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INTERPRETATION OF SPIRITUAL LIFE ACCORDING TO THE “IMAGO DEI”¹

This article is the result of theological research on the subject of life. The phenomenon of life is multifaceted, but often it cannot be defined because it is a mystery. The author of the article, based on the truth that man is a biological-psycho-spiritual unity, interprets these spheres in the key of St. Bonaventure’s idea, describes them as *vestigium*, *umbra*, and *imago Dei*. The issue of spiritual life in the category of *Imago Dei* is analyzed in detail. The author tries to answer the questions that arise by using not only theological fields: or is there an openness to transcendence only in a man? What does it mean to be an image of God? How to achieve a full life? The sphere of *bios*, *psyche*, and *zoe* in the human person are permeating each other, but this spiritual life transcends the previous two planes. This distinguishes man from other creatures and gives him a unique character. God, in His goodness and freedom, grants man life, creates him as a free being and in His image. But the perfect image of the Father is Jesus Christ. In His Incarnation, He showed us the fullness of humanity and through imitation and union with Christ, man can become conformed to the image of God. In this way, it is finally possible to obtain full participation in the communion with God in the Holy Trinity.

INTRODUCTION

Life is a mystery. There are different interpretations of this phenomenon, on many planes, from the natural sciences, through the psychological sciences,

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cognitive science, to the humanities and philosophy. However, the most important and broadest interpretative perspective is given by theology. In its context, this phenomenon can be presented in three categories: *bios* (biological life), *psyche* (conscious life, mental life) and *zoe* (spiritual life). The research undertaken on this subject encourages the theological reflection especially on spiritual life. The inspiration and at the same time the working method for the author of the article is the concept of St. Bonaventure, who explained the relationship of the Creator to creation in three categories: *vestigium* (trace, vestige), *umbra* (shadow) and *imago* (image).² As the title of the article itself indicates, the most important category for this consideration is *imago*, which will be the basis for the interpretation of spiritual life, hereinafter referred to as *zoe*. The correlation between spiritual life and the theological category of *imago* thus defines the main purpose of the article, as indicated in the title. The presented interpretation will not be a simple analysis of Bonaventure's theology, but will be made in relation to the cultural, psychological and even biological understanding of the term *image*.

It is worth making a methodological remark here. Although science and theology operate using different ways of describing the world, they deal with one and the same reality. Therefore, an appropriate hermeneutical key is needed to enable dialogue between science and theology. This analysis adopts the approach called convergence, which was presented by John Haught in his book *Science and faith*.³ Therefore, spiritual life will not be presented as a simple synthesis of different views of science and theology. Rather, it will be presented as a new emergent quality – a *zoe* that is finally established in God.⁴ It is worth noting that the article is a continuation of the two earlier papers, which were previously published in the *Theology in Poland* [Teologia w Polsce].⁵ Together with them it constitutes

² Cf. Bonaventura, *Commentaria in quatuor libros sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi* [I d 3 p 3 q 2 c (I 73 a)], in: Bonaventura, *Opera omnia*, Quaricchi 1882, quote after: J. Ratzinger, *Opera omnia*, vol. II: *Rozumienie objawienia i teologia historii według Bonawentury*, transl. J. Merecki, ed. K. Gózdź, M. Górecka, Lublin 2014, p. 280.

³ J. Haught, *Science and faith. A new introduction*, New York 2012.

⁴ Cf. K.E. Duszek, *Theological Insight into the Phenomenon of Life: the Bios as a Vestigium Dei*, "Teologia w Polsce" 13 (2019) 1, p. 62.

⁵ In 2018 a research team created in the Institute of Dogmatic Theology of KUL, including the author of the article, undertook research work on the issue of life. The project was entitled *The phenomenon of Life in Interdisciplinary view. A Theological Analysis of the State of Research*. The research resulted in the articles of K.E. Duszek, *Theological Insight into the Phenomenon of Life: the Bios as a Vestigium Dei*, "Teologia w Polsce" 13 (2019) 1, p. 59–72; A. Pędrak, *Umbra Dei. A Theological Interpretation of Psychological Life*, "Teologia w Polsce" 13 (2019) 1, p. 87–100. They became an impulse to undertake further research on this topic. The present article is a continuation of the idea included and explained therein.

a certain whole and it is worth reading it in their context. Each of these articles looks at life from the point of view of interdisciplinary research, showing a broader perspective on this phenomenon. The following analyze is the apex of the research, so that it is possible to answer the questions: is the plane of life of the *zoe* exclusively human? Does the spiritual life bear witness to being an image of God? And finally: what produces the fullness of life?

ZOE AND IMAGO

Spiritual life can be defined using the term *zoe*. This term is, on the one hand, very simple, but on the other hand, it encompasses the highest, most subtle aspect of life – transcendence. Spiritual life is more than just mental life, which will be expanded further on in the article. *Zoe* means reaching "towards" something higher than oneself, it is a longing for the "Other," the "Inconceivable," the "Eternal." It is a content that goes beyond the described phenomenon and is never fully defined. The final form of existence is called life – *zoe* because it is not just ordinary, actual and lifeless existence. Life indicates such a quality of being that allows an internal communication within itself, makes it possible to possess oneself and to relate freely to the other. To the highest extent it belongs to a person, especially through the two fundamental activities of the spirit – reason and will – and reaches perfection in one's community with God.⁶

As was said in the introduction, *imago* together with *vestigium* and *umbra* appeared in the teaching of St. Bonaventure, but here the comparisons of *zoe* as *imago* will not directly relate to his concepts. The expression *imago* itself is surprisingly diverse. To see the fullness and coherence of all the meanings it is worth relating to the interpretation taken from non-theological fields. In the most general and colloquial meaning *imago* is simply an *image*. This is the world presented in an image which reflects some reality. An image can be a work of art or a scene recounted in memory or imagination, the entirety of matters. An image has the dimension of otherness and diversity. Its task is to show "something" or "someone else." There are different kinds of images: mental, literary, cultural and material ones. Man has the tendency to create mental images of reality, especially of some-

⁶ Cf. G.L. Müller, *Katholische Dogmatik. Für Studium und Praxis der Theologie*, Freiburg–Basel–Wien 1995, p. 565–566. Man, thanks to soul and spiritual powers of reason and will, is bestowed with freedom, „a special sign of the image of God" CCC 1705 (2nd Vatican Council, The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Contemporary World *Gaudium et spes*, Vatican 1965, 17).

one unknown, including God.⁷ In psychoanalysis *imago* denotes an subconscious or unconscious notion of some person that is projected on other persons in the milieu.⁸ Biology also gives an interesting definition, since *imago* is an adult form, capable of reproduction, shaped fully and finally after successive transformations.

It seems that the proposed scopes of understanding of image have little to do with spiritual life and the analogy is largely incomprehensible, but by developing the theme it will be possible to present a broader and interesting horizon for theological interpretation of *zoe* as the *imago Dei*.

SHADOWS, VESTIGES, IMAGES

In this section we will try to answer the first fundamental question: is *zoe* (inner life, transcendental) something exclusively human? It is certain that the world is not something created and existing without any relationship with God. Its truthfulness and potentiality have their basis in the reflection of the Father – the Eternal Word. The Trinitarian features of God are also imprinted in creatures.⁹ In his concept, St. Bonaventure proposed a ternary construction that indicates the relationship of creation to the Creator. All living beings, named by the holy Doctor of the Church, are vestiges – *vestigia Dei*; *umbra Dei* are shadows, meaning everything created but lifeless. Both have a causal relationship to God. *Imago*, on the other hand, is related to the Creator through a relationship of knowledge and love.¹⁰ Man as a spiritual-personal and spiritual-corporeal being integrates all three degrees within himself. Only he can praise God, reciprocate His love and have a personal relationship with Him as God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In his existence, knowledge and desire for perfect love, he is the image of God.¹¹ The very term *imago Dei* (Latin), Greek *eikon*, Hebrew *selem*, is the inner relationship between God and man who was created in His image. In the light of the Bible, the image of God indicates an ontological relationship between man and his Creator that touches the very essence of being, emphasizing his special status and dignity and destiny, different from other creatures.¹²

⁷ Cf. F. Boespflug, *Karykatury Boga. Potęga i niebezpieczeństwo obrazu*, transl. M. Szewc, Poznań 2006, p. 15.

⁸ Cf. I. Błocian, *Psychoanalityczne wykładnie mitu. Freud, Jung, Fromm*, Białystok 2010, p. 11–22.

⁹ Cf. G.L. Müller, *Katholische Dogmatik...*, p. 194.

¹⁰ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Opera Omnia*, vol. II: *Rozumienie objawienia i teologia historii według Bonawentury...*, p. 279–281.

¹¹ Cf. G.L. Müller, *Katholische Dogmatik...*, p. 194.

¹² Cf. *Obraz Boży*, [in:] *Encyklopedia katolicka*, vol. XIV, Lublin 2010, col. 226.

An interesting vision of anthropology was put forward by Wolfhart Pannenberg. He does not start with theological teaching on man, but looks for sources in philosophical, psychological or even biological and zoological research. In this way he indicates a connection between all sciences dealing with man in the most important points of his structure as an individual and a cultural-social being. Contemporary anthropology defines man differently from Christian tradition. It starts with his place in nature, not with his relationship with God. Man, in the order of nature, is conceived of as a microcosm that is in relation to the macrocosm, constituting the whole universe. Since the time of Democritus man has been considered a reflection of the macrocosm because he unites all realities: body, soul and spirit. Such an assignment was very much present in the Renaissance era and lasted until modern times. It was then that the idea of man as a microcosm began to be abandoned, concurrently with opposing him to animals by returning to the idea that only man has the immortal soul. So the Christian understanding of the soul, which bears witness to the dignity of man, rising above the cosmos and being on God's side, returned. However, the dualism of the soul and the body has reappeared, which has brought back the problem of defining man from the material side. Behavioural psychology and biological research have tried to help solve this problem, showing again that man is not fundamentally different from animals, but only presents a different variant of behaviour in the environment and this is what makes him special. According to Pannenberg, the animal environment cannot be conceptually transferred to the human environment. Man's behaviour is not inborn, as in animals, but is the result of culture and other complex factors. Man's uniqueness is revealed in his openness to the world. The human person distinguishes himself from the animal world by his way of being, which points out to his spirituality and his different way of looking at the world, as well as going beyond it.¹³

Helmuth Plessner explained man's position by distinguishing him from animals, which are the centre of life for themselves. Man sees his centre not only inside himself, but also outside himself. And so Pannenberg, referring to the discussion on the place of man in the world, explained that man does have certain patterns of behaviour, but they are the starting point of man's openness, that is self-transcendence. The most important thing, however, is that man constitutes a personal unity of soul and body.¹⁴ Humans surpass animals with their spirit, which gives them an infinite horizon. Man not only wants to eat and drink, but also seeks community, closeness, friendship. He wants spiritual exchange and spiritual cognition. As a result, he finds his perfect place in the order of love and

¹³ Cf. K. Gózdź, *Teologia człowieka*, Lublin 2006, p. 375–377.

¹⁴ Cf. W. Pannenberg, *Anthropologie in theologischer Perspektive*, Göttingen 1983, p. 35–37, quote after: K. Gózdź, *Teologia człowieka...*, p. 378–380.

this is what he is assigned to. This is revealed in man to an incomparably higher degree than in animals.¹⁵ God gave the animals an instinct, and left the image, religion and humanity to man in his soul.¹⁶

Zoe is therefore most fully realized in man, because only the human person as *imago Dei* is capable of spiritual acts that make him or her a transcendental being – open and going above himself or herself. For “traces” and “shadows” God is only the cause, while for “image” He is the object of knowledge. But all creatures say something about God. Nature is neither a revelation of God nor an image of God, but everywhere one can see the traces and shadows of God’s beauty and divine intervention.¹⁷ It can therefore be considered that in a certain sense other creatures and the whole world are a *subimago* – an incomplete, imperfect figure.

Zoe is “hidden” in the potentiality of all creation, of every life. This potentiality is participation in the infinite life of God. The phenomenon of life, also understood as *bios* and *psyche*, testifies that biological and mental life is a *vestigium* and *umbra Dei*. However, this *zoe* – spiritual life emerges from the earlier ones and is fully realized in the human person by God’s grace.

HOMO – THE WORK OF THE “OTHER ONE”

It has been mentioned that in psychoanalysis, *imago* denotes subconscious or unconscious image of a certain person based on experience, projected at other people from the environment and at God. In order to fully understand what *imago* is, it is worth addressing this issue as well. It should be made clear that Freudian thesis that the image of God is a projection of the image of the father of the family is not only a theological but also methodological error. According to this interpretation, it is man who “creates God in his own image, according to his image and concepts.” Although the psychology of religion draws attention to a mental process of a religious character, it is not entirely competent to deduce the ontological fact of a deity on this basis. Carl Gustav Jung has delineated these spheres more concretely, emphasizing that when one speaks of God (especially in the imaginative mode), one has a psychological fact in mind, because at the bottom in every human being rests the image of God as an archetype.¹⁸ Depending on

¹⁵ Cf. G.L. Müller, P. Lisicki, *Chrystus jest zawsze nowoczesny*, Łomża 2018, p. 14.

¹⁶ Cf. J.G. Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784), Berlin–Weimar 1965, p. 312–313, quote after: K. Gózdź, *Teologia człowieka...*, p. 381.

¹⁷ Cf. J. Moltmann, *Bóg w stworzeniu*, transl. Z. Danielewicz, Kraków 1995, p. 132.

¹⁸ Cf. C.G. Jung, *Archetypy i symbole. Pisma wybrane*, transl. J. Prokopiuk, Warszawa 1993, p. 182–187.

experience, these images may be distorted, but as an empiricist he confirmed that there are no research methods to clearly define God as a *factum ontologicum*.¹⁹

Most generally speaking, the image's task is to present something or someone else. Also the very concept of creation presupposes a Creator, the Maker of this image. The uniqueness of creation consists in the fact that it is an empirical, tangible being, existing in relationship to a person, pointed at a person and revealed in a person. So the Creator as the Ultimate Person is in some way revealed through creation. An image presents some reality but is not this reality. Also here. Man is created in God's image, but is not God. Personal God is absolute transcendence and for all creation He is inherently immanent, but not in the sense of being identical with creation. He exists in a dialogical mode in relation to creation, particularly as reaching towards man, who is the crown of creation.²⁰

According to the most widespread interpretation, being an image of God means being a substitute or representative of God in the created world. This concept, which has its source in Genesis (1:26–27), becomes the key to interpreting the particular dignity and role of man. This is indicated by some of his characteristics: diversity of the organic system, biological structure, openness to the world, awareness, self-determination, knowledge.²¹ The second description of man's creation adds two details, that he was created from the dust of the earth and that God breathed the spirit of life into him. In the light of these descriptions, three aspects of similarity to God can be seen: exceptional dignity, moral values and participation in the way of existence of God.²² At the same time, these issues raise further questions. Does not the biological and mental life itself already bear witness to the fact that man is God's image? In what sense does this spiritual life make man *imago Dei*? What about people who do not believe in God or, in ecclesiastical terms, do not lead a spiritual life; or those who, due to a disability, are not even able to maintain cognitive processes?

Based on our previous research, we recognize that man is a biological-psycho-spiritual unity. Biological life is given, but also partly determined, has its openness and is in a sense a struggle, characterized by emergence and "leaning" towards the future. Already these characteristics of life understood as *bios* have their transcendental reference to God and make the phenomenon of life understandable as *vestigium Dei*. However, it cannot be separated from the psychological and spiritu-

¹⁹ Cf. A.J. Nowak, *Osoba fakt i tajemnica*, Rzeszów 2010, p. 187–190.

²⁰ Cf. K. Gózdź, *Teologia spełnieniem myśli ludzkiej*, Lublin 2019, p. 109.

²¹ Cf. J. Bujak, *Człowiek jako imago Dei. Wokół antropologicznych treści w wybranych dokumentach dialogów doktrynalnych*, Szczecin 2007, p. 51–52.

²² Cf. J. Czerwski, *Ikona w Nowy Testamencie. Studium semantyczno-egzegetyczne pojęcia Eikon*, Wrocław 2011, p. 11–12.

al sphere. This means that the *bios* as a trace of God is ultimately fulfilled in *imago Dei*.²³ The same is true of the mental sphere of man. Mental processes in this key can metaphorically be called a shadow of God (*umbra Dei*), because they lead to deeper spiritual reflection, particularly connected with the ultimate meaning of existence. Mental life results from the *bios* and leads to the *zoe*, which is ultimately fulfilled in its transcendental function.²⁴ Karol Wojtyła explains these issues by distinguishing between ontological and experiential subject, which means that man is not only aware of his actions but also experiences them very deeply.²⁵ Wojtyła also writes about the pure *self* and the spiritual *self*. The experiences of the soul constitute the transcendence of the person and embrace the entire spiritual *self* of man. Moreover, the integration of body and spirit in every person is perfect, regardless of their physical, mental or spiritual health. Therefore, we can speak of total equality, dignity and value of people. An individual's personality, as an expression of a person, can be more or less integrated, but it is not identical to that person.²⁶ The mentally ill, the deeply disabled are persons fully created in the image of God. Even if these people are not able to make full use of the powers given to them because of their disability, there is a potential in them to make use of the sphere of *bios*, *psyche* and *zoe* granted to every human being during creation. According to Wojtyła, the integrity of a person consists in aligning the dynamism of the body (proper to nature) with the dynamism of the spirit (proper to person).²⁷

It should be stressed once again that free will and reason, cognitive processes and mental life distinguish man from other creatures. St. Thomas believed that in the act of creation God poured a rational soul into man and this fact proves that man is *imago Dei*. It is the rational nature that imitates God in the fact that God knows and loves himself. Moreover, St. Thomas believes that the image of God is only in man's mind and not in his entire existence.²⁸ Joseph Ratzinger follows this categorization, explaining the difference between mental and spiritual life based on the main theological virtues.²⁹

²³ Cf. K. E. Duszek, *Theological Insight into the Phenomenon of Life...*, p. 71.

²⁴ Cf. A. Pędrak, *Umbra Dei...*, p. 98.

²⁵ Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, Kraków 1969, p. 268–269.

²⁶ Cf. A. J. Nowak, *Osoba fakt i tajemnica*, Rzeszów 2010, p. 128.

²⁷ Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, p. 218–219; also. A. J. Nowak, *Osoba fakt i tajemnica...*, p. 129.

²⁸ Cf. B. Kochaniewicz, *Homo Imago Dei? O Tomaszowym i współczesnym spojrzeniu na tajemnicę człowieka*, in: *Teologia św. Tomasza z Akwinu dzisiaj*, ed. B. Kochaniewicz, Poznań 2010, p. 97.

²⁹ A similar understanding of this issue is given by the Catechism of the Catholic Church: "Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons. and he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead." CCC 357.

Faith is something else than a "pre-understanding" of scientific knowledge, it is beyond intellectual cognition. Faith is disproportionate to knowledge, it gives meaning to man's place in the world, without which he could neither calculate nor act. Of course, it must be added that understanding helps to retain faith, but faith goes far beyond rational thinking.³⁰

Hope is something else than optimism. Optimism in some moments of life is good and useful, but it is based on a kind of utopia, and even proposes a world without hope, often deceptive, urging one to escape into unreal life. Hope also goes beyond optimism and is directed to happiness here on earth, but also in the future. For it assumes an eschatological union between the world and God through an act of God's power and love. It presupposes a return to the original state.³¹ Ratzinger also stresses that human love (*eros*) cannot be separated from the supernatural one (*agape, caritas*). Usually such attempts end in degeneration and falsification. Likewise, love should not be reduced to the love for the temporal, as it is deprived of its deepest sense – the infinity. And whoever tries to separate the love of *agape, caritas* from the nature transforms it into a caricature.³² God wants to reveal His love, which He has for the world, He wants it to be recognized by the world in spite of its completely-different-existence. In the most significant way God has done this, giving people His Son. "For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). Love can only be recognized by love. It is from God that love lights up and it is also ignited in human hearts. If we are His creation, there is in us the germ of love, the image of God.³³ Love, as the highest ability anchored in the *zoe*, enables the human person to go beyond himself, beyond his "self," and to respond lovingly to Love.

Thanks to this simple analysis, we can conclude that spiritual life is something other than mental life. In many respects it goes beyond it, making it possible to explain the non-definable. With full awareness one can also come to the conclusion that a non-believer (or rather not having the name for what or whom he believes in) has an inner life. He has a desire, as well as the ability, to carry out inner processes, not only on the *psyche* level. Michael Polanyi calls it *the logic of achievement*.³⁴ It is one of the most characteristic features of living beings, which takes

³⁰ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Opera Omnia*, vol. IV: *Wprowadzenie do chrześcijaństwa. Wyznanie – chrzest – naśladowanie*, transl. R. Biel, M. Górecka, ed. K. Gózdź, M. Górecka, Lublin 2017, p. 71–77.

³¹ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Opera omnia...*, vol. IV, p. 385–386.

³² Cf. *ibidem*, p. 412–413.

³³ Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *Wiarygodna jest tylko miłość*, transl. E. Piotrowski, Kraków 2002, p. 70–71.

³⁴ Zob. M. Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*, New York 1958, p. 327.

on a full and unique shape in a person. It is an openness and focus on “something more.” The definition of person developed by the Boetius is not enough to convey who he/she is and what his/her purpose is. Joseph Ratzinger refers to the term proposed by Richard of St. Victor that a person identifies himself as a *spiritualis naturae incommunicabilis existentia* (non-communicable existence of a spiritual nature); he refers in this way to the treatment of the word *persona* in a theological sense, not to the essence, but to the relationship.³⁵

Faith is the co-communion of two or more persons, and above all of a human person with the Person of God in a way that is not reistic but personal. According to Ratzinger, God gives the grace of faith to everyone, and does it always, but man is not an impersonal being or a thing, so faith cannot be imposed on him by force. Man has his share in the phenomenon of faith through the fact of creation, so he can open himself to it or close himself up, he can accept or reject it, he can develop it, but he can also destroy it – because of sins or for various other reasons. Man has the chance to complete his faith in cooperation with Christ and the Holy Spirit in order to become a man of God.³⁶

A FULLY SHAPED FIGURE

In the light of Jürgen Moltmann’s theology, the teaching about creation is closely linked to the Trinity; creation is shaped by the revelation of Christ and by the experience of the Spirit. The Creator-Father is the one who sends the Son and the Spirit. The Word-Son is the one who unifies and redeems. The creative Power-Spirit is the one who animates and enables creation to participate in eternal life.³⁷ Christ – The Word perfectly realizes the fullness and perfection of the Image of God. It is Jesus Christ who is said to be “the Image,” not “in the image,” because he reminds the Father through the unity of nature. He is the “Image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” (Col 1:15). The human nature of the Son of God is therefore the most perfect realization of the Image of God in creation.³⁸ Christ is the perfect *Imago Dei* – a fully and completely formed figure. Man, on the other hand, in the order of grace, is the image of Christ and can imitate Him.³⁹ Christ

³⁵ Cf. M.J. Szulc, *Obraz Boga. Wokół twórczości Josepha Ratzingera*, Poznań 2011, p. 138–139.

³⁶ Cf. K. Gózdź, *Logos i miłość. Teologia Josepha Ratzingera – Benedykta XVI*, Lublin 2018, p. 86.

³⁷ Cf. K. Gózdź, *Teologia spełnieniem myśli ludzkiej...*, p. 119.

³⁸ Cf. J. Bujak, *Człowiek jako Imago Dei...*, p. 159.

³⁹ Cf. J. Moiser, *Dogmatic Thoughts on Imitation of Christ*, “Scottish Journal of Theology” 30 (1977) 3, p. 204.

is the glory of creation, which at the same time means that Christ is the Sense of the whole world. God's Incarnate Son, the eternal Logos, is the goal, the glory of creation and of new creation (Romans 8:18–23; CCC 280).⁴⁰ What does it mean? History is a development, process, it is not static. In particular, we mean the development of the meaning and final purpose of history. This summit is the Event of Christ. It is not about supernatural or supra-rational development, but about development that appeared at a crucial moment in human history – in the person of Jesus Christ. It is in Him that the summit of humanity has been revealed, and every development of man is heading towards that summit.⁴¹

Man "before Christ" was different from the one "after Christ." According to Fr. Jozafat Nowak, man, even if he sensed that God loves him, probably did not know that He loves differently than man and that God himself is Love. This knowledge came only with Christ. The Word's incarnation was a necessity for man to understand his dignity, both spiritual and corporal. The new man, who reads the Old Testament in the key of the Jesus Christ's Person can conclude that God created man in the image that He was to be in His Incarnation.⁴² Jesus Christ, who crossed the boundaries of humanity, became at the same time a model of man. Man becomes more himself when he lives for another, when he moves away from himself. Jesus Christ is the one who has fully risen above himself and is therefore a man who has truly become human. The process of humanization came in Him to its ultimate end. In order for man to be fully human, God had to become man; only then was the "Rubicon" crossed, separating the animal and rational levels; only then were realized the possibilities that man had from the moment of being created from the dust of the earth; by looking above himself, he could speak to God as "You."⁴³ Christ "has restored to the sons of Adam the divine likeness which had been disfigured from the first sin onward (...) The Christian man, conformed to the likeness of that Son Who is the firstborn of many brothers, received the 'first fruits of the Spirit,' by which he becomes capable of discharging the new law of love."⁴⁴

In this context, it can therefore be concluded that man is actually an *imago Christi*. Christ is a model for every human being, which is why the New Testament calls Him the New Adam. This means that He is to bring together the whole nature of "Adam," the reality that St. Paul called "the Body of Christ." According to Teilhard de Chardin, man is the ultimate point of the complexifica-

⁴⁰ Cf. K. Gózdź, *Teologia spełnieniem myśli ludzkiej...*, p. 119.

⁴¹ Cf. K. Gózdź, *Twórca i Spełniciel naszej wiary*, Lublin 2009, p. 323.

⁴² Cf. A.J. Nowak, *Osoba fakt i tajemnica...*, p. 106, 110.

⁴³ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Opera omnia...*, vol. IV, p. 191.

⁴⁴ 2nd Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, 22.

tion of evolution, but he is also something unfinished; he has not yet reached his goal, he shows a tendency which demands fullness and completeness. The direction of the existence of his “self” makes it clear that he is a creature belonging to a superego who does not destroy him, but embraces him and only in connection with him can the figure of the future man appear, fully achieving his own goal.⁴⁵ Although Teilhard’s theory is not devoid of biological reductions, it does outline a good horizon of theological reflections on spiritual life and the fulfilment of humanity. It points to man’s universal vocation to holiness, to deification, or, as the French thinker calls it, to merging with the divine – christomorphization. The moral obligation to perfect the image of God within oneself does not depend on some external precept; rather, it is an ontological necessity based on the real presence of the image of God in man and on the fulfilment of the divine mission.⁴⁶

Man’s salvation consists in a total rapprochement and being conformed to God in cooperation with Christ and the Holy Spirit. The Fathers of the Church remind us that divinization is never achieved through self-divinization, but only “by grace.”⁴⁷ The measure of man’s vocation is “life in Christ”: “If one remains in Christ, he is a new creature.” (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). A “new one” because of the presence of Christ and the Spirit, and due to living according to the spirit (*kata pneuma*) and not according to the body (*kata sarka*).⁴⁸

Apart from the identity of the being, man can become everything that God is, because he was created for this. Deification by grace does not equal the annihilation of human nature, but is realized in its most perfect form. Christ did not come to transform human nature or to change it into some other nature, but through His Incarnation He wanted to bring it back to where it was before the fall, to immortality. The divinized humanity, therefore, is a humanity that has reached the purpose for which it was created.⁴⁹ Jesus Christ became man not only to save us from our sins but also to restore our full communion with God.⁵⁰

The fullness of human life is expressed in three aspects. First, man’s response to God’s love is not based on compulsion, but on full freedom. The second aspect shows Christ as the fulfilment of man. It is in Jesus Christ that man’s openness to God is achieved and man’s mystery is revealed in its fullness. True humanity

⁴⁵ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Opera omnia...*, vol. IV, p. 192–194.

⁴⁶ Cf. J. Moiser, *Dogmatic Thoughts on Imitation of Christ...*, p. 205.

⁴⁷ Cf. Ch. Schönborn, *Przebóstwienie, życie i śmierć*, transl. W. Szymona, Poznań 2001, p. 37–42.

⁴⁸ Cf. K. Gózdź, *Teologia człowieka...*, p. 90.

⁴⁹ Cf. Ch. Schönborn, *Przebóstwienie, życie i śmierć...*, p. 43–45.

⁵⁰ Cf. N. Vasiliadis, *Wieczny raj*, transl. A. Bieć, K. Korszak, Hajnówka 2004, p. 9.

reaches its peak in communion with God when man is filled with the presence of the Trinity. The third aspect shows the Christological perfection of man. He will reach it when he follows the way of the cross, living in communion with the Crucified, Risen and Glorious One.⁵¹

Exitus is understood in Christianity as a creative act of God, in which man can respond to God's freedom and love by returning to Him. *Reditus*, on the other hand, means the recognition by man that he is a creature and in his freedom has the possibility of giving a response of love to God's love. This is how the dialogue between the Creator and creation arises, in which man as a creature comes to dedicate himself to the Creator in love.⁵² Joseph Ratzinger emphasizes that the spiritual soul, given to man by creating him in the image and likeness of God, opens man to immortality. In Trinitarian Love, in *Christus Totus*, there is the fulfilment of man's time and the beginning of eternity. And every death is an entry into "eternity," into the "end of time," into the full *eschaton*, into the already present resurrection and completion.⁵³ "We know that when He appears, we will be like Him." (1 Jn 3:2). Being like Christ means entering into eternal dialogue with the Divine Persons. By receiving life and love from the Father, in union with the Son and by the power of the Spirit who will dwell in us eternally, we will be able to speak with God the Father in filial intimacy.⁵⁴ Man's existence makes sense when we consider his beginning and vocation: the beginning of creation and the vocation to participate in God's life.⁵⁵

CONCLUSION

"For God created man for incorruption, and made him in the image of his own eternity" (Wisdom 2:23). The words from the Book of Wisdom perfectly summarize the reflection on spiritual life in the light of the *imago Dei* category. This article is not a comprehensive study of this issue, but answers the questions raised at the beginning of the paper. God's marks exist in all nature. In the created world one can see traces (*vestigia*) and shadows (*umbra*) and images (*imago*)

⁵¹ Cf. K. Gózdź, *Teologia spełnieniem myśli ludzkiej...*, p. 132–133.

⁵² Cf. K. Gózdź, *Logos i miłość...*, p. 81.

⁵³ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Opera omnia*, vol. X: *Zmartwychwstanie i życie wieczne. Studia o eschatologii i teologii nadziei*, transl. J. Kobienia, ed. K. Gózdź, M. Górecka, Lublin 2014, p. 354.

⁵⁴ Cf. M.M.G. Gil, *Chrystus – Pośrednik przez miłość jednoczącą*, in: *Jezus Chrystus Pośrednik Zbawienia w hiszpańskiej teologii posoborowej*, ed. J. Lekan, Lublin 2010, p. 165–166.

⁵⁵ Cf. L.F. Ladaria, *Człowiek stworzony na obraz Boga*, in: *Historia dogmatów. Człowiek i jego zbawienie*, ed. B. Sesboüé, vol. II, transl. P. Rak, Kraków 2001, p. 127.

of divine love. However, it is man who is the crown of creation, and it is only in him that unique rational and spiritual processes and openness to relationships with others, and in particular with the Creator, exist. Going deeper into the allegory of understanding life as *bios*, *psyche* and *zoe*, we come to the conclusion that there are three spheres of being in the human person: material, mental and spiritual. God is present in the *bios* as its Creator, but He is not a part of the world, but its foundation. God exists in everything that is alive and constitutes the horizon of biological life, is its cause, purpose and revealed meaning. Life is something given, but also a challenge; being *vestigium Dei*, it reveals the mystery of the Creator.⁵⁶ The mental sphere can be compared to the likeness of God in an *umbra*-like way, because at this level, like a shadow, certain processes are imperfect and distorted, but in their function, structure and sense they already speak of man's Creator, the Cause and the ultimate Purpose – the Divine Logos.⁵⁷

It is spiritual life called *zoe*, which every human being possesses, which shows in a perfect way that through spiritual acts, going beyond himself, towards Transcendence, man can realize himself as a person. Jesus Christ is a perfect image of God the Father. He is “the firstborn among creation.” The humanity of the Son of God has revealed the fullness of human life, which is being destined for eternal life. Following Christ is, therefore, participation in His life on the way of the cross, it is union with His love, in order to transform our lives, to return to the original destiny of man, who was created in God's image. Man is *Imago Christi* when he responds in full freedom to the love of the Creator. In union with the Incarnate Word, the mystery of man in all its fullness and his special vocation is revealed.

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⁵⁶ Cf. K.E. Duszek, *Theological Insight into the Phenomenon of Life...*, p. 64.

⁵⁷ Cf. A. Pędrak, *Umbra Dei...*, p. 98.

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Keywords: spiritual life, image of God, Creator, creation, following of Christ, human

INTERPRETACJA ŻYCIA DUCHOWEGO WEDŁUG KATEGORII *IMAGO DEI*

Streszczenie

Prezentowany artykuł jest owocem refleksji teologicznych nad tematyką życia. Fenomen życia jawi się na wielu płaszczyznach, często jednak do końca nie można go zdefiniować, gdyż jest tajemnicą. Autorka artykułu, opierając się na prawdzie, że człowiek jest jednością biologiczno-psychiczno-duchową, interpretuje te sfery. Podąża za myślą św. Bonawentury i określa je mianem *vestigium*, *umbra* oraz *imago Dei*. Szczegółowej analizie poddaje zagadnienie życia duchowego w kategorii *Imago Dei*, przez co korzystając z dziedzin pozateologicznych, próbuje odpowiedzieć na nasuwające się pytania: czy tylko w człowieku istnieje otwartość na transcendencję, co znaczy być obrazem Boga i w jaki sposób osiągnąć pełnię życia. Sfera *bios*, *psyche* i *zoe* w osobie ludzkiej wzajemnie się przenikają, lecz to życie duchowe przewyższa poprzednie dwie płaszczyzny, przez co odróżnia człowieka od innych stworzeń oraz nadaje mu wyjątkowy charakter. Bóg w swej dobroci i wolności udziela człowiekowi życia, stwarza go jako istotę wolną i na swój obraz. Jednakże doskonałym Obrazem Ojca jest Jezus Chrystus. We wcieleniu ukazał nam pełnię człowieczeństwa i dzięki naśladowaniu i zjednoczeniu z Chrystusem człowiek może upodabniać się do obrazu Boga, by ostatecznie uzyskać pełnię udziału we wspólnocie z Bogiem Trójjedynym.

Słowa kluczowe: życie duchowe, obraz Boży, Stwórca, stworzenie, naśladowanie Chrystusa, człowiek