

W uwagach końcowych Massimiliano Proietti pisze o *fides quae creditur*, podkreślając szczególnie historię nicejskiego wyznania wiary badaną na przestrzeni siedemnastu wieków, która odzwierciedla umiejętność przekształcania ustalonej formuły zarówno poprzez przeróbkę tekstu i tłumaczenie na języki inne niż oryginalny grecki, jak i poprzez resemantyzację, która z jednej strony gwarantowała jego powodzenie, ale z drugiej – mogła otworzyć drogę do jego przewyższenia (s. 712).

Zarysowane pokrótce liczne opracowania Wyznania nicejskiego i nicejsko-konstantynopolińskiego, choć zapewne nie wyczerpują ich bogactwa i wielowiekowej historii recepcji, to dają niewątpliwie asumpt do nowych, wieloaspektowych badań.

ks. Sylwester Jaśkiewicz

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Grzegorz Strzelczyk, *Eklezjologia. Jak Kościół rozumie sam siebie* (Ecclesiology. How the Church Understands Itself), Kraków: WAM 2025, 315 p.

Contemporary reflection on the nature and mission of the Church gains particular significance in the context of dynamic social, cultural, and religious transformations. Ecclesiology today is not merely a theoretical theological discourse but a living dialogue between faith and reality. The reviewed book represents an attempt to reread the mystery of the Church in the light of Scripture, Tradition, and the challenges of the modern world. Grzegorz Strzelczyk addresses both classical questions concerning the essence and structure of the community of believers and current issues regarding its role in the world, its ecumenical relationships, and its dialogue with culture.

The book consists of nine chapters, including the introduction and conclusion. Does the arrangement of the chapters reflect a logical development of the ecclesiological idea underpinning this study? It appears that it does. The author sets himself the goal of answering two key questions: “How does the Church understand itself today?” and “Why does it understand itself in this particular way?” He notes, however, that the language of the book is intended not only for an academic audience but also for readers who explore theology in a broader, non-scholarly context. The point of departure is an attempt to present a synthetic description of the Church’s rea-

lity, followed by an explanation of how particular convictions have historically taken shape. The theologian seeks to integrate the idea of synodality into a comprehensive synthesis of ecclesiological teaching. At the outset, he defines the concept of the Church and traces the historical development of its understanding, emphasizing that, due to the mystery of the Church, it is impossible to formulate a single, exhaustive definition. The author also briefly reflects on the relationship between the Kingdom of God and the Church, subsequently guiding the reader through an examination of the Church from the perspectives of various theological disciplines.

In the second chapter, the author seeks to examine the Church's heritage of self-understanding from seven different perspectives. At the outset, the editor succinctly explains the events in which one may discern the beginnings of the Church, emphasizing that its origins consist of a series of personal decisions made by the disciples, who, through trust and faith, receive successive gifts. The next section presents the understanding of the Church as *communio*, where the Church's ultimate goal is the unity of all people within the communion of the Church – in the one Body of Christ. Subsequently, Strzelczyk discusses the Church's mission as a service to unity. This mission concerns both those who are members of the Church and those who have not yet come to faith in Christ. The author then reflects on the concept of the Church as a sacrament – one that, on the one hand, administers the sacraments, and on the other, embodies and manifests its own sacramentality through them.

The book then turns to the theme of the Church as the Body of Christ, highlighting the indispensable need for life in community, where each member serves and remains open to receiving service from others. The unity of the Church's members rests upon cultivating a relationship with Christ, the Head, who identifies himself with his Church, as well as upon building horizontal relationships: with other members of the Church and with other denominations within the framework of ecumenism. Among all members of the Church, various vocations and ministries are distinguished – a topic to which Strzelczyk devotes considerable attention, describing their purposes and differences in detail. In doing so, he reveals the richness found in the diversity of Christ's Body, while simultaneously drawing attention to contemporary challenges and misunderstandings that arise when translating the divine plan into the daily lives of modern believers. Consequently, the author also touches upon the multicultural character of the members of the Body, which finds expression in diverse forms of faith experience and expression. In conclusion, the chapter unites all these perspectives on the

Church, underscoring that it is the continuous, living presence of the Holy Spirit that makes possible the Church's unity – both eucharistic and universal – within the one Body.

The third chapter is devoted to examining how the community of disciples is described in the New Testament. It presents issues concerning the identity and mission of the Church, as well as the organization of early Christian communities, as reflected in the texts of the New Covenant. The chapter begins with examples of how the Bible refers to the Church, and then proceeds to a discussion of its identity and mission. The point of departure is a reflection on the pre-paschal teaching of Jesus, which was initially directed toward the Israelites and later extended to the Gentiles. This is followed by an analysis of the disciples' pre- and post-paschal preaching and an exposition of the content of the paschal kerygma. The author also addresses the question of the divergence between Judaism and the Church. In a particularly insightful way, Strzelczyk explores the transformation of meanings in the vocabulary originally used by Israel and subsequently adopted by Christians, who infused it with a new, New Testament significance. The chapter then turns to the presentation of the Church as the Body of Christ, as well as the Temple and the building of God, viewed through the witness of the New Testament. Subsequent sections consider various metaphors and dimensions of ecclesial identity: the Church as a shepherding community, as cultivated land, as a community of fishermen, as holy and sanctifying, as the Bride of Christ, as Mother, and as Priest. Strzelczyk also addresses the organization of the Church in the first century, discussing its emerging structures and the processes that shaped the internal organization of the early Christian communities.

The fourth chapter, devoted to the first millennium, offers a chronological presentation of the Church's developing self-understanding. It begins with a reflection on the factors that testified to belonging to the Church. The author discusses the catechumenate and the tension between faith and baptism, emphasizing that faith itself is the primary element signifying one's belonging to the Body of Christ. Subsequent sections address the themes of salvation and charisms, highlighting that the possession of charisms is not equivalent to attaining salvation. The author then turns to the question of apostolic succession, underscoring the continuity of the Church and the assistance of the Holy Spirit, who, through his abiding presence, continually guides the Church toward the truth – including the truth about itself – among other means through synods and their reception within local Churches. The next set of reflections focuses on the unity of the Church,

which manifests itself in several dimensions. From the earliest centuries, the Church practiced the discernment of common positions through the assemblies of bishops-synods. It is within these gatherings, through the action of the Holy Spirit, that the mystery of the Church continues to be discovered. Another space of unity discussed is the Eucharist, in which unity was understood in a literal and tangible way: all partake of one Body and thereby become one Body. The author traces the historical development of the Church's awareness of the need for unity – from the establishment of a single biblical canon, through the formulation of creeds, to the convocation of synods and the issuing of synodal letters in response to the challenges faced by local Churches. Strzelczyk also demonstrates that local synods influenced the formation of universal doctrine, while at the same time emphasizing the role of unity in the bishop, in the college of bishops, and in the enduring authority of the Roman episcopate. In contrast to unity, the author devotes part of the chapter to the phenomenon of division, addressing it in moral-disciplinary, doctrinal, and jurisdictional contexts. He then examines how the Church understood its own activity within the cultural frameworks of the Roman and other pagan worlds, as well as how it gradually strengthened its relations with state authorities, culminating in the establishment of the Papal States. Faced with the growing universality of Christianity, the author explores how local communities responded from the ground up to the declining quality of Christian life. He notes the rise of more radical forms of discipleship – such as virginity, monastic life, and eremitical existence – as expressions of a renewed evangelical radicalism. In a particularly engaging way, Strzelczyk describes how the Roman synod gradually evolved into the present-day institution of the College of Cardinals, referring to the original purpose and nature of the synod as an advisory body to the Bishop of Rome.

The fifth chapter presents the development of ecclesiology during the second millennium. The chapter discusses the Gregorian Reform, highlighting changes in the understanding of the office of the Bishop of Rome, modeled on the authority of feudal rulers. It examines the departure from the prerogatives of the Roman synod and the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome's authority over that of the emperor. Part of the chapter is devoted to the Church's grassroots responses to these changes, including the emergence of confraternities and religious orders. The author then presents the main thinkers of the scholastic period and their indirect contributions to the Church's self-understanding. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Martin Luther's ecclesiology and the response of the Council of Trent.

The sixth chapter addresses Roman Catholic ecclesiology after the Council of Trent. It examines the teaching of the Roman Catechism and provides a brief synthesis of the thought of Bellarmine, Gallicanism, and Josephinism. The chapter sets the stage for the First Vatican Council by highlighting trends present in the Roman school and the phenomenon of ultramontaniam. Subsequently, it reflects on the reception of the Council's teaching up to the twentieth century. The text emphasizes the increasing importance attributed to the states of life within the Church and the role of priests in ecclesiology. Only later did grassroots movements, such as the biblical movement, the liturgical movement, and Catholic Action, begin to address the role of the laity in Church life.

The seventh chapter, devoted to the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council, provides insight into the context in which the Council was convened and the course of its deliberations. The main themes of the Council's documents are presented, offering a foundation for understanding the Church's self-understanding as expressed in conciliar texts.

The eighth chapter focuses on the reception of the Second Vatican Council's decrees and the new trends and questions that arose from the ensuing ecclesiological discussions. The chapter offers a detailed examination of various ecclesiological models, emphasizing the principle of unity in diversity. The author also addresses the concept of the Church Militant as developed in South America and explores questions related to Church governance. In this chapter, the marks of the Church are discussed more extensively than previously, and selected post-conciliar theological currents are presented. Strzelczyk engages with concepts such as *una mystica persona*, the Domestic Church, and reflections on consecration and permanent ministries in the Church, including the diaconate, lectorate, and acolyte. The chapter concludes with a synthesis of teaching on the synodality of the Church, referencing both documents produced during the Synod on Synodality and statements by Pope Francis.

Reading Strzelczyk's book provides significant insight into how the Church has understood itself over the centuries. Throughout the work, the author demonstrates the evolution of the understanding of local synods and ecumenical councils, as well as the authority of the Bishop of Rome. Historical analysis allows readers to appreciate contemporary challenges regarding synodality. However, compared to the extensive discussion of the relationship between the local and universal Church and the states of life of Church members, the book provides a relatively brief treatment of how ecclesiological thought developed after the Second Vatican Council. The

transition from understanding the Church as a community of local churches (synodal) to ecclesiology expressed in the formula *subsistit in*, together with the redefinition of the concept of the People of God and the resulting assignment to specific circles of belonging, was presented too briefly in relation to the significance of this topic for the universalism of the Church in an ecumenical and interreligious context.

An interesting aspect of the book is its depiction of the formation of ecclesiological beliefs and practices through *emergence* – the development of more complex forms from simpler, less complex ones. The Katowice theologian attempts to synthesize the current stage of this emergent process, which the Church continues to undergo, bearing in mind that it will only be completed with the coming of the Parousia.

In his publication, Strzelczyk presents the establishment of disciples as a decision resulting from their faith and trust. This is contrary to other treatises, where Jesus chooses and calls disciples. In addition, the role of Peter is also discussed from a different perspective. The author identifies the culmination of the attribution of sole authority only at the moment of the Gregorian reform, which stands in opposition to the previous understanding of Peter's primacy granted by Christ. The selected collection of source texts confirms this narrative, but there is a lack of early Christian texts emphasizing the authority of the Bishop of Rome.

In conclusion, Strzelczyk's work is highly recommended. The book represents a valuable and inspiring contribution to ecclesiology, deepening understanding of the nature and mission of the Church while also provoking further theological reflection. Its clear style, rigorous source analysis, and relevance to contemporary issues make the publication noteworthy for scholars as well as anyone interested in contemporary thinking about the Church. It is certainly a work worth reading.

*Wojciech Jakubowski, PWT Wrocław*