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CHRISTOLOGICAL HETERODOXY AS A THREAT TO THE KERYGMA IN THE THEOLOGY OF FATHER RANIERO CANTALAMESSA

Any attempt to reduce or disintegrate the Christological dogma is not without an impact on the basic message of the good news, the Kerygma, as well as on its soteriological implications. The theological challenge is to make every effort to proclaim the first message as the announcement of the fullness of the revealed truth, but also to indicate the dangers arising from incomplete or unorthodox proclamation. The article presents negative consequences of heterodox Christological tendencies for the reality of the Kerygma in theology of Father Raniero Cantalamessa. These dogmatic threats and their consequences focus on the person of Jesus Christ and the mysteries of His death and resurrection.

The Apostle of the Nations in the letter to Timothy writing that God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (παντας ανθρωπους θελει σωθηναι και ει εις επιγνωσιν αληθειας ελθειν)¹ (1 Tim 2:4), has shown the essential link between the salvific aspect and the reality of truth. It is not only about the cognitive aspect in the intellectual sense, since the Gospels reveal that the truth that liberates has a personal dimension, but about the recognition (επιγνωσιν)² of this truth, about its personal acceptance inextricably linked with

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¹ Literal translation: “who wants all people to be saved and to come to the recognition of the truth” cf. *Grecko-polski Nowy Testament. Wydanie interlinearne z kluczem gramatycznym, z kodami Stronga i Popowskiego oraz pełną transliteracją greckiego tekstu*, transl. R. Popowski, M. Wojciechowski, Warszawa 2014, p. 1112.

² Apart from 1 Tm 2:4 the word “επιγνωσιν” also occurs in: Rom 10:2; Col 1:9.10; Col 2:2; Col 3:10; 2 Tim 2:25; 2 Tim 3:7; Tit 1:1; Heb 10:26; 2 Pet 1:8.

the entrance into the perspective of salvation. For this reason, from the very beginning, the Church has been preaching the good news of Jesus Christ the Son of God, who is the Lord and Messiah, who died, rose from the dead and leads to salvation and the knowledge of the truth.

The proclamation of the good news of Jesus remains extremely necessary and always relevant. By reading the signs of the times, the Church encourages us, while taking from the whole treasury of Divine Revelation, to return to the joyful proclamation of the kerygma,³ the first message which, as Pope Francis teaches, is the most beautiful, the most important, as well as larger, more attractive, and at the same time the most necessary.⁴ It should occupy a central place in the activity of evangelization, because there is nothing more solid, profound, certain, meaningful and wise than the kerygma.⁵ It is a Christological message aimed at salvation and at recognizing the truth and entering into a personal relationship with Jesus.

But can a message that aims to know and acknowledge the truth not achieve it? Can the preaching of the good news, and even the very essence of it contained in the kerygma, not lead to an encounter with Jesus Christ? Or, fulfilling the mission of the Friend of the Spouse,⁶ like John the Baptist, can one fail to bear witness to the truth (cf. Jn 1:29–34)? The history of the Church gives a positive answer to all these questions. Numerous views, theories and, above all, Christological heresies have shown that the deformation of the revealed truth is not without its impact on the whole set of the truths of faith, especially soteriology. The Church's positive response to the heterodox trends that have emerged over the centuries has been dogmatic judgments, the teachings of the councils or the development of theology

³ It is worth pointing out such documents as: *Encyclical Fides et ratio* 24, 99; *Encyclical Redemptoris missio* 16, 23; *Apostolic exhortation Catechesi tradendae* 18, 21, 25; *Apostolic exhortation Ecclesia in Africa* 73; *Apostolic exhortation Ecclesia in America* 69, 73; *Apostolic exhortation Ecclesia in Oceania* 20; *Apostolic exhortation Pastores Gregis* 29, 39; *Apostolic exhortation Reconciliatio et paenitentia* 17; *Encyclical Deus caritas est* 25; *Apostolic exhortation Verbum Domini* 2, 105; *Apostolic exhortation Evangelii gaudium* 164, 165, 177; *Apostolic exhortation Amoris laetitia* 58, 207, 290, 324; *Apostolic exhortation Christus vivit* 211, 213, 214, 222; *Apostolic exhortation Querida Amazonia* 64–66.

⁴ Cf. Francis, *Apostolic exhortation Evangelii gaudium*, Kraków 2013 [further on: EG], 35; *Apostolic exhortation Amoris laetitia*, Kraków 2016 [further on: AL], 58.

⁵ Cf. EG 165; AL. 58.

⁶ It is about an institution called *shoshbin* in Hebrew, i.e. a person who, on behalf of the Bridegroom or his family, is to prepare the ceremony of the bride and groom's wedding. In the New Covenant, this function gains a spiritual dimension, referring to the relationship and marriage of Jesus the Bridegroom and the Church of His Bride. In the pages of the New Testament, John the Baptist (see Jn 3:29–39) and the Apostle Paul (see 2 Cor 11:2) make reference to this institution. See F. Mickiewicz, *Przyjaciele Oblubieńca. Studium biblijne*, Ząbki 2016; B. Pitre, *Jesus the Bridegroom: The Greatest Love Story Ever Told*, New York 2014.

leading to an ever deeper interpretation and understanding of the revealed truth. It is undeniable, however, that the emergence of dogma does not automatically eliminate views contrary to orthodoxy, and ancient heresies return in different ways and are still present in the living space of the people of God.⁷ This is confirmed, among others, by Pope Francis, who in his exhortation *Gaudete et exsultate* writes about modern gnosticism and pelagianism.⁸

Therefore it should be stressed that even this most basic preaching of the truth about Jesus, who died “for” man and rose “for” man’s justification, may not be devoid of heterodox tendencies. It would therefore be quite an abuse to take approach the reality of the kerygma without reflection on its content, on preparing those who preach it and making the grace of salvation present. The priority, therefore, is to properly discern and name the threats or heterodox tendencies and to effectively eliminate them from the reality of the kerygma and the Church’s teaching. As Napiórkowski states: “bad dogmatics is bad theology and bad teaching; good dogmatics is the basis of good theology and good teaching.”⁹ Thus, one can also state that bad dogmatic foundations are a bad kerygma.

Having this in mind, the purpose of this article is to discuss some of the dogmatic dangers concerning the kerygma¹⁰ which, due to the heterodox formulation of Christological truth, significantly endanger the basic message of the Gospel. These dangers, divided according to the logic and content of the kerygma, will be presented on the basis of the theological-pastoral work of the Italian Capuchin Fr Raniero Cantalamessa.¹¹ The first group will concern Jesus Christ and the second – two Paschal events: death and resurrection.

⁷ See H. Pietras, *Herezje*, Kraków 2019.

⁸ See Pope Francis, *Apostolic exhortation Gaudete et exsultate*, Kraków 2018, p. 35–62. According to the Holy Father, “gnosticism and pelagianism” are two “subtle enemies of holiness.”

⁹ S.C. Napiórkowski, *Jak uprawiać teologię*, Wrocław 1994, p. 72.

¹⁰ The kerygma is by its very nature a dogmatic-pastoral message, so the dangers to its essence are linked to both its dimensions. Dogmatic threats include: christological errors, overemphasis or questioning paschal events, reduction of the pneumatological dimension, a rheistic approach to the first message and attempts to theologize it. The pastoral dangers, on the other hand, are: a wrong relationship to God’s Word, failure to accept God’s wisdom, attempts to smooth out the message for the sake of the recipient and replace it with other forms of help or activity, as well as abandonment of its proclamation..

¹¹ Raniero Cantalamessa (born 1934) – Italian Capuchin, doctor of theology (Freiburg 1962) and classical literature (Milan 1966). Lecturer at the Sacro Cuore University of Milan and member of the International Theological Commission from 1975 to 1981. For twelve years he took part in the Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue. In 1979 he resigned from university work and devoted himself to the service of preaching the Word of God. A year later he was appointed by Pope John Paul II as Preacher of the Pontifical House, a function which he holds to this day. Author of numerous scientific and pastoral books. See A.M. Valli, *Il bambino che portava acqua. Una vita a servizio della Parola*, Milano 2014.

CHRISTOLOGICAL ERRORS

The person of Jesus Christ is in the centre of the kerygma. Its proclamation, in order to be an effective introduction into the personal and salvific relationship, should take into account the data of the Revelation and their proper reading by the Church's Magisterium. As Fr. Raniero states: "During the Councils, the Church has included the essential contents of her faith in Jesus Christ in three statements: Jesus Christ is a true man; Jesus Christ is a true God; Jesus Christ is one person. This is a kind of dogmatic triangle in which deity and humanity are two sides and the person is the apex, which is also true from a historical point of view. First, in the fight against the heresy of gnosticism, the humanity of Christ was defended. Then, in the fourth century, in the fight against Arianism, His deity was defended. Finally, in the course of the Christological controversies of the 5th century, the unity of his person was defended."¹²

The dogmatic triangle Fr. Cantalamessa writes about includes the three basic truths of faith concerning the incarnate Son of God. Their denial or unorthodox attempt at interpretation would have serious consequences for the Christian message. Because of the subject of the paper, the detailed analysis of heresy will be omitted, and the focus will be on showing the consequences of the heterodox Christological approaches to the reality of the kerygma.

NEGATING THE HUMANITY

The truth about the humanity of Jesus Christ, and at the same time about the realism of the incarnation, was already being questioned in the first centuries, among others by docetists and appellites [i.e. followers of Apelles].¹³ The existence of the problem is confirmed by the letter of Saint John, which indicates a clear rule of discernment: "By this you will know the Spirit of God: every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ came in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus, is not of God; and this is the spirit of the Antichrist who, as you have heard, is coming and is already in the world." (1Jn 4:2–3). Views that deny the reception of the body or speak of its illusionary and impassible nature are heresies that contest the incarnational event in which the Word truly became flesh (cf. Jn 1:14).¹⁴ Another form of questioning the human nature of Jesus was

¹² R. Cantalamessa, *Jezus Chrystus Święty Boga*, transl. W. Polczyk, Wrocław 2000, p. 113–114.

¹³ See H. Masson, *Słownik herezji w Kościele katolickim*, transl. B. Sęk, Katowice 1993; R. Cantalamessa, *Jezus Chrystus Święty Boga...*, p. 37–38.

¹⁴ Cf. J.N.D. Kelly, *Początki doktryny chrześcijańskiej*, transl. J. Mrukówna, Warszawa 1988, p. 112–113.

the attempt to disintegrate it, proposed by Apollinaris, who claimed that Jesus Christ accepted humanity but without the element of the rational soul (*nous*).¹⁵ Hence the second type of threat to the truth about the humanity of Jesus, that is to say, an approach that accepts human nature, but to a lesser extent. However, any violation of anthropological truth within the person of Jesus will not be without consequences for Christological and soteriological truth.¹⁶

Also noteworthy is the dangerous tendency which, although not denying the humanity of Jesus, loses the perspective related to human nature by unilaterally emphasizing the deity. This tendency and its consequences appeared in the Middle Ages. At a certain time, the excessive concentration in the lecture of the *Creed* on the dogma of the Holy Trinity as well as the presentation of Jesus as God, Saviour, King and Lord, in isolation from his humanity and earthly life, resulted in the need to seek closer intermediaries with God than Jesus Christ himself. In this way, the top-down presentation of Christological truth led to the development of the cult of saints and relics. The idea of mediation of Mary and the saints also appeared at that time and there is nothing fundamentally wrong with this idea. However, the conviction behind it that Christ is too distant, too divine and too holy for the ordinary and sinful man is in obvious contradiction with the truth of the incarnation as well as with the whole message of the Gospel. It also contradicts the concept of the kerygma, which is about bringing Jesus closer to us and introducing us into the experience of salvation. Therefore, wrong accents in the proclamation, even when the incarnational truth or its realism are not denied and neither is Jesus' humanity disintegrated, may make Him seem distant and make it difficult to enter into a personal relationship with Him. As Cantalamessa states: "faith creates a bond between Christ and the believer, opens the way of communication through which the Holy Spirit passes (...) given to him who believes."¹⁷ For the theory of kerygma, this becomes an extremely important premise. The basic Christological truth, this Christological creed, which is proclaimed in an unbalanced or incomplete way, influences religious consciousness, religious practices and the lives of the faithful. Disproportion and misplaced accents in the proclamation of the kerygma can lead to a wrong image of God, to many distortions in the practice of the people of God and of the Church itself.

All heresies, which to some extent cast doubt on the statement that Jesus is a true man, or over-emphasize the deity in relation to humanity, must be interpreted as a threat to the reality of redemption and to human nature's participation in

¹⁵ Cf. L. Bouyer, *Syn Przedwieczny*, transl. P. Rak, W. Dzieża, Kraków 2000, p. 511–513.

¹⁶ See R. Cantalamessa, *Jezus Chrystus Święty Boga...*, p. 94–96.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 81.

salvation,¹⁸ according to the patristic paradigm that “what was not accepted was not redeemed either.”¹⁹ This is of great importance for the kerygma, because undermining Jesus’ humanity makes it impossible to preach the good news of God incarnate, close to man, similar to him in everything except sin (cf. Heb 4:15). It also deprives us of the right to preach Jesus as a mediator between God and men (cf. 1 Tim 2:5). Finally, the kerygma also loses its most important axis, which is the event of salvation accomplished by Jesus, true man and true God. If He is not human or is not fully human, then a doubt arises as to whether people are and can be redeemed and whether and how they can participate in the reality of salvation. On the other hand, the inappropriate distribution of accents one-sidedly emphasizing the deity of Jesus distances Him from man, contradicting the logic of the kerygma. It ceases to be a joyful proclamation of Jesus’ salvific work and its effects, as well as bringing God closer to man, and instead becomes a disturbing question about man’s future, his relationship to God and personal fulfilment. After all, “the hope of eternity is a coping stone of the faith in incarnation.”²⁰

NEGATING THE DIVINITY

From the perspective of the history of Christianity, it is clear that heresies denying the deity of Jesus have been much more frequent than those denying His humanity. Among the most important are Arianism, with the denial of the divinity but also of the pre-existence of Jesus expressed in the phrase “there was a time when there was no Son.” Apart from Arius, views which reduce deity and reduce Christology to ordinary anthropology can be found in Ebionites, who consider Jesus to be a normal man born of Mary and Joseph, as well as in Artemon, Paul of Samosata, Marcellus of Ancyra or Photin.²¹ In addition, all these heresies were also in some way related to adoptionist or modalist theory. In their opinion, Jesus, who is not God, is an exceptional man because at the time of his baptism in the Jordan he was filled with the Holy Spirit and was adopted in a special way by God. This was supposedly expressed in words: “Thou art my beloved son.” (cf. Mk 1:11; Matt 3:17; Lk 3:22). However, the event of Baptism received from

¹⁸ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 39.

¹⁹ Formula: “that which was not accepted was not saved, but that which was joined to God is also redeemed” was written by Gregory of Nazianzus in a letter to presbyter Cledonius. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Listy*, transl. J. Stahr, Poznań 1933, p. 138.

²⁰ R. Cantalamessa, *Jezus Chrystus Święty Boga...*, p. 99.

²¹ Cf. J.N.D. Kelly, *Początki doktryny chrześcijańskiej...*, p. 110–111; R. Cantalamessa, *Jezus Chrystus Święty Boga...*, p. 166–171.

John has changed nothing in ontology. Jesus, called the Son of God, continued to be a man, becoming only a chosen one and, through God's adoption, unique among all other people. Modalists, on the other hand, saw in Jesus the *modus*, that is, the way God acted or the form of His revelation. The humanity of Jesus of Nazareth, His life, words and actions are human activities in which God acted and was present in an extraordinary way.

While trying to analyze the consequences of thinking and teaching that denies the deity of Jesus, we should begin, following Fr. Cantalamessa, by saying that "the deity of Jesus is the cornerstone [...] After the rejection of this stone, the whole edifice of the Christian faith crumbles down,"²² and the kerygma is not left intact, too. In the writings of the Italian theologian, three groups of threats to the kerygma can be found, born as the fruit of the reduction of the supernatural dimension of the person of Jesus. These are: the collapse of the existing Christian concept of God, the reductionist system of treating faith and thinking about reality in general, and narrowing Christology and soteriology to an anthropological issue, as well as the search for secular ways of salvation.

The rejection of Jesus' divinity affects the Trinitarian horizon of understanding God and the Christian faith. If Jesus is not God, then neither is God in three persons, so the concept of the Trinity with all its novelty and originality revealed in Christianity collapses. Catholic doctrine states that God is eternally Father in relation to his only Son, who is eternally Son only in relation to his Father.²³ If Jesus is not God, then God is not the Father either – for intra-Trinitarian relations no longer apply. Although it is possible to call God the Father in some broad sense, pointing to Him as the beginning or creator,²⁴ this is only a purely figurative or nominal expression that is not rooted in the inner life of the Trinity and its relationships.

The further consequence will be questioning the essence of God as love. How can one speak of eternal God who is love, when there is no person to show unconditionally His essence and His being for the other? "Who does God love? – asks

²² R. Cantalamessa, *Jezus Chrystus Święty Boga...*, p. 160.

²³ Cf. CCC 240; K. Gózdź, *Bóg, Ojciec Jezusa Chrystusa*, w: *Bóg – Ojciec wszystkich*, ed. K. Gózdź, J. Lekan, Lublin 1999, p. 110.

²⁴ CCC 238–239: Many religions invoke God as "Father." The deity is often considered the "father of gods and of men." In Israel, God is called "Father" inasmuch as he is Creator of the world (cf. Deut 32:6; Mal 2:10). Even more, God is Father because of the covenant and the gift of the law to Israel, "his first-born son." (Ex 4:22). God is also called the Father of the king of Israel (cf. 2 Sam 7:14). Most especially he is "the Father of the poor," of the orphaned and the widowed, who are under his loving protection (cf. Ps 68:6). By calling God "Father," the language of faith indicates two main things: that God is the first origin of everything and transcendent authority; and that he is at the same time goodness and loving care for all his children.

Cantalamessa. Humanity? The universe? But it has been love for some millions or billions of years, respectively. And before that, what was He if it wasn't about love? Maybe it was about love in the sense that He had predicted and destined his Son Jesus for all eternity, that is, in the sense that he has always loved something that is not yet, but will be? But in such case God is hope, not love! Or would God love his 'mode' of existence with infinite love, if the Son is considered a mode, not a reality or hypostasis? But it would be neither hope nor love, but vanity."²⁵ Questioning the deity of Jesus leads directly to the denial of the Trinity, of God's Fatherhood, and of the fact that God is love (cf. 1 Jn 4:8b). In this perspective, the kerygmatic message seems to be annihilated at its very foundations, becoming a useless message with content that is not true. God who loves and is love does not exist, nor does His work for the salvation of man and the world. To proclaim the kerygma would be to proclaim a lie. It is worth mentioning that just like the denial of the true humanity of Jesus, also the denial of the deity of Jesus leads to a problem connected with the work of salvation. *Cur Deus homo?* – asked St. Anselm, answering that salvation needs the joint action of God and man, which has become a fact in the person of Jesus Christ, thanks to His two natures. If one denies the truth of any of them, it will also undermine the soteriological reality and its effectiveness.

Cantalamessa defines the second group of dangers as a reductionist system of treating the faith. According to him, reductionism as an approach, which, together with secularism, wants to close and explain the whole reality in secular categories, seeps from the academic circles, including specialist literature, into common way of thinking and interpreting the world. It becomes a basic element of mass culture, which accepts it uncritically. This is also the case on the ground of faith, which, when subjected to a reductionist influence, for example rejecting the deity of Jesus, becomes its own caricature. Cantalamessa claims that “the result of such a process is the silent and hypocritical acceptance of two faiths and two kinds of Christianity, which have nothing in common but a name. The first is Christianity with the Creed of the Church, with common ecumenical declarations, in which faith in the Trinity and the full deity of Christ is still professed. The second is the 'real' Christianity of broad sections of society and culture, in which, following some 'fashionable' theologians, the same truths are interpreted quite differently.”²⁶ This coexistence of the official teaching of the Church and the orthodox way of believing with the subjective faith resulting from the absolute autonomy of the individual who interprets it in his own way, with its characteristic manifestations in the selectivity of the truths of faith, in denial, especially of the Church's mor-

²⁵ R. Cantalamessa, *Jezus Chrystus Święty Boga...*, p. 162.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 154.

al teaching, and in the reduction of supernatural elements, is both a threat and a challenge to the kerygma. It is a threat because the first message in its essence is authoritative, interpreting and subordinating the reality to itself, and not the other way round.²⁷ It is also an orthodox message and a call to faith, in line with the Church's teaching, which [in some interpretations] is *a priori* denied and rejected. This can also happen to the kerygma as part of it. But it is also a challenge, because only the kerygma appears to be the right way to move from the faith it has created, which consists in the denial of its many principles, to a true personal faith in God. The proclamation of the kerygma as a fundamental content in the work of the new evangelization is an action that counters the existence of "two faiths and two Christianities."

The last group comprises consequences related to a total reduction of Jesus Christ's person to the human dimension. For it must be stated that denying the deity of Jesus is tantamount to assuming that He is only human, perhaps exceptional, chosen, perhaps a prophet, but still human.²⁸ Such an approach entails a number of dangers for the faith and for the message that takes place in the kerygma. It constitutes a radical narrowing of all Christology and soteriology to anthropological reality, which results in a reduction of Christian novelty and uniqueness. As Cantalamessa states: "What is the difference between Christianity and Islam then, but for ethics, perhaps? The synthesis of Islam is the sentence, 'There is no God except Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet.' The synthesis of such Christianity – denying the deity of Jesus – is: 'There is no God except Yahweh, and Jesus Christ is his prophet'."²⁹ Removing the truth about the divinity of Jesus from the Christian faith leads to a return to the Old Testament level or the level of other religions. In addition, the cult and worship of Jesus, present in Christianity, assuming that He is not God, makes it a mere idolatry, at the center of which stands creation, not God.

If Jesus is only man, then, together with questioning the uniqueness of Christianity, its supernatural character, the uniqueness and efficacy of salvation earned by Him is equally questioned. A question comes to mind: what then is the work that He has done? Is the salvation proclaimed in the Church a reality that is actual, true, supernatural and effective? For the kerygma it will also be extremely important to answer the question whether and how this event is made real during its proclamation.

In addition to questioning these realities, negating the divinity also leads to a specific way or even style of thinking about salvation. The reduction of the divinity of Jesus deprives this reality of its supernatural and universal character,

²⁷ Cf. R. Cantalamessa, *Tajemnica chrztu*, transl. G. Niedźwiedz, Wrocław 2006, p. 59.

²⁸ Cf. J.N.D. Kelly, *Początki doktryny chrześcijańskiej...*, p. 111.

²⁹ R. Cantalamessa, *Jezus Chrystus Święty Boga...*, p. 162.

embracing all people, all times.³⁰ It can also lead to showing Jesus as an example of striving for and achieving salvation, which, devoid of the transcendent element, becomes a human act. As a consequence, this style of thinking restricts the question of soteriology solely to the sphere of human action and opens it up to the search for secular and materialistic ways of salvation or self-salvation. At their source, apart from extreme individualism and anthropocentrism, there will be a rejection of the deity of Jesus and of God as such. The tendency to think about salvation in secular terms stands in opposition to the message of the kerygma, which shows salvation as a gift from God.

There will be a similar result for the reality of grace. Negating Jesus' divinity will lead to reducing the charitological dimension, where grace will no longer be God's self-giving, an unexpected and undeserved gift, surpassing all expectations. It will also be stripped of the personalist and Christological dimension, in which it is Jesus himself who enters into the salvific relationship, endowing man. Like salvation, "the grace of Christ' will be reduced, as in Pelagianism, to Christ's example.³¹ The meaning of Christ will therefore be limited to [His being] a model and [our] imitation of Him, devoid of inner, and above all divine, endowment. Grace is not a gift of new life, but an example of how to act. The kerygma, proclaiming Jesus only as a human being, is a moral teaching that shows the model that Jesus Christ was. But this proclamation is no longer a channel of grace and the possibility of an authentic transformation of life under its impact. The kerygma then becomes merely an empty preaching of Jesusology.³²

Ultimately, reducing Jesus to just a human dimension leads to the impossibility of making His presence real at the time of the proclamation of the kerygma. "If Jesus is only man, even an eschatological prophet, He cannot penetrate the conscience of every human being, including the one separated from Him by a two-thousand-year period."³³ Nor can he be the acting subject of the kerygma.³⁴ Jesus remains then just a historical person, locked in the past. The negation of the divinity makes it impossible to enter into a personal relationship with Him. When

³⁰ Cf. H. Pietras, *Herezje...*, p. 78.

³¹ R. Cantalamessa, *Jezus Chrystus Święty Boga...*, p. 184.

³² Jesusology or Jesology is a reflection on Jesus rejecting His identity as the Son of God and denying His divinity. Therefore, concepts practising Jesusology do not accept the decisions of Christological Councils or other forms of Church teaching concerning the person of Jesus Christ. Jesusology focuses mainly on the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth and as such is a teaching about man, not God.

³³ R. Cantalamessa, *Jezus Chrystus Święty Boga...*, p. 187.

³⁴ Cf. R. Cantalamessa, *Proroctwo i modlitwa*, transl. L. Rodziewicz-Doktor, Kraków 2011, p. 29; cf. R. Cantalamessa, *Tajemnica głoszenia Słowa Bożego*, transl. G. Niedźwiedz, Wrocław 2007, p. 72–73.

the kerygma about Jesus is proclaimed, recalling the words and events of His life, He does not become present and is not a source of salvation or new life for the recipients of such a message.

NEGATING ONE PERSON

Jesus is one divine hypostasis. This last truth of the dogmatic triangle has been clarified by the Council of Chalcedon. The “difference of natures because of unification has never disappeared, but rather the characteristic of each of the two natures remains noticeable and is unified in one person and in one hypostasis.”³⁵ It cannot therefore be divided into two persons, nor can it be differentiated in Him, because there is one and the same Only-Begotten Son, the Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. However, this Christological judgment was also challenged in various ways, and unorthodox views were essentially three-fold. Some, such as nestorianism, monophysitism, or monotheletism, focused on the fusion of the two natures in the person of Jesus, without maintaining the differences and properties of the two natures. This fusion was always associated with the diminution or loss of the characteristics of one of them. Another group of heresies concerned the very subject of the person of Jesus. It was emphasized that Jesus is one person, but human, in whom God acts in some way and reveals Himself to the world. The person of Jesus was to be a certain space in which one could discover God’s presence. This direction, once again, reduces the deity of Jesus to some extent, bringing it down to an anthropological dimension only. The last group of theories is the adoption of a direction that completely rejects the category of person in defining Jesus Christ. In light of these views, Jesus is more an action or energy than a person.³⁶

Denying the dogma about the person of Jesus, in one way or another, raises the question of the possibility of knowing Him and entering into a personal relationship with Him. It also entails undermining the earlier understanding of God, faith and the reality of salvation. From now on salvation ceases to be a gift given within the personal relationship of faith between God and man. The object of faith is no longer a personal God, but rather some divine energy or action. Believing in Jesus could be a certain experience of such action. The question remains open whether it would be rational and free, or rather mechanical, and how man could enter into the orbit of its influence. Once again, the denial of a single truth of faith entails the disintegration of the whole system of faith and an inner contradiction between its individual truths.

³⁵ *Breviarium Fidei. Wybór doktrynalnych wypowiedzi Kościoła*, ed. I. Bokwa, Poznań 2007, p. 74.

³⁶ Cf. R. Cantalamessa, *Jezus Chrystus Święty Boga...*, p. 156.

Fr. Cantalamessa in his theology absolutely rejects such approach to the problem of the person. He says: “Christianity is not a science, but above all a person, Jesus Christ (...). The proclamation of this person is the most important thing, because at the heart of every relationship is the encounter of persons.”³⁷ Therefore the proclamation of the kerygma is so important in his theology, because he treats it as a space in which salvation is realized and Jesus himself becomes present.³⁸ The proclamation creates an opportunity to encounter Him and favours the decision of man as a personal partner in faith³⁹ to enter into a salvific relationship with the person of Jesus Christ. The emphasis placed on a personal encounter with Jesus is not a sign of subjectivity or sentimentalism, but is the basis of communication with God, with its biblical and dogmatic justification. On the other hand, the meeting of the *keryx* with Jesus, the continual personal communion with Him, is the basis of Christian proclamation and the mystery of its strength. Hence any attempt to deny the dogma of the person of Jesus Christ is also a threat to the kerygma. It removes from it the perspective of a personal entrance into the relationship with Jesus and experiencing salvation, and it also becomes a challenge to the role of the *keryx* as a witness and mystagogue. For “witnessing to God whom one has not encountered becomes for the world witnessing to a God who does not exist.”⁴⁰

Summing up, it can be said, after Pascal, that “the source of all heresies is the exclusion of just some truths.”⁴¹ For the kerygmatic message, undermining, negating or misplacing emphasis, concerning Christological truth and its soteriological consequences is, according to Cantalamessa, the most serious dogmatic threat. The kerygma without the orthodox doctrine of Jesus Christ ceases to be a proclamation of salvation and making God present. The denial of humanity, deity or one person in Jesus Christ undermines the *raison d’être* of the message of the kerygma and the sense of its proclamation. For it loses its effectiveness and spiritual power to transform reality. It is no longer a new-evangelizing appeal full of life, but another empty message of the modern world. For this not to happen, it

³⁷ Ibidem, p. 112–113. In a similar way Pope Benedict XVI writes in the encyclical *Deus caritas est*, stating that: “at the beginning of being a Christian there is no ethical decision or any great idea, but rather an encounter with an event, with a Person who gives life a new perspective and thus a decisive direction.” (Benedict XVI, *Encyclical Deus caritas est*, 1, Wrocław 2006).

³⁸ Cf. R. Cantalamessa, *Jezus Chrystus Święty Boga...*, p. 112.

³⁹ Cf. M. Jagodziński, *Communio dzięki komunikacji. Teologiczny wymiar teorii komunikatywnego działania w eklezjologii Medarda Kehla SJ*, Radom 2002, p. 334.

⁴⁰ A. Baron, *Spór o Pawła, spór o człowieka czy spór o Boga: refleksje na marginesie kontrowersji pelagiańskiej*, w: Pelagiusz, *Komentarz do Listu św. Pawła do Rzymian* (Źródła Myśli Teologicznej 15), Kraków 1999, p. 85.

⁴¹ B. Pascal, *Myśli*, 862, transl. T. Boy-Żeleński, Warszawa 2008, p. 423.

is necessary to care for the integrity of doctrine because, as the Italian theologian stresses, orthodoxy is always “the fruit of a balanced and painful discernment that takes place day and night”,⁴² in order not to lose what is the most important in faith, starting with the kerygma.

HETERODOX PRESENTATIONS OF PASCHAL MYSTERIES

The kerygma is a proclamation of the person and the events constituting the basis for the salvation of man and the world. As the Italian theologian stresses: “the main message of the Gospel is the death and resurrection of Christ. It is known that it is not a synthesis of the entire Gospel, a result of a gradual concentration, but the original seed from which all the rest grows. In the beginning there was a kerygma, as we find in these short formulas, which were incorporated into the apostolic writings.”⁴³ In its most concise form, the kerygma is always made up of two elements as well as their justification or motivation.⁴⁴ It is the proclamation of the history of two paschal events: “the event of the cross – Christ died for our sins and the event of the resurrection – Christ was raised from the dead for our justification.”⁴⁵ The orthodox proclamation of the first message should always include both Christological events as well as show their inner coherence.

So, if the simplest presentation of the content of the kerygma is expressed in the formulas “Jesus died” and “Jesus rose from the dead,” then every “dialectic either-or”⁴⁶ as well as a softer attempt to emphasize one of these events at the expense of the other distorts the inner structure of the kerygma, leading to a distortion of the salvific message. However, it is all the heterodox attempts to question the event of Jesus’ death or resurrection that are a more serious threat, since they ultimately result in deprivation of the sense or the purpose of its proclamation.

⁴² R. Cantalamessa, *Jezus Chrystus Święty Boga...*, p. 165.

⁴³ R. Cantalamessa, *Życie w Chrystusie. Duchowe przesłanie Listu do Rzymian*, transl. M. Przeczewski, Kraków 2014, p. 82.

⁴⁴ Cf. Ibidem, p. 98; R. Cantalamessa, *Moc krzyża*, transl. M. Przeczewski, Kraków 2013, p. 101. See M. Zborowski, *Jakie poznanie Syna przynoszą kerygmatyczne formuły „za nas” i „dla nas” (cf. Rz 4,25)?*, w: *Imago Dei – Imago Christi. Na Obraz Boży*, red. A. Małek, Ł. Rzepka, Kraków 2018, p. 31–47.

⁴⁵ R. Cantalamessa, *Wysłuchani w Ducha Świętego*, transl. J. Pawalus, J. Stachurska, M. Rogozińska, I. Ciapara, Kraków 1994, p. 33.

⁴⁶ Cf. R. Cantalamessa, *Maryja zwierciadłem dla Kościoła*, transl. J. Królikowski, Warszawa 1994, p. 120.

OVER-EMPHASIZING THE PASCHAL EVENTS

Father Cantalamessa repeatedly warns against the danger to the kerygma consisting in overstating one or the other paschal event. He says that “in pastoral work, as a response to human suffering, it is not enough to preach that God suffers too [...]. The weakness of the doctrine of suffering [...] in some authors is that it is based on ‘God crucified.’ They do not deal enough [...] with the resurrection, that is, the victory already achieved over suffering and death.”⁴⁷ By proclaiming the kerygma it is not enough to reveal only part of the good news, that is, the truth about the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, for, left alone, it leads only to the discovery of God’s solidarity with man, without in any way changing his situation. The salvation achieved in Jesus is much more than just solidarity and presence. “The cross can be known better by looking at its effects than at its causes, which often remain mysterious and unexplained to us.”⁴⁸ Therefore, focusing only on the event of passion and death is not the proclamation of the good news and the realization of salvation.

Similarly, the kerygma will also be threatened by one-sided emphasis on the event of the resurrection in isolation from that of Jesus’ death. The proclamation of a message based solely on the Easter joy, the omnipotence of God, victory over Satan and death, and the fact of being freed from the yoke of sin, will lead, on the one hand, to triumphalism and mentality of the gospel of success⁴⁹ and, on the other hand, to its rejection as a reality which does not find its confirmation and is absent, in this form, from the lives of the recipients. Moreover, the pseudo-kerygma built solely on the event of the resurrection will convey a deformed understanding of salvation. It can be horizontally narrowed or reduced, removing the dimension of supernatural transformation, taking the form of an external justification, without touching man in an ontological way, and thus similar to Martin Luther’s Protestant approach. The proclamation of salvation in Jesus, based solely on His victory, can also result in transferring salvation into the reality of eschatology, because in the presented dimension it is not realized during human life. It seems that there may be even more negative effects and their modifications, especially since they are a reproduction of many pre-existing mistakes and heresies. The kerygma, in this sense, will not be an effective message, and any overstatement or disconnection of one event from the history-salvific context will be a threat to the first message, which may additionally contribute to distorting the good news and the faith of its addressees.

⁴⁷ R. Cantalamessa, *Kontemplując Trójcę*, transl. P. Cembrowicz, Kraków 2003, p. 25.

⁴⁸ R. Cantalamessa, *Maryja zwierciadłem dla Kościoła...*, p. 123.

⁴⁹ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 120.

QUESTIONING THE PASCHAL EVENTS

It is also worth noting that much more serious theological consequences result from attempts to question the authenticity or historicity of the events that constitute the core of the kerygma. History knows many hypotheses which approach critically the events of death or resurrection.⁵⁰ And while the fact of Jesus' death is historically confirmed by many sources independent of the Gospel,⁵¹ there have been attempts over the centuries to question the suffering itself or Jesus' participation in His death in body and person.⁵² According to the views of the docetists or appellites, Jesus did not participate personally in the staurological event, because of the illusionary character or astral matter of His body and its impassibility.⁵³ In such case it is impossible to speak of the authenticity of this event. Another attempt to question the event of crucifixion was H. Paulus's hypothesis of

⁵⁰ "In the United States, the published Gospel of Thomas became a best-seller, presented as a gospel 'saving us from crucifixion.' It sees no need for a resurrection and does not command faith in a God called Christ.... People who would never take the trouble to read a serious analysis of the historical traditions on the Passion, death and resurrection of Jesus are fascinated by every new theory that proclaims that He was not crucified, not dead, especially if the story continues with a description of the escape with Mary Magdalene to India (or to France, as the updated version proclaims). These theories show that as far as the Passion of Jesus is concerned, in spite of the folk saying, fantasy surpasses reality and is, unfortunately, more profitable" (R. Cantalamessa, *Wspominając błogosławioną Mękę*, transl. T. Bargiel, Kraków 2007, p. 59).

⁵¹ Fundamental theology divides texts confirming the historicity of the life and death of Jesus into Jewish testimonies, and among these are the *Old History of Israel* by Joseph Flavius, the testimony of Lucian of Samosath, the letter of Mary, son of Serapio, the Babylonian version of the *Talmud* and the rabbinical book *Toledoth Jessuah*, the *Roman Yearbooks* of Tacitus, the *Lives of the Caesars* by Svetonius, the testimony of the court chronicler Tallos Samaritan and the Islamic ones pointing to the Koranic suras talking about Jesus. It should be noted that the credibility of these works, for the most part, is not questioned, as well as the fact that their authors were indifferent or even hostile to Christianity, thus making their records mentioning Jesus authentic. The Jewish, Roman and Islamic testimonies concerning Jesus, independently of the Gospel message, confirm the historical nature of his person – the fact that there was someone like Jesus – and the fact of the end of his life, which was the death of the cross or at least one of these elements. See Cz. Bartnik, *Dogmatyka katolicka*, vol. 1, Lublin 2012, p. 563–569; J. Mastej, M. Rusecki, *Historyczność Jezusa Chrystusa*, in: *Leksykon teologii fundamentalnej*, ed. M. Rusecki, K. Kaucha, Lublin–Kraków 2002, p. 509–516; M. Rusecki, *Pan zmartwychwstał i żyje. Zarys teologii rezurekcyjnej*, Warszawa 2006, p. 48–57; H. Seweryniak, *Świadectwo i sens*, Płock 2003, p. 164–179; H. Seweryniak, *Teologia fundamentalna*, vol. 1, Warszawa 2010, p. 217–241.

⁵² Cf. R. Cantalamessa, *Życie w Chrystusie. Duchowe przesłanie Listu do Rzymian...*, p. 85.

⁵³ Cf. M. Zborowski, *Typologie chrystologiczne, czyli Orygenesza próba odpowiedzi na pytanie: Kim jest Jezus, na podstawie komentarzy i homilii do ewangelii synoptycznych*, "Resovia Sacra" 22 (2015), p. 374–375.

lethargy.⁵⁴ He did not question the reality of the body and the suffering on the cross, but he believed that Jesus survived the event of the cross and woke up from the lethargy in his tomb.⁵⁵ Such a perspective would have obliterated the salvific claims related to Jesus' passion and death and made the preaching of the kerygma unjustified.

The event of resurrection, also crucial for the kerygma, has been the subject of numerous theories and explanations questioning its realism and historicity.⁵⁶ According to Cantalamessa this should not be a surprise, as "one can study Christ's resurrection all life long and write many books on this subject and yet not really comprehend Christ's resurrection."⁵⁷ One of the first attempts, still in the apostolic era, was the theory accusing Christians of deception, suggesting the theft of Jesus' body from the tomb. This fact is even confirmed by the Gospel (cf. Matt 27:62–66; 28:11–15). So if we are to assume, in line with the aforementioned hypothesis of lethargy, that Jesus did not die at all, then Christophanies do not prove the resurrection of Jesus at all, but rather confirm the thesis of surviving the Passion and the Cross. The research on Sacred Scripture based on the methods of historical and literary criticism also generated a concept that separates Jesus of history from the Christ of faith. Bultmann is one of the first⁵⁸ to assume that the original Christianity believed in the resurrection and also preached the kerygma, which does not mean that this event actually took place historically. The Christ of faith has risen in the disciples' consciousness, in the apostolic kerygma, but not necessarily in history. His resurrection written on the pages of the Gospel is rather a projection or an invention of the disciples, so these passages of Scripture must be de-mythologized.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the role of the resurrection proclaimed by the apos-

⁵⁴ Heinrich Paulus (1761–1851) – a German theologian, who carries out an exegesis that de-mythologizes Scripture. His hypothesis of lethargy is one of the naturalistic attempts to explain the event of the resurrection.

⁵⁵ Cf. M. Rusecki, *Pan zmartwychwstał i żyje...*, p. 94–95.

⁵⁶ Cf. R. Cantalamessa, *Życie w Chrystusie. Duchowe przesłanie Listu do Rzymian...*, p. 111.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 124.

⁵⁸ Before R. Bultmann this issue was approached by H.S. Reimarus and D.F. Strauss. But from R. Bultmann and M. Dibelius, it is argued on the basis of the results of the work on Scripture based on the method of historical criticism and redaction criticism.

⁵⁹ "Attempts to re-formulate the truth about Jesus Christ are based, more or less clearly, on the following assumption, taken for granted by Bultmann: the way in which faith was presented in the New Testament and at the time of the ancient councils was conditioned by an ancient mythological mentality [...]. The modern style of thinking, which rejects any mythological categories, forces a new way of presenting the faith [...]. But isn't what remains after demythologization also mythical? What does it mean: "God acted in Christ" or: "Christ is God's highest revelation"? Are these sentences also not, by any chance, a passage from one "semantic plane" to another? (R. Cantalamessa, *Jezus Chrystus Święty Boga...*, p. 164–173). More on the criticism of Bultmann's de-mythologization of Christianity made by the Italian theologian: see R. Cantalamessa, *Jezus Chrystus Święty Boga...*, p. 150–192.

bles has had and continues to have an enormous impact on people's lives. Jesus lives in the preaching of the disciples. This theory, also known as the presentational-existential interpretation,⁶⁰ has undergone numerous modifications, and the case of Jesus of Nazareth continued, leading to in-depth theological and biblical research, also on the Polish ground.⁶¹ Also the second salvific event, crucial for the proclamation of the kerygma, was repeatedly questioned and challenged. However, any attempt to deny the historicity or realism of the resurrection should, according to the Italian theologian, be confronted with a fragment of St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians: "Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain." (1 Cor 15: 12–14).⁶² If Christ has not been raised, the proclamation of the kerygma loses its meaning, and, as the Apostle of the Nations states, it becomes futile and faith in Jesus and the grace of salvation is rendered vain. Moreover, when "the resurrection is denied as historical, that is, objective and not merely subjective, the birth of faith and of the Church becomes a mystery which is even more difficult to explain than the resurrection itself."⁶³ So questioning the resurrection message of the kerygma becomes not only a threat to it but also negates its essence.

Finally, it is worth looking at the comparison invoked in this context by Fr. Cantalamessa. In the image of the cross, constructed from two beams, he sees the absolute, historic inseparability of both paschal events: death and resurrection. Separating or removing them will destroy the possibility of making their fruit actual, that is – salvation and new life in Christ. The danger of overemphasis will nullify the kerygma by distorting the orthodox faith and salvation, while the negation of authenticity will mean ceasing to proclaim the kerygma as a message deprived of its meaning and d'être. Without passion and death, proclaimed as interrelated and equally important salvation events, the kerygma is not good news, but rather a denial of the logic of the Gospel and God's economy.

In the light of Raniero Cantalamessa's teaching on the subject, it can be pointed out that Christological heterodox approaches to the person of Jesus Christ and the mysteries of his life lead to:

⁶⁰ Cf. M. Rusecki, *Pan zmartwychwstał i żyje...*, p. 122.

⁶¹ See W. Granat, E. Kopeć, *Jezus Chrystus. Historia i tajemnica*, Lublin 1982; J. Kudasiewicz, *Jezus historii a Chrystus wiary*, Lublin 1987; J. Kudasiewicz, H. Witczyk, *Jezus i Ewangelie w ogniu dyskusji*, Kielce 2011; K. Romaniuk, *Jezus historii a Chrystus wiary. Refleksje metodologiczne*, "Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne" 23 (1976), 1, p. 39–48; M. Rusecki, *Pan zmartwychwstał i żyje. Zarys teologii rezurekcyjnej*, Warszawa 2006.

⁶² Cf. R. Cantalamessa, *Życie w Chrystusie. Duchowe przesłanie Listu do Rzymian...*, p. 127.

⁶³ R. Cantalamessa, *Tajemnica Paschalna u Ojców Kościoła, w: Przesłanie Zmartwychwstania*, red. G. Sztok, transl. J. Merecki, Kraków 2007, p. 76.

- negating the humanity of Jesus, and thus to making God distant from man (in the sense of relation, solidarity and above all – ontology);
- reducing Christology and soteriology to anthropology, losing in this way the absolute uniqueness of Christianity;
- reductionism in its approach to supernaturality and to epistemological secularism;
- the abolition of the Christian concept of God – God is not Trinity, God is not love;
- an untrue image of God;
- questioning the role of the only Mediator;
- denying salvific universalism;
- seeking ways of self-salvation;
- questioning the work of redemption and human participation in the salvific reality;
- the impossibility of a real transformation and justification from faith, as well as the loss of certainty of forgiveness of sins;
- reduction of grace to a moral example;
- fideistic dualism, in which, in addition to faith which is declared and taught, there is also another practical and subjective faith;
- questioning the personalistic perspective in theology, as well as all the existential implications that arise from it;
- false faith attitudes (from hopelessness and fear to triumphalism and the gospel of success);
- negating paschal events or preaching facts that did not really happen.

The above mentioned consequences of the impact of various unorthodox currents pose a serious threat to the kerygma and the reality of faith in general. For any reduction, challenge or negation, wrong emphasis or distortion of the truth of the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ undermines the content of the preaching of the Gospel, deprives it of salvific effectiveness, not leading to the recognition of personal truth, and thus calls into question the sense of proclaiming it to all creation (cf. Mk 16:15). As Fr. Cantalamessa states: “if the very core of the proclamation becomes precarious and uncertain, that which speaks of the person of Jesus Christ, then the Christian cry – the kerygma – is fractured in its most beautiful place, losing any possibility of penetrating hearts.”⁶⁴ It can therefore be concluded that defining kerygma as a message which is beautiful, solid, profound, certain, meaningful or wise⁶⁵ is true if and only if it is an orthodox message. Hence the conclusion that the kerygma at all times needs the teaching of the Church, dog-

⁶⁴ R. Cantalamessa, *Jezus Chrystus Święty Boga...*, p. 151.

⁶⁵ Cf. EG 35, 165; AL [58].

mas and theological reflection to give order to its message, to explain it rationally, and to protect it from heterodox approaches and their consequences.⁶⁶

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⁶⁶ Cf. K. Gózdź, *Kościół zbawienia*, Lublin 2010, p. 21; Cantalamesa uses a meaningful comparison in this context: "dogmas are like antibodies in the body of the Church. When an infection affects a healthy organism, and a person overcomes an infectious disease such as smallpox, he remains immune to it forever; for his body has developed effective antibodies, which will come into play as soon as the same disease is about to attack again. In terms of faith, the dogmatic definition fulfils a similar task. It comes into action immediately when the same heresy, in defense of which it was formulated, creeps into the Church anew, even in another robe. There is no need for the Church to condemn it again. Dogma is the judgment of heresy." (R. Cantalamesa, *Jezus Chrystus Święty Boga...*, p. 152).

- Francis, *Apostolic exhortation Gaudete et exsultate*, Kraków 2018.
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Keywords: kerygma, dogma, salvation, Christology, Cantalamessa

HETERODOKSJA CHRYSOLOGICZNA ZAGROŻENIEM DLA KERYGMATU W TEOLOGII O. RANIERO CANTALAMESSY

Streszczenie

Każda próba redukcji lub dezintegracji dogmatu chrystologicznego nie pozostaje bez wpływu na podstawowe orędzie dobrej nowiny, jakim jest kerygmat, a także na jego soteriologiczne implikacje. Teologicznym wyzwaniem jest dołożyć wszelkich starań, aby proklamowanie pierwszego orędzia było zwiastowaniem pełni prawdy objawionej, ale również wskazać niebezpieczeństwa wynikające z przekazu niepełnego lub nieortodoksyjnego. Artykuł stanowi prezentację negatywnych konsekwencji heterodoksyjnych tendencji chrystologicznych dla rzeczywistości kerygmatu w teologii o. Raniero Cantalamessy. Omawiane zagrożenia dogmatyczne i ich skutki koncentrują się na osobie Jezusa Chrystusa oraz na wydarzeniach śmierci i zmartwychwstania.

Słowa kluczowe: kerygmat, dogmat, zbawienie, chrystologia, Cantalamessa