the law except by love and love means that men never can fulfil the

law – since men's love is always a response to God's infinite love. "This love was revealed by our Lord and is conveyed to the faithful in Christ Jesus by the Holy Spirit who is given to them (Rom 5:5)"<sup>8</sup>.

Criticism of law can be found in other arguments as well. Some say that while Christian morality is positive, law is negative. While morality is internal, law operates externally. Finally, Christianity is based on principles and not on laws, which assumes the two are at variance with each other. All these arguments are either one-sided or based on misconception of the indicated notions. Christian moral law can be expressed in negative terms though one has to admit that the law as such is not negative as a whole and cannot express its very essence in negative terms. Jesus' teaching contains both positive and negative principles though its heart is of course a positive calling to love God and one's neighbour. Christ's interpretation of the "external" commandments aimed at their "internalization". Again, the suggested contradiction between principles and laws is not what our Lord meant when He taught about a law that only the Holy Spirit can help understand and fulfil. As it is eventually the Spirit that can make Jesus' disciples accept and know that Jesus himself is its final end and fulfilment<sup>9</sup>.

In one of his Bampton Lectures Bishop Kirk refers to St. Paul's criticism of law in his Letter to the Romans. The law can make man conscious of his sin but cannot help him conquer it and get rid of it. It is stressed by Paul that the law is powerless to alter the dispositions of man's heart. Characteristically to him Kirk points out to the idea of the vision of God that will help to overcome the difficulty with the law. Setting grace over against the law, Paul turns to the vision of God which can transform the soul and bestow on it eternal life and real likeness to the Father. Kirk's emphasis here is on man's receptive attitude – to wait for God's transforming and renewing grace. Only then as he receives it will law be of real use to him and will lay open him to the gift of new life. The fundamental thing then is the bond to be set up between God and the soul, the Spirit or the grace that will

<sup>8</sup> Lindsay Dewar, *Moral Theology in the Modern World*, p. 47. Cf. Lindsay Dewar, *A Short Introduction to Moral Theology*, London: Mowbray 1956, p. 9-22.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Lindsay Dewar, *A Short Introduction to Moral Theology*, p. 12-18.

come to the believer. What is distinctive for the Christian life here is a new relationship between man and God: "Once the relationship has been established, the field is open for human effort and activity; and the lines along which effort can best be exercised can now fitly be laid down in terms of law"<sup>10</sup>. So what is of primary importance is that the law be subordinated to the personal relationship with the Saviour.

Given the proper interpretation moral theology can and should be based on the concept of law. It is for practical reasons that man needs law and its principles that will guide him in his daily life. If the whole moral guidance were limited to general rules, a danger of vague and divergent interpretations would easily occur. Moral instructions of the Gospels as well as of other New Testament texts are clear about it. Practical requirements of moral conduct also prove it. It is right to say that the perfection and holiness are the goal of the Christian life but that does not exclude setting a minimum standard before the Christian man and woman. One has to remember, however, that these minima are not maxima (as in civil laws). Though some argue that to follow the minimum standards would be less than Christian, many examples of such rules are to be found in the life of the early Church. St. Peter and other Apostles knew and taught that Jesus' disciples must always aim at perfection but that must not be interpreted strictly as otherwise it would fall into the trap of rigorism. And rigorism is neither evangelical nor workable. An important aspect of the truth of man must not be overlooked here as man, though called to perfection, is a sinful and frail creature that cannot do without rules and laws to guide him. Thus one can admit "the Christian moral standard is involved in a paradox. On the one hand, the standard we seek is nothing less than perfection for which God has made us [...]. On the other hand, in practice we are most likely to achieve it by not aiming directly at it, and following a humbler path"<sup>11</sup>. Anglican moralists seem to show a sound realism here, which is in accordance with the message of the Christian revelation.

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<sup>10</sup> Kenneth Escott Kirk, *The Vision of God: The Christian Doctrine of the summum bonum*, London: Longmans, Green and Co 1931, p. 135.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Lindsay Dewar, *Moral Theology in the Modern World*, p. 60-61; Mark Pontifex [review], Lindsay Dewar, *Moral Theology in the Modern World*, "The Downside Review" 82(1964), p. 354-355.

It is the same spirit of a practical necessity of rules and laws that can be found in an early work by Kirk. Using still a characteristic language of that time in *Some Principles of Moral Theology* Kirk summarises the Christian attitude towards rules and law by laying stress on their indispensability “during the formative period of the soul’s development”. Even if the soul may reach spiritual maturity and grow in communion with Christ, and some rules may be discarded little by little but not in a sense that the Christian law may be get rid of completely. Law “will always be necessary to that life of liberty which is the Christian heritage”<sup>12</sup>.

When one turns to the central message of the New Testament one can see that the Christian moral law is to be understood as the law of love. *Agape* is at the heart of the Christian faith and it is the primary essence of the moral order God has inscribed in his creation. Love, being the substance of the Christian morality, does not exclude other norms and rules. Herbert Waddams opposes to such interpretation of the Christian moral teaching and defends its absolute moral norms. Since love itself is absolute, it is expressed in absolute standards, which form the content of moral law. As he puts it, “the moral law is the law of love as it is shown in God’s ordering of the world [...]. The moral law is only understood when it is itself seen to be the very expression of God’s *agape* in his creative and redeeming work”<sup>13</sup>. So love nor rejects law nor opposes it but rather needs it for its full expression and realization in the life of the Christians.

The real meaning of law reveals itself when it is put in the context of love. Since love knows no end or as Aristotle put it, it goes to infinity, following the rules of law in the spirit of love will prevent man from “the keeping to the rules”. Love, being a universal calling, makes everyone advance towards perfection. Following Kirk’s reasoning, Dewar realistically puts emphasis on a gradual advancement on the path to perfection as otherwise would be turning to a dangerous rigorism. Realism demands that we understand that Jesus’ followers, as all man and women, are called to pursue the ideal of perfection

<sup>12</sup> Kenneth Escott Kirk, *Some Principles of Moral Theology and Their Application*, London: Longmans, Green and Co. 1920, p. 22.

<sup>13</sup> Herbert Waddams, *A New Introduction to Moral Theology*, London: SCM 1964, p. 90.

through particular daily circumstances, which is another reason why people need the guidance of specific rules and duties of the moral law<sup>14</sup>. The Christian life then is a life of progress and it passes through its stages. Kirk would often emphasise that its end is contemplation or the vision of God, which can be regarded as its highest and final stage<sup>15</sup>.

Still another argument for the need of laws and rules comes from tradition understood as inherited religious and moral experience. People always begin and shape their lives under the authority of various human traditions. Christians believe that the whole truth of the moral order has been revealed by God in the course of the history of salvation, eventually and fully in God's only Son. Christ's words and deeds show how God's law and its demands are accomplished in the highest commandment of love both of God and of one's neighbour. This holy tradition, which is being guarded and taught by the Church, is – among others – embodied in moral laws and rules. It is characteristic to Anglicanism to be open to tradition as such and to the Christian tradition in particular. The tradition is one of the three major elements of the triple Anglican authority<sup>16</sup>.

Unwillingness, or even rejection of law is often based on a false identification of law and legalism. The latter is an obvious abuse of law but they are not the same thing at all. Examples can be found in the history of Christian ethics that it was too much bound up with the law and Christians would see their lives not as a living relationship with God but rather as following the rules, either positive or negative.

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<sup>14</sup> „The neglect of laws, duties and standards in the Christian life leads to moral and spiritual flabbiness. The Christian way is a pilgrimage, not a hitch-hike. It demands the discipline associated with an expedition, rather than the leisurely attitude of the traveller with a 'go as you please' holiday ticket". Henry Trevor Hughes, *Faith and Life: An Introduction to Christian Ethics*, Wallington: Religious Education Press 1962, p. 53. Cf. Lindsay Dewar, *Moral Theology in the Modern World*, p. 61-62.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Kenneth Escott Kirk, *The Vision of God: The Christian Doctrine of the summum bonum*, p. 243.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Henry Chadwick, *Tradition, Fathers and Councils*, in: *The Study of Anglicanism*, eds. Stephen Sykes, John Booty, London: SPCK/Fortress Press 1990, p. 91-105; Kenneth Escott Kirk, *Moral Theology*, in: *The Study of Theology*, ed. Kenneth Escott Kirk, London: Hodder and Stoughton 1939, p. 393-394.

A sound revival of moral theology needs a clear distinction between law legalism and not rejection of both. This distinction is essential in order to save the concept of law and its proper functioning in the moral life of the followers of the Lord. The Christian moral order, as seen in the Bible and in the tradition of the Church, is to be grounded in a stable authority of moral law as the traditional basis of Christian morals. Bishop Kirk is therefore critical about the practice of translating of St. Alphonsus Liguori's manuals for the use of Anglican clergy often regarded as legalistic<sup>17</sup>.

There is still another reason for a strong defence of law in contemporary moral theology, which seems to be increasingly under the influence of the present tendency to appeal to experimentation rather than to the authority (of law and moral order). This modern empirical approach to questions of Christian ethics and moral theology can be fatal and dangerous for the whole Christian moral message. When even some moralists are being influenced by the trend to settle questions of morality not by authority but rather by experiment and so to start a kind of a new Christian morality, this will undoubtedly threaten the whole traditional moral teaching of the Church. Christian moralists must pay more attention to empirical data but it would be a serious mistake to try to establish moral standards by empirical methods alone. The empirical methods have their own important but necessarily limited role and meaning for the Christian moral order as being revealed by God and taught by the Church<sup>18</sup>.

## **b. Natural law**

Moral law, enabling man to know the will of God, is internal in its character and as such is communicated to man in an internal way. It comes to him as twofold law – natural law and revealed divine law. Beside some early reservations Christianity from its beginning has adopted the concept of natural law that was previously worked out by the ancient Greek and Roman philosophy. The Anglican moral

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Lindsay Dewar, *Moral Theology in the Modern World*, p. VI; Kenneth Escott Kirk, *Some Principles of Moral Theology and Their Application*, p. X.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Lindsay Dewar, *An Outline of Anglican Moral Theology*, p. 11-12.

tradition, seen here in its Catholic dimension, has assimilated the traditional doctrine of natural law from its 16<sup>th</sup> c. “architect of Anglican theology” Richard Hooker, from Caroline Divines and from the leading moral theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> c., such as K. E. Kirk, L. Dewar, R. C. Mortimer and H. Waddams.

When going back to ancient philosophers and their understanding of natural law Dewar and Hudson recall Cicero’s canons of natural law: religion or the worship of gods; natural piety towards family and fatherland; natural gratitude; revenge; respect towards elders and betters; regard for the truth and keeping of promises<sup>19</sup>. However the Christian formulation of natural law, though not disregarding earlier remarks, turns to the Letter to the Romans, which can be called the *magna charta* of natural law for a Christian. In it St. Paul teaches: “So, when Gentiles, not having the Law, still through their own innate sense behave as the Law commands, then, even though they have no Law, they are the law for themselves. They can demonstrate the effect of the Law engraved on their hearts, to which their own conscience bears witness; since they are aware of various considerations, some of which accuse them, while others provide them with a defence” (2:14-15). Other New Testament texts should be mentioned here as well, like 1 Cor 11:14-15 or 1 P 2:12. This understanding of the natural moral order can be found as *implicite* present and presupposed in the teaching of Jesus himself. In many parables of the Lord these “are not allegories, but plain matter of fact stories about the way in which normal human beings behave all over the world. On this basis of such behaviour our Lord argues to the character of God who made these men and women – an *a fortiori* argument [...]. The constant implication in these stories is that there is in a common man a power of moral judgement and behaviour which is natural”<sup>20</sup>. In this sense it is fair to say that the New Testament contains the seeds of the full-blown doctrine of natural law as it later developed in the course of the evolution of the Christian teaching.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Lindsay Dewar, Cyril E. Hudson, *Christian Morals. A Study in First Principles*, London: Hodder and Stoughton 1954, p. 39.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Lindsay Dewar, *Moral Theology in the Modern World*, p. 4.



The recognition of the natural law, given by the Creator, is particularly possible in Jesus' words in answer to a question on marriage and divorce. What is seen here is the Lord's clear return to the original form of God's creation of man and woman. Waddams lays stress on the conviction that "it is only when man lives in accord with God's creative work that he can fulfil God's will". It is deeply in the spirit of the general teaching of the Lord noticeable especially in the Sermon on the Mount. Man should never depart from the mind of God when He made mankind and which can be discerned from his creation. According to Waddams Jesus' principal emphasis here is – as in the Sermon on the Mount – on the proper attitude that Christians should adopt in the approach to natural law and the problems of their daily lives. The Lord "puts his finger on the tension which has to be faced, lived with and creatively used by man. On the one hand we see the need for Christians and the Church to witness to the true principles of morality, and on the other hand, springing from Christian love, to minister pastorally to the people whom Jesus came to save"<sup>21</sup>. It is in a similar way that Dewar interprets Jesus' teaching on the indissolubility of marriage as being the law of man as man because it is part of the natural law<sup>22</sup>. Thus the natural law is the basis of moral order according to which all men and women are to shape their lives in all their aspects.

As is well known, the author of the fullest and most elaborated version of the doctrine of natural law was St. Thomas Aquinas. Law, based on reason, means the rule and measure of human actions and so it is essentially rational. It is the reason that directs man towards an end. All law is divided into four kinds: eternal law, natural law, divine law and human law. Eternal law, which exists in the mind of God Creator and Ruler of all, orders all things and therefore all things are subject to the divine Providence. This assumes that all things participate in the eternal law but rational creatures are subject to the divine Providence in a special and higher way since they can control their own actions. Their participation in the eternal law is called natural law.

<sup>21</sup> Herbert Waddams, *A New Introduction to Moral Theology*, p. 54.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Lindsay Dewar, *An Outline of New Testament Ethics*, London: Hodder and Stoughton 1949, p. 95-97.

It is the light of natural reason that enables man to discern good from evil. Thus natural law can be described as the impression of the divine light in man that operates by virtue of his moral and rational qualities. Therefore St Paul called natural law “the law written in men’s hearts”<sup>23</sup>.

Anglican moral theology, essentially formed in the 16<sup>th</sup> c. by Caroline Divines, adopted Aquinas’ doctrine of natural law. That meant distancing itself from the teaching of the Reformers who proclaimed a total corruption of man’s nature by the original sin. The Anglican conviction did not accept this pessimism and claimed the image of God in man has not been obliterated by man’s sin. God’s law remained written in man’s heart and man has natural powers of reasoning and conscience and so is able to pursue right goals and to make right judgements. Human nature, despite the ravages of sin, has remained essentially good. Henry McAdoo, in his studies in Caroline theology, stresses that though “man is wounded in the things of nature and despoiled of the things of grace: he is very far gone from original righteousness, but he is not an outlaw. The Anglican divines are in accord with Aquinas [...]. Despite sin, man still stands within the scheme of the Divine Order”<sup>24</sup>. It was mainly Jeremy Taylor and Robert Sanderson who developed this teaching in Caroline moral theology. Before them Richard Hooker in his *Ecclesiastical Polity* wrote: “The Law of Nature, meaning thereby the law which the human Nature knoweth itself in reason universally bound unto, which also for that cause may be termed most fitly the Law of Reason; this Law, I say, comprehendeth all those things which men by the light of this natural understanding

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<sup>23</sup> „[...] man’s endowment with reason and conscience was held to give him a true insight into the mind and purpose of God. According to St Thomas Aquinas, the Law of Nature consists in man’s ‘participation,’ by virtue of his moral and rational qualities, in the Eternal Law, which is the character of God Himself”. Cyril E. Hudson, *Nations as Neighbours: An Essay in Christian Politics*, London: Victor Gollancz 1943, p. 30. Cf. Lindsay Dewar, Cyril E. Hudson, *Christian Morals*, p. 38-39; Kenneth Escott Kirk, *Ignorance, Faith and Conformity: Studies in Moral Theology*, London: Longmans, Green and Co. 1925, p. 2-3.

<sup>24</sup> Henry R. McAdoo, *The Structure of Caroline Moral Theology*, London: Longmans, Green and Co 1949, p. 17.

evidently know, or at leastwise may know, to be befitting or unfitting, virtuous or vicious, good or evil for them to do”<sup>25</sup>.

By appealing to natural law Anglican moral theology protects the objective character of the moral order. The Christians cannot overlook such trends in contemporary ethics as utilitarianism and relativism, which more and more effectively modify modern mentality in ethical thinking. The Church must then hold to the objective distinction between right and wrong that eventually springs up from the will of God. This fundamental conviction of the objectivity of the moral law appeals to the universal innate consent that what is good and what is evil is the same for all men at all times, being determined by the intrinsic nature of man. This code of things to do and not to do, a pattern of general behaviour which “derives necessarily from nature itself, from the simple fact that man is man” – it is what is called natural law<sup>26</sup>. When this natural moral order is recognized and accepted, God’s will for man is accepted and embodied by man regardless his religious affiliation. What is important is that in the idea of natural law Christianity has found a special instrument to defend autonomy and freedom of the individual conscience. History proves that many authorities can threaten individuals in their moral choices and decisions. Natural law, being the basis of any law, guards individual conscience in its freedom and autonomy which it has received from the Creator himself against the tyranny of any earthly authority<sup>27</sup>.

Among the principles of natural law there may be discerned first the most general principles that are immediately and intuitively known. Being self-evident no proof is needed for them as for example for the most fundamental of all: good must be done and evil avoided (*bonum est faciendum, malum vitandum*). Thus they prove universality and immutability of natural law in the most evident way. They may be called the content of synderesis. From them secondary rules or conclusions may be derived which include the commandments of the Decalogue.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Robert Cecil Mortimer, *The Elements of Moral Theology*, London: A. and C. Black 1947, p. 9-10.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Robert Cecil Mortimer, *Christian Ethics*, London: Hutchinson’s University Library 1950, p. 11.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Kenneth Escott Kirk, *Ignorance, Faith and Conformity: Studies in Moral Theology*, p. 43.

They are conclusions or applications of the general principles. Since discursive reasoning is involved here there may occur a possibility of error. Therefore Mortimer points here to constant need of restatement or reaffirmation. Best such reaffirmation may be the work of reason aided by revelation. Following St. Thomas Anglican theologians distinguish three main groups of the secondary principles. The first are those, which man shares with everything and they are called the instinct of self-preservation. The second group is shared with the lower animals and it is the tendency to reproduce one's kind and to care for the offspring. The third group of the secondary precepts is peculiar to man and it is the desire to know God and to live in peaceful communion with him and with other people. It's worth adding that traditional moral theology, to which Anglican thought appeals, has also often turned to the expanded consideration of the cardinal virtues given by Aquinas and other moralists to find out an exhaustive account of the content of natural law<sup>28</sup>.

The ontological basis of natural law is the human nature, which is common to all men and women. Created by God it leads to the recognition of the pattern of conduct that is binding upon all. Thus natural law reveals its two main features – it is both universal and immutable. The unambiguous character of natural law, which admits of no exceptions and dispensations, is particularly stressed by Mortimer who says that if “an action is truly perceived to be contrary to the natural law, it is wrong and always wrong. The natural law thus affords a valid norm and objective standard and criterion of moral conduct”<sup>29</sup>. Human nature is fully grasped especially when seen in its teleological context. Nature, as anything else that exists, is to achieve its end given to it by the Creator. It is by the use of reason that man can recognise that end. It is in the same way that man can recognize the basic content of natural law and then follow it. Since natural law

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Robert Cecil Mortimer, *The Elements of Moral Theology*, p. 10-12; Lindsay Dewar, *Moral Theology in the Modern World*, p. 6-7; Kenneth Escott Kirk, *Conscience and Its Problems: An Introduction to Casuistry*, p. 71-80; Lindsay Dewar, Cyril E. Hudson, *Christian Morals*, p. 62.

<sup>29</sup> Robert Cecil Mortimer, *The Elements of Moral Theology*, p. 12. Cf. Robert Cecil Mortimer, *Christian Ethics*, p. 11-12.

has human nature as its basis all people are capable of knowing it and not just to those who believe in the Creator.

The order that God created for the world and particularly for the mankind to be fulfilled has been disturbed by man's sin. Consequently man's power to reason has been weakened and disordered. Thus moral theology must not forget that man's mind has limitations in the process of recognition of the precepts of natural law. This however does not mean that the moral standards, which God wills for man, have been lowered. All this leads to the conclusion that man needs revelation to know the content of natural law in its fullness and without an error. It is since its 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> c. beginnings that Anglicanism has stressed the need for man's mind to be enlightened by the reference to the Bible as the revelation of God's will and the truth about man. Bishop Taylor, a leading Caroline moral theologian, emphasized the significance of reason in theology but at the same time warned that "Reason is such a box of quicksilver that it abides nowhere: it dwells in no settled mansion [...]. It wanders up and down like a floating island, or like that which we call the life blood"<sup>30</sup>. The Anglican tradition has often put stress on this impossibility of relying on the reason alone as it is by itself an insufficient test of what law of nature really is. That is why it must be supplemented by revelation. It was God who made it that way. So reason and revelation are not two separate and different roads that lead to the recognition of God's moral order. Rather they should be viewed as two aspects of one process of discovering that order – "in so far as it is man who apprehends, we may call the process reason; in so far as it is God who allows himself to be apprehended, we may call it revelation"<sup>31</sup>.

Christian theology claims that the most complete knowledge of God's truth is achieved only through revelation. This demands that natural law be verified and supplemented by the data of revelation, particularly of the New Testament as well as by the teaching of the

<sup>30</sup> Cited from: Stephen Platten, *Can Anglicanism Survive? Reflections on Lambeth 1998 and Anglicanism as a World Communion*, "Theology" 103(2000), p. 182.

<sup>31</sup> Kenneth Escott Kirk, *The Crisis of Christian Rationalism: Three Lectures*, London: Longmans, Green and Co. 1936, p. 10. Cf. Herbert Waddams, *A New Introduction to Moral Theology*, p. 55; Kenneth Escott Kirk, *Conscience and Its Problems: An Introduction to Casuistry*, p. 78.

Church, particularly of the undivided Church of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium. In Jeremy Taylor's opinion the law of nature is so closely tied with the revealed law that in fact "the revealed law of Christ is the law of nature most clearly understood". That means that all Christ's teaching concerning moral actions is finally the laws of nature<sup>32</sup>. An important Christological aspect of understanding of the natural law emerges here which leads to a conclusion that it is only through the knowledge of Christ that man's nature and consequently the moral order of his life can be fully comprehended. While referring to the Bible one must remember that the truth of man can in no way be limited to the Book of Genesis and its account of creation. It is only in the Incarnation of Christ that man can know his morality, which is rooted in natural law but is not confined to it. Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, has renewed the whole creation as its Redeemer. Thus natural law needs revealed law to let man discern the whole of his vocation. The Christian ethics must include natural law but in its interpretation has to put its emphasis rather on "the communion of life and love between a Christian and God in Jesus Christ"<sup>33</sup>.

When God is seen as the source of natural law and its full understanding, its adequate concept is ensured. Natural law cannot be accounted for by any social expediency. Norms of natural law are not derived from social custom. In this sense natural law transcends an earthly dimension of man's life and its fullness can be shown in the light of the faith in God. God as the transcendent law-giver opens a supernatural character of moral law, including natural law, that God inscribed in man's heart. Thus complete sense of moral life cannot be discovered and described apart from religion and eventually proves that the moral law is absolute in its character<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. Henry R. McAdoo, *The Structure of Caroline Moral Theology*, p. 39-40. However to this claim Dewar and Hudson raise an objection "for it blurs the distinction between the natural and the supernatural. The correct way of putting the matter is to say that the precepts of the natural law are *potentially* the precepts of the Gospel. But 'we see not yet all things put under Him'". *Christian Morals*, p. 46.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Herbert Waddams, *A New Introduction to Moral Theology*, p. 60.

<sup>34</sup> „We are then bound to conclude that the moral law is an absolute law. The sense of right and wrong cannot be accounted for by any social expediency [...]. Though it was perhaps first apprehended *through* social custom, it is not

It is then only in the supernatural context and so in its relation to God that the adequate apprehension of human nature is possible. Since man's nature was created by God, without God nature is not true to itself. According to Vigo A. Demant "Christ is the unique answer to the question of man [...]. Because man in Christ knows what he himself is, he knows not only that his activities in the orders of creation are perverted; he must know their true order"<sup>35</sup>. Christ, who came to the world to redeem it, enables man to return to the full knowledge of God's moral order and so to follow it with accordance with God's will. Man then needs natural law that God gave him and Christ renewed in order to achieve his final end. Hudson even says that the recovery of natural order is the first purpose of God's redemptive activity. Christ – the Redeemer restored first what is natural and then what is spiritual. Natural law then receives here its supplement being put in the context of the spiritual<sup>36</sup>.

By some theologians, Dewar and Hudson among them, the doctrine of natural law is to be analysed in the context of a wider issue of nature and grace. As all Anglican tradition in this respect they refer in their teaching to St. Thomas. Though nature has been afflicted by sin it remains good but needs grace to be perfected. The same is with natural law, despite man's sinfulness it remains written in his heart and so man is capable of reasoning, of distinguishing between good and evil and then pursuing right goals and making right judgements. Two main mistakes are most common as regards the relation between nature and grace, which can consequently occur as regards natural law and the law of grace. One considers nature to be good and self-sufficient which makes grace unnecessary. The other considers nature to be so corrupt by evil that it is only grace that can help it know anything. As Calvin put it, nature is wholly in darkness until the sun of grace arises upon

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derived *from* custom [...]. If this is the case, the moral law transcends this life, and leads us to the transcendent law-giver. In other words, we cannot make complete sense of our moral experience apart from religion". Lindsay Dewar, *Christian Standard*, in: John William Charles Wand, W. R. Matthews, Vigo Auguste Demant, Lindsay Dewar, *Christian Belief To-day*, London: Mowbray 1952, p. 201-204.

<sup>35</sup> Vigo Auguste Demant, *Christian Polity*, p. 100.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Cyril E. Hudson, *Nations as Neighbours*, p. 72.



it. Anglican tradition in fact rejects the two extreme positions turning to Christ who was God and man. Thus if “it is impossible for man that walketh to direct his steps aright apart from the divine assistance, it is equally true that grace does not destroy or override nature, but rather [...] uses it as the foundation for the divine superstructure. We are courting disaster if we attempt to build the higher and heavenly storeys of the house of human life without constant reference to the ground-plan which is provided by nature”<sup>37</sup>.

The natural law should be constantly related to God and his love (*agape*). The *agape* of God embraces the whole creation renewing everything and liberating it from the consequences of sin, including man and his nature. Consequently natural law that man educes on the basis of his rational nature reveals its fullness and certainty only in the light of and with the help of *agape*. If man is to be fulfilled he must receive the gift of God’s *agape*, which enables him to know the order of his nature and then to conform to it and its standards of right and wrong<sup>38</sup>.

The concept of natural law is useful and has its significance for Christians when they want to start a dialogue with non-Christians and non-believers. It is on this plane that a discussion can be carried on and even a consensus can be achieved as regards universal moral norms. It is based on the conviction that all men share the same nature and thus the pattern of conduct is the same for all and is universally valid. Among possible issues for a dialogue justice in social life can be one where injustice is not so much “sinful” as “unnatural”, but also more controversial problems like sexual morality where Christians can insist on the natural demand of chastity without which “men are less than men”. An emphasis on justice allows the Church to influence secular spheres like politics or economics. In this way natural law makes it possible both for the Church and for individual Christians to fulfil

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<sup>37</sup> Lindsay Dewar, Cyril E. Hudson, *Christian Morals*, p. 50-51.

<sup>38</sup> „We may therefore legitimately come to the conclusion not only that the sense of right and wrong is fund in all men, but that it does in fact correspond to outward moral standards to which men must conform, if they are to fulfil the will of God for themselves and for others”. Herbert Waddams, *A New Introduction to Moral Theology*, p. 80.

their mission on earth of proclaiming justice as in fact willed by God though without using theological arguments<sup>39</sup>.

In the context of the natural law discussions it becomes clear that there is a role for the Christian Church to fulfil in relation to the world. It is particularly justice that makes the Church express its attitude towards civil governments and it is the attitude of judgment. Since the mission of the Church is above all supernatural it has the right to do it though it must be extremely hesitant in pronouncing specific political or economic judgments. However when the Church does make them, it must do so by referring to natural law of which it is the guardian and interpreter. It is particularly in the field of anthropology that the Church is competent to express its judgments as it possesses the Gospel with its doctrine of both God and man. Since the task of the Church is to guide men to God, knowing man's true nature and destiny, the Church is obliged to reprimand and even to indict a social or political or economic order which denies it<sup>40</sup>.

The Church's critique of unjust social orders, including both national and international relationships, is not based on pragmatic or contingent grounds. The Church, as the interpreter of natural law, turns here to the natural truth of human solidarity: "Sirs, ye are brethren" – as Hudson put it. He sees in it one of the basic tasks of the Christian Church. The necessity of natural law in the field of international relations is based on the conviction that states, like individuals, are subject to the moral law. Thus natural law is part of law of nations (*ius gentium*). It is from natural law that positive law of *ius gentium* derives its validity. According to Mortimer states then are not governed simply by expediency and force but they may be judged and restrained by "an appeal to the conscience of mankind, which perceives the natural law, upholds the inalienable rights of man and approves the moral binding force of contracts"<sup>41</sup>. In this the Christian teaching puts stress on the truth that both individuals and states are finally governed by

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Lindsay Dewar, Cyril E. Hudson, *Christian Morals*, p. 203-204 and 234-235; Robert Cecil Mortimer, *Christian Ethics*, p. 14; Cyril E. Hudson, *Nations as Neighbours*, p. 109-110.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Lindsay Dewar, Cyril E. Hudson, *Christian Morals*, p. 205-208.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Cecil Mortimer, *The Elements of Moral Theology*, p. 16-17. Cf. Cyril E. Hudson, *Nations as Neighbours*, p. 88. Hudson is critical about the way the

the law of God, which is expressed in the creation and written in the hearts and consciences of all men and women. The Church has the task to be a critical witness and guide for all particularly by judging in the light of moral norms of natural law.

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Church of England carries out this task while at the same time praises the social teaching of Pius XI and Pius XII.

## War – Just or Justifiable? A Christian Orthodox Perspective

It is rather widely believed that the Eastern Orthodox theological tradition has not worked out the ethical criteria to justify or reject war to the same extent, as it has been the case with the Western Christian traditions<sup>1</sup>. While various historical circumstances had their impact on that fact, it also had its reasons in the fundamental presuppositions of the Orthodox theological tradition. This vision of Christianity is not about moral life as such, its norms and way of daily behaviour. Its goal is *theosis* – deification through participation in the life of Triune God. It is believed that all human beings are not so much called to lead a certain moral life but rather “become by grace all that God is by nature [...]. All are called to embrace and be transformed by the holiness of God, to become saints”<sup>2</sup>. In this perspective it is at least problematic to put too much emphasis on working out and following concrete norms in any sphere of life, including social relationships in the context of peace and war.

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<sup>1</sup> „Few, if any, Orthodox theologians have concerned themselves with the problems of pacifism, disarmament, nuclear war, just war theory, peace movements, etc.” Stanley S. Harakas, *Something Is Stirring in World Orthodoxy*, Minneapolis: Light & Life Publications 1978, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> Philip LeMasters, *Orthodox Perspectives on Peace, War and Violence*, „The Ecumenical Review” 63(2011), no. 1, p. 57.

## 1. Early developments

It is nonetheless possible to deduce from Eastern theology some essential relevant principles and norms of moral acceptance or rejection of warfare. While the Western Christianity followed mainly St. Ambrose (d. 397) and St. Augustine (d. 430) who laid foundations for the successive conception of just war, the Eastern reflection looked to those Church Fathers – St. Basil the Great (d. 379) and St. John Chrysostom (d. 407) among them – who believed and stressed that the kingdom of Christ (“the empire of Christ”) has brought peace to the world that is to be promoted and not some ideas of justifying wars. In a typically Orthodox way it is above all peace that is stressed as a unique gift from God. St. John Chrysostom would teach that “the true peace is from God”, while in St. Basil’s words “he who seeks peace, seeks Christ, for He is the peace”. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> c.) in his *Divine Names* would express his faith in God who is “the Fount of True Peace and of all Peace, both in general and in particular”. As coming from above this true “inner peace should express itself in outward behaviour and external relationships, as a function of the proper relationship with God, and the control of the passions, as well as love and forgiveness”<sup>3</sup>. All these premises allowed the characteristic pacifist option to develop in Orthodox Christianity. This would include several specific virtues that need to be underlined as necessary: mutual non-violence, non-resistance to evil, voluntary kenotic suffering and universal forgiveness<sup>4</sup>.

Beside Chrysostom’s many statements on the central value of peace one may as well find other opinions proving the complexity of his position. In one of his homilies he said: “Never be afraid of the sword if thy conscience does not accuse thee: never be afraid in war if thy conscience is clear”. This seems to be due to St. John’s ongoing position

<sup>3</sup> All quotes see Stanley S. Harakas, *Wholeness of Faith and Life: Orthodox Christian Ethics*, vol. 1: *Patristic Ethics*, Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press 1999, p. 144-146.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Alexander F.C. Webster, *The Pacifist Option: The Moral Argument Against War in Eastern Orthodox Moral Theology*, San Francisco-London-Bethesda: International Scholars Publications 1998, p. 244-249.

to distinguish between the Church and the state and, consequently, one way of life for the clergy (for whom participating in war is clearly forbidden) and another way for the laity. In his *On the Priesthood* Chrysostom states that those who sin “must be made better not by force but by persuasion” while “secular judges indeed, when they have captured malefactors under the law, show their authority to be great, and prevent them even against their will from following their own devices”<sup>5</sup>. It is also true however that the Gospel proclaims God’s mercy for all and there is only one goal for all to strive for which is salvation.

Another fact that both expressed and influenced the Eastern tendency toward a pacifistic attitude were canons that prohibited clergy and monks not only from entering the military service but also from the secular government service. Another aspect of the development of that vision was the perception of Christian warriors as martyrs who laid down their lives for Christ and Orthodoxy. Over the centuries mixed influences had their impact on the Eastern doctrine on war and peace, including the significant 13<sup>th</sup> Canon of St. Basil, the teaching of other Greek Fathers, or the complex situation of Eastern Christians in the times of the Crusades and their relations with Muslim and Turkish emirates<sup>6</sup>. One can find historical arguments both for confirming or denying the existence of an Eastern (Byzantine) version of the Christian justification of war. However, taking into account a particular historical mixture of secular (imperial) and religious ideology and politics of Eastern Orthodoxy, Byzantine wars were often perceived as “holy” and their goal was to “defend the integrity of God’s empire on earth” and so “by extension they were

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<sup>5</sup> The above quotes and a more detailed discussion of St. John Chrysostom’s position on peace and war see David K. Goodin, *Just-War Theory and Eastern Orthodox Christianity: A Theological Perspective on the Doctrinal Legacy of Chrysostom and Constantine-Cyril*, „The Greek Orthodox Theological Review” 48(2004), no. 3-4, p. 254-261.

<sup>6</sup> A lot of important historical and theological aspects of the development of the Christian Orthodox understanding of war and peace are presented by Yuri Stoyanov in his *Norms of War in Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, in: *World Religions and Norms of War*, eds. Vesselin Popovski, Gregory M. Reichberg, Nicholas Turner, Tokyo-New York-Paris: United Nations University Press 2009, p. 166-219. See also Stanley S. Harakas, *Patristic Ethics*, p. 155-156.

fought for God and Orthodoxy”<sup>7</sup>. As early as the late Roman period the general rules of the justification of certain wars (*ius ad bellum*) were developed and also some *ius in bello* regulations. While it is not difficult to discern attempts to preserve the pro-peace strands, it is also obvious that particularly as early as the post-Constantinian Church that “an enhanced appreciation of those elements in the Christian tradition which affirmed the need for order, the punishment of evil-doers, defense of the innocent” gradually “permitted and even enjoined the involvement of Christians in the military”<sup>8</sup>. An analysis of those different sources allows to distinguish several ways of perceiving war as justifiable: “self-defense’, ‘recovery of lost territory’, ‘breach of agreement’, ‘averting a greater evil’ and ‘pursuit of peace’”<sup>9</sup>.

One of the most lucid accounts leading to a possible justification of warfare comes from St. Cyril (d. 869) which he expressed in his conversation with Caliph Mutawakkil in 851, quoted in the Russian Orthodox Bishops’ document *The Basis of the Social Concept*. Cyril’s manner of interpretation of John 15:13 may be problematic, yet in his exposition he offers “a surprisingly strong and unambiguous theological affirmation of the wars being fought to repel the armies of the caliph”<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> „In this providential framework Byzantine military defeats and setbacks were interpreted as God’s punishment for Byzantine sins – or, in the later history of Byzantium, as crucial stages in the unfolding of the God-guided eschatological drama determining the fortunes of the universal empire”. Yuri Stoyanov, *Norms of War in Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, p. 180.

<sup>8</sup> Stanley S. Harakas, *Patristic Ethics*, p. 152. According to some researchers the concept of holy war and accompanying practices were generally rejected by Byzantium, which “never knew a real ‘holy war’, and the Church refrained from blessing any killing as a ‘laudable act’, from granting remission of sins to Orthodox warriors for their military service, or from recognizing fallen warriors *ipso facto* as martyrs”. Alexander F.C. Webster, *The Pacifist Option: The Moral Argument Against War in Eastern Orthodox Moral Theology*, p. 86. For a broader analysis see *Peace and War in Byzantium: Essays in Honor of George T. Dennis*, eds. Timothy S. Miller, John Nesbitt, Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press 1995.

<sup>9</sup> Yuri Stoyanov, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, in: *Religion, War and Ethics: A Sourcebook of Textual Traditions*, eds. Gregory M. Reichberg, Henrik Syse, Nicole M. Hartwell, New York: Cambridge University Press 2014, p. 167.

<sup>10</sup> David K. Goodin, *Just-War Theory and Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, p. 252. In his conversation with the Caliph St. Cyril stated: „[...] in company we



Nevertheless war would constantly be seen as an evil, which only in some circumstances could appear a necessary evil with an obligation to limit its tragic consequences. Obviously warfare has to do with killing that the Orthodox tradition understands as the so-called involuntary sin. It is an action that damages the soul even if done out of necessity. Taking one's life is undoubtedly such an action and as such it creates serious obstacles in – in this case – the soldier's path to holiness<sup>11</sup>. Hence the Eastern tradition of Christianity did not apprehend warfare as just or good and continued to stick to its emphasis on peace, which remained central both in its theology and liturgy. One must always remember that there exists a continuous tension between one's behaviour amid warfare and one's growing in life with God toward *theosis*<sup>12</sup>.

New transformations of Orthodox thinking about the morality of war took place in the post-Byzantine/Ottoman and modern periods when the political and religious context of the Eastern world had changed. A growing importance of the Russian Orthodoxy was

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defend one another and give our lives in battle for our neighbours [...]. Our Christ-loving soldiers protect our Holy Church with arms in their hands. They safeguard the sovereign in whose sacred person they respect the image of the rule of the Heavenly King. They safeguard their land because with its fall the home authority will inevitably fall too and the evangelical faith will be shaken. These are precious pledges for which soldiers should fight to the last". Sacred Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, *The Basis of the Social Concept* VIII. 2 ([www.mospat.ru/en/documents/social-concept](http://www.mospat.ru/en/documents/social-concept) accessed: 20.09.2016).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Philip LeMasters, *Orthodox Perspectives on Peace, War and Violence*, p. 57. „Orthodoxy does not require nonviolence or pacifism as essential characteristics of the Christian life; neither, however, does it sacralize war. Instead, the church merely tolerates war as a sometimes tragically necessary or unavoidable endeavour for which repentance for ‘involuntary sin’ is appropriate”. Ibidem, p. 59. Cf. Bartholomew, [Address] *In the Emirate of Bahrain* (25.09.2000), in: *In the World Yet Not of the World: Social and Global Initiatives of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew*, ed. John Chrysavgis, New York: Fordham University Press 2010, p. 227.

<sup>12</sup> Origen and Eusebius could be regarded as two exceptions in this unequivocal leaning toward peace according to Stanley S. Harakas. The first one appears to accept a possibility that people may be „doing battle in a just cause and on behalf of an emperor”. Eusebius writes about some who could be „serving in the army, according to justice”. Cf. *Patristic Ethics*, p. 154.

accompanied by the development of their secular and religious concept of just war. It was combined with the belief in war as a “judgment of God” and a religiously strengthened obligation to protect one’s country. St. Filaret of Moscow (d. 1867) preached that “those who die for the faith and fatherland will be awarded with life and a crown in heaven”<sup>13</sup>. Different opinions and teaching on the morality of warfare that have been formulated over the centuries have in many ways depended on the political situations of the local Churches and governments, very often mutually dependent on one another. Consequently, various versions of the just or holy war doctrine might be found in individual autocephalous Orthodox communities. Their teaching may both vary in some aspects and be more or less developed when related to *ius ad bellum* or *ius in bello*.

## 2. Recent opinions

It is also true however that even most recently some Orthodox voices have stressed again the theme of peace as central and crucial to their vision of faith and life. It was Patriarch Pavle (d. 2009) of the Serbian Orthodox Church, whatever problematic his political behaviour, who during the civil war in Bosnia reminded all those involved that “the Church must condemn all atrocities that are committed, no matter what the faith or origin of the person committing them may be. No sin committed by one person justifies a sin committed by another”. On another occasion he called on his fellow Christians to pray so that “God would help us to understand that we are human beings and we must live as human beings so that peace would come into our country and bring an end to the killing”. True peace, being a basic good to which all are entitled, can be achieved only by good means: “evil never brings good”<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Yuri Stoyanov, *Norms of War in Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, p. 194.

<sup>14</sup> All quotes see Jim Forest, *Not What We Have Been Led to Believe* ([www.incommunion.org](http://www.incommunion.org) accessed: 17.09.2016).

In the year 2000 the Sacred Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church issued *The Basis of the Social Concept*, which is a rare example of the Orthodox systematic treatment of Christian social teaching. In the VIII chapter of their document entitled *War and Peace* the Bishops first speak of war as evil being "caused by the sinful abuse of the God-given freedom" (VIII. 1). Nevertheless, they admit that it can be "considered to be necessary" in cases when "the security [...] and the restoration of trampled justice" are at stake (VIII. 2). Using the notion of "just war" they follow their classical criteria of *ius ad bellum* and similarly of *ius in bello* norms, particularly the treatment of the wounded and war prisoners that should be based on what St. Paul expressed in his Letter to the Romans (12:21-22): "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (VIII. 3)<sup>15</sup>. *The Basis of the Social Concept* is to be regarded as an important endeavour to determine the Orthodox perception of the morality of warfare in an organized way. It does lack, however, a more detailed interpretation of some terms or criteria, for instance of the term "trampled justice".

Even if Orthodox Christians consider war an evil, they admit it may turn out necessary due to certain circumstances and goals that are not to be neglected. In order to better understand that "necessity" of war the American Orthodox theologian Stanley S. Harakas would distinguish between a "justification of war" and a "just war". These two terms should not be taken interchangeably because a certain war may be justified but that does not make it a "just war": "a justification for war does not constitute a moral good in or of itself"<sup>16</sup>. Consequently, strictly speaking, he argues against any Orthodox just war theory (*ius ad bellum*) while there may be and in fact have been attempts to formulate *ius in bello* norms (like those found in *Strategikon* of

<sup>15</sup> Cf. [www.mospat.ru/en/documents/social-concept](http://www.mospat.ru/en/documents/social-concept) (accessed: 30.08.2016).

<sup>16</sup> David K. Goodin, *Just-War Theory and Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, p. 253. Cf. Stanley S. Harakas, *The Morality of War*, in: *Orthodox Synthesis: The Unity of Theological Thought*, ed. Joseph J. Allen, Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press 1981, p. 67-96. The text of *Strategikon* see *Maurice's Strategikon: Handbook of Byzantine Military Strategy*, trans. George T. Dennis, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1984.

Emperor Maurice who died in 602). Being a “necessary evil” war can never become a “good” war. In his other statement Harakas is even more categorical when he argues that “the East did not seek to answer questions concerning the correct conditions for entering war and the correct conduct of war on the basis of the possibility of a ‘just war’ [...]. In short, no case can be made for the existence of an Orthodox just-war-theory”<sup>17</sup>.

In the course of the tragic war in Kosovo in the early 2000s a group of influential Orthodox bishops and metropolitans from North America turned to the United Nations and Western governments to “intervene swiftly and forcefully to restore a safe and secure environment in Kosovo, to protect the rights and property of minorities, and to preserve the remaining centuries-old religious sites throughout the region”<sup>18</sup>. It is characteristic in such cases that an appeal like that would be followed by a petition for prayer and spiritual efforts so that God grant peace all those involved. In an appeal to their Orthodox faithful the Serbian Holy Synod of Bishops called upon „all of our people that they in these extremely difficult times double their fasting and prayer for their salvation and redemption, for peace among us and all over the world”<sup>19</sup>.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople (b. 1940) has not just once expressed his opposition to war calling it “irrational”. War can in no way find solutions to human problems and conflicts and it is evident that the deadly effects of war extend not just to those directly involved but also to many others who are treated unjustly. It is only peaceful solutions that are to be sought and implemented where conflicts between peoples and countries arise. It is not difficult to discern Bartholomew’s criticism toward those holding public

<sup>17</sup> Stanley S. Harakas, *No Just War in the Fathers* [2005], ([www.incommunion.org](http://www.incommunion.org) accessed: 23.09.2016). „The absence of a ‘just war theory’ in the East [...] is a continuing witness to the Church’s strong bias for peace as a central Christian value”. Stanley S. Harakas, *Peace in a Nuclear Context*, „The Greek Orthodox Theological Review” 38(1993), no. 1-4, p. 86.

<sup>18</sup> *SCOBA Hierarchs Call upon UN and NATO to Restore Peace and Order in Kosovo* (23.03.2004, [www.assemblyofbishops.org](http://www.assemblyofbishops.org) accessed: 15.09.2016).

<sup>19</sup> *Appeal from the Extraordinary Session of the Expanded Convocation of the Holy Synod of Bishops* (18.03.2004, [www.incommunion.org](http://www.incommunion.org) accessed: 15.09.2016).

offices in their ways of fulfilling public duties: “The choice of military violence as the sole method for resolving or imposing issues betrays a lack of satisfactory imagination and reveals intellectual laziness as well as confidence in the erroneous notion that evil can be corrected by evil”. The “dark consequences” of war on “humanity and on the natural environment” prove its irrationality being a “paranoid act”<sup>20</sup>. When pointing to all kinds of warfare, including terrorism or atomic warfare, Bartholomew calls war not just a “crime against humanity” but also a “mortal sin against God”<sup>21</sup>. In his critical approach to war the Patriarch in a particular way rejects situations when war is being fought “in the name of religion”. In such instances religion is undoubtedly abused and it is in fact “war against religion” because God is “benevolent and merciful and does not delight in bloodshed”<sup>22</sup>. In the contemporary world it is especially tragic that religious violence or even warfare carried out with a religious motivation seems to be ever more present. Bartholomew categorically condemns such actions so that “there should not be any space for those who are using religion as their excuse to commit horrible crimes”<sup>23</sup>. The *Bosphorus Declaration* of 1994 signed by Patriarch Bartholomew together with other participants of the International Peace and Tolerance Conference in the context of the war in former Yugoslavia contained a definite assertion rejecting the “concept that it is possible to justify one’s actions in any

<sup>20</sup> Bartholomew, *Address to the Bankers Association* (Athens, 24.05.1999), in: *On Earth as in Heaven: Ecological Vision and Initiatives of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew*, ed. John Chryssavgis, New York: Fordham University Press 2012, p. 264.

<sup>21</sup> Bartholomew, *Address to the Sixth World Conference on Religion and Peace* (Riva del Garda, Italy, 4.11.1994), in: *In the World Yet Not of the World: Social and Global Initiatives of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew*, p. 148.

<sup>22</sup> Bartholomew, [Address] *In the Emirate of Bahrain*, p. 227. „We have always declared that war in the name of religion is war against religion and that we must separate political from religious activism, so that what is done by political dictates is not confused with what is taught by our three monotheistic religions”. Bartholomew, *Inaugural Address at the World Conference* (Brussels, 19.12.2001), in: *In the World Yet Not of the World: Social and Global Initiatives of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew*, p. 280.

<sup>23</sup> *Address at the Second Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions* (Astana, Kazakhstan, 12.09.2006), in: *In the World Yet Not of the World: Social and Global Initiatives of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew*, p. 95.

armed conflict in the name of God”<sup>24</sup>. Similarly uncompromising was the Patriarch’s statement of 2003 in which he referred to God Himself for whom “war and violence are never means used [...] in order to achieve a result”. He stressed that only “in a few specific cases the Orthodox Church forgives an armed defense against oppression and violence. However, as a rule, peaceful resolution of differences and peaceful cooperation are more pleasing to God and more beneficial to humankind”<sup>25</sup>.

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The fundamental way of life for all Christians should be peace-making. It has been the constant tradition of Christianity to call upon all Christ’s disciples to reject violence and war and to embrace peace as both God’s gift and task. It is also very much included in the Orthodox Divine liturgy and prayers with their frequent and unequivocal stress on peace and “peaceful life in all reverence and godliness” (1 Tm 2:2) for all. In order to avoid a false idealism Orthodox theology admits the world both Christians and others live in is imperfect and in many ways infected with sin. Therefore also those who believe in Christ and follow His Gospel may come to face and get involved in violent inevitable behaviour aiming at the protection of those who are innocent and suffer from injustice. Both soldiers and all involved in warfare, perceived as a necessary evil, are not left to themselves but are always offered by the Church spiritual healing through repentance and sacramental grace<sup>26</sup>. Whether leading a peaceful life or finding it necessary to go to war and use deadly weapon all are called to follow the Lord and grow in holiness.

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<sup>24</sup> *The Bosphorus Declaration* (Istanbul, 9.02.1994), in: *In the World Yet Not of the World: Social and Global Initiatives of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew*, p. 300.

<sup>25</sup> *Cosmic Grace, Humble Prayer: The Ecological Vision of the Green Patriarch Bartholomew*, ed. John Chryssavgis, Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans 2009, p. 231.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Philip LeMasters, *Orthodox Perspectives on Peace, War and Violence*, p. 60-61.

## Man as the Primary Way for the University

The complex and ambiguous condition of contemporary culture, above all in Europe and North America, is something universally experienced both by individuals and societies. A lot of attempts have been done to find out the reasons of this widespread confusion which is so serious that may threaten the very nature of the two-thousand-year-old culture based on the Greco-Roman and Christian foundations. Thus, it is appropriate to point out to the essential elements of the culture: its common values, foundations and principles that European nations share; with its juridical culture based on the principles of Roman law; with the Judeo-Christian belief in one God – Father of all which over the centuries has had a profound impact on European thought and institutions; with a certain model of education and educational formation based on a definite anthropology<sup>1</sup>.

For centuries universities have played a vital role in the life of nations and societies. They themselves have not only emerged from a certain cultural and religious background but have become its inherent element and as a result they continue to make their own impact on individuals and societies. As elsewhere, here too the crucial element of the identity and mission of the university is a vision of man with all its far-reaching implications concerning the way the university carries out its tasks.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. the interview with prof. Hans Maier of Munich's Ludwig-Maximilians University published in the Italian daily "Avvenire" of 5 July 2006 ([www.avvenire.it](http://www.avvenire.it)).



## 1. European culture's state of affairs

A lot has been said about the contemporary cultural situation, particularly in Europe. It is still relevant to claim that our modern culture has not ceased to be under a strong influence of the Enlightenment. Attention should be paid to three dominant aspects<sup>2</sup>. First it is secularism. The Enlightenment rejected not only the Church but all revealed religion as irrelevant to society and the state. Secularism is then the way of life *as if God did not exist*. When applied to the subject under consideration, it deprives the university world of God and any reference to the supernatural, it brings a secular way of life and academic work, a secular theory of law and science etc. Finally there is no basis for affirming a transcendent dignity of the human person, and so there are no limits to what the science can do to manipulate human beings<sup>3</sup>.

Another aspect is relativism. It is based on a conviction that reason is not capable of knowing objective truth, including moral truth. In fact, there is no such truth (postmodernism!). Here all depends upon the circumstances of a given case. In consequence, relativism

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<sup>2</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre recalled the famous phrase of Francis Canavan SJ, professor of political science at Fordham University, who had described the present stage of American culture as "the fag-end of the Enlightenment". Cf. Charles E. Rice, *Natural Law in the Twenty-First Century*, in: *Common Truths: New Perspectives on Natural Law*, ed. Edward B. McLean, Wilmington: ISI Books 2004, p. 296-301.

<sup>3</sup> Secularization has been much analyzed and there are several theories of its nature and origin. José Casanova distinguishes at least "three very different, uneven, and unintegrated propositions. First, there is secularization understood as differentiation, in which secular spheres of society are increasingly distinguished from religious institutions and norms. Then there is what most people probably mean by secularization: a decline in religious beliefs and practices. Finally, there is secularization as the marginalization of religion, pushing it almost totally into the private sphere of life. While the first and the third of these may seem pretty much the same thing, it is surely true that discovering what people actually believe and why they believe it is not as susceptible to the kinds of structural analyses of which sociologists are fond". Richard John Neuhaus, *Secularizations*, "First Things" 2009, no. 190, p. 23.

has become “the only virtue”<sup>4</sup>. Since no one can know what is right or wrong, the resolution of such questions must be left up to the political process. Eventually there comes a utilitarian philosophy that governs everything. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, before entering the conclave that elected him the successor of John Paul II, identified it in his homily on 18 April 2005 as “a dictatorship of relativism” which he later repeated as Pope. The third remnant of the Enlightenment is individualism which is an exaggerated autonomy of the individual. Here man is no longer an *animal sociale* by nature. The Enlightenment thinkers postulated a mythical “state of nature” populated by autonomous individuals who were not *social* but *sociable*<sup>5</sup>.

The present state of modern culture has been finely described in Pope John Paul II’s apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*. It is enlightening to refer to that document which has named the current “state of affairs” in this respect as the *dimming of hope*<sup>6</sup>: “There are many *troubling signs* which at the beginning of the third millennium are clouding the horizon of the European continent”. We experience “*the loss of Europe’s Christian memory and heritage*, accompanied by a kind of practical agnosticism and religious indifference whereby many Europeans give the impression of living without spiritual roots”. We see “the slow and steady advance of secularism [...]”. Many people are no longer able to integrate the Gospel message into their daily experience; living one’s faith in Jesus becomes increasingly difficult in a social and cultural setting in which that faith is constantly challenged and threatened. In many social settings it is easier to be identified as an agnostic than a believer. The impression is given that unbelief is self-explanatory, whereas belief needs a sort of social legitimization which is neither obvious nor taken for granted”.

People seem to be filled with *fear of the future*, which is accompanied by “the inner emptiness that grips many people and the loss

<sup>4</sup> The phrase comes from Allan D. Bloom. Cf. his wider study *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today’s Students*, New York: Simon & Shuster 1987.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Hobbes, John Locke or Jean Jacques Rousseau would claim that for example people formed the state according to the social contract for some purpose and not out of man’s social nature.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, no. 7-9.

of meaning in life". There is an expanding experience of *existential fragmentation*, which causes a feeling of loneliness in people's hearts as well as divisions and conflicts among them. All this comes with the dissemination of individualism, which brings about "an *increased weakening of interpersonal solidarity*". When searching for a reason of this situation the Holy Father stresses that "at the root of this loss of hope is an *attempt to promote a vision of man apart from God and apart from Christ*", and this makes man "the centre of reality" occupying – falsely! – the place of God. "Forgetfulness of God led to the abandonment of man. It is therefore no wonder that in this context a vast field has opened for the unrestrained development of nihilism in philosophy, of relativism in values and morality, and of pragmatism – and even a cynical hedonism – in daily life". This leads the Pope to emphasize that mankind is witnessing "the emergence of a *new culture*, largely influenced by the mass media, whose content and character are often in conflict with the Gospel and the dignity of the human person. This culture is also marked by a widespread and growing religious agnosticism, connected to a more profound moral and legal relativism rooted in confusion regarding the truth about man as the basis of the inalienable rights of all human beings. At times the signs of a weakening of hope are evident in disturbing forms of what might be called a '*culture of death*'".

This changing cultural context has undoubtedly been influencing the academic world, showing both positive and negative trends<sup>7</sup>. The so-called democratization of social and cultural life has transformed the university from a place once reserved for the privileged into an institution wide open to a vast public. While good in itself in many aspects, this has also led to the lowering of the social status both of the academic staff and of students. Contact with academic teachers is more often limited and thus students seem to be without guidance in face of diverse problems of the today's world. Additionally, they are confronted by the increasing prevalence of relativistic liberalism and scientific positivism with no ethical reference – science for the sake

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Congregation for Catholic Education, Pontifical Council for the Laity, Pontifical Council for Culture, *The Presence of the Church in the University and in University Culture*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1994, no. I 1-15.

of science. The proliferation of universities and their specialization have made them lose part of their prestige, which is accompanied by ever less capacity for synthesis in the scientific research. Specialization together with diversification in the fields of knowledge lead teachers, students and researchers to limit themselves and to perceive only a fragment of reality.

With an ever-growing dependence on the industrial world, the university has felt to be obliged to produce rapid and specific technical services. Thus one can speak of a “professionalization” of the university, which on one hand has its benefits, while on the other hand it loses its touch with an integral formation in a sense of values and an ethical approach to all other disciplines. Among the consequences of this process is the university’s withdrawal from playing an active role in the development of culture. The university becomes either marginal in relation to the dominant cultural trends or passively submits to them. It is not the human person and his integral formation, which is at the centre but rather a production of technical or professional specialists. The university ceases to play a creative and critical role within the sphere of culture, its role being often labelled as “responsive and inclusive”<sup>8</sup>. In many respects this is combined with a certain kind of scepticism which concerns the very idea of truth. As a consequence, the university finds itself lacking a “guiding idea” for all its multiple activities. The chaos of thought and the poverty of basic criteria lie at the root of the crisis of identity and purpose that the university undergoes. It touches the very heart of the university’s nature and mission being an institution directed towards the search for truth. It is to be stressed that modern culture often tends to treat different spheres of life as autonomous and beyond moral judgment. The modern university, as part of such culture, appears as a “value-free institution”, consisting of an array of unintegrated spheres. This made Karl Jaspers call the modern university “an intellectual department store”, while Clark Kerr called it a “multiversity” where disciplines “develop side by side and

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<sup>8</sup> An example of this could have been found at a conference of the European University Association, which took place in Rotterdam in October 2008.

scholars pursue independent pursuits with no sense of connection or overarching purpose”<sup>9</sup>.

Another aspect of modern culture, which has a strong impact on the university is that its positivistic mentality tends to equate truth with knowledge, thus rejecting metaphysics. Among its consequences there is a denial of the foundations of faith and of an objective moral order. During his visit to America Pope Benedict XVI emphasized that “truth means more than knowledge: knowing the truth leads us to discover the good”. The recognition of truth plays an indispensable role in one’s maturing in life and discovering its sense. When truth is lost, it is only the individual that is recognized as definitive and as the ultimate criterion of judgment: “Within such a relativistic horizon the goals of education are inevitably curtailed. Slowly, a lowering of standards occurs. We observe today a timidity in the face of category of the good and an aimless pursuit of novelty parading as the realization of freedom”<sup>10</sup>. Thus, the university, being an institution of education and devoted to the truth, nowadays finds itself in a cultural environment, which has lost a sense of the transcendence. In such circumstances fostering the true perfection of students is no longer regarded as the very sense and dignity of the mission of the university. The university is no longer able to offer a young person how to discover the truth.

## 2. A continuing debate about the integral notion of man and authentic humanism

What is central in the above description of modern culture is the phrase, which stresses that the whole problem is rooted in “confusion regarding the truth about man”. It is here, from the level of anthropology that the *dimming of hope* emerges and then spreads. John Paul II

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<sup>9</sup> Mark William Roche, *The Intellectual Appeal of Catholicism and the Idea of a Catholic University*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 2003, p. 34.

<sup>10</sup> Benedict XVI, *Address at the Meeting with Catholic Educators* (Washington, D.C., 17.04.2008, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va) accessed: 25.11.2008).

expressed it in the words that ever more often contemporary societies are “suffering from *horizontalism*” and so are in real and urgent need of openness to the Transcendence. “European culture gives the impression of *silent apostasy* on the part of people who have all that they need and who live as if God does not exist”<sup>11</sup>.

Academics deal with very many different disciplines, in numerous and different institutions and countries, in various political, social, even economic and financial circumstances. What all share, however, is that in each place they are a part of a university – *universitas magistrorum et scholarium*, being a place where this community of teachers and students devotes itself to the search for truth. In this vast and essential task university teachers and researchers deal with various disciplines and work in different spheres of their scholarly activity. Eventually, however, what is characteristic for university scholars and scientists is that they all deal with students – young men and women whom they teach and with whom they pursue their quest for the truth. All their work and activity ought to be in the service of man: man as a human person “ought to be beginning, the subject and the object of every social organization”<sup>12</sup>. The university is one of those social organizations that Vatican II refers its teaching to. Consequently it is right to say, paraphrasing John Paul II’s well known conviction of man being “the primary way for the Church”<sup>13</sup>, that man – the human person is truly the primary way for the university.

Such a fundamental assumption allows to see the entire mission of the university within modern societies as building and fostering a sound authentic humanism. It is all the more urgent task because higher education is so often regarded as an “investment in human capital” and an “instrument for career preparation”. This may easily lead to neglect or to seriously weaken the traditional mission of the university in which a central place has always been given to the humanist dimension of man’s life. When the university is regarded as a place for “career preparation”, it becomes an increasingly “professional” or even commercial institution where research is more and more frequently

<sup>11</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, no. 34 and 9.

<sup>12</sup> Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, no. 25.

<sup>13</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptor hominis*, no. 14.

commercially sponsored. As an almost inevitable consequence there comes an elimination of the disciplines, which lay the foundations for genuine humanism. All this is part of a market-driven mentality so widely disseminating in modern societies. What is needed then is a commitment to reclaim the “tradition of an integral Christian humanism, a tradition of learning which places the person in community at the centre of the educational process”<sup>14</sup>.

It was during the Jubilee meeting of university professors in Rome in 2000 when Pope John Paul II emphasized that “the humanistic character of culture sometimes seems relegated to the periphery, while there is an increased tendency to reduce the horizon of knowledge to what can be measured and to ignore any question touching on the ultimate meaning of reality”. In order to challenge and combat such reductionisms the Holy Father underlined the importance of humanist education and the creation of “a new authentic and integral humanism”, inspired “by an awareness of human autonomy as well ‘the sense of responsibility for the spiritual and moral maturity of humankind’”<sup>15</sup>. Since there are more and more reductionist conceptions of man, universities have a task to grasp, to describe and to teach an integral vision of man and his life, which will help unravel the mystery of the human person. Such a solid integral anthropology – the truth about the human person – can establish a common ground for people of good will throughout the Academy and beyond, throughout the entire contemporary culture. Hence, the university ought to be concerned with the full human and spiritual development of its students and the institution itself should distinguish itself in a humanistic and personalistic orientation<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> J. Michael Miller, *Challenges Facing American and European Catholic Universities: A View from the Vatican*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 2006, p. 12.

<sup>15</sup> John Paul II, *Homily at the Jubilee Mass for University Professors*, no. 4 (The Vatican, 10.09.2000, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va) accessed: 20.11.2008). Cf. his *Address to University Professors of All Nations* (The Vatican, 9.09.2000, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va) accessed: 20.11.2008).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Statement on the Nature of the Contemporary Catholic University* [1967], no. 8. The *Statement* is commonly known as the *Land O'Lakes Statement* because it was signed by presidents and leaders of several American Catholic universities in Land O'Lakes, Wisconsin on 23 July 1967. It was recently



During his apostolic visit to Poland in 1997 John Paul II expressed it again in very clear terms how essential the proper understanding of man and man's life is for a sound culture and for the life of the nation. In his address at St. Anne's church in Kraków, when referring to the removal of Theology Faculty from the Jagiellonian University by the communist authorities, he explained that the Church's defence of the faculty was in fact a defence of the integrity of the intellectual life and of culture. As it is only with theological insights that one can grasp the entire truth. When culture is cut off and deprived of reference to the transcendence it cannot serve the authentic human good being unable to know the truth about man. Man's and the nation's future depends on "a lively awareness" that "man does not create truth; rather, truth discloses itself to man when he perseveringly seeks it". This is exactly what universities are supposed to do being devoted to the truth and as a consequence to man and true humanism. An integral notion of the human person is a necessary condition for the sound development both of every individual and of the nation<sup>17</sup>.

The above considerations show that the university needs a cultural basis in order to fulfil its mission in the society. It is not and cannot be separated from the set of values and moral norms that guide the life of people. Having in mind how important a religion is for man to discover and adequately understand his life in its natural and supernatural fullness, in this context it is the Christian and Catholic university that has a particular task to carry out. The European tradition proves that all universities, from European Bologna, Paris, Oxford to American Princeton and Harvard, were constituted and inspired by Christian truth. In fact, "there is no such thing as a university pure and simple". When a university professes it is a secular institution, it does not mean it is more of a university, it is rather a different kind of a university grounding itself on the secular convictions. A secular university is not a university as such, not "a university pure and simple", but rather it is a secular university (secular is not a synonym of

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republished as *Land O'Lakes Statement: The Idea of the Catholic University* (Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism, University of Notre Dame, 2017).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. George Weigel, *John Paul II and the Priority of Culture*, "First Things" 1998, no. 80, p. 22.

neutral). Similarly, when a university claims to be a Catholic institution, it does not mean it has a dual identity but rather an explicit identity based on a definite understanding of man and of the world and the character and mission the university has. If the unique duty of the university is to discover and to transmit the truth and to cultivate the life of the mind, the Catholic university can do it in a particular way being bound for a comprehensive account of reality. It asks not only about “the what of things”, but also “the why of things”, it seeks not only to find out how, but also asking what for. “Unlike other kinds of universities, the Catholic university cannot evade the hard question about what it all means. Therefore theology and philosophy, the science of meaning, are at the heart of the Christian university”<sup>18</sup>.

In his address to students and teachers of Rome’s universities Pope Benedict XVI turned their attention to an important differentiation in what they all search for. Referring to St. Paul’s 1 Letter to the Corinthians the Pope distinguished between the “wisdom of this world” and the “divine wisdom”. While the first one is a way of living and viewing things of life apart from God in conformity with the criteria of success and power, the other has nothing to do with it since “the wisdom of the world is folly to God” (3:19). Paul is not anti-intellectual here but is “opposed to the type of arrogant intellectualism in which a man, even if he knows a great deal, loses sensitivity to truth and the freedom to open himself to the newness of divine action”<sup>19</sup>. It is only when man becomes “truly wise before God” and opens to His mind, that he follows the path of truth and love.

The university, particularly the Catholic university is a privileged place where faith and the different disciplines of knowledge engage in a mutual dialogue. This is the way to acquire a “higher synthesis of knowledge” which is vital in the current context of an ever growing fragmentation of knowledge. It will encourage the promotion of a renewed synthesis of faith and culture which is an issue of a particular importance in any circumstances. Thus, the university assists all those involved and the entire society to find answers to the fundamental

<sup>18</sup> Richard John Neuhaus, *The Christian University: Eleven Theses*, “First Things” 1996, no. 59, p. 20-22.

<sup>19</sup> Benedict XVI, *Address to Students and Teachers of the Ecclesiastical Universities of Rome* (The Vatican, 30.10.2008, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va) accessed: 22.11.2008).

“questions concerning humanity: the value of the human person, the meaning of the human existence and action, and especially conscience and freedom”<sup>20</sup>. The presence of the Christian faith in the university renders a unique service to people both in personal and social spheres of their lives. This enables young men and women who come to the university to develop not just intellectually but to mature to the fullness of their lives including the transcendent dimension of existence, so often neglected in the current postmodern era. W. von Humboldt, whose influence on the idea of the university continues to receive considerable attention, thought that the university education should “increase the students’ ability to perceive and understand life as a whole, while probing deeper knowledge; the aim is to turn university members into mature human beings, able and ready to improve human life”<sup>21</sup>.

Man, regarded as the primary way for the university, should be seen in “the full truth of his existence, of his personal being and also of his community and social being”<sup>22</sup>. Several elements of the integral notion of the human person are to be enumerated. What is essential is the person’s unity of body and soul (*corpore et anima unus*). Man is both a material (corporeal) and spiritual being. Neither the materialism, with its rejection of the spirit, nor the spiritualism with its rejection or neglect of the reality of the body, appropriately describes the human person. His being is not composed of two natures – a material one and a spiritual one, but rather the union of the material and spiritual elements form man’s unique single nature.

Man cannot be reduced to a natural being. Due to his origin and his final destiny he is a creature open to the infinite, to the *unlimited horizon of being* – to God himself. Therefore man with his intellect and will raises himself above all creation and strives for total truth and the absolute good. Being a *subjective entity*, he is conscious not only

<sup>20</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education, Pontifical Council for the Laity, Pontifical Council for Culture, *The Presence of the Church in the University and in University Culture*, no. II 1.

<sup>21</sup> Jón Torfi Jónasson, *Inventing Tomorrow’s University: Who Is to Take the Lead?*, Bologna: Bononia University Press 2008, p. 51.

<sup>22</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor hominis*, no. 14. What follows cf. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 124-151.

of the world around but also of himself and thus exists as an “I”. The transcendent dignity of the human person guards his inviolability and makes him the ultimate end of society. Consequently, the society ought to be ordered to the human person. The person is always entitled to the primacy over society. The vision is based on the notion of man as a person – an active and responsible subject open to the transcendence and called upon to the fulfilment of his life vocation.

The transcendent dimension of the human person is necessarily accompanied by freedom. Only as a free creature man can turn to God and fulfil the appeals of his conscience. Without freedom it would impossible for man to search for truth and to choose the good. However, it is important to understand that man’s freedom is not unlimited. As a creature he depends upon God and thus is to accept the moral order given by the Creator. Having been created in the mage of God, man participates in God’s wisdom and providence, and thus is able to know moral law. In this way by accepting that law man’s freedom finds its authentic and complete fulfilment<sup>23</sup>.

Another aspect of the integral concept of man is that all men and women are equal in their dignity. All were created by God and in His image and likeness. The same dignity of every person before God implies and forms the basic foundation of the universal brotherhood among all men and women. The recognition of the equal dignity of each person makes it possible for everyone to develop and grow to the fullness of the personal maturity. Similarly, the relations between peoples and nations ought to be based on the recognition of the principle of equality.

Finally, man is a social being. His social nature makes man grow and realize his life vocation within a community, in manifold relations with others. Social life belongs to the very nature of man, it is his natural characteristic and therefore cannot be regarded as something optional. This means that community life is necessary for a human person to mature. Man needs social life in order to develop according to

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<sup>23</sup> „Law must therefore be considered an expression of divine wisdom: by submitting to the law, freedom submits to the truth of creation. Consequently one must acknowledge in the freedom of the human person the image and the nearness of God, who is present in all”. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 41.

the requirements of his nature<sup>24</sup>. A further elaboration of the integral concept of man and his life would have to include several particular spheres of life where he fulfils his life-long vocation, especially marriage and family, culture and work.

The Christian and Catholic understanding of man has found its novel form in the teaching of Vatican II as well as in the magisterial teaching of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Several crucial principles, based on philosophical and theological reflection, make up the complete anthropological vision. "First, man is the image of God; this is the fundamental truth about the human person and the point of departure for all subsequent reflection on him. Second, Christ revealed man to man; he is the way and the truth for every human person. Third, the communion of love of persons is a reflection of the inner life of the Blessed Trinity. This is the point of departure for understanding the nature of the nuclear Christian family which is a microcosm and model of an authentic human society. Finally, man attains self-fulfilment in the giving of himself to others; this is the Christian conception of man's calling and the basis to organize a better society which can only be achieved through charity"<sup>25</sup>. One more aspect of that vision is not to be omitted which is its dynamic character. The Christian integral notion of the human person embraces man's call to perfection which God bestowed on him. Thus, this vision explains not only who man is but also who he is to become, being called to the fulfilment of his humanity. An essential aspect of such a process is a moral dimension of human life which is to be constantly emphasized, particularly in the current context of moral relativism. The truth about man brings with itself a certain way of man's life, always with respect to objective moral norms. It is in moral life that man fulfils his life and vocation to the perfection. The moral order of man's life is a part of the integral truth about him. The university community, dedicated to the search

<sup>24</sup> „The human person needs to live in society. Society is not for him an extraneous addition but a requirement of his nature. Through the exchange with others, mutual service and dialogue with his brethren, man develops his potential; he thus responds to his vocation". *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1879.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas McGovern, *The Christian Anthropology of John Paul II: An Overview*, p. 143-144.

for truth, is called to bear witness to that objective truth about human life. It belongs to the mission of the university to search for this truth of man, to expound and teach it and to protect it when needed.

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Since their beginning Universities have played an important, often decisive role in the development of Europe as a cultural community of various peoples and nations. In the present circumstances, ever more troubling, they cannot cease to be responsible for the way Europe exists, and the direction it is going. All those who belong to *universitas magistrorum et scholarium* have a fundamental duty to discern the signs of the present times, to distinguish and separate good from bad, and above all to search for truth – the integral truth about man in the perspective of his natural and supernatural dimensions. Thus man is to become the primary way for the university. The modern debate about man is in fact the debate about the essentials of culture which today is often marked by ambivalent and contrasting meanings. Hence, this universal debate must not be neglected by the university. On the contrary, the university should make it its priority in all its educational and scientific activities. Otherwise, it would deny its primary duty and proper identity.

## Catholic Universities and Contemporary Culture

After two millennia the mission to “go out to the whole world [and] proclaim the Gospel to all creation” (Mk 16:15) entrusted to the Church by Lord Jesus, is still far from completion. This continuous task is based on the truth that every human being needs Jesus Christ and man’s true liberation and peace consist in opening human heart to the love of Christ, as Pope John Paul II stressed in his Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*<sup>1</sup>. Among the many instruments the Church uses for fulfilling its mission is *universitas magistrorum et scholarium* being a place where this community of teachers and students devotes itself to the search for truth. Over the centuries Catholic universities have grown into a kind of laboratories where, “in accordance with the different disciplines, ever new areas of research are developed in a stimulating confrontation between faith and reason that aims to recover the harmonious synthesis”, as Pope Benedict XVI put it in his address to the community of the Sacred Heart University in Rome in November 2005<sup>2</sup>. Thus academic research, carried out at Catholic universities always in a faith perspective, should aim at discovering the intrinsic unity that links different branches of knowledge in order to reach the answer to the question of the true and the good – the very

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, no. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Benedict XVI, *Address at the Inauguration of the Academic Year at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart* (Rome, 25.11.2005, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va) accessed: 13.12.2005).



question that brought universities into being. If so done, universities become part of the service to the Kingdom of God and to all humanity.

## 1. Catholic universities – their identity and our hopes

Whether in Europe or in America, or in India<sup>3</sup>, the Church's essential hope in this context is that the Catholic university continues to be both a university and Catholic. As such it will preserve its integral identity as a maturely Christian Catholic institution of higher education. On the other hand, if it happens to cease to be Catholic, it will turn unnecessary and consequently it will lose the main reason for its existence. I stress here the component "Catholic" rather than that of "university", because I suspect that it is easier to remain a university than to continue to be Catholic in the contemporary cultural circumstances.

Institutions of higher education, like universities,, academies and the like, have for centuries played a significant role in the Church's continuous effort to preach the Gospel to all nations. Having gathered its own experience in this field, one can say the Church possesses a kind of wisdom as how the institution a Catholic university is ought to function and fulfil its mission. The Church expresses this wisdom in various ways of which Pope John Paul II's Constitution *Ex corde*

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<sup>3</sup> Among the many Catholic universities and other institutions of higher education in the United States, the leading one is the University of Notre Dame in Indiana. The oldest Catholic University in Central and Eastern Europe is the one in Lublin, Poland founded in 1918 (recently renamed the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin). In recent years there have been three more established – in Esztergom-Budapest, Hungary (1992), in Ružomberok, Slovakia (2000) and in Lviv, Ukraine (2002). Another one was founded in Zagreb, Croatia (2006). The first Catholic university in Tbilisi, Georgia came into being in 2001. After the Australian Catholic University in Sydney was founded (1998), not so long ago news came that a new Catholic college was established in Jaddalpur, India (2001).

*Ecclesiae* is of a special interest and weightiness<sup>4</sup>. In what follows, that document will be referred to several times. Though published a few decades ago it continues to be even more topical in the present changing circumstances in which the Catholic universities find themselves in the early years of the new century.

A Catholic university, being *a university*, can be defined as an academic community which, in “a rigorous and critical fashion, assists in the protection and advancement of human dignity and of a cultural heritage through research [and] teaching”. In this a university enjoys “that institutional autonomy necessary to perform its functions effectively and guarantees its members academic freedom, so long as the rights of the individual person and of the community are preserved within the confines of the truth and the common good”<sup>5</sup>. This autonomy is a fundamental and indispensable condition, *conditio sine qua non*, for any university. Being fundamental, however, it is not absolute – its obvious limits are to be found in the truth and the common good.

Now, as regards its *Catholic* character, a Catholic university should possess four essential characteristics as the *Ex corde Ecclesiae* states it. First is the Christian inspiration, which should be the source of thought and activity not only for individual members of the University community, either teachers or students, but also for the community as such. All members of the university, being a community, form a particular social structure and therefore cannot be regarded as a simple gathering of individual persons either professors or students. Secondly, it is the Catholic faith which is to be the light and context for a “continuing reflection [...] upon the growing treasury of human knowledge” to which the university is devoted. The third aspect of being a Catholic institution points to the issue of its essential fidelity to the Christian message which is guarded, interpreted and taught by the Church. This ecclesial dimension of the *univeritas catholica* is not to be diminished or neglected particularly in the contemporary circumstances of a widespread neglect of the authority as such, including the authority of the Church. Finally, the Catholicity of the university refers to the universal

<sup>4</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1990. Cf. particularly no. 12-20.

<sup>5</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, no. 12.

dimensions of its service both to God's people and to all humanity as all men and women are on their way to the transcendent goal, which is God himself<sup>6</sup>.

Hence, it is important that Catholicism is "vitally present and operative" in a Catholic university. It then adds to its ordinary tasks – as the teaching, research and other services, common to all academic institutions – "the inspiration and light of the Christian message". It is to be stressed here that all this should be done by institutional commitment and not only by personal commitment of the individual members of the academic community. Catholic ideals, attitudes and principles should penetrate and inform university activities always in accordance with the proper nature and autonomy of these activities<sup>7</sup>.

If one can rightly describe a university as "a place of research", it is obvious this research has to have its place at a Catholic university as well. However, according to *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, this research is to include several crucial aspects. Keeping in mind the present context of an ever-growing fragmentation of knowledge the Catholic university should be dedicated to the search for an *integration of knowledge*, to the search for truth. As John Paul II put it, it is a basic task of the Catholic university to "*work towards a higher synthesis of knowledge, in which alone lies the possibility of satisfying that thirst for truth which is profoundly inscribed on the heart of the human person*"<sup>8</sup>. In this

<sup>6</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, no. 13-15.

<sup>7</sup> Mark W. Roche, a long-time professor and dean at the University of Notre Dame, in his inspiring essay on the idea of a Catholic university emphasizes until some extent similar aspects of the university's catholicity relating them to the Christian truth of the Holy Trinity: "My answer focuses on Catholicism's universalism, its sacramental vision, its elevation of tradition and reason, and its emphasis on the unity of knowledge. These four points could be loosely related to the different persons of the Trinity and the idea of the Trinity itself: the idea of one God grants dignity to all persons, regardless of their nation or background; the Incarnation, or the light of Christ, illuminates the idea of divine presence in the world; the Holy Spirit manifests itself in the development of the Catholic tradition, with its elevation of reason; and the Trinity itself underscores the organic connections between each of these spheres and the world, which is a manifestation of divine wisdom." Mark William Roche, *The Intellectual Appeal of Catholicism and the Idea of a Catholic University*, p. 9-10.

<sup>8</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, no. 16.

task the university is aided by the specific contributions of philosophy and theology. These two disciplines will assist (and indeed enable) the university in its search for a proper vision of the human person and the world, which is enlightened by the faith in Christ, by Christ's Gospel.

While each academic discipline has its own integrity and methodology, what is particularly needed in this process of the integration of knowledge is a dialogue between faith and reason. This necessary and fruitful cooperation between faith and reason was strongly stressed by Pope John Paul II in the very first words of his encyclical letter *Fides et ratio*: "Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth – in a word, to know himself – so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves"<sup>9</sup>.

Despite not so infrequent trends in the modern academy in any research an *ethical concern* is of vital importance. University research is to be carried out with a constant concern for the ethical implications both of its methods and of its discoveries. It is so because knowledge is meant to serve the human person, which is not always the case. In his first encyclical *Redemptor hominis* of 1979 John Paul II devoted to this problem significant remarks: "The man of today seems ever to be under threat from what he produces, that is to say from the result of the work of his hands and, even more so, of the work of his intellect and the tendencies of his will". Therefore the Holy Father stressed the so-called triple priority: "the priority of the ethical over the technical, of the primacy of the person over things, of the superiority of the spirit over matter"<sup>10</sup>.

Finally, a theological perspective is a necessary component of the Catholic university research because theology plays a particularly important role in the above stressed search for a synthesis of knowledge as well as in the dialogue between faith and reason. Theology can and

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<sup>9</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et ratio*, The Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1998. A noteworthy collection of comments on this encyclical see *The Two Wings of Catholic Thought: Essays on Fides et ratio*, eds. David Ruel Foster, Joseph W. Koterski, Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press 2003.

<sup>10</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor hominis*, no. 16.

should assist all other disciplines in their search for meaning and can bring them “a perspective and an orientation not contained within their own methodologies”<sup>11</sup>.

Additionally, since a Catholic university forms part of the Catholic Church, which is the Body of Christ and He is in its centre, it is worth stressing that the university should continue to become an authentic community animated by His Spirit. Hence, it is the person of Christ and His Gospel that give the Catholic university its distinctive character. The unity of the university is to be based above all on a common dedication to the truth as well as a common vision of the dignity of the human person created by God and in His image. This inspiration gives rise to the spirit of freedom and charity as well as to mutual respect that govern the community. In such circumstances each member of the community can continue to achieve the integral development of his life and vocation as a human person in the context of the community of persons. All this strengthens the distinctive Catholic character of a Catholic university.

What has been said so far refers mainly to the fundamental aspects of the identity of a Catholic university. One more dimension, however, should also be pointed out, and that is its mission (which is, obviously, strongly tied to its identity). A Catholic university, as any university, should see its basic mission as a “continuous quest for truth through its research, and the preservation and communication of knowledge for the good of society”<sup>12</sup>. This means the Catholic university is to serve both the Church and society. This will be fulfilled when its research activities will include a study of serious contemporary problems, particularly concerning the dignity of human life, the quality of personal and family life, the protection of nature, the promotion of justice and peace for all, the search for a new economic and political order that will better serve the humanity<sup>13</sup>. In all this a Catholic university is to pay special attention to the ethical and religious dimensions of the

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<sup>11</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, no. 19.

<sup>12</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, no. 30. See also no. 30-49.

<sup>13</sup> Roche enumerates three issues of profound implications for coming generations: the general crisis of values and orientation, the increasing gap between developed and developing countries and the current ecological crisis.

studied problems. Having its own role in the evangelizing mission of the Church, the university has an obligation to communicate to society those ethical and religious principles, which give full meaning to human life. Of special importance is the Church's endeavour of developing an integral Christian anthropology, to which the university should continue to contribute<sup>14</sup>. Being a Catholic institution the university shall also offer pastoral ministry particularly to its students. This ministry is meant to help people integrate faith with life, religious and moral principles with academic and non-academic activities. Every Catholic university is also called to promote cultural dialogue. In any circumstances the university is to regard itself as a primary place for a lasting and fruitful dialogue between the Church and culture, which is based on a profound conviction that human culture is essentially open to transcendence – to God and his Revelation<sup>15</sup>. Finally, being

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Cf. *The Intellectual Appeal of Catholicism and the Idea of a Catholic University*, p. 13-14.

<sup>14</sup> It is in many documents that John Paul II, following the Vatican II teaching, has stressed the importance of a sound integral vision of man and his life, which the Church finds above all in Christ: "In reality it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear" (Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, no. 22). In his inaugural encyclical letter John Paul II has stressed his Christological anthropology: "Christ the Redeemer 'fully reveals man to himself'. If we may use the expression, this is the human dimension of the mystery of the Redemption. In this dimension man finds again the greatness, dignity and value that belong to his humanity. In the mystery of the Redemption man becomes newly 'expressed' and, in a way, is newly created. He is newly created! 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal 3:28). The man who wishes to understand himself thoroughly – and not just in accordance with immediate, partial, often superficial, and even illusory standards and measures of his being—he must with his unrest, uncertainty and even his weakness and sinfulness, with his life and death, draw near to Christ. He must, so to speak, enter into him with all his own self, he must 'appropriate' and assimilate the whole of the reality of the Incarnation and Redemption in order to find himself. If this profound process takes place within him, he then bears fruit not only of adoration of God but also of deep wonder at himself" John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, no. 10.

<sup>15</sup> "From the time the Gospel was first preached, the Church has known the process of encounter and engagement with cultures. Christ's mandate to his disciples to go out everywhere, 'even to the ends of the earth' (*Acts* 1:8), in

“born from the heart of the Church” a Catholic university must play its part in the evangelization, which is the primary, salvific mission of the Church. Catholic universities are to bear witness to Christ and his Gospel, which is ever more critical in contemporary circumstances of modern cultures marked by secularism.

Understanding both the identity and the mission of a Catholic university is necessary in order to explain the reasons why Catholics want to have such academic institutions of higher education. Having been established either in the distant past or in recent years these universities bring along hopes and expectations for the Church and society. Hence it is essential that Catholic universities will remain both good universities and unwaveringly Catholic. As academic institutions they are to be places of free, autonomous and responsible research and so conducting their research and teaching in accordance with methodological requirements. Freedom and responsibility must go together here since freedom is intertwined with the responsibility to the truth. This formal requirement needs to be complemented by a key demand that the entire service of the Catholic university will help to guard the dignity of very human being.

Being academic communities of professors and students those universities shall strive to remain communities and not just assemblies of loosely connected elements like faculties, departments, chairs or indi-

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order to pass on the truth which he had revealed, led the Christian community to recognize from the first the universality of its message and the difficulties created by cultural differences [...]. With the richness of the salvation wrought by Christ, the walls separating the different cultures collapsed. God's promise in Christ now became a universal offer: no longer limited to one particular people, its language and its customs, but extended to all as a heritage from which each might freely draw. From their different locations and traditions all are called in Christ to share in the unity of the family of God's children. It is Christ who enables the two peoples to become 'one'. Those who were 'far off' have come 'near', thanks to the newness brought by the Paschal Mystery. Jesus destroys the walls of division and creates unity in a new and unsurpassed way through our sharing in his mystery [...]. Faith's encounter with different cultures has created something new. When they are deeply rooted in experience, cultures show forth the human being's characteristic openness to the universal and the transcendent. Therefore they offer different paths to the truth, which assuredly serve men and women well in revealing values which can make their life ever more human". John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et ratio*, no. 70.



vidual persons. Their Christian character includes an expectation that they will continue to be inspired by the Christian Revelation and not only as individual teachers or students but as university communities. All their reflection is to be open to the light of the Catholic faith, to remain faithful to the Church and thus serve both the people of God and the entire human family. A particular and pressing task of the Catholic university should be to continue its research that would contribute to the integration of knowledge, as already mentioned. This is rooted in the university's constant dedication to the search of truth. A crucial aspect of this dedication should be promoting an ever more needed dialogue between faith and reason and thus bearing witness to the unity of all truth. Catholic universities are also called to keep alive the moral dimension of all academic activities, and so will serve the human person preserving the priority of the ethical over the technical, and the primacy of the person over things. Theology, both as a field of research and as a study programme, is to permeate all knowledge and offer it its own theological perspective, which – as nothing else – brings to all disciplines a universal and even supernatural orientation. Being born from the heart of the Church the Catholic university should not neglect its role in assisting and helping believers on their way to heaven, to the *visio Dei*, which is the final goal of the human person and of all mankind.

## 2. Some aspects of a cultural context

It is obvious that in many respects the Central-Eastern European world, being part of Western civilisation, resembles the rest of Europe, and shares both in its bright and dark sides, both in its hopes and fears. But it is also clear it has its peculiar characteristics, due to its recent history and contemporary developments, both achievements and failures. I will first try to point out to certain common aspects of our contemporary world and its culture, and then I will try to pick out some facets of our local situation.

I will not be very novel, I suspect, when I first turn the reader's attention to three aspects of our modern culture, which is still under

a strong influence of the Enlightenment<sup>16</sup>. What I first mean here is secularism. The Enlightenment rejected not only the Church but all revealed religion as irrelevant to society and the state. Secularism is then the way of life *as if God did not exist*. When applied to the subject under consideration, it creates a secular way of life and academic work, a secular theory of law and science etc. Finally there is no basis for affirming a transcendent dignity of the human person, and so there are no limits to what the science can do to manipulate human beings.

Another aspect of today's culture is relativism. It starts with the premise that reason is not capable of knowing objective truth, including moral truth. In fact there is no such truth (postmodernism!). Here all depends upon the circumstances of a given case. For a modern man relativism has become "the only virtue"<sup>17</sup>. Since no one can know what is right or wrong, the resolution of such questions must be left up to the political process. Eventually we get a utilitarian philosophy that governs everything. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, before entering the conclave, identified it in his homily on 18 April 2005 as "a dictatorship of relativism" which he later repeated as Pope.

Finally modern culture is deeply marked by individualism. It is an exaggerated autonomy of the individual. Man here is no longer an *animal sociale* by nature. The Enlightenment thinkers postulated a mythical "state of nature" populated by autonomous individuals who were not *social* but *sociable*<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> "[...] the classic phrase of Francis Canavan, SJ, of Fordham University, who described the present stage of American culture as 'the fag-end of the Enlightenment'". Charles E. Rice, *Natural Law in the Twenty-First Century*, p. 296. The three core strands of the Enlightenment see *ibidem*, p. 296-301.

<sup>17</sup> "Relativism is necessary to openness; and this is the virtue, the only virtue, which all primary education for more than fifty years has dedicated itself to inculcating. Openness – and the relativism that makes it the only plausible stance in the face of various claims to truth and various ways of life and kinds of human beings – is the great insight of our times". Allan David Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students*, p. 25-26.

<sup>18</sup> Among those thinkers were for example Thomas Hobbes, John Locke or Jean-Jacques Rousseau who formed the state according to the social contract for some purpose.

The present state of modern culture has been finely described in Pope John Paul II's Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*. It would be enlightening to refer to that document, which has named the present "state of affairs" in this respect as the *dimming of hope*<sup>19</sup>: "There are many *troubling signs* which at the beginning of the third millennium are clouding the horizon of the European continent". We experience "*the loss of Europe's Christian memory and heritage*, accompanied by a kind of practical agnosticism and religious indifference whereby many Europeans give the impression of living without spiritual roots". We see "the slow and steady advance of secularism [...]. Many people are no longer able to integrate the Gospel message into their daily experience; living one's faith in Jesus becomes increasingly difficult in a social and cultural setting in which that faith is constantly challenged and threatened. In many social settings it is easier to be identified as an agnostic than a believer. The impression is given that unbelief is self-explanatory, whereas belief needs a sort of social legitimization which is neither obvious nor taken for granted".

People seem to be filled with *fear of the future*, which is accompanied by "the inner emptiness that grips many people and the loss of meaning in life". There is an expanding experience of *existential fragmentation*, which causes a feeling of loneliness in people's hearts as well as divisions and conflicts amongst them. All this comes with "the spread of individualism, we see an *increased weakening of interpersonal solidarity*". The Holy Father stresses that "at the root of this loss of hope is an *attempt to promote a vision of man apart from God and apart from Christ*", and this makes man "the centre of reality" occupying – falsely! – the place of God. "Forgetfulness of God led to the abandonment of man. It is therefore no wonder that in this context a vast field has opened for the unrestrained development of nihilism in philosophy, of relativism in values and morality, and of pragmatism – and even a cynical hedonism – in daily life". This leads the Pope to emphasize that mankind is witnessing "the emergence of a *new culture*, largely influenced by the mass media, whose content and character are often in conflict with the Gospel and the dignity of the human person. This culture is also marked by a widespread and

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, no. 7-9.

growing religious agnosticism, connected to a more profound moral and legal relativism rooted in confusion regarding the truth about man as the basis of the inalienable rights of all human beings. At times the signs of a weakening of hope are evident in disturbing forms of what might be called a ‘*culture of death*’.

What in my opinion is central here is that phrase which stresses that the whole problem is rooted in “confusion regarding the truth about man”. It is here, from the level of anthropology that the *dimming of hope* emerges and then spreads. Ever more often contemporary societies are “suffering from ‘*horizontalism*’” and so are in real and urgent need of openness to the Transcendence. “European culture gives the impression of ‘silent apostasy’ on the part of people who have all that they need and who live as if God does not exist”<sup>20</sup>.

All of what I have said so far about the European culture as a whole applies in many respects to our Central and Eastern situation as well as to other parts of the modern globalized world where ideas and cultures are being transferred and mixed so easily and rapidly. Perhaps a lot of the elements are even reinforced in my part of Europe, particularly because of the legacy of communism and its still present traces in our societies’ mentality and way of life. After communism had cast its shadow on some of our nations for two generations, for others even for three, it is here that one can see and experience secularism, individualism, moral and epistemological relativism, agnosticism, egoism or a spirit of suspicion. Our societies do suffer from *horizontalism*, and many people still carry in themselves seeds of *homo sovieticus*.

Beside the above, critically speaking I should not omit other aspects of the situation of our Catholic universities, which derive from our human weaknesses, negligence and failures. These too influence the way our universities function and at times not so fruitfully fulfil their mission. One can notice that our academic staff and our academic authorities seem to learn slowly about how the present circumstances change and our culture changes, hence they react slowly. Either they are for good or for bad, those rapid changes and transformations of the contemporary cultural situation should be seen as *the signs of the*

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<sup>20</sup> See respectively John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, no. 34 and 9.

*time* and so the challenges, to which the universities are to react. Still too many of us – people of the Church and of our universities – look toward the world around as something alien or even inimical and hostile. It is obvious one has to be critical about what is going on around in the world, but what is essential is Christians' deepest conviction, rooted in the faith, that the world is good having been created by God and redeemed by Jesus Christ. Referring again to our European context I believe we insufficiently see our continent as one whole, as a community of brothers and sisters – our common home. Too often we rather tend to see it as a collection of separate fragments and parts, separate nations and societies that have not so much in common. One of the results of this way of thinking is that we have too little a serious, particularly philosophical and theological, long-term or short-term cooperation and common projects. Sharing in the same culture shaped so deeply by the Christian religion, Catholic universities should cooperate more among themselves in order to better understand the milieu in which they are to fulfil their mission. Notwithstanding the various difficulties, it is to be said that we do not sufficiently cooperate with other non-Catholic universities, including secular ones or those belonging to other faiths. We need more openness to dialogue with other academic partners seeing this as a privileged way how we can share our values and goods with others while learning from them too. This touch of individualism in some cases applies to the situation within our institutions where academic professors and students do not regard their university as a real *universitas* – an authentic community with common goals. One can have an impression that the university community sometimes seems divided and fragmented as being marked by egoistic thinking and acting. It is then worth emphasizing that we do not put enough stress on some form of a Christian and Catholic formation both of students and of professors. I believe we need more openness to the inspiration coming from our Christian faith and ecclesial context. As Catholic institutions Catholic universities are to understand and promote their ecclesial rootedness and so to shape more fruitfully the contemporary society in the light of the message of Christ.

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Benedict XVI has reminded that “Catholic” identity is in no way reductive but rather exalts the university. Catholic universities have their permanent place in the life and mission of the Church. “In the vast ocean of culture Christ always needs ‘fishers of men,’ that is, knowledgeable and well-qualified people who put their professional skills at the service of good, ultimately at the service of the Kingdom of God”<sup>21</sup>. Eventually and fundamentally then Catholic universities are destined to the glory of God and to the spiritual and material promotion of humankind. Whatever the circumstances then, our Catholic universities cannot cease to be Catholic as otherwise they will become redundant and unnecessary, and then we will have to close them down.

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<sup>21</sup> Benedict XVI, *A Reason Open to God: On Universities, Education and Culture*, ed. J. Steven Brown, Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press 2013, p. 43.

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